

The girls in the baobab

Venda stories from the Limpopo Valley

Second Edition

**Collected, edited and introduced by
Jaco Kruger
in collaboration with**

**Mathuvhelo Mavhetha
Pfananani Masase
and
Tshifhiwa Mashau**

We have been telling old stories and singing old tales of dreamtimes past, giving
old warnings of women who dance and turn through the firelight and leave only their
footprints for the mornings that follow.

Robert James Waller (Border Music)

Love of a country begins as an attachment to our own field of action/ And comes
to find that action of little importance though never indifferent.

TS Eliot (Little Gidding, from Four Quartets)

Niche Research Area:
Musical Arts in South Africa – Resources and Applications
School of Music, North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520, South Africa
www.nwu.ac.za/music

Cover design and page layout: Colourcode Designs

Photographs: Jaco Kruger

Map: Dirk Cilliers

Printed by Xerox Ivyline

ISBN 978-0-620-55751-1

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Venda lashu: Tshivenda songs, musical games and song stories
The flamboyant rooster and other Tshivenda song stories

Front cover: The village of Folovhodwe
Back cover: The house of narrator Ntsundeni Muraga of Muswodi

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Contributors

Jaco Kruger heard his first *ngano* story in 1984 from 83-year old xylophonist Wilson Ravele of Makonde. Entitled '*Tshilombe tshi na ngoma lila-lila*' ('The wandering musician'), this story by chance found its way into this collection. Kruger pursued his growing interest in *ngano* by means of the Musical History Project conducted at Venda University (1989-1994). This resulted in '*Venda lashu: Tshivenda songs, musical games and song stories*' (2004), a book whose content was collected by students. This was followed by '*The flamboyant rooster and other Tshivenda song stories*' (2007), co-edited with *ngano* scholar Ina le Roux. Kruger has studied various categories of Venda music, including bow, xylophone, guitar and choral dance music. He teaches musicology in the School of Music at North-West University, Potchefstroom.

Mathuvhelo Johannes Mavhetha travelled extensively in South Africa during the 27 years he worked for the Department of Water Affairs. Following this, he was employed as miner at the Tshikondeni Coal Mine in the Limpopo Valley for 11 years. He is now a pensioner who spends most of his time farming in the Nwanedi irrigation project in the village of Folovhodwe. He has been pastor in the Apostolic African Church since 1995.

Pfananani Thomas Masase grew up at Mashamba village. He attended Tshiitwa Secondary School where he matriculated in 1996. He subsequently studied electrical engineering at Phalaborwa College. He has an interest in poetry and drama, and his first radio drama, '*Mbilu i a funa*,' was broadcast on SABC Radio's Phalaphala FM in 2000. During this time he completed a certificate programme in drama writing and film making at the University of Venda. Masase started his studies in theology at North-West University in Potchefstroom in 2002. He completed his master's programme in 2006 and then was ordained as minister of the Reformed Church. Pursuing an interest in theological ethics, he completed another master's programme in 2010, and currently is engaged in doctoral research in this field. He is minister of the Boskop Reformed Church in the Potchefstroom district. He also serves farming communities around Ventersdorp. Faith, hope and love keep him going.

Tshifhiwa Iagnetia Mashau was born in Soweto but grew up at Vyeboom in the Masia district. She completed matric at Ramauba Secondary School in 1992, and her Senior Teacher's Diploma at the Venda College of Education in 1995. She finished an advanced certificate programme in education at North-West University, Potchefstroom, in 2004. This was followed in 2005 and 2011 respectively by an honours and master's programme in learner support. She currently resides in Sunnyside, Pretoria, with her children and her husband Derrick, who is a church minister.

Acknowledgements

The editor would like to thank

- the narrators for allowing their stories and lives to be represented in this collection.
- Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, Pfananani Masase and Tshifhiwa Mashau for their loyalty and diligence.
- the following persons for financial support: Jan Swanepoel (Dean: Faculty of Arts), Karendra Devroop (Director: School of Music) and Hetta Potgieter and Liesl van der Merwe (Research managers: Musical Arts in South Africa – Resources and Applications).
- Selina Mavhetha of Folovhodwe, and Nic and Christien Hoffman of Makhado for their hospitality.
- Godfrey Dederen for his constant willingness to share his extensive knowledge of Venda culture.
- Bertha Spies, Franci Greyling, Heilna du Plooy, Godfrey Dederen, Hetta Potgieter, Abraham Kriel, Amanda-Marié van der Merwe and Johann Tempelhoff for their helpful comments.
- his family for their support.

About this book

The primary purpose of this collection of stories is the documenting of a waning oral narrative practice. Because the stories are integral to a culture-specific symbolic system, it is necessary that their meanings should be explained. These meanings, and the social conditions in which they are produced, are analysed in part I of this book. This discussion will appeal more to the specialist than general reader. The stories, as well as short life sketches of their narrators, appear in part IV, and they may be enjoyed without recourse to part I. Most of the stories are followed by annotations which refer the interested reader to explanations in part I. By necessity, there is a limited overlap between these annotations and sections of part I. Part II also is aimed at the specialist, and it introduces matters of style, performance and presentation, while part III offers instructions for those who would like to perform the stories and their songs. The first edition of this book is aimed at English-speaking readers, and does not include the original Tshivenda versions of the stories. These versions appear in Part V of this second edition.

Video recordings of the performances are housed at the International Library of African Music at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. Excerpts of the songs may be accessed at www.ru.ac.za/ilam. Descriptions and recordings of Venda dance-song and instrumental music referred to in this book are available on websites such as that of the University of Washington Ethnomusicology Archives (www.music.washington.edu/ethno) and the South African National Digital Repository (www.ndr.org.za).

References appear in endnotes which are indicated by Arabic numerals. Roman numerals are used for footnotes which contain observations.

Part I

Stories from invisible villages

The rich home of words

The wall

South Africa's Limpopo Valleyⁱ surprises the unsuspecting traveller who enters it through the lush green valleys of the Soutpansberg. The damp, dark recesses of the mountains gradually open up to intense light shimmering over plains undulating towards the Limpopo River. It is not without reason that local Tshivenda-speakers refer to the Soutpansberg as '*Luvhondo nga sia liiwe la shango*': 'The wall at the end of the world.'ⁱⁱ It shields the south from what Thomas Pakenham, chronicler of historical events and remarkable trees, describes as the lowveld 'at its hottest and drabbest. Nothing breaks the monotony of the thorn scrub except the occasional explosive moment when a large baobab breaks surface like a whale rising from the ocean.'¹

Pakenham's observation stems from a trip to a magnificent baobabⁱⁱⁱ situated outside the village of Zwigodini. Some ten years after his visit, one of South Africa's foremost outdoor and travel magazines² gave descriptions of the same route to this tree. Precise directions take the traveller through two villages, namely Folovhodwe and Muswodi, but they are not mentioned: it is as if they are invisible. Another popular travel magazine³ identifies the home of giant baobabs as the 'Limpopo outback.'

Ryszard Kapuscinski notes that 'the European in Africa sees only part of it, usually only the continent's exterior coating ... His vision glides over the surface, penetrating no deeper and refusing to imagine that behind every thing a mystery may be hidden, and within as well.'⁴ However, it is with instinctive conviction that the traveller initially fails to establish emotional attachment with marginal, arid land. My initial visits during the early 1980s to Folovhodwe and Muswodi left an indelible impression of a moonscape enveloped in searing heat and white dust, of inscrutable figures lounging somnolently in the narrow shadows of local bars and shops with ironic names like Little Paradise and Liquor Restaurant. Several questions presented themselves: How did people come to settle here? What value did they attach to their land? What were their dreams? What was their place in the world?

Trails into stories

My travels in the area during this time also took me to Mututuwaguvha, a deserted rock stronghold outside the village of Mutele.^{iv} This outcrop is almost unassailable: it can be approached only up two narrow footpaths that wind tortuously between boulders. The top reveals clear signs of ancient habitation: crumbling drystone walls, shallow rock depressions for the collection of rain water and a scattering of round grinding stones. The sheer cliffs of the citadel make it a superb defensive position. An unimpeded vista unfolds north towards the Limpopo River and Zimbabwe. And so the region started

ⁱ This name is used here to refer to the northern Vhembe district of South Africa's Limpopo Province. The area is bordered by the Limpopo River and the Soutpansberg. It is part of the larger Limpopo basin which incorporates swathes of land in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

ⁱⁱ Eastwood, E. & C. (2006:27) translate the name as 'The wall beyond the world,' and Pfananani Masase as 'The wall in the other side of the world.'

ⁱⁱⁱ Some claim this is the biggest baobab in South Africa.

^{iv} Mututuwaguvha was inhabited until 1936. John Mutele, interview at Mutele, 21 May 1984.

revealing itself, since this is the direction from which the ancestors of local Tshivenda-speaking inhabitants migrated in pre-colonial times to escape famine and conflict.

Footsteps have echoed across these sandy plains for centuries. And while human silhouettes no longer are visible on Mututuwaguvha's high promontory, tracks of ancient migration remain mapped-out in communal memory as Zimbabweans now try to escape the effects of the Third Chimurengaⁱ across the Limpopo River. These migrants not only are integral to the local landscape, but also the mindscape of its inhabitants. A Tshivenda *ngano* story narrated in 2011 by Elelwani Singo of Folovhodwe describes how a community in the Limpopo Valley fends off an attack by a group of 'cannibals' (*madyavhathu*) who subsequently rush back to Zimbabwe.ⁱⁱ And although local relations with Zimbabweans generally are amiable, their role in *ngano* is almost exclusively that of stranger and villain.

Warnings to avoid strangers like them is one of various functions of *ngano*. These stories belong to the *cante fable* narrative category, which integrates prose with songs and chants. This ancient expressive form is known in Indian, Arabian, Persian, medieval European as well as other African cultures.⁵

Ngano performance enables people to 'interlace their everyday experiences with an awareness of the poetic, of the deeper hidden elements in human life and of their place in a wider order of things.'⁶ We are mistaken not only in habitually quantifying culture, but also doing so in exclusive concrete terms by listing memorials, historical buildings and battle sites. However, there is no self-evident link between a 'drab' environment and the human imagination. Like the villages they inhabit, many local *ngano* performers appear invisible. They are poor and live in humble conditions, yet their stories reveal complex inner worlds – cultural mindscapes saturated with tight, often conflicting social relations expressed in lavishly metaphorical forms at odds with the hot bareness of the land. This frequently overlooked corner of Africa in fact also is 'the rich home of words.'⁷



The Limpopo Valley

ⁱ The Third Chimurenga follows on the Second Chimurenga (1965-1979), the war against imperial Britain. It is an effort since the turn of the 21st century to effect 'economic liberation.' Taking the form of land redistribution and the nationalisation of commerce and industry, it has been marked by economic depression and political turbulence.

ⁱⁱ *A vha a tshi shavha. A vha o wela seli ha Zimbabwe.* (They fled. They crossed back to Zimbabwe.) Folovhodwe, 17 June 2011.

Repossessing stories

The discussions accompanying the *ngano* in this collection treat them as a gateway to the local landscape and some of its histories which are ‘woven into the artistic image.’⁸ The ethics of narrative documentation no longer scaffold the colonial control that insight into folklore once aimed at.ⁱ Pallo Jordan remarked thirty years ago that urbanisation had ‘excluded the majority of the people from access to the traditions that once shaped their societies.’⁹ And so indigenous knowledge systems, also embedded in artistic performance, remain important in Africa, although now for a very different reason: they are instrumental to the autonomous negotiation of identities in a globalising world. For some the African past ‘has to be recognised for what it was. It must be reconciled with the present, then promoted in the future.’¹⁰ The cultural charter of the African Union accordingly emphasises the need to preserve and promote cultural heritages, respect for regional identities and the role of elders as cultural stakeholders,¹¹ while a recent local conference on African oral history aimed at addressing the declining ‘warmth of human contact’ accompanying mass communication.¹²

These concerns and visions speak of a sense of disorientation, of an inability to recognise ‘navigational points’ in a changing world. They require ‘working through those difficult questions about who we are, how we live together in difference and what we consider the human to be.’¹³

Beyond *ngano*

Following a conventional approach, the personal particulars of narrators whose stories appear in this collection initially were plumbed mainly for the insight they provide into *ngano* as socially mediated artistic expression. But whereas previous collections¹⁴ in this series were culled from different districts in the Soutpansberg, most of the stories included here emanate from Folovhodwe and Muswodi. Conversations with their narrators unexpectedly crystallised certain distinct shared experiences. While populations in the central Soutpansberg had limited direct contact with the colonial world, those living in border areas were affected extensively, even traumatically, by the influx of white settlers since the early 19th century.¹⁵

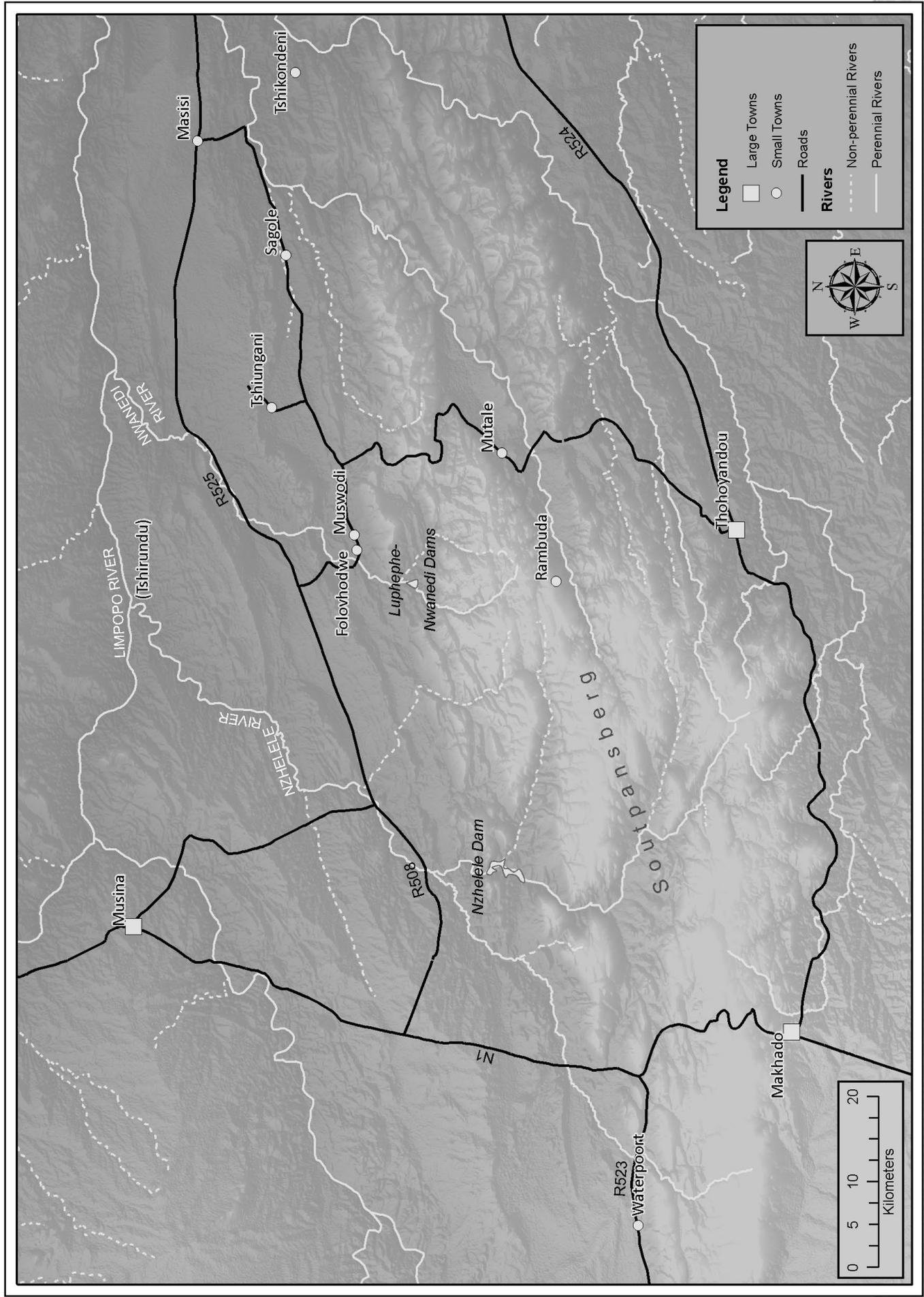
Land invasion in the Limpopo Valley in the first half of the 20th century led to the expulsion of certain local populations. I first became aware of some of these removalsⁱⁱ when documenting the history of a sacred drum belonging to the Nefolovhodwe ruling family.¹⁶ However, I was unaware of their full extent and consequences.

The meanings of the stories in this collection accordingly not only are traced in narrative images that have wider, even universal relevance, but also in local lives linked firmly to the forces that have shaped the land. They offer a glimpse of how people may be swept along almost unnoticed in the currents of larger historical processes. However, they also show how people attempt to shape the place they live in, partly by means of their stories.

This, then, not only is a collection of *ngano* narratives, but also of stories about and around them. These stories aim at persuading uncertain travellers that the often unforgiving plains north of the Soutpansberg need not be alien, that they can assume strange beauty, and that it is possible at the end of our exploring to arrive where we started, to ‘know the place for the first time’¹⁷ and leave with a better understanding of the links between ourselves and invisible others.

ⁱ Bloomhill’s observation (1960:107) that ‘intimate knowledge of African tradition and folklore is necessary to rule the Africans wisely’ contrasts ironically with the disintegration of colonial rule in Africa during the second half of the 20th century.

ⁱⁱ See ‘The Land Acts,’ p. 35.



Fading memories

The preceding collection in this series of Tshivenda *ngano* stories, entitled ‘The flamboyant rooster,’ is based on research carried out by Ina le Roux¹⁸ during the early 1990s. It identifies an all too familiar trend in the colonial encounter in Africa, namely a steadily fading communal memory of certain narrative and musical arts. *Ngano* not only are unobtrusive, they also are fragile. Social life no longer supports their transmission in any significant way, and many of their dwindling number of performers are elderly and unwell. Four narrators whose stories are included in this collection have become silent. Flora Kwindu and Elisa Madzanga died of illness in 2011 and 2013, while the voices of Lydia Matshusa and Matamela Makapile were muted by strokes in 2009 and 2011.

Documenting waning art forms accordingly often involves fruitless quests. When I expressed frustration to ethnologist Wilfred Phophi,ⁱ he responded succinctly that I had been ‘born too late.’ So, when this book was conceptualised, I was in serious doubt whether another collection of stories would have any justification or even be feasible: the features of *ngano* had been identified, while their rootedness in the world had been analysed. Also, it seemed that our source of narrators had dried up: this indeed appeared to be the end of a once vital cultural practice.

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha

Understandably, there was no immediate answer to these concerns. Nevertheless, I started joining Le Roux on visits to a community embroidery projectⁱⁱ she had established in Folovhodwe and Muswodi. Folovhodwe was the home of Malori Mavhetha, Le Roux’s co-researcher prior to his premature death in 2005. It is here that I met his elder brother Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, who is a local resident. Mavhetha was indispensable in tracking down the narrators whose stories are included in this collection. This septuagenarian is a cultural ‘inbetweenner,’ an insider who travelled extensively in South Africa during his working life as labourer in the civil service. He is a person who bridges apparent far-ends of the world, one who instantly grasped metaphor as a narrative technique and analytical concept, and in so doing helped to tease out the complex meanings of *ngano* from narrators.

Mavhetha and I started combing the village of Folovhodwe on foot, making use of his wide network of family and friends. Predictably, familiar hurdles related to documenting a fading cultural practice presented themselves. Clues about where to find narrators mostly led nowhere: people were either working, running errands, visiting somewhere or in poor health. Those who were located usually only could dredge up faint fragments of stories or simply indicated that they could not remember anything at all.ⁱⁱⁱ Mavhetha summarised our predicament in unexpected Byronian terms,^{iv} remarking: ‘The world turns: it has been long. You can forget things.’ Local healer Jameson Nevhungoni similarly explained that he had not heard any *ngano* since his youth: ‘I was at school in the 1950s. This is the last place I heard any *ngano*. We have forgotten those things.’

Ngano have been a component of formal education since the introduction of readers

ⁱ Tshifudi, May 1984. Phophi was the local government ethnologist during this time. He edited several comprehensive ethnographic reports on Venda culture in collaboration with head government ethnologist Nicholaas J. van Warmelo.

ⁱⁱ See www.tambani.co.za

ⁱⁱⁱ Dorothea Bleek visited the Northern Cape in 1910, some 40 years after her father Wilhelm Bleek’s work with famous San narrator //Kabbo. Her efforts to find San narratives were futile: they were gone and forgotten (Lewis-Williams, 2000:33-34, citing Stow & Bleek).

^{iv} ‘Well, the world must turn upon its axis / And all mankind turn with it’ (Byron: Don Juan, Canto II).

in mission schools.ⁱ However, their presence has diminished greatly. Fifteen-year old Rofhiwa Matlari of Muswodi painted a picture of indifference towards them, while sixteen-year old Vilas Singo of Folovhodwe did not encounter them in school at all.

Rofhiwa's grandmother Anna explained that her mother 'was the one who sang and told me stories. Children today go to school. There is no time to tell them the stories of the old people.' Implicit in this comment is the decline of seniority, and the struggle by the elderly to transmit older cultural forms to young people. The waning of *ngano* for Selina Mavhetha of Folovhodwe is related to the fact that children 'no longer vacate chairs for their elders.'ⁱⁱ It therefore comes as little surprise that several elderly people identified as possible narrators had little interest in recalling stories from their youth. Their immediate concern was their declining health, and pressing community and family matters.

Forgotten songs

These factors all militate against the retention of older artistic practices. Incomplete or abbreviated stories are one of the most evident aspects of decline. Narrators also sometimes confuse plots and songs. Junod¹⁹ noted of neighbouring Xitsonga narrative practice that 'the words of the songs ... are probably the most ancient and stable element of the tales. They are often half Zulu in those of the tales which have been borrowed from the neighbouring tribe, and contain archaic expressions.' In contrast, songs in *ngano* are the first components to succumb to failing memory: a narrator sometimes confidently starts a story, only to stop in silent embarrassment when she arrives at the song. It arguably is more difficult to reproduce the precise integration of musical and verbal elements in a song than core narrative images that can be called up and creatively manipulated with relative ease.

Like Xitsonga narratives, *ngano* songs and chants also contain archaic expressions. These expressions are in Chikaranga, the Chishona dialect spoken in neighbouring southern Zimbabwe. These phrases have become corrupted over time, and very few people remember them accurately or are able to explain them.

In cases where narrators still know *ngano* songs, their audiences sometimes do not. Performances therefore are interrupted as narrators stop to teach the chorus part of songs to their co-performers. Often a narrator becomes impatient because her performance is disrupted, and abandons the chorus to melodically and rhythmically unstable singing. In other cases a narrator becomes so impatient that she attempts to sing both the solo and chorus parts, often omitting sections from both.

Finding stories

While *ngano* performance practice is a weakening echo of its former self, there still are a few stories in some personal memories, often with their songs intact. However, they are scattered and concealed behind public lives, and have to be tracked down relentlessly and laboriously. This collection accordingly features stories by thirteen narrators from Folovhodwe. Another four narrators were identified in the neighbouring village of Muswodi, including the irrepressible Johanna Muleba, who repeatedly welcomed us back. The remaining narrator is Miriam Vhengani, a traditional healer who lives a short distance away on the sandy plains of Tshiungani village.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ngano narrators generally have no voice beyond the periphery of their village.

ⁱ See e.g. Schwelnus, 1930 & 1937.

ⁱⁱ Malawian Gertrude Rubadiri similarly complained about changing values to Paul Theroux, noting: 'No one respects old people. No one gives me a seat.' (Theroux, 2003:324.)

ⁱⁱⁱ Stories in this collection were documented from 2007 to 2011. A very small number of stories marked by obvious confusion and incompleteness were not considered for inclusion.

Histories typically speak of the powerful and victorious, and those without voice ‘simply fade away, and their story is eradicated along with them.’²⁰ And so it may be left to others who occasionally move through their landscape and lives to construe representations of their stories, even if incomplete and lacking nuance.

I relied heavily on Mavhetha’s local knowledge and interpersonal skills to prod and diplomatically tease out personal particulars from narrators. Fragments of their lives are represented in the first person: the third person simply is too distant and impersonal. Inevitably, however, my representations assume a degree of expressive uniformity.

Representing the narrators in this volume is a demanding responsibility. Challenges of representation in South Africa typically relate to culture and language, as well as status and gender differences. Of these challenges, the biggest have been transcription, translation and interpretation.ⁱ There also is the matter of proscription of information: what is explained in conversation is not necessarily available for public consumption, and difficult decisions must be made in terms of what detail to release.

The biographical detail offered here differs in quantity and quality: some narrators are laconic, and simply will not speak about themselves; others are more than happy to talk about their lives. The extensive biographical sketch of narrator and co-researcher Mathuvhelo Mavhetha has been motivated by lengthy friendship. In addition, he has had a long life and is an informed observer of humanity.

Perspectives on *ngano*

The discussion of this collection integrates two perspectives in narrative theory. The first is that of stories as ‘rhymes of the universe’²¹ that beat with a ‘deeply atavistic pulse.’²² Put differently, storytelling is marked by a tendency towards universal narrative patterningⁱⁱ that is shaped by the instinctive exploration of ‘the basic features of the human predicament.’²³ Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explains that all Venda arts ‘speak for life,’ while one of Junod’s informants, a convert, described story-telling as the ‘heathen’s’ version of evening prayer.²⁴

Dennis Dutton suggests that ‘the most abstract characterization that can be given of stories is that they involve (1) a human will and (2) some kind of resistance to it.’²⁵ Harold Scheub similarly notes that ‘characters who are charismatic death dealers and life givers are the essence of storytelling.’²⁶ Stories offer ‘surrogate experience’ that may serve as imaginary ‘preparations for life and its surprises’; they navigate ‘the endlessly complex mental worlds shared with others’ and inculcate ‘potentially adaptive interpersonal and social capacities.’²⁷

The analysis of narrative patterning takes shape in philology, a concern with comparison and categorisation.²⁸ While the construction of this kind of ‘grand scheme’ now has less appeal than before,²⁹ it is instrumental in locating *ngano* narrators in the wider space of humanity and its storytelling.

Although the biological impetus of art is accounted for in this way, the approach in this discussion is not reductive since it secondly probes the mediation of narrative patterning in culture-specific modes of expression. Contemporary development in folklore studies accordingly involves an increasing concern with specificities of text, time, place, and ideology³⁰ – with the ‘individuation of knowledge and its location in real history.’³¹ Since the voices of *ngano* narrators are not heard at national forums, we

ⁱ See ‘Transcreation and representation,’ p. 69.

ⁱⁱ In southern Africa, the quality of Chishona *ngano* stories as ‘ageless and archetypal’ also has been identified for Isizulu, Sesotho and Xitsonga oral narratives. See Tracey, 1986:x; Callaway, 1970:2-3; Jaccotet, 1908:xiii-xiv. Junod (1927, II:225) remarks that narration ‘can no longer be classed merely as an amusement for old women during the long evenings, or as a more or less intellectual parlour game: it is a monument upon which the soul of the race has recorded, unconsciously perhaps, its ideas and its aspirations.’

very well may ask: how do their lives and stories speak to us, and what do they tell?

'The inside story'

Collections of *cante fables* from southern Africa often eschew comprehensive explanations of their meanings and the ways they are transmitted. The reasons for the general lack of awareness of their symbolism are unclear. The often deeply culture-specific nature of African oral narratives shields them from popular consumption. Kriel³² notes of Chishona *ngano* that they 'occupy a special position in virtue of the difficulty of analysing their symbols.' In contrast, there is a receptive youth and educational market for trickster tales and stories about animals.ⁱ These narratives exist in their own right: they are expressive of a land based existence, specifically of patterns of male labour and experiences like herding, hunting and travelling. However, the result of their popularity is that a very large segment of the African narrative world is subverted.

In any case, echoing important work carried out by Kriel and Aschwanden on Chishona myths and tales, and by Scheub on Nguni narratives,³³ Le Roux offers a novel perspective on Tshivenda *ngano*.³⁴ This approach identifies what Mathuvhelo Mavhetha has come to describe as 'the inside story.'

As the preceding collection in this series shows, *ngano* 'almost never are what they seem.'³⁵ They are similar to South African rock art in the sense that paintings and engravings are but surface representations of complex thought patterns and cultural practices.³⁶ Le Roux explains that narrator and diviner Masindi Maliyehe of Masisi, described by her as 'clear-sighted,' first revealed the metaphorical underpinnings of Tshivenda *ngano* to her. Kapuscinski³⁷ fittingly remarks that the African world often is

of the very simplest, most elementary sort, reduced to several objects: a single shirt, a single bowl, a handful of grain, a sip of water. Its richness and diversity are expressed not in a material, concrete, palpable, and visible form, but in the symbolic values and meanings that the African imparts to the most mundane things ... The slightest object takes on symbolic, metaphysical weight ... [and is transported] into another dimension, into a higher realm of being – into transcendence.

Cees Nooteboom identifies the melding of reality and 'unreality' as the domain of sacred art.³⁸ In fact, all art unfolds in 'the theatre of the imagination.'³⁹ It would appear that 'humans have evolved specialized cognitive machinery that allows [them] to enter and participate in imagined worlds.'ⁱⁱ This is 'decoupled cognition,' the ability for the world of play to be bracketed off from everyday reality.⁴⁰

African verbal artists are very much aware of this human capacity. Mukondeleli Netshiunda of Tshitereke recalls a song from his youth:

Luthweḥwe na lufhoro zwa lila, ndi a ṅala. When the sunbird and the robin sing, I ponder.
Luthweḥwe na lufhoro zwa lila, ndi a ṅuwa. When the sunbird and the robin sing, I leave.⁴¹

'Pondering' and 'leaving' are metaphors for releasing the mind from actual reality and allowing it to soar in art.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, guitarist Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila from

ⁱ These stories typically feature Hare, Tortoise, Lion, Elephant, Hippopotamus and Baboon, but they also sometimes include human characters. Although animals often play an important role in *ngano*, these stories usually revolve around human characters (but compare 'Mr Elephant learns a lesson too' in this collection). *Ngano* featuring Sankambe, the trickster hare, are rare.

ⁱⁱ Charles Kingsley (2004:30) accordingly remarks in his classic novel 'The water-babies': 'Some people think that there are no fairies ... But it is a wide world ... and thank heaven for it, for else, between crinolines and theories, some of us would get squashed – and plenty of room in it for fairies, without people seeing them ...'

ⁱⁱⁱ Jacottet (1908:200-208) fittingly documented a Sesotho tale called 'The nanaboleles' in which a young man desires the skin of a 'fabulous' animal. His sister (the hero of the story) goes on a fantastic quest and after many adventures returns with the skin. Her brother expresses amazement: 'He rejoiced,

Tshakuma, a village on the southern slopes of the Soutpansberg, had nothing less than a narrative urge: epic songs about young male adulthood in a changing society poured from his mouth. 'He tells so many stories,' co-researcher Daniel Mudzanani remarked, 'that even his explanations of them are stories.'⁴²

Narrators of *ngano* identify their stories as fiction by means of the opening marker *salungano! salungano!* (lit. like a *ngano*). This is supported by the interpretation of *salungano!* as a contraction of *ha u sala lungano*, meaning 'only the story remains.' Also, the prefix *sa-* points to an agreement, so that *salungano!* appears to urge consensus to accept *ngano* as 'a symbolic space in which words and actions become free of the restrictions of the real world.'⁴³

The often sparse texture of *ngano* therefore should not be taken as lack of capacity for narrative eloquence,ⁱ and these stories always must be approached as a potential disclosure of *something* beyond immediate enactments.⁴⁴ *Ngano* performance is underpinned by 'frame clarity,' an implicit understanding, even among the dwindling number of performers, that 'another type of activity' in fact is occurring.⁴⁵ As with other symbolic systems, Venda musical and verbal arts are rooted in social reality, yet reframe it by means of figurative devices. Some songs even entirely comprise concealed meanings.ⁱⁱ Prolific song composer Solomon Mathaseⁱⁱⁱ of Thohoyandou sometimes uses the term 'example' to refer to his use of symbolism, and at other times, 'stories.'⁴⁶ Scheub fittingly identifies African story-tellers as intellectuals because of their ability to express 'special qualities and patterns of thought.'⁴⁷ Like all great artists, they in fact envelop us in riddles requiring careful reflection.^{iv}

This is not to say that all narrators are equally accomplished exponents or interpreters of their art. Junod⁴⁸ notes that Tsonga narrators

also vary greatly. Some of them, the beginners, are dull, slow and tedious. They mingle the episodes without any order, frequently assuming that things are known which have not been mentioned. But others are full of life, and one feels a true literary pleasure in listening to them.

Even Callaway, whose research dates back to the 19th century, noted of a narrative that it 'is very inferior in its general style to many of the others, and is devoid of life and incident.'⁴⁹ Similarly, the best *ngano* narrators are not necessarily equally adept at interpreting ancient narrative images. Blacking⁵⁰ notes of the symbolism of girls' initiation that few initiated women understand or even are concerned with it. Some symbolism even is obscure to instructors. When asked to explain particular images, *ngano* narrators often merely retell sections of stories. It may be more than coincidence that those narrators better able to explain *ngano* are diviners like Masindi Maliyehe^v and Miriam Vhengani (in this collection), who deal professionally with symbolism and hidden meanings. Contemporary San shamans accordingly have been found to be 'more inner-directed' than others, and to have 'easier access to a rich fantasy life.'⁵¹

the son of the chief; he was glad when he saw that which he did not know, about which he had only dreamed, without knowing it.'

ⁱ Scheub (2005:xvii) notes that the apparent 'flat, undeveloped' nature of characterisation in African oral narrative fails to take into account actual dramatic production in which the performer 'is himself the characters in the story, giving them life and fullness.' In addition, characterisation in *ngano* may be regarded as culturally internalised in their practitioners. Given that *ngano* are rooted in collective life, listeners vicariously experience the predicaments and joys of narrative characters.

ⁱⁱ For example, 'Muhwana' is a song from the boys' circumcision school (*murundu*) in which the transition to manhood is symbolised by the life cycle of the *muhwana* tree (unidentified). See Kruger, 1994:107-108.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mathase received a South African Traditional Music Award in 2009 for his promotion of *malende jive*. See Kruger 1999a.

^{iv} 'Great art envelops the viewer in riddles, and it's up to him to hunt for clues.' (Nooteboom, 1997:67.)

^v See the second collection in this series, entitled 'The flamboyant rooster.'



Baobab: ruler of the land

Land and village

The relationship between humans is at the centre of *ngano*, but almost ‘always within the embrace of nature.’⁵² Dutton⁵³ argues that ‘life goals, experiences, and familiar local environments will engrave innate interests in landscapes and our ability to exploit them.’ Natural images in *ngano* accordingly form a network of codified meanings and perceptions which holds the natural world up as a ‘reflection of human emotions or attributes,’ and provides ‘fictional answers to man’s existential problems.’ⁱ

ⁱ Kruger (1994:71), citing Roderick Beaton and Ernest Becker. This also applies to other categories of verbal art. And so guitarist Solomon Mathase sings:

<i>Tshipuka tsho thanya: a thi tsho dzhia na mmbulunge.</i>	A wild animal is wise: it does not hate.
<i>A hu na zwitshela.</i>	There is no gossiping.
<i>A hu na u fhambana.</i>	There is no discrimination.

But what are the features of the local landscape in which *ngano* are cast? Land in extreme climates tend to dominate human populations, especially jungles, deserts and snow-covered terrain. This also is the case with large swathes of the sparsely-populated Limpopo Valley: they are undisturbed, giving an impression of timelessness, a characteristic that also finds expression in *ngano*.

A place called Niani

The eastern Limpopo Valley is known locally as Niani, a term derived from the name of the live-long or dikbasⁱ tree (*munii*) with its highly-prized *nii* fruit. Locals often also call the area Mopane, a name actually pertaining to the central Limpopo Valley, but used generically to describe large areas of mopane bushveld interspersed with occasional sparse grass lands. Mopane trees shed their leaves during autumn in a clattering, windy dance of yellow, red and brown. This is when darkness and cold descend during late afternoon and people head indoors to stay warm, share their daily experiences and contemplate their existence.

Apart from the incessant, shrill mass choir of cicadas, the most persistent sound on the land is that of the wind. It usually comes up late at night, and ruffles branches and leaves. It almost never is gentle: it rises restlessly and with ill temper up from the hot earth. It is not uncommon to see the corners of corrugated iron roofs tied down with wire to iron stakes in the hard ground. But some welcome the anger of the wind because it controls malaria mosquitoes.

A hot, dry land

It is not without reason that the action in the title story unfolds on a hot day. Niani is notorious for its soul-searing summer heat which often hovers in the high 30s and low 40s. Lines from girls' initiation songs describe the heat as so severe that meat can be roasted in the sun, and pots can be left outside where they will cook by themselves.⁵⁴ The heat even follows people to local cemeteries where their graves are roofed over so that they can rest in eternal shade.

Water is the most precious natural resource in this region. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha remarks that it 'is the medicine of the soil.' Sustained small-scale farming in this arid region is possible along water courses only. Villages and roads are bordered by numerous dry fields. They are neatly fenced and lie prepared for cultivation. However, the rain seldom comes.

There is much bitterness about the lack of piped water. Few people are able to afford the R800 fee that is required for a connection to main water lines. These lines are part of a reticulation system that draws water from the nearby Nwanedi and Luphephe Dams. However, the system functions poorly, if at all, and those who have taps in their yard find a trickle of water flowing from them only. Consequently, it is common to

A hu na u gođana.

There is no mocking.

A hu na na solana.

There is no slandering.

*Lusunzi lwo thanya: luiwe tshi khou u bva,
luiwe tshi khou dzhena.*

The ant is wise: when one leaves the nest,
another one enters.

(Kruger, 1994:140).

Junod & Jacques (1935) similarly cite 252 proverbs that invoke images of wildlife while Blacking remarks that natural metaphors feature prominently in various initiation schools (1969a:74). See e.g. Blacking (*op. cit.*:94-95) for the category of initiation law called '*Shangoni*' ('In the land').

Laurens van der Post (1961:20) notes that nature under these conditions 'becomes an affair of personalities. Any scientific notions one might have held about it vanish quickly, until there is nothing of the abstract left in one's mind. Sun, moon, stars, wind, lightning and rain all become great magnetic beings and one's relationship with them intensely personal.'

ⁱ *Lannea discolor*.

see large numbers of women of all ages gathered around communal taps with a sea of multi-coloured plastic water containers.

Baobab: ruler of the land

Apart from the towering presence of the Soutpansberg, Niani is characterised by the regal baobab tree, that ancient behemoth of this hot land. According to legend,⁵⁵ the African baobab complained about moisture and coldness during creation. This angered God so much that he flung the tree over his shoulder. It came to land upside down in a hot area with its face in the sand. And so God no longer could hear its complaints ...

There are thousands of baobabs in Niani, a virtual expanded, sparse forest. In winter, when the sky alternates between blinding white and cobalt blue, they shed their leaves and take on a myriad of fantastic shapes. With their thick torso and limbs protruding in all directions, they resemble an army of brawny, mythical beasts that once marched across the warm sand, died in a vast battle and became fossilised on the landscape. It therefore comes as no surprise that the baobab features centrally in the title story in this collection, and peripherally in other stories as well (see 'A thief').

Folovhodwe

The village of Folovhodwe merely is a small intrusion on this expanse. It straddles the Nwanedi River where it exits Nwanedi Provincial Park. The neighbouring village of Muswodiⁱ is located immediately adjacent. These villages sprawl orderly on the northern slope of the Soutpansberg. They face a range of prominent sandstone hills, some five kilometres to the north. These hills are the site of ancient settlements, and they unfold like a 'topographical backbone'⁵⁶ towards Mutele in the east.

When entering Folovhodwe over the Nwanedi River, the traveller is struck by a stark contrast: on the left is the Nwanedi irrigation project, a dark green and brown swath against the pallor of the surrounding landscape. The root of this paleness is sand and limestone. Limestone dust envelops everything and everybody. Its presence also is audible: this part of Folovhodwe is dominated by a limestone quarry. The ceaseless thumping sound of its stone breaker is the background of the local soundscape. The village soccer team fittingly is called Folovhodwe Stone Breakers.

The front stage of audible life resounds with the gentle clanking of goat bells, like dishes being washed and stacked; throbbing radios in homes and cars parked by the river for washing; the disembodied voice of the television which tells new stories to entranced viewers; music from churches; distant shouts; laughing and animated chatter coming from shebeens; thundering lorries on the corrugated main dirt road; the bakery truck from Musina that hoots to announce its arrival; the greeting of the young white man jumping from the cabin to serve his customers their daily loaf.

The area surrounding the limestone quarry squats on a deep bed of round brown and white stones that are scattered profusely, like granules of sugar. They occasionally are scraped in heaps around the trunk of trees, almost as if some giant had swept them there with a large broom. Immense heat radiates from them during summer.

Going to church

The northern part of Folovhodwe is hilly. The Dutch Reformed Church with its steeply slanting roof stands like a moral sentinel on the highest point, casting a

ⁱ Muswodi comprises two contiguous sections. Muswodi-Tshisimani (Muswodi at the fountain) takes its name from a strong fountain that has sustained life for many years. The fountain once fed a wetland, but its water is now piped to local communal taps. The other section of the village is called Muswodi-Dipeni (Muswodi at the dipping tank).



The Dutch Reformed Church, Folovhodwe

critical, penetrating eye over its scattered congregation. It in turn is watched over by two baobabs that offer a quiet reminder of the antiquity of the land. There are many churches here, some in a bad state of repair. Over weekends they all compete loudly with their music for members. Churchgoers converge on them in small groups along footpaths.

Local ZCC congregations are the most popular and visible. Uniform green and yellow signs point to open-air areas ritually bounded by white-washed stones, often under a large tree. They are immediately evident: brown-clad men dance on one side, blue-clad women on the other. Here the ageless, sometimes stark contrast between

male and female identity is made clearly evident.

There are few cars inside the church terrain at Folovhodwe on a Sunday afternoon: almost all members walk to church. One woman who appears to be ill sits on a chair just outside the circle of dancers. Those without church uniforms are bright splotches of colour against the pallid landscape.

After a while everyone moves under a roofed, wall-less structure where they take a break from dance and worship, and drink tea together: this is a pleasant social activity singled out by several narrators who are ZCC members.

The service lasts several hours. It is clear that worship is a core social activity. Spirituality ties people into communities: it finds physical expression in daily acts of compassion and symbolic expression in sermons, hymns and stories.

Services of various dominations often spill onto the banks of the Nwanedi River for baptism. Entire congregations gather next to the large pool below the bridge. When they leave, their place is taken by people washing clothes and cars.

Other public activity is evident at the clinic and on school grounds. Weary scholars from Dzimauli Secondary School trundle several kilometres back to Muswodi without books, always asking for a lift. People rarely pick them up: they swamp the back of pick-up trucks and fatal accidents due to overloading sometimes occur.

A wasteland

The villagescape is shaped markedly by the absence of refuse removal. Discarded, torn shoes lie scattered everywhere, almost as if their owners lost them in a frantic stampede. Yards usually are impeccable, and people also clear their streets of litter. However, the stunted plant growth along the main road is festooned with decaying rags of plastic and paper that flutter in the hot wind, while piles of litter often wash up in shallow gullies and communal land. While unsightly, these areas never smell. Because of poverty, all scraps of food that otherwise may be discarded, are utilised here. Goats and chickens rove the landscape and gobble up every edible morsel. This is why fences and gates are imperative, and people even place bricks around the base of their garden shrubs and fruit trees.

Car wrecks and pieces of metal are strewn across the landscape, like remnants from a destructive battle. Garden implements also lie about, many disintegrating from rust and overuse. There are discarded wheels from bicycles and wheelbarrows, old car doors and rims, donkey carts sagging on broken springs, discarded kettles and paraffin lamps, and even a table made from a faded road stop sign.

Some car wrecks still have 'homeland' number plates. Like the defunct Republic of Venda,ⁱ they have shuddered to rusty immobility. Donkey carts in various states of disrepair squat in many yards, with worn reins draped over fences. These carts are an indispensable mode of transport for the poor. Unable to realise their dreams of wealth, they paint names on them, like 'Mazda 6.'

Brick and clay

Old and emerging Africa combine in local housing. Most people want brick houses, but only the wealthy can afford them. A song accordingly complains: 'I live at this home, the dilapidated home. Others laugh at me.'⁵⁷ Tile-roofed homes in particular are signs of affluence as well as the redefinition of community. They belong to wealthy businessmen and teachers, and they often are surrounded by high, isolating walls.

ⁱ Venda was one of the TBVC (Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda and Ciskei) states established in terms of the grand scheme of 'separate development.' The nominally independent Republic of Venda came into being on 13 September 1979, and whimpered to a demise on 6 April 1990 when its tribal government was overthrown in a bloodless military coup.

Those lucky poor receive modest government-sponsored RDP houses.ⁱ Old-style thatched roof houses are disappearing: they require too much maintenance, and it is difficult to obtain grass from the dry land. Even so, there are those like narrator Sara Munyai who mourn their gradual passing. They are redolent of a distant era, and some ancestral spirits are not at home in modern houses.ⁱⁱ

This pattern of ambiguity also is evident in piles of firewood outside brick homes as well as old-style homes that feature an electricity line and a satellite TV dish.ⁱⁱⁱ

Many home interiors display Christian iconography, especially the crucifixion and depictions of The Last Supper. Ceramic wall plaques read: 'With God all things are possible' and 'Only God knows how I am surviving.' There are calendars and display cases with decorated glasses, plastic flowers, family photos, trophies (mostly for soccer), greeting cards and ceramic objects like roosters, dogs and fruit.

Furniture is modest and often dilapidated: couches are worn and damaged while poor people sit on their bed, a bucket or on flattened cardboard boxes on the floor. Stoves are not common: they use more electricity than poor people can afford, and cooking fires still are customary. Fridges, in contrast, have a privileged place in this hot climate, and they occupy even lounges and bedrooms.

Outhouses are an integral part of the village landscape. Waterborne sewage is not yet possible in this dry land. Outhouses often have magnificent views of the mountains or plains dotted with the silhouette of distant baobabs. There is a memorable outhouse at Muswodi-Tshisimani, one with a perfectly proportioned map of Africa. It appropriately



'A memorable outhouse'

ⁱ Houses built as part of an earlier government Reconstruction and Development Plan.

ⁱⁱ See Munyai's biographical sketch, p. 263. Similarly, Shona ancestral spirits will not manifest themselves in contemporary *bira* rituals when participants perform music or wear shoes that are not 'traditional' (Chipendo, 2012).

ⁱⁱⁱ People are too poor to afford satellite television. These dishes are necessary to receive public television broadcasts.

faces north, perhaps in reflection on shared identity.

Some outhouses have government notices stuck to their doors. They give instructions about hygiene, urging people not to clean themselves with stones, and to wash their hands. To remind themselves of this, people suspend a plastic cooldrink bottle with water from a rafter.

Our RDP toilets: a story

‘So, you want to know why my sister-in-law Selina Mavhetha suddenly has a third outside toilet?’ⁱ Yes, it came as a surprise to her too: after all, the two she had were more than adequate. Well, you will have noticed that toilets are appearing all over. They are RDP toilets.

‘This story started because our municipality at Tshilamba is looking for taxes. See, every house now has a number. They come with a brush and a can of paint and slap a number on your door. This means no escape, only trouble if you refuse to pay.

‘In any case, when those paint-slappers explained what they were doing, we asked, “What have you done for us that you now want us to pay tax for? We have no water inside our stands. Our roads are not tarred, and electricity is only here and there.”

‘Well, so the municipality said, “OK, what can we bill those people for? Let us build toilets and let them pay for servicing them.”

‘It is so dry here that everything evaporates or turns to dust. How often will they need to service these toilets? Once a year? Perhaps not even so often. We do not know whether there will be a lorry to do the job. And our roads are so bad, it will break down all the time.

‘Anyway, this is the reason why you see all the RDP toilets on the same side of people’s yards: this is so that the lorry can drive in a straight line. Also, they have put the toilet in a corner of each plot. Now, the problem is that some stands are quite big, and a person’s small house is in the opposite corner. Imagine you need to get up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet which is far away, falling over things in the dark to get there ... And winter is cold here.

‘Well, people now are asking those others from the municipality, “Do you want us to sleep in your toilet? But there is only room for one to sit. Where will the others sleep?”’

ⁱ Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, Folovhodwe, 14 June 2011.

Yards, taps and tracks

Most yards are swept meticulously with short grass brooms. They are made locally and sell for R10. One such yard has a small house in a corner and a cooking place in the centre of a barren expanse: a wheelbarrow is turned on its side to form the back of what looks like a culinary shrine.

There is also other evidence of cooking and eating, of a persistent ‘texture of life’⁵⁸: axes with grinding stones, porridge whisks, winnowing baskets and metal basins for washing dishes.

Garden hoses snake down roads from yards to communal taps. They often are in poor condition, as cars drive over them constantly. Leaks are wrapped in rubber and plastic, and they make the hoses look like bandaged snakes.

Dark, shallow runnels of water radiate out from the taps that are constantly surrounded by gossips of water collectors. Some taps have a cement basin. At

Muswodi-Tshisimani herds of donkeys arrive in a cloud of white dust and eagerly lap water from them.

Superimposed on the land is a web of footpaths onto which people and animals spill. They are connective arteries leading to fields, grazing, sacred sites, the river, communal taps, neighbouring areas and even distant destinations.

The irrigation scheme

The land plays no small part in poor people's strategies to survive. Local communities have been farming along the Nwanedi River since precolonial times. Riverine agriculture received huge impetus with the damming of the Nwanedi and Luphephe Rivers in Nwanedi Provincial Park. The so-called twin dams were constructed from 1960-1964, and the Nwanedi irrigation scheme was established at Folovhodwe in 1965 after the area was cleared of vegetation.

Water is channelled from a barrage in the park and each farmer receives an allotment once a week for six hours. However, the canal is too narrow to supply sufficient water. In addition, it often becomes choked with litter, leading to much frustration. Volunteers initially opened blockages, but there is now a local office of the Department of Water Affairs and Agriculture that is responsible for administering the water supply.

Many local families own a field in the irrigation scheme. Fields in this parched landscape are priceless, and they are transferred to successive generations. A wide variety of cropsⁱ is produced for local consumption, while chillies, peppers and tomatoes are the most important cash crops. They reach the fresh produce market in Johannesburg via Musina. Although this is an important source of income, people complain that they lack adequate control over what happens to their produce. Some consignments are written off, and there seldom is motivation by wholesalers for rejection.

Farmers work long hours and contend with the high cost of fertiliser, pest control and transport.ⁱⁱ The farmers' cooperative in Musina is an important resource for advice, technology and goods, but people complain about the taxi fare they have to pay to travel there.

The most challenging period in the agricultural cycle obviously is the beginning of summer. Temperatures already hover in the high 30s during the end of September, and there is not a blade of new grass to be seen in the veld. Cattle, goats and donkeys are hungry and roam all over to find sustenance.

Although the chilli season is from July to September, this crop does not fill empty stomachs. Access to water in the irrigation scheme allows farmers to plant maize during late winter. However, this crop sometimes is damaged by unexpected frost. Consequently, there usually is a sudden profusion of temporary shebeens during this time of year. A plastic bag fluttering on top of a long pole indicates the availability of home-made beer. Small gatherings of figures huddle in the dark shade of trees. They are not employed and their spending is at the centre of much domestic conflict.

The veld is life

Not all local families have access to a field in the irrigation scheme. All riverine land along the Nwanedi is either privately owned or cultivated. Therefore, what the

ⁱ They include maize, beans, pumpkin, cabbage, butternut, spinach, banana, mango, avocado, melon, sugar cane, orange, peanuts and okra.

ⁱⁱ A case in point is that of a local small-scale farmer who produces 70-100 small bags of chillies annually. He hires two or three labourers to help him harvest. These labourers are paid R15 to fill a crate, and five crates fill 100 bags. Transport to Musina and from there to Johannesburg costs R6.80 per bag. His gross income for 2012 was R1366-81, but his net income was only R493-00.

surrounding land has to offer brings much needed relief to those less privileged.

There are two iconic veld fruits in Niani, namely *nii*, the fruit of the live-long tree and *mbuyu*, the fruit of the baobab. When ripe in spring and early summer, *nii* resemble fat, pale yellow raisins. They have a surprisingly large pip and are chewy. They are devoured in copious amounts by individuals, and are described locally as ‘our sweets.’ This is also reflected in the expression *Wo takalesa sa Munia o la nii* (As happy as a person from Niani who has eaten *nii*).⁵⁹ The fruit may also be pounded into a paste for cooking, as described in the saying *Nii nii, mutshelo dzi no phala mbuyu* (*Nii*, a fruit better than that of the baobab).

The baobab is more than a bulky beast on the horizon – it also provides shade for animals and people. Poor church congregations demarcate a ritual space for themselves around large specimens. As the title story indicates, baobabs also store water, and one such tree stands in a deserted field on the periphery of Folovhodwe. Baobabs support a small ecosystem that feeds and provides shelter to a variety of domestic and wild animals such as cattle, goats, bats, bush babies, birds and bees.⁶⁰

But for people the most important use of the baobab is its nutritiousⁱ fruit which provides a ‘supermarket of useful products.’⁶¹ The pulp usually is pounded into flour for the making of *kwangwali*, baobab porridge. Because the flour tends to harden, it ideally is mixed with maize flour.

Villagers gather the fruit in large quantities during winter. They comb the countryside in their donkey carts and return with mountains of them. At home they are cracked industriously with hammers and pieces of heavy iron. Some people burn the husks in empty oil drums, and prepare from the ash a powder that relieves digestive problems.

Winter also is the time for the wide-spread gathering of the pips of marula fruit.ⁱⁱ They are shelled and then grated for cooking. It is not without reason that the mongoose in Anna Matlari’s story entitled ‘A smart bird’ is cracking marula nuts: they are delicious and people add them to a variety of stews.

Groups of women gather mopane wormsⁱⁱⁱ on farms in the region during December and March. They pay a fee of about R120 to farmers and stay on location for approximately three weeks. Some worms are cooked, while others are dried.

People complain about the price of the worms. They struggle to find the R20 now asked for a large tin cup of this delicacy. Unlike *nii* fruit, a stew of mopane worms is to be enjoyed in company, and so people sing in a *malende* choral dance-song.⁶²

Tshidudu tsha mashonzha tsho vhilingana! The small clay pot with mopane worms is bubbling!
Ndo itwa nga mme anga: My mother troubled me while I was partying:
vha nthuma vhengeleni! she sent me to the shop!

Here, the image of the enclosed clay pot symbolises an intimate gathering of people at a beer drink, a kind of ideal, preferred social situation. It conjures up a fabricated world which shelters people safely and warmly.⁶³

Surviving famine

The ravages of famine are indelibly etched in communal memory, and they are a fundamental trigger of action in *ngano*. So enduring is the image of famine that the expression *iwaha wa ndala* (the year of drought) also refers to extreme emotional stress.

ⁱ The fruit is a source of vitamin C, protein and various minerals (Drake, 2006:19, citing from a study by F. Taylor).

ⁱⁱ *Sclerocarya birrea*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Gonimbrasia belina*.

People's deepest fears recall distant times when no state relief was available.ⁱ A particularly devastating drought affected the Soutpansberg area during 1895-1897. Domestic and wild animals were largely wiped out, and illness and death affected virtually every household. In addition,

often social integration was weakened and social order broke down. Individuals turned to selfishness and sometimes even to stealing. Folktales tell about such situations of husbands secretly stealing away to eat in secret in order to avoid sharing with their wives and children. In the *Berliner Missionsberichte* people were reported to grind and prepare their corn in secret and to eat at night time, so as not to invite others to a meal.⁶⁴

As indicated above, *ngano* triggered by drought and famine usually describe social conflict, particularly in relation to the sharing of meagre resources. One such *ngano* notes: '*Nga hoyo n̄waha, muniwe na muniwe o vha a tshi ðivha thumbu yawe fhedzi.*' ('In that year everybody cared for their own stomach only.')

Stories carrying this theme often expose the greed and selfishness of the male provider ('Pumpkin seeds'), although famine also reveals the murder of a girl by her mother ('The pool of shrines'). A young man comes to realise that scarce resources must benefit all ('A hero learns a lesson'). Similarly, in a *ngano* entitled '*Nðala khulu*' ('Big famine'),⁶⁶ a boy magically produces water. However, his mother prohibits him from informing the village of his valuable find. These stories usually show how strongly humanity is motivated by the instinct for self-preservation, and how easily the thin veneer of morality rubs off.

When crops fail during times of drought, people are reliant on what little the veld has to offer. Elisa Madzanga describes in 'Pumpkin seeds' how famine sometimes forced people to eat blackjack leaves.ⁱⁱ The tubers of the bitter cassavaⁱⁱⁱ also were utilised for liquid. Adults chewed the tubers and spurted the moist content into the mouth of babies. In dire circumstances people cut the skin of an ox into very small pieces and cooked them.

The elderly also recollect that people ate the roots of the shepherd's tree^{iv} during these times. The roots first are dried in the sun. After pulverising them by stamping or grinding, they are placed in a covered pot or bag for a couple of days. They are then winnowed and sifted. The flour is cooked with water to make porridge.

Hunting and fishing

Narrators note in conversation and their stories that venison used to be a common source of meat ('The curious case of the guinea-fowl,' 'Smelly blankets'). These stories describe how venison is stolen, giving rise to conflict.

Sometime during the early 1980s a large antelope one day appeared on the grounds of a school at Folovhodwe. All the learners and teachers rushed out. They cornered, killed and slaughtered the animal and then had a barbeque. That was the end of the school day. Nowadays the only large game left are to be found in the adjoining Nwanedi Provincial Park, where they are protected by fences and roving patrols.

Some people also catch birds, like 94-year old Luvhengo Singo of Folovhodwe, who described how she pounds and mixes a concoction of tree roots and latex sap to make bird lime. She showed us her catch of the day: a tiny plucked carcass hardly worth a meal. This small catch is in stark contrast to the central role that birds play in

ⁱ Operation Hunger is a well-known example of a national feeding programme. Founded in 1980, the programme ultimately came to care for two million needy South Africans (Meyer, 2012).

ⁱⁱ *Mushidzi* (*Bidens pilosa*).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Mutumbula* (*Manihot utilissima*).

^{iv} *Muthobi* (*Boscia albitrunca*).

ngano.ⁱ

Narrator Miriam Vhengani explains the hunting of guinea-fowl who raid crops in 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl.' People also harvest their eggs and raise the birds at home. It is strange to see nervous gaggles of them criss-crossing neighbourhoods, usually without people or dogs chasing them.

People have a long history of fishing in local rivers. Narrators who used to live in the adjacent Tshirundu district all tell stories of swimming and fishing in the Nzhelele River. Men, women and children of all ages fish in the Nwanedi River and nearby Cross Dam. They use long river reeds to cast their bait (worms) into the water. When they get a bite, their catch is pulled in by hand. Others use a variety of bags and sacking to make nets. In the past, when the water level dropped and pools were formed in the shallows, people prepared a substance from the fever berry treeⁱⁱ which incapacitates fish.

Themes of labour

There is very little local trade and commerce. The most obvious signs are a scattering of small shops and bars, fruit and vegetable vending, brick-making and house construction.

The main road is flanked by that ubiquitous African structure, the dilapidated fruit and vegetable stall. These stalls are roofed over with a sheet of corrugated iron nailed to a wobbly framework of wooden poles. Customers cluster around modest pyramids of fresh produce.

Almost all shops express aspirations by referring to themselves as restaurants. Most of them in fact are quite ramshackle and they exhibit faded Joko Tea or other well-known brand names on their façade.

Several villagers have spaza shops. Some are minute and comprise a corrugated iron shack or a decrepit brick structure, often with its name painted crudely. The dark silhouettes of their owners inside them contrast with the harsh sunlight.

Trading is most evident on that day of the month when welfare grants are paid. Then entire communities become animated. Schools are attended reluctantly, and a razzmatazz of old and young converge from all directions on foot and the back of pick-up trucks. They flock at pay-out points to receive their grants, pay debts, socialise and engage in trade (this is not a good day for stories).ⁱⁱⁱ

As narrator Florence Mphoshomali indicates, some people exclusively are welfare traders: they follow state officials between welfare pay-out points and sell a wide variety of goods, particularly cheap clothing that local shops do not stock. Several narrators explain that this is the climax of the month, a respite when luxuries like meat, bread and soap bring ephemeral smiles.

Tambani

Several narrators are members of the Tambani Embroidery Project,^{iv} founded by Ina le Roux in 1996. Struck by the poverty and dependency of local women, Le Roux put her research into *ngano* to practical use by having women embroider narrative themes onto *malabi*^v (applique blocks). These blocks are turned into a variety of products, including handbags and quilts.

ⁱ See 'A strange hero,' p. 56.

ⁱⁱ *Muruthu* (*Croton megalobotrys*).

ⁱⁱⁱ Kapuscinski (2007b:298) describes the open-air market in Africa as 'an entirely different universe. It is vitality, spontaneity, improvisation. It is a folk festival, an outdoor concert.'

^{iv} See www.tambani.co.za

^v From *lappies*, Afrikaans for cloths.

The project is a lifeline for virtually all its members, none of whom have regular employment. Those living in close proximity to one another often meet at a member's house. A jumble of shoes outside a kitchen door leads inside where their owners socialise and work together.

It has not been plain sailing for these women: the competitiveness of the market requires work of the highest quality. New members are guided by experienced embroiderers, and all work is vetted by coordinators. From time to time donated glasses are distributed to those with failing sight, and there is light-hearted banter as a pair is tested for efficacy and fashionable appearance.

Farm labour

The most common pattern of employment in the Limpopo Valley is that of labour on white-owned fruit and vegetable farms. Many people's experiences have been immortalised by guitarist Albert Mundalamo⁶⁷ (c. 1938-1990). His nick-name was Mapani, and it derived from his eponymous song:

<i>Mberego, Mberego ya Mapani.</i>	Work, work of Mopane.
<i>Ndo vhuya nga milenzhe, wee.</i>	Alas, I returned on foot.
<i>Ndi kundwa na tshienda tsha milenzhe, wee.</i>	Alas, I do not even have shoes.
<i>Ndi shona na u dzhena na hayani.</i>	I am too ashamed to come home.
<i>O vhuya mahaweni nga vhakalaha.</i>	The old men's overalls have returned.
<i>Yo! Yo! Yo! Mapani, wee!</i>	

Mundalamo worked from 1957-1959 on the farm of Jan Venter near Nwanedi. To earn his wage of two pounds per month, he had to work non-stop:^{vi} 'No Christmas, no New Year.' This is expressed in the song by extensive repetition of the word *mberego* (work, Afr. *werk*). *Mberego* expresses all the negative connotations of wage labour, social change and human alienation. Too ashamed to admit that he is returning from his place of labour with nothing for himself or his family, Mundalamo considers himself from a distance. What he sees is a pathetic, shoeless pair of overalls returning home on foot.^{vii}

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha and narrator Leah Madzhie indicate that beatings were not unknown. At the same time, relations with some farmers were very good. While Mundalamo complained about low wages, he added that labourers always received free food,^{viii} a practice also described by narrators. Such food was in the form of vegetables, beef and venison.

As narrator Anna Matlari explains, male labourers often attained the position of foreman and were such effective workers that farmers did not want them to resign. Storytellers have pleasant memories of looking after children and learning to cook new dishes in farm kitchens. Sannie Mudau of Muswodi has fond recollections of sitting next to a warm stove with a cat on her lap.⁶⁸ People also learnt to speak rudimentary Afrikaans, and this is one of the origins of Afrikaans words in *ngano*.

Scratchers of the soil

Migrant labour has been shaping local life since the latter half of 19th century, when men first travelled to the mines of Kimberley and Johannesburg. The social upheaval

^{vi} Kotzé (see endnote 79) calculated the average gross income of farmers during the early 1960s as R3000, commenting that this amount was marginal in terms of viable farming.

^{vii} Mundalamo's condition of poverty was exacerbated by alcoholism and an indolent life-style. He died in penury at his home at Mukula.

^{viii} Mundalamo also commended the presence of 'widows' on farms. This is a euphemism for female farm labourers separated by work from their husband. In contrast, he added, tea estates in Venda did not offer this 'benefit.'

this caused is still evident in the derogative name for migrant labourers, namely *magaraba* (scratchers of the soil).ⁱ Although people understand the unavoidable need for migrant labour, this name still carries implied accusations of desertion and lack of responsibility. Home visits by migrant labourers often are associated with ‘pub-crawls’ and other forms of disruptive behaviour. Guitarist Solomon Mathase sings:⁶⁹

<i>Magaraba, vhuyani nothe.</i>	Migrants, come home.
<i>Ndi musi ndo vha tendela dali.</i>	I agreed to be your lover.
<i>Vho dina nga u kanda u la niwana.</i>	You caused trouble by stepping on a child.

Copper mining at Musina has lured local men since precolonial times, and on a large scale since the turn of the 20th century. Tshikondeni Coal Mine, situated some 60 km to the east, is the biggest single regional employer of male labour. Mine labour is lucrative and young people like narrator Zachary Tshamano model themselves on friends and relatives who work there. However, as Mathuvhelo Mavhetha vividly remarks of his experiences at Tshikondeni, ‘It was a bad job, but when you are looking for money you must go to a dreadful place: underground. This is where you must not go. The roof falls on you ... It is asking for trouble to work underground.’

Other smaller mining operations in the region involve the excavation of magnesite. All that remains of local limestone mining is the quarry at Fholovhodwe, and deserted white and brown mine dumps that date from the 1960s and 1970s.

Many locals who are migrant labourers see their family only occasionally. The son and daughter-in-law of narrator Anna Matlari work in Polokwane. They are unable to care for their three young boys in town, and Matlari looks after them at her home in Muswodi. She is illiterate, and the boys have to fend for themselves in the school system.

A culture of poverty

Vhembe district, of which the Limpopo Valley is part, is one of South Africa’s poorest regions. There are wildly conflicting estimates of the local unemployment rate, which optimistically sometimes is linked to the national average of 25%, and in other instances calculated at as high as 65%.⁷⁰ In any case, to earn a salary here, however meagre, is to be one of the privileged. For the rest, hunger continuously howls at the door. And so guitarist Solomon Mathase explains in song:⁷¹

<i>Hu nwiwa tie a i na vhurotho.</i>	They drink tea without bread.
<i>Vha la vhuswa a vhu na muroho.</i>	They eat porridge without vegetables.
<i>Vhaiwe vha khou tambula.</i>	Some are suffering.
<i>Vhaiwe vha khou shengela.</i>	Some are in despair.

A peek into unwashed pots reveals the daily fare of many: beans, porridge and *muroho* (leafy vegetables). People who farm locally also have other produce, but most are too poor to eat meat except on special occasions. Feeding schemes at schools have become commonplace, and the meagre meal (frequently porridge and cabbage) provided here often is all some children get to eat.

As elsewhere in South Africa, there is huge reliance on social welfare. Pensions, disability grants and child support grants (*mundende*) are one of the economic foundations of Niani.ⁱⁱ These grants often are the financial anchor of entire households. They are dedicated typically to basic items like an 80 kg bag of maize meal, funeral cover, local tax, washing powder and school fees.

This leaves virtually nothing for transport, clothing, other food and a host of

ⁱ From Afrikaans *krap*.

ⁱⁱ Old age pensions were R1220 per month in 2012, while child grants were R280.

smaller necessities. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha remarks that it is good to have access to electricity, but that it is easy for poor people to fall into the trap of its excessive use. The situation is even worse in unemployed families where there are no pensioners or where children are too old for support grants. Parents are particularly scathing about what they consider a waste of their money by schools that require uniforms, send their children on expensive trips and lure learners to tuck shops.



'Tea without bread'

History and identity

Meanings of place often are rooted in history and therefore are invisible. As explained, Niani is a regional crossroads that borders onto Zimbabwe and Moçambique. It has witnessed the pre-colonial importation from the Indian Ocean of porcelain, coins and beads, and the exportation of rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks and feline fur.⁷² Its historical cast of actors features hunters and traders, as well as warriors, cattle raiders and an endless current of refugees, migrant labourers and people visiting family or healers. And they not only carried weapons and trade goods with them, but also symbolic resources. As narrator Asinathi Nenzhelele explains, she first heard her story entitled 'The big hero' from a Zimbabwean.

The ancestors of several Venda clans migrated to the Limpopo Valley and the Soutpansberg from about 800 C.E. The mountains were inhabited by San and Khoekhoe stone age hunter-gatherers who now have a flickering presence only in archaeological fragments, rock art⁷³ and the fading memories of the elderly.

The local Nefolovhodwe ruling family belongs to the Tavhatsindi, a clan with the elephant as its totem. This clan settled in the Soutpansberg in the early 18th century,⁷⁴ and they bury their dead with the head pointing north to affirm their Shona affiliation.⁷⁵ This special relationship is evident in the praise of the Nefolovhodwe family: *Folovhodwe la mulanga Niani lo la nga Venda na Galanga* (Folovhodwe is the capital of Niani, which relies on Venda and southern Zimbabwe for survival). It is also evident in the fact that local communities provided shelter to Zimbabweans fleeing the Second Chimurenga, the colonial war with Britain (1965-1979).⁷⁶

Now, some thirty years later, this has become a pattern as economic and political refugees spill from Zimbabwe over the Limpopo River into South Africa. Although many pass on to Gauteng and other areas, the Limpopo Valley often is the final destination for the poorest, who can only afford to travel on foot. There are horror stories of them being attacked and robbed during their crossing. Very young children

and the weak often do not survive. Those who manage to cross unharmed can be seen wandering in small destitute groups along local roads, carrying meagre possessions.

Zimbabwean teachers are sought after, but the Department of Education does not recognise their professional status, and they do not remain long. As narrator Elisa Madzanga explains, it is more common for those who stay on to become farm labourers and domestic workers. They are a subclass of the rural poor who sometimes work under oppressive conditions.ⁱ Their silent shadows hover in the background, waiting for a favourable sign to return home; they also lead a shadowy existence in *ngano*.

Gender history

The Folvhodwe-Muswodi area is historically significant for other reasons too. It is the setting of an important milestone in local gender relations. The development of South Africa's ethnic 'homelands' (1948-1993) was accompanied in Venda by a resurgence in communal dance symbolic of ruling class power.⁷⁷ This revitalisation was given impetus by a national dance competition whose final round took place annually in Thohoyandou on 'independence day' (13 September). One of these dances is *tshikona*, the famous bamboo-pipe dance that once featured centrally in communal life. Although the dance often employs women drummers, its team dancers used to be exclusively male. Because there was an absence of male *tshikona* dancers during the early years of the competition, a group of women from Muswodi-Dipeni founded a dance team in 1982. This novel performance practice was met with some opposition, and always amazement. The team made the village famous and 'seemed to have boosted the morale of an economically depressed community. A strong sense of community pride followed its enlargement, its performances, and its subsequent fame.'ⁱⁱ

The Land Acts

White settlement in Niani was legitimised by the first Land Act (1913) and gained impetus from the 1920s onwards.⁷⁸ It accelerated following the second Land Act (1936), the incipient fight against malaria during the 1940s, and the end of the Second World War. Returning white soldiers were enabled to settle along the Nzhelele and Nwanedi Rivers as vegetable farmers, while animal husbandry was introduced in drier areas.⁷⁹ Although there still is fruit and vegetable farming in the region, there since has been a large-scale shift towards more sustainable game farming and tourism, while conflict is brewing in response to the impact of new mining operations on local natural resources.

Niani had been populated since precolonial times by communities who practiced self-sustaining hunting-gathering and agricultural economies, most intensively along water courses. Kriel⁸⁰ remarks about Chishona *ngano* narratives that 'there is emphasis on the ideal of procreation, with heroes begetting large families and even populating villages.' Miriam Vhengani accordingly introduces 'The curious case of the guinea fowl' by noting:

Now, there was a certain man who lived far from other people. This meant that he was able to have a large field. He worked hard to clear this field. Then he married and lived there with his wife. They had a lot of maize, and different kinds of peanuts. Then their children were born and so they lived as a family while the years passed.

This image of settlement and the endless cycles of life often is expressed in *ngano*

ⁱ An investigation into farm labour practices around the turn of the 21st century found 30 Zimbabweans living in corrugated-iron barracks measuring 15 by 3 meters (Yakpo, 2003:13).

ⁱⁱ Nowadays there is nothing exceptional about certain dances formerly expressive of gender status featuring male as well as female performers.

in the image of working on the land, coming home at sunset, going to bed and rising again for work.ⁱ

The Land Acts removed and restricted local populations to what later became the short-lived Republic of Venda (1979-1990). Several land claims were lodged after 1994, and some areas have been returned to their former owners.

Removals also followed the proclamation of game reserves and the Madimbo security corridor.ⁱⁱ This swath of land along the banks of the Limpopo River, which forms the border with Zimbabwe, is under the control of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Communities that once subsisted here have been living in penury in nearby rural villages ever since.⁸¹ Their land claim has been validated, and they 'want the SANDF to leave' so that they can 'make a living.'⁸² However, the implementation of their claim is problematic because the area is an international border zone.

The land claim of the Manenzhe community, formerly located on the slope of the Soutpansberg west of the Nwanedi River, similarly yet has to be resolved satisfactorily.⁸³

Land invasion also took place at Tshirundu, an area under the jurisdiction of Mphephu traditional leadership. It comprised several settlements located between the Nzhelele and Nwanedi Rivers.⁸⁴ They included the seat of the Folovhodwe district which was located in the hills just north of the present Folovhodwe village.

A significant number of narrators and their families once lived in the Tshirundu district. Not only were they uprooted, but the names of their villages also were wiped off the map.ⁱⁱⁱ Theroux^{iv} notes that land in the colonising mind is 'blank' and therefore waiting to be defined with new names. Farms with names expressive of distant origins and new hopes and fears were proclaimed: Vrouensbrom (Women's Grumble), Voorwaarts (Marching On), Grootsoekel (Big Struggle), Hope, Solitude, Woodhall, Charlotte and Boulogne.⁸⁵ And as the references to toil suggest, while the land witnessed name changes, it remained patient and true to its unforgiving self.

These and other farms became the destination and destiny of dislocated villagers who congregated there in informal settlements. Tshirundu and Waterpoort, an agricultural hub north of Makhado, emerge in conversations with local villagers as

ⁱ This ageless image also is described by one of Berglund's Zulu interviewees who asks:

What work do men accomplish? They do two important things. Firstly, they build the homes. When the houses are few, they increase their numbers. They prepare the fields for planting. They look after the cattle ... That is the first work of men. The second work is fighting. A man has weapons ... He guards his homes against enemies. (Berglund, 1976:307.)

ⁱⁱ The corridor is some 50 km long, and it is bordered by the Limpopo River and the R525 linking Tshipise with Pafuri.

ⁱⁱⁱ Maps are very much part of historical representation. Goodwin (2003:19) remarks that 'there are no straight lines on European maps because they lack that kind of innocence ... They slip innuendo into place names, skip inconvenient details, and play odd games against each other with scale, with borders, and with politics.'

^{iv} Theroux, 2011:135. Of course, the same applies to people's names. //Kabba, the famous San narrator who worked with Wilhelm Bleek, was given the Dutch name Jantje as part of an effort to bring 'people and places within the ambit' of colonial rule (Lewis-Williams, 2000:9).

Kapusinski (2007b:67) remarks that the introduction of Christianity and Islam in Africa reduced the 'exuberant world of poetry and history to several dozen names from the Bible and the Koran.' This was in contrast to indigenous names that inscribed events in collective local memory.

Naming and renaming remains at the heart of identity politics in South Africa. Erdmann Nevhuladzi, a retired school inspector, grew up at Maungani, the site of the first Berlin Mission in the eastern Soutpansberg (founded 1872). He explained how missionaries wanted him to adopt a German name. He resisted, asking whether he would be required to take a Russian name, should the 'communists' invade South Africa (interview at Maungani, late 1980s).

In contrast, there is a practice of people no longer giving their children any Tshivenda first names. A case in question is that of Beyoncé, the only first name of a young daughter of narrator Elelwani Singo of Folovhodwe. When I asked Singo what the family elders (who usually give first names) thought of this name, she replied that they were 'more than pleased.'

tropes of farm life and the disintegration of communities of labourers in the Limpopo Valley. These communities once seem to have thrived, although within constricted circumstances: Tshirundu had a primary school, while narrator Anna Matlari explains that Waterpoort's population was sufficiently large to make the running of initiation schools feasible.

A well-known settlement was located on a farm on the banks of the Nwanedi River, near its confluence with the Limpopo River. What many former inhabitants of this settlement have in common is that they were born around 1960, and spent their youth in the area. Their parents worked as farm labourers, and some of them attended a school called Nzhelele Primaryⁱ on the farm of Mugobaⁱⁱ Fourie. They were forced to relocate to Folovhodwe, Muswodi and other villages as farms were sold and redeveloped for game farming and tourism.

Wada: symbol of resistance

Folovhodwe and Muswodi enjoy regional fame for Wada, a sacred drum belonging to the Nefholovhodwe family.⁸⁶ The drum is one of a variety of objects known as *zwitungulo zwa Vhadzimu* (sacred objects of the Ancestral Spirits), and it is described as *Mudzimu washu* (our Ancestral Spirit). This drum played a central role in events surrounding forced removal during the 1930s.

Voluntary resettlement was not unknown in precolonial times. However, because people are linked spiritually to the land, removals usually involve lengthy planning and religious rituals. The 1936 Land Act in fact legalised processes of forced local removal evidently dating back to the early 1930s. There is little detailed oral testimony of these removals, but it is clear that none of the required rituals took place. This resulted in the Nefolovhodwe family leaving their sacred drum in a cave in their ancestral hills.

The period immediate following removal is shrouded in myths that describe efforts by white farmers to confiscate the drum. The initial attempt at removal failed because the drum contained snakes. A truck and tractor subsequently sent to collect the drum were trapped in soft sand. A donkey cart was then dispatched, but it broke down. When the drum eventually was taken away, it emitted no sound when struck.

The Nefolovhodwe family eventually negotiated the return of the drum. It was carried from the farm by young girls, and suspended inside a hollow baobab tree just north of Muswodi-Dipeni where it remained for about fifty years.

The tree became a sacred siteⁱⁱⁱ during this time and it was given wide berth by the local population who could hear Wada being played by ancestral spirits performing *tshikona*, the sacred bamboo-pipe dance. Goats and donkeys that strayed in the vicinity were left to find their own way home. Indeed, 'not even the naughtiest boys' ventured near the tree. When a particularly recalcitrant young daredevil entered the tree hollow, the spirits of the drum held him captive. Only after prayers were offered, was he released. His punishment was to remain a short person for the rest of his life ...

Wada was returned to its original location after the reincorporation of Niani into

ⁱ Narrator Elelwani Singo of Folovhodwe still recalls the song of this farm school (interview at Folovhodwe, 17 June 2011):

Riṅe ri vhana vha tshikolo tsha Nzhelele.
Riṅe vhana ri bvumisa Jehova wa Makoleni.

We are children of the school at Nzhelele.
Us children, we praise God [Jehova of the
Clouds] loudly.

Abo kaḷa ngedzhe!

[Imitation of the sound of clapping tins]

ⁱⁱ 'Snake of the mountain,' a reference to a fearsome spiritual entity which is the counterpart of Mmamulambo, the 'snake of the water' that features in local belief systems.

ⁱⁱⁱ Perhaps because of their antiquity and impressive appearance, baobabs often are sacred. Some Kalanga people in Botswana worship their supreme being Mwali at baobabs: 'We have dances, with drums, and we sing special songs ... The tree is like a god. When people want something, they go there and pray.' (Drake, 2006:35.)

South Africa in 1994. Simultaneously nursing their historical affiliation with southern Zimbabwe, some local people have been rallying around and deriving emotional energy from the mythical powers of Wada. It has been an important symbol of resistance, not only against land invasion, but also against perceived marginalisation within Limpopo Province.ⁱ There are extant accusations dating back to the early 1980s that Niani's infrastructural development is not a regional priority. For many local people, prompt progress remains frustratingly out of reach and they struggle to assert themselves. As Mathuvhelo Mavhetha remarks, 'That man who is in politics, he says, "OK, let us conquer the world!" But when we get up in the morning, we do not find that the streets are covered with loaves of bread we can take and eat ...'



Muswodi-Tshisimani

From landscape to mindscape

As indicated, local patterns of land use has ancient roots. Almost all older people point out that their parents were land cultivators, articulated in the timeless images of 'ploughing' and herding. Anna Matlari explains in 'Mighty rooster' that 'Those people had a big field that was farmed by the old woman. The cattle grazed on one side while she was hoeing. That boy herded them.'

'Ploughing' as a trope for land based existence is the basic setting of *ngano*. Human naivety accordingly is portrayed within the core image of farming: a woman working in her field accepts the offer of babysitting from a stranger in the guise of a rock-rabbit or duiker, with fatal consequences ('Mrs Rock-Rabbit,' 'A thief,' 'The babysitter').

Many older people grew up in isolated areas in the Soutpansberg. Anna Matlari remarks that she 'did not go to school. There were no schools, there was nothing.' Narrator Martha Kwindu in turn explains: 'I went to school only up to standard one. Then my mother took me away to look after my little sister.'

People often blame their struggle to survive on such incomplete schooling. Narrator Mashudu Mathala says: 'You know, I am poor because I did not go to school. My father stopped me from going there. There are too many boys there at school, he said.'

ⁱ To local people it is a matter of 'out of sight, out of mind.' Polokwane, the provincial capital, is situated about 250 km away, and for many this distance is insurmountable.

He was afraid of losing my bride wealth.’ⁱ

Poverty links with a different kind of perceived deprivation, namely that of values. Most elderly narrators once attended initiation rituals where ancient morals were inculcated. The girls’ initiation school last took place at Folovhodwe during the 1960s and at Muswodi in the 1980s.ⁱⁱ People complain, *Ho dzhena tshikhuwa: namusi no fhunguwa* (Western life has entered: nowadays there is no respect).⁸⁷ Change can be exciting and energising, and people like ‘dancing in a modern fashion’ (*vha tamba tshimodeni*).ⁱⁱⁱ However, they too often ignore time-honoured forms of ordered interaction. In particular, patterns of respect no longer are replicated:

<i>Hulisa khotsi au na mme au.</i>	Respect your father and mother.
<i>Na inwi no begwa ndi shangoni.</i>	You were born after me.
<i>Vha ri, n̄wana o bebwaho u ene na milayo.</i>	They say a child must be obedient. ^{iv}

Numerous songs accordingly ‘manifest a nostalgic longing for the physical and emotional security embedded in patterns of land based existence’⁸⁸:

<i>Vhathu vha kale na madanga vho vha vhe na.</i>	People of old had cattle byres.
<i>Vho vha vho dzula.</i>	They were rich.
<i>Zwino, ri nga ita mini?</i>	Now, what shall we do?
<i>Tsha khwine ndi u ya u lima ngoho.</i>	Truly, the best thing is to go and hoe. ⁸⁹

Timeless space

This retrospective view helps to explain *ngano* as virtual timeless cultural space. This does not imply that these stories can be condensed to their context – some of their qualities do not allow facile reduction. Nevertheless, this perspective is indispensable if we are to understand why, despite an approximate 150-year history of culture contact, there still is a precolonial memory in *ngano* that dissolves the past into the present.

Junod⁹⁰ remarks in relation to Xitsonga narratives that ‘all the new objects brought in by civilisation are, without the slightest difficulty, made use of by the narrator.’ And so *ngano* feature jackets, suits, ties, handkerchiefs, shoes, rifles, cell phones, metal baths, aeroplanes, bicycles, shops and ships. However, this is little more than the superficial accommodation of a new material culture. Scheub remarks of African narratives that they are ‘impenetrable by alien forces’ and that they unfold ‘evenly and predictably along ancient cultural lines and molds.’⁹¹ Alexander McCall Smith⁹² specifically observes of narratives from Botswana and Zimbabwe that ‘they are tales which owe little or nothing to the external influences which have since the nineteenth century made themselves felt in Africa with such devastating effect.’

ⁱ Guitarist Solomon Mathase similarly sings: ‘*Ndo shavha tshikolo. Vhonani, namusi a thi na na tshithu.*’ (‘I ran away from school. See, today I have nothing.’) (Kruger, 1994:131.)

Blacking (1959:157) notes that ‘girls at school are in a minority,’ and cites boy-girl ratios. He also remarks that girls ‘are not easily satisfied with the schoolboys, many of whom are rather uncouth and in any case have only one object in being friendly with a girl.’

ⁱⁱ In contrast, the boys’ circumcision school (*murundu*) remains active. It is run by individuals (unlike *domba*, which takes place under direct ruling class auspices) for whom it is a source of income (the fee in 2008 was R308).

ⁱⁱⁱ <i>Mme anga vha tamba tshimodeni.</i>	My mother dances in a modern style.
<i>Khotsi anga vha thula mavhotana.</i>	My father dances in a modern style [shakes the buttocks].
<i>Thula! Thula! Thula!</i>	Dance! Dance! Dance!
<i>Ri a pembela.</i>	We dance excitedly.

(From a song by Solomon Mathase. See Kruger, 1994:83-84.)

^{iv} Lit. a child must follow the law (from a song by Solomon Mathase; Kruger, 1994:131).

Iron logic

In essence, *ngano* may be considered a ‘formally enacted acknowledgement of wide and often continuing social relationships ... [having] wider implications for the smooth running of social relations generally.’⁹³ *Ngano* have been identified as *milayo nyana*, or ‘small laws.’⁹⁴ *Milayo* may be described as ‘traditional standards of behaviour’⁹⁵ or ethical values that may be pared down to politeness, neighbourliness and kindness.⁹⁶ *Ngano*, as ‘small laws,’ are contrasted with the extensive *milayo* that feature in initiation schools, but they also express core cultural values.

Ngano accordingly occupy a space similar to that of Shakespearian drama in the sense that their principles are settled and that life unfolds as ‘the pageant of men’ living up to them or failing to do so.⁹⁷ In other words, *ngano* essentially portray social relationships guided by ‘iron logic.’⁹⁸ Stories like ‘Mrs Rock-Rabbit,’ ‘Father on the footpath,’ ‘A fat girl,’ ‘Mrs Devhele goes down’ and ‘Goodbye’ contain little moral ambiguity: intentions, attitudes and actions are clear, fixed and hard.

Storytellers sometimes point out that harshness in stories like these is deliberately exaggerated to impress young minds. This strategy dovetails with the evangelical approach to mission theology in Africa, in which moral evaluation eschews nuanced gradation in favour of explicit, polar opposites.ⁱⁱ

Ironically, the law-giving function of *ngano* also came to serve a competing ideology. *Ngano* included in the first collection in this series⁹⁹ were documented by students at Venda University. Their interpretation of these stories emphasised their moral qualities, a characteristic that apparently motivated the inclusion of *ngano* in primary school readers produced by the Berlin Mission Society. Schweltnus accordingly opens a story¹⁰⁰ with the question, *Ndi lungano; lu ri funza mini?* (This is a *ngano*; what does it teach us?) Christian values are pursued clearly in these readers in the retelling of stories from the Bible. The *ngano* included in them apparently were selected for their transmission of values that correlate with teachings of the Bible.

The persistent iron logic of *ngano* is attendant on the turmoil of social change. At the centre of this upheaval is changing relations in the family, in particular those brought about by the increasing empowerment of women and young people. ‘Mr Jim’ is a *ngano* from the first collection in this series that explores this change.¹⁰¹ Mr Jim is a migrant labourer who is away at work. His wife refuses to cook for his two younger, unmarried brothers who live with them. She is a ‘modern’ woman who rejects the responsibility of caring for her husband’s extended family. The family dog, speaking on behalf of the brothers, sings:

Ululu!
Vho-Jimu! Tshinakaho hayani.
O bika na vhuswa, na nama ya khuhu.
Ino bva Dzubege.
A nzima na vhuswa!

[The sound of howling]
Mr Jim! Tshinakaho is at home.
She has cooked porridge and chicken.
He comes back from Johannesburg.
She refuses to give me porridge!

But this expression in *ngano* of identity shift is extremely unusual.ⁱⁱⁱ The title story (‘The

ⁱ Blacking (1969a:19) cites a girls’ initiation instructor: ‘[The songs and strenuous accompanying movements] are there to make the girls suffer and honour the old ones. They reinforce the pattern of seniority. That is the lesson they teach.’

ⁱⁱ See Bosch, 1979:29-36. A song of Lutheran derivation accordingly goes:

Tshivhumbeo tshiswa, hayani ndi Liṭadulu.
Nwana movhi, hayani ndi Heleni.

Those who are reborn, your home is in Heaven.
Bad child, your home is in Hell.

(Kruger, 1994:438)

ⁱⁱⁱ In contrast, it is quite common in contemporary music. Mashudu Mulaudzi of Tsianda notes in one of his songs:

Vhasidzana vha zwino a vha dzuli vhuhadzi.

Nowadays girls do not stay with their in-laws.

flamboyant rooster’) in the second collection in this series, in contrast, describes how a rooster flies to Johannesburg to call home his owner whose wives are undermining his authority. The husband returns and re-establishes his position as head of the family by giving his wives a thrashing. His sojourn in Johannesburg as migrant labourer is a historically significant yet dispensable element of the story: all that matters is that he is absent from home and that he returns to maintain control over his wayward wives.ⁱ *Ngano* in this way express only faint images of people moving to and from town – the new world largely remains peripheral to the precolonial centre. Most narrators still fulfil conventional domestic roles; also, they are elderly and have resided in rural areas their entire lives.

The immutability of the precolonial foundation of *ngano* may be explained further by the fact that the performance practice of these stories has waned. Zachary Tshamano is at pains to explain that the stories he knows were told by his grandmother when the family still lived in an old-style homestead, and they socialised around the cooking fire after evening meals.ⁱⁱ His mother, Mashudu Mathala similarly explains:

You know, stories are told when families are together. Nowadays people roam all over during the day: they only come home late. My grandmother lived with us, she was Mrs Mbau. She is the one who told us stories. She called the children together just before bedtime. There was a fire in the big kitchen. Everybody would be sleepy: our heads would fall over during the stories. Those kitchens of the old people, they had shelves. People put their bags of maize on them. We argued with each other to sleep on top of those bags. They were soft, and the kitchen was warm.

The lounge has become the ritual centre in a RDP culture in which people are lured by the disembodied voice of the television to soap operas like *Muvhango* and *Generations*.

Perhaps if storytelling still were a daily domestic ritual, the practical role of the ‘audience’ as co-creators living in the dynamic present would have had a redefining impact on the content of the stories. This is no better evident in the fact that reflection on social change is very much manifest in music, such as children’s ‘school songs’ and certain styles of popular music.¹⁰²

A narrative geography

The network of ancient tracks superimposed on the Limpopo Valley by ‘ploughing’ not only lays claim to history and the soil; it also finds expression in the scattering of ‘a trail of words and musical notes’ⁱⁱⁱ by means of which land becomes art. Anna Matlari (‘A fat girl’) describes how a dog witnesses and then reports the murder of its mistress: ‘When it arrived home it sat by the gate. It was sitting with its back to the house, looking intently towards the footpath along which it had come.’

Images of action on footpaths in this collection present themselves most compellingly. In ‘Mrs Rock-Rabbit,’ a woman whose child has been kidnapped, returns home as darkness descends. She stumbles along the footpath as the enormity of her negligence dawns on her. She may not realise that the footpath is leading her to death, but those

Vha dzhia mahadzi vha tou tolela.
U tshi mu vhudzisa, u ri,
‘O shavha bodo, bodo ya saizi four.’

They just call there briefly to see how things are.
 When you ask her [to explain] she says, ‘I ran
 away from the pot, pot size 4 [a large pot].’

(Kruger, 1994:240-241)

ⁱ At the same time, the husband’s return home by train gives the rooster the opportunity to sing publically about the domestic scandal. This embarrasses the man and undermines his patriarchal status.

ⁱⁱ Makuchi (2008:196) similarly remarks that her mother ‘used storytelling, before and after meals, to instruct, to mother, to maintain a sense of family and cohesion.’

ⁱⁱⁱ See Chatwin (1987:13), who defines the famous ‘songlines’ of the aboriginal peoples of Australia as creation myths that describe how totemic beings ‘wandered over the continent ... singing out the name of everything that crossed their path – birds, animals, plants, rocks, waterholes – and so singing the world into existence.’ (*op. cit.*:2.) Also see Kaemmer, 1993.

who know the story anticipate her impending doom.

Ngano often feature the ancient obstacle flight motif. 'Father on the footpath' depicts the dramatic pursuit of a woman by her husband who has changed into a lion: 'The woman and her children walked and walked and walked. Then they heard a noise behind them! Hey, when they looked around, there was a lion! It rushed towards them!' To delay the lion, the woman breaks calabashes filled with insects that the predator stops to eat.

And so *ngano* unfold along a web of trails that connects the village with the surrounding world. Space in *ngano* is carefully choreographed within three overlapping locations: the organised world of home and village, the periphery of settlements and the untamed veld. Although conflict and destruction is associated with all three locations, people decreasingly are able to control the universe as they radiate outwards from home.¹

Home and village

The home in *ngano* features in a continuous oscillation of repulsion and attraction. It is linked by walking to a variety of nearby locations, usually the veld, fields, rivers or, further away, the in-laws.

As in many of the world's narratives, home is a place people flee from or return to after misfortune or adventure, and the song in 'A big hero' affirms attachment to this well-spring of life: 'Mother! Do not go to places far away from home.' Reconciliation at home after separation often is expressed by images of eating together. In 'Fortune lies ahead,' the narrator remarks: 'That was when the children returned home. They were given food to eat.' Similarly, in 'Spirit,' 'The elder sister took her younger sister under her wing. She lived there. She ate food. She was very happy.'

'Fortune lies ahead' is a typical adventure in which a young brother and sister adventurously explore the world and return home to a teary reunion with their family. What makes adventures like these particularly scary is the image of people sometimes having to sleep out in the open: 'When he arrived back home this man had not been walking for a day only: he had been travelling for many, many days! He had to sleep out in the open.' ('The woman at the fountain.')

Death beyond the caring arms of home is a vividly frightening image. 'The problem with a wandering musician,' someone observed,¹⁰³ is that 'neither he nor anyone else knows where he will die.' (see 'The wandering musician.') A poisoned man accordingly dies dramatically on a footpath as he tries to reach home ('A fool is always eating'). His only companion is his pet bird whose wise advice he ignores, and who remains loyal to him until the end. Similarly evocative is the image of a frantic mother who futilely calls her clay child home when he is overwhelmed in the veld by a storm ('A little story').

The site for married life is the husband's home. It also is a basic setting for conflict ('A man refuses to dance'). A wife's parental home conversely is a safe haven to which she flees during times of marital discord ('The princess who slept late'). A mouse reveals to a woman the violent nature of her husband, and then tells her: 'When all the cattle have been killed, he will come and eat you and the children. Go back to the home of your parents.' ('Father on the footpath.')

Unknown, remote homes and villages almost always are settings of menace and violence. Enemies are confronted in distant villages in 'Fortune lies ahead' and 'Mighty rooster.' A core image in *ngano* is that of one or more girls lured away from a river where they are washing clothes or collecting water, often by a young stranger who entices them to his place of origin where some horror awaits them, usually in the implied form of sexual assault ('Foolish girls'). 'Historically strangers were accepted

¹ This has also been noted for Isixhosa narratives by Scheub (1992:270).

only if their origins were known, they were not fleeing justice and showed that they could be trusted. Even so, they usually had little social influence and retained a measure of outsidership.¹⁰⁴

On the periphery

The periphery of settlements often is demarcated by fields and rivers. These are liminal spaces where people come into contact with the wild, and where there is potential loss of self-control. So a woman's field is penetrated by a kidnapper: 'At sunrise the next morning, Mrs Rock-Rabbit saw that woman going to her field. Truly, she came down the mountain. She arrived at the field and said, "I came to take the child."' ('Mrs Rock-Rabbit.') In turn, an old woman becomes lawless when she ventures beyond her field into the wild in 'Smelly blankets,' while lions threaten a family at a river which is the boundary between two villages ('Mr Dirty Pants').

But rivers also demarcate a different kind of periphery: 'There was a big river. Those girls collected firewood on the other side of the river. Now, after they had gathered their firewood, it started to rain and the river flowed strongly. The girls could not cross back home.' ('A smart bird.') The opposite bank of a river not merely triggers action, but also symbolises the threshold to threat and disorder which often marks the veld beyond.

Untamed space

The veld is an untamed space that gives the old man in 'The girls in the baobab' the ostensible freedom to make a foolish proposal to a group of girls. Similarly, when the woman in 'Eating with animals' joins Lion in licentious abandon, it is in his cave. In 'The fat girl,' the daughter of a chief in turn loses her life in the veld where the murderers hope their deed will go undetected, while a boy fights for his life with a python in the veld in 'The python healer.' The veld becomes the feral backdrop for conflict between husband and wife in 'Magic.' It constitutes a setting in which the couple calls on malevolent natural forces in their vicious confrontation.

Motion and space

The notion of return and proximity to home as expressed in 'A big hero' arguably points to a distinct notion of motion and space, to a 'particular mental map of the world.'¹⁰⁵

It is to be expected that most verbs indicating human motion in the largely precolonial world of *ngano* would pertain to a pedestrian culture. Mechanised transport is virtually absent, and walking (*tshimbila*) accordingly is the core image of movement: 'They started walking. They walked and walked.' ('Foolish girls.') Forms and direction of motion related to this include rushing (*gidima*), running (*shavha*), going (*tuwa*), arriving (*swika*), returning (*vhuya*), going or coming out (*bva*), coming (*da*), crossing (*wela*), following (*tovhela*), turning back (*huma*), entering (*dzhenā*) and passing (*fhira*).

When people leave home, they often are followed by those who want to harm them or who are suspicious of their behaviour. Such trailing usually leads to moments of revelation ('Pumpkin seeds,' 'A hero learns a lesson'). Conflict on a footpath often is expressed by movement to the front and the back ('A big hero') or around when the path is blocked by a person or object.

Commonly-used adverbs of place in *ngano* include ahead (*phandā*), near (*tsini*) and behind (*murahu*). Action often centres on those who remain behind after some separation or those who move away. In 'Magic' a husband says to his mother: 'This

wife of mine is fat. It is better to kill her. When I leave for the fields, stay behind and kill her.' Lion in turn accuses Porcupine of fooling around with his wife in his absence ('Eating with wild animals'). When girls are abducted, those left behind usually are very concerned: they start searching or turn to magical solutions ('Foolish girls').

Space in *ngano* also is characterised by fine distinctions of close and middle distance. Tshivenda has 28 demonstrative adverbs that are variations of four degrees of distance, namely 'just here,' 'here,' 'there, with you' and 'yonder.'ⁱ These adverbs also are categorised into those that are static and those that indicate direction and movement.

Qualities of distance, place and motion in *ngano* arguably are shaped by a variety of cultural practices rooted in the land. Blacking¹⁰⁶ suggests that the relative slow tempo of Venda dance may have been conditioned by people's habitual, laborious traversing of their mountainous land. As the earlier reference to Mututuwiguvha village explains, settlements 'crammed with people' often were located defensively on mountain tops in precolonial times: 'The steep slope was stabilized by terrace upon terrace faced with stone, with many little stairways and narrow winding streets (*mikoto*).'¹⁰⁷ Assembly areas were relatively small, and many communal dances still take circular form. Such design is inward-looking, even closed; it lacks the aggression of expansive 'war dances'¹⁰⁸ and expresses the ancient dictum 'There is no crying in the home of the coward.' It manifests the concept of power through cooperation (*maanda nga u pfana*), a primordial adaptive strategy that is evident not only in settlement patterns, but also in social space.

Relations and transformations

'I know almost the entire village' [of Folovhodwe] Mathuvhelo Mavhetha remarks. And so *ngano* also express a tight fabric of relations. Scheub¹⁰⁹ argues that 'storytellers reveal connections between humans, within the world, within a society, within a family, emphasizing our interdependence and ... our obligations to our fellows.' Institutions like the extended family, age sets, initiation schools and the village are demarcated by physical as well as social boundaries.

Ngano typically start by identifying a set of domestic relations: a couple and their two children, a man and his three children, a man and his two wives, an old woman with her son and his wife, and an old woman and her grandson.

'Child of my mother' (*Ńwana wa mme anga*) and 'Wait, I will help you lift' [your water pot] (*Wa ima, nda hwesa*) are timeless expressions that emphasise short inner distance between siblings. These statements are made in 'Child of my mother,' a story that describes a young girl's painful, nascent awareness of her social identity.ⁱⁱ She learns that the self, however rebellious, only has meaning in relation to others.ⁱⁱⁱ Narrator Mukondeleli Mathunya explains that her 'father was a special person. He looked after all of us. He wanted us all to eat together. When he went out to his cattle and fields, we young children always went with him. It was just our family. We were close: we did not see many other people.'

And so *ngano* abundantly reveal the emotional turmoil often associated with confined communal space. Death commonly induces painful awareness of isolation

ⁱ Van Warmelo, 1989:87. The most common demonstrative adverbs in this *ngano* collection include *hafha* and *henefha* (here), *hafho* (there), *afho* (there where you are), *henengei* (there), *hafhaŋa* (yonder), *henefhaŋa* (there yonder), *fhaŋa* (yonder far away), *hangeno* (here), *henengeyo* (there where you are), *henefho* (there, near you), *ngei* (yonder), *hangei* (there, yonder) and *ngeo* (there they are).

ⁱⁱ This motif also features in an Isixhosa narrative. See Scheub, 1992:184; 'A girl is kidnapped.'

ⁱⁱⁱ Naipaul argues that 'people could be made by the conditions in which they lived' and that the high population density in Mumbai produced a deep psychological aversion to social isolation (1990:60-66). Paz (1990:205) similarly remarks that 'in archaic societies, a complex and rigid system of prohibitions, rules and rituals protects the individual from solitude. The group is the only source of health.'

and depression ('Spirit,' 'Sorrow'). Narrator Asinathi Nenzhelele remarks that her mother's premature death 'came as a shock to me because I was her only child. Happiness is something you find in a large family. I have been unwell ever since.'

This kind of restriction of space and experience also is evident in the lives of local people who ventured beyond home as migrant labourers. Women and men moved to nearby farms where they worked in the enclosed space of kitchen and field with its small dramas.ⁱ

Symbolic journeys

The tracks of migration and movement in the Limpopo Valley lead into *ngano*, where they serve narrative strategies. The arrival home in stories like 'Fortune lies ahead' is an emotional climax whose quality is shaped by the adventurous journey that precedes it. Voyages like these constitute a fundamental psychological space in the world's narratives. Put simply, they are metaphorical of transformations in human life, and they facilitate the conceptualisation and interpretation of the life cycle.¹¹⁰

The Tshivenda verb *wela* (to cross over) often indicates fording a river or traversing a mountain. Frequently involved in such crossings is the notion of a voyage to unfamiliar, even untamed locations. *Wela* is conceptualised in initiation as the 'rebirth' of a young person as an adult.¹¹¹ However, it in fact applies to the entire cycle of life, from birth to death through puberty, adulthood and old age.

In conventional terms, the shift between life phases is marked by separation, transition and incorporation.¹¹² Young tribal initiates typically go into seclusion. *Murundu*, the Venda boys' initiation school, takes place in the veld, away from settlements. Any women or uninitiated males who happen to pass in the vicinity are liable to receive a beating. During the transitional phase, the boys receive instruction and undergo some 'ordeal' (becoming circumcised, sleeping outside in winter and eating insufficiently) to prepare them mentally for the hardships and responsibilities of adulthood. During this time they are on a social threshold, 'betwixt and between' childhood and adulthood. When they pass initiation, their temporary shelters are burnt: they leave childhood behind, and become incorporated into adult society.

From naivety to wisdom

Transformations in *ngano* do not invoke images of actual initiation: these events are socially restricted and much of their content is secret. Instead, *ngano* describe transitions in life in other ways. In typical fashion, the young adult moves from a condition of naivety to knowledge, experience and increasing authority.ⁱⁱ In 'Thunder returns,' a boy literally is called away from childhood to demonstrate his spiritual power to the village: 'That miracle was done by the boy of Mr Mugele. So the chief sent messengers to fetch him. He was playing over there with those other boys.' In another story, a boy arrogantly challenges his father: 'Hah, you are an old man, you cannot herd cattle.' ('A hero learns a lesson.') However, he comes to learn that his special skill must be applied ethically. 'Foolish girls' by Martha Kwinda in turn opens with the core image of a group of girls accosted by a young Zimbabwean. They display the arrogance and foolishness of youth by insisting that they join him on his long journey home. However, they lose their innocence gradually as they realise the man is making them disappear one by one.

ⁱ See Mathuvhelo Mavhetha's biographical sketch, p. 253.

ⁱⁱ This is portrayed no better than in 'Children of wax' (Smith 2004:49-52) in which a couple have wax children who cannot tolerate sun. They only come out during the night and must remain indoors during the day. A son eventually complains about this restriction, saying, 'We can never know what the world is like ... When we come out of our hut everything is quite dark and we see so little.'

As 'Mr Elephant learns a lesson too' and stories about marriage conflict show ('Pumpkin seeds,' 'The woman at the fountain'), adulthood is not exempt from its own transitions.ⁱ This is exemplified in 'Smelly blankets' where a boy initially is told by his grandmother: 'Why don't you stop questioning me? Leave your questions and just eat.' The boy later frees the old woman from the stomach of an elephant. The emergence from 'swallowing monsters' is an ancient image of personal transformation.¹¹³ Whereas the grandmother used to be authoritative and asserting, she has become silent and docile. Her grandson, in contrast, has displayed incipient ingenuity and courage, and he takes charge of his elderly relative. He first helps to wash her, and then her dirty dress blankets, but they remain smelly: not only has the power relationship between the two characters changed permanently, but the old lady also has moved from self-sufficiency to dependence in old age.

This story shows that boys' journeys to adulthood usually take them into the world. The ideal male character is marked by courage and ingenuity, and this often is portrayed by conflict with powerful adversaries ('Fortune lies ahead').

As explained, the typical transformation girls undergo also involves loss of innocence. The core image attached to this is that of a group of pubescent girls who get lost in the veld or are lured to the home of a man who means to harm them ('Foolish girls').ⁱⁱ These girls often ignore the instructions of their elders and then venture into a domain of experience they cannot yet navigate safely.

As 'small laws,' *ngano* construed around this image link with instructions girls receive during initiation, in particular those addressing new responsibilities and statuses. The girls no longer may roam the veld freely and idly as before: they are expected to marry in accordance with time-honoured practice and have children.

Certain experiences of course are not related to gender. 'Spirit' and 'Sorrow' portray the deep emotions elicited in young people during their first encounter with death. The action in these stories evolves in the wilderness, both literally and psychologically. This is a typical setting in stories that involve ordeals. But these two stories also invoke the fearsome depths of the unconscious, with its images of monsters and evil. Scheub remarks in this regard that 'narratives can have no impact if they are not constructed on and of human feelings: uncertainties, fulfilment, suspense, expectation, hopes, fears ... Images are the repositories of emotion.'ⁱⁱⁱ

Dzwee and Olosi

It may be more than coincidence that both stories narrated by young Zachary Tshamano involve transfiguration to manhood. However, the way this transition unfolds in these stories differs markedly. In 'Dzwee's journey,' the hero goes on a fantastic adventure that develops his incipient qualities of courage and perseverance, and enables him to be 'reborn' into a state of psychological maturity and knowledge ('whiteness,' *vhutshena*). The young Olosi also achieves a life-goal, namely to marry the daughter of a chief and obtain wealth ('Olosi lives happily ever after'). However, he becomes transformed materially only, without any indication of the psychological development that results from Dzwee's voyage.^{iv}

ⁱ See 'The journey of marriage,' p. 50.

ⁱⁱ Also see 'The lourie who was not a bird' in Kruger & Le Roux (2007:123-125) in which the culprit disguises himself as a beautiful bird in order to kidnap a group of young girls.

ⁱⁱⁱ Scheub, 1992:373. Kriel (1971:23) similarly notes of Chishona *ngano* that they 'preferably evoke moods which can be readily accessible in the emotions of the larger part of the audience, and which accordingly derive their existence from matters which touch many people very often and very profoundly.'

^{iv} Stuart Little, that classic hero of 20th century children's literature, accordingly screams and sulks when a carefully-planned romantic picnic fails. Unlike the stereotype film version of the book, heroism is not achieved in a climactic instant. The journey to adulthood has direction but no clear destination,

That the ultimate goal in life is not material, is emphasised clearly in 'Fortune lies ahead': here the young fleeing siblings are lured with offers of material reward. However, they are urged by a bird to seek their fortune elsewhere. And so it becomes apparent that wealth is to be found in humanity's inner resources. The ideal is becoming an adult who is not ego-centric but aware of his social responsibilities ('A hero learns a lesson'). Dzwee has come to understand evil and his relation to society and nature. The young heroes in 'Sorrow' and 'Spirit' similarly encounter the monster of death, and, like Dzwee, they too emerge safely and transformed from their ordeal.

Water and transformation

Immersion in water is a common human ritual. The psychological and spiritual experiences people undergo in this process are expressed pervasively in narrative images.ⁱ The relief that water brings to parched soil has been conceptualised powerfully in images that structure religious experiences¹¹⁴ and narrative practices in southern Africa. Kriel¹¹⁵ remarks that 'in folktales water usually plays a role in the form of a pool or a river, and no other venue for the occurrence of the supernatural is quite as common.' Accordingly, in the Karanga worldview, 'water is closely connected with life, birth and procreation.'¹¹⁶ Similarly, in Zulu culture, the pool is *uhlanga*, 'the origin, the place of the coming out of men.'¹¹⁷

Water is a symbol of life and coolness that contrasts with states of 'heat' or forms of physical, social and emotional stress.¹¹⁸ A Zulu diviner notes that prior to entering the pool of spirituality, he was 'sick, very sick,' but when he emerged from the pool he was 'quite better.'¹¹⁹ This is similarly illustrated in the well-known Venda *phasa* religious procedure, the squirting of cooling, healing water.

Hugh Stait, pioneer of Venda ethnography, identifies rivers, streams, lakes and pools as places inhabited by a variety of spiritual forces, some of 'whose sinister presence is greatly feared, and who can influence the lives of the living people.'¹²⁰ It is hardly surprising then that there is a category of *milayo* instruction in girls' initiation centred on the metaphor of a river.¹²¹ Similarly, that the pools crossed in 'Mrs Devhele goes down' and 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl' are not real, is evident in the recourse to divination: it is clear that the errant wives are judged in terms of sacred ancestral norms. As such, the pool that features centrally in 'The aeroplane in the water' also is a space of moral condemnation.

Pools in *ngano* often are spaces for coming of age experiences.ⁱⁱ 'Dzwee's journey,' with its hint of contemporary consciousness, similarly invokes the sea as a medium of transformation to maturity. 'Child of my mother' in turn presents a core image of a pubescent girl who enters a pool after conflict with her parents.ⁱⁱⁱ The story briefly describes the stormy relationship between the girl, her younger sister and her parents. When she eventually emerges from the pool, she is 'caught' by her father and taken home. Narrator Mukondeleli Mathunya simply indicated that the girl had 'learnt a lesson': she emerged from family conflict learning to submit to the authority of her

and Stuart remarks that 'from now on I shall be traveling north until the end of my days.' (White, 1973:129.)

ⁱ Water accordingly is the setting for transformation in Charles Kingsley's classic, 'The water-babies.' Tom, the dirty chimney-sweep, is told to wash himself before he will be allowed into church. Half asleep he mumbles: 'I must be clean, I must be clean.' (Kingsley, 2004:28.)

ⁱⁱ Similarly, an Isizulu story relates how a monster takes the clothes of a 'proud' princess who bathes in a pool. The two characters then become embroiled in a fight on land and in the water. When the girl leaves the water the next morning, she has been transformed into a woman, having achieved puberty (Callaway, 1970:85-89; 'Uuhlazase'). In another story (*op. cit.*: 336; 'Unana-bosele') a young girl is transformed into a state of pregnancy and fertility after emerging from a pool where she had been 'sporting.'

ⁱⁱⁱ For a more elaborate version, see 'To be human again' in Kruger & Le Roux (2007: 84-92).

parents and to value the close relationship between siblings. According to Booker,¹²² this invokes the concept of

the unrealised value, the emerging of a young person into the world to replace the generation that came before. This is why so often at the beginning of stories we see the central figure as young and single ... [To achieve their role in society] they have to work their way through some version of that 'archetypal family drama' which lies at the heart of storytelling.

Nyamukamadi Ndou's 'Spirit' combines transformation to maturity with spirituality. The river the young woman enters and crosses is the threshold between her parental home and that of her married sister. She moves from a state of isolation and shock about the death of her mother to the safety of her sister's home, as well as better understanding of the instability of physical existence. She also comes to learn that there is a spiritual realm for all deceased that has bearing on the world of the living: it not only provides a comforting image of perpetual life, but also of benign spiritual power that intercedes in the lives of successive generations.

'The pool of shrines' explicitly deals with the concept of life in the after-world. Elaborating on the image of the sister who enters a pool, Nyamukamadi Ndou explains how a young heroine is murdered but returns from a sacred pool as eternal spirit. Attendant on this is a profound concept central to some of the greatest narratives of humanity, namely that of the sacrifice of the individual to redeem and revitalise others.

Journeys of disgrace

Heroic journeys like those undertaken by Dzwee contrast with journeys of disgrace, and villains are very much part of the panoply of characters whose tracks criss-cross *ngano*. Children occasionally are 'dark' figures, but they usually are pushed around by adults on the chessboard of evil and weakness.

These machinations of immorality take the form of images that affirm principles of conduct. 'Mrs Devhele goes down' and 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl' feature errant wives who are judged according to *milayo* and found wanting. The benchmark of their transgression is ancestral morality, and they both fall into a pool of spiritual authority. The grandmother in 'Smelly blankets' goes on a similar journey of dishonour when she steals meat, even though she has a field to feed her. Nature is the moral template that judges her, and she is swallowed by an elephant in retribution.ⁱ This story shows that seniority is not exempt from weakness. Mr Elephant, that ancient symbol of authority, succumbs to arrogance when he abuses the lowly Mr Tortoise ('Mr Elephant learns a lesson too'). He is gently taken to task by the other animals who remind him that he is an adult who must act with dignity and responsibility. However, his transgression is mild compared to that of the woman in 'Eating with wild animals' who enters a state of sexual abandonment. This also applies in 'Mr Dirty Pants' where the culprit is a married man who turns into a sexual predator. The villain in 'The wandering musician' in turn is an institutional offender who habitually seduces women: his wandering is symbolic of rootlessness and lack of social responsibility.

The iron logic of *ngano* usually makes short thrift of those who are found guilty of moral offenses. Although the deception of a wife in 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl' appears relatively mild, she is dispatched brutally to a watery demise. The murderous co-wife in 'Goodbye' meets her end in a similarly dramatic way, as does the violent husband in 'Father on the footpath' and 'A big hero.' Mr Dirty Pants is fortunate to escape after his mauling of a group of young girls. However, the stench of his transgression clings to him.

ⁱ A thieving grandmother similarly is killed by an ostrich whose nest she raids (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:79-80).

The outsider as villain

As explained before, the role of Zimbabweans is restricted to that of stranger and villain, an ancient characterisation given current impetus by the plight of Zimbabwean refugees. This is expressed in the common derogative song phrase *Vhakalanga a vha na maano* (The Karanga people are not clever; see 'Trouble like pouring rain'). During waves of migration from the north to South Africa over several centuries, many Venda people settled temporarily among the Karanga in southern Zimbabwe. Numerous *ngano* originate from this period of co-habitation and contain traces of the Chikaranga dialect.

The image of the Zimbabwean malevolent character may be rooted in the stress and conflict attendant on migration. Scheub¹²³ remarks that ancient fantasy images contain emotional history and 'therefore have the capacity to elicit strong emotional responses from members of audiences.' As explained, Elelwani Singo of Folovhodwe tells a story of 'cannibals' from Zimbabwe who cross into the Limpopo Valley. A group of sisters fetching water overhears their singing and reports them to their grandmother who explains: 'My grandchildren, they are cannibals, it is the song of cannibals. Old women long ago used to tell us that there are cannibals who sing like that.'ⁱ

Zimbabweans are not the only people referred to as cannibals in *ngano*. The popular *ngano* song '*Tshinoni tsha nkuku*' ('Mighty rooster') similarly identifies the Pedi or some other neighbouring group as cannibals. The image of cannibalism is likely to be an expression of an 'out-group attitude that attributes everything negative to foreigners, especially to neighbouring nationalities.'ⁱⁱ

The image of the villainous outsider accordingly has two forms. First, there is the presence of general threat, often expressed in the image of cannibalism. Secondly, outsidership is a template for the sexual predator and unreliable spouse. He often takes the form of a kidnapper who lures foolish young girls with promises of marriage and wealth. One such man remarks to his victims, 'Let us go, there at my place there is a big house.' ('Foolish girls.') The unreliable spouse also usually is male (but compare 'The woman at the fountain'). Here Zimbabwean identity is metaphoric of concealed negative character traits of the spouse that emerge only after marriage ('A big hero,' 'A man refuses to dance'). The distant origin of the Zimbabwean character in fact points to any strangers whose morals and motives are unknown and therefore suspect.

The old hag

Another dark character in *ngano* is that of the universal old hag, almost always derogatively described in Tshivenda as *lukegulu* or *tshikegulu*,ⁱⁱⁱ a 'thin, dirty old woman' ('Spirit'). In Karanga narratives she is referred to as *Varukweguru bande*, 'the thin old woman who tears children into pieces.'¹²⁴ Hugh Tracey¹²⁵ documented a story featuring an old woman called 'Wazaradota, Old-full-of-ashes. They had called her that because her hut was always untidy, unswept, and full of ashes from the cooking fire in the middle of the floor. She always lived like that.' However, it is more likely that this dirt in the first instance represents a state of impurity.

Junod,¹²⁶ in his discussion of old age, notes that 'old and decrepit women are despised. As long as they can still till their land, they are treated with consideration,

ⁱ *Vhaḍuhulu vhanga, ndi madyavhathu, ndi lwone luimbo lwa madyavhathu. Vhakegulu vhakale ha vhone vho vha vha tshi ri vhudza vha tshi ri hu na madyavhathu a imba nga hoyu mukhwa.* (Folovhodwe, 17 June, 2011.)

ⁱⁱ Oinas, 1997:841. Jacottet (1908:160-165) accordingly documented a Sesotho story of abduction in which the Xhosa or Zulu perpetrators are described as 'Ma-Tabele,' who have 'but one leg, one arm, one ear, and one eye.'

ⁱⁱⁱ Compare *mukeyulu*, the respectful term for an elderly woman.

but when they have lost all their strength and must be fed by their children, they are looked upon as troublesome burdens.’ They accordingly are mocked and forsaken, and often become destitute.

There is little reason to believe that this is not the experience of elderly men too, who, as the title story of this collection shows, also are figures of ridicule. However, old women appear in *ngano* in much greater frequency. This is also the case in Chishona *ngano* where the type of characters ‘are strangely limited.’¹²⁷ Although the identity of women is by no means self-evident,¹²⁸ it stands to reason that the strong presence of old women in Tshivenda *ngano* should be understood in terms of male-female power relationships. Kriel¹²⁹ categorises the old hag with little children and the physically handicapped as a symbol of the plight of, but also resistance by, the physically weak. At the root of the image of the old hag in *ngano* therefore not only is the identity of women, but also the transition of the elderly to frailty and loss of power. The superseding of the power of a grandmother by her grandson in ‘Smelly blankets’ is reflected in a Sesotho story.¹³⁰ This story describes the adventures of a particularly stubborn young woman. When she is given an instruction by an old woman, she replies: ‘I do not like to be spoken to by people like you.’ The old woman responds: ‘Although I may be as I am, I give you good advice.’ The girl answers: ‘Who said that I must be advised by infirm people?’

The lives of elderly female *ngano* narrators show their world literally shrinking as they become increasingly immobile and dependent on others. They no longer want to venture out of doors and become isolated. They struggle to comprehend the changing world, and this is how they become misunderstood and victimised.

The old hag accordingly is as peripheral in *ngano* as she sometimes is in life. At best she is a repulsive catalyst that sets events in motion,ⁱ and at worst she is evil personified. In ‘Child of my mother,’ she exemplifies a social outcast, the kind of person one must avoid speaking to. In ‘Smelly blankets,’ she is a thief whose transgression leads to humiliation and loss of power. The identification of the old hag as a typical witch by translator Pfananani Masase is evident in her portrayal in ‘Fortune lies ahead’ as the mighty, evil adversary of a young man battling his way into adulthood.

The journey of marriage

Marriage is an adventurous journey expected from all,ⁱⁱ and a perilous one undertaken by many. *Ngano* constitute an important space in Venda culture for the expression of marital sparring with its own journeys of experience and enlightenment. This is conveyed dramatically in the pursuit of a wife by her husband in a story describing how the couple magically invokes powerful natural forces to undermine each other (‘Magic’). While the husband in this story is ultimate evil personified, ‘The woman at the fountain’ in turn dramatically depicts the unreasonable demands that spouses often make on each other. The bitter protraction of their failed partnership is expressed in the arduous journey both undertake in the wilderness.

Polygamy also provides fertile ground for conflict, and Junod identifies domestic quarrelling as one of the ‘evils’ of polygamy.ⁱⁱⁱ Narrator Leah Madzhie explains that ‘my father had ten wives and my mother was the second. There was much jealousy and

ⁱ This is also the case in Isixhosa oral literature. See Scheub, 2006:58-64; ‘*Kholekile, Mambakamaqula.*’

ⁱⁱ Blacking (1959:156) accordingly notes that ‘there is no word in the language to describe a spinster.’

ⁱⁱⁱ Junod, 1927, I:285-289. *Bukwele* is a special Xitsonga term that refers to jealousy between co-wives, as well as a site between houses where they go to argue and insult each other: ‘O! May my rival die and I remain alone in possession of everything!’ Junod also refers to ‘hatred manifested to the children of the co-wives’ as well as ‘the refusal on the part of the despised one [wife] to cook his [the husband’s] food’ as reasons why he finds polygamy unacceptable.

arguing between those wives. And so seven of them deserted my father.’ⁱ In ‘Goodbye,’ the father of a murdered child says: ‘The explanation of this matter is inside my home.’ And in ‘Mrs Devhele goes down,’ the husband says to his younger wife: ‘How can you not know [who spoilt our food] when only three people live at this home? If you do not know what happened, then I should know. But because I do not know, the elder wife should know.’

The animal spouse

The character of spouses commonly is expressed by means of narrative transformations into animal form. Such human representation is universal and needs little explanation. As mentioned, nature provides a framework that enables humans to conceptualise and interpret their world. Animal transformation is part of a wider belief in metempsychosis, which holds that the human spirit is able to migrate between bodies.¹³¹ It is no doubt of prehistoric origin and its atavistic roots even anchor the images of werewolves, vampires and other shape-shifters in contemporary popular culture.

Animal transformation manifests ancient cosmologies in which nature is powerful, mysterious and spiritual. For some narrators of *ngano*, the shift between human and animal form is not merely symbolic but also real. Narrator Tambani Mamavhulo¹³² of Muswodi remarked that people who become animals undergo change in uninhabited places where magical forces reside, and that this is the reason why the untamed veld is so treacherous. Anna Matlari accordingly explains in ‘Father on the footpath’ that the evil husband changes into a lion in the veld where other, ‘real’ lions hunt.ⁱⁱ

As a narrative technique, changes from human to animal form generate tension, conceal identity and enable the portrayal of human character, not only when a person takes on animal features, but also when morality is under scrutiny (‘Mrs Rock-rabbit,’ ‘Eating with wild animals’).ⁱⁱⁱ This is effected by allowing humans to speak to animals like wild birds, lions, baboons, snakes, horses, fish, roosters and goats.

The most common forms of male transfiguration in *ngano* are lions and baboons (‘Father on the footpath,’ ‘The man in the fur-coat’). The lion-men and hyena-men¹³³ of Africa arguably are counterparts of the European werewolf or ‘man-wolf’ who is transformed by witchcraft or the self, and who hunts animals and, infrequently, also human beings.¹³⁴ Both these transformations are associated with torment and destruction.^{iv} Lion-man’s identity as a predator who preys on his children may be one of the oldest motifs in the oral literature of the world.^v

ⁱ Guitarist Solomon Mathase sings:

<i>Ndo mala vhasadzi vhaṭanu.</i>	I married five wives.
<i>Vhararu vho bva vha fhela.</i>	Three of them left me.
<i>Nga vha thuse nga masheleni!</i>	Help me to get my bride wealth back!

(Kruger, 1994:81-82)

ⁱⁱ Le Roux documented a *ngano* with a similar theme entitled ‘The lion who hunted his daughter’ (Kruger & Le Roux 2007:112-115).

ⁱⁱⁱ Accordingly, a *ngano* shows an unfaithful wife taking on the character of a crow, a carnivorous bird known for feeding indiscriminately (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:47-50; ‘Crow-woman’). Also see ‘The princess and the frog’ in the Grimm collection.

^{iv} The San people of the Kalahari similarly refer to lions as ‘angry,’ and associate them with ‘unknown or threatening people’ (Eastwood, E. & C., 2006:106-107). Malevolent shamans also are said to take on the shape of a lion (Lewis-Williams, 2000:6).

Kapuscinski (2007b:23) fittingly describes a meeting with a Ghanean man who describes himself as sick: ‘The thing is that ... animals are literally in his head ... If they happen to be gentle animals ... he tolerates them well ... But sometimes a hungry lion arrives. He is hungry, he is furious – so he roars. And then this roar makes his head explode.’

^v Bettelheim (2010:245-248) points to variations on the Cinderella theme that involve an ‘unnatural father,’ and argues that Cinderella’s position in the first instance is ‘the consequence of an oedipal relation.’

Anna Matlari's dramatic portrayal of a husband as a lion in 'Father on the footpath' is matched by the humour of Johanna Muleba's extended portrayal of the typical husband who fails to measure up to his wife's (often exacting) standards as a baboon who walks on all fours with his red eyes and hairy skin ('The man in the fur coat').ⁱ Kriel¹³⁵ notes in this regard that Baboon falls short of 'human standards,' and therefore plays the role of 'the stooge and the dupe ... As a symbol of foolishness it provides the audience with something to reject.'

In 'What a woman!' in the second collection in this series,¹³⁶ a traditional leader unsuspectingly marries a baboon. When he discovers her true identity, he exclaims in surprise, 'By the ancestors, I was married to a baboon!' Such insight always comes too late. Mischievous Matlari remarks of a husband at the beginning of marriage that 'he was still human. Yes, he had not yet changed. He will become a baboon in future!' ('The baboon in the orange tree.')

The husband in fact shows remarkable patience and fortitude in response to the demands made by his pernicky wife. Given that *ngano* narrators usually are women, and that their narration is a mode of power, it stands to reason that the male character sometimes is caricatured or portrayed starkly. However, it is a man who redeems his daughter in 'The pool of shrines,' while a husband wisely resolves marital discord in 'Goodbye' and 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl.' In addition, Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, after listening to a narrator emotionally describing how her husband left her, remarked:

You know, not all men are bad or disloyal. I knew a man who was a migrant labourer. He always sent money to his wife at home, expecting her to use it wisely to maintain the household. When he returned home after a period of time, he discovered that she had squandered everything. He was so heart-broken that he died soon afterwards.

Childlessness

Of the many images of married life in *ngano*, that which perhaps is most poignant expresses the misery of childlessness ('A little story').ⁱⁱ The daughter of a narrator explained how she met and fell in love with a man in 1994. He divorced her on 16 June 1997 (she promptly recalled the exact date) because he accused her of not being able to bear children. He chased her away in an appalling manner.ⁱⁱⁱ This was a bitter experience for the young woman who said that she really loved her husband, and would never marry again.

It goes without saying that the family is a social foundation and the setting for core roles and identities. Marriage is said to 'build' a home, and to 'populate' a homestead is to accrue material wealth and promote social well-being.^{iv} Junod¹³⁷ remarks that 'it is through his wife and children that [a man] becomes somebody in society' and that a sterile woman therefore is 'despised.' In Zulu culture, a childless woman is described as useless and 'no longer of any consequence.'^v Mathuvhelo Mavhetha similarly explains that Venda women who do not have children are subject to various devastating insults like 'You do not taste nice, you are *mphanzhe-muumba*' (a childless cow), 'You are *phongwe*' (or *phombwe*, a prostitute), 'that is why your husband left you,' and 'You are a slut who loves many men.'

ⁱ Muleba's performance was marked by extreme mirth and pauses as she regained her breath after bursting repeatedly into laughter.

ⁱⁱ Also see Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:75-78; 'The clay child.'

ⁱⁱⁱ See a similar event in the life of the daughter of narrator Elisa Madzanga (biographical note, p. 207).

^{iv} This is also expressed in the opening of 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl.'

^v Callaway, 1970:67, 106. Berglund (1976:45) describes a childless Zulu woman as 'weeping bitterly' because of a life of scorn, 'profound unhappiness and utter meaninglessness in that she had no children.'

'Playing' with dolls

Ngano dealing with childlessness are located in a symbolic space in southern Africa centrally occupied by so-called fertility dolls.¹³⁸ Few of these figurines are particularly faithful representations of the human figure. Some clay figurines, such as those which feature in Venda girls' initiation, are life-like only in certain respects (they are used to explain sex and birth), while others are highly stylised and do not resemble the human figure. Most figurines 'are constructed around a core made of clay or wood or consisting of a gourd, bottle, or some other item. In most cases it is the suggestion of coiffure and items of female dress added to the core, such as miniature replicas of leather and beaded garments, that transform the supporting cores into figurative sculptures.'¹³⁹

'Fertility doll' is a misnomer for figurines that in fact also express worldviews and social relationships. Contrary to popular belief, they not only are representations of children, but also of adults, especially women. Most narrators in this collection recall building *mahundwane* or children's 'play-villages.' These villages were simple mud constructs which belied children's dramatisation of social and domestic life by means of figurines.

As indicated above, figurines serve in Venda girls' initiation to explain reproductive processes to young women.ⁱ More pertinent in relation to *ngano* that deal with childlessness, is the role of figurines in practices related to married life and procreation. It is in this context that certain figurines are described as 'robust icons of female identity' and the 'private world' of their fecundity.¹⁴⁰

The most detailed descriptions of the role of figurines in relation to motherhood and childlessness derive from observations of South Sotho culture.¹⁴¹ Childless women made figurines from clay or wood, strapped them to their back and carried them wherever they went. These figurines 'were often prescribed by healers and were cared for by the women as if they were real children. They were also used during prayer ceremonies and were sung to. They were sometimes left in a sacred spot as an offering to the spirits.'¹⁴²

There is a faint echo of this in 'A little story' by Johanna Muleba and in local rituals dealing with childlessness. An elderly male resident¹⁴³ from Folovhodwe explained his distress over the absence of children early in his married life during the late 1950s. His brother's wife had just given birth to a boy, and this emphasised his own childlessness. As in his case, a childless couple consults a diviner who casts dice and presents them with a container of *vumba*, or potter's clay. The clay is used by the couple to shape an unfired male or female figurine called *mbugwe*, which is the name of the child in 'A little story.' The figurine is about 20 cm high and relatively life-like, with rudimentary characteristics of gender. It is placed between, or as close to, the bodies of the couple during intercourse. The figurine subsequently is suspended from a door frame until the woman becomes pregnant (the implication seems that this should not take more than a couple of months). When this happens, the figure is returned to the diviner who is then paid.ⁱⁱ

In any case, the emotional trauma experienced by women in these cases finds expression in verbal and musical art.ⁱⁱⁱ Junod¹⁴⁴ cites a song in which a childless woman

ⁱ Initiation features an object called *thahu* which is worn at the small of the back. Cone-shaped, it is described by Blacking (1969b:35) as a 'formalised fertility doll,' but Nettleton (1998:175) notes that it in fact is 'almost completely abstract' and 'is not a representation of a human figure' since it has no head or body. Even so, the *thahu* represents male and female sexuality and reproductive capacity, as well as some characteristics of a baby. More importantly, some of Nettleton's interviewees maintained that the *thahu* in the past also was worn by infertile women (Nettleton, *op. cit.*:179).

ⁱⁱ There is evidence of the continuation of this practice. A fertility figure with the head of a brown doll and a small calabash body was observed in the consulting room of a local diviner during 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Magically produced children take the form of animals in similar stories from other regional cultures.

asks others to lend her a child. They refuse and she says to the child: 'Were I an eagle ... I would carry thee away!' An extract from a Sesotho song featuring in fertility rituals in turn goes: 'The calabash child makes no sound ... How can I know this child's generations?'¹⁴⁵

Tshivenda songs similarly express the desire for children.ⁱ The magical creation of life in the form of human figures in *ngano* is an obvious response to loneliness and the unbearable weight of social expectation. Figures usually are made according to domains of labour. Men are woodcarvers, and *ngano* show them shaping women from logs.ⁱⁱ Women in turn are potters, and they usually shape clay figurines. In the typical understated, laconic style of *ngano* narration, Johanna Muleba simply remarks that the clay boy 'had been made in sorrow because there was no real child,' and that this is 'just a little story' known to many women.

The nature of heroism

Although the maturing person in 'Spirit' and 'Child of my mother' is a young woman, it is more common in *ngano* for characters on the cusp of adulthood to be male. While a sister and her brother go on a voyage in 'Fortune lies ahead,' it is the young man who is the hero in the story (his sister hardly features). It is also notable that the central character in Florence Mphoshomali's biographical story 'Sorrow,' is a young man.

What is striking is that these young male characters often are presented as timeless, swashbuckling heroes who engage in furious combat. They enter the world, engage in daring feats of bravery and establish their status in accordance with the time-honoured role of patriarch and warrior. In typical fashion, the male hero often also is the youngest sibling who challenges the power hierarchy in the family and even in society at large ('The python healer,' 'Thunder returns').

The heroine

The conventional narrative role of young women is quite different. They are social lynchpins whose marriage expands cohesive social relations and disseminates wealth. Selecting a suitable marriage partner therefore is a serious matter that involves entire families ('Marriage'). Speaking about her youth, narrator Sophia Nefolovhodwe explained that if a potential suitor did not meet the approval of the family, there was little a young woman could do.¹⁴⁶ This is poignantly expressed in a core image that structures a number of regional narratives, namely that of a young woman who falls in love with a zebra, that 'horse of the veld.' The zebra is a stranger she is not allowed to marry, and he is brutally slaughtered.¹⁴⁷

As such the narrative role of young women often is passive rather than heroic. Although the expression 'A man marries while a woman becomes married' ('*Hu maliwa musadzi, munna ha maliwi*') essentially refers to the patrilocal and patriarchal structuring of society, it also implies the monitoring by the in-laws of the role of newly-married women ('The princess who slept late'). This is a continuation of the first narrative journeys that girls usually undertake, namely those which define moral boundaries: they are warned not to 'cross over' but to obey their superiors, to act wisely and, above all, to avoid strangers.

This is not to say that young women do not resist exploitation or that they never are

See 'The woman and the mouse' (Tracey, 1986:118-121) and 'Guinea fowl child' (Smith, 2004:1-4).

ⁱ A well-known *malende* choral dance-song indicates: '*Matakadza mbiluni ndi niwana*' ('A child brings joy to the heart'). An English school song similarly states: 'Shaka-du-du-du-du. Let us have a family.' (Grade 4 class, Malinge Primary School, Muswodi-Dipeni, 12 June, 2009.)

ⁱⁱ See 'The king and the musician' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:94-96) and 'Kamiyo of the river' (Tracey, 1986:22-25).

heroes.ⁱ Research into Venda and Sotho rock art in the Limpopo Valley has identified 'women's places' containing symbols from female initiation. These symbols relate to sexuality, fertility and adulthood and they are geared toward regulating social behaviour.¹⁴⁸

Ngano similarly is a site of female power. Nyamukamadi Ndou's remark that her father was the narrator of *ngano* in her family points to an exceptional instance. Although most people in the past were able to tell one or more stories, the best *ngano* narrators always have been adult women. The domestic narrative practice of *ngano* is an extension of their labour and authority in the household:ⁱⁱ the kitchen with its cooking fire is not merely a place of domestic work, but also poetic expression. A San story accordingly describes God's presence as manifest in the voice: 'The speech itself is what is the owner of authority.'¹⁴⁹ In other words, women control *ngano* and therefore the imagination. They tap into the human unconscious and instinctively deal with primordial images of life and death. As mediators between world and mind, they often are the only ones able to explain the metaphorical foundations of *ngano* fully.

Although many *ngano* uphold patriarchal norms, adult women manipulate them to engage male identity. Women assert themselves particularly in response to men who fail to act responsibly. Not surprisingly, what is essentially expected from them is to care for their family. Accordingly, *ngano* feature various forms of disciplining, the most common of which involves fantastic acts of humiliation. A husband who gorges himself secretly on food during famine while his family is starving, is outwitted in humorous fashion by his wife ('Pumpkin seeds'). A particularly powerful instance of humiliation is described in 'Mr Dirty Pants,' in which a husband's cowardice is evident in his fouled trousers.ⁱⁱⁱ Nyamukamadi Ndou in turn undermines the image of the male as lion in 'Eating with wild animals.' She makes a woman ask a potential lover: 'Are you Mr Big Lion?,' to which comes the ironic reply: 'Yes, I am a very powerful man!' And later, when Lion fights Porcupine over the woman, he is referred to as 'that little lion.'^{iv}

Such dark humour also is expressed by means of violent images: the stomach of a repulsive husband is pounded until it bursts ('A big hero') and an old woman whose cattle are raided responds by breaking the hand of a rustler and cutting holes in the hair of another ('Mighty rooster').

The tempting question of course is whether this narrative resistance and retribution finds any expression in the real world. This is a matter for speculation, but a reasonably convincing case may be made for the deep narrative roots of the changing identity of women.¹⁵⁰ An emerging South African legal system increasingly is providing space for Venda women to speak up and report abuse,¹⁵¹ but it should be understood that their verbal and musical arts in fact are ancient modes of 'speaking up.'^v

ⁱ Jacottet (1908:200-208) documented a tale in which a young man desires the skin of a 'fabulous' animal called nanabolele. His sister is the hero of the story, and she goes on a fantastic quest for the skin. She returns with it after many adventures.

ⁱⁱ A well-known Zimbabwean story entitled 'The cat who came indoors' describes Cat's ambition to form an alliance with the most powerful creature. She rejects various increasingly powerful animals, and later goes to live with Man in his home, only to find that he is dominated by Woman ... (Tracey, 1986:115-117).

ⁱⁱⁱ Narrator Miriam Vhengani's dramatisation of the husband's mishap caused much enjoyment among her adult co-performers.

^{iv} Kriel (1971:48-50) remarks that, while Lion is king of the animals, 'his intelligence does not quite match his power and prestige.' In relation to humans he is 'nothing but a carnivorous animal,' while in a broader African context he is representative of 'stupid, brutal force' (citing Alice Werner).

^v Krog (2003:201) cites Mahmood Mamdani who remarks:

Before colonialism, those we refer to as 'traditional leaders' were not the only source of authority. The entire social, economic and political life of Africans involved various traditional structures. There were structures at the marketplaces, within households, in local areas, during initiations and

A strange hero

An entirely different kind of hero is to be found in the world of birds. With the notable exception of crows and owls,ⁱ birds generally are symbols of benevolence, spirituality and redemption ('Spirit').ⁱⁱ They are mythical and magical culture heroes who intervene when human endeavour fails ('Foolish girls,' 'A smart bird'). Their capacity for flight symbolises a very different freedom, namely to rise from that which 'binds us to our earthly existence.'¹⁵² They can detect impending peril concealed from humanity and stay out of harm's way ('A fool is always eating').

The most common core image in *ngano* featuring birds is that of a group of naïve young girls trapped by a flooded river or lured from home by a man with evil intentions.ⁱⁱⁱ The bird then comes to their aid and carries them safely home. In 'A smart bird,' the feathered hero takes on the image of a protective mother:

'The river is in the way, it is in flood. How will we cross?' The bird answered, 'Do not worry.' It flew down from the tree and sat down on the ground. 'Come here my children.' Those girls came immediately. They climbed under its wings, they climbed under its wings, under the wings!

This bird is *mugotwe*, the grey hornbill. However, it takes on a different identity in a similar *ngano* entitled 'The girls and the dove.'¹⁵³ The dove's mournful call expresses the human condition: *Ndo sala ndi tshisiwana sa liivha* (I am destitute like a dove), and so this bird speaks for all those who are poor and lonely:¹⁵⁴

Ndo sala ndi ndothe: a thi na wanga.
Ndo khakha, musanda ambelwa nga nnyi?

I am left alone: I have no relatives.

When I make a mistake,
who will defend me in court?

Nga liivha li tshi lila.
Li tshi ri: tu-tu, tu-tu, tu-tu.

The dove speaks for me when it sings:

Tu-tu, tu-tu, tu-tu.

Bettelheim¹⁵⁵ equates birds with 'the superego, with its investment in high goals and ideals, its soaring flights of fancy and imagined perfections.' The dove in 'The girls and the dove' accordingly delivers the girls to the home of their traditional leader who pleads with the bird not to leave. The dove replies: 'I cannot stay, I have many people to help. I stand here, bird that I am, waiting to find suffering.'

The spiritual, redemptive character of the bird as hero also is evident in its role as messenger and guide. In the abovementioned stories, the bird not so much returns the girls home in a physical sense as it stops them on the brink of pollution and affirms their state of purity. This is also evident in 'Fortune lies ahead' in which the bird tells the children to forsake material goals and travel towards spiritual and social wealth.

Potency in *ngano*

'A man falls' invokes quite a different form of animal transformation, namely that associated with spiritual potency. Studies¹⁵⁶ of trance behaviour among the ancient San

other rituals, so everyone had a place where their voices counted – women, children, men, the elderly, farmers, herders, chiefs, fathers, uncles, grandmothers.

ⁱ Owls are witch familiars, while the indiscriminate carnivorous eating habits and harsh call of crows do not make them endearing. The image of a lourie is used in a story about a man who assumes the appearance of this beautiful bird in order to lure young girls to his home (Kruger & Le Roux, 2004:123-125; 'The lourie who was not a bird').

ⁱⁱ Scheub) notes of the role of birds in an Isixhosa narrative that they represent intervention in human affairs by nature (1992:201; 'The two nieces').

ⁱⁱⁱ This image also is at the centre of a story documented by Jacottet (1908:100-109) in which children get lost, are protected by a mythical bird, and eventually return home, after which the bird is rewarded with cattle.

populations of southern Africa reveal the hallucinatory blending of human and animal forms. The ensuing shapes generated in these states of altered consciousness typically include those of the elephant, rhinoceros and hippopotamus. These are 'spirit animals' who invest spirit mediums with the power to bridge the human and spirit worlds.

'A man falls' accordingly portrays some extraordinary spiritual skill in the transformation of man into elephant. It may be significant that elephant-man is contrasted with a boy, a person who still lacks the skill to achieve potency. Notions of the potency of animals and other natural forces are transmitted to the young at initiation schools, and it is possible that the boy has not yet been initiated.

Potency in *ngano* often is expressed by the image of musical performance. 'The magic song' is a story from the second collection in this series,¹⁵⁷ and it describes how a hunter magically controls his prey by singing. More commonly, however, is the ability of heroes to make rain. As the history of Wada shows, musical performance is a basic means of spiritual expression. *Tshikona*, the bamboo-pipe dance, is more than the expression of ruling class power:¹⁵⁸ it also is a link to spiritual forces associated with fertility and rain. Similarly, many districts in the Soutpansberg resound with the thundering drum patterns of trance dance groups who appeal for rain to spiritual forces when the summer heat accumulates in October.ⁱ

'Thunder returns' and 'A hero learns a lesson' in this collection briefly sketch settings of drought and famine. Here too, song is the expression of the rainmaking potency that the young male heroes in these stories have: they are givers of life, modest versions of Modjadji, the godlike rain-queen of the Lobedu people.¹⁵⁹

Potency and conflict

The role of the spirit medium as culture hero is not necessarily to be envied, and *ngano* also reveal the conflict often associated with potency. Those able to communicate with spiritual forces typically include ritual specialists like healers, leaders of trance dance, initiation school instructors, expert dancers and musicians, and even craftsmen like ironsmiths and potters. The power these specialists have must be used with care and responsibility. This is why they normally are called to their occupation by ancestral spirits who appear in a dream.¹⁶⁰ This legitimises their occupation and also means they undertake to observe ancestral morality.

Even so, ritual specialists often are at the centre of conflict, especially when there is a nagging suspicion that they may conceal their special ability for selfish or malevolent purposes. So, although it is accepted that spiritual power is not accorded to all, those who possess power must make themselves available for scrutiny since what they do affects communal well-being and the balance of power. The supernatural skill of the hunter in 'The magic song' alienates him from his community, and he is brought to heel when they force him to reveal the source of his power.¹⁶¹ This is also the case in 'Thunder returns' and 'A hero learns a lesson' in which the person with special power is still young and naively unaware of the implications and responsibilities of his outstanding ability. In these three stories, power is made known and applied for the benefit of all. Accordingly, the boy in 'A hero learns a lesson' eventually is reconciled with his community: 'Every family in the village gave the boy an ox, an ox. They gave cattle, the boy was given many cattle. They said, "Sing." The boy danced, he danced *Mamvula tembelele*. He danced for the whole village!'

These stories emphasise that heroes blessed with special skills are not omnipotent. The lives of those who engage spiritual forces often are marked by deep ambiguity: they are heroes characterised by ordinary human weakness, the exposure of which is a means of keeping the forms of power that heroism accrues in check.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ These dancers perform *Ngoma dza Midzimu*, 'Rituals of the Ancestral Spirits.' See Blacking, 1985.

ⁱⁱ See Kruger 2000, 2002. Blacking (1969a:70) accordingly remarks: 'And it is indeed true that many

Epilogue

Ngano in the 21st century

The human predicament expressed in *ngano* remains that of sources of power, of the close weave of conflicting relations and the ties that bind communities. *Ngano* display the universal array of villains and heroes: those who oppress and destroy, and those who resist injustice and perpetuate the urge to life and growth, especially by means of transformations to moral and spiritual conditions.

The images that *ngano* continue to portray at the start of the 21st century are those of a virtual timeless past. Many older narrators embrace a changing world but are concerned about indifference to the ancient ethical principles expressed in *ngano*. These principles remain a source of resistance in an ambiguous, often confusing existence. Moralising in *ngano* should not be dismissed as an all too obvious and trivial narrative objective: it links firmly with the concern of narrators about the orderly adaptation of their community.

This concern is an obvious corollary of economic change and weakening communal ties. The experience of declining warm human contact indeed is a social challenge. The story of Mr Jim's wayward wifeⁱ who refuses to care for her extended family is indicative of the ravelling out of an ancient mesh of relations. The notion of community not only is being redefined by domestic perimeter walls: many local people also seldom see relatives who work in urban areas or have relocated there permanently. Their lives become increasingly shadowy, and so they gradually fade from memory, like old stories.

The gradual passing of *ngano* also is inscribed in Olosi's adventure in a different world, one revealing an awareness that 'wealth can be created by the production of things, mined and manufactured away from home,' to be accumulated by uncontrollable, outside forces.¹⁶² As Mr Jim discovers, the restricted, carefully managed world of *ngano* is a link with the past that is not renewable. What was an expression of life has become dim, fragmented recollection. In the conflicting unfolding of history we see the world of *ngano* shrinking as another mushrooms: 'All stories,' Hans Christian Andersen remarks, 'no matter how long they are, must eventually come to an end.'ⁱⁱ In oral cultures, 'the outer reaches of memory are the limits of history. Earlier, there was nothing. Earlier does not exist. History is what is remembered.'¹⁶³ In essence, then, we continue to experience in *ngano* performance practice the waning of an ancient artistic genre. As with the verbal art of San communities, all that eventually will remain of *ngano* is what has been documented.

Revealing the invisible

Marginal landscapes intensify awareness of difference, and first-time visitors to the large baobab at Zwigodini cannot be reproached for retaining in memory the image of an inscrutable wasteland. But once the overwhelming pallor of the hard land dulls

do not bother to develop their talents, and that the few who do so are often harshly criticized and "dragged down to the level of their fellows."

ⁱ See 'Iron Logic,' p. 40.

ⁱⁱ From 'The pine tree' (Andersen, 1983). One of the most poignant descriptions of the passing of a narrator is provided by folklore pioneer Minnie Postma (1950). Postma structures her collection of Sesotho stories around the end of the life of a grandmother called Mamaru (Mother of the Clouds). She describes how Mamaru becomes old and stops doing chores around the home. Instead, she sits by the fire at night and in the sun during the day. But she still has a skill, namely to narrate stories, something she is highly valued for, and for which people beg. She dies at the end of the book, 'Silently and softly, like the waning of the moon; like the end of winter; like a year that has passed; like the end of a story ...' (1950:152.)

on the retina, one gradually becomes aware of certain forms of human intervention, of defining splashes of colour, shape and texture:ⁱ pink oleanders outside a window with a bright pink drawn curtain contrast with the paleness of a grey cinder-block wall; an old woman in a purple T-shirt stands next to a red door in a brown wall; squares in mustard, oxblood and pale grey polish reflect off a smooth cemented courtyard; post box-red and powder-blue doors lead to dark interiors; walls are white, ochre, mustard, pale yellow, brown, turquoise, even bubble gum-pink and lime-green – some have dark blue or black borders; dashes of green, purple, white and yellow flicker on a washing line; an old man with a bright-red scarf passes on a bicycle; a checkered purple and blue blanket lies over an ochre courtyard wall.

The land not only provides people with images to construe *ngano*: the abundant local supply of stones is used by many people to build their house. But they go a step further, and allow the stones to shape other stories. Not all Zimbabwean refugees are crouching silhouettes in fields. Some are expert masons who utilise the shape of these stones and cement them into walls so that animal forms emerge: pigs, hares, kangaroos, mice, rats, fish, leopards; also the human world: faces, hearts and AK-47s that are silent here. Some people meticulously paint the thin layers of mortar that keep the stones in place.



Stories in stone

Depictions of hearts are not restricted to these Zimbabwean masons: hearts in various shapes and colours appear on many walls and houses. They offer little evidence of romantic love: they are expressions of care for orphans, the poor and sick,ⁱⁱ of compassion

ⁱ Nooteboom (2007:152) remarks that there is a zealotry about travelling that turns the observer into ‘a complete blockhead’ because he insists on searching for ‘the extraordinary within the everyday environment of others.’ But perhaps it requires outsiders to verbalise what local people may take for granted.

ⁱⁱ Local young people have few professional role models. Even so, there is a pattern of career development centred on medical services, especially nursing and paramedical work. A nursery rhyme states:

<i>Vhutshilo hanga.</i>	My life.
<i>Ndi khou dzhena tshikolo uri ndi vhe na vhumatshelo havhuḽi.</i>	I go to school so that I can have a bright future.
<i>Lifhasi ḽa zwino ḽi ṽoḽa muthu o funzeaho.</i>	The world nowadays wants an educated person.
<i>Nḽe ndi tama u vha mudededzi.</i>	I want to be a teacher.
<i>Vhupholisa mmanga?</i>	And what about being a policeman?
<i>Ndi si tsha amba vhudokotḽela hune wa ambara tshena!</i>	Not even talking about the medical profession where you wear white!
<i>Ee, wa sa funzea u ḽoḽa damba.</i>	Yes, if you are not educated you will suffer [eat herbs].

Alice Tshisevhe, Folovhodwe Community Pre-School and Creche (28 September 2010).

aimed at social coherence and survival. There is a very real, dark undercurrent of hopelessness and even suicide here ('A little story,' 'Sorrow'), but it is concealed behind insouciance and cheerful despondency. And so it is in patterns of expression that we may detect the 'particular style that a society adopts to deny despair.'ⁱ A sign at the gate of Muswodi Primary School asks that it be kept closed; it incongruously also notes: *Nga mbilu ya tshilidzi na dakalo* (Of the heart of sorrow and joy). Poverty-stricken people verbalise resistance by giving their children names like Athikhatali (I do not worry), Athivhadini (I must not trouble you), Future and Beyoncé, and by experiencing salvation vicariously in their narratives. Here, magical birds rescue lost girls, young heroes give life to their village, old women fend off cattle-rustlers, animals are resurrected magically, childless women shape clay children for themselves while a murdered daughter returns as spirit, and explains: 'I have returned. I will not die. I will never die again. Not once. I will live forever.' ('The pool of shrines.')

Colours, shapes, textures: these are expressions of exuberance; they are small celebrations of the urge to life in which may be detected pride and integrity.ⁱⁱ The measure of greatness in humans is their indefatigable spirit, their ability to support contradictions.ⁱⁱⁱ Florence Mphoshomali remarks: 'I struggle to help my children, but I will not give up: I know how hard life can be if you did not go to school.' Like her, many people resist the limitations of their existence by farming their field diligently, selling brooms, beadwork and mopane worms, joining churches, doing community service, undergoing adult education, battling moral desiccation and sacrificing to educate their children.^{iv}

And so the wasteland inhabited by others gradually reveals itself in familiar form. Guitarist Mmbangiseni Mphaga¹⁶⁴ of Mukula sings:

I was to move around the world.^v
 I was to move on wasteland.
 I was to think that I shall be died there.
 I found children playing their cards.
 I say to them, let's play together.
 I say to them, let's sing together.
 I say to them, let's dance together.

The footprints in the secluded eastern corner of the Limpopo Valley stem from migrations ancient and contemporary, of invasions, conquests, displacements and struggles for restitution, of local communities sometimes helplessly scattered across the expanse of history. Here too, 'injuries seek redress and fear ricochets off fear ... Every hope, every triumph, every good is there; and packed away, swiftly unloaded, every evil ever given or received. Each man's redress is another's injury; every restoration

ⁱ Becker, 1972:150. 'All art,' remarks André Malroux, 'is a defiance of man's fate,' and a way societies attempt to rid themselves of their demons (cited in Chatwin, 1990:130).

ⁱⁱ Chatwin (1990:176) describes a visit to Kazan, the capital of the Tartar Autonomous Republic: The streets of Kazan bore the imprint of a vanished mercantile vitality. Yards once stacked with barrels of fish-oil or bitumen now lay overgrown with burdocks and thistles. Yet the little log houses, their African violets in the window, and the streams of blue woodsmoke spiralling from their tin chimneys – all reaffirmed the dignity of the individual and the resilience of peasant Russia.

ⁱⁱⁱ Becker, 1971:177, citing Hegel. Fermor (2004:208-209) fittingly quotes a poem by Emperor Maximilian of Austria: 'Live, don't know how long / And die, don't know when / Must go, don't know where / I am astonished I am so cheerful.'

^{iv} Thomas Jefferson, writing from his home in rural Charlottesville in 1823, fittingly compares urban with rural life: 'New York, for example, like London, seems to be a Cloacina of all the depravities of human nature. Philadelphia doubtless has its share. Here, on the contrary, crime is scarcely heard of, breaches of order rare, and our societies, if not refined, are rational, moral, and affectionate at least.' (<http://www.yamaguchy.com/library/jefferson/1823.html>)

^v Original English lyrics.

is a usurpation; no act is free from guilt.’ⁱ In the colonial mind, the other occupies a space ‘on the margin of universal history’ that expresses, ‘in rags,’ an indecipherable, ‘still-living past.’¹⁶⁵ And so it should come as little surprise that those labourers made to ride on the back of pick-ups and lorriesⁱⁱ often cannot recall the names of any of their employers,ⁱⁱⁱ whose existence often remains an inscrutable threat, a nameless fear: ‘Go to Musina to have [my bore-hole pump] repaired?’ narrator Miriam Mavhenga of Tshiungani asks. ‘I don’t know about that. My business is healing. How will I speak to those people?’

Yet, submerged below history’s traumas lie contradictory, often concealed stories like those of Ina le Roux who is a lifeline for an entire community of local women,^{iv} and Malori Mavhetha who, during the early history of apartheid, was incorporated into caring white families, and whose eventual separation from them was a teary funeral.^v

Ryszard Kapuscinski notes of his extensive journeys in Africa ‘that situations of crisis appear more dire and dangerous from a distance than they do up close. Our imaginations hungrily and greedily absorb every tiny bit of sensational news, the slightest portent of peril, the faintest whiff of gunpowder, and instantly inflate these signs to monstrous, paralyzing proportions.’¹⁶⁶ For Paul Theroux,¹⁶⁷ a return to Africa



‘The heart of sorrow and joy’

ⁱ Goodwin (2003:199). This observation relates to the ‘ruthless’ displacement of long-established German-speaking communities in Transylvania accompanying the construction of ‘the Greater Romanian ideal’ after the fall of communism towards the end of the 20th century. Goodwin (*op. cit.*:193, 198) identifies these communities as bewildered, ‘half-strangers in familiar country’ who can only summarise their helplessness in the refrain, ‘Was kann man tun? Muss gehen.’ (‘What can we do? We have to go.’)

ⁱⁱ ‘Goloj ndi ya makuwa ... Ro vha ri tshi dzhena nga murahu hayo, hezwiḽa ri tshi thoma u shuma.’ (‘Cars belonged to whites ... We used to ride on the back when we started working for them.’); extract from historical testimony by Elias Masutha (Le Roux, 1996:802).

ⁱⁱⁱ Despite years of employment, some remember their employers merely as *miesies* (missus) and *nonnatjie* (missy).

^{iv} See www.tambani.co.za

^v Mathuvhelo Mavhetha’s brother. See Le Roux, 2009 (‘Die wit seuntjie,’ ‘Die paymaster by Waterworks’).

initially was underpinned by an expectation of ‘a burned-out wilderness, empty of significant life, of no promise, a land of despair, full of predators.’ His fears sometimes were realized, but they often also were tempered by meetings with the ‘kindest Africans’ who ‘had not changed at all.’

Kapuscinski¹⁶⁸ remarks elsewhere that the most important discovery of famous Greek traveller Herodotus was that there are many worlds besides ours, and that they are ‘mirrors in which we see ourselves, thanks to which we understand ourselves better – for we cannot define our own identity until having confronted that of others.’

The great lesson of the world’s storytellers is that the human image in folklore is one of unity, of ‘a feeling of recognition and communion with other human beings.’¹⁶⁹ We initially only see our dimly reflected image in the opaque glass of the other, but eventually find that their enigmas essentially are ours too – that we all belong to ‘the symbolic species’¹⁷⁰ whose narratives aim at reconciling eternal opposites.

And so the ‘surprising similarity’ of our human diversity¹⁷¹ requires us to look beyond the obvious features of the land, to reflect on a new us, situated in a landscape suffused with colours, sounds and textures. But to do this we first need to journey into mindscapes, into stories and songs, so that we are able to discover who we are and what we may become.



Miriam Vhengani’s harvest



'Thatched roof houses are disappearing' (see 'Brick and clay')

Part II

Structure, performance and presentationⁱ

Speech and narrative categories

The nature of *ngano* as verbal art may be explained in relation to verb categories and genres.¹⁷² Narration obviously takes the form of speaking (*amba*). Other terms that indicate narrative speech include *anetshele* (to hang out, as with clothes)¹⁷³ and *nea* (give or hand to)¹⁷⁴ or ‘take out of the mouth.’¹⁷⁵

In cases where songs feature in a story, or even comprise most of the story (‘The man in the fur coat’), singing or chanting (*imba*) takes place. Such chanting may be structured rhythmically and within a narrow melodic range.

The verb *nea* applies to the category *nganeane*, which pertains to forms of the contemporary novel. It is derived from the older category *nganeane vhakale* (stories of past events). The verb accordingly also applies to the categories *nganeane vhutshilo* (life stories) and *nganeane pfufhi* (short stories). The term *tshitori* (story) is used increasingly, also by narrators of *ngano*.

Ngano (pl. *dzingano*) are narratives in call and response form. The ‘audience’ are co-performers with a limited role: they periodically chant the response *salungano!* (‘like a story’) and sing the chorus part of songs that are integral to plots. Dramatisation in *ngano* is limited to expressive use of the voice, head, torso and arms.ⁱⁱ

There is a difference of opinion about whether *ngano* include songs or not. Some narrators are adamant that they must have songs, and this is the only kind of spoken *ngano* that Blacking identifies.ⁱⁱⁱ Hugh Tracey in turn, who documented Chishona *ngano*, notes that ‘many African stories have no songs in them.’¹⁷⁶ Ntsihlele¹⁷⁷ accordingly remarks that some *ngano* lack songs, and this is confirmed by other narrators who sometimes refer to them as ‘stories.’ This is a useful contemporary description, but it does not suggest that *ngano* without songs are a recent development.

Narrator Sara Munyai denied that the absence of a song in ‘The aeroplane in the water’ is unusual, and explained that this is how she heard the story from her elders. Le Roux¹⁷⁸ documented one such story, while collections of *ngano* by Venda editors as well as Hugh Stayt contain several stories without songs.¹⁷⁹

ⁱ In keeping with the focus of the introduction, this discussion serves to present certain general style characteristics of *ngano*, and specifically in this collection. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

ⁱⁱ Dramatisation obviously is related to personality and self-image. Johanna Muleba, Anna Matlari and Nyamukamadi Ndou may be described as born narrators whose energy bubbles to narrative surfaces in the form of passion and humour. Transcriber Pfananani Masase is particularly impressed with the way Muleba uses her voice: her diction is good, she changes dynamics and voice register, and makes use of dramatic pauses.

The performance of other narrators sometimes is marked by absence of detail and dramatisation. These narrators do not possess the same energy and confidence of other storytellers, and tend to be soft-spoken. However, this is not necessarily the case. Asinathi Nenzhelele is a quiet, unassuming person, yet her narrative voice is commanding, perhaps because it echoes the voice of her deceased mother she misses very much.

ⁱⁱⁱ Blacking, 1967:24. Blacking (*loc. cit.*) also describes *ngano* as ‘a number of songs of similar structure that are sung without a story to accompany them.’ He notes furthermore that ‘there is only one commonly recognised subdivision of *ngano*, and that is *ngano dza bune* (lit. songs of the game of touch), in which the responsibility of singing the solo is passed from one member of the group to another.’

Constructing stories

Migrating images

Categorising is an obvious strategy to make sense of the innumerable oral narratives of the world. Variations of stories often are studied with the aim of redaction, or the identification of some ‘standard form’ or ‘original core.’¹⁸⁰ Useful as this approach is, it should not divert our attention from oral narratives as ‘the performances and productions of individuals.’¹⁸¹ Junod¹⁸² noted that, ‘after having heard the same stories told by different story-tellers, I must confess that I never met twice with exactly the same version ... There is no standard at all!’ Contemporary folklore studies accordingly focus less on ‘communal tradition’ than the manipulation of the repertory by known individuals.¹⁸³ They show how stories ‘grow wings,’¹⁸⁴ how they are recreated by storytellers who offer their interpretations of time-honoured narrative images.ⁱ

The most notable feature of variation in *ngano* is that of migrating images. Junod¹⁸⁵ remarked having heard narrators ‘mixing up elements of totally different styles ... New combinations thus constantly take place.’ Songs are part of narrative images that are fragmented and reassembled to structure stories in different ways. For example, the image in *ngano* of poisoning generally is linked to the story of a boy called Mutshavhona whose relatives attempt to poison his food because of envy or hate. Mutshavhona resists and overcomes his adversaries with the assistance of a magic bird who warns him, ‘*Mutshavhona dada!*’ (‘Watch out Mutshavhona, there is danger!’). This image must speak deeply to the subconscious and to experiences of oppression because it even surfaces in a version of the story that migrated to an urban area.¹⁸⁶

The core image of villains attempting to poison a vulnerable person accordingly structures other *ngano* too. Settings, names and songs differ, but the basic image is retained.ⁱⁱ So, for example, it features in ‘A fool is always eating’ by Johanna Muleba. Here, however, a magic bird sings ‘*Mutshavhona dada!*’ to a son-in-law who fails to heed its warning, and who, in contrast with heroic forms of the character, perishes from poisoned food.

Similarly, the song ‘*Hayani hanga a thi sindi*’ (‘We do not pound at our home’) usually structures a core image in stories about broken agreements (‘The princess who slept late’).ⁱⁱⁱ However, this line reappears in ‘The pool of shrines’ where its original, literal meaning is replaced by new meaning (‘Why are you killing me?’) that expresses conflict between a young woman and her mother.

The appeal and power of core images may obscure subtle, yet important variations. The image of a boy who magically produces rain is common in Chishona and Tshivenda *ngano*. This image expresses the trauma of famine, but it also portrays the transformation of a boy into adulthood. In a Chishona version entitled ‘The magic herd boy,’ the hero brings rain and marries a chief’s daughter.¹⁸⁷ The variations in this collection (‘Thunder returns,’ ‘A hero learns a lesson’) also have a ‘happy’ ending. However, their portrayal of transformation is not conflict-free as in ‘The magic herd boy.’ Coming to age involves disputes related to the gradual placement of the maturing young person in adult society.

ⁱ Scheub notes that storytellers ‘have agendas of their own, and so it is that history is always revisionist history’ (2010:200).

ⁱⁱ See Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:116-122, ‘Spears eat those who make them.’

ⁱⁱⁱ This is portrayed by the image of a newly-married young woman who is forced to pound contrary to prior agreement.

The babysitter motif

This collection includes three narratives based on the popular babysitter motif ('Mrs Rock-Rabbit,' 'A thief,' 'The babysitter'). The core image is that of a woman who has to care for a baby while also working in her field. The baby is then kidnapped by an animal, usually a rock-rabbit or a duiker.

'Mrs Rock-Rabbit' is the most detailed of the stories, while 'The babysitter' presents the core image with almost no elaboration. Each story is dramatic in its own way. In 'Mrs Rock-Rabbit,' the image of the mother stumbling home during the dark, and then meeting her doom, is particularly powerful, while the violent death of the baby in 'The babysitter' also comes as a shock to the unsuspecting listener. 'The thief,' in comparison, treats the image of the kidnapped baby in a relatively gentle manner.

The woman in the story ultimately is to blame for the disappearance and murder of the baby, and she usually is portrayed as naïve and careless. However, in 'A thief' she identifies the duiker as a threat, and chases it away. But even this reaction cannot prevent the baby from being kidnapped: a woman has many domestic responsibilities, and industrious as she may be, she often struggles to attend successfully to all of them.

Stories structured around the same core image may have songs whose lyrics as well as musical features are quite different. It is clear that the formulation of the lyrics related to the babysitter motif differ significantly even though they share the image of an evil outsider (Fig. 1). Not even the chorus lines (which otherwise are a fixed element in Tshivenda choral dance-songs) are the same.ⁱ In addition, the song in 'A thief' is inserted into the plot *prior* to the kidnapping: it is a portent of what is about to happen. In the other two stories, the song is performed *after* the child is taken by the babysitter. They are much more in the nature of lamentations than the forewarning first variation.

Fig. 1. A comparison of the lyrics related to the babysitter motif

'Mrs Rock-Rabbit'	'The babysitter'	'A thief'
[Narrator] You, little rock-rabbit: return my child, I want to carry her home on my back. [Chorus] Mrs Rock-Rabbit is nursing the child.	[Narrator] Hey you duiker: bring my child, I want to breastfeed. Its head is injured. I played with it. [Chorus] Playing roughly with the child!	[Narrator] A nursemaid. I have a nursemaid. I found a nursemaid. I said, 'Nurse the child.' The nursemaid cares for the child. Soon it will want to take the child. [Chorus] The big stomach is hungry.

Independent *ngano* songs

Ngano songs not only migrate between stories. A number of them also have come to take on an independent existence outside the genre. Two of the most popular journeys have been undertaken by 'Tshinoni tsha nkuku!' and 'Mutshavhona dada!' (see 'Mighty rooster,' 'A fool is always eating'). The former was sung almost on a daily basis by Lewis Tshinavhe on Radio Thohoyandou during the early 1990s. 'Mutshavhona dada!' in turn has become part of the school choir¹⁸⁸ and *malende* choral dance-song repertoire.¹⁸⁹

ⁱ A comparison of the songs shows that they also differ in musical terms.

'*Hu na buka livhi*' ('There is an ugly monster'; see 'Mr Dirty Pants') derives from a children's game,¹⁹⁰ while '*Tsho la nyaiwali wanga, nga tshi de!*' ('The one who ate my sister, let it come!') from a story about a girl swallowed by a hippopotamus and rescued by her brother¹⁹¹ was part of the repertoire of songs performed on the *tshihwana* braced mouth bow.¹⁹²

The expansible image

Stories based on the babysitter motif employ an ancient structural technique, namely that of the 'expansible image.'ⁱ In essence, this image is a 'core-cliché' which is 'fleshed out' in various ways during performance.¹⁹³ The expansible image often appears three times, a number defined by Booker¹⁹⁴ as the 'number of growth and transformation' that is 'fundamental to the way the human imagination works.' In *ngano* it usually takes the form of the 'contrasting three.' In other words, the last presentation of the image contrasts with the first two. In 'Mrs Rock-Rabbit,' the expansible image is the song in which the mother asks the rock-rabbit to return her baby. The baby is returned twice, but the third performance of the song is met with ominous silence: the baby has been kidnapped.ⁱⁱ

Such expansion has the clear property of rhythmicity, and techniques like repetition, anticipation and recapitulation are common in oral narratives.¹⁹⁵ Recapitulation in particular is a common device in *ngano*, and its usual form is that of 'voyage and return'¹⁹⁶ that shows how young people leave home, undergo a series of adventures and return home transformed as young adults ('Fortune lies ahead,' 'Foolish girls').

Given the prominence of walking and footpaths, it also comes as no surprise that the story entitled 'A fool is always eating' opens with a young man traveling to his in-laws, and ends with his gruesome death on his way home. Another particularly effective form of recapitulation structures 'Dzwee's journey': the young hero's encounters with a lion take place at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of his voyage of self-discovery. At its first appearance, the lion represents the unknown world Dzwee has entered, in the middle he is the hero's helper, and at the end he symbolises Dzwee's acquired knowledge.

Incremental repetition

The expansion of an image often takes the form of incremental repetition, described as 'narrative development through sequential, verbally patterned episodes in which at least one element changes with each expression.'¹⁹⁷ Such repetition not only is a compositional device, but also functions aesthetically to create and sustain tension.

Accordingly, in 'Mrs Rock-Rabbit,' the song is repeated without change. However, while the chorus phrase and certain solo phrases remain unaltered in 'The girls in the baobab,' some of the solo lines change in accordance with changing circumstances in the story: when the girls want water, they agree to love the guardian of the tree, and when they have slaked their thirst, they reject him.

Such incremental repetition also commonly structures spoken narration in *ngano*. Typically, narrators build a story by repeating the concluding phrase of a sentence:ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ In this collection, see its use in 'The python healer,' 'Pumpkin seeds,' 'Mighty rooster,' 'Child of my mother,' 'Magic,' 'The woman at the fountain' and 'The princess who slept late.'

ⁱⁱ Scheub (2006:277) accordingly describes metaphor as 'the rhythmic, patterned path to meaning.'

ⁱⁱⁱ Other examples include the following: 'When he did that, his wife went blind. She became blind, and she still had small children!' ('Goodbye.') 'The water swept those bones of Devhula away. It swept them into a pool, into a pool where there was an island with ancestral shrines.' ('The pool of shrines.') 'They grabbed that dog and killed it. After killing the dog they took it, made a fire and burnt its body.' ('A fat girl.')

Havhala vhasidzana-hii vha mbo di tuwa na hetshila tshinoni vha swika muḍini wa khosi.
Those girls started to leave with that bird and they arrived at the chief's house.
Vha tshi swika muḍini wa khosi vha wana vhabebi vhavho vho kuvhangana henehala.
When they arrived at the chief's house they found their parents gathered there.

(From 'Foolish girls')

Figurative speech

Generally, *ngano* do not feature the extensive use of figurative language that often marks contemporary poetry and novels. Instead, as Scheub has shown in his many works on Nguni oral narrative, the *cante fable* genre relies on dramatic performance to provide aesthetic effect.¹⁹⁸ Even so, figurative language does characterise some *ngano*.

The narrative imprinting of water needs little explanation, as does the image of stormy weather to portray emotion and conflict. In timeless form, an approaching storm is expressive of some human crisis. This is portrayed poignantly in 'A little story,' in which accumulating thunder clouds express the emotional turbulence experienced by a childless mother. Similarly, the image of a cloudburst describes the feeling of being overwhelmed by adversity in 'Trouble like pouring rain.' In turn, the image of flashing lightning represents the violent, mercurial personality of a husband in 'A big hero': 'The rain pelted down! The sky thundered! The lightning struck, *gu!*'

A portent of quite a different kind is the act of defecation in 'Mr Dirty Pants.' The smell of faeces not only expresses the husband's abhorrent character, but also forecasts his sexually perverse behaviour at the dance.

Some elderly narrators are particularly skilled in the way they use such metaphors. Nyamukamadi Ndou employs the image of food preparation extensively in 'The pool of shrines.' She uses this core image of women's labour to represent a vicious relationship between mother and daughter. The daughter initially is pounded to death. Her slaughter develops the metaphor of the preparation of maize porridge as she is 'winnowed.' Following this, she is cooked in a pot.

Another outstanding instance of the use of metaphor is evident in 'Father on the footpath' by Anna Matlari. The drama of Lion-man's execution is preceded by a drawn-out, macabre process of humiliation: his status as adult, husband and son-in-law is undermined as he removes his hat, jacket and shoes (and presumably socks, leaving him only in a shirt and trousers) in a desperate attempt to silence his children who inform on him. In a skillful manner the narrator lets the children reveal the true identity of the monster and his deeds: the truth emerges as the man steadily loses his clothes in preparation for his skin to be shed and replaced by fur.

Compressed style

Such use of metaphor, however, is relatively rare. In contrast, *ngano* are marked by compressed style. Scheub notes that 'anything considered superfluous by the artist is omitted,' and that narrators therefore portray 'compressed experiences.'¹⁹⁹ *Ngano* narration is performance, and the narrator-actor dramatises what is expressed verbally in written genres.

In any case, few words are necessary in a narrative genre whose core images are understood so well. In 'A fool is always eating,' a young man is poisoned by his in-laws. His death and the conclusion of the story are described concisely, almost as a mere matter of fact: 'Then he started to stagger! He collapsed and died! ... Those people arrived there in the footpath and found that child dead. "Oh no! Our child has died!" They picked up his body. Later they arrived home. They arrived and dug a grave.'

Stories like 'Mr Dirty Pants' and 'Pumpkin seeds' similarly end with harsh abrupt-

ness and without any ornate reflection. In them there is no resolution, only a vision of eternally weak humanity.

Languages

Contemporary collections of *ngano* display the interaction of various local languages, mainly the Chikaranga dialect of Chishona, Sesotho, Xitsonga, Afrikaans and English. Needless to say, this points to contact both historical and contemporary. The representation of oral texts often is underpinned by sectarian ideologies or vested interests, and as such may involve efforts towards ‘language purity.’ However, such texts are ‘no longer automatically conceived as something rooted in one language, linguistic unit or “tribal” culture’ and ‘newly emergent genres of forms drawing on a mix of languages or media are no longer automatically brushed aside as somehow hybrid or un-African, an untoward departure from the pure and authentic genres of the past.’²⁰⁰

It may be more than coincidence that the villains in the story entitled ‘Magic’ are cannibals. They speak Tshiguvhu, a dialect of Tshivenda influenced by Sesotho. There are several other dialects too, such as Tshironga, which is spoken in southern districts bordering onto Xitsonga-speaking populations. Speakers of these dialects often are made to feel inferior by those who promote Tshiphani, the dialect which is spoken in the densely populated central districts of the region.²⁰¹ The status of Tshiphani derives from the location of missionary linguists at Maungani (now part of Thohoyandou) who developed written Tshivenda and took the vocabulary and speech patterns of surrounding communities as the norm.²⁰²

The use of certain Afrikaans words in turn imbues *ngano* with experiences of tension and conflict that have entered narrative practice from the domain of daily life. Expressions like ‘voetsek!’ (‘shove off!’) and ‘wragtag!’ (a mildly crude form of ‘truly’) link stories and their narrators with history’s power relations.ⁱ

Transcreation and representation

As explained, transcription, translation and interpretation have been major challenges in the production of this collection of stories. This not only is a corollary of the intricacies of expression and concealed meanings, but also an awareness of the complexities of representation.

Firstly, writing obviously is an incomplete and even ‘awkward’ medium for representing a multimodal expressive form like *ngano*. Oral narratives are teller’s stories, not writer’s stories,²⁰³ and their dramatic essence ‘is gone the minute sound is gone, and the shift is from the ear to the eye.’²⁰⁴ Secondly, the representation of oral performance never can be a ‘neutral transfer.’ In short, this process is determined by contextual factors that manifest the selective as well as subconscious reconstruction of original forms. As such, all translations are reinterpretations or ‘transcreations,’ⁱⁱ whether of stories themselves, or of the biographies of narrators. Accordingly, ‘dynamic rather than formal equivalence’ in translation is required: ‘One must seek a solution by devising something of a hybrid form, neither the original narrative performance nor a literary story, yet borrowing from both.’²⁰⁵

The transcriptions of speech from video recordings and their translation is the result of a collaborative effort between Tshifhiwa Mashau, Pfananani Masase, Mathuvhelo

ⁱ English does not escape this rather unfortunate appropriation. I once heard an old lady using the expression *bulati fulu* (‘bloody fool’) in a song.

ⁱⁱ Finnegan, 2007:159, 166, 172. Transcreation is particularly evident in the often divergent translations of a particular text by different persons.

Mavhetha, the narrators and myself.ⁱ Mavhetha and I returned to narrators after transcription and translation to check on uncertainties and to conduct in-depth analyses of the stories with them.

Translation involved two basic steps. The first took the form of a more or less direct translation. This was necessary not only to uncover meaning as clearly as possible, but also to remain faithful to stylistic traits I could identify. Once this had been done, finer ‘transcreation’ took place in order to represent culture-specific concepts and *ngano* style meaningfully in English.

Some retelling of African stories involve expanded versions of ‘excessively sparse’ original material that avoid the ‘dryness’ of original texts.²⁰⁶ Such representations play an important role in popularising African narratives, but they obviously do not yield reliable ethnographic or literary data. The obvious problem with adding information is that narratives may be imbued with cultural meanings and style characteristics that are not original attributes. A tell-tale sign of added meaning in the translation of older African narratives is portrayals of nature. These narratives as a rule do not ‘celebrate’ nature by means of elaborate descriptions.ⁱⁱ

To have made the translations in this collection fully palatable to readers not familiar with the genre would have involved sacrificing the voice of the narrators. This explains the retention of certain core words and phrases, especially the many repetitions of ‘now’ and ‘so’ (*zwino*) and demonstrative adverbs of place such as ‘over there’ (*hangei*). At the same time, we placed limits on the kind of extensive repetition that is tolerated in dramatic performance with all its social dynamics, but not on the ‘sterile,’ printed page. This is especially the case with the repetition of song lines.

Another form of intervention is that of the use of the rather clumsy past tense instead of the dynamic interplay in performance of the past and historic present tense.ⁱⁱⁱ This interplay also is tied up with the direct nature of dramatic enactment. However, in our opinion its transformation into written form too often clouds the clarity of plots.

The translation retains as much as possible of the original compressed sentences. One of the roots of this stylistic feature is the frequent chanting of the *salungano!* response.

Onomatopoeia are not easily translated: in retaining them in Tshivenda we also have attempted to give a brief impression of the poetry of the original presentation.

Performance settings

A self-evident contextual factor affecting representation is the setting of performance. As explained, *ngano* performance no longer is a vital social practice. As a consequence, the performances whose reduction to written form appears here, did not occur spontaneously but took place in ‘induced natural’ settings.²⁰⁷ This means they were requested by myself, and were attended by whoever was present at a particular time. In exceptional cases only three persons were present: the narrator, Mathuvhelo Mavhetha and I (as observer and camera operator). In most cases, however, narrators were joined by family members, friends and neighbours. Co-performers and audience members occasionally were so many that they filled a courtyard. In one such instance the younger members of the audience were so rambunctious that narrator Anna Matlari left out repetitions of a core image, remarking: ‘Look, I will not carry on with this part of the

ⁱ Van Warmelo’s Tshivenda dictionary (1989) helped to clarify many unclear and archaic concepts.

ⁱⁱ Lauri Harvilahti (1996:511) notes that the collection and publishing of folklore routinely involves ‘refashioning’ and that this ‘expresses fundamental cultural, ideological, and political processes.’

ⁱⁱⁱ Junod (1927, II:219) notes of Xitsonga narratives that they ‘are not told as if they were past and remote events, in an abstract manner, but considered as happening amongst the hearers themselves, the names of the listeners being often given to the heroes of the story, which are, so to speak, forced into the frame of everyday life.’

story. Be grateful for what you have heard so far.’ (‘A smart bird.’) However, this was a rare instance of audience impact on narration, and most performances unfolded in conditions controlled by storytellers.

Musical transcription

The transcription of musical pitch and rhythm is different to the translation of speech in the sense that the former has no semantic meaning that must be revealed. But it would be incorrect to surmise that no ‘processing’ is involved: musical transcription inevitably also is a product of ‘transcreation.’ Human hearing is notoriously personal and culture-specific: it tends to approximate pitch and rhythm to embedded, enculturated patterns.^{iv} In addition, the ear struggles to detect minute pitch differentiation and rhythmic subtleties, especially during high-speed delivery.

These challenges are intensified in the transcription of *ngano* songs by the fact that their contemporary performance sometimes lacks stability. For example, it is not always clear whether *rubato* treatment of solo phrases is deliberate or not. In cases of doubt I turned for guidance to Blacking’s analyses and codification of the stylistic features of older forms of Venda music,²⁰⁸ as well as my own findings in relation to the characteristics of *ngano* songs and other styles of vocal music,²⁰⁹ although this is not to suggest that the *ngano* songs in this collection necessarily adhere strictly to these principles. They display some unusual features that may be the result of inaccurate transcription or the instability of performance; they even may point to traits not identified before. Perhaps the development of effective transcription software will provide answers in the future.

Songs

The legacy of narratives left by //Kabbo and other San narrators in collaboration with the Bleek family has been of incalculable value in cognitive archaeology and folklore studies. This collaboration took place during the early 1870s, shortly before Thomas Edison invented the phonograph in 1877. Access to the phonograph obviously would have helped to preserve the songs, an element of the Bleek collection little discussed and lost forever. These songs ‘had a most dramatic effect’ when they were performed with ‘appropriate tones and gestures.’²¹⁰

Regrettably, the remainder of the 19th century, as well as the 20th century, generally was not marked by the documentation and discussion of songs in southern African *cante fables*. Most presentations of stories mention the act of singing, but they seldom provide lyrics or music. Notable exceptions include work by pioneering ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey and a discussion of the role and nature of song in Chishona narratives by Kriel.²¹¹ In any case, a massive amount of information related to the aesthetic role of songs in *cante fables* has been lost: this indeed is a high price to pay for the conventional separation between training programmes in music and literature.

The power of song

Forms of artistic expression in Africa generally serve as sources of identity and power.

^{iv} Kubik’s (1979:242) familiar dictum notes that hearing habits in the field of the recognition of note systems, once learned, are apparently irreversible. Someone who has ‘grown up’ into a given note system from childhood onward perceives the note material of a foreign musical culture always in relation to his own patterns ... The ingrained inner note system is embossed so deeply that it *must* be projected reflex-fashion on external stimuli. By the immense power of this inner pattern the outer stimuli are unbent, ‘heard as they should be.’

'*Ipfi langa ndi musevhe*' is a common Tshivenda expression which means 'My voice is an arrow.' Put differently, people know that speech used skillfully may influence social relations. Guitarist Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila from Tshakuma remarks: 'You must know that what I sing about is for you to hear. You taste it as if it is rice which is eaten with a spoon. You are enjoying it very much.'ⁱ Dutton remarks in this regard that 'the evolutionary function of language is not only to be a means of efficient communication but to be a signal of fitness and general intelligence.'ⁱⁱ Accordingly, the young heroes in 'Thunder returns' and 'A hero learns a lesson' prove their capacity as developing adults by mastering dance-song performance, an indispensable mode of social interaction in precolonial life.ⁱⁱⁱ

Responsorial chanting and singing is a distinguishing feature of *ngano* performance. The call or solo phrase usually is performed by narrators, and the response or chorus phrase by co-performers. This interactive expressive technique is aimed at a variety of strategic social objectives: it organises statuses, helps to negotiate alliances and promotes amiability and reconciliation.²¹³ This is illustrated by the motif of the young man whose skill in rain-making brings him to the cusp of conflict with his community ('Thunder returns,' 'A hero learns a lesson'). The young hero is unaware of the socially divisive potential of his special power, and almost creates a rift between himself and his village. However, all ends well because he is reconciled with them when they join him in dancing and singing.ⁱⁱⁱ

In contrast, the cohesive function of responsorial singing may hide malignant intentions. As explained, a core image in *ngano* is that of a young man who accosts a group of impressionable young girls at a river ('Foolish girls'). He uses his strong voice to entice the girls into joining him in performance. But this is a ruse to gain their trust and persuade them to follow him to his home where evil lurks. The girls agreeing to sing with the young man is an indication that he has overcome their suspicion.

Similarly, the invitation by characters in *ngano* to others to participate in musical performance exploits the aesthetic power of singing to distract their attention and escape a predicament. This is often depicted in stories in which people are accosted by dangerous animals. They invite the animals to sing with them, and flee when they become entranced by the music.²¹⁴

The familiar function of music-making as a means of spiritual communication is manifested in stories like 'The woman at the fountain,' 'Spirit' and 'The pool of shrines.' In the latter, a father searches for his murdered daughter in a pool inhabited by ancestral spirits:

He arrived there, he arrived and sang to the spirits, asking, 'Is my child here?' That child answered! She had been resurrected by those ones from the past, those ones she never knew. She said, 'I am here father. I was pounded, they crushed me.' The father asked, 'And what now?' Those ones from the past said, 'Just sing your sacred song ...'

This story is significant because singing also is linked to resurrection, the desire for eternal existence that surfaces in other narratives too: faithful animals are brought back to life by chanting and singing in 'Mighty rooster' and 'Fortune lies ahead.' Similarly, the falling of life-giving rain as a consequence of musical expression occurs in 'Thunder returns' and 'A hero learns a lesson.' Such power of speech also is evident in the magic chant in 'Mr Elephant learns a lesson' that enables lowly Mr Tortoise to find groundwater for his drought-stricken village. Narrative references to rainmaking

ⁱ Kruger, 1994:385. In the culture of poverty in which the singer lived, rice was regarded as an expensive food not often enjoyed.

ⁱⁱ This correlates with a young man's struggle for self-expression in an Isixhosa story (Scheub, 1992:251-259; 'The boy who did not want to marry his sister').

ⁱⁱⁱ Conversely, when musicians for some reason dislike song leaders, they may withhold their participation in performance (see Kruger, 1994:203-204).

relate to the performance of fertility rituals prior to the rainy season. These rituals include songs addressed to spiritual forces associated with rain and growth. *Tshikona*, the Venda bamboo-pipe dance serves this purpose, as does *Ngoma dza Midzimu* trance music.

Chanting and singing generally are considered to have magical effect. A familiar core image in world literature is that of the opening of a door by means of magic chants. This also occurs in 'Smelly blankets' and other *ngano*.ⁱ In 'Magic,' chanting in turns invokes powerful natural forces while singing turns a husband into a sexual predator in 'Mr Dirty Pants': 'When he sang 'gidi-gidi, zhoto' he changed, this man! He became that monster in the song...'

The poetry of song

As suggested, the entrancement induced by musical performance is linked to its nature as a form of emotional expression. Kriel²¹⁵ remarks of singing in Chishona *ngano* that it 'makes a very deep contact in the human heart.' In 'Goodbye,' the mother of a murdered child says: 'I am singing because I do not know what happened to my child.' Singing not only is a way of reporting her loss, but also of expressing her worry. A young woman in turn reports a serious legal transgression in 'The princess who slept late.' She is in shock and is able to do so only by singing: 'Now, she was unable to explain what had happened to her. She could only sing that song again, *Hayani hashu a ri tsha sinḁa*.'

Musical expression accordingly plays an integral role in the portrayal and transmission of narrative images. This most obviously is the case when sounds are given expressive musical character, such as in the *Ti-ti-dolilo* call of a small bird ('A fool is always eating'), the *Gi! Gi!* resonant sound of a pestle striking a wooden mortar ('The pool of shrines') and the deep *Duu! Duu!* of a drum ('The wandering musician').

Singing also plays a more subtle role. In both 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl' and 'Mrs Devhele goes down,' wives are found guilty of misdemeanour during divination, represented by the image of crossing a pool on a thong. However, their guilt is suggested *before* they fall into the water when they cry as they sing: 'Then it was the turn of the younger wife. She took the first step. She cried as she started singing, *Ro vha ro ya u lima ... hii-hii!* Oh, she was singing and crying ... She fell into the water!' ('The curious case of the guinea-fowl.')

Chorus phrases and chants generally are short and relatively simple. As such they often appear innocuous. However, they arguably play a decisive role in expressing compelling experiences and powerful emotions. The repetitive nature of chorus phrases, frequently within a narrow melodic range (often the interval of a third), produces a mesmerising effect with profound emotional associations. For example, in 'A fat girl,' a dog refuses to eat the bones of its murdered young owner: '*Mbulungwane! Thi li munḁ wanga!*' ('I do not eat my mistress!'; Fig. 2.) Similarly, the insistent repetition in 'A little story' of the phrase '*Lavhelela dzhatsha!*' ('Watch out!') expresses a mother's mortal fear for the safety of her clay child who is threatened by a storm. Similar profound emotion is expressed in the chant-like, hypnotic chorus response ('*Dagalume!*') in 'Sorrow' that expresses the dark spectre of death (Fig. 3). In 'Magic,' repeated chanting helps to accumulate tension as a cannibal pursues his wife across a wilderness. The chant '*U dendele*' ('Father on the footpath') in turn expresses the hysteria of a child pursued by her violent father.

Although particular phrases are not directly expressive of human personality, their insistent repetition appears to emphasise certain character traits. The chorus line '*Tavhaila!*' ('On all fours!') in 'The man in a fur coat' emphasises the baboon-like

ⁱ See 'The cannibal's tooth' and 'Mr Hippopotamus throws his weight around' in Kruger & Le Roux (2007:103-107, 144-148).

foolishness of a husband, while the chorus phrase ‘*Mbutsha muninga!*’ (‘A troublesome wife!’) in ‘Mrs Devhele goes down’ underlines the unruly nature of a spouse.

Movement similarly is given musical character by means of short repetitive phrases: the chorus phrase (‘*Dangali kulende!*’) in ‘The babysitter’ portrays the violent way the duiker treats the child (*dangali* indicates oscillating movement; Fig. 4). In ‘The girls in the baobab,’ the sequential chorus phrases (‘*Tendeleka! Tendeleka!*’) express the oscillating movements of the old man under the baobab tree (Fig. 5).

In ‘A little story,’ the phrase ‘*Kole lo lelemela*’ (‘The clouds are gathering’) is repeated four times (two complete sequences), arguably portraying the movement of thunder clouds. In ‘A man falls,’ the expression ‘*Bvunga-bvunga*’ has a steeply falling, saw-tooth melodic contour (the song is transcribed at pitch), and Johanna Muleba deliberately sings in her low range to imitate the heavy treading of the animal (Fig. 6).

Similarly, the punctuated rhythmic patterning of the solo phrase of the second song in ‘Eating with wild animals’ appears to serve sexual imagery (Fig. 7), while the repetitive, lilting solo phrase ‘*Ra kure-ndidza, kure-ndidza!*’ (‘Foolish girls’) arguably suggests sexual assault (Fig. 8). The portrayal of sexual voracity in this phrase also is manifest in the distinctive pronunciation of the ‘r’ sound (*Ra kure-ndidza*). Unlike the soft ‘r’ in English, the Tshivenda ‘r’ is produced by vibrating the tongue hard against the palate. This quality often is exploited by singers for expressive purposes.¹

Fig. 2. Song extract from ‘A fat girl’ (Johanna Muleba)

Fig. 3. Song extract from ‘Sorrow’ (Florence Mphoshomali)

Fig. 4. The expression of oscillating movement in the chorus phrase of ‘The babysitter’ (Mukondeleli Mathunya)

¹ This is exemplified in the phrase ‘*Ri khou tshila rothe*’ (‘We shall all live’), popularised by guitarist Solomon Mathase of Thohoyandou (see Kruger, 1994), in which the ‘r’ sound is elongated to give poetical expression to the singer’s appeal.

and chorus phrases.

Balanced phrasing means that songs not only may be repeated, but also that song lines may be repeated within a particular song. As such, a distinction must be made between basic and total metrical patterns. In Fig. 10, the basic metrical pattern of 16 pulses also comprises the total metrical pattern.

In Fig. 11, the basic metrical pattern comprises 18 pulses. However, the total pattern comprises 54 pulses: the first system is repeated (36 pulses) and it is followed by the second system (18 pulses).

Basic metrical patterns often comprise 12, 15, 18 or 24 pulses, made up of 3-pulse groups. The common 12-pulse pattern frequently comprises four 3-pulse groups, taking the form of one of the so-called African standard patterns, usually $2 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 3$ (Fig. 12).²¹⁸

Patterns comprising 16 pulses are less common in Venda music, although quite prevalent in *ngano* songs. *Ngano* songs also feature other, much less conventional metrical lengths. The first song in 'A smart bird' shares its 20-pulse pattern with that of songs from other musical categories.ⁱ The 21-pulse pattern of the song in 'Mrs Rock-Rabbit' is exceptional,ⁱⁱ as is the 14-pulse pattern in the second song of 'The wandering musician.'ⁱⁱⁱ The song in 'Child of my mother' curiously shifts from an initial 12-pulse phrase to 15-pulse phrases. This may be a consequence of fading memory, but the shift is performed consistently, and it seems intentional.

As explained, the chorus phrase of *ngano* songs usually is short and fixed. Solo phrases in contrast mostly are longer (Figs. 3 & 11). They often carry narrative content, which results in melodic and rhythmic variation. As such, they often are much more demanding to perform, and they regularly contain glides (Fig. 13). However, there are a significant number of *ngano* songs in which the length of the chorus phrase exceeds that of the solo phrase, and which features melodic and rhythmic characteristics more often associated with solo phrases (Fig. 13). Clearly, chorus singers at times are expected to be as adept in performance as expert narrator-singers.

Chorus phrases in addition sometimes repeat themselves entirely or partly within a particular metrical pattern (Fig. 14).

Fig. 9. Melodic variation and metrical balance in 'Mighty rooster' (Anna Matlari)

The musical score for 'Mighty rooster' is presented in four systems. The first system is divided into two parts: 'Melodic variation' and 'Metrical balance'. The lyrics are in Xhosa and include: 'Kho-lo-mo dzi a xu-wa! Tsha nku - ku! Dzi xu-wa na vha-fhi - o? Tsha nku - ku! Tshi -no-ni tsha nku - ku! Tshi -no-ni tsha nku - ku! Dzi xu-wa na Ma-le - ma. Tsha nku - ku! Ma-le-ma-ma-xa-vha - thu! Tsha nku - ku! Tshi -no-ni tsha nku - ku! Tshi -no-ni tsha nku - ku!'

a pulse is represented by a quaver.

ⁱ They include a girls' initiation song as well as bow songs (see Kruger, 1986:26, 31, 37, 102, 107-108).

ⁱⁱ Despite careful consideration I have been unable to perceive any other metrical length.

ⁱⁱⁱ The duration of this pattern is open to interpretation, since its rendering was not strictly rhythmical.

Fig. 17. Melodic structure in sequential thirds in 'The python healer' (Flora Kwinda)

: | :s' |s' |s' |s' |s' |s' |s' |s' |f' |m' :- |m' :m' |m' :- |d' :- || :- |s :-
 Ndo da u hwa-la Gwa-la-gwa-la-Nya-nga-la-mbu-ya. Hae-ya.
 |d :- |d :d |d :- || :- | : | : || :- || :- |l :- |f :- | : | :
 Nya-nga-la-mbu-ya. Nya-nga-la-mbu-ya.

Fig. 18. Sequential melodic structure in 'The cart of Tshimange' (Mathuvhelo Mavhetha)

Go-lo', go-loi ya Tshi-ma-nge. Yo pa', yo pa-na nga mbe-vha.

Fig. 19. Sequential melodic structure in 'The python healer' (Johanna Muleba)

Solo |m' :m' |m' :r' |d' :- |t : | : | : |d' :d' |d' :t || :- |s : | : | :
 Vho-kho-tsi vha a fa. Vho-kho-tsi vha a fa.
 Chorus |t : | : | : |m :- |s :s |s :- |s : | : | : |s :- |t :t |t :-
 da. Hee, ta-la-vha-nda. Hee, ta-la-vha-

Tonality

One of Blacking's most important findings regarding older African music is the principle of shifting tonality.¹ Venda melodies accordingly 'may be called bitonal, in the sense that they shift from the influence of one implicit or explicit tone-centre to another.'²²⁰ This tonality shift occurs between *phala*, the 'keynote,' and *thakhula*, the 'lifter' (from *takula*, to lift), 'which lies a whole tone above the keynote and "lifts" a melody onto it.'ⁱⁱ This shift is most clearly evident in sequences of seven descending tones, the first of which may be regarded as the keynote and the last as the lifter²²¹ (Fig. 20).

The bitonal shift is not always as evident as in Fig. 20, and implicit shifts are much more common in *ngano* songs. Underlying these shifts is the principle of harmonic equivalence. This principle relates to the fact that 'every tone may be conceptualised as having a companion tone' located at the distance of an octave, fifth or fourth. Companion tones have the same harmonic value and they are selected to create

ⁱ Originally identified in Blacking, 1959b. The term 'tonality' obviously is borrowed from Western musical practice, but it is not used in the precisely the same way. In particular, it does not suggest any notion of keys or modulation.

ⁱⁱ Blacking, 1970:13. *Phala* and *thakhula* correspondingly are names of tones in the set of bamboo-pipes that features in the *tshikona* dance, the slats of the xylophone (*mbila dza mutondo*) as well as the tongues of the lamellophone (*mbila dza madeze*). Other tones also have names. Some of these names refer to the sound of a particular pipe (e.g. *kholomo*, cow), and others to its function (*thevheleli*, one that follows; *kholomwana*, calf; the upper octave of *kholomo*).

melodic variationⁱ (Figs. 21 & 22). This is evident in Fig. 21 in the melodic variation of the solo phrase which is a fourth lower in the second cycle, while either melodic line may be performed in Fig. 22.

In practice, melodic lines may be conceptualised as streams of chords from which melodic variations may be derived.²²² This gives rise to extensive implicit tonality shifts in which the ‘keynote’ and ‘lifter’ are not heard a whole tone apart as in Fig. 20.

Two forms of such tonality shift may be identified. They emerge from the practice in responsorial music like *ngano* songs for tonality shifts to occur ‘regularly between solo and chorus sections.’²²³ In a model derived from vocal initiation music, the solo phrase centres on the lifter and the chorus phrase on the keynote²²⁴ (Fig. 23). Accordingly, the tonality shift in Fig. 23 takes place between lifter A (at the end of the solo phrase) with its implied companion tone E (a fifth above), and keynote D (in the chorus phrase) with its implied companion tone G (a fifth below; see Fig. 24).

The second model of tonality shift, derived from instrumental music like *tshikona*, the bamboo-pipe dance, is the reverse of the vocal model. Here the solo phrase centres on the keynote and the chorus phrase on the lifter.²²⁵ This is evident in Fig. 25 in the shift between keynote G (at the end of the solo phrase) with its implied companion tone D (a fifth above) and lifter C (at the end of the chorus phrase) with its implied companion tone F (a fifth below; see Fig. 26).

In contrast with Fig. 20, in which the keynote and lifter mark the beginning and end of a phrase, Fig. 27 features what Blacking²²⁶ calls a ‘retrograde’ version of the tonality shift in which solo and chorus phrases ‘begin with passing notes and move towards the leading note and final respectively.’ In Fig. 27, the tonality shift occurs clearly between keynote G and lifter A in the solo phrase.

The tonal weight of the chorus phrase in Fig. 27 is more ambiguous, but it seems to centre on lifter E, the companion tone of A in the solo phrase. This kind of tonality shift also is a feature of much Zimbabwean lamellophone music. Andrew Tracey²²⁷ remarks that ‘for someone who knows Shona music, visiting Venda to the south is like a step back into history, to an earlier level of Shona music. Although a few of the long sequences [of Shona music] are there, variations of the old short sequences are more in evidence, often with the influence of Sotho pentatonic parallelism.’

The retrograde tonality shift with clear emphasis on the keynote and lifter also unfolds within chorus phrases. The tonality shift in Fig. 28 is weakly expressed in the solo phrase but strongly in the chorus phrase that evolves over the total metrical length of 42 pulses between keynote G and lifter A.

Fig. 20. The basic tonality shift in ‘The woman at the fountain’ (Miriam Vhengani)

The musical score for 'The woman at the fountain' is presented in two staves of 8/8 time. The first staff contains the solo phrase, which begins with a keynote (D) and ends with a lifter (A). The lyrics for this phrase are 'Li no zwi - vha ri - pi.' The second staff contains the chorus phrase, which begins with a lifter (E) and ends with a keynote (D). The lyrics for this phrase are 'Hu na Ne - mu - ko - lo - lo wa li - lo - mbe.' The score includes a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 8/8.

ⁱ Blacking, 1970:18. This is well illustrated in the music of *tshikona*, the bamboo-pipe dance (see Blacking, 1967, 1970). Co-researcher Eloff Mashandule identified these companion tones as *zwifanaho*, ‘things which are similar’ (from *fana*, to resemble; Malavuwe, 1984).

Epilogue: words and music

The complexities of musical transcription and analysis often displace the interpretation of musical meanings in narrative contexts beyond the scope of our investigations. These meanings consequently may become relegated and even disregarded.

However, it is clear that the chants and songs of *ngano* do not merely serve unfolding plots: formal, tonal-melodic, rhythmic and other musical features infuse core images with meanings and emotions; they also provide onomatopoeia with poetic quality and portray images of motion.

Chorus phrases have an important yet often underestimated function. Their typical brevity and simplicity belies the role they play in expressing atavistic narrative actions and emotions. Le Roux²²⁸ first identified the repeated insistence of short chorus phrases, especially those that function as lamentations in the context of tragedy. Their mesmerising effect arguably is rooted in the subconscious perception of repeated metrical units and tonality shifts, all within the mould of swaying, responsorial singing. Put differently, narrative images are gripping because they tap into the deepest fears of humanity and because their expression in performance entrains participants in shared bodily states.

Dennis Dutton²²⁹ is ambiguous about the cohesive function of ritual performance. Following Steven Pinker, he warns against the use of 'gluey metaphors' like 'bonding' and 'cementing relationships.' In fact, the motives of art are 'ancient and complicated.' They are directed towards community, but they also are underpinned by sexual selection that 'pits suitors against each other in a competition with real winners and losers.' However, the fact that coherence is elusive does not deter humans from seeking it, also in art, and there is evidence of the use of the interactive techniques of music-making in broader processes of social adaptation in Venda culture.²³⁰

Like other categories of Venda music,²³¹ *ngano* songs position their performers within the world. The map of Africa on a wall at the village of Muswodi expresses a notion of a wider historical and cultural space, one rooted less in the ambiguities of colonisation as its disruptions which are resisted by narrative images and musical patterns as timeless as uninhabited areas of the Limpopo Valley. Of these images and patterns, those that are redolent of a past shared with Chishona-speakers is perhaps clearest, and they are evident in the vocabulary of song phrases as well as ancient formal and tonal-melodic structures.

Part III

Performance instructions and pronunciation guide

The *salungano!* response

There is no strict rule for the frequency of the chanted *salungano!* response. It is conventionally interjected by co-performers between a narrator's spoken phrases. The end of phrases often is indicated by a decrease in pitch as the narrator gets breathless. *Salungano!* also follows certain key words. *Zwino* (now), a word that initiates a new set of actions, is almost always followed by this response.

There usually is a brief but clear demarcation between the narrator's spoken lines and the *salungano!* response. However, this demarcation disappears when a narrator sometimes speeds up her delivery (especially when narrative climaxes occur) so that an overlap with the chanted response occurs.

Songs

Repeat signs have been included only where they apply to basic metrical patterns. Total metrical patterns (i.e. entire songs) may be repeated at will.

When a first solo or chorus phrase is bracketed in transcriptions, it means that the line is sung only during repetitions.

Lyrics are presented fully in the stories initially only. Only the first song line is presented subsequently.

Generally, only one variation has been selected for purposes of transcription.

Pitch levels

Pitch levels have been selected for purposes of presentation. Songs therefore must be transposed to pitch levels suitable for performance. In cases where singing took place in the tenor register, the music was transposed into the soprano range. This is not the case in 'A man falls,' where the singing in the tenor represents the heavy walking of an elephant.

Allocation of parts

The narrator performs the top line in a system and the chorus the bottom line.

Note groupings

Note groupings do not necessarily suggest beats, although a three-pulse beat is common in cycles comprising multiples of six.

Pronunciation guide

Vowels:

a (short) (*mulisa*, herder): **m**other
a (long) (*lamba*, refuse): **a**rgue
e (short) (*nemeneme*, flying ants): **n**eck
e (long) (*fhela*, end): **p**ear
i (*pandani*, dig): **s**ick
o (*zwino*, now): **p**ort
u (*vuwa*, waking up): **b**ook

Paired vowels:

The following paired vowels must be pronounced separately:

au (*khauwa*, break)
ae (*mutshaeli*, driver)
ei (*vheuwe*, you)

Consonants:

l̥, n̥, t̥ and d̥: the tongue touches the palate behind the teeth
l, n, t and d: the tongue curls back into the mouth against the palate, producing a rounded sound
bw (*mmbwa*, dog): **B**jorn
fh (*afho*, there): like vh (see below), but voiceless
g (*wanga*, my): **g**arden
ñ (*ñombe*, cattle): a velar nasal sound, like **sing**
tsh (*tshilombe*, musician): **ch**arge
vh (*vhothi*, door): a voiced consonant; like **why**, but with the lips pouted
v (*mmvulela*, open for): **v**enom
w (*wanga*, my): **w**ater
y (*ya*, of): **y**ard
zh (*milenzhe*, legs): **g**enre
zw (*zwino*, now): one sound; do not overemphasise the 'w'

Part IV
Life sketches and stories



Anna Matlari

Please pass me my beads. I like to work while I chat and tell stories.¹ I live here at Muswodi-Tshisimani. My place is near Tshililo Liquor Market and Muswodi Primary School. The headman's homestead is just across the road. We go there for meetings and pension. Because I struggle, I make necklaces from beads. I also use the beads to make pouches for cell phones. The beads are very small, but I still see well and my fingers are strong.

My daughter Constance and her family live not far away. Constance is one of those who make *malabi* for Tambani.² You have met her young daughter Rofhiwa. She knows some *ngano*. But she does not yet tell them in the proper way.



Waterpoort near Makhado is a place many old people know. Our people always lived there. But when white farmers came, we started to work for them. This is where I was born in 1928, on the farm King's Kloof where my father worked. His name was Lukas Maphalaphatwa. He ploughed and planted tomatoes. He worked hard and became foreman.

My mother also worked on the farm. Her name was Nyakhakhu. She had five children – three daughters and two boys. I am the third child. My two sisters live at Ha-Mashau, in the south. My parents joined them there when they became too old to work.

I liked living on the farm. The farmer was called Flip. His wife was Drina and their daughter was little Maria. When I was a child, I looked after Maria. Later I worked in the kitchen. I cleaned and cooked pumpkin, meat, sausage and potatoes. I had to lay the table. After eating, they rang the bell. They called me to take the dishes to the kitchen. When Flip was working in the fields, I put Maria on my back and took his food to him.

I did not go to school. There were no schools, there was nothing. But there were so many people working on farms that we were able to have our *domba* initiation school at Mulambwane. We learned about secret things. We made and sang with the *lugube*.³ We sang:

*Tshitaka tsha Gole ndi dzunde.
Ndi dzunde la Nyamutshenuwa.*

Chief Mphaphuli's cemetery is his field.
The field of the scared woman.⁴

We also sang with the *lugube* which is made from iron.⁵ This *lugube* we bought from the shop. We liked to sing with it when walking around. My mother was the one who sang and told me stories. Children today go to school. There is almost no time to tell them the stories of old people.

My husband was Piet Matlari. My father wanted fifty pounds from him for marrying me. Piet was poor, and fifty pounds were a lot of money. When marrying, the bridegroom's family bring the money to the in-laws. They put the money on a carpet or a reed mat the old people used. Then they roll up the carpet. If the money is

still there the next day, the in-laws are happy with it. The wedding can then go ahead.

Piet and I worked for many years on the farm Hardepad⁶ at Waterpoort. The farm was owned by the Fick family. It passed from Petrus to Steven to Lammer.

We were happy when the Ficks gave us venison to eat. They shot kudu and bush pigs that raided their fields. Piet always had to collect the carcasses with a tractor.

Piet was a good worker and later became foreman. When he wanted to find another job, Lammer refused. Those days people needed a pass to change jobs. Lammer did not want to sign the pass. But Piet left anyway. It was a difficult time. Piet could not find other work, so he came back to the farm. After some time, Lammer signed his pass. Piet then worked on the roads for a short time. He came back to the farm again, until 1986. Then he came to live at Muswodi. He died in 2007.

I had ten children – five girls and five boys. I struggled to send them to school. One daughter has died, and two sons. My girls live all over: Kutama, Nzhelele and Muswodi. My son Samuel lives with his wife in Johannesburg. The other son works at Tshikondeni Coal Mine. Then there is my son Freddy: he and his wife both work in Polokwane. I live here in their home with their three young sons. Their parents cannot look after them while working, so I am raising them.

Long ago, because people were so poor, they did not want to pay tax.⁷ When the police came to catch them, they ran into the mountains. Nobody could find them there. But if you were caught, they took you to jail at Zebediela. To get out of jail, people rubbed their eyes with snuff. Then their eyes became red and they cried. The police would become worried. They gave them money for medicine and told them to go.

When I was still young, pension was one rand. People living at Waterpoort had to walk to Makhado for pension. It took more than a day to walk there. So they slept on the road. One day, when people got to the office, they were told that the blind also could ask for pension.

I worry that so many of our people are dying. Some are ill. Others kill themselves, like one of my sons. Their hearts are heavy because people in the family argue. Men do not like us women to be too strong; they become worried.

I go to the ZCC. I feel safe there. Our services take place on a Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. We pray for health and drink tea together. I go to Moria every year. I am glad that the mobile clinic also stops at the ZCC site.

1. Kriel (1971:19) notes of Chishona *ngano* that ‘certain lengthy but non-strenuous tasks like basket weaving also affords good opportunities [for narration], especially for the longer type of story.’

2. *Malabi*, from Afrikaans *lappies* (cloths), a reference to the applique blocks embroidered by the Tambani Embroidery Project (www.tambani.co.za; see ‘Tambani,’ p. 31).

3. A musical bow performed by girls during puberty (see Kirby, 1968: plate 63B; Kruger, 1986:17-45).

4. This is a hoeing song. According to oral testimony, chief Mphaphuli monitored compulsory work (*dzunde*) by his subjects in his fields strictly, causing people to fear him (Kruger, 1986:40).

5. The mouth-harp.

6. Lit. Hard Road.

7. Annual family tax of one pound was introduced in 1903 (Nemudzivhadi, 1985:25).

The girls in the baobab

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

This story was told by my mother.¹

There was an old man called Mr Tshisimba. Now, about this Mr Tshisimba: he woke up with the sun every day and went to the veld with the chief's cattle. When it was late afternoon, he returned with them.

Now, there were girls who had gone to collect firewood. There were ten of them. Those girls were roaming far away in the veld.

It was a hot summer day. Now, the girls became thirsty. They were collecting firewood where Mr Tshisimba was herding the cattle. He was lounging lazily against a big baobab. This tree had a hollow high up in which water collected when it rained. Mr Tshisimba used to drink that water when he was herding the cattle. He would knock pegs² into the tree and then climb up. When he finished drinking, he would come down and pull those pegs out.

So, Mr Tshisimba was sitting comfortably against the tree while his cattle were grazing. Hah, now: those girls wanted to leave with their firewood, but they were thirsty.

Ah! Mr Tshisimba coughed to draw their attention: 'Axa!'³ He coughed again: 'Axa!' Then the girls saw him reclining against the tree.

'Hey! Hello Mr Tshisimba!'

'Good! Hello! My girls! My wives! Don't you look pretty when you are collecting firewood! So, how can I help you?'

'Oh dear! We are crying Mr Tshisimba!'

'What is the matter my girls?'

'We are thirsty. We are dying of thirst! We are begging for water!'

'Shame, my children! You know, if you all agree to be my wives and love me, I will insert my pegs and you can climb up the tree to drink water. You will drink and sit up there, you will drink and sit up there.'

I say, the girls agreed between themselves to marry Mr Tshisimba so that they could get water. And so they replied, 'Really, Mr Tshisimba, we love you! Truly, we love you! We cannot turn down such good fortune. We will be your wives. Just give us water. We must drink because our home is far.'

'OK, good!' Mr Tshisimba knocked his pegs in one by one. The girls climbed up. They drank water and rested in the tree. They were pleased because they were no longer thirsty. Then they shouted, 'Hey! You, Mr Tshisimba! Do you really think we could be in love with an old man? One with white hair and cracked skin?⁴ No, no, no, no! We cannot love an old man! We cannot return home and marry you!'⁵

So, Mr Tshisimba got up and took out those pegs of his: *tomo-tomo-tomo-tomo!* He put them next to the tree and sat down again.

Those girls started to sing:

[Narrator]

A ri tsha ni lamba Madzinga, haye!

Ndi ri, a ri tsha ni lamba inwi Madzinga haye.

Hee, mulisa wa mahombe nyanga Rathovhele.

Ee, ee! Madzinga Tshimbale.

[Chorus]

Tendeleka, tendeleka!

We will not reject Madzinga!

I say, we will not reject you,
Madzinga.

The lonely herder who looks
after the cattle of the chief.

[Name of the old man]

Walking up and down!⁶

Mr Tshisimba was sitting down there, laughing. The girls were sitting up there, begging: 'We are not rejecting you! We are not turning you down, Mr Tshisimba! No, we love you! Don't you hear us singing? *A ri tsha ni lamba Madzinga haye! ...*'

Yes, yes, Mr Tshisimba was satisfied again. He was laughing happily because those girls were saying they loved him. So, he knocked the pegs in one by one. Those girls: they all climbed down peg by peg. They picked up their bundles of firewood and put them on their head. They sang:

[Narrator]

Ndi ri, a ri tsha vha funa, wee, Madzinga!

I say, we no longer love you
Madzinga!

Ri ri: a ri tsha vha funa Madzinga, haye!

We say: we do not love Madzinga!

Mulisa wa mahombe nyanga Vho-Rathovhele.

The lonely herder who looks
after the cattle of the chief.

Ee, Madzinga Tshimbale.

Yes, Madzinga Tshimbale.

[Chorus]

Tendeleka, tendeleka!

Walking up and down!

Yes, yes! Do you see Mr Tshisimba's problem? Those girls had finished drinking water and climbed down the tree. But then they told Mr Tshisimba they no longer loved him.

And so Mr Tshisimba was left behind without getting even one wife. He returned with his cattle during the early evening. Do you see?

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 11 June 2009

Translator Tshifhiwa Mashau is critical of Mr Tshisimba's behaviour for three reasons: firstly, water is such a basic requirement that it may not be withheld from anyone; secondly, blackmail is reprehensible; thirdly, marriage proposals are to be made with due regard for proper procedure, and not in an impulsive, slapdash manner. Of course, this story primarily speaks to the listener as comedy, with clear elements of farce. The scenario of ten girls betrothing themselves all at once to an old man is meant to be ridiculous and amusing. And while feelings are hurt, no serious transgression takes place.

But the central purpose of comedy, namely to reveal the contradictions of human experience in a playful manner,⁷ requires consideration of a possible deeper truth: that of the plight of an elderly, destitute man. Although it has become not uncommon in contemporary life to see retired men herding cattle, this is a result of changing socio-economic patterns, and is not necessarily regarded as demeaning. However, in precolonial times the duty of herding was that of boys. When they were young, they looked after goats, and when they were older, cattle. Herding was a test of skill, endurance and courage (see 'Mighty rooster'). This, therefore, was an important early step towards the attainment of full manhood. Boys passed through this phase to military training and then became adults with attendant responsibilities. Conversely, 'old men looking after cattle would have been considered destitute in the olden days.'⁸ They also would have been targets of ridicule since they were supposed to be cared for by their family while they basked in the sun and gave advice in community matters.

In other words, this story may express some of the anxieties and obsessions of an old man who appears to live in penury without kith or kin. And so it may happen that, in typical comedy style, everyone around him sees a truth to which he is oblivious. Driven by loneliness, he lives in an 'ego-centred dream-world' from which he is then

‘brought abruptly down to earth’⁹ as the girls desert him and he returns to a silent home.

1. Krüger (1933/34:2-4) documented a similar narrative entitled ‘The chief’s herd boy.’
2. Because of their smooth, straight trunk, baobabs are difficult to climb. Stories about baobabs often feature the use of pegs (see Drake, 2006:38, 40).
3. The ‘x’ in *axa!* is pronounced like the ‘ch’ in **loch**.
4. Such cracked skin is caused when people sit too close to a fire in winter.
5. A women’s pounding song (*mafhuwe*) accordingly states (Kruger, 1986:258):

Idani u vhone: vho-mme anga vho lovha. Come and see: my mother has died.
Vho-khotsi anga vho siya mmbudza vha ri Before his death my father told me not to
ni songo sala na funa mukalaha. fall in love with an old man.

Guitarist Mashudu Mulaudzi from Tsianda in turn sings (Kruger, 1994:257):

Vha tshi vhona vhakalaha vha sa kalahi. Look at old men.
Thoho ndi mmbvi. Their heads are grey with age.
Minwaha ndi mahumi They count their age in multiples of ten
a vha litshi u dzhoḷa. but they still engage in illicit love affairs.

Blacking (1969a:177-78) cites a girls’ initiation song called ‘*Lamba-mukalaha*’ (‘Refusing an old man’) in which girls indicate that they are turning down the advances of older men. This song was adapted from a *malende* choral dance-song popular during the late 1950s. It referred to the fact that younger migrant workers now could compete with older men in terms of financial security.

6. Describing the old man’s oscillations on the ground under the tree.
7. Booker, 2004:587.
8. Godfrey Dederen, correspondence, 15 August, 2011.
9. Booker, *op. cit.*:587.



♩ = 132



Doh is C | m' | m' : m' | s' : s' | - : s' | f' : - | m' : m' | r' : d' | - d' : s | : | : | m' : - | : | m' : m'
(Rubato) Ndi ri, a ri tsha ndi la - mba Ma-dzi-nga, ha-ye. Ye! Hee, mu-



| s :- | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | d' : d' | d' :- | t :- | l | : l | l :-
(ka!) Te-nde-le - ka, te-nde-le -



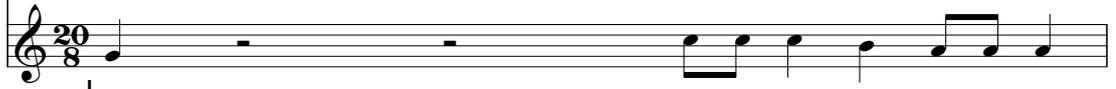
| s' :- f' | f' : f' | f' :- m' | d' :- m' :- m' . r' | - : d' . s | - : s | - : | : | m' : - | : | : |
li - sa wa ma - ho - mbe nya - nga Vho-ra - tho-vhe - le. Ye!



| s :- | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | d' : d' | d' :- | t :- | l | : l | l :-
ka! Te nde - le - ka, te - nde - le -



| : | m' : s' | m' :- m' | - m' :- s' | - : - . | : | : | : | : | m' : - | : | : |
Ma dzin-nga Tshi-mba - le. Ye!



| s :- | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | d' : d' | d' :- | t :- | l | : l | l :-
ka! Te - nde - le - ka, te - nde - le -



| : | m' : s' | m' :- m' | - m' :- s' | - : - . | : | : | : | : | : | : | m'
A ri tsha ni la - mba. Ndi



| s :- | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | d' : d' | d' :- | t :- | l | : l | l :-
ka! Te - nde - le - ka, te - nde - le

Smelly blankets

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

So, there was an old woman and her grandson: he was a lastborn child. Yes, now, this boy lived with her because he had no mother and father.

The old woman was a farmer. She hoed, she weeded. Yes, there were vegetables in her field. There was maize. It was growing.

The field was near a mountain. Now, at the foot of the mountain was a big pool where all the wild animals came to drink. That woman heard the song of those wild animals when she was in the field. They would leave their home to look for food in the veld after locking their house. When they returned at the end of the day, they sang and their song opened the house:

[Narrator]

Wa mmbvulela, Luti!

Open, Luti!¹

[Chorus]

Matshelo ndi tsa mbatela, Luti!

Tomorrow we will hide, Luti!²

One morning the old woman said to that boy, ‘Child of my child, I am going to fetch vegetables.’

She left with a basket, she left with a basket and went to the field. She arrived there, but did not pick vegetables. She went to the home of the wild animals, of those elephants and lions. When she arrived, she sang, *Wa mmbvulela, Luti! ...*

When those animals used to return from hunting, they hung their meat up to dry. So, the door opened, the old woman went inside and the door closed again. The old woman took the meat down, took it down, took it down and put it in the basket. When she wanted to come out, she sang inside the door of the house, *Wa mmbvulela, Luti! ...* The door opened wide!

She left for her field and picked vegetables. She put them on top of the meat and returned carrying everything. They ate for a day.

In the morning, two days later, the old woman said, ‘Boy, I am going to pick vegetables again.’ When she arrived there at the field, she did not stop. Yes, she went there where those wild animals had locked their house. She sang, *Wa mmbvulela, Luti! ...* Again she took some meat and returned home.

Now, that boy said, ‘Hey, granny!’ She said, ‘Hi!’ The boy went on, ‘You, please tell me: when you get up in the morning, you say, “I am going to pick vegetables.” But you come back carrying meat. Where do you get the meat?’ She answered, ‘Why don’t you stop questioning me? Leave your questions and just eat.’ She cooked that meat. She ate it with that grandchild.

There came a time when the animals noticed their meat was disappearing. ‘That meat of ours: who comes and takes it? We only eat a little at a time. Our meat is being finished. Now, what will we do about this?’

Those animals took a clay pot and started to make beer. Now, I say, long ago there were no large metal drums for beer like we have today. Beer was made in clay pots. They took a big clay beer pot and made that beer. They added malt and the beer started to ferment.

The old woman again left home to take the meat of the animals. She sang and entered the house of those animals. But when she wanted to leave, the door remained tightly closed! It was closed! We do not know what the animals did with that door, we do not understand. Do you see? The old woman sang, *Wa mmbvulela, Luti! ...* The door remained closed! Again she sang, *Wa mmbvulela, Luti! ...* But the door did not open!

So, the old woman was trapped inside the house. It became dark and the animals

were returning. Yes, the owners of the house came back, the owners of the house. The old woman was still inside! The animals sang, *Wa mmvulela, Luti!* ...

The door started to open. The old woman jumped with those baskets of hers into the pot of beer! Her blankets were floating on top!³

The animals came inside the house. Mr Elephant found the old woman and her baskets inside the pot. He picked that woman up with its tusk, *ngulungundu!* He took those baskets and they fell, *ngulungundu!*

That grandchild saw that the old woman did not return home. It was evening and he went to bed. Yes, he slept. When he woke up the next morning, he said to himself, 'No, the old woman has not returned.'

It became dusk and the child was looking all over. He was roaming around, eating left-overs. So, it became evening and that boy went to bed. The next morning he said, 'What shall I do? Hey, I have a plan.'

The boy left home and went to that big pool. There was a big tree. Its branches spread over the water. That young man made a bow. He spent much time on his bow, making it well, making it as deadly as a gun. Do you see?

He sat there in the tree. Now, see: when the sun rose early in the morning, when the sun rose, the animals came there one by one. Hmm, Mrs Guinea-fowl came there first and said, '*Ke-kerr! Ke-kerr! Ke-kerr!*' when she was drinking water. The boy sang:

[Narrator]

Buka, iwe ndi iwe wa ka dya maivhavho? Big scary animal, it is you who ate my granny?

Asi nne nda ka dya maivhavho. It is not me who ate your granny.⁴

Vha ka dya maivhavho vha tshe po. Those who ate your granny are still over there.

*Vha na makgwanga nyenyedzi!*⁵ Those who ate your granny have claws!

Vha na gongoli nga ndi gwana! They have large belly-buttons!

[Chorus]

Dya mandile-ndile. Those who ate your granny are still coming.

Hah, the boy said to Mrs Guinea-fowl, 'Leave!' So she ran away. Then Mrs Duiker came there jumping, jumping. She came there to drink water, drink water. The boy started to sing, *Buka, iwe ...* 'OK,' he said to Mrs Duiker, 'Go, you!' So she also left.

Mr Lion came there. He came there and drank water. The boy again started to sing, *Buka, iwe ...* And then he told Mr Lion, 'Go!'⁶ Do you see? Now, because there were so many animals that came to drink, I will not name them all.

Aha, it was coming! The one the boy was waiting for was coming there: Mr Elephant. He came there, came there and drank water. The boy said, 'This one with the big stomach: hah, this one is mine!'⁷ So, Mr Elephant finished drinking. As he was about to leave, the boy started to sing. Yes, he sang again, man:

Buka, iwe ndi iwe wa ka dya maivhavho! Big scary animal, you are the one who ate granny!

Ahee, ndi nne nda ka dya maivhavho! Hey, it is me who ate the granny.

The boy killed Mr Elephant instantly, *thuu!* He went down slowly ...!

The boy started to cut Mr Elephant open with a big knife, *pfee!* The old woman crawled from his stomach with her baskets. She came out and ran away. The boy picked up her baskets.

At home the boy helped his granny to wash, to wash and scrub herself until she was clean.⁸ Yes, he washed and washed those blankets to dress her again but they remained smelly!

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Stayt documented a similar narrative, although it additionally involves Sankambe, the trickster (1931:351-353, 'The square house with four doors').

This is a deceptive story, an apparent classic tale of the weak overcoming the strong, here represented by that clumsy ogre, Mr Elephant.⁹ The situation is familiar: that of the elderly and young who have to fend for, as well as defend themselves (see 'Mighty rooster'). So, we rejoice over the demise of cruel Mr Elephant at the hands of our young hero who is able to make a bow and fell his hefty adversary.

We see the old woman initially putting her grandson in his place when he becomes too curious about the origin of the meat. After all, his dependence is evident in the fact that he cannot look after himself, only scratch around for left-overs while granny is away. However, he shows ingenuity and courage, and rises in the world after killing a frightening beast and rescuing his granny. At the end he takes control and the old woman becomes silent, not only from shock, but also because her grandson's voice has become commanding.

We also may be deceived into thinking that the old woman is harmless and innocent. However, her raid on the larder of the animals is not driven by need, but by greed. Local audiences generally have the same understanding of this kind of story: theft is a crime and the guilty party must pay.¹⁰ And to give young listeners a good scare, granny is punished by death, although she (and sensitive listeners) are given a reprieve when her sentence is tempered by her resurrection and the humorous if humiliating ending of the story.

As explained ('On the periphery,' p. 43), the old woman's field has symbolic value as an actual as well as moral boundary. The field appears to provide her with everything she could reasonably expect. This is an indication of propriety, of limits. The field with its ordered rows is part of Nomos, the controlled world with its boundaries within which we must accommodate ourselves. What lies beyond is Chaos, the Wild. To go there is to pass into the dark unknown, to steal and transgress the limits of morality. Some pass those limits never to return; others return but the stench of their weakness still clings to them.¹¹

1. Luti is the short form of the female name Lutanani. This song derives from a story of an orphaned brother and sister who are threatened by adult family members. The sister remains inside their locked house while her brother herds their cattle and looks for food in the veld. He sings this song when returning home so that his sister can unlock the door (see 'Mr Hippopotamus throws his weight around' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:144-146).

2. The precise meaning of this line is unclear. *Mbatela* could be *mbalelo*, referring to switches tied to a roof structure, and over which thatch grass is placed. However, it is more likely to be derived from *nambatela*, to be suspended from, to grab and hold on to. Anna Matlari indicated that the woman conceals herself inside the hut by climbing up and sitting on, or hanging from, the rafters (except that she actually hides in the beer pot).

3. The blankets older women wear around the waist and sometimes also the shoulders.

4. Mrs Guinea-fowl is speaking.

5. *Nyenyedzi* could be an onomatopoeia for scratching or directly indicate scratching.

6. Given the reference in the song to animals with claws, Mr Lion is a likely suspect. However, as the end shows, the animal must be big enough to swallow the grandmother

Father on the footpath

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a woman and her husband. This man used to change into a lion when he was herding his father's cattle. He would wake up in the morning, let the cattle out and go with them to the veld. When he arrived there, he would change and then join other lions.¹ They would kill an ox and eat it.

One day he returned home and reported, 'Father, I tried to find a lost ox, but I could not see it.' His father exclaimed, 'No! Did you not let them out this morning, my child? And did you not go with them to the veld?'² The son just replied, 'I really do not know where it is.' So, that was the end of the matter.

The following morning the man again let the cattle out and left with them. He joined those other lions and they did their usual killing and eating.

When the man returned he said, 'Father, another ox is gone.'

'Ah! How did that happen?'

'I do not know my father: they are just disappearing.'

So, the father left the matter there.

Now, this wife, the man's wife: she was pounding peanuts. She pounded peanuts and added them to vegetables. Then a mouse arrived there. The mouse came there and said, '*tsk-tsk-tsk!*' It asked, 'Will you give me peanuts if I tell you my news?'³

That person chased the mouse away: 'Hah! Go far away!' She chased it. When she chased it, the mouse ran away a short distance and sat down.

The woman was pounding and winnowing. Now, that mouse returned and asked, '*Tsk-tsk-tsk!* Will you give me peanuts if I tell you my important news?' The woman took some peanuts and threw them down. When she threw them down, the mouse ate and ate.

After eating for a while the mouse said, 'I want to tell you my news: your husband, when he is there in the veld, he changes into a lion. He kills and eats the cattle with other lions.'

'Oh no!'

'Yes! It is true!'

'You know, he came back and reported to his father. He said, "Another ox is gone."'

'Hah! He killed it, and those lions ate with him.'

'So, right, mouse, what will I do about this person?'

'Yes, what? When all the cattle have been killed, he will come and eat you and the children. Go back to the home of your parents.'⁴

'Ah, if I go back home will he not follow me?'

'No: take calabashes, about five or ten. Put cockroaches in one, bedbugs in another and lice in a third one. Put anything nasty in them.'⁵ When he follows you and changes into a lion, you must break one of the calabashes. When he stops to eat the insects, you must flee with the children.'⁶

Hah, indeed: that woman prepared herself there, following those instructions. So, at the end of the day she put her calabashes down in the house. When her husband returned with the cattle, he found nothing unusual.

The woman told her husband and mother-in-law, 'Hah, tomorrow I am going home.'

'Right, who will go with you?'

'I am going with the children.'

Hmm, now, that woman dressed with her children. They washed; they were getting ready. The woman put those calabashes inside a wide basket.⁷ She carried the basket. There they were: they were leaving.

The husband announced, 'I am taking the cattle to the veld.' The others said, 'All right.' So, he let the cattle out, but he did not go with them. He let them roam while

hiding from his wife. He wanted to kill her and the children on the footpath.

The woman and her children walked and walked and walked. Then they heard a noise behind them! Hey, when they looked around, there was a lion! It rushed towards them!

The woman exclaimed, 'Let me do what that mouse said!' She immediately threw one of the calabashes. It went *thuu!* The lion stopped there. After a while he chanted:

Nemeneme dza pano dza kunda kupera! There are no more termites left here!⁸

The woman shouted, 'Quickly, my children, run so that we can escape!' The lion rushed towards them. It sang:

*Ee, ku lila mutendele!*⁹ Give me a child to devour!¹⁰

The woman broke another calabash, *puu!* The insects scattered and the lion picked them up. It stopped and picked them up over there. The woman fled further with her children.

Aha, when the lion had finished eating, he chanted, *Nemeneme dza pano dza kunda kupera!* And when he found his wife and children again, he sang, *Ku lila mutendele!* ... Yes, that woman threw those calabashes down one by one until she arrived at her parents' homestead.

They found those people drinking beer. The woman's relatives put down a reed mat for their son-in-law. Yes, he sat down. The woman also sat down with the children. They clustered around her in shock.

Hmm, so, one of the children started explaining what her father did, explaining what he did: 'Granny, father was on the footpath! My father was on the footpath! He wanted to attack us on the way! He chanted, "*Nemeneme dza pano dza kunda kupera!*" So, my mother broke a calabash! When those termites were finished, when those termites were finished, that man followed us. He chased us. He sang, *Ee, ku lila mutendele!*'

Her father said to her, 'Hey, take my hat and put it away.' That child took the hat and put it inside the house. She came back and sat down. Again she explained, 'Yes granny, my father was on the footpath. He sang. He followed us and sang, *Ee, ku lila mutendele!*'

Her father again told her, 'Hey, come here! Take my jacket and put it in the house.' Hmm, the child took it to the house. She returned, the child came back from the house. She sat down. Yes, she told her story again. The child told it again: 'Oh granny, my father was on the footpath! He chased us and chanted':

U dendele, u dendele! Give me a child to devour!

The father slapped her mouth. But then that small child on the mother's back carried on: 'My mother broke them, *thuu!* She threw calabashes down, she threw them down. My father stopped. Yes, he chanted, "*Nemeneme dza pano dza kunda kupera!*" Oh mother, we ran, we ran! Hah, now, we arrived here, and here is my father too!'

The father had asked for almost all his clothes to be put away: his jacket, hat and shoes. Yes, now all that remained was his shirt and trousers. He started chanting, '*Mvingi-mvingi, mvingi-mvingi!*'¹¹ He immediately started to shed his skin! He scratched and scratched himself! He grew fur! He became a lion! He sang, *Ku lila mutendele!* ...

That lion wanted to attack those people who were drinking beer. The father of the woman was there. He rushed into the house. He took his rifle and shot the lion!

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The concept of men as lions is common in regional cultures (see ‘The animal spouse,’ p. 49); see Granger, 2007:81-85; ‘The lion men’; Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:112-115; ‘The lion who hunted his daughter’; Nenzhelele, 1968:1-2; ‘*Munna we a vha a tshi shanduka a vha ndau*’; Scheub, 2010:60-64; ‘The lion who took a woman’s shape’; Smith, 2004:125-129; ‘The girl who married a lion’).

Aschwanden (1989:98) discusses a similar Karanga narrative entitled ‘The hyena-man’ and interprets it essentially as referring to ‘the problem of forbidden sexual intercourse after the birth of a child.’

As pointed out (‘Figurative speech,’ p. 66), the death of the ferocious lion in this story is preceded by a drawn-out process of humiliation. The status of Lion-man is undermined as he removes his clothes in a desperate attempt to silence his children. In a skillful manner the narrator lets the children reveal the true identity of the man and his deeds.

1. The gathering of lions emphasises the man’s ferocious temperament.
2. The father questions how a cattle herd who accompanies and guards his cattle all day, could lose an ox.
3. The choice of the mouse as messenger (instead of the more usual bird) relates to its presence in people’s houses. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that the mouse is dependent on people for food, so it returns the favour by warning the woman. In another African story, a mouse overhears a plot being hatched in a kitchen, and reports the conspiracy (see ‘The cloud princess’ in Gordon, 2002:87-92).
The Ekoi people of West Africa note that ‘Mouse goes everywhere. Through rich men’s houses she creeps, and visits even the poorest. At night, with her little bright eyes, she watches the doing of secret things and no treasure chamber is so safe but she can tunnel through and see what is hidden inside.’ (Feldmann, 1963:170; ‘How all stories came among men.’)
4. Women portrayed in situations of marital conflict in *ngano* often seek refuge in their parental home. Junod (1927, I:199) writes: ‘When she thinks she is persecuted, the wife runs home. This is her great weapon.’
5. Although the nasty nature of these insects seems to underscore the monstrous nature of the lion, their function actually is to delay him as long as possible, being small and scattering all over.
6. This is an example of the familiar obstacle flight narrative category, specifically the Atalanta motif. Atalanta is a Greek princess who races her suitors. If they lose, they are beheaded. The successful suitor (Hippomenes) receives three golden apples from Aphrodite. Atalanta loses the race when she pauses to pick up the apples scattered by Hippomenes (also see ‘Magic’ in this collection). In a Sesotho story, a pursuer is delayed when he stops to pick up beads scattered by his victim (Postma, 1957:109-121; ‘*Senkepeng en die droogte*’).
7. ‘Wide-mouthed basket shaped like an inverted cone’ (Van Warmelo, 1989:245).
8. There are different interpretations of this chant, partly because it is a mixture of Tshivenda and Chikaranga. Local Tshivenda-speakers translate it as ‘There are so many termites that they cannot be finished.’ I use the translation provided by Charles Nota, a Chishona speaker (Potchefstroom, 20 May 2009).
9. Possibly *mudendele*.
10. This line also shows Chikaranga influence, and its precise meaning is unclear. The

general interpretation is that it expresses the father's intention to catch and kill a child. The phrase also could translate as 'the child is crying.'

11. A magic formula in *ngano* to indicate that a person is changing into an animal (see 'Crow-woman' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:47-50).

$\text{♩} = 166$



(Chant) Ne - me - ne - me dza pa - no dzi nga ku - nda ku - pe - ra.

$\text{♩} = 100$



(Chant) U de - nde - le. U de - nde - le.



A smart bird

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There were girls. Those girls went far into the veld. They went to collect firewood.

There was a big river. Those girls collected firewood on the other side of the river.¹ Now, after they had gathered their firewood, it started to rain and the river flowed strongly. The girls could not cross back home.

They gathered, they gathered under a tree. The rain kept on falling. How would they cross? They could drink water from the river, but they were hungry.

Back at home, people were looking for their daughters. They rushed all over and came back tired and empty-handed.

Then a bird came there, it came there.² It flew *prrr!* into a tree and sat on a branch. 'So, girls: why are you here when they are looking for you at home?' Those girls replied, 'The river is in the way, it is in flood. How will we cross?' The bird answered, 'Do not worry.'³ It flew down from the tree and sat down on the ground. 'Come here my children.' Those girls came immediately. They climbed under its wings,⁴ they climbed under its wings, under the wings!⁵

The bird now left with them. It left and flew, looking for villages of chiefs.⁶ It landed there at Phaswana's village. It sat down there under trees. It sang:⁷

[Narrator]

Ntumbedzeni Ha-Malebane, silili!
*Ke marwaledzhi vhanana vhawe.*⁹
Tsha swika muthavhani wa mutasiri.

Show me Malebane, *silili!*⁸
I carried his children.
Arriving at the sandy place of the karee tree.¹⁰

[Chorus]

Silili, si nya ntika?

Silili, where must I take the children to?

So, those people said, 'This is not Ha-Malebane.' That bird flew on and arrived there at Manetoni. It landed and sat in a baobab tree. It started to sing. It sang, *Ntumbedzeni Ha-Malebane, silili!* ... Those people said, 'This is not Ha-Malebane.' Yes, so, the bird flew further.

(Look, I will not carry on with this part of the story. Be grateful for what you have heard so far. As long as I am telling the story correctly.)¹¹

So, the bird arrived at Folovhodwe. When it arrived there, it perched in a tree. It started to sing its song, '*Silili*, where must I take the children to?' People said, 'Yes, this is Ha-Malebane, the sandy place of the karee tree.' Now, the bird said, 'Put down the reed mats.¹² Spread them from this tree to over there by the house.' Hah, they immediately spread the mats.

The bird flew down right away and sat on the mat. 'Parents, do not worry. I found your children who were trapped by the flooded river. Now, I decided to help by carrying them and looking for you from one chiefly village to the next.'

It quickly put those children down.¹³ Now, all those children were together. Yes, they walked onto the mats. They sat down with their bird.

The chief, that owner of the village: he rang a bell to call those mothers and fathers of the children. They had been crying over their children that had disappeared.¹⁴ He said, 'Come and see your children. They are here, they have returned.'

Now, people rushed there. The mothers and fathers were very happy. They had found their children. They had been brought by this bird. Yes, the bird had carried them.

Hah, the chief said, 'Yes, and I am happy too. We suffered because we searched for the children and you helped us by bringing them back.' I would like to slaughter an ox

to celebrate.’¹⁵

The bird said, ‘No thanks!’

‘OK, shall we scrape a pig?’

‘Not necessary!’

‘Now, we will kill a fowl to thank you for bringing our children we were so worried¹⁶ about, our children we could not see. Shall we kill a fowl?’

‘No!’

‘A goat?’

‘Forget it: I would prefer you giving me beads so that I can make myself beautiful.’

‘Ah! Only beads?’

‘Yes, beads, I will wear them.’

So, the women selected the beads carefully.¹⁷ Some brought necklaces, some brought decorated waist belts. The bird took all those things. It was a beautiful bird!

Hah, the bird announced: ‘Now, I am saying goodbye. I am leaving.’ Those people replied, ‘You can say your farewell, bird.’ The bird, now, the bird left.¹⁸ ‘Stay well with your children.’

Hah, the bird started to walk. She found a mongoose¹⁹ cracking marula nuts.²⁰ It was cracking its nuts and eating, it was cracking its nuts and eating. ‘Hey! You, bird: wow, look at you! Where did you find those beautiful things you are wearing?’

The bird replied, ‘Well, I received them at Ha-Malebane because I carried their children. I found them at the flooded river. They could not cross it. I helped them back home. When I arrived there, the women gave me beads. Here you see me wearing them and being so beautiful.’

The mongoose asked, ‘Will you not give me the beads so that I can wear them and see whether I can be smart too?’ So, the bird took off the beads and gave them to the mongoose.

The mongoose took them and put them on. It arranged them until it looked smart. It asked, ‘Now, will you sing²¹ with me as I perform my song and dance with these beads?’ The bird answered, ‘Yes, I will sing with you.’ So the mongoose sang:

[Narrator]

Lwa musidzana mungafha.

Of a big girl like this.

Ndi a tshitakana,²² lule.

I am going beneath a small branch, light.²³

A ho tshantshaṭa-ngoli.

[The sound of the beads when dancing]

[Chorus]

Tshangana! Lule, lukhohe, lule.

Mine!²⁴ Light, mongoose, light.

The bird exclaimed, ‘You, mongoose! Why are you dancing towards your hole? I ... my beads! You are not bringing them back! I want to put on my beads and leave!’

The mongoose shouted, ‘Just wait! I am still dancing! Hah, sing with me, *Tshangana! Lule, lukhohe, lule ...*

The mongoose suddenly darted into its hole with those beads. The bird went and sat there by the entrance to the hole. The mongoose did not come out. The bird saw that it was getting dark. That was when she flew away.

Havha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 25 September 2009

The obvious question is why the adventure of the bird does not simply end happily, as is the case in similar stories.²⁵ The meeting between the bird and mongoose in fact also comprises a separate *ngano* in which girls lose their beads to the dancing and singing

mongoose.²⁶ It is clear therefore that this image has been shaped creatively to follow on the conventional, initial adventure in 'A smart bird.' However, this is not an issue that concerned the narrator: she merely indicated that the bird was leaving the world of humans and entering the world of animals.

Booker (2004:187) remarks of Greek tragedies that they 'appreciate the complexities of human existence. They were not satisfied with black-and-white answers. They were always looking round the corner for another question to ask.' Perhaps this explains why ancient Greek heroes were both god-like and weak. This quality also may apply to the bird. However, the narrator rejected the suggestion that the bird is vain, remarking that it was justifiably proud of its reward. Stayt (1931:361) in turn cites the proverb 'To be too smart will lead to trouble.' It is clear that behind the integrity and the beautiful appearance of the bird there lurks a good deal of naivety. As in the case of the young child that is stolen by its nurse ('Mrs Rock-Rabbit'), there also seems to be a warning not to be deceived by strangers.

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1. The narrator confirmed that rivers seldom are actual boundaries in *ngano*. Instead, they are social and moral boundaries not to be crossed (see 'On the periphery,' p. 41; also see 'The lourie who was not a bird' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:123-125).
 2. The narrator identified the bird as *ngoto*. This appears to refer to the grey hornbill, *mugotwe* (Van Warmelo, 1989:211). Given the protective role of the bird, the narrator was asked about its gender. She merely replied that she did not know.
 3. Lit. it is all right.
 4. Lit. in the armpits.
 5. The repeated action shows that the group is large.
 6. The implication is that some or all the girls are from a ruling family (this is indicated in the song). However, a case of missing children would also be reported to, and investigated by, a traditional leader.
 7. The song shows correlation with that in a similar story (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:70-74; 'The girls and the dove'). In the latter, Ha-Malebane is Ha-Mulibana, and *muthasiri* is Mudasiri, the name of a river.
 8. The call of the bird.
 9. This line shows Sesotho influence.
 10. One of various species of *Rhus*.
 11. In an extended version of the story, the bird visits a number of villages before finding its destination. This comment may be explained by the fact that the narrative was performed for a large audience with a number of restless children.
 12. Reed mats are used for sleeping on and receiving visitors.
 13. *Tsitsa*, to put down a child that is carried on the back, *beba*.
 14. Lit. their children they could not see.
 15. The implication is that people want to reward the bird.
 16. Lit. lost our heads about.
 17. Lit. they took their time.
 18. Lit. entered the road.
 19. The recorded narrative refers to *gwavhavha* and *fuvhuvhu* (names for rock lizards), but the narrator denied this in the follow-up interview, insisting that the animal is a mongoose.
 20. Marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) nuts are a nutritious delicacy. They are cracked to reveal a hard white interior similar to that of pine seeds. This interior is pounded into flour and used to cook porridge.
 21. Lit. respond, i.e. to sing the chorus phrase.
 22. From Afrikaans *takkie*, a small branch.
 23. The mongoose is an uncommon character in *ngano*. Its inclusion in this narrative

appears motivated by its habit of standing up, and ducking and diving suddenly (see ‘I am going beneath a small branch’). These movements not only are light and fast, but are reminiscent of dancing. The quality of lightness also is accorded to the necklace that bounces up and down when the mongoose is dancing.

24. The mongoose is claiming the necklace for herself.

25. See e.g. ‘The girls and the dove’ in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:70-74.

26. ‘Vhasidzana na lukhohe’ (‘The girls and the mongoose’; Nenzhelele, 1961:32).

♩ = 142

Doh is C | f' :s' | f' :- | r' :r' | - :r' | - :r' | t :t | l | :- | : | : | : |
 Si - ǀi - ǀi, si nya nǀi - ka, si - ǀi - ǀi!

| : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | r' :r' | - :r' | - :r' |
 Si nya nǀi - ka.

| f' :s' | f' :- | r' :r' | - :l | - :l | t :t | l | :- | : | : | : | :r' |
 Si - ǀi - ǀi, si nya nǀi - ka, si - ǀi - ǀi! (Lu) -

| : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | r' :r' | - :r' | - :r' |
 Si nya nǀi - ka.

| r' :r' | - :r' | r' :r' | r' :r' | - :r' | t :t | l | :- | : | : | : | :
 pe - tshe - ni Ha - Ma - le - ba - ne, si - ǀi - ǀi!

| : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | r' :r' | - :r' | - :r' |
 Si nya nǀi - ka.

| r' :r' | - :r' | d' :r' | - :d' | r' :- | r' :t | t :l | - : | :r' | - :r' |
 'Rwa - ǀe - dzhi vha - na - na vha - we, si - ǀi - ǀi! Fi - tha

| : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | r' :r' | - :r' | - :r' |
 Si nya nǀi - ka.

| r' :d' | r' :d' | r' :d' | r' :r' | - :l | t :t | l | :- | : | : | : | :
 Mu - ǀha - vhe - ni, wa, mu - ǀha - si - ri, si - ǀi - ǀi! *gliss.*

| : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | r' :r' | - :r' | - :r' |
 Si nya nǀi - ka.

| f' : s' | f' :- | r' : r' | r' :- | r' :- | r' :- | r' :- | t : t | l :- | l :- | l :- | l :- |
 Si - li - li, si nya nti - ka, si - li - li!
 | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | : | r' : r' | r' :- | r' :- | r' :- |
 Si nya nti - ka.

♩ = 82

Doh is C | : : | s' : r' :- | r' : r' : d' | t : l :- | : : | t : t : t | t : s : t | t : l : :
 Lu - le, lu - kho - he, lu - le. Lwa mu - si - dza - na mu - nga - fha.

| s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- | | s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- |
 (Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le.) Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le.

| : : | t : t : t | t : s : s | t : l :- | | : : | s : t :- | s : s : s | t : l :- |
 Ndi a tshi ta - ka - na, lu - le. A ho tsha - ntsha - ta ngo - li.

| s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- | | s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- |
 Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le. Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le.

| : : | s : t :- | s : s : s | t : l :- | | : : | s : t :- | s : s : s | t : l :- |
 A ho tsha - ntsha - ta ngo - li. Lu - le, lu - kho - he, lu - le.

| s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- | | s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- |
 Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le. Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le.

| : : | s' : r' :- | r' : r' : d' | t : l :- | | : : | s' : r' :- | r' : r' : d' | t : l :- |
 Lu - le, lu - kho - he, lu - le. Lu - le, lu - kho - he, lu - le.

| s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- | | s : s : s | t : s :- | s : s : s | t : l :- |
 Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le. Tsha - nga - na lu - le, lu - kho - he lu - le.



Mighty rooster

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was an old woman, together with her son and his wife. They had a byre with cattle, and a big ox. Now, those people died, that man and his wife. So, the old woman and her young grandson were on their own. Oh, right: those people had a big field that was farmed by the old woman. The cattle grazed on one side while she was hoeing. That boy herded them.

Now, there were chiefs. These chiefs were eager to take the cattle.¹ They said, 'How can an old woman look after a young boy and cattle?'² We are taking these cattle to become ours.' You see now?³

So, this old woman gave melon seeds to that boy. 'You must roast them and eat them with porridge. Do not roast pumpkin seeds because they will block my ears.' There, do you see?⁴

Now, there they were: the cattle were grazing; that old woman was planting different seeds. Chief Nefolovhodwe⁵ arrived. He said, 'We are going to take them. You cannot live with cattle and a small boy.'

The chief's messengers arrived. Those who came were seven. They gathered the cattle and led them away. The boy stood up and came out of the shelter.⁶ He sang:

[Narrator]

Ahee, iwe, nkuku, wee!

Kholomo dzi a tuwa!

Dzi tuwa na vhafhio?

Dzi tuwa na Malema.

Malema-maḷa-vhathu!

Tserere nda livha ndila.

Tserere nda gobagoba.

Tserere nda luma ndila!

[Chorus]

Tshinoni tsha nkuku!

Hey you, rooster!

The cattle are leaving!

With whom are they leaving?

They are leaving with Malema.

Malema the cannibals!⁷

If I fall, I will stay on the footpath.⁸

Sliding and falling.

Bite the dirt!⁹

Mighty rooster!¹⁰

But then the old woman arrived. She rushed ahead and cut them off. She grabbed one of the seven! She broke his hand, *khotlo!* She cut it off and threw it down! She led her cattle away with that boy.

When they arrived home, it was almost evening. The cattle went into the byre. The old woman cooked their porridge with that sour milk of the cattle. They ate and went to bed. Yes, they slept.

It was the next morning. When they woke up, they left for the field again. The cattle grazed and the old woman hoed.

Aha! Some other robbers arrived there. Who were they? From which chief did they come? They came from over there, from chief Tshiungani. Eight of them gathered the cattle, they gathered them. When they were ready to leave, that boy stood up. 'Can't you hear me? I am singing, *Ahee, iwe, nkuku, wee! ...*'

The old woman rushed there. 'Hey, hey, give back our cattle!' She hurried ahead and stopped them. Now, she grabbed one of the men. She cut holes in his hair with a knife! She said, 'Go back to the chief and tell him you could not take my cattle.' She gathered the herd and went back home. The boy and his granny went to bed.

So, it was morning again, it was morning and the old woman opened the byre. She opened it for the cattle. They left with her and the boy. They went to the fields. The boy roasted those seeds of the bitter melon. Then he started to roast pumpkin seeds. He ate those pumpkin seeds. The old woman's ears became deaf! She could no longer hear.

So, more robbers came there to the field. Hey, who were they? They were from Tshikundamalema. 'We are taking the cattle today! We will leave with them.' They started gathering those cattle. The boy sang, *Ahee, iwe, nkuku, wee!* ...

The old woman could not hear the song. Her ears were deaf because of those seeds. So, the boy left with the raiders while singing along the way, *Ahee, iwe, nkuku, wee!* ...

'Shove off! Go back boy! Where are you following us to, following us and your cattle? They are ours now. You will be humiliated. We are going home with them.'

Those robbers arrived with the cattle at the chief's place. They put them in the byre. 'Now that we have put them in the byre, we will slaughter one.' The boy squatted by the entrance of the byre. 'If you must slaughter one, take that ox.' So, they said, 'That is fine, young man. We will kill that one and you will eat it.' He said, 'All right, I will eat it with you.'

Yes, they pierced its nose and passed a strap through it. They knew how to do that because in the past people rode on their cattle. They slaughtered that ox. They cut its throat. There was a lot of meat. They ate the meat of the ox.

So, the boy said, 'When you people eat the meat of this ox, spread the skin.' They spread the skin. He continued: 'When you have eaten, collect the bones and put them here on the skin. Do not leave any bone behind. All of them must be on the skin. And the head too.'

Now, it became evening. They said to that boy, 'You will sleep in that little hut.' Hah, the boy thought, I will wake up during the night and go back home. So, he replied, 'That is all right.' The boy went to bed.

Later those people fell into a deep sleep. The boy woke up during the night and cut a stick with a sharp point. He made that stick well, very well. He took magic things he had with him. He rubbed the stick with them so that it became magical.¹¹ He beat those cattle. He shouted, 'Hey, you: rooster at home! The ox must wake up!' He saw the ox's legs standing up! Hah, he sang and the head came up! So, the boy sang as he beat it. He sang, 'Hey rooster! The ox is leaving!'

The ox woke up and stood. The boy opened the byre. He mounted that ox and rode on it. He caught its nose strap. He led those other cattle. He led them back home.

Havha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 25 September 2009

Narratives about cattle that are raided and eaten, only to be resurrected magically, are common in South Africa (see Callaway, 1970:221-237, '*Ubongopa-kamagadhlela*'; Jacottet, 1908:76-81, '*Moshanyana oa Senkatana*'; Junod, 1927, II:251-53, 'The magic cattle'; Le Roux, 1996:465-492, 'Milela, leader of the cattle herd'; Nenzhelele, 1968:7-10, '*Vho-Malimagovha na muduhulu, na kholomo yavho Nyathavha*'; Postma, 1957:88-99, '*Die seuntjie Senkatane*'; Savory, 1965:76-82, 'Matong and the big black ox').

'Mighty rooster' is typical in that it shows how the weak imagine themselves overcoming their oppressors, even if by magical means only. The elderly and the young are obvious targets for exploitation. The old woman is portrayed as thwarting the raiders violently: her actions have a hyperbolic, magical quality so common in narrative fantasies. Her violent reactions also are humorous (especially when she cuts holes in a culprit's hair), and in this way she undermines power in a mocking way.

1. The narrator could not explain why the perpetrators in this story are traditional

leaders. She merely told the story the way she heard it from her mother. However, it is possible that cattle raiding (which was common in former times) was a factor in local political relations. Jacob Rambuda explained that, in past times, men at chief Rambuda's village would 'sing songs with the *mbila* [the Venda xylophone, a symbol of political and military power] and then go and take chief Tshivhase's cattle' (interview, Ha-Rambuda, 20 June 1984).

2. Lit. live with. This question apparently is motivated by greed, rather than concern for the new responsibilities of the old woman.

3/4. These rhetorical questions are directed at the audience.

5. The traditional leader of the Folovhodwe area.

6. A temporary hut erected in a field. People take shelter in these huts when guarding their crops against marauding animals and birds.

7. Malema refers to 'a cannibal tribe from the south which once invaded Venda; according to some they were baPedi, according to others the amaNdzundza Transvaal Ndebele' (Van Warmelo, 1989:171). Blacking (1969a:163) in turn notes that it is unlikely that the Pedi ever were cannibals. However, 'they made a great impression on the Venda when they massacred many people at Mbilwi [today Thohoyandou] during the 19th century.'

8. Although the footpath may refer to the escape route followed by the marauders, it rather appears to be metaphoric of the quandary in which the old woman and boy find themselves, and their determination to overcome it (see the references to falling and holding on; also see note 10).

9. Lit. to hold on by biting the footpath.

10. 'The rooster is a metaphor for a brave herdsman protecting his cattle against marauders in the same way that a rooster is master of a farm yard.' (Kruger, 2004:92.)

11. A magic stick or staff is a common motif in oral narrative (see Thompson, 1955:D956; 'Magic stick of wood').



A fat girl

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

A group of girls left home to collect firewood. Mutshekwa went with them. She was the chief's daughter. Her dog also went with them.

Now, they arrived over there in the veld. They collected their wood and tied it into bundles. Then they said, 'Let us pinch each other to see who is the fattest.'

They started to pinch each other, pinch each other! They exclaimed, 'Mutshekwa is the fattest!' So they killed her! After they killed her, they made a fire and cooked her flesh. They ate her, they ate, they ate! They took Mutshwekwa's bones and gave them to the dog. But that dog refused to eat them. The girls panicked. 'Eat the bones!' But it refused. So, the girls picked up their bundles of firewood, and said, 'Let us go!'

The dog started a song. It sang:

[Narrator]

Havha vhasidzana!

Henengei khunini na vhone.

Ri swike, ri totane.

Ri vhone o nonaho.

Ho nona Mutshekwa.

Mmbwa ya musanda

ya fhiwa kurambwana.

Thi li muṅe wanga!

[Chorus]

Mbulungwane, mbulungwane!

These girls!

Collecting firewood over there with them.

We arrived, we pinched each other.

We saw the fattest one.

It is Mutshekwa, the fat one.

The dog of the chief was given
small bones.

I do not eat my mistress!

I do not eat my mistress! I do not eat my mistress!

Those girls said, 'Aah! Listen! The dog says Mutshekwa is fat. It is going to report us! Let us kill it!'

They put down their firewood. They grabbed that dog and killed it. After killing the dog, they took it, made a fire and burnt its body. They picked up their firewood again and left. As they were walking, they saw the dog!¹ It came rushing up to them: *Havha vhasidzana! ...*

The girls were worried. 'Now, what shall we do? Indeed, what shall we do? This dog will report us. Do you hear it? This dog is going to report us! No! What shall we do? We burnt it, but it came out of the fire. It is following us. Now, what shall we do?'

One of the girls said, 'So, let us kill it again. But this time we must hide its body. Let us go to the river and throw it in the water. Yes, we will throw it in that pool,² that big one.'

'Which pool?'

'That one called Muṭovhori, we will throw it inside Muṭovhori.'

Hah, truly, they killed it, killed it again! They carried that dog's body over there to Muṭovhori. They threw it into the water. Then they returned to the place where their bundles of firewood were. Hah, they picked them up. They had just started walking when they saw the dog behind them! *Havha vhasidzana! ...*

They arrived back at the village and went to their homes – some over here, others over there. The dog went straight home. I say, it had no mistress – its mistress had been killed. When it arrived home, it sat by the gate. It was sitting with its back to the house, looking intently towards the footpath along which it had come. Yes, it started to sing again, *Havha vhasidzana! ...*

Those at home said, 'Hey, listen! The dog is singing! It is saying it has no owner. Yes, it went out with Mutshekwa. What happened to her?'

The chief got up. 'Hey, you girls!'

One of the girls, Alidzuli, answered, 'Good day! Yes sir?'

The chief said, 'You, Alidzuli! Hey! I know you went out with Mutshekwa. Now, we only see this dog. The dog is singing. Where is she, Mutshekwa, the one you went with?'

'Well, we left her tying her firewood together. We left her tying her firewood over there. We told her to follow us. She said we should go, that she would follow us.'

'Really?'

'Yes.'

'Now, why is the dog singing? Listen, the dog is singing.'

'Hey, voetsek, hey, go away man! No, it is just a nuisance!'

They chased that dog away. It left and ran around over there singing, *Havha vhasidzana!* ...

So, people said, 'No, we must follow this dog.'

The chief immediately started walking. He immediately started walking and went over there where the dog had been looking. So, the dog followed him, it followed him and overtook him. It ran ahead while singing *Havha vhasidzana!* ... It arrived there and rushed around Mutshekwa's ash and bones. Do you see?

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 11 June 2009

Other versions of this story, which sometimes end with the death of the murderers, have been documented among the Sotho and Venda people.³

Fatness generally is indicative of wealth, authority and privilege, and the story hides dark allusions to social conflict and jealousy. The story arguably is rooted in 'a stratified snobbish class-conscious society' in which ruling families are referred to as '*Vhane vha shango*,' 'Masters of the land,' and their young men grow up understanding that their 'gift' is not to weave baskets, but 'that of ruling people' and living 'the good life.'⁴

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha accordingly remarked that 'we work *dzunde* for them, they do not work for us.' This is a reference to compulsory work that people must do for traditional leaders. During the early part of the 20th century, people worked an average of 7-10 days per year for their headman, and 3-4 weeks for their chief. Failure to report for work was punishable with a fine.⁵

In a Sesotho version of this story, the chief's daughter refuses to sit on the ground, remarking, 'How can I sit on the ground? The dust will make my body dirty!' The other girls then accuse her of pride: 'They said she thought she was better than they were. They said that a person who had such an opinion of herself should be killed.'⁶

1. Junod documented a similar narrative in which the role of the animal is played by a bird (1927, II:259-261; '*Zili*').

2. Lit. dam.

3. See Nenzhelele (1961:46-47; '*Zwe vhasidzana vha ita khunini*'), Kruger (1996b:4; '*Shanana*') and Postma (1950:123-131, '*Senanapo*'; 1974:142-145, '*Tsananapa*').

4. Van Warmelo, 1971:355-356.

5. Du Plessis, 1940:86-87.

6. Postma, 1974:143-144.

♩ = 96

Doh is C | t : t : s ls :- :- lm : r : r lr :- :- | t : t : s ls :- :- lm : r : r lr :- :-
 Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne, mbu-lu-ngwa-ne! Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne, mbu-lu-ngwa-ne!

| : : | : : m lr : r : r lm :- r | : : | : : s ls : s : m lm : m : r
 Ha-vha vha-si-dza-na! He-ne-gei khu-ni na vho'.
 Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne! Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne!

| : : | : : m lm : r : r lm : r :- | : : | : : s ls : s : r lr : r :
 Swi-ke, ri to-ta-ne. Ri vho-ne o no-na'.
 Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne! Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne!

| : : | : : s ls : s : r lm : r : | : : | : : s ls : r : r l :- r :
 Ho no-na Mu-tshek-wa. Mmbwa ya mu-sa-nda.
 Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne! Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne!

| : : | : : m lm : d : r lr : r : | (x3) : : | : : m : m ld : d : r l :- r :-
 'Fhi-wa ku-ra-mbwa-na. Thi ji mu-ne wa-nga!
 Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne! Mbu-lu-ngwa-ne!



Johanna Muleba



So, you have come back. I am glad you found me, because I have moved to a different part of Muswodi-Tshisimani, here against the foot of the mountain. This place is nice: there are shade trees and I have peace.

I was born in 1926 at Nzhelele. Chief George Mphephu was my father. My mother was one of his four wives. My father died when I was still very young. Things went badly for my mother after this. She moved to Waterpoort where she worked on a farm. She guarded crops against monkeys and porcupines.

I remember my first train trip during this time: it was from Waterpoort to Musina. I was very afraid of the noisy locomotive. I laugh about it now, but I was really scared then. My mother had to drag me onto the train.

I am a widow. My husband was Phalanndwa Muleba. He also farmed his fields. We met here at Muswodi. My mother moved here after living at Waterpoort. You know, it is really strange: my husband paid no bride wealth

for me. He was wealthy, and my mother was afraid she would be accused of selling her daughter.

I have two sons. One of them works in a hardware store in Honeydew. The other one helps to fight malaria. You found me living in his house until last year. I had my own outside room, next to the kitchen hut. I have a bed, a wardrobe and a fridge. His wife Dorcus has six children. She is clever, that one: she can open up a story as if cutting with a knife.

You know, today we can buy many things at the shop. But long ago we preferred *mukumbi* [marula cooldrink] and meat cooked with marula nuts. We did not often have different pots for different dishes. Stews were common: there was *thophi*, pumpkin stew, as well as *tshidzimba*, that stew which is made from beans, maize, peanuts and marula nuts. *Kwangwali* was baobab porridge while *munamba* was porridge cooked with milk.

We usually only bought things from the shop during Christmas. Then the grown-ups travelled to Musina. There they bought loaves of brown bread for a shilling. They also bought tea and sugar. There were no shops where we lived at Waterpoort. The first shop I saw was at Muswodi. Bread cost a ticky only, but we children preferred those red sweets. We also pinched sugar whenever we could.

During that time we could still find venison to eat. Now you cannot get it. Those people at Nwanedi [Provincial Park] want to catch people who hunt. We cooked kudu and rooibok meat with marula nuts. We also ate food from the veld.

I am happy to see that our young girls still do *khadi* [rope skipping] nowadays. You see them doing that in the street, especially during holidays. This was our favourite game too when we were young. We made the rope from *savha* [sisal]. Then we skipped and sang:

Khadi mudifho wayo!

Rope-skipping is nice!

The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is a chant in 12/8 time, with lyrics: (chant) Kha - di, kha - di mu - di - fho wa - yo!. The bottom staff shows a rhythmic pattern for foot strikes on the ground, consisting of a quarter rest followed by quarter notes on the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th beats.

I remember first seeing white people when I was about ten years old.¹ I was afraid they would shoot me. This was because of the stories my grandmother told me about the war with them.² You know, my mother was inside the royal village. It was called Songozwi.³ Those *Mabunyu* [Swazi soldiers] shot her with an arrow.

But the white people I saw were only farmers. What I was scared of was their tractors. That exhaust pipe of the tractor went straight up. It made smoke and rumbling noises: rrrrrrrrrrrrr!

You know, old people like me: we did not learn to read and write. We went to initiation school. My mother was a leader there. Those old people knew many things. She was the one who told me stories. I used to listen to her during winter when we were resting.

But things are different nowadays because I go to Abet [Adult Basic Education and Training]. I can now write my name and surname. See, here is my pencil and glue stick: they make me proud. This is my book in which I write ‘a’ and ‘b.’

Here, before you go, take these baskets I have woven. No, they are my gift to you. I get a lot of attention when you visit me. Others want to know why a white man always comes to my place. I tell them he comes from the Lotto.

-
1. This period (the 1930s) saw the proclamation of the second Land Act (1936). See ‘The Land Acts,’ p. 35.
 2. The Mphaphu War of 1898-1899. As Muleba’s historical account indicates, the forces of the South African Republic were joined by various tribal armies during the war.
 3. The village was situated in the mountains above the present-day Makhado (Louis Trichardt).



The man in the fur coat

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Long ago there was a certain man. Now, he had a girl. And his girl: he married her. He took her to his home. This is where they lived.

But then, this man, this one: he changed into a baboon! Now, his wife was very surprised. She said, 'Aa-a! I fell in love with a baboon!'

So she started singing:

[Narrator]

Mato o tswuka ngani?

Why are the eyes red?

Pamangavhini!

Because I fell from the sky!¹

I milenzhe tshini?

What are these legs for?

Ndi milenzhe yanga!

They are just my legs!

Tshimbilani, ri vhone!

Walk so that we can see!

*Kusada-kusada: izwo-ha!*²

Kusada-kusada: there, you see?

I zwanda ndi tshini?

What are the hands for then?

Izwi ndi zwanda zwanga!

They are just my hands!

Farani-ha, ri vhone!

Grab with them so we can see!

*Dzungu-dzungu: izwo-ha!*²

Dzungu-dzungu: there, you see?

Khe ni sa fari zwone?

Then why don't you catch properly with them?

Uyo mutshila tshini?

What is the tail for?

*Iyi ndi mbaḁo yanga!*³

It is my ax!

*Remani-ha, ri vhone!*⁴

Chop so that we can see!

Kukatshu-kukatshu: izwo-ha!

Kukatshu-kukatshu: there, you see?

Khevha sa remi zwone?

Why are you not chopping properly?

Kukatshu-kukatshu: izwo-ha!

Kukatshu-kukatshu: there, can't you see?

Aya makuse tshini?

What about your fur?

Idzi ndi nguvho dzanga!

It is just my blanket!

Bvulani-ha, ri vhone!

Take it off so that we can see!

Kudzungu-kudzungu: izwo-ha!

Kudzungu-kudzungu: there you are!

Khevha sa bvuli zwone?

Why don't you take it off then?

Kudzungu-kudzungu: izwo-ha!

Kudzungu-kudzungu: there you are!

Maḁo o tswuka ngani?

Why are your eyes red?

Ndi no bva afho mutsini.

I have been sitting in smoke.⁵

[Chorus]

Tavhaila! Tavhaila!

On all fours!

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 1 October 2009

A different version of this story explains how a man dies, leaving his wife and small twins behind. The woman is 'foolish' and marries again, but this time to a baboon. One morning Mr Baboon is sitting comfortably on top of an overturned clay pot, not working. The children do not recognise him and proceed to ask him a series of questions:

'Why do you have protruding eyebrows?'

'They are not protruding eyebrows. Look my child: it is a cap that you wear when you swank.'

'Why do you have hair? You frighten me very much.'

'It is not hair my little one. It is a blanket for protection against winter.'

‘Why do you have such a big tail?’

‘No little one, it is not a tail. It is something to whip you with when you bunk school.’

This excerpt was integrated into a song and its conclusion is not known.⁶

If society models itself on nature, it stands to reason that Mr Baboon should feature in its narratives. An Isixhosa narrative entitled ‘The baboon’s wedding’ arguably expresses the core meaning of the baboon image, namely that baboons are animals who resemble humans, but who lack culture and therefore fail to achieve humanity.⁷ Accordingly, baboons once were people who were ‘habitually idle, and did not like to dig; they wished to eat at other people’s houses, saying, “We shall live, although we do not dig, if we eat the food of those who cultivate the soil.”’⁸ Elsewhere they sing, ‘*Rititse, rititse*, we are afraid of ploughing.’⁹ And so Mr Baboon’s humanoid antics, and especially his habit of raiding people’s carefully tended crops, result in him entering popular consciousness as a lazy nuisance. He is also incompetent and not too bright.

*Dende*¹⁰ gourd-bow player Elias Ndou from Mangaya in the Thengwe district describes himself fittingly as *tshienda-hongolo*, an old male baboon who roams the countryside (see ‘The wandering musician’). He is a pest in the fields, and he likes to enter homes to eat children’s food.¹¹ Ndou furthermore describes an inept political leader as a baboon who wears a tie but does not work (*‘Pfene lo vhotha thai mara a li vheregi’*).¹² Musician Solomon Mathase from Thohoyandou in turn describes himself derogatively as a ‘guitar-bashing baboon’ because of his irresponsible lifestyle.¹³

But Baboon is not male only. A story much loved by audiences describes the horror of a man who discovers that he has married a baboon. His wife’s secret identity is revealed when she no longer feeds her family who live in the veld, and they take revenge.¹⁴

The husband as baboon may link with the theme of the so-called animal groom. This image expresses the conflict attendant on the young adult’s introduction to the ‘dangerous propensities of sex, about its strange secrets and close connection with violent and destructive emotions.’¹⁵ In the *ngano* entitled ‘The pumpkin that could speak,’¹⁶ a newly-married woman accordingly has sexual relations with her husband, but she cannot see him. She yearns for friendship with him too. One day she returns home unexpectedly and finds him basking in the sun: he is a snake. She flees to her mother who hacks the snake to pieces. This is a typical feature of the animal-groom theme, namely that ‘the groom is absent during the day and present only in the darkness of night; he is believed to be animal during the day and to become human only in bed ... The female, despite the ease and pleasure she enjoys, finds her life empty.’¹⁷

Filling this ‘emptiness’ is of course one of the purposes as well as challenges of married life. Audiences find the spouse as baboon generally very entertaining because they understand marital conflict. Particularly amusing is that moment of discovery, or its prediction. Johanna Muleba says of a newly-married husband in the story that follows (‘The baboon in the orange tree’): ‘He will become a baboon in future!’

Translator Pfananani Masase expressed mild irritation at the description of the husband as *pfene*, which is derogative. The respectful name for baboons is *La thavhani* (Those of the mountain). In addition, the baboon also is praised as ‘*A nyamutsa nga davhi wa lombe: wa sa farelela davhi u a wa lombe*’ (‘You who are climbing down the branch: if you do not hold on, you will fall’). This praise is used to muster courage, especially during war.¹⁸ But the intention in *ngano* is not to praise Baboon, but to undermine husbands, even he who married a baboon, since he should have detected his wife’s true nature prior to marriage!

However, Baboon arguably functions on a deeper level in the sense that its image points to those who roam beyond moral limits, and also to the personal growth that

is required for ‘union with the beloved other.’¹⁹ Becoming a complete human being is when ‘one is at the same time able and happy to be oneself with another.’²⁰ This entails giving up ‘childish attitudes’ and developing true love: only then is the spouse disenchanted, and no longer a beast.²¹

1. The implication seems to be that Mr Baboon’s eyes are red and burning because of his long and fast descent! As for falling from the sky, it could simply be an exasperated way of saying, ‘I am your husband, where do you think I come from, and why do you think my eyes are red?’

2. Varied with *Kubatu-kubatu, izwo-ha!*

3. Varied with *Idzi ndi mbaḁo dzanga!*

4. Varied with *Khevha sa remi zwino?* (Why don’t you chop now?)

5. Lit. I have come out of smoke.

6. Kruger 1994:260-261.

7. Scheub, 1992:335-347.

8. Callaway, 1970:178-180.

9. Smith, 2004:120.

10. See Kirby (1968) and Kruger (1986) for descriptions of this bow.

11. Kruger, 1986:123-125.

12. Kruger, *op. cit.*:132.

13. Kruger, 1994:80.

14. See ‘What a woman’ in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:139-140.

15. Bettelheim, 2010:303.

16. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:57-62.

17. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:294.

18. Le Roux, 1996:819-820.

19. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:278.

20. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:279.

21. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:279, 284.



♩ = 144

Ma - to o tswu - ka nga - ni? Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Pa - ma - nga - vhi - ni! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

I mi - le - nzhe tshi - ni! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ndi mi - le - nzhe ya - nga! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Tshi - mbi - la - ni, ri vho - ne! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ku - sa - da, ku - sa - da: i - zwo - ha!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

I zwa - nda ndi tsi - ni? Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

I - zwi ndi zwa - nda zwa - nga!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

U - yo mu - tshi - la tshi - ni? Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

I - yi ndi mba - do ya - nga! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Re - ma - ni - ha, ri vho - ne!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ku - ka - tshu, ku - ka - tshu: i - zwo - ha! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

I khe - vha sa re - mi zwo - ne? Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

A - ya ma - ku - se tshi - ni? Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

I - dzi ndi ngu - vho dzan - nga! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Bvu - la - ni - ha, ri vho - ne! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ku - dzu ngu, ku - dzu - ngu: i - zwo - ha! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ke - vha sa bvu - li zwo - ne? Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ke - vha sa bvu - li zwo - ne?

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

Ku - dzu - ngu, ku - dzu - ngu: i - zwo - ha! Ee! Ee!

Ta - vha - i - la, wee, ta - vha - i - la!

The baboon in the orange tree

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a young man who wanted to marry a girl. He went to her parents and said, 'I want my girl.' They answered, 'OK, she will go with you.'

And so this young man, this one and his girl, started walking. They were walking together. After a while the girl started complaining: 'I am thirsty, I am thirsty! What shall I do?' Then she added, 'If you do not give me water, I will refuse to go further with you. I will simply refuse!'

So, the young man searched around. There was no river nearby, only water trickling from a rock. He took his handkerchief from his pocket and said, 'The handkerchief will become soaked when I spread it on the rock. Come here, girl.' His wife came there and found that he was still human. Yes, he had not yet changed. He will become a baboon in future!

The husband wringed and twisted the wet handkerchief into that girl's mouth. She drank water, she drank water! Then the husband said, 'Let us go!'

They walked, they walked until they came to an orange tree.¹ A baboon was sitting up there.

That girl said to her husband, 'I am not passing here. If you get those oranges, those ones up there, and give them to me to eat, I will definitely go further with you.'

The young man picked up a clod. He threw it and it struck the tree near that baboon.

The girl kept on nagging: 'If you do not give me oranges, I will not go with you.' The man picked up another clod and threw it. The baboon looked around and said, 'Now what shall I do about this person?' He picked an orange and threw it at the man! He threw it and that young man caught it. He took another clod and the baboon asked, 'What shall I do?' So he picked more oranges and threw them down there!

The young man said, 'There you are! Now, let's get back on the footpath. Let's go.' There they were: they were walking further, that girl with her young man. Then they arrived at a fountain ... I forget its name, but it was a marshy place where the water flows from the ground.

Now, that girl said, 'There is no other way ahead except through here. Now, how will we pass?'

'We just have to wade through.'

'Well, I am not crossing through the water. I will not do it! What shall we do? I will not ...!' And on and on until that young man said, 'OK, enough!'

He took soil and spread it all over where the water was flowing, spreading, spreading ... And so he finally became married to his girl. He went home with her.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha tshitori.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 28 Sept 2010

As in 'Dzwee's journey' by Zachary Tshamano, the actual journey in this story is metaphoric of an inner voyage, and a trigger that reveals the character traits of the newly-married couple.

The story shows some correlation with 'The woman at the fountain' in this collection. In both stories, excessive demands are made by newly-married persons wanting to test the suitability of their partner. The young husband in this story is put on trial for his ingenuity and forbearance, as well as his capacity for hard work which presumably is indicative of his ability to be a good provider.

Despite the childish, nagging behaviour of the young wife that must come as a

surprise to the husband, he retains his integrity and passes his character test: ‘And so he finally became married to his girl.’ (Compare ‘The man who refused to dance,’ in which the opposite happens.)

The young husband does not lose his temper, and therefore remains ‘human.’ Changing into an animal in *ngano*, especially into a lion, means ‘losing’ your humanity. But there is an important difference between the identity of Lion and that of Baboon: the former represents an extreme aberration of the normative male role, while most if not all men are baboons at some or other time during their marriage. The only problem, as Johanna Muleba points out above, is that it takes time to find this out!

1. This is a rare instance in *ngano* of the presence of a changing outside world. The cultivation of oranges is attendant on 20th century white land invasion.



A little story

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain woman and her co-wife. Now, the co-wife, the co-wife did have children: they were boys. But this woman had no child. So, she asked herself, 'What can the matter be? Why don't I have a child?'

She collected clay and shaped a child. She made a clay child with ears and everything. He was called Mbugwe. This boy was called Mbugwe Tshiulu.¹

Now, that husband of the women had cattle. One day he went out with his sons. They went out to herd the cattle. They went with that child, but he was just made from clay. They went out with him because that woman had no child.²

Now, a thunder storm started brewing. They were outside there, there at Madzhawu. They were sitting next to Ngondodza River. That is where they were.

That woman heard the thunder approaching and she exclaimed, 'Oh no! The rain will fall on my child!' She said this because that Mbugwe was made from clay.

Then she went outside. She sang:

[Narrator]

Mbugwe, Mbugwe, Mbugwe Tshiulu!

Mbugwe, Mbugwe, Mbugwe
Tshiulu!

Lavhelela dzhatsha, Mbugwe, mutshavhona!

Hey, watch out, Mbugwe, watch
out!

Ñwana wanga o vhumbiwa, mutshavhona!

My child is made from clay,
watch out!

Ndo muvhumba, ndi tshiulu!

I made him, it is clay!

Lule, lule, kole lo lelemela.

The clouds are gathering.

Ñwananga ndi tshiulu.

My child is made from clay.

[Chorus]

Lavhelela dzhatsha!

Watch out!

The clouds gathered. They swirled higher and higher! The rain came down, *thuu!* The child's ears fell off, off! While this was happening, the woman was singing at home, *Mbugwe Tshiulu!* ...

When the herders arrived home, they found that the clay child had crumbled along the way.³ He had been made in sorrow because there was no real child.

The woman asked, 'Where is Mbugwe Tshiulu?'

'We left him along the way because he broke.'

The woman burst into tears! She was crying there. She was crying over her boy that had been made of clay. Because it was a child made in grief. That child was dead, he was dead ...

And so the woman returned to the house of her parents.⁴

*Lwa mbo ðivha lu khou fhela: lwa tou
vha lutuku nyana.*

This is the end: it is just a little story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 1 October 2009

1. Lit. Mbugwe Anthill. The implication is that the woman used clay from an anthill to shape her child. The image of an anthill also serves the ultimate disintegration of the boy (he loses his human shape and becomes a 'formless' mound of clay). The symbolism of anthills in Venda culture requires investigation, but it may be worth

noting that anthills in other African symbolic systems are regarded, *inter alia*, as entrances to the underworld and 'the womb of the earth' (Kriel, 1989:39).

2. In other words, they indulged the fantasy and sorrow of the woman (see 'Childlessness' on p. 52 and 'Playing with dolls' on p. 53.)

3. Harber (1998:111, 113) notes of clay figurines used in Venda girls' initiation that they are not fired 'as their usage and life span is short. They are usually thrown back into the riverbed to return to clay mud.' This action is considered 'a crucial feature of the ritual.' There could very well be a link here with the image in 'A little story' of a disintegrating clay child, but there is no clear evidence to support this.

4. Married women often return to their parental home in times of marital conflict or stress. Women who are childless also may be rejected by their husband.

$\text{♩} = 156$

Doh is C | d' :- lt :- ll :s ll :- ld' :m' lr' :d' |t :l ll :l ll : | : | : | :
 Mbu- gwe, nwa-na- nga. a - hee- hee, Mbu- gwe, mu-tsha- vho- na!

|m :- ls :- | : | : |m :m |m :m |d :- |m :- | : | : |s :s |s :s
 dza - tsha. La- vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La- vhe - le - la

|m' :- lr' :- |m' :- ld' :- ld' :m' lr' :d' |t :l ll :l ll : | : | : | :
 Mbu - gwe, Mbu - gwe, a - hee- hee, Mbu- gwe, mu-tsha- vho- na!

|m :- ls :- | : | : |m :m |m :m |d :- |m :- | : | : |s :s |s :s
 dza - tsha. La- vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La- vhe - le - la

|m' :m' lr' :r' |d' :d' |d' :d' |t :t |t :t |s :- |t :- ll :l ll :l | : | :
 Nwa-na wa- nga o vhu- mbi- wa, la- vhe - le - la dza - tsha, mu-tsha- vho- na!

|m :- ls :- | : | : |m :m |m :m |d :- |m :- | : | : |s :s |s :s
 dza - tsha. La- vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La- vhe - le - la

|m' :m' lr' :r' |r' |r' :d' |s :- | : | : |d' :- |t :t ll :l ll :l | : | :
 Ndo mu- vhu- mba, ndi tshiu - lu. Nwa - na 'nga mu-tsha- vho- na!

|m :- ls :- | : | : |m :m |m :m |d :- |m :- | : | : |s :s |s :s
 dza - tsha. La- vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La- vhe - le - la

Magic

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Long, long ago there was a man. This was during the time of the San people.¹ This man and his wife, and his mother: they ate other people.

The man was called Radzhimu.² Now, one day he said to his mother, 'This wife of mine is fat. It is better to kill her.³ When I leave for the fields, stay behind and kill her.' The mother agreed.

A certain neighbour came there. She sat down and told her friend they planned to kill her that evening. So, Radzhimu left while the women remained at home.

Now, the mother said, 'Wife of my child, come so that I can shave your head.'

'No, I will shave you first.'

'No, I say! Wife of my child, your hair is long. I want to cut it.'

That one said, 'No, I *will* shave you first.'

So, the mother-in-law agreed at last. The wife knelt next to her. Long ago there were no razors, only those long knives. That neighbour gave her friend a knowing look. The wife took the knife and started to shave, shave her there on top of her head. Then she turned! She lifted the knife behind the head of her mother-in-law and stabbed her!

After killing her, she took the old woman's body. She put it in a pot and then cooked it. Now, when she was cooking, she took those clothes of the old woman and put them on.⁴ She took her own clothes and hung them over a pole so that when Radzhimu came home he would think that his wife had been killed.

And so Radzhimu returned. When he came there, he found that wife. She had covered herself with the blankets⁵ of the old woman.

'My mother! (They were those Maguvhu.)⁶ Did you do that job?'

'I did the job, my child.'

'Now, won't you get up and eat?'

'No, my child, I am ill.'

'Get up, get up mother!'

'No, my child, I am too ill.'

There was the sound of eating: 'Ssssp!' Radzhimu was sipping his mother with a spoon!

He finished there, went to bed and woke up the next morning. He left to go and hunt.

The woman said, 'Hell!' She got up and finished washing herself and doing everything. She took her own clothes and put them on. She took those clothes of the old woman and put them there on the pole. Then she took a drum. She came out of the house and stood in the door. She sang:

[Narrator]

Radzhimu u li^le mmae!

Radzhimu ate his mother!

[Leader/chorus]

Ka ri ke tshelana-tshelana mmae!

He thinks he is eating me, but he is eating his mother!

Radzhimu said, 'Hell! That woman killed my mother!' He came back running. When he came to the homestead, he found the woman singing with a drum, *Radzhimu u li^le mmae!* ...

That woman fled. Both she and her husband did magic. So, as she was fleeing, the husband created a flood. The woman was stopped by a deluge of water.⁷ She sang:

[Narrator]
Tshiwawa khoba-khoba-khoba! The disappearing water thunders!

[Chorus]
Khoba-khoba-khoba! Thunder-thunder-thunder!

That water flowed away and she ran further. Then she found a mountain in front of her. She exclaimed, 'Oh no! Radzhimu is still behind me!' So she sang:

[Narrator]
Nḁou paḁa-paḁa-paḁa! Elephant trample-trample-trample!

[Chorus]
Paḁa-paḁa-paḁa! Trample-trample-trample!

Trees at the foot of the mountain splintered! That mountain disappeared! But as it disappeared, the wife was blocked by a stony ridge. She exclaimed, 'Oh no! Oh no! I am suffering here. What will I do, poor me!' She chanted again, 'Elephant, come and trample the stony ridge! *Nḁou paḁa-paḁa-paḁa!* ...'

The elephant smashed the ridge and that woman fled further. As she ran, that husband threw down devil's thorns.⁸ The wife's flight was blocked by those thorns. She sang:

[Narrator]
Pfuko pfuka-pfuka-pfuka! Locust jump-jump-jump!⁹

[Chorus]
Pfuka-pfuka-pfuka! Jump-jump-jump!

Ha mbo ḁi vha u fa ha lungano. This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 30 September 2009

Kuper (1987:171) suggests that references to cannibalism in southern Africa's past are more symbolic than real, and 'if one bases a description of cannibals on what the legends tell us, then it is possible to construct a richer image. First, cannibals are contrasted implicitly with the good ancestral spirits, who protect people and foster human health and fertility. Second, cannibals are directly contrasted to human beings.'

It is particularly in relation to this cannibal-human contrast that the setting of this story is familiar: it is that of the family as the centre of most social discord. A woman is in conflict with her husband and mother-in-law. They are represented as cannibals, a form of ultimate evil usually reserved for marauding outsider groups (see 'Mighty rooster').

Although the woman is the prey of her cannibal husband, she manages to outwit him. In typical fashion the oppressed join forces: she is forewarned by her neighbour. And she is no weakling: she murders her mother-in-law and tricks her husband into eating her flesh.

The woman flees, and she and her husband engage in a series of mutually undermining magical acts in the setting of the wilderness which provides images of terror. Tension builds as each magic chant becomes increasingly frantic. The story ends abruptly: conflict is inevitable and enduring.

1. *Masarwa*. The narrator is distancing herself from cannibalism by situating the story in the very distant past. Prehistoric society seems to be regarded as 'unformed' and

‘uncivilised.’ In a San story entitled ‘The great thirst’ (Gordon, 2002:15-17), animals had no water or food, and they ate each other.

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha indicated that local people are well aware of the historical presence of San and Khoekhoe populations in the Soutpansberg.

2. The name Radzhimu probably derives from the root *dimu* which in certain regional languages refers to an ogre (see Kuper, 1987:170). In Setswana, *dimu* also refers to a ‘malevolent child-eating giant, the evil one’ (Kuper, *loc. cit.*, citing Cole).

3. The cannibals first ate the woman’s child. To stop her from becoming suspicious, she is their next victim.

4. Callaway (1970:17-21) documents a story about *Uhlakanyana*, the Zulu trickster figure, who similarly tricks a cannibal into eating his own mother.

5. The blankets some women wear round their waist and shoulders.

6. Maguvhu are Venda people living in southern areas like Nthabalala, Moila and Mashamba. They speak the Tshiguvhu dialect whose vocabulary and pronunciation is influenced by neighbouring Sesotho speakers. The conversation and song that follow, show these traits. The narrator heard the story from her grandmother who lived among Tshiguvhu speakers.

7. This part of the story takes the form of the well-known obstacle flight (see ‘Father on the footpath’). The image of stopping or dividing a large mass of water during flight also occurs in Isizulu narratives (Callaway, 1970:82, 93). Callaway claims ‘that for many years the natives of Natal have had abundant opportunities of receiving from others the substance of this tale [Moses and the parting of the Red Sea], which they may have worked up into a tale of their own’ (1970:95).

8. Thorns of *Dicerocaryum zanguebarium*. A similar image appears in a Sesotho narrative (Postma, 1957:128-139; ‘Die reënmaker, die waterslang’).

9. Although *pfuko* refers to a locust, Mathuvhelo Mavhetha indicated that the animal in question in fact is called *khwidi* (unidentified). It is the size of a cat and has long haunches.

♩ = 96 Solo

Doh is C | m' : m' : m' | r' : r' : d' | d' : :
 Ra - dzhi - - mu 'li - le mma - e!

Solo/chorus

| l : d' : d' | s : s : s | m : m : m | d' : d' :-
 Ka ri ke tshe - la - na - tshe - la - na mma - e!

Chant 1 ♩ = 100

Doh is C | d' : d' : d' | r' :- : s | d' :- : d' | r' :- : s
 Tshi - wa - wa kho - ba - kho - ba - kho - ba!

| : : | r' :- : s | d' :- : d' | r' :- : s
 Kho - ba - kho - ba - kho - ba!

Chant 2 ♩ = 100

Doh is C | t : t :- | r' :- : s | t :- : t | r' :- : s
N - dou pa - qa - pa - qa - pa - qa!

| : : | r' :- : s | t :- : t | t :- : t
Pa - qa - pa - qa - pa - qa!

Chant 3 ♩ = 100

Doh is C | d' : d' :- | r' :- : s | d' :- : d' | r' :- : s
Pfu - ko pfu - ka - pfu - ka - pfu - ka!

| : : | r' :- : s | d' :- : d' | r' :- : s
Pfu - ka - pfu - ka - pfu - ka!



A hero learns a lesson

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a place without water. It was dry.

There were two boys. They were Johannes and Samuel. Their father was Mr Mavhetha.¹ Hey, now, this younger boy, this one with his wonderful magic ...

Mr Mavhetha had a herd of cattle. Now, those cattle were collapsing. There was no water anywhere.

This elder brother, this one: the father said to him, 'Man, the cattle are weak. Go out over there with them. Herd them, herd them and return at the end of the day.' But the younger brother said, 'Father, leave it, let me go man.'

Hah! So what will he give them? Because there is no water.

The boy left, he left and went over Madzhawu mountain. Madzhawu² pan was on the other side. Now, the cattle could smell that there had been water there long ago.

Hah, the boy arrived and stood there. It was this younger brother with his magic. He let water come out from the pan! He sang:

[Narrator]

Mamvula tembelele! Filling with rain!

[Chorus]

Mamvula tembelele! Filling with rain!

That water, now: it came from the soil and filled the entire pan, '*phaaa!*' The cattle of Mr Mavhetha drank happily. They urinated and dropped dung!

When the cattle returned home to their byre, people were surprised. 'How is it that Mr Mavhetha's cattle are so fat? We wonder what they eat.'

So they went to Mr Mavhetha and said, 'Your cattle are fat: what have they eaten?' Mr Mavhetha replied, 'They went out with my boy yesterday. I do not know where they grazed. Hey, they are dropping a lot of dung. We are milking them man.'

Things went on like that. Now, one day Mr Mavhetha said, 'Let me go out with the cattle myself.' So he went with them over there to Madzhawu. The cattle rushed to the pan because they smelled the water. The father wanted them to move on. He wanted them to go over there to the veld. He just stood there, not knowing what to do, *duu!*

He said, 'Hey, there is the smell of water here! Hah, the cattle know there used to be water here long ago.' He herded the cattle home and they were complaining.

The father called, 'You, boy! When I wanted the cattle to go around the pan, why did they refuse?' The boy answered, 'Hah, you are an old man, you cannot herd cattle.'

The elder brother said, 'Tomorrow I will go out with them.' This elder brother, when he left with the cattle, he also went over there to Madzhawu. He tried to find grazing but the cattle just suffered. They arrived there at the pan: there was nothing. So the elder brother herded them back home. 'Hah, the cattle of Mr Mavhetha: I cannot herd them.' The father said, 'You know, my child, I also struggled with the cattle yesterday.'

That younger brother said, 'Let me go out with them.' Ah, the boy went with the cattle. When he returned, his clothes were washed clean!³

People were becoming suspicious. So Mr Mavhetha decided: 'This boy, let me follow him so that I can see where he spends his day.' He went with a certain man called Mr Elias.

When the cattle went out with the boy, they grazed and grazed, yes! It was in the afternoon. The boy came there and again danced his song, *Mamvula tembelele!* ...

That water flowed from the ground once more. The father said, 'So this is what my boy is doing! Hey, this child, this one is special.' He softly came up to him from behind. The boy shouted, 'Hey!' He had been startled. The father admonished him.

‘But you, my child: you see us suffering while you are able to make water.’

Mr Elias left and invited the messenger of the headman who called the whole village to the pan. He said, ‘These cattle are drinking water. Water was made here.’

Every family in the village gave the boy an ox, an ox. They gave cattle, the boy was given many cattle. They said, ‘Sing.’ The boy danced. He danced *Mamvula tembelele*. He danced for the whole village!

The story ends when he gave water to the people.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 30 September 2009

On the face of things, this is another story describing the ascendancy and triumph of the youngest child. Typically he does so ‘in a community in which something is amiss: ... things are in disarray, life is no longer flowing peacefully and happily.’⁴ This refers firstly to the drought that ravages a district, but also to the effect this has on social relations.

The younger brother shows up his elder sibling in typical fashion. This involves an unusual turn in the plot. The elder brother usually fails first (see ‘The python healer’). However, in this story the younger brother takes the herd out first. The comment by the narrator (‘So what will he give them?’) suggests that this is necessary so that the listener can be introduced to his magic. In addition, the contrast between impotence and power subsequently also is established in terms of the father-son relationship. Competition between generations expressed here takes the form of a parent’s emerging belief that a child is ready to surpass him. As such ‘he sends his child out into the world to prove himself, and thus demonstrate his ability and worthiness to take over.’⁵

Whereas heroes in other coming of age stories prove their worth by battling dangerous adversaries (‘Fortune lies ahead’), the young hero in this story proves his capacity as young adult by mastering musical speech (see ‘The power of song,’ p. 71). Dutton⁶ remarks accordingly that ‘the evolutionary function of language is not only to be a means of efficient communication but to be a signal of fitness and general intelligence ... Vocabulary accurately used is a handy quantitative measure with a potential to reach into the psyche in order to ascertain a person’s mental powers.’

What sets this story apart from the ‘The python healer,’ is the latter’s portrayal of its young hero as imperfect: he fears being dragged into the snake’s hole and resists fiercely. The young man in ‘A hero learns a lesson’ is different: he starts out as an arrogant super-human: not only is he able to find water immediately, but his derisive comments about his father’s lack of herding skill normally would invite a beating. But the purpose of this characterisation is revealed as the listeners come to realise they have been misled. Although the younger brother is crowned as hero, he also learns a valuable, even humiliating lesson about social existence: those who have special powers must make them known to, and apply them for the good of the entire community.⁷ It is unacceptable that just one herd of cattle has access to the water: all animals and people in the village must share. Accordingly, the second last line of the story indicates that the boy dances for the whole village. In other words, he is shown

to move away from the pole of limited ‘ego-consciousness,’ which puts him at the mercy of events he does not understand, towards that other pole which connects him up to the world outside himself and gives him the wider vision which is necessary for his liberation. This winning of a wider vision [is necessary for] reaching an entirely new relationship with himself and the universe ... [and in doing so] the wider community or kingdom is redeemed (Booker, 2004:252, 306).

1. The narrator clearly had not told this story for a long time. She hesitated before providing the names of the brothers and father, inserting the name of Mathuvhelo Mavhetha here.
2. *Madzhawu* is the name of a wet area.
3. An indication that he washed them in the pan.
4. Booker, 2004:272-273.
5. Bettelheim, 2010:135.
6. Dutton, 2009:147.
7. See 'Thunder returns' in this collection as well as 'The magic song' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:68-69.



$\text{♩} = 100$

Doh is C

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Ma - mvu - la te - mbe - le - le!

Mr Elephant learns a lesson too

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was drought in the village. Now, the cattle and wild animals were pining for water. They gathered to make a plan. Mr Kudu and Mr Elephant and all the others said, 'Now, what shall we do about water? Let us dig in the river bed.'

They went there and started to dig, but there was no water. Now, Mr Tortoise happened to walk by.

'Why are you gathering here, men? What are you looking for?'

'We need water. There is no water in the river.'

'So, let us dig.'

'Hah, we tried but there is nothing.'

'Let me try.'

'Hah! You have such short legs. How will you dig?'

'No, man, let me try!'

So Mr Tortoise went down the hole those others had started to dig.¹

[Narrator]

Fulugudu!

Dig-dig!

[Chorus]

Maḍi a bvelela!

The water is coming out!

Mud started to bubble. Then, as it started to rise, the men told Mr Tortoise, 'Hey, go back down, man! We think the water is coming out!' So Mr Tortoise went down again.

That Mr Elephant said, 'Tortoise cannot do anything. He is just weeing in the hole, man!' Mr Tortoise replied, 'I am not weeing! As you can see, I am digging here!' That Mr Elephant was abusing him because he was small.

Mr Tortoise went down again, *Fulugudu!* ... Water came out now. That water rose up, *tesu-tesu!* It rose up in that hole. The men were speechless.² Then they said, 'Come and see this!' Mr Elephant asked, 'What?'

Now, Mr Tortoise went back down there. He wanted to wash off the mud. Mr Elephant complained, 'No, no, no! I will not allow this one to wash himself, man!' He picked Mr Tortoise up and flung him far away!

So, the men said, 'For an adult, what you are doing is not right. Don't do that. Remember, we looked for water without finding it. Now, this man helped us.' Hah, they said to Tortoise, 'Come here, you. Wash yourself. We don't mind drinking the muddy water, because we are perishing.'

So, Mr Tortoise washed and splashed! After he finished, he sat down over there. Some people picked leaves. They spread the leaves nicely for Mr Tortoise to sit on comfortably.

Hah, then those other people went down into the hole. They drank water. And Mr Elephant no longer was upset. He had listened to all the villagers who had agreed that Mr Tortoise should not be snubbed.

Ha mbo ḍi vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 1 October 2011

This story carries the same theme as that narrated by Masinda Maliyehe of Sanari.³ In both cases Mr Tortoise is ridiculed and abused because of his low status which is defined in power hierarchies usually constituted in terms of age, gender and politics.

In Maliyehe’s version, Mr Tortoise resists oppression by letting the well dry up. This blackmail then leads to an apology, after which he restores the water supply. His final triumph is that he takes a bath in the well.

And so we learn that Mr Tortoise is a magician, and that he dispenses his power with ‘immutable and unhurried wisdom,’⁴ in particular to teach ‘a lesson in humility,’⁵ although he seems unable to resist mocking the others as he washes himself in their drinking water. Kriel⁶ notes of Tortoise that ‘the quiet, determined and resistant character of this animal is in agreement with the usual African ideal for a man, who should not flare up like a woman but bear the vicissitudes of life stoically.’ In addition, Tortoise’s ‘reference includes the good of society as a whole’ so that he also should ‘be seen as the symbol of “conscience.”’⁷ As such, this story essentially speaks to ideal character, as well as the tensions of social stratification, and the consequent importance of interdependence and mutual respect.

Johanna Muleba’s story teaches the same lesson, but it is directed specifically at Mr Elephant, that symbol of ultimate, in this case also abusive, power. However, Mr Elephant is subject to social constraint. Although the powerful often exploit and oppress others, there are various mechanisms that direct their behaviour. Decisions affecting groups usually are taken in consultation. For instance, powerful as some traditional leaders are, they are pressed to adhere to consensus decisions taken at tribal court.⁸ And so Mr Elephant wisely realises the error of his ways, and he is graciously reincorporated into the group. He has redeemed himself, and, in typical comedy style, retains his honour.

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1. Lit. they had dug a bit, *bitshana*; from Afrikaans *bietjie* (a bit) and Tshivenda *nyana* (a lesser quantity); a word mostly used in the Limpopo Valley.
 2. Lit. they grabbed their mouth.
 3. See ‘Mr Tortoise takes a bath’ in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:63-65.
 4. Tracey, 1986:xi.
 5. Kriel, 1971:56, 59.
 6. Kriel, 1989:158.
 7. Kriel, 1971:58.
 8. See the expression *Khosi ndi khosi nga khoro* (A chief rules through his councillors).

♩. = 126

Doh is C | s : s | s :- | t :- | : | : | : | : | : | :
 Fu - lu - gu - du!

| : | : | : | m :- | m :r | - .r :- | r :- | t :-
 Ma - di a bve - le - la!



A man falls

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Here at this place: there was a man and his wife. The wife had a brother. He was called Mavhetha. Now, that Mavhetha: he could do magic. He could call an elephant from the veld so that it could be seen.

Now, one day Mavhetha said to his brother-in-law, 'Let us go to the veld together.' When they arrived there, he said, 'Ah! Watch! I want to call an elephant. You will see it.'

'Really?'

'Yes! Climb up there!'

There was a big rock that was so high that when an elephant came, there would be no need to run away. They took a long pole and put it against the rock. The brother-in-law started to climb. He scaled the pole until he got to the top.

Mavhetha said, 'I am going now. I will bring the elephant. Do not run away. Just sit there and wait.' The brother-in-law said, 'All right.'

Mavhetha left and changed. He changed into an elephant. He returned and sang:

[Narrator]

Ahee, mulamu: wa vhona zhou.

Hey, brother-in-law, hey: if you see the elephant.

Ahee-aa, woza tuke

You have not yet seen the elephant.¹

Hai! Bvunga-bvunga!

Oh! Treading heavily!

[Chorus]

Nzhenzhe-kunzhe!

Just look!²

That elephant came treading heavily! It trampled trees. It pushed them over. It threw them over there!

Now, when I say '*bvunga-bvunga*,' sing well. I want to hear you responding. *Ahee, mulamu, wa vhona zhou ...*

So, after singing this, Mavhetha went away and returned as a person. That one who had been sitting there on the rock asked, 'Hey! Where have you been?' Mavhetha replied, 'I was afraid! I climbed that mountain: did you not see me? I climbed that mountain!³ So, get down. Let us go.'

When they arrived home, that brother-in-law said to his wife, 'Hey, today Mr Mavhetha showed me an elephant.'

'Ah, where did you see it?'

'I climbed on top of a big rock. I saw an elephant coming there. It grabbed a lot of trees, it grabbed a lot of trees. It threw them over there!'

A friend called Pitiroso said, 'Really? Well, tomorrow I will call Mr Mavhetha. We will go together. I want to see that elephant.'

When they arrived in the veld the next day, Mr Mavhetha asked, 'Will you not fall off the rock?'

'No, I won't fall my friend. I also want to see the elephant.'

'OK, but do not run away or jump down. You will break something. You must just sit there. You will see it coming. When it tramples trees, when it tramples trees, do not run away!'

So, they put that pole against the rock and that boy climbed up there.

Mavhetha said, 'I am going. Hey! I am going to bring the elephant here. But only one will come.' So, he changed over there in the distance, he changed into an elephant. When he returned he sang, *Hee, mulamu, wee ...*

Truly, that boy jumped unexpectedly! When he jumped down, that boy, his legs pushed into his stomach! Mr Mavhetha saw that and said, 'Oh dear! Poor boy! Oh

dear me!’

Mr Mavhetha went back into the veld and changed. He returned as a person. ‘You, Pitiroso! Pitiroso! Hey! I am here!’ He found that child injured. His legs were pushed into his stomach. Mr Mavhetha did not know what to say.

They returned. Mr Mavhetha carried that child on his back. He carried him home on his back. He said, ‘I found the child like this there in the veld.’

But it was Mr Mavhetha who was with him when he became injured, when he was frightened by the elephant.

Ndi hone u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 30 September 2009

As with most *ngano*, this story unfolds primarily as metaphor. It deals with those who have special powers, and how these powers should be exercised (see ‘Potency in *ngano*,’ p. 56). Kriel⁴ remarks that

of all the powers of the human being, magic is the one which enables him to pass the bounds of his human existence and have dealings either with the spirits or with animals. Great care should be exercised in both directions, and a *muroyi* [wizard] is not only in contact with harmful spirits, but also with animals that serve as familiars.

The spiritually powerful typically include ritual specialists like healers, initiation school instructors and musicians. These people have access to the world of magic and spirits,⁵ and the power accrued in this way must be exercised with care.⁶ This is why they usually are called to their occupation by spirits who appear in a dream. This calling legitimises their occupation, but it also means that they undertake to observe ancestral morality. They must go through a process of training, often lengthy and formal, as in the case of healers. Blacking⁷ writes in this regard that

mastery of special techniques is the first step towards using them for the public good; but if a man continues to aspire to do what he cannot do properly, he is being less than fully human, because he is unaware of his limitations ... if a person imagines that he has ... a gift and cannot prove it by being technologically competent, his apparently good intentions are doubted and he is suspected of arrogance and self-deception.

Translator Pfananani Masase accordingly interpreted Pitiroso’s misfortune as an indication that one should not compare yourself to others by trying to imitate their extraordinary deeds. Pitiroso alternatively is described as a boy and a child, pointing to his lack of maturity.

Johanna Muleba similarly identified Mavhetha as a person with extraordinary skill, specifically spiritual power (*madambi*, ‘dark’ magic), and Pitiroso as a younger, inexperienced man who fails miserably when trying to emulate the magician. Mavhetha’s transformation into elephant form therefore represents his special abilities. The veld in turn may be regarded as the place where Pitiroso confronts and works through his inner darkness; ‘where uncertainty is resolved about who one is; and where one begins to understand who one wants to be.’⁸

But Pitiroso is not solely responsible for his adversity: those with power must use it in accordance with time-honoured morality. The boy’s jump from the rock comes as an unpleasant surprise to the wizard. His integrity fails him, and he covers up his mistake: he too is after all just human.

1. The statement could indicate that the brother-in-law does not yet possess potency.

2. This line reflects Chishona influence.
3. Climbing may be a metaphor for achieving a state of potency.
4. Kriel, 1971:144.
5. This is reflected in the story in the lines 'I am going to bring the elephant here. But only one will come.'
6. See 'The magic song' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:68-69.
7. Blacking 1969a:70.
8. Bettelheim, 2010:93.

♩ = 116

Doh is C | m :- :- | m : m :- r | d :- :- | s :- :- : | : : | m :- :- | s :- m :- m | m :- s :- | : : | : : r
 Hee, mu-la mu, wee, hee, wa vho-na zhou.

| : : | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t | s :- :- | : : | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t
 Nzhe - nzhe - ku - nzhe! Nzhe-nzhe - ku -

| m :- :- | m : m :- r | d :- :- | s :- :- : | : : | m :- :- | s :- m :- m | m :- s :- | : : | : : t
 Hee, mu-la mu, wee, hee, wa vho-na zhou.

| s :- :- | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t | s :- :- | : : | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t
 nzhe! Nzhe - nzhe - ku - nzhe! Nzhe-nzhe - ku -

| d :- :- | s | t :- m :- s | t :- :- | s :- t :- m | s :- t :- | m :- :- | s :- m :- m | m :- s :- | : : | : : t
 hee, aa, wo-za tu-ke. aa, wo-za tu-ke hee, wa vho-na zhou

| s :- :- | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t | s :- :- | : : | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t
 nzhe! (Nzhe - nzhe - ku - nzhe!) Nzhe-nzhe - ku -

| d :- :- | s :- t :- m | s :- t :- | s :- t :- m | s :- t :- | m :- :- | s :- m :- m | m :- s :- | : : | : : t
 hee, bvu-nga-bvu nga_ bvu-nga-bvu nga_ hee, wa vho-na zhou

| s :- :- | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t | s :- :- | : : | : : | : : | t :- | t :- : t
 nzhe! (Nzhe - nzhe - ku - nzhe!) Nzhe-nzhe - ku -

* Not performed, but implied



A fool is always eating

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a young man who went to visit his in-laws. Those in-laws did not like him because he had taken their daughter. They were witches. They cooked porridge and vegetables, and put the dishes there in the house where their son-in-law was to be received.

They arrived over there at the house, that young man and his bird. This bird: it could speak. The young man's father and mother knew their son had a bird and that he walked around with it.

Now, what happened was that these in-laws poisoned the vegetables, but not the porridge. As the young man started to eat, the bird peered from his pocket and sang:

[Narrator]

Nwana u na mbilu.

Vhuswa u le zwau.

Muroho u lenge.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Mutshavhona, we dada!

[Chorus]

Mutshavhona dada!

The child is a glutton.¹

Eat porridge only.

Leave the vegetables.

[Call of the bird] Watch out for danger!²

Watch out for danger!

So, the young man set those vegetables aside and ate the porridge only. Then that child left. He went back home and stayed there for a few days.

He returned to his in-laws, he returned alone. Those in-laws cooked porridge for him again. They said, 'Today: the porridge. We are poisoning the porridge.' But the bird saw what they were doing.

So, the young man came there, washed his hands and wanted to eat. The bird came out of his pocket and sang, 'You, child who are a glutton, watch out!'

[Narrator]

Nwana u na mbilu.

Vhuswa u vhu lenge.

Muroho u le zwau.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Mutshavhona, we dada!

[Chorus]

Mutshavhona dada!

The child is a glutton.

Leave the porridge.

Eat the vegetables only.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Watch out for danger!

Watch out for danger!

So, the young man left that porridge and ate the vegetables. He ate the vegetables only. The bird went back into his pocket. It went inside. So far so good.

Now, the son-in-law arrived for the third time. He was still alone. Those in-laws said, 'Hey, this boy, today he won't leave, we will show him.' So they poisoned the vegetables.

The son-in-law washed his hands. He wanted to eat. The bird came out of his pocket. It stepped into the hand basin and started to wash itself too.

As the young man started to eat, the bird sang:

[Narrator]

Nwana u na mbilu.

Vhuswa u le zwau.

Muroho u lenge.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Mutshavhona, we dada!

[Chorus]

Mutshavhona dada!

The child is a glutton.

Eat porridge only.

Leave the vegetables.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Watch out for danger!

Watch out for danger!

So, that bird was telling the young man to eat porridge only, and not the vegetables. But that man refused to listen.³ He said, 'The bird really is a nuisance, man.' So he took the bird and went outside. He squashed it with a stone! He returned to the house. As he put his hand out to take those vegetables, the bird sang again, *Ńwana u na mbilu* ...

He said, 'Wragtag!'⁴ The bird does not listen!' He squashed and burnt the bird. He came back and washed his hands. As he wanted to eat, the bird sang again, *Ńwana u na mbilu* ...

Hey, now, that young man sat there, not knowing what to do. Then he said, 'This bird: I do not care what it says, I am eating this food.'⁵ The bird sang, *Ńwana u na mbilu* ...

That child ate and then went home. He walked and walked with his bird. Then he started to stagger! He collapsed and died!

The bird flew up into a tree. It sang and reported to those at home. It told the mother and father: *Ńwana u na mbilu* ... They asked, 'What is the matter? Why is the bird singing that? Is our child dead? Why is it talking about poisoning? Hey, let us look into this!'

They left and started walking. The bird flew ahead. It stopped and waited for them while singing. It goes, there it is! Those people arrived there in the footpath and found that child dead. 'Oh no! Our child has died!' They picked up his body.

Later they arrived home. They arrived and dug a grave.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 28 September 2010

This story shows some correlation with 'The magic knobkerrie' (Stayt, 1931:341-343) as well as 'Spears eat those who make them' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:116-122).

Greed is a common motif in folklore.⁶ Makuchi⁷ fittingly includes two tales that are critical of gluttony. One of them is entitled 'When you eat today, remember there is tomorrow,' and in it the stomach of a culprit bursts in spectacular fashion. This correlates with the Tshivenda proverb 'A wise person does not eat at all times; a fool is always eating.'⁸ Among the Zulu, gluttony is a particularly heinous habit akin to cannibalism.⁹

But this story serves as more than a straight-forward warning. Gluttony also expresses a state of youthful incompleteness, of 'uncontrolled voraciousness' and the inability to recognise 'the dangers of unrestrained oral greed.'¹⁰ As in many other *ngano*, its performance is part of the process of enculturation into a moral universe. Those who fail to observe the rules of this universe are 'held up to ignominy and bundled off stage.'¹¹

Poisoning is a common theme in *ngano*. However, it is not mere fiction and is typically associated with kitchens and cooking. Women consequently are to be feared in conflicting relations. An elderly female narrator from Tshiungani explained in 2012 how her husband deserted her some twelve years previously, only to be poisoned by the woman he had gone to live with.¹²

1. Lit. the child has a heart, i.e. he is controlled by impulse.

2. This is a standard warning against poisoned food. It derives from a story in which a boy called Mutshavhona is the target of poisoning. *Dada* is a general term for a threat, or a monster (see 'Mutshavhona' in Kruger, 2004:57-58).

3. Lit. he had logs in the ears.

A man refuses to dance

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, this story explains what happened to a young man who visited the home of his in-laws.

When he arrived there, everything was ready. The yard had been swept, the reed mats had been unrolled and the beer was ready. People arrived and filled the courtyard. They started drinking. Later they also started dancing there.¹

Now, as they were dancing, some girls said to the son-in-law, 'You, why don't you get up and dance too?' But he was afraid of dancing.

The girls insisted: 'Go and dance, man, go and dance. We will come and sing.'² They pleaded with him to get up, to get up and dance. Because he was afraid that his wife would reject him, he stood up.

And so he started to sing his song:

[Narrator]

Lule-lule-haa, lule-lule, Vhukalanga.

Lule-lule-haa, lule-lule, Mutshangana.

Zwa mukadzi:

A zwi lengiwi wa zwilega zwina.

Shima!

[Chorus]

Lavhelela dzhatsha!

[I come from] Vhukalanga.

[I am] Shangaan.

The woman:

Do not say you do not want her.³

Shame on you!

Look at the clouds of dust when I dance!

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 1 October 2009

A number of familiar motifs interweave in this truncated story. It essentially describes the trials of early married life. This is epitomised in a number of similar *ngano* featuring the husband in animal form. 'The pumpkin that could speak'⁴ accordingly features the husband as a snake. Apart from its rather obvious sexual imagery, the snake also is symbolic of concealed nature: it lies quietly and hides its true self, especially its latent menace, which is revealed after marriage only. What this story also shows is a spouse's consequent reaction of astonishment, confusion and even hurt.

This theme is integrated with that of distrusting strangers (see 'The outsider as villain' on p. 49). This lack of trust is borne out by the behaviour of the husband who takes on the identity of an outsider, here represented by southern (Shangaan) as well as northern neighbours (Zimbabwean). These are strangers whose history and family may not be known adequately. As explained in part I, men from Zimbabwe almost exclusively are portrayed as 'dark' outsiders.

The risky nature of marriage with outsiders increased with urbanisation. A wedding song, apparently originating during the first half of the 20th century, accordingly explains:⁵

Tshitiiriri tsho lila.

Tsho lilela Selinah.

Ho saina, mama.

Ho saina, papa.

Saina, saina, saina.

Mukusule ndi mini?

Ndi nama ya Vhavenda.

Tshidimela ndi mini?

The whistle is blowing.

It is blowing for Selinah.

It is a sign, mama.

It is a sign, papa.

Sign, sign, sign.

What are dried vegetables?

They are the favourite Venda food.

What is a train?

The song describes a marriage between a Venda man and a woman from a different ethnic group. The couple are on their way from town to the husband's rural home. During the journey the man instructs the woman in the customs of his people.

The whistle announces the wedding and the departure of the train. However, the image of a sign also pertains to a signed marriage contract, which is intended to promote the stability of the union.

The nature of the husband's hidden character is not known. However, it seems as if he lacks some basic social skill, perhaps patience or tolerance. Zimbabwean men usually are portrayed as aggressive and short-tempered (see 'A big hero'). In any case, the basic capacity that the husband lacks is represented by the image of dancing, a skill that all people are expected to have. The man refuses to dance because he knows his true nature will be exposed to all.

Men in such situations usually receive short thrift from female narrators: they are irredeemably bad. However, the narrator's treatment of the husband is more subtle. The fact that a stranger was allowed to marry into the family puts some of the blame on the in-laws.

The narrator also portrays the husband in a quandary: there is the expectation that men should marry and have a family. And so the man proposes marriage while deliberately suppressing his true nature because he fears rejection by his beloved and society at large. 'Shame on you' is the reprimand he gets for knowing in advance that the marriage is likely to fail.

The narrator explained that, as the man fails in dance, he assumes his true nature by becoming a snake. The standard treatment snakes get is to be hacked into pieces. In this case the snake is chopped in two, 'with the tail going one way and the head going another.' This is metaphoric of the end of the marriage and the disappearance of the man.

Scheub⁶ cites an Isizulu story, collected by Callaway, that presents a similar image in the context of a wedding: 'In the morning, many people assembled, but some laughed because Mamba [the son-in-law] did not know how to dance. They said, "Since he is a snake, how will he dance?"' The snake husband is described as 'deformed,' and his new wife pulls his skin off so that his true nature emerges.

-
1. This would have been *malende* choral dance-song performances that accompany drinking and family rituals.
 2. Lit. to respond in singing, *bvumela*.
 3. I.e. do not agree to marry a woman when you know your own aberrant nature.
 4. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:57-62.
 5. As performed by guitarist Solomon Mathase (Kruger, 1994:89-90).
 6. Scheub, 2010:24-34.



♩ = 152

2/4

Doh is C | m' :- | r' :- | m' :- | d' :- | t :- | m' :- | r' | d' :- | t | - : | l | l : | l | l : | l : | l : |
 Lu - le, lu - le - haa, lu - le, lu - le, Vhu-ka - la - nga.

2/4

| m :- | s :- | l : | l : | m : m | m : m | d :- | m :- | l : | l : | s : s | s : s
 (dza - tsha!) La - vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la

2/4

| m' :- | r' :- | m' :- | d' :- | t :- | m' :- | r' | d' :- | t | - : | l | l : | l | l : | l : | l : |
 Lu - le, lu - le - haa, lu - le, lu - le, Mu-tsha-nga - na.

2/4

| m :- | s :- | l : | l : | m : m | m : m | d :- | m :- | l : | l : | s : s | s : s
 dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la

2/4

| m' :- | r' :- | m' :- | d' :- | t :- | m' :- | r' | d' :- | t | - : | l | l : | l | l : | l : | l : |
 Lu - le, lu - le - haa, lu - le, lu - le, Vhu-ka - la - nga.

2/4

| m :- | s :- | l : | l : | m : m | m : m | d :- | m :- | l : | l : | s : s | s : s
 dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la

2/4

| m' :- | m' | r' :- | r' | r' :- | d' | d' :- | d' :- | l : | d' :- | d' | d' :- | t | l | l : | l | s : s | l : | l : |
 Zwa mu - ka - dzi 'zwi le - ngi - wi wa zwi - le - ga zwi - na. Shi - ma!

2/4

| m :- | s :- | l : | l : | m : m | m : m | d :- | m :- | l : | l : | s : s | s : s
 dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la

2/4

| d' :- | r' :- | d' | d' :- | d' | d' :- | l : | l : | m' :- | l | l : | l | l : | l | l : | l : | l : |
 Hae - ee, Vhu-ka - la - nga! Hae - ee, Vhu-ka - la - nga.

2/4

| m :- | s :- | l : | l : | m : m | m : m | d :- | m :- | l : | l : | s : s | s : s
 dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la dza - tsha! La - vhe - le - la

The python healer

[Narrator]

Vho-khotsi vha a fa.

Ndo do dzhia nianga.

Nda da, u songo ntshavha.

Thi nga shavhi nianga.

[Chorus]

Hee, talavhanda.

Father is dying.

I am here to fetch the healer.

When I come, do not run away.

I will not run away from the healer.

Hey, sing.

Then the snake came out. When it came out, it coiled around the first boy. He ran away. When he ran away, the younger brother arrived there. He came and sang *Vho-khotsi vha a fa*.

It came out: it was the snake! It came and coiled and coiled and coiled around the boy! It put its head on top of the boy's head. The boy returned home and sang *Vho-khotsi vha a fa*. He sang, and said, 'I have returned with the healer.'

The snake uncoiled from him. Now it coiled around his father! That father got up: he was healed. The boy carried the snake back again, over there to the cave.

Hah, when he arrived back home, the father gave him the entire herd, everything and lots of money.

Ha mbo vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 30 September 2009

This is a truncated form of the complete story (see 'The python healer' by Flora Kwindi, p. 238).

The performance starts with the song which is not repeated during narration. The reason for this is not clear, but the narrator taught the song extensively to her co-performers beforehand, and it seems that she then decided against repeating it. This may also explain her very short and incomplete rendition of the narrative.



♩ = 148



 Doh is C | m' : m' | m' : r' | d' :- | t : | : | : | d' : d' | d' : t || :- | s : | : | : |

 Vho-kho-tsi vha a fa. Vho-kho-tsi vha a fa.



 | t : | : | : | m :- | s : s | s :- | s : | : | : | : | s :- | t : t | t :-

 da. Hee, ta - la - vha - nda. Hee, ta - la - vha -



 | m' : m' | m' : r' | d' :- | t : | : | : | d' : d' | d' : t || :- | s : | : | : | :

 Vho-kho-tsi vha a fa. Ndo do dzhi - a na-nga.



 | t : | : | : | m :- | s : s | s :- | s : | : | : | : | s :- | t : t | t :-

 da. Hee, ta - la - vha - nda. Hee, ta - la - vha -



 | m' : m' | m' : r' | d' :- | t : | : | : | d' : d' | d' : t || :- | s : | : | : | :

 Ndi do dzhi - a na - nga. Vho-kho-tsi vha a fa.



 | t : | : | : | m :- | s : s | s :- | s : | : | : | : | s :- | t : t | t :-

 da. Hee, ta - la - vha - nda. Hee, ta - la - vha -



 | m :- | s : m | s : m | : | : | : | s : m | s : m | s : s | s : | : | : | : | :

 Aa, he - ha - he - ha. Nda da, u so-ngo ntsha-vha.



 | t : | : | : | m :- | s : s | s :- | s : | : | : | : | s :- | t : t | t :-

 da. Hee, ta - la - vha - nda. Hee, ta - la - vha -



 | m' : m' | m' : r' | d' :- | t : | : | : | d' : d' | d' : t || :- | s : | : | : | :

 Thi nga sha-vhi na - nga. Thi nga sha-vhi na - nga.



 | t : | : | : | m :- | s : s | s :- | s : | : | : | : | s :- | t : t | t :-

 da. Hee, ta - la - vha - nda. Hee, ta - la - vha -

Nyamukamadi Ndou

Like other people who live here at Folovhodwe, I come from the Nzhelele district. I was born there, at that place called Pfumembe. I do not know in which year, but I think I am about 75 years old.

My parents had fields there at Pfumembe. My father was Khalushi Magoba and my mother was Johanna. They farmed with maize, tobacco and marijuana. Yes, they smoked that stuff and also sold it.¹ Remember that the old people smoked when they spoke to their spirits. They hollowed out a dry maize cob and made a pipe.

My father had a herd of cattle. We made cream. It was like butter, and we smeared our body and face. Yes, we put cream in our porridge. But my favourite food was sweet potatoes with milk.² We also liked to eat *maranga* pumpkins – those you also cook with milk.

New-born babies like me stayed inside the house with their mother for five months after they were born. My grandmother was the one who helped us. No man was allowed to enter. This was to protect us babies from evil. We were treated with various potions. One of them we made by crushing a cockroach, *tshipande*,³ and a worm called *sheshe-danga*.⁴ We added the gum of a thorn tree and the paste was rubbed onto the head of the baby.

My parents' house was built in the old way. People planted stakes close to each other,⁵ then they smeared them with clay. They mixed ash with clay, and made a kind of white-wash for the walls.

Pfumembe is in the mountains. Not many outsiders came there when I was young. We never saw any whites and some people still wore skin clothes. There were no schools or shops. So, I did not go to school. But I know stories. The curious thing is that I heard them from my father and not my mother.

Our school came later. People built it themselves, using stones. Our first teacher was Mr Tshipulwana. He was a Sotho man sent by the government.

My mother was a member of the dove church, the African Apostolic Church. I became a member of the ZCC here at Folovhodwe when I was already an adult.

You know, my father's brother, Abel Tshibalo, was blessed with strong spiritual power. Once, when I was still a young child, Abel passed a farm at Waterpoort. He saw a man leading oxen. They were pulling a sleigh with the carcass of a cow. It was the farmer's favourite milk cow. Abel told the man that the cow was not dead. He prayed over it until he broke out in a sweat, and the cow came to life again. The farmer was so glad that he gave Abel a coat. Others who knew Abel say he even could resurrect people with prayer. They saw this with their own eyes.

I am a widow. My husband was Jonas Mudau. He worked in a shop near Musina. They sold things like hoes, firewood and clothes.

I gave birth to twelve children – seven are still alive. I also have many grandchildren. I live here in the homestead of my son, Samuel Tshibalo. He works at a factory that makes powdered milk, but I do not know where it is.



As you can see, Samuel's house is not complete. That is why there are many things here: wheelbarrows, planks, buckets, plastic drums and corrugated iron sheets. We put those sheets in the window frames until the house is finished. Windows are expensive, and people break them.

The thing that worries me most is that we do not have water at our homes here in Folovhodwe. People say the water is coming, but I do not see it.⁶ I am now old. My feet are swollen all the time, and I can only crawl slowly when I want to sit outside in the sun. My daughter Langanani collects my pension and takes me in the car to go shopping.

1. Blacking (1969a:28) explains that 'in former times, all girls passing [initiation] were forced to chew the leaves of dagga, which are bitter.'

2. A girls' *musevetho* initiation song accordingly goes:

<i>Vho mammbegwana: ri tamba</i>	We, the swallows: what do we eat when
<i>ri tshi la mini?</i>	we play?
<i>Ri tshi la mburutata:</i>	We eat sweet potatoes:
<i>tshilo tsha vhaṭanuni.</i>	the favourite food of the chief's junior wives.

(Kruger, 1986:43)

3. Van Warmelo (1989:418) notes of *tshipande* that it is a wingless female cockroach found under the bark of the marula tree, and that it is used for a 'condition of small children marked by biting and fidgeting with finger-nails, tugging at hair and clothes, scratching and searching for things not there.'

4. Or *tshenzhe-danga*, described by Van Warmelo (1989:390) as 'large white larvae found in the dung of cattle kraals,' although Muthuvhelo Mavhetha was quite clear that they are found in goat dung only.

5. Agricultural betterment schemes dating back to c. 1940 placed a ban on the use of trees for house construction (Nemutanzhela, 1999:4).

6. See 'A hot, dry land', p. 20.

Spirit

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There once was a young woman. Now, her mother died. She died, leaving this young woman and her elder married sister.

The young woman did not know where her sister was living with her husband and his family. She said, 'Ah! I am now alone at my mother's home. It is better for me to go and live with my sister.' Yes, man, she left.

That child met a thin, dirty old woman at the river.

'Girl, where are you going?'

'I am crossing the river.'

'Come and scrub me, girl.'¹

I say, the girl suspected nothing – she just scrubbed the old woman. Suddenly the old woman grabbed her and held her tightly! That girl became the old woman, and the old woman turned into the bouncy young girl wearing beautiful beads.

And so the old woman in the girl's body arrived at the house of the elder sister. She shifted closer to the sister, she shifted closer and cried while looking at her.

The elder sister was confused: 'Why are you crying? Why are you moving closer to me!² What do you want? And who is that dirty woman with lice?'

The old woman was shifting closer, man, ever closer. Hah, the mother's spirit saw that the elder sister did not recognize her younger sister because she had turned into a thin old woman covered in lice. She said, 'It is better for me to move closer. Me: your mother.' Yes, truly, the mother's spirit was a dove that flew into a tree.³ She sang:

[Narrator]

Gurundu: mudzindele.

Wa dzhia n̄wana wa mmai.

Wa dzhia mutsinda zwetswe.

Wa dzhia wa longa mumba.

Wa dzhia wa longa n̄duni.

[Chorus]

Wa lila n̄duni.

She cries: nurse her.

You received the child of your mother.

You received the stranger.

You received the stranger in the home.

You received the stranger in the house.

There is crying in the house.

That elder sister was speechless. She exclaimed, 'Hah! Hah! Hii! This one is my sister! Hey, child of my mother! Oh dear me! This dove is telling me that this is the child of my mother. What I am doing to her is not right.⁴ Look, I took a stranger into the house!'

She indeed had done a foolish thing. So, she got up and said to the old woman, 'Get up, get up you! Make a hole for the fire!'⁵ The old woman made the hole and put firewood inside. Then the elder sister said to her, 'You will leave my sister's body when you feel the fire!⁶ Yaa! You! Get inside! Go, you! Go, you who are dressed, man!'⁷

Hey, the fire was very big! As the old woman stepped into it, the flames shot up, *phuvhuu!* She started to burn and her skin came off, *sutu!* It became the skin of that younger sister!

That elder sister was very happy. She was laughing. She said, 'Why did I receive this monster I do not know and who has lice? Now, here is my sister. Come here, child of my mother.' She took her sister inside the house and gave her food.⁸

The elder sister said to the old woman, 'You: stay over there. Do not ever again step inside here.' The old woman cast herself into the sun!⁹ She covered herself with ash, covered herself with ash, covered herself with ash, and stayed there on the ash pile, the ash pile: there, where the ash is thrown!¹⁰ That old woman stayed dirty. She was dirty as soil.¹¹

The elder sister again said, 'Do not come here again! Hah, I will show you: you will not step inside the house again.' But she always had to have a fire. She always had to have a fire with her sister staying there.¹²

'I will stop you,' the sister persisted. But truly, the old woman stayed there, thinking they would give her food, that they would throw food at her.¹³

The elder sister took her younger sister under her wing. The younger sister lived there. She ate food. She was very happy.

Ha mbo di vha lungano luya lu khou fa.

This is where this story dies.

Folovhodwe, 29 September 2010

This story deals with a coming of age experience similar to that described by Florence Mphoshomali ('Sorrow'), namely our first encounter with death, and our consequent fear 'that we will be deserted, left all alone.'¹⁴ This fear may lead to 'supernatural assault,' a ubiquitous form of emotional torment or even illness and injury.¹⁵ In this case it is arguable that the younger sister experiences a form of 'soul loss,' also referred to as 'fright illness.' This is a condition 'often believed to be produced by sudden fear or emotional shock [that may be caused by] the unexpected death of a loved one.'¹⁶

The old woman in turn may be described as a 'sick, earth-bound' spirit whose 'anger, envy, and other negative emotions cause [her] to accost people who trespass in their places.'¹⁷ Spirits like these

may seek to displace one's soul in order to possess the body ... The act of possession itself may be perceived as an assault in which the victim struggles and feels an alien spirit entering the body by force ... Somewhat less intrusive is the attachment of spirits to the living in a way that influences their behaviour, sometimes called 'obsession.'¹⁸

The spirit in question is called *ludzimu*. This is a derogative form of *mudzimu*, defined by Van Warmelo¹⁹ as 'an ancestral spirit before it has been "raised" (*vusa*); spirit of a deceased which has been turned into an agency of evil (*madambi*) sent to kill or harm people (done by a *nianga*).' Dederen²⁰ accordingly writes that *ludzimu*

has different shades of meaning. In the case of the mother's spirit, it simply means that the mother who died recently has not attained the full status of spirit. She has not been appropriated as yet. No rituals other than the burial have been organised for her (the diviner wakes up his bones; sacrifices and appropriations wake up the living dead). People say that the newly deceased hangs around the burial ground or the house for some time before departing to the other world.

The mother is not in a position to help her daughter with real spiritual power. All she can do is to change into a dove and sit in a tree, trying to make the elder sister aware of the 'soul switch' ... The old hag who asks to be scratched or washed also is common in Shona stories. In this instance she is evil: *lukegulu* [a thin, dirty old woman] here is real derogative.

Dederen also points out that the younger sister is vulnerable, and that it is expected of the older sister to care for her. He argues that this story 'prepares young girls for initiation' (*vhusha*) in which older girls act as caretakers or 'mothers' of young initiates. This is a relationship that often extends beyond initiation into adult life.²¹

1. A Chishona story entitled 'The man with thick lips' (Granger, 2007:65-69) also features an old woman in a river, the spirit world and the action of being washed. This appears to be a common image in regional narratives.

2. The young woman entranced by the spirit moves closer to her elder sister and cries because she is not recognised.

3. Kuper (1987:182) remarks that the trickster figure in regional folklore is contrasted

by other creatures which are ‘unambiguously associated with the ancestors, and which intervene to perform good magic. These are typically light-coloured birds, such as pigeons or doves, or bees or honey birds ... These beneficent mediators intervene in the stories to warn people against cannibals, to expose murderers, and to give barren women children.’

The representation of the mother’s spirit in the form of a dove that offers consolation after death has a curious parallel in the story of Cinderella. Bettelheim (2010:259) writes: ‘Cinderella’s inner processes begin with her desperate mourning for her mother, as symbolized by her existence among the ashes ... The little white bird which comes in answer to Cinderella’s prayers is the messenger ... The white bird is easily recognised as the mother’s spirit conveyed to her child through the good mothering she gives [her].’

The spiritual associations of the dove extends to the Bible, where it represents the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22), as well as Xhosa culture, where it similarly is a representation of ‘nature and of God’ (Scheub, 1992:47; ‘Mbulukazi and the raven wife’).

4. I.e. she has invited the stranger (the old woman in the guise of the younger sister) into her house while neglecting the younger sister in the old woman’s body.

5. A shallow fire pit in the kitchen floor.

6. Fire therefore purifies and wards off evil.

7. The spirit, when ordered into the fire, is described as ‘one who is dressed’ because dress gives it shape.

8. Feeding is symbolic of community (see the conclusion to ‘Fortune lies ahead’).

9. Like fire, the sun also drives away evil.

10. The spirit tries to disguise herself: evil remains lurking among humanity.

11. Lit. the colour of soil.

12. In order to counteract the perennial presence of evil. Kriel (1989:17-18) cites several instances of African magic-religious practices that involves a constantly burning fire. Such fires also feature in Venda initiation.

13. I.e. evil is ever-present (see note 10).

14. Bettelheim, 2010:145.

15. Hufford, 1997:63.

16. Hufford, *op. cit.*:64.

17. Hufford, *op. cit.*:65.

18. Hufford, *op. cit.*:66.

19. Van Warmelo, 1989:141.

20. Dederen, correspondence, 2 June 2011.

21. See Blacking, 1959a.



♩. = 100

Doh is C | 1 : d' : d' | d' : 1 : 1 | : : | : : 1 : 1
 Gu - ru - ndu, mu - dzi - nde - le. Gu -

Wa li - la nḁu -

ru - ndu, mu - dzi - nde - le. Wa

Wa li - la nḁu -

dzhi - a nḁwa - na wa mma - i. Wa

ni. Wa li - la nḁu -

dzhi - a mu - tsi - nda zwe - tswe. Wa

ni. Wa li - la nḁu -

dzhi - a mu - lo - nga mu - mba. Wa

ni. Wa li - la nḁu -

dzhi - a wa lo - nga nḁu - ni. Gu -

ni. Wa li - la nḁu -

* Perform either note

Eating with wild animals

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There once was a woman. This woman was lazy. She refused to work. She only really liked to cook for wild animals.¹ Truly, she always loitered about like a pampered child. During the early evening people would ask, 'Where is she?'² Others would answer, 'We don't know, she was just here.'

Truly, that woman roamed. She roamed and then met a lion. The lion asked, 'Where are you going, princess?'³

'I am looking for a lover, man!'⁴ (She was speaking about another lover.)⁵

'Now, won't you love me?'

'I love you very much, man. Are you Mr Big Lion?'

'Yes, I am a very powerful man!'

'Hey, I have never seen a man as handsome as you.'⁶ Now, what are you holding there?'

'This? I am holding my *mbila*.⁷ Now, won't you come and cook for me, girl?'

'OK, where is your house, Mr Lion?'

'There at Madzhawu.⁸ Do you see? There at Madzhawu, there in the mountain, there in the mountain. My home is there.' (He was referring to caves.)

Now, hey: that girl followed Mr Lion, and they arrived at his home. Mr Lion went out to hunt. He killed a kudu. When he returned, he said, 'Now, cook porridge, girl.' The girl did that. She cooked food, she cooked food, she cooked food! Then she stored it.

Mr Lion said, 'Dish up! Start serving the breast and the liver: bring it here.'⁹

The plate is stones! They came and took those plates with stones.¹⁰ The porridge was served, the meat was served.

The woman asked, 'Hey, what are you holding?'

'Ah, it is my *mbila*.'

'Come and play, I want to hear.'

[Narrator]

He-he-he-he-hae!

[Chorus]

Madanda a vhila-vhila!

Logs are boiling!¹¹

She cried out, 'Oh, my man! Let us kiss!¹² *Yuwiyuwiyuwi!* This is why I love you! Where will I find another man like you? Such a handsome man! A killer! One who can make me cry so that my tears run *mburu-mburu!* Mr Lion, I love you! *Yuwi!* Now, can I bring your food? Here, here it is.' She came there, kneeled respectfully and put the food into his hands. They ate and ate and ate!

Now, that Mr Lion: he went to bed after eating. He woke up the next morning and said, 'My darling, when I go out, do not take my *mbila*.'¹³ She said, 'OK!' But she thought, 'Ah, rubbish! He thinks that I will love only him who gives me meat. But I want a cob of green maize!'¹⁴

So, she started walking around as before. She went to the river, looking for water. She found Mr Porcupine: 'Who are you? What beautiful colours you have!'¹⁵ Hey, why do you push me away when I try to hold you?'

'That man of yours, that lion: you say you love him, love him. But I can beat him up! I can squash him!'

'Can you really beat him up? That one with his large teeth and long nails? Can you pin him down, Mr Porcupine?'

'Of course! Come and take the maize cob!'

‘Yah! I will come and roast it!’
 ‘I will follow you. I see you have a very shiny skin. What do you eat?’
 ‘I eat breast and liver. Hah, dry meat: I am no longer interested, it is boring.’¹⁶
 ‘OK, let us walk.’
 Hey, and Mr Porcupine started to sing:

[Narrator]
Ri bve, ri dzhena! We go out, we go in!¹⁷
 [Chorus]
Bvulela madanda! Open the logs!¹⁸

The girl said, ‘I like this song of yours!’ *Ri bve, ri dzhena ...*

But then Mr Lion returned! He stalked Mr Porcupine who shouted, ‘This person with the eyes that are red-red-red-red: I, I can pin you down man!’¹⁹

‘Come here! I have caught you in the act! You! It is you who gave my lover a maize cob! I have caught you today! It is you, Mr Porcupine!

‘Shut up!’

Mr Porcupine scratched Mr Lion on his paws and released his quills!²⁰

Those quills made Mr Lion jump up and down. He shouted, ‘Hey, I will take you down! I will take your feet from under you!’ But Mr Porcupine just released more quills and held on for dear life!

‘Hey, Porcupine! Get off! Your quills are hurting me, man!’

‘I will not let go, I am holding on!’

‘OK, I will show you that you know me badly!’

Now, Mr Lion mauled Mr Porcupine, who let go of him, *tomo!* That little lion²¹ pulled out the quills frantically with his teeth. He pulled them out, pulled them out, pulled them out, and threw them far away! Then he mauled and mauled Mr Porcupine and threw him far away too!

Mr Porcupine got up slowly and stumbled away.

Ha vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Folovhodwe, 29 September 2010

This story is a local form of *fabliau*,²² which is

a humorous narrative treating a sexual or obscene theme ... [it is] brief, focusing on intrigue that is usually erotic in nature. The typical plot structure involves some kind of deception or ruse perpetrated by the main character, who uses the ruse as license to commit some kind of cultural misdeed.

Very little is known about the performance practice of erotic *ngano*. However, Kriel²³ notes of Chishona oral narratives that ‘erotic attraction is by no means ignored, and the hero gets a handsome wife (or more than one); while in its evil form, where it assumes the proportion of lust that becomes witchcraft, it leads to ruin.’

Since the body and its sexualities also are cultural constructions, they are likely to be representations of desire aimed at hegemony and the delimitation of social boundaries.²⁴ Given the general taboo on the public discussion of sexual issues, it is likely that their performance is restricted to specific gender, age and family groupings. For example, female initiation is replete with sexual imagery²⁵ and the same applies to male initiation.²⁶ The role of the woman as a *femme fatale*, who causes conflict and downfall in this story by Nyamukamadi Ndou, also links with the wider function of *ngano* as a site of female power.²⁷

Although this performance took place in the presence of the narrator’s three young

grandsons, it is unlikely that they understood much if any of the obscure sexual imagery in the story. Ellis²⁸ notes that the description of sexually explicit events in *fabliau* is characterised by irony. Bettelheim²⁹ similarly remarks that ‘since all is expressed in symbolic language in fairy tales, the child can disregard what he is not ready for by responding only to what he has been told on the surface.’ It therefore is likely that the young boys would have reacted primarily to the fight between the animals.

Stayt³⁰ documented a narrative that describes a similar scenario, but appropriately so in very brief and covert terms (‘The frog, his bride and the snake’). In the story, Mrs Frog is accosted by Mr Snake. He sings a song and ‘the lady was greatly touched.’ Mr Frog ultimately takes revenge by shooting Mr Snake with an arrow.

Given the rootedness of *ngano* in the natural environment, it is hardly surprising that both stories invoke symbols from the land. In Nyamukamadi Ndou’s story, eating is the master symbol that unlocks the concepts of meat, breast, liver and, not least, the cob of green maize (*tshikoli*). The latter is not merely a phallic symbol. It is associated with casual sex since it represents a penis ‘which you can pick up anywhere.’³¹

On the surface level, ‘Eating with wild animals’ is a mocking injunction against corrupt sexual mores, since it is critical of all three role players. However, most derision is aimed at the woman. As in medieval European forms of *fabliau*,³² she is presented as ‘unfaithful and sexually unrestrained,’ a portrayal also common in Tshivenda songs.

Sexual behaviour ideally is ‘seen not simply as a gratification of animal passions, nor even as a means to the end of biological reproduction: it is regarded as a way of uniting man with the cosmic forces which animate both his own body and the world in which he finds himself.’³³ The famous *domba* initiation dance, often noted primarily for its apparent sensuality, accordingly ‘is not meant to be sexy: it is intended to symbolize both the mystical act of sexual communion, conception, the growth of the foetus, and child-birth.’³⁴

Kriel³⁵ similarly remarks that erotic attraction is valued among the Shona people,

while fully realising the menacing forms it can sometimes assume. If it is experienced and practised solely on the physical level, and not integrated with other ideals, it readily becomes lust of such flagrantly egocentric nature, that it passes into the realm of sorcery, where men become hyenas and lions, ready to devour women.

Although ‘Eating with wild animals’ clearly is critical of licentiousness, Nyamukamadi Ndou’s performance of this story arguably also took the form of a celebration of sexuality. Her rendition was extremely spirited and characterised by much amusement – she clearly enjoyed it and became fully immersed in the drama and the chanting of the crude song and chant. Preston³⁶ notes of ‘bawdy stories’ that they encode attitudes toward the body and the erotic while using representations of the body and the erotic for purposes of psychological release [and] group and dyadic bonding.’ It seems that the elderly reminisce about the entire gamut of their experiences as active younger people.

-
1. The narrator described the wild animals as *vhafarekano* (lovers).
 2. People are supposed to return home at dusk.
 3. A form of address that identifies the lion as a flatterer and womaniser.
 4. Lit. I do not have a lover.
 5. I.e. outside marriage.
 6. Flattery obviously is a strategy in relationships like these (see note 3).
 7. The Venda lamellophone. Its use here relates to musical performance as oblique communication. The song proposes a relationship. Outstanding musicians often are considered good lovers on the basis of their musical expertise.

The instrument also is in the possession of a lion in ‘The zebras are jiving’ (Kruger

& Le Roux, 2007:108-111) and 'The lion on the path' (Tracey, 1986:1-5). This is unusual, as the instrument has no special connection with secular power in the way drums, bamboo pipes and xylophones do.

8. A wet area.

9. A reference to the first sexual encounter that serves as a test for 'satisfaction.'

10. An apparent reference to wiping the thighs prior to and after intercourse. A well-known *malende* choral dance-song that derides sexual immorality accordingly refers to '*matamba-thafu*,' 'those who wash the thighs only.'

11. Blacking (1969b:36) identifies '*danda*' as a term for penis.

12. Junod (1927, I:353-354) notes that 'kissing was formerly entirely unknown ... Even a husband never kissed his wife.'

13. I.e. do not cheat on me.

14. *Tshikoli*, a symbol of the penis. This describes the woman's desire for many lovers.

15. I.e. the colours of Porcupine's quills. The woman is flattering her new lover too (see notes 3 and 6). She clearly values physical appearance.

Porcupine quills are used to decorate a costume used in the Pedi (Kgaga) boys' circumcision school, and a song from this school accordingly remarks: 'This animal called porcupine! It pleases me so. It pleases me with its colours. With its colours which are shining and variegated.' (Hammond-Tooke, 1981:69.)

16. Referring to her relationship with Lion.

17. Sexual movements.

18. I.e. open the legs.

19. Fights between men about a woman are commonly addressed in song, of which the most famous must be Albert Mundalamo's '*Vho-Mutshakwa*' ('Mrs Mutshakwa'): 'They are killing me. The battle-axe was against my cheek. The knife was against my throat.' (Kruger, 1993: 336-337.)

20. It would seem that Porcupine has been selected carefully for his role in this story. Greaves (2000:54) notes that

porcupines can become aggressive, stamping their back feet and grunting. They can erect their quills at will, making themselves look twice as large ... The quills are very sharp and can become deeply embedded in an enemy's body, inflicting painful and sometimes fatal wounds. This enables the porcupine to protect itself from animals as large as lions and leopards.

21. The lion derogatively is referred to as *tshi*, a personal pronoun that signifies objects, and which accordingly dehumanises a person. It thus becomes clear that Lion's attribute of power that is identified on his meeting the woman also is meant to be undermining, ironic and sarcastic, and that it refers to brute strength and the absence of moral authority (see 'The heroine' on p. 52).

22. Ellis, 1997:273. *Fabliau* is a term of French origin that dates from the end of the 12th century

23. Kriel, 1971:234.

24. Preston, 1997:227-228.

25. See Blacking, 1969a.

26. Hammond-Tooke, 1981:47. Although Hammond-Tooke's findings apply specifically to the Pedi boys' circumcision school, it is the model for *murundu*, the Venda school.

27. See Kruger, 2008.

28. Ellis, 1997:273.

29. Bettelheim, 2010:279.

30. Stayt, 1931:344-345.

31. Blacking, 1969a:103.

32. Ellis, *loc. cit.*

33. Blacking, 1969a:216.

The pool of shrines

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a man and his wife and their ten children. Yes, those children were ten. Now, one of them was called Devhula. She was the youngest. Nobody liked her.

Famine came to the land. It was really bad. The mother called her children. 'Come!' Then she explained, 'Hey, see, what will I give you to eat? You will die of hunger. It is better to kill Devhula. She is the one we should get rid of. When she dies, all of you will live.'

Really, she called that child who came there. She was grabbed and butchered!¹ It was as if she was pounded inside a mortar.²

[Narrator]

Hayani hanga a thi sindi.

Why are you killing me?³

Gi! Gi!

[Resounding sound of a pestle striking a wooden mortar]

[Chorus]

Devhula!

That child was dead! The woman said, 'Now we will stay alive my children.' They slaughtered, slaughtered, slaughtered her!⁴

Later that woman told her children, 'These bones of hers: throw them there on the trash pile.' Those children went there and threw them away.

Then the mother took Devhula's flesh and stewed it in a pot.⁵ Later she called, 'Come here, my children! We are eating!' They ate. The children were happy. Their faces were shining.

The father returned. He returned carrying long spoons for stirring food. He had gathered bees,⁶ honey and locusts. He said, 'Come, let us eat!' Then he asked, 'Hey children, are you all here? Someone seems missing ... Where is Devhula?'

'We have not seen her. She is not here.'

'You are lying! Tell me!'

'No!'

'Well, where did you get food?'

'Well ... see, from our mother. Yes, she made something that looked like thick tea.⁷ But it was stew. And locusts: we ate them too. Yes, and honey and bees.'

'So, she really gave you all these things?'

'Yes, and also something strange.'

'OK, let's leave the matter here.'

The heavens opened and it rained heavily. The water swept those bones of Devhula away. It swept them into a pool, into a pool where there was an island with ancestral shrines.⁸

The father said, 'I want my child, Devhula. Let me first go over there to the pool of shrines so that I can ask the spirits.' He arrived there. He arrived and sang to the spirits, asking, 'Is my child here?' That child answered! She had been resurrected by those ones from the past, those ones she never knew.⁹ She said, 'I am here father. I was pounded. They crushed me.'

The father asked, 'And what now?' Those ones from the past said, 'Just sing your sacred song ...'

The father of that child returned home. He arrived there and said, 'Let us leave. We are going to the pool of shrines.' And so he left with his brothers and his mother.

When they arrived at the pool, the father said to the others, 'Stand over here: do not go too near the water.' He went closer and spoke to those ones from the past. Then that child started to sing, *Hayani hanga thi sindi* ...

The pool became very big and scary! The water started to rise! It rose like a mountain and burst, *phwaa!* The girl came out from that pool. She came out formed as a child. Others did not recognise her. Only her father and mother knew what she looked like. She came out shining and white. She had been recreated perfectly, with her legs and her feet and her head and her hair!

Devhula said, 'It is I my father, I have returned. It was my mother who pounded me when there was famine: she crushed me to dust. Now, I have returned. I will not die. I will never die again. Not once. I will live forever.'

Ndi u fa ha salungano.

This is where *salungano* dies.

Folovhodwe, 29 September 2010

Like 'Eating with wild animals,' this story by Nyamukamadi Ndou is astonishing, although for different reasons. Its main motif is not so much the murder of a daughter by her mother, but that of transformation (see 'Relations and transformations' on p. 42). This transformation is similar to that portrayed in other coming of age *ngano* stories, but it additionally invokes the notion of spiritual metamorphosis and sacrifice so central to humanity.

Famine may lead to extraordinary actions, such as when people are forced to entrust their children to others in a position to look after them better, or, in extreme cases, murder when there is insufficient food (see 'Fortune lies ahead'). While this also is the ostensible motivation for Devhula's murder, the actual personal nature of the mother's calculated, heinous deed is reflected in the fact that her husband later arrives home with food.

This, then, is a type of story in which 'normal' parent-child conflict is taken to the ultimate 'dark' ending. The mother is the kind of supremely evil murderer who also features in 'Goodbye' in this collection, as well as in 'Snow White' where she is 'the treacherous, ruthless older woman who no longer just wants to repress the hero or heroine ... but to kill them.'¹⁰

The murderous deed of the mother is motivated by some unstated, intense dislike of her daughter. Scheub¹¹ remarks in this regard that conflict may arise from a mother's jealousy of her daughter's marriage or 'the indifference a daughter might feel for her parents after she has left home.' This story by Nyamukamadi Ndou similarly appears animated by deeply-rooted conflict between mother and daughter. As such, the degree to which Devhula's murder must be interpreted literally is open to debate. In other words, the daughter's rebirth arguably is symbolic: she is resurrected as an adult in her own right – her 'eternal life' appears to symbolise the recurrent coming to maturity of young humanity.

As explained ('Water and transformation,' p. 45), an Isizulu story¹² similarly describes girls bathing in a pool, and their clothes being taken by a monster. He returns the clothes of all but one, a princess described as 'proud.' The two then become embroiled in a fight on land and in the water. When the girl leaves the water the next morning, she has been transformed into a woman, having achieved puberty. In another Isizulu story,¹³ a young girl is transformed into a state of pregnancy and fertility (she magically grows large breasts) after emerging from a pool where she had been 'sporting.'

The narrator's membership of the Zion Christian Church raises the question whether this is the source of the concept of eternal life in 'The pool of shrines.' Both she and Mathuvhelo Mavhetha denied this, arguing that the notion is central to a religious worldview in which ancestral spirits remain in the memories and lives of their descendants. The motif of spiritual resurrection is central in a number of *ngano* in

which a murdered girl's bones are swept into a pool, and she is resurrected by spiritual forces who reside in the water (usually in the form of a hippopotamus and a crocodile). This is portrayed in profound terms in a *ngano* entitled 'To be human again'¹⁴ and in embryonic form in 'Child of my mother' in this collection.¹⁵

Booker¹⁶ fittingly remarks of stories like Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk that 'there is nothing overtly religious or "Christian" about [them]. But they can be seen to reflect the same fundamental picture of human nature as that which underlies Christianity or other religions, because they spring so directly from the same archetypal roots.' This is evident in pre-Christian Egyptian and Greek myths that describe the rebirth of the gods Osiris and Dionysus.¹⁷ Junod¹⁸ notes in this regard that 'when an old decrepit man or woman dies, he at once becomes a god: he has entered the domain of infinity. The Thongas have no very clear idea of infinity. They have, however, a technical term for it ... "that which does not reach the point where it ends."'

Blacking¹⁹ writes that the word *hhasi* (below) refers to 'the underworld, the world of spirits.' This term is associated with the word *shango* (country, more specifically the veld). 'Thus the suggestion is that when man dies, he returns to the order of nature.' This also could explain the recurrent motif of the young girl's corpse washing into a pool. Water is a common setting of the eternal reunification with nature, of transformation into states of healing.

Devhula accordingly emerges from the water being 'white' ('*A bva a mutshena*'; also see 'Dzwee's journey'). In conversation with Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, healer Miriam Vhengani from Tshiungani confirmed the notion that people who enter water and fire are characterised by spirituality, purity, power and cleanliness: this is what 'whiteness' represents. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha constantly emphasises the contrast between being dirty and clean – these are metaphors for evil and goodness. Similarly, in Zulu culture, spiritual beings and states of spirituality are white. A diviner remarks: 'When a man comes out [of a pool] it is known that he comes from the shades in that he comes out white.'²⁰

Goodness in turn ties in with that other profound tenet of religion, namely human sacrifice, illustrated dramatically here in the sustenance that Devhula's family gets from her body. This theme also characterises a San creation narrative in which Elephant sacrifices his body to the other animals in the absence of water and food.²¹ It is this ego-transcending nature of heroes which lives forever:²² not the individual, but society as an eternally integrated unit.

A similar narrative documented by Jacottet²³ also portrays conflict between mother and daughter. The mother literally grinds the daughter to dust, and throws the dust into a pool where the daughter is resurrected by a crocodile. And the father again redeems the daughter. At the end of the story there is also an apparent reference to eternal life. When the crocodile returns the daughter to her father, it says: 'This one is my child, you may kill her. When they have killed you, come back to me; as for me, I love you, I shall receive you.' Although the daughter returns home and becomes married, it therefore is more than likely that there is also a reference here to eternal life and support for the weak and oppressed. The crocodile seems to suggest that, regardless of how the girl is oppressed, there will always be love from someone, as well as the promise of eternal life as a spirit.

1. Lit. folded like a piece of cloth.

2. The image of pounding is presented literally in the original: '*A mudzhenisa mutuluni, a swika a musinda*.' The use of this metaphor to represent conflict between women is common in African stories, and it is a good example of how nature and the economy shape figurative language.

3. Lit. we do not pound at home. This phrase is taken from another story (see 'The

princess who slept late’).

4. Lit. to winnow. The narrator develops the metaphor of pounding.

5. Lit. to make porridge, expanding the metaphor of pounding further.

6. *Mbani*, stingless bees.

7. The narrator skillfully makes the children give the answer.

8. *Zwifho*, shrines for ancestral spirits from ruling families.

9. I.e. her ancestors.

10. Booker, 2004:244.

11. Scheub, 1992:439.

12. Callaway, 1970:85-89, ‘*Uluhlazase.*’

13. Callaway, *op. cit.*:331-335, ‘*Unana-bosele.*’

14. See Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:84-92.

15. A similar image structures an Isixhosa oral narrative. See Scheub, 2006:189-206; ‘The floating room.’

16. Booker, 2004:640.

17. Booker, *op. cit.*:620.

18. Junod, 1927, II:425.

19. Blacking, 1969a:236.

20. Berglund, 1976:144.

21. Gordon, 2002:15-17, ‘The great thirst.’

22. Booker, 2004:626.

23. Jacottet, 1908:166-175; ‘*Mosimoli le Mosimotsane.*’

♩ = 96

Doh is C | s' : s' : s' | f' : s' :- | f' : m' :- | r' :- : d' | t : s :- | : : |
Ha - ya - ni ha - nga 'thi si - ndi. De - vhu - la.

| d :- : | : : | : : | : : | : : | m : r :- |
(la.) De - vhu -

| s :- : | : s :- | : : m | s :- : d' | t : s :- | : : |
Gi! Gi! A - hee, De - vhu - la.

| d :- : | : : | : : | : : | : : | m : r :- |
la. De - vhu -



Miriam Vhengani

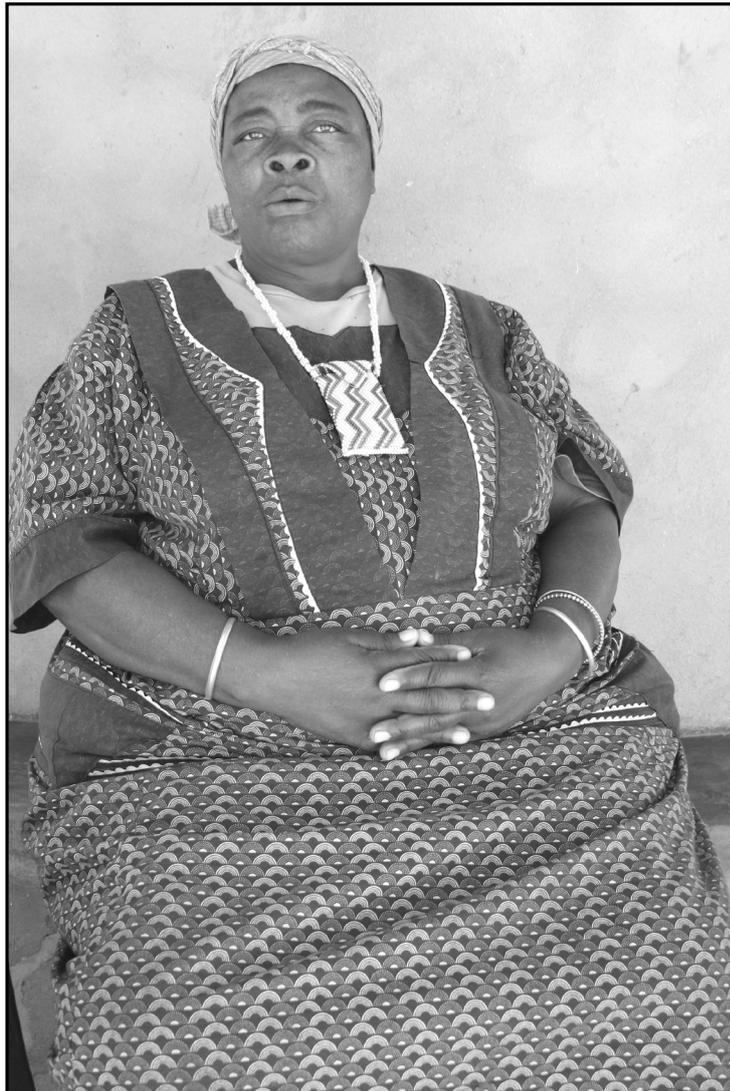
No, no, no: the business of healing has many secrets, so I cannot really tell you anything about myself. All I can say is that I was born at Tshiendeulu. The year was 1951. Also, my mother lives with me here at my home in Tshiungani. My son is here too. He is a teacher.

As you can see, we are having a celebration at my place today. This is because we are happy about our new healers. People come from far to be trained by me. See, here is young Johanna Molibatsane. She travelled all the way from Rustenburg which is many, many hours of travel from here. When people like her come to me, I help them to speak to the spirits. Look, here are the drums we use in *Ngoma dza Midzimu*. This is the ceremony for those spirits. When we heal, we also give patients medicines: look at all the bottles, jars, packets and skins around me.

I have a vegetable garden next to my house, and a large field. I cannot work there myself. I have a young man to do that.

It is dry here at Tshiungani, but the soil is good. It is deep and sandy. I have a borehole right next to my house. There are the pipes: they take the water to my vegetables. Look at my pumpkins and water melons. I also plant spinach, tomatoes, butternut, pumpkin, *magwadi* [bitter melons] and maize. I send my chillies to the market.

The pump in my borehole is noisy so close to my house. So, I want to use my other borehole. That one is in my field. But its pump is broken. Here, let me take it from my store room for you to look at ... Go to Musina to have it repaired? I don't know about that. My business is healing. How will I speak to those people?



The woman at the fountain

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a certain man. This man was looking for a wife. So he started roaming, roaming all over, looking for a woman.

One day he arrived at a place far away, there in southern Zimbabwe. Here he met a certain lady. She said, 'I am looking for a husband. But he must give me the skin of a lion and not money or cattle.'¹

That man agreed. 'All right, because I want a wife I am prepared to find the skin of a lion.' So, he left and walked, walked, walked, walked, walked and walked! He wandered through valleys and over mountains.

One day he found a pool where lions used to drink. He waited for them and then followed them home. When he got there, he went into hiding.

Those lions went hunting the next morning. The man said, 'See, they went out and left their children² behind.'

Now, that man found a certain lion that lived nearby. He was very old. He killed that lion and put on his skin. Then he entered the shelter where those cubs were. He sat down over there with them.

Those big lions: when they returned from hunting, they found this old one. They looked at him with suspicion ... After a while they said, 'OK, grandfather must stay behind and watch the children.'³ So, the next morning those lions woke up and went hunting.

Now, one of those cubs was clever, that small one.⁴ He was playing and looking around curiously. 'Ah! What kind of grandfather has a stomach like that?' He could see that the skin had been repaired.

That man saw trouble! So he killed and skinned the cub. He skinned that cub and fled. He left and ran and ran!

When the lions returned, they found that a child was missing. The grandfather also had disappeared. They started to look around, look around, look all over. That man knew he was in danger. He found a tree and climbed into it. Then those lions arrived there. They passed and returned, looking for his tracks. They found that, no, the person did not pass this tree. When they looked up, they found him sitting there!⁵

Those lions slept under the tree, they slept under the tree. That man knew he was in trouble! Those lions waited there overnight and during the next day. Ah, the man became hungry and thirsty. He said, 'Hey, what shall I do?' So, he took that skin and threw it down. Those lions got a fright, *bibiri!*⁶ They ran away. That man climbed down, down⁷ and ran away too. When he ran away, those lions returned to the tree and fought over the skin.

When he arrived back home, this man had not been walking for a day only: he had been travelling for many, many days! He had to sleep out in the open.

He said, 'Hey, woman! See, I found the skin of a lion. I have returned with it.' He gave her the skin of that cub he had killed. Ah! That woman was putting on the skin, man!

'Hey, this skin fits me, this skin fits me.'

'Yes! The skin is very nice. Now, my wife, because I found you a skin, I want you to fetch me water. But I do not want to hear the sound of a frog coming from that water.'⁸

That woman picked up a water calabash.⁹ She left, she left and started travelling, looking for fountains.

She arrived at the first fountain and waited ...¹⁰ Then she started to sing:

[Narrator]

Li no zwivha ripi, a vha ri vhoni-naa? Those who know,¹¹ where are they?¹²

[Chorus]

Hu na Nemukololo wa lilombe. There is Nemukololo who is a spirit medium.¹³

When the woman heard the sound of a frog, *kokorr! kokorr!*, she knew she had failed. So, she went further.

She kept on looking for the right fountain. When she arrived at the next fountain, she again waited at the water's edge, waited there at the water's edge. She sang *Li no zwivha ripi ...* But ah! A frog answered, *kokorr! kokorr!* So, she went on. Oh, she walked! She walked, thinking: what if I get to the next fountain and things are still the same?

She arrived at another fountain, *Li no zwivha ripi ...* She heard only silence! 'Hah, I have arrived at the right place!'

Now, she was hungry and thirsty because she had been travelling far. She tasted the water and found that it was very nice. It was sweet like the honey of bees.

Ah! But there were wild animals there. The fountain belonged to all of them. And she now drank her fill of that water. Her stomach was full. It was so full she could not stand up! She could not do anything. She was all swollen. She just sat there ...

A bird came there the next morning. It sat in a tree, wanting to drink water. But it found a person there. So, it left, it left, and the woman remained sitting there.

Then a hare turned up to drink water. But that person did not get up and the hare was also afraid to come closer. After it left, a tortoise arrived and also went away. And so all the animals queued there, only to leave again: Mr Baboon, Mr Sable Antelope ...

Then a lion came there! He also found that person and tried to scare her off,¹⁴ scare her off, scare her off, because he was thirsty. He came closer and glared at her with shining eyes! But ah, then he left as well.

And so Mr Elephant arrived, Mr Elephant arrived! There he came, there he came, there he came, walking slowly and heavily! He found that person sitting there. She was scared when she saw Mr Elephant. She was thirsty and hungry. Her stomach was swollen from that water, and not as if she had eaten porridge ...

That woman slowly died there.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Tshiungani, 28 September 2008

As with most *ngano*, this narrative has a surface level on which self-evident actions take place, as well as a metaphorical foundation concealing a number of culturally encoded meanings.

The main motif emerges in a number of regional narratives, and it concerns distorted family relationships.¹⁵ Bettelheim¹⁶ remarks of the story of Bluebeard that it 'has nothing whatsoever to do with love. Bluebeard, bent on having his will and possessing his partner, cannot love anybody, but neither can anybody love him.' Those in question in the African tales also are husband and wife, although in Jacottet's version they are brother and sister. But these stories all share the motif of unreasonable demands, clothed in the guise of testing love and loyalty.

In this story by Miriam Vhengani, the skin of the lion represents the excessive material goods the girl demands as bride wealth. Her vanity is evident when she fits the skin. The requirement of water (fetching water is a female chore) untainted by the presence of frogs (this is a common motif) is the husband's way of counteracting her unacceptable expectation. He marries on condition that she takes no lovers, i.e. drink water without a frog. She then becomes pregnant by a lover when she drinks water 'as sweet as honey' and swells up: 'Now, that honey water will just make her stomach full,

The princess who slept late

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a chief who had five wives. He loved one of those wives most of all. This woman had a child who was a girl. This child of the chief who was a princess was loved more than all the other children.

That girl was raised in a manner fit for a princess. Now, this means she had to sit on a reed mat over there behind the kitchen while others cooked for her and brought her food. When she had finished eating, they brought her water. She then washed herself. When she wanted to go to bed, they brought her reed mat and prepared everything for sleeping.

Now, when the child of that chief was growing up, she passed through all the initiation schools for a princess. Then time arrived for her to become married according to custom.

Certain people came from another district. They said, 'We like this girl.' So, the chief replied, 'I understand that you like my child. But when you take her, remember that she does not work, even if you ask her. There is to be no cooking, no sweeping, no fetching of water, no pounding. She does not do a single thing.'

And so many people came and went away again. The chief sighed, 'Perhaps it is better that this child of mine does not marry. I say, this princess must not marry.' But then others came there and said, 'We really like her. We will do everything the chief wants.' The chief warned them. 'I hear you, but I repeat that my child does not work.' Ah, they insisted. 'We *will* take this princess. We will go home and see that she does not work.' So, they made an agreement with the chief who heard from them that the princess would not work.

The chief announced, 'These are the things that I want: you must come with a big ox. You must slaughter it. When you have slaughtered that ox, you must prepare to leave with this princess. When she leaves my home, she must be accompanied by her bridesmaids. There is nothing else that I need.' Ah, indeed, they agreed, 'That is all right.' They slaughtered that ox and then the princess departed with her father's councillors and certain elders. Those travellers were very happy.¹

They arrived there at the in-laws where the princess was married. The councillors and all the people gathered. Another ox was slaughtered.

Now, truly, the princess was used to sleeping late. Ah, she slept a lot!² Those in-laws tolerated this for a few days. They tolerated it for a few days. They did everything for her.

But one day they said, 'Now, we want to know why this person does not do any work at all.' So, they woke her up early one morning. 'Get up and start pounding.'³ Ah! That girl did not get up. She did not get up. She just sat and cried, sat and cried, sat and cried!

Hah, those in-laws took that basket with maize cobs back to the grain-pit. (For a grain-pit they made a hole and threw the maize cobs inside.) Hah, they put the cobs inside and closed the lid. Things went on like this for some time.

Then, a few days later, they again said, 'Wake up and sweep.' That girl got up and took the broom. But then she sat down with it and just cried and cried! Ah, those people saw that she was not sweeping. She was crying. They took the broom and put it away. And so things went on like that for a few days more. Ah, again they said, 'Hey, open the grain-pit, man. We will give maize to this person. Today she *is* going to pound!'

They took a stamper and a mortar. They called the princess. 'Come here! You must pound. Today we want to teach you to pound.' She went to the stamper and the mortar, but just stood there. So those in-laws took that maize and put it inside the mortar. They said, 'Hold the stamper like this, then put it inside the mortar.'⁴ Now, the girl took the

stamper and started to pound that maize. She was singing:⁵

[Narrator]

Hayani hashu a ri tsha sinḁa.
Ha Vho-Phophi na Vho-Tshililo.
Ri sinḁa nga lunanga lwa nḁou.

We do not pound at our home.
Of Mrs Phophi and Mrs Tshililo.
We pound with the tusk of an elephant.⁶

[Chorus]

Di-di-dimile, dimile.

She started to cry, man. She cried and cried and cried! She stood there with the stamper. That place where she was standing and singing started to cave in. They saw that! She sank into the ground, she sank below!⁷ She was singing, *Hayani hashu a ri tsha sinḁa*...

Hey! She had disappeared below. They no longer were able to see that child down there. That opening in the ground was closing again. When that happened, those people screamed and carried on. Oh dear! They could not see her! She had vanished below with that mortar and stamper. She had gone down there! Oh, there was really serious trouble. Now, they did not know what to do.

That girl appeared over there at her home. She had been walking down there, under the ground. People woke up in the morning and found her standing behind the chief's house. They came there and looked in surprise. 'Ah! The princess is here, here she is!'

Truly, they found the princess crying non-stop. The royal family, councillors and people started to gather. They were startled by the princess crying and the way she had arrived there.

Now, she was unable to explain what had happened to her. She could only sing that song again: *Hayani hashu a ri tsha sinḁa* ... Ah! And so they came to learn that this person was forced to pound. Her singing and crying meant that they had forced her to pound.

Ah, the chief returned from discussing the matter with his councillors. He said to his messengers, 'Go and confiscate all the property of those people. Go and take everything and return with it.' (Remember that wealthy people in the past had many cattle and goats.)

Ah, indeed, those messengers arrived over there. They carried spears and everything else. They surrounded that homestead and took all the cattle. They led them away and arrived back home. 'Chief, here we are.' The chief replied, 'Now that you have returned, all the people in the village must meet me tomorrow.' Indeed, they went there to the chief's place. Again they made plenty of food, just like when the princess got married. They slaughtered that bull, one they selected from the herd. It was roasted and eaten.

Ah, that child stopped crying.

Ha mbo ḁi vha u fa ha lungano.
Tshiungani, 28 September 2008



Several versions of this story have been documented in southern Africa.⁸ A profound variation was narrated by Sophia Magoro⁹ from Masia who made extensive use of metaphors to imbue it with many additional meanings. In essence, however, it is similar to a version told in 1992 by Zwido Makhari¹⁰ of Hamadala. It underlines the legality of agreements, in particular in relation to marriage (this is also made evident in the song).

Because marriage is an economic and social cornerstone, it is not an institution to be treated lightly, hence the fact that all the property of the in-laws is confiscated. The gravity of the matter is underlined by the dramatic disappearance underground of

the girl (see note 7) and the fact that her crying only stops when punishment has been meted out. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha was not impressed by the drastic, punitive response, and merely noted that it was not unknown in the past.

Miriam Vhengani's treatment of the story also invokes the trappings of ruling power (see 'A fat girl'). The elevated status that ruling class membership accords is mirrored in the luxurious, indolent life-style of the princess as well as court speech. Court speech mainly takes the form of a special vocabulary that applies to royalty only.¹¹ Accordingly, in this story the royal kitchen is referred to as *tshamudane* (the common term is *tshitanga*) while the exclusive term used to describe the princess washing herself is *ambusa* (compare the general term *tamba*). In addition, the princess attends a special initiation school for royalty.

But this life-style stands not so much for itself as for all the complications and tensions associated with ruling power. Van Warmelo¹² notes that rulers 'paid the price' for their status. And so, in this story, most families approaching the chief's family with offers of marriage refuse to become imprisoned in the structures of authority. Even the chief seems to express despair over this matter when he suggests that it is better for his daughter not to marry. He too is positioned in a system over which he has limited control, since his daughter must marry 'according to custom.'

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1. Lit. they left well.
 2. The theme of sleeping, as well as the pampered way in which the girl is raised, is reminiscent of Hans Christian Andersen's 'Princess and the pea' (1835). Also see the next note.
 3. Women often rose during the dark hours of the morning to start pounding, especially in large households.

Blacking (1969a:24) cites a girls' initiation song which 'teaches a girl that she must not allow her husband's mother to cook for her: it is her duty to cook for the old lady. A woman who is spoilt by her mother-in-law will never be any good at housekeeping.'

4. This is said sarcastically and even with humour, since pounding used to be one of the basic duties of women.

5. Because the girl is crying, she sings hesitantly and plaintively.

6. An indication of the wealth and status of her family. This also is a reminder of the agreement between the families.

7. The precise meaning of this event is not clear. However, the underground generally is conceived as the location of spiritual forces, as is evident in the name *Vhafhasi* ('Those below') for ancestral spirits. Kuper (1987:184) discusses an Isizulu narrative whose heroine is called Untombi-yaphansi ('The girl of below' or 'The girl of the earth'). The heroine manages to escape an evil pursuer when the earth opens and she escapes underground. Of significance here is the fact that the name of the girl links her with the ancestors. Although there is no evidence to support a similar meaning in 'The princess who slept late,' failing to honour an agreement of this nature may be construed as a transgression of ancestral morality.

8. See Jacottet (1908:184-191; '*Seilatsatsi oa Mohale*'), Tracey (1986:88-92; 'The delicate daughter') and Smith (1986:95-102; 'The wife who could not work').

9. See Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:84-92; 'To be human again.'

10. See Kruger, 2004:14-16; 'The young wife who was forbidden to pound maize.'

11. See Van Warmelo, 1971.

12. Van Warmelo, *op. cit.*:357.

The curious case of the guinea-fowl

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a certain man who lived far from other people. This meant that he was able to have a large field. He worked hard to clear the ground.¹ Then he married and lived there with his wife. They had a lot of maize, and different kinds of peanuts. Then their children were born and so they lived as a family while the years passed.

Now, the time came when the man said to that wife, 'This field is hard to farm because it is so big.' That woman answered, 'Really?² I see no problem.' But her husband just said, 'I want to know whether I can take another wife.' And so they came to an understanding. Yes, the husband took a younger wife. They lived together and continued to farm.

Now, this man was a hunter. He always went out and returned with game. He returned with duikers, he returned with impalas, he returned with kudus. Their meat was eaten as a side dish.³

Now, it happened one day that this man came home with a guinea-fowl. That younger wife who was still newly-married said, 'Hey, I do not eat guinea-fowl.' Her husband was surprised. 'Really? You do not eat guinea-fowl? Well, OK.'

So, the husband again left to hunt. He came back home and said to his younger wife, 'Here is the carcass of an impala. Take it, it will last you long. The rest of us only eat guinea-fowl nowadays. I hunt them when they come to raid the field.' So, truly, this is what they agreed on. And so life went on.

Then, the man returned with a guinea-fowl on a certain day and gave it to his elder wife to cook. That younger wife looked inside the pot when no-one was watching. She said, 'Hah, today I will taste this guinea-fowl.' She took a piece and ate it. Ah, it was delicious! Hey, she cleaned out the whole pot!

Those people came back from working in the field. They found the woman, but what happened to the meat?

'No, I do not know. I do not eat guinea-fowl!'

Hah, those people were surprised. If this person did not eat guinea-fowl, where did the food disappear to? They had no answer!

The rest of the family kept on cooking guinea-fowl only to find the pot empty. So, now it came to the point where these wives began arguing. The husband said to himself, 'Is my elder wife cooking the meat and eating it alone? What is the best thing to do?'

So, he called those wives together. 'You, wives: I see that this matter of the empty pot is causing trouble. Now, what I propose is to gather your parents here at home.' Those wives said, 'No, good, good.'

So, they went to fetch the family of the elder wife. They went to fetch the family of the younger wife.

The husband explained, 'I asked you here to tell you this: I live here at my home with my family. I hunt, I hunt all kinds of animals that we eat together. But then this younger wife joined us and said, "I do not eat guinea-fowl." But even though she said she does not eat guinea-fowl, we always find that there is no meat in the pot. I am worried, I am troubled. It is better for us to go to a diviner so that we can find out who the culprit is. Is the elder wife cleaning out the pot, or is it the younger wife?'

Truly, the in-laws agreed, 'Yes, let us go.'

The husband said, 'The diviner we are going to is on the other side of the river.'

Ah, really, there they were: they got up in the morning and left in single file. Later they arrived over there at the diviner's place. They stood calling on this side of the river.

The diviner answered, 'Here I am, here I am! Now, I will call you from this side.'

I have tied a zebra thong across the river. Each of you must cross over on it. Then we will see the one who ate the guinea-fowl.’

Really, that diviner tied his thong that side. Then he tied it this side. It was so long that it reached across the river.

The diviner said, ‘Let the children come one by one.’ Now, this younger wife had two children. The elder wife had five children and another one. They told the children of the elder wife to go first. Yes, then the first child started crossing. (You must sing with me!) That child was crossing. As he started to cross, that child started to sing:

[Narrator]

Ro vha ro ya u lima.

We went to farm.

Ro wana khanga yo liwa.

We found the guinea-fowl eaten.

Lutsinga lwa mbiḁi khauwa!

Let the thong of the zebra break!

Ri vhone havha vhalimi.

We will see those farmers.⁴

[Chorus]

Di-di tshama di-diḁwe.⁵

Hah, so, that boy crossed. Then the second boy followed. He also sang that song, *Ro vha ro ya u lima ...* Truly, those children of that elder woman all crossed one by one until they arrived on the other side where the diviner was.

Then the children of the younger wife followed. Yes, those children of that younger wife all crossed: there they were! They stood there on the other side where their brothers were.

Now, the diviner told the husband and his wives to start crossing. Yes, there is the husband coming across, *Ro vha ro ya u lima ...* Here is the man now: he is crossing. Yes, he crossed safely.

Then the wives came. Yes, the elder wife started to cross, *Ro vha ro ya u lima ...* That woman arrived on the other side.

Then it was the turn of the younger wife. She took the first step. She cried as she started singing, *Ro vha ro ya u lima ... hii-hii!* Oh, she was singing and crying, ‘Let the thong of the zebra break!’ She fell into the water! As she fell, her parents rushed to rescue her, but they also tumbled into the pool! They were struggling to save their child. No, they could not. That elder wife and the husband started to dance for joy.

The children of the younger wife were left behind. They had not eaten from the pot.

Ha mbo ḁi vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Tshiungani, 12 June 2009

Similar narratives have been documented among the South Sotho and Venda people.⁶

‘The curious case of the guinea-fowl’ carries a motif similar to that in ‘Mrs Devhele goes down’ in this collection. Both stories portray conflict rooted in a polygamous marriage and its resolution by a husband (the wise head of the household) who invokes ancestral morality (represented by the diviner and water).

In keeping with narrative practice, the elder Mrs Devhele is jealous of her younger co-wife. However, roles are reversed in this story by Miriam Vhengani. Since there is no clear motivation for the younger wife’s behaviour, we can only surmise that she has what is commonly described as ‘many stories.’ In other words, she is capricious, difficult to satisfy and always has excuses for her transgressions. She even may be spoilt. Alternatively, her behaviour could be related to her status as a newly-married woman with its attendant uncertainties. In both stories the vulnerability of the culprits is evident in the way they sing.

1. I.e. of vegetation and stones, prior to cultivation.
2. Lit. what are you thinking? The wife's disagreement may be related to the fact that the presence of more than one wife in a family increases the potential for conflict.
3. I.e. as a dish accompanying maize porridge.
4. I.e. it will be revealed who worked in the fields and who ate the meat at home.
5. These are vocables expressing the woman's tearful admission of guilt.
6. See Jacottet (1908:180-185; 'Ntetekeane'), Postma (1974:53-57; 'The guilty woman') and Krüger (1933/341-2; 'The man who had three wives').

$\text{♩} = 112$

System 1:
 Doh is C | m' : m' | m' : r' | d' : l | s :- | : | : | : | :
 Ro vha ro ya u li - ma.

System 2:
 | : | : | : | : | : | m' : m' | r' :- | r' : d' | d' : d'
 Di - di tsha - ma di - di - ñwe.

System 3:
 d' : d' | d' : d' | d' : l | s :- | : | : | : | :
 Ro 'na kha - nga yo li - wa.

System 4:
 | : | : | : | : | : | m' : m' | r' :- | r' : d' | d' : d'
 Di - di tsha - ma di - di - ñwe.

System 5:
³ m' : m' : m' | r' : d' | d' : l | s :- | : | : | : | :
 Lu - tsi - nga lwa mbi - ñi kau - wa!

System 6:
 | : | : | : | : | : | m' : m' | r' :- | r' : d' | d' : d'
 Di - di tsha - ma di - di - ñwe.

System 7:
³ m' : m' : m' | d' : d' | d' : l | s :- | : | : | : | :
 Ri vho - ne ha - vha vha - li - mi.

System 8:
 | : | : | : | : | : | m' : m' | r' :- | r' : d' | d' : d'
 Di - di tsha - ma di - di - ñwe.



Mr Dirty Pants

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a woman and her husband. One day, as life went on, these people decided to go and visit the woman's family. Indeed, it was a good idea, so they started their journey. They walked, they walked.

Now, long ago a woman used to carry a basket on her head and a child on her back. The man only took his coat and walking stick.

And so they walked. Yes, they walked and walked. Then the woman said, 'I am tired. Let us sit and rest. I need to breastfeed the child.' The husband replied, 'No, let us walk on. We will rest when we get to the river.' So, the poor woman persevered and carried the child.

Now, in the past journeys took a long time. And so the couple walked the whole day. It was like walking from here to Sibasa.

It was already sunset when they reached the river. They arrived there and put down their things. The woman took the child down and breastfed her. While they were resting, the man and his wife decided to wash themselves because their destination was now near.

As it was sunset, wild animals came there to drink water. Hey, there they were: they were singing as they came closer:

[Narrator]

Umawawa!

[vocables]

[Chorus]

Vulele, dzi ende mashango!

Make way, they are coming closer!¹

Now, the man and his wife were listening to this sound. They decided to come out of the water. But ah, the lions were already near and they saw the child. They wanted to grab that child! Those lions: they were trouble! So the man ran away!

The woman was very worried, man. She shouted, 'I will fight you lions to death if I have to!' She grabbed her child and then ran away. The man ran in one direction, the woman ran in another direction. Hey, later they found each other again.

But something had happened to the husband! He had run away in fright and then something happened to him! The woman asked, 'What is that smell? What stinks like that?'

The husband answered, 'When I am angry, I smell bad. I stink. Stop asking.' The woman said to herself, 'No, how can it be that anger stinks like this? I will just have to persevere.'

Later the woman complained again, 'It has become dark and you are still stinking!'

'Well, I tell you again: I became angry when I saw the lion that wanted to grab the child. It is anger that makes me smell so bad.'

The woman replied, 'Let us stop arguing. We are almost there.'

So, at last they reached their destination. Yes, it was late afternoon when they arrived at that homestead. The husband started to explain: 'You know, when we arrived there on the other side of the river, we started to wash. As we were about to collect our clothes, we heard a loud sound. It was the roaring of lions!'

And those people exclaimed, 'Can you imagine, the roaring of lions! You definitely do not wash there at the end of the day.'

It had become early evening. Yes, it was dusk. There were many girls there at the in-laws. They had come to see the son-in-law, that man who was smelling bad. The son-in-law poured water. He washed and refreshed himself as a person should do.

Those girls said they were going to dance *tshifasi* over there. That man followed

them. He said, 'I know how to dance *tshifasi* very well.' The girls said, 'Good! We are looking for someone who can dance.'

So, those girls lined up and started to dance. The man then sang that evil song of his:

[Narrator]

Hee, hee, nandi vhasidzana!

Hezwi ri tshi tamba,

ni sendele murahu.

Hu na buka livhi.

La matambo mavhi.

Gidi-gidi, dzhoto!

[Chorus]

Ndi-lindee, ndi-lindee!

Hey, hey, you girls.²

When we dance,

you must move to the rear.

There is an ugly monster.

He plays evil games.

Run, grab!

Now, a cloud of dust billowed because of the vigorous dancing of the son-in-law. When he sang *gidi-gidi, dzhoto* he changed, this man! He became that monster in the song! He grabbed a girl! Yes, afterwards he threw her far away and returned to the cloud of dust before it could settle.

He again sang that horrible song of his, *Hee, hee, nandi vhasidzana!* ... People could hear that the dancing over there did not end. Then they knew that it was because of the song that the girls were being attacked and finished off.

The remaining girls escaped from the cloud of dust. When they counted one another, they found that several were missing. So, they fled! They ran home! When they arrived there, they reported, 'Hey, we were over there with a person who dances *tshifasi* very well!'

Ah, that son-in-law saw that he was now in trouble and he sprinted away ...

Ha mbo di u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Tshiungani, 12 June 2009

This story is shaped around the familiar motif of a husband who changes into a monster or a vicious animal (see 'The animal spouse' on p. 49). This transformation usually leads to some form of serious transgression. In 'A big hero' in this collection, the monster kidnaps his children by swallowing them. In a *ngano* entitled 'The lion who hunted his daughter,'³ the husband commits incest with his daughter. The villain in 'Mr Dirty Pants' also commits acts of sexual aggression.

Tshifasi is a courting dance for young teenagers. By the time boys and girls reach puberty, their divergent domestic chores have melded them into separate groups. Typically, girls help their mothers at home while boys are out herding. *Tshifasi* accordingly is a sanctioned public event that integrates them and regulates an increasing awareness of the opposite gender. Boys and girls accordingly approach the dance ground from opposite sides. Individuals then dance towards the middle where they pair off with a member of the opposite gender. Incipient sexual selection is evident when a boy or girl chooses a beloved to dance with. As such the dance is marked by a high degree of physical and sexual energy. However, it is controlled by patterns of ordered interaction. This is partly evident in the respectful way that participants greet one another.

It is clear therefore that participation in *tshifasi* is not in keeping with the status of adults. And so the son-in-law's dancing is an indication of his sexual aberration, namely his interest in young girls. The narrator does not spell out what his behaviour

towards them entails, but some form of sexual violation is clearly suggested.

Although the culprit seems to escape actual punishment, he is of course humiliated effectively by means of the narrator's scatological humour in the first part of the story. It is clear that faecal imagery as a metaphor for 'sin and sinfulness' is not restricted to Western theology and art.⁴ Kriel⁵ notes that 'in most parts of Africa all references to the human product are derogatory.'

1. Lit. open, they are walking across the land (countries).
2. This song features in a children's game in which boys sing the call and girls the response. As the last line is performed, the boys attempt to catch and 'eat' the girls (Le Roux, 1996:250-251). Le Roux suggests that the game may affirm male violent behaviour.
3. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:112-115.
4. See DuBois, 1997:757.
5. Kriel, 1989:103.

$\text{♩} = 116$

Doh is C | : | : | : | : | :r' l- :- |s :s |s :-
U - - ma - wa - wa!

|d' :r' |r' :- |d' :t |.t :- |t :l |l : | : | : | :
Vu - le - le, dzi e - nde ma - sha - ngo!

$\text{♩} = 80$

Doh is G | : :s l- :- :- |s :- .d' :- .t l- .s :l .l :s
Hee, hee. Na - ndi vha - si - dza - na.

|f :m :r l- :d :t |s :- : | : : :
Ndi - li - ndee, ndi - li - ndee!

| : :s l- :- :- |s :- .d' :- .t l- .s :s .s :s
Hee, hee. He - zwi ri tshi ta - mba.

|f :m :r l- :d :t |s :- : | : : :
Ndi - li - ndee, ndi - li - ndee!

: s l- :- :- | s :- .d' :d' .d' |d' .s :s .s :-
 Hee, hee. Ni se - nde - le mu - ra - hu.

f :m :r l- :d :t |s :- : | : :
 Ndi - li - ndee, ndi - li - ndee!

: s l- :- :- | s :- .d' :- .d' |d' .d' :s .s :-
 Hee, hee. Hu - na bu - ka li - vhi.

f :m :r l- :d :t |s :- : | : :
 Ndi - li - ndee, ndi - li - ndee!

: s l- :- :- | s :- .d' :- .d' |d' .t :s .s :-
 Hee, hee. La - ma - ta - mbo ma - vhi.

f :m :r l- :d :t |s :- : | : :
 Ndi - li - ndee, ndi - li - ndee!

: s l- :- :- | s :- .m ,m.- |m ,m:- .m :s
 Hee, hee. Gi - di - gi - di dzho - to!

f :m :r l- :d :t |s :- : | : :
 Ndi - li - ndee, ndi - li - ndee!



Matamela Makapile

I am a widow. My place of birth is Maranikwe, there in the Nzhelele district. I was born in 1934.

My grandfather was the headman of Sane. His name was Phaswana Nesane. Those old people: most of them had fields. My parents farmed too. My father was Nalana Makapile. He had several wives. My mother was Khakhu. She had five children: her son Phaswana, and her daughters Denga, Makwarela, then me, and Nyamukamadi, the youngest.

What I remember best about being a child is playing in the mud, making dolls and oxen. We also liked playing house.¹ We decided who should be the father, the mother and the children. If you were the mother or a girl, you had to pound maize and millet.

My husband was Kwareli Rashaka. He was one of those who worked in Johannesburg. I married him at Halftown, there at Nzhelele. He had another wife too. She was a Pedi named Anna. She had two children called Boy and Maria.

I had two sons. The first is Zachary Ndanduleni. He was born in 1952. You find me living here at his house at Folovhodwe. When he and his wife Mashudu were working in Johannesburg, I came here to look after their children. They are Siphso, Jenneth, Prince, Emmanuel and Zachy.

I taught Jenneth to cook. The children loved my stories so much that they forced me to tell them again and again. But nobody tells these stories today. People have also forgotten riddles. Young people go to school where they learn new things. They do not ask to hear the stories we old people have to tell. When you tell them stories, they do not remember them well. They forget the songs.

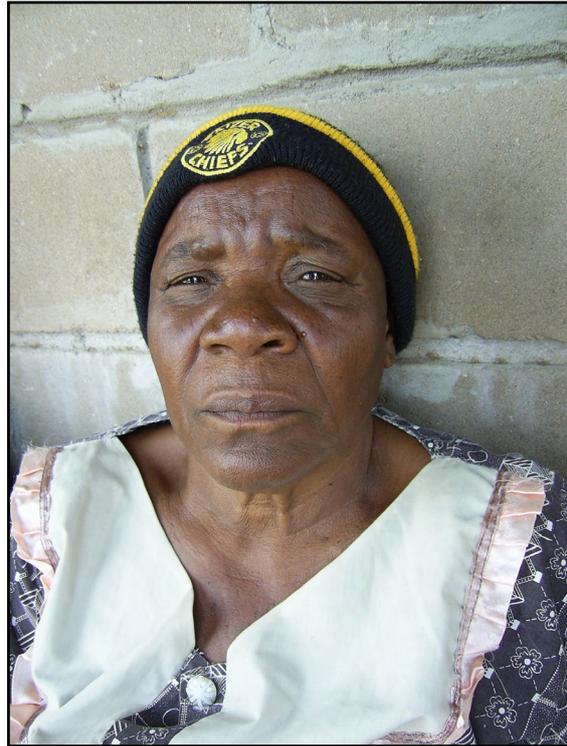
My son Zachary first worked on the farm of the Jouberts. He helped to pick oranges. He later worked as boilermaker at Cullinan Bricks in Olifantsfontein. He had a stroke while working there. We have been living with his disability for fifteen years now. He cannot work. He watches TV and waters our garden. My other son was Maluta Rashaka. He is deceased.

I divorced my husband many years ago. So, I took my two sons back to the home of my parents at Maranikwe.

Following this, I worked at Hope Farm, here in Niani. I was a supervisor over others who watered and picked oranges. I started brewing beer there after some years. Some even called me a shebeen-queen.

I get *mundende* [pension] but to be a pensioner is to be poor. So I make bracelets and necklaces from beads. That is something we old people can do.

[Matamela Makapile's voice was silenced by a stroke in 2011. She now resides with her younger sister Nyamukamadi in the Nzhelele district.]



1. *Mahundwane*, a children's play-village in which domestic roles are enacted (see 'Playing with dolls,' p. 51).

Fortune lies ahead

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a woman and a man with their children. They said about those two children, the first one and the one that followed, they said, 'Let us kill them. They are eating our food.'¹

They took the children to a dry river bed in the morning. They stabbed them with a haft,² they stabbed them! They left them for dead. But those children recovered later.³ They said, 'Let us not go home. We must not follow our parents. If we do that, they will really kill us.'

They went away and discovered a cave. They stood before the entrance and sang a song. The cave opened.⁴ They went inside and found many things: different kinds of porridge, maize, grinding stones, clay cooking pots, water: everything!

The boy woke up the next morning and left to look for food in the veld.⁵ He returned at sunset. Yes, he sang that song. He sang it so that his sister could hear that he had returned. The door opened and he went inside. This was what the brother used to do.

One day a monster heard him singing while he was hiding nearby. When the boy left again, that monster went over there to the cave and sang and sang. It stood there in the entrance.⁶ The sister said to herself, 'No, that is not my brother!' She remained quiet.

When the brother returned in the evening, his sister said, 'One day, when you come back, you will not find me.'

'Why?'

'There is a monster who comes and sings here. Now, when it sings and the door is opened, it will take me away.'

'Hah, let us leave, sister.'

They got up in the morning and travelled further. They reached a place where there were goats and sheep. There were many! They said, 'Hah, there is wealth here: we have found it.' But a bird came to them. It stood there and sang:⁷

Litshai izwo: zwivhuya zwi tshee phanda.

Leave that: fortune lies ahead.

And so they went on. They reached a big village with cattle, sheep and other animals. There were many things. Everything was there! They said, 'There is wealth here, we have found it.' But the bird had followed them, *Litshai izwo* ...

And so the brother and sister went further. They came to a village without men. There were only women. The brother and sister sat down and those women gave them food and beer. They ate and were happy.

An old woman came there and said, 'I can smell a person who is a man, I can smell a person who is a man, I can smell as person who is a man!'⁸ Later she said, 'You will sleep in my house.' And so they went to bed.

The old woman woke up and wanted to kill the boy. That boy had two dogs. Their teeth came out, 'hrrrr!' The old woman shouted, 'No, no!' The boy said to the old woman, 'Sleep: do not try to do anything. They will kill you.' He slept again.

It became morning. The old woman said, 'I want to slaughter an ox for the dogs.'⁹ Her cattle were many: she just picked a big one and slaughtered it. She gave the meat to those dogs. They ate until they could eat no more. Then they went into the house to sleep. The old woman piled stones against the door so that they could not escape. She said, 'You, grandchild, boy: go to the fields to cut wood for me.' That boy replied, 'All right granny.'

They went to the fields. The old woman said, 'See the tallest tree? That is where you must go.' That boy scampered up the tree. Yes, that old woman started to chant:

[Narrator]

Tshe-tshe-turu!

[Sound of chopping]

[Chorus]

Tshetshethula nga ludzino lwangu.

I am cutting with my tooth.¹⁰

That boy called his dogs. He called Nyaluvhengo and Matshena. They came there and found the tree being chopped down. They caught that old lady! But then she farted. Those dogs were dead!

That boy started singing up there and the dogs came to life again. They stood up and prowled around the old woman. Then they tore her to pieces!

That boy climbed down. He was chanting, 'Climbing down! Climbing down!' Then he stepped onto the ground. He chopped that firewood: he chopped and piled it, he chopped! He called the women of the village and said, 'Come and fetch the wood.' There were so many women that each only had to pick up one piece.

That boy was piling the wood for burning the old woman, piling for burning, piling! He burned her until only her ashes remained.¹¹ When he finished, he went among those trees and scattered the ashes: scatter, scatter, scatter, scatter, scatter!

Those children said, 'Let us go to the home of our parents.' So they left. When they got there, they sat down. They were given food to eat. The mother and father came: there they were.

Those children said, 'We need a place to stay.'

'Yes, all right.'

'That girl sitting over there: do you know her?' the brother asked.

'We do not know her.'

'Do you know Mugele?'¹²

'We know him, but we have not seen him for long.'

'Here he is: it is me.'

Those old women and old men were crying. The children said, 'Stop crying. Here is our mother who is from the chief's family. She is his sister.'

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Folovhodwe, 29 September 2008

This is a typical coming of age story that takes the timeless form of a thrilling, arduous journey undertaken successfully (see 'Relations and transformations,' p. 42).

The pairing of brother and sister is not surprising (compare '*Hänsel und Gretel*' in the Grimm collection). There is a close relationship between male and female siblings since a brother may require the bride wealth a sister brings into a family for his own marriage.

Like many similar narratives, the journey is prompted by a crisis. Droughts are one of the standard triggers for action (see 'Surviving famine,' p. 27). Although the conflict between the parents and their children is the result of famine, it may be treated more broadly as an expression of power relationships that change inevitably in families as children grow up.

Although the adventures the hero undergoes may be imagined as real by young listeners, the quest for 'fortune' essentially is a process of self-realisation. The term used for 'fortune' is *zwivhuya*, and Van Rooy¹³ links the concept with the notions of 'vital force, power, prestige, health, good luck.'

Accordingly, there is an initialising, violent confrontation in the story that leads to separation and the children's departure. Their voyage is fraught with ordeals that are overcome by means of courage and ingenuity.

The first challenge is that of the monster that lurks in the veld and wants to kidnap the sister. Ultimate evil, however, is the old woman that the brother engages in a battle to death. Booker¹⁴ notes in this regard that ‘the thrilling escape from death ... is one of the most consistent motifs in storytelling.’ And in typical fashion, the siblings are aided in their quest by ‘animal helpers’ in the form of an ever-present bird as well as the boy’s dogs.¹⁵

The story reaches a climax with the burning of the old woman, and the scattering of her ashes. Following this, the children return home to be ‘reunited’ with their family who initially fail to recognise them, not so much because their physical appearance has changed, but because they have completed their transformation to maturity. And it is through sitting down and sharing a meal (a socially cohesive act) that there is final reconciliation, a motif also found in ‘Spirit’ by Nyamukamadi Ndou.

The image of a village without men does not explicitly support any feministic interpretations and my enquiry about this came as a surprise to the narrator. However, it is possible that contemporary interpretations in fact may be shaped by such consideration. ‘Madikwe village’ is a story about women who rebel against abusive treatment by men and then establish a separate community for themselves.¹⁶ This is not far-fetched. *Newsweek*¹⁷ reports on a Kenyan woman, Rebecca Lolosoli, who founded a village called Umoja (Freedom) for women fleeing domestic violence, forced marriage and genital mutilation. The women turned the village into a tourist attraction and sell beadwork for a living.

Similarly, Ghana features special ‘witch camps’ for destitute women violently exiled from their homes, following a variety of social conflicts.¹⁸

1. The implication is that there was famine. Narratives with a similar theme have been documented by Nenzhelele (1968:14-15; ‘*Demana mmbwa yavhuḍi*’) and Stayt (1931:348; ‘The egg that grew bigger while the man was singing’). The narrator indicated that the parents had to decide whether all should die, or whether some should die and others should live, a moral dilemma not addressed in the story.

2. *Murumbulo*, ‘boring instrument: a wooden handle to hold an iron rod made red-hot to burn holes through wood’ (Van Warmelo, 1989:234).

3. Lit. to wake up.

4. Songs and chants that magically open doors of course are common in oral literature, as they are in *ngano* (see Thompson, 1955:D1557; ‘Magic charm causes door to open’). The narrator did not offer any song here.

5. *Hosongwe*: a place of work or where food is obtained from.

6. This is a familiar motif in oral literature: a person lives or hides in a house or cave with a door that is opened magically by a song known to a confidante or close family member only (see Thompson, 1955:D1557; ‘Magic charm causes door to open’; also see ‘The cannibal’s tooth’ and ‘Mr Hippopotamus throws his weight around’ in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:103-107, 144-148). However, an antagonist (often a monster or violent man) overhears the song and manages to enter the house and harm the occupant.

7. For other stories in this collection featuring a bird, see ‘Foolish girls,’ ‘A smart bird,’ and ‘A fool is always eating.’

8. The narrator explained that the old woman is evil. She killed her husband and then continued to eject all men from the village. She uses her long tooth (see the chant) to kill men. This latter part of the story closely correlates with a Chishona narrative entitled ‘Tsimbarumé the hardened bachelor’ (Tracey, 1986:15-21).

9. To pacify them.

10. The woman wants to kill the boy and uses a large tooth in her mouth to chop down the tree. The image of an old woman with a large tooth also appears in other *ngano* (see Nenzhelele, 1961:8-9).

11. This fierce battle between the young man and his dogs and the old woman seems to be a core image in regional narratives, as it also appears in a Xironga story (Baumbach & Marivate, 1973:33-34). The identity of the old woman in this narrative is quite clear: 'But it happened that his mother-in-law very often turned into a monster.' Burning accordingly is reserved for witches, since fire is regarded as a suitable form of total destruction of supreme evil (Mathuvhelo Mavhetha). This narrative incident resonates uneasily with the murder and burning of nine elderly residents of Fholovhodwe on 10 and 11 March 1990 (see www.justice.gov.za/trc/decisions/2000/ac20094.html).

12. Names like Mugele and Mukene are given to people whose names cannot be recalled immediately (like 'Whatsisname').

13. Van Rooy, 1978:7.

14. Booker, 2004:45.

15. See Bettelheim (2010), Thompson (1955:B300-349; 'Helpful animals – general').

16. See Makhale, 2003.

17. March 14, 2011.

18. Grove, 2011.

$\text{♩} = 136$

Doh is C | ṃ . ṣ:- . ḍ | - : | . ṣ:- . ṣ | - . ṣ:- | ṣ . ṣ : ṣ | ṣ : | . ṣ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:-
 Li-tshai'zwo Hae hae hae hae li-tshai'zwo Hae hae hae

| : | . ṃ : ṃ . ṃ | ṃ . ṃ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:- | : | . ṃ : ṃ . ṃ | ṃ . ṃ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:-
 zwi-vhu-ya zwi tshee pha-nda. zwi-vhu-ya zwi tshee pha-nda.

| ṃ . ṃ : ṣ . ṣ | - : | . ṣ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:- | ṣ . ṣ : ṣ | ṣ : | . ṣ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:-
 Li-tshai i-zwo Hae hae hae hae li-tshai'zwo Hae hae hae.

| : | . ṃ : ṃ . ṃ | ṃ . ṃ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:- | : | . ṃ : ṃ . ṃ | ṃ . ṃ:- . ṛ | - . ḍ:-
 zwi-vhu-ya zwi tshee pha-nda. zwi-vhu-ya zwi tshee pha-nda.

$\text{♩} = 108$

(Chant) Tshe-tshe-tu - ru! Tshe-tshe-tu - ru! Tshe! Tshe!

'La nga'dzi- no lwa-ngu. 'La nga'dzi- no lwa-ngu.



Thunder returns

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, the country was dry. There was no water at all.

Some boys went out into the veld. One of them sang a song on the bank of a dry river bed and it rained. It was like that: long ago people used to go out and make water in this way.

One of the boys returned from the veld and said to his father, 'Follow us and you will see a boy who does wonderful things.'

So, that father went out and sat a short distance away from the dry river bed. Those boys arrived there and stood on the bank of the river bed. They said to their friend, 'Sing again.' Hah! They persuaded that boy. He started to do it again. He sang:

[Narrator]

Dza Munzhelele.

Of Munzhelele.¹

[Chorus]

Kile dza vhuya.

The thunder that precedes the rain has returned.

Then he sang another song, this small song:

[Narrator]

Thovhele u ralo, ngelengende!

The chief says,

U pandani mavula? Ngelengende!

who will dig for water?

Vhathu vha a fhela, ngelengende!

People are dying!

[Chorus]

Tshavha.

It digs water.

Tshipanda mavula.

Dig for water.

All of a sudden there was lots of water! That father washed himself, he washed! The children swam!

The father returned home and reported to the chief: 'Hey, those children are doing something special over there in the veld.'²

'What are they doing?'

'They have found water.'

'Ah! They know how to find water! Now ...'

That miracle was done by the boy of Mr Mugele.³ So, the chief sent messengers to fetch him. He was playing over there with those other boys. The messengers told him to come to the chief's place with his friends and his mother: everybody in the family.⁴ And so they gathered. The chief's place was crowded.

Certain people despised the boy.⁵ 'Can he do anything good, this child?' But others protected him. 'Sing that song of yours, sing, quickly.'⁶

That boy started to sing. The people responded. They sang *Tshavha, tshipanda mavula!* ... The boy did not sing his first song, he only sang *Tshipandu-tshipandu*.

Rivers started to surge and flow!⁷ People lived happily in that country.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Folovhodwe, 29 September 2009

1. The name of the boy's family.

2. Lit. doing big things.

3. A name selected on the spur of the moment, similar to 'Whatsisname.'
4. Typically, in coming of age narratives, the crucial issue of identity is addressed by locating the individual in community.
5. Because of jealousy, a condition attendant on potency.
6. To protect him against those wanting to undermine him.
7. In dramatic style, the rain that falls at the end serves to unite the conflicting parties: 'The wider community is restored to wholeness.' (Booker, 2004:219.)

$\text{♩} = 86$

Doh is C | : : | l : - . l : - | l d' : - . l : - | m' : d' : - | : : | l l : m' : l | l d' : m' : l | l d' : d' : - |
 Ka - nga ke - nge ki - li. Ka - nge ka - nge - nge - nge ki - li.

| d' : d' : d' | l l : - : l | s : m : | : : | d' : d' : d' | l l : - : l | s : m : | : : |
 Dza vhu - ya dza M'zhe - le - le. Dza vhu - ya dza M'zhe - le - le.

$\text{♩} = 112$

Doh is C | d : d : d | d : d : d | s : s : s | s : s : : | d : d : d | d : d : d | s : s : s | s : s : : |
 Tho - vhe - le u ra - lo, nge - le - nge - nde. Tho - vhe - le u ra - lo, nge - le - nge - nde.

| : : | : : | : : | : s : s | s : d : d | d : d : d | : : | : s : s |
 Tsha - vha, tshi - pa - ndu ma - vu - la. Tsha - vha,

| d : d : d | d : s : s | s : s : s | s : s : : | d : d : d | d : d : d | s : s : s | s : s : : |
 'Pa - nda - ni ma - vu - la? Nge - le - nge - nde. Vha - thu vha a fhe - la, nge - le - nge - nde.

| s : d : d | d : d : d | : : | : s : s | s : d : d | d : d : d | : : | : s : s |
 tshi - pa - ndu ma - vu - la. Tsha - vha, tshi - pa - ndu ma - vu - la. Tsha - vha,



Mashudu Mathala



My name is Mashudu Mathala. You can also call me Agnes. I live here in Folovhodwe. You know the stories of my mother-in-law, Matamela Makapile. She lives with me. We are a family of story-tellers: my grandmother knew stories, my mother can tell them, and even my son Zachy knows a few.

I was born in 1960. My parents lived there at Tshirundu.¹ What I remember clearly about growing up is catching fish in the Nzhelele River. My friends and I also collected firewood for our mothers. We liked playing

ndode. This is a game played with stones. We chant when we play the game. The words describe things that happen in the family. Like so many other girls, we also liked to skip rope, *khadi*.

Playing like this was so wonderful. This why we always complained loudly when an adult sent us to fetch water or wood, or to go to the shop.

That shop was far away. We bought flour, paraffin and sugar and had to carry everything back home. When there was a little money left, I was happy because I could buy those milk toffees. Sometimes there was no money for sweets. Then I took a bit of sugar from the groceries without my mother noticing.

Of all the dishes my mother made when we were children, my favourite is *thophi*, which is pumpkin stew. *Dovhi* also is nice. It is meat stew you make by adding the flour of marula nuts.

You know, stories are told when families are together. Nowadays people roam all over during the day: they only come home late. My grandmother lived with us: she was Mrs Mbau. She is the one who told us stories. She called the children together just before bedtime. There was a fire in the big kitchen. Everybody would be sleepy and our heads fell over during the stories. Those kitchens of the old people had shelves. People put their bags of maize on them. We argued with each other to sleep on top of those bags. They were soft, and the kitchen was warm.

My father is now dead. He was Wilson Mathala. He worked in a mine, there in Benoni. Later he moved to Musina. They had the MTD copper mine² there. That is where he worked. It is now closed.

My mother is Elina Mathala. She lives not so far away. She is at Tshiungani. She has a field there. My brother and two sisters live with her.

My husband is Zachary Tshamano. He had a stroke and now receives sick pension. His grant is small but we are fortunate because we have a field next to Nwanedi River. I work very hard there. I sell my tomatoes, peanuts and avocados. I also sell fish I buy from the Indian trader. I must do this to care for my daughter and four sons. My two elder sons have matric, but they cannot find work. The family cannot help: my brother and sisters who live at Tshiungani also have no job. My two younger sons are still at school. One is Emmanuel. He is in grade 10. He says he wants to become a land surveyor.

Zachy is my youngest. He is very special to me. I do not want him to have any

problem with money. You know, I am poor because I did not go to school. My father stopped me from going there. There are too many boys there at school, he said. He was afraid of losing my bride wealth. I only went to initiation: to *vhusha* and *musevetho*. But not *domba*: that school was too far away.³ In any case, I am not happy with our secondary school here at Folovhodwe. The learners and teachers are lazy. So, I am sacrificing to send my boy to St. Augustine. That school is at Tshilamba. It is a private school. I must pay the school fee and for the bus.

I started going to Abet [Adult Basic Education and Training] in 2010. That is where many older people now learn to read. It is free. I go there to the restaurant where Florence Netshipale teaches. It is really nice to learn to write and do maths.

My church is the Living Gospel Church. Our church really does not like *dziloungi*.⁴ They kill people. You see that cross there near the shop? It is inside that shebeen which is now collapsing. There was a young man: he was only 25. He had no job. He lived with his parents. They hurt him in that shebeen. He died. So we closed that place.

The other thing we do not like is the bad road. You know, the tar road from Thohoyandou now reaches Muswodi-Dipeni. The big tar road to Musina also is near. Why do we still have a dirt road with holes and stones? Can you see how the lorries drive? They make a lot of dust.

1. See 'The Land Acts' on p. 33.

2. The Messina Transvaal Development Company, founded in 1905 and closed down during the 1990s.

3. See Blacking 1969a for a discussion of these schools.

4. Lounges or shebeens.



Mrs Devhele goes down

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain man and his two wives. Now, about this man and his two wives: that elder wife liked causing trouble.¹ She was called Mrs Devhele.

The man said, 'You! Mrs Devhele, cook.' But that Mrs Devhele was difficult. 'No, I do not cook.' Then that man said to his younger wife, 'You! Cook!' So that young woman cooked. She worked and worked and worked in her yard. She went all over and did everything.

That elder wife: she saw her husband together with that younger wife. She said, 'Oh! This woman will take my husband because she knows how to cook. What shall I do? Let me plot against her.'²

Mrs Devhele went out and defecated. She took those faeces and put them in the cooking pot. Remember, long ago there were no iron pots. People used to cook in clay pots. So, Mrs Devhele closed the lid and left to do her chores. Those things of hers were still inside the pot over there.

The old man came back from work.

'I am tired. I want to rest and eat. Hey, somebody!'

'Hello!' that younger wife answered.

'Come here. So, prepare our food, I want to rest.'

'Look: the food has been cooked, and it is delicious.'

Old men in the past were not served – they served themselves. So, that younger wife picked up the pot and brought it there. That old man opened the pot.

'Hey! What is this? Ah! No! Let me close it! Hey, someone!'

'Hello!'

'Come here! My wife, serve me. Let us eat.'

'Why must I serve you today when you usually do it yourself? I am now afraid.'

'Look my wife, today I give you permission: serve me.' He did this because he wanted to do what? To find out what was going on!

That woman opened the pot: 'Hey, what is this?'

'This is why I called you.'

'I cannot explain this,' the young woman said. She shivered in fear. 'I really do not know how this happened.'

Her husband asked, 'How can you not know when only three people live at this home? If you do not know what happened, then I should know. But because I do not know, the elder wife should know. You: Mrs Devhele! Come here.'

The elder wife arrived there and asked, 'What is the matter?' When they showed her the pot, she said, 'I do not know either.' That husband said, 'In that case there is no problem, my wives. Now, we will go for divination so that we can solve this problem and not argue any longer.'

They left and walked with that old man in front. He was leading and walking straight ahead. He started to sing:

[Narrator]

Devehele bikani!

Cook Devhele!

Na vuwa no lamba.

Waking and refusing to cook.

Zwino zwo itani?

Now what happened?

Zwa vuwa no tenda.

Sometimes you wake up and agree.³

[Chorus]

Mbutsha muninga!

A troublesome wife!⁴

There was a big river at the diviner's place that the women had to cross.⁵ For this they

had to use a leather thong. They had to cross the water on this narrow thong. That old man went over to the other side. He said, 'Let the first one come.' That younger wife started to go: *Mbutsha muninga!* ...

She crossed over, she passed! That elder woman, that one who liked to cause trouble, she started to cross. But she was crying a lot, *Mbutsha muninga!*⁶... She arrived there in the middle of the river. That thong broke, *duu!* She went down!

Mrs Devhele went down because she did things she was not supposed to do. If her husband had merely pointed here, pointed there, pointed at everybody, the matter would not have been resolved because each person would have denied wrongdoing. They simply would have refused to admit guilt, not so?

Now, the matter came into the open because of that thong, the thong that broke in the middle. It happened to that old woman: she fell into the water.

Ha mbo di vha hu u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Folovhodwe, 29 September 2009

This story takes the form of *mulayo nyana*, a 'small law' that serves to uphold social roles (see 'Iron logic,' p. 38). Three roles are spelled out clearly: the authority of a husband and his responsibility to maintain order in his household, the relative statuses of co-wives and the duty of those wives to cook.

The severity of Mrs Devhele's transgression is evident in terms of the practice that 'above all things, in the evening, each of his wives will bring him [a husband] the pot which she has cooked for him. This is the essential matrimonial duty of the wife. Not one will fail in it.'⁷ But although Mrs Devhele is lacking in this regard, she is portrayed as a troublesome rather than cruel character. The elder wife in *ngano* typically protects her status as senior who feels threatened by the beauty and energy of younger wives, and her efforts to undermine the latter usually are driven by jealousy, that universal, often uncontrollable drive.⁸

What *ngano* show is that women resist the limitation social life places on them, but that transgressions of their time-honoured roles usually have negative consequences. In addition, Mrs Devhele's vulnerability also is evident in the emotion (crying) she displays when confronted with ancestral morality during the divination process (crossing the river).

The younger wife's frightened response to the soiled food is an indication of the power of male authority, although, given the defiant behaviour of the elder wife, it could also be an expression of her junior status and lack of marital experience, and hence uncertainty: she is still undergoing personal transformation in a new social setting.

Although the husband turns to divination to resolve the conflict in his home, he is presented as the wise sage who holds sway over, and even may punish his wives.⁹

-
1. Lit. she had many stories.
 2. Lit. I will do a story this woman will not be able to see.
 3. The implication seems to be that Mrs Devhele behaves inconsistently.
 4. *Mbutsha*, to complain; *muninga* (from *nanga*), to choose the best wife (Mathuvhelo Mavhetha).
 5. As explained ('Water and transformation,' p. 45), rivers not only are symbolic borders, but also places of sacred origins, spiritual forces and religious authority. Although reminiscent of the 'floating test' European witches were subjected to, the crossing of water here therefore is a metaphor of the assessment of unacceptable behaviour in

ancestral moral terms. Similar images appear in Isixhosa and Sesotho stories (Scheub, 1992:335-347; 'The baboon's wedding'; Jacottet, 1908:180-185; 'Ntetekeane').

6. The narrator must sing with a crying voice.

7. Junod, 1927, I:128.

8. See 'The tree with red flowers' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:81-83.

9. See 'The flamboyant rooster' in Kruger & Le Roux, *op. cit.*:26-28.

$\text{♩} = 104$

Doh is C | : : | : : | : : | : : | s :- :- | s :s :s |l :r :-
De - vhe - le bi - ka - ni!

|r' :- :- |t :- :t |t :t :- | : : | : : | : : | : :
Mbu - tsha mu - ni - nga!

| : : | : : | : : | : : | s :- :t |t :- :l |r :r :-
Na vu - wa no la - mba.

|r' :- :- |t :- :t |t :t :- | : : | : : | : : | : :
Mbu - tsha mu - ni - nga!

| : : | : : | : : | : : | s :- :s |s :- :t |t :l :-
Zwi - no zwo i - ta - ni?

|r' :- :- |t :- :t |t :t :- | : : | : : | : : | : :
Mbu - tsha mu - ni - nga!

| : : | : : | : : | : : | l | :t :t | :- :l :r |r :- :
Zwa vu - wa no te - nda.

|r' :- :- |t :- :t |t :t :- | : : | : : | : : | : :
Mbu - tsha mu - ni - nga!



Goodbye

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain man, his wife and their two children. This woman with two children had an eye disease. Now, long ago there were no hospitals. To cure her, that husband collected leaves of the sour plum tree.¹ He came back, made medicine and put it into the eyes of that woman. When he did that, his wife went blind. She became blind, and she still had small children!

That husband said, 'You, my wife, it will be better to take your younger sister from your parents' home as my second wife. I know that if I take a woman from your family as my wife, your children will be cared for. Your younger sister will be able to look after them.' That woman agreed. She remarked, 'Truly, we are very close to each other.'

That man went and married his wife's younger sister. She left her parents and came there to the home of her husband. Then that younger sister had a child. Her elder sister asked, 'My sister, is your child a boy or a girl?'

'It is a boy.'

'Well, my dear sister, it is our good fortune that you have a boy and I have two. They are the heirs of this homestead. The wealth of the father of these three children will be theirs. It means that the wealth of our husband will not leave home. It will be shared by all of us.'

But that younger sister did not like this. She was hiding something in her heart. She wanted this wealth to be whose? Hers. 'If I do not get rid of a child,² this child of mine will struggle.'³

Now, one of those children of the elder wife no longer was a toddler – he had grown a bit. You know, it is like growing every day after a person gets up in the morning.

She took a maize bag. She grabbed that child and tied him inside! She threw him into the bath.⁴ Afterwards she turned the bath over so that his body could not be seen.

The mother of that child came there and asked, 'The child?' The younger sister took that child of hers and gave him to her blind sister.

That elder sister said, 'This is not my child.'

'It is him, it is your child.'

'This is *not* my child.'

'This really *is* your child.'

What could the elder sister do? She was blind. Even if she made a scene,⁵ what would it help? But she knew something was not right. So she shuffled to the road. She arrived there and sang:

[Narrator]

Idani, ni do vhona.

Come, I will see you,

[Chorus]

Thevhele mutete.

Let us find out what is wrong.

Children were playing. They passed her, they passed her as she stood in the road.

'What is the matter?'

'I am singing because I do not know what happened to my child.'

You know, those children used to play with that boy. So they left that blind woman and went to her home. That woman continued singing over there, 'Why don't I see the child?'

That younger sister said something to those children: we don't know what. Perhaps she told them to voetsek.⁶ It was her home after all.

That husband returned. He returned and wanted to see his child.

‘The child?’

‘Is he in that tree, or is he in the tobacco field?’ the younger wife wondered.

‘Where is the child?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘No problem, he will come out.’

Things were difficult long ago. So, that man went and called the police. The police walked and searched. They searched, they searched.

The child’s corpse had started to decompose. It was under the bath!

The husband called everybody together. He said, ‘You, neighbours, I have been staying here next to you for years. This matter, I have never seen anything like it. I cannot accuse people, saying: it is you or it is *you*. The explanation of this matter is inside my home.’

He consulted the headman who said, ‘Do not be hasty, take it gently. When you get home, do not warn anyone. Let us first finish the burial. We will deal with this serious matter afterwards.’

Truly, they prepared the body of that child. They buried him.

The husband said, ‘My younger wife: prepare beer. You know, we buried the child without ceremony. Now, make beer.’

Three old men who had buried the child returned home so that they could end the matter.⁷

The younger wife scurried about. ‘The beer is ready.’ Then she scuttled and scampered around some more. She did everything.

The old men entered the house. They were told to make a rope and tie the woman up. They braided the rope and that woman entered. Her husband had been persuaded to leave. ‘Go and only come back afterwards.’

When the woman entered the house, she was tied up. One grabbed the rope this side, the other grabbed it that side. They started to strangle her.⁸ They struggled, they struggled, they struggled, they struggled! At the end she said good-bye.

They dug a hole inside the house. They buried her and closed up everything. And those two other children never knew what had happened. Even that blind woman did not know what had happened.

There is the burial of the woman: it is over. That husband returned to his house.

Ha mbo di vha hu u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Folovhodwe, 27 September 2010

As in the previous story (‘Mrs Devhele goes down’), the central character is driven by an uncontrollable urge towards self-assertion, although it is directed here in a warped way at the welfare of her child. Of course, there is a big difference between the crimes in the two stories. Booker⁹ notes in this regard that ‘the natural ending of Tragedy is that its central figure has become so blinded by egotism, so split off from the Self, that he or she must come to a violent death, because this is the only way in which the wider state of wholeness can be restored.’

Also, like Mrs Devhele, the murderer is not treated without sympathy – her seemingly innocuous farewell displays a fatalistic acceptance of her end. She greets the world and her existence whose demands she could not meet. There is no accommodation for this kind of crime in a preordained universe, even if it is driven by irrepressible passion.

The elder sister constantly refers to her younger sister as ‘*nwana wa mme anga*’ (‘child of my mother’), thus emphasising their bond. Her firm belief in this relationship explains why she fails to comprehend her sister’s murderous action. This failure also could be represented by her blindness which may symbolise her good faith in her sister,

as well as her naivety. ('Even that blind woman did not know what had happened.')

The tragedy not only takes shape in the younger sister's execution, but also in the fact that the elder sister's inevitable eventual insight into her sister's nature comes too late to save her son.

1. *Ximenia caffra*. The tree has a number of medicinal uses, including the treatment of diarrhoea, venereal disease, bleeding, internal parasites as well as inflammation of the eyes (Van Wyk, P., 1992:40).
2. Lit. let one go.
3. Lit. my child will not budget: *niwana wanga hanga badzheti hoyu*.
4. A loose-standing metal bath. The implication is that she drowned the child.
5. Lit. jump up and down.
6. From Afrikaans 'voert sê ek,' 'shove off.'
7. As elders of the community they have legal power.
8. Gottschling (1905:377) notes that strangling was a punishment usually meted out to members of ruling families.
9. Booker, 2004:525.

♩ = 112-120

Doh is Cl d' :- : d' | t : l : s | s :- : | : : | : :
 'Da - ni, ni do vho - na.

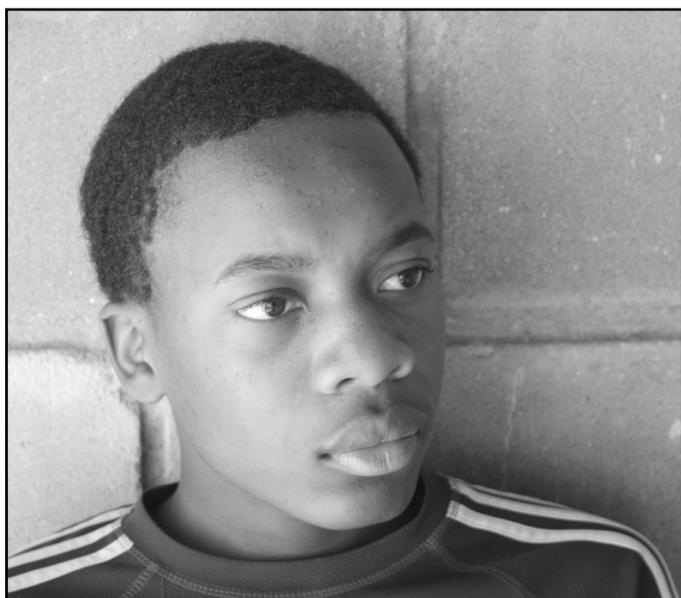
| : : | : : | : : | : : s | s : s | m : m :-
 The - vhe - le mu - te - te.

| s :- : s | f : m : r | r :- : | : : | : :
 'Da - ni, ni do vho - na.

| : : | : : | : : | : : s | s : s | m : m :-
 The - vhe - le mu - te - te.



Zachary Tshamano



Yes, it is unfortunate that my granny Matamela Makapile is not here to tell more of her stories: she went to Nzhelele because there is conflict in her family who lives there. But you know, because she stays with us, I grew up with her stories. And my mother Mashudu Mathala also knows *ngano*. So, I will tell you the ones I remember best.

When looking back at how we used to live when I was a young boy, I think I understand

why granny still told stories: during that time we did not live in a brick house. We lived in a simple homestead with thatched roofs. This means there was no electricity. We had a separate kitchen and cooked over a fire. This is where people used to tell stories long ago.

You know, this business of your hair falling out when you tell *ngano* during the day, I do not believe it. There is another reason why *ngano* is performed in the evening: during the day people move all over, working, running errands, doing chores and visiting. So, they gather in the evening to eat, discuss their day and tell stories because they are a family.

And as for the reason why those who listen to a story must chant *salungano!*, we always say this is a good way for granny to see when her young listeners are falling asleep ...

So, about me: I am now 14 years old. I was born in 1997. My Tshivenda name is Vhukhudo. It means a refuge. I am happy to say that I feel cared for at home and at school. My mother is the one who looks after her children and husband. She works long hours in her garden at the river to provide food for us. And because she cannot read or write, she wants me to go to school. But not any school. The secondary school here at our place: I always see the learners walking around and not working. So, we decided that I should go to a school at Tshilamba. I am in grade 8. History is my favourite subject. I like learning about King Louis IV.

But it is not only my mother who has to sacrifice so that I can get a good education. Because I must take the bus to school, I have to get up at 4:30 in the morning. I catch the bus at 5:30, and arrive at school at 6:50. School starts at 7:20 and ends at 2:30 in the afternoon. I only get back home at 5:20. I am now used to such long days. It also means I cannot do sport. But it does not matter. I spend all my time studying because I want to make something of my life.

Although my matric year is still some time away, I am thinking of becoming a boilermaker at Tshikondeni Coal Mine. There are many men from our district who work there. But perhaps I will become a teacher or something else. Folovhodwe is so far from big towns. There are many things I do not know.

Even though I am serious about my school work, I also get tired. So I join our church band on Saturdays and Sundays. That is in the Church of the Nazarene. I am learning to play the keyboards and drums. It is important to have instruments in your church because people like them. I am just frustrated because there is not really anyone to teach us properly.

On 16 June 2011 our church youth group went to Domboni, just behind those low hills to the north. The SAPS station commander at Masisi spoke to us about crime prevention. There are too many young people here who steal, drink and smoke marijuana.

Dzwee's journey

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain young man called Dzwee.¹ He was unhappy at home. It was a time of drought, and everybody was hungry. Dzwee quarrelled with his parents because he did not want to help them find food in the veld. He sulked and said, 'It is better that I leave home!'

He walked until he came to a large forest he did not know. Here he found a lion. He was scared and wanted to run away. But the lion said, 'Do not run away! Come and pull out this thorn from my paw. It has pierced me.'²

The boy went up to the lion and pulled the thorn out. The lion said, 'Do not go around telling anyone that you removed the thorn and that you spoke to me.'

The boy went further and found a fish floundering on the bank of a river. The fish called, 'Hey, you, Dzwee! Come and throw me back into the water!' Dzwee became frightened and wanted to run away again. The fish said, 'Do not run away! Help me, and do not tell anyone that you spoke to me.' So Dzwee took the fish and threw it into the water.

Dzwee walked further and found a horse.

'Hey, Dzwee! What are you looking for here in the big forest?'

'I am just wandering around. I do not really know where I am going.'³

'You will be devoured by predators because we are far from villages⁴ here.'

And so Dzwee mounted the horse. He rode him, he rode him! The horse arrived at a village and dropped the boy off.

Dzwee found a big shop that belonged to an Indian trader. He said, 'I am asking for work.' The trader answered, 'My wife went to visit her family overseas. She took the key to the shop by mistake. Will you board a ship and fetch her?'

They gave him food to take on his journey and he boarded the ship.

The country he travelled to was infested with lions. Those lions wanted to devour him. That lion who once had a thorn in its paw came there and said, 'Do not eat this one, he helped me.'

The boy found the woman. They boarded the ship. But when they were in the middle of the ocean, the woman dropped the key into the water.

When they arrived back home, the trader asked, 'Where is the key?' His wife explained, 'I dropped it into the water.' So the husband said to Dzwee, 'We are sending you back. Go and look for the key in the ocean.' They again gave the boy food for his journey. Dzwee boarded the ship. He spent two days on the sea, looking into the water.

That fish he returned to the water saw him and asked, 'Hey, Dzwee, what are you looking for?' Dzwee answered, 'I am looking for a key.' The fish gathered all the other fish and they searched for the key. They found it and said, 'Here is the key, take it.'

Dzwee travelled back to the shop. When he arrived there, that trader said, 'Hey, we cannot repay this person for everything he did for us – no money can repay him.' They took him into the kitchen.⁵ They burned him, they burned him! But he did not die! He rose from the fire being white-white-white! Those Indians exclaimed, 'Hey, look!'

The owner of the shop said, 'I also want to be burned so that I no longer will be red.' He burned and died! All the Indians fled. The shop became the boy's.

The lion came there. He said, 'Hey, Dzwee, do you remember me rescuing you when the other lions wanted to devour you?' Dzwee answered, 'You do not live with people. Go to the veld!'

The fish spoke to him from the water, 'Hey, Dzwee, do you remember me helping you to find the key?' Dzwee said, 'You: stay in the water. You do not live with people.'

The horse came closer. He asked, 'Hey, Dzwee, do you remember me bringing you here?' Dzwee replied, 'You, horse: you do not stay inside people's homesteads. Go

and graze over there where we can see you.’

Ha vha u fa ha salungano.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 17 June 2011

The apparent simplicity and brevity of this story conceals an extensive symbolic foundation. The story shares essential qualities with those narratives that explore human self-realisation in a psychological and social sense (see ‘Fortune lies ahead,’ ‘Thunder returns’ and ‘A hero learns a lesson’). It involves two kinds of journey: the obvious voyage is external, and it involves the expansion of Dzwee’s material world. However, this journey clearly is fantastic, and this alerts us to a concurrent, ‘excruciatingly painful’ psychological voyage.⁶ In other words, Dzwee’s quest essentially is an inner journey couched in the terms of the outer world, which therefore must be scrutinised for the symbolism of its objects, events and characters.

The journey is triggered in classic mode by a crisis in which these outer and inner worlds clash: there is a drought, but Dzwee refuses to help his family. A typical adolescent, he desires the freedom of adulthood without its responsibilities. He also is miserable because he is an ‘inbetweener,’ a young person who finds himself on that awkward threshold between childhood and adulthood:

[He] feels himself stupid and inadequate when confronted with the complexity of the world which surrounds him. Everybody else seems to know so much more than he, and to be so much more capable. This is why many fairy tales begin with the hero being depreciated and considered stupid. These are the child’s feelings about himself, which are projected not so much onto the world at large as onto his parents and older siblings.⁷

Booker⁸ accordingly describes Robinson Crusoe before his journey as ‘a thoughtless young man, rejecting the sage advice of this father.’ For Dzwee to become himself, he therefore has to leave home.⁹

And so Dzwee departs in a fit of anger, and goes on a quest into the unknown. Predictably, the world he enters is ‘wild, alien and unfriendly ... a countryside full of dangers from animals and men; or the wild and treacherous sea.’¹⁰ The forest, which features so prominently in narrative, is an ancient symbol of the ‘hidden, near impenetrable world of our unconsciousness.’¹¹ It is ‘the place in which inner darkness is confronted and worked through; where uncertainty is resolved about who one is; and where one begins to understand who one wants to be.’¹² In particular, Dzwee must learn to confront anxieties which are symbolised by wild animals as well as strange figures and experiences.¹³ The sea not only is a frightening setting for transformation, but, as in Greek mythology,¹⁴ Dzwee’s search for the key in the deep, murky ocean may represent ‘the ordering faculty of the human mind when it is cut off from life and the ability to see whole.’

The centrality of the animal characters is linked to the assurance that the young hero, in the course of his life, ‘will be guided step by step, and given help when it is needed.’¹⁵ So, the assistance that the animals render does not merely make for an interesting story. Bettelheim¹⁶ suggests that ‘both dangerous and helpful animals stand for our animal nature, our instinctual drives. The dangerous ones symbolize the untamed id, not yet subjected to ego and superego control ... The helpful animals represent our natural energy ... but now made to serve the best interests of the total personality.’

The lion is an ancient symbol of courage and authority, as well as ferocity and danger. *Ndau-nduna!* (Male Lion!) is a common, respectful form of address in Tshivenda, while the contemporary symbolism of the lion also is shaped by the on-going attacks

on people and domestic animals by lions who escape from local game reserves.

The fish is more difficult to interpret. Although fishing is an important economic activity among many local riverine populations, Sotho and Venda people generally regard fish as 'snakes of the water' which have a negative spiritual association.¹⁷

The horse, as a tame animal, obviously has different value, even though there also is a reciprocal relationship between Dzwee and the other two animals. The horse may be interpreted in terms of Bettelheim's understanding of the symbolism of the dog: because it lives with humans and is a loyal friend, it functions to regulate 'man's relation to others and to the world around him.'¹⁸ In particular, it could represent 'instinctual' but limited freedom, which may explain why Dzwee sends the horse to the periphery of his property at the end of the story whereas the lion and the fish must return to the wild. The animals thus are accorded 'distinct characteristics which complement each other, and add up to a "whole."¹⁹

Upon meeting the lion and the fish, Dzwee is still inexperienced and ignorant, and wants to flee. Booker²⁰ remarks of the 'helpful animal' that it symbolises 'all those mysterious instinctive powers in [the hero's] psyche which will help to carry him to maturity.' And so Dzwee harnesses his inherent courage and incipient social consciousness to help these animals. However, while he passes this first test, his journey is incomplete since the helpful animal also 'stands for powers which he has not yet fully integrated into himself.'²¹ Only when the animals return at the end of the story, do we see that Dzwee truly is transformed.

If it is accepted that the animals represent qualities of the self and the world, the quest for the key essentially also is to be understood in symbolic terms. What it does is to unlock Dzwee's inner resources and enable his social reintegration. Booker²² remarks in this regard that 'the numinosity of the Self may be symbolically evoked in many different ways as the distant life-renewing goal the central figure is heading for. We may see it symbolised for instance, as a treasure, a jewel or some other mysterious priceless object.' So, when the key is found and returned, Dzwee cannot be paid for undertaking the journey, since it was symbolic.

The structure of this story corresponds to that of 'rags-to-riches' narratives.²³ It is in binary form, and its sections are separated by a 'central crisis.' The young hero leaves home and therefore seems to be independent. However, his youthful inexperience is evident in the frightening encounters with the lion and the fish. This is followed by his journey to India, a subsequent stage with bigger challenges aimed at making him 'much more fully-developed and self-reliant.' This is followed by the narrative apex where the hero has 'a final confrontation with the dark figures.' Only when this confrontation has passed, is the hero 'finally liberated to enjoy the state of wholeness and fulfilment which marks the conclusion of the tale.'

The 'central crisis' obviously is the burning with its overtones of immolation. Dzwee's transformation from his previous egotistic self (his refusal to help his parents) climaxes in him being cast into a fire from which he emerges unscathed and 'white.'

The notion of destruction by fire as the crucible of 'rebirth' is one of the core metaphors and actual events in boys' circumcision schools in South Africa. The initiation lodge is destroyed by fire upon completion of the school to show that youth is left behind. In the Sepedi initiation song entitled '*Mo le mo*' ('Here and here'), there accordingly is a line that notes: 'We are passing away like burning grass.'²⁴

Nyamukamadi Ndou interprets the whiteness that marks Dzwee's emergence from the fire as a condition of purity (she uses the word 'cleanliness'; see 'The pool of shrines'). Purity and cleanliness comprise two of the 23 categories of symbolism of whiteness identified by Turner for the Ndembu.²⁵ In Zulu culture, spiritual beings and states of spirituality are white: 'When a man comes out [of a pool] it is known that he comes from the shades in that he comes out white.'²⁶ In addition, when Zulu people speak of *Abaphansi* (Ancestral Spirits), they 'think of the white ones ... That

is why we can see them in dreams.' The dreams in which these spirits appear are also described as white, as is 'The Lord-of-the-Sky,' the Zulu supreme being.²⁷

Junod²⁸ similarly writes about perspectives on death that the departed are said to go 'to a great village under the earth, a village where everything is white (or pure, *ku basa*) ... a kind of ... Paradise.' In any case, this dimension brings about a 'clearer vision' that allows the hero 'to see everyone and everything objectively, for what they really are.'²⁹ Like Gilgamesh in the famous Sumerian epic, Dzwee also emerges from 'darkness' into the light of justice and wisdom.³⁰

The trader in contrast fails to get rid of his 'redness.' This in the first instance is a reference to the infamous red soil of the Soutpansberg that stains everything. However, such redness (that has extensive symbolism in the cultures of southern Africa) is in contrast to Dzwee's 'whiteness' and, with the trader's metaphorical demise, symbolises his failure to achieve a state of purity. He accordingly is a 'type of alter-ego whose role is to serve as a foil, displaying qualities the opposite of those shown by the hero.'³¹

The role of the alter-ego arguably could have been fulfilled by an in-group character. Whatever the case, the role into which the trader is cast obviously suggests conflict rooted in culture contact. The actual status of local residents of Indian descent is ambiguous. Most are engaged in business, although there is amongst them a sprinkling of professionals like doctors and teachers. They have a longstanding record of residence and community involvement in larger towns, especially Makhado and Thohoyandou. For example, Amie Chhaya has been engaged in social welfare in Makhado for many years, and he is fondly referred to as the 'Minister of Blankets' for his provision of blankets to the poor during winter.

Many Venda residents of the Limpopo Valley are in contact with Indian traders who have general dealerships in outlying areas. Some of these traders have an enduring presence and established the first shop in many areas. They provide employment and rent rather than own the buildings that house their shops, and in so doing provide a return on real estate investment. Many can speak Tshivenda fluently and they generally get on amicably with their customers.

However, the common derogative reference to them as *magula* (coolies) does point to the presence of animosity. Much of this antagonism is the result of ignorance and fear related to cultural difference: Muslim dress and worship in a predominantly Christian community are clear symbols of outsidership. This is expanded by the fact that rural traders travel to their businesses from towns and do not live locally.

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha indicates that these traders often are regarded as 'dangerous and evil.' They are classed together with Nigerian traders who possess 'magic that is made at night.' Dederen argues³² that 'the burning of incense and the use of spices that resemble *muti* [magic substances] definitely contribute to accusations of magic. In addition, the fact that Indian traders sell so successfully, leads to subconscious feelings of jealousy.' Traders appear affluent since they own vehicles and have large stocks in their stores. In addition, the local government still issues cheques that can be cashed at shops and this influences people's spending patterns.

The power that rural people feel Indian traders have over them seems to be one of the root causes of their ill feeling. Although these traders carry large stocks of common items, people often need specialised products they do not sell. They also are accused of selling stock of poor quality or which is past its sell-by date. This means that people often are forced to undertake expensive shopping trips by taxi to larger towns. Essentially therefore, they seem to experience exploitation and powerlessness because they are unable to negotiate a fair deal with their meagre financial resources.

Theroux,³³ in a journey from Cairo to Cape Town, also found persistent evidence of prejudice against Africa's Indian populations. In Zambia he was informed that there were

Indian traders who made a practice of abducting very young African girls from villages. The Indians killed the girls and cut out their hearts. Using the fresh hearts of these African virgins as bait on large hooks they were able to catch certain Zambezi fish that were stuffed full of diamonds. 'That is why the Indians have so much money.'

In South Africa he in turn was told: 'They say Indians never sleep. They just stay awake, doing business night and day. That's why they are rich.'³⁴

Although not obviously evident, there is a link between the shop that seems to fall in Dzwee's lap, and the return of the animals at the end of the story. At this point heroes like Dzwee have come to achieve the knowledge and confidence needed to act 'wisely, unselfishly and for the good of all.'³⁵ In other words, the reward of the shop is not concrete but symbolic of Dzwee's metamorphosis. Similarly, 'only when animal nature has been befriended, recognized as important, and brought into accord with ego and superego does it lend its power to the total personality.'³⁶

And so the story comes full circle: the lion, that ultimate symbol of untamed wildness, is banished from humanity. Dzwee now better understands the world's dangers and dilemmas. He also has come to comprehend social statuses and relationships, having learned that cooperation and interdependence are basic social requirements.³⁷ He has redeemed his youthful selfishness by helping the animals when they were in need. Like the Ancient Mariner, the hero 'has at last begun to move from his original centre of awareness, his limited little ego, to another, much deeper centre in himself, from which he can recognise his kinship with all life.'³⁸

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1. A name of possible Chishona origin.
 2. The correlation with Aesop's tale of Androcles and the lion is clearly evident here. Schweltnus includes this story in one of his primary school readers (1937:45-47), but it is not clear whether it has had any influence on the shaping of Dzwee's adventure.
 3. This image of the threshold stage in growing up, with its sense of being lost, also appears in an Isixhosa story. Here a young girl becomes cut off from her friends when they are overwhelmed by thick fog in the veld. She remarks: 'We scattered and ran. I don't know where they are.' (Scheub, 1992:215; 'A girl cuts off a man's ear.')
 4. *Zwitentsi*, stands.
 5. Lit. the room of the fire.
 6. Bettelheim, 2010:79; Booker, 2004:85.
 7. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:103.
 8. Booker, 2004:100.
 9. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:70, 79; Booker, *op. cit.*:70.
 10. Booker, *op. cit.*:73.
 11. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:94.
 12. Booker, *op. cit.*:93.
 13. Booker, *op. cit.*:226.
 14. Booker, *op. cit.*:270.
 15. Booker, *op. cit.*:226. See 'Fortune lies ahead' which features a bird.
 16. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:76.
 17. Godfrey Dederen, correspondence, 26 September 2011.
 18. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:100.
 19. Booker, *op. cit.*:72.
 20. Booker, *op. cit.*:307.
 21. Booker, *loc. cit.*
 22. Booker, *op. cit.*:306.
 23. See Booker, *op. cit.*:64-65.
 24. Raatji, 1992:26-28.
 25. Cited by Kriel, 1989:177.

26. A remark made by a diviner to Berglund (1976:144).
27. Berglund, *op. cit.*:51-52, 90, 100.
28. Junod, 1927, II:375.
29. Booker, *op. cit.*:254.
30. Booker, *op. cit.*:600.
31. Booker, *op. cit.*:72.
32. Dederen, correspondence, 21 October 2010.
33. Theroux, 2003:359.
34. Theroux, *op. cit.*:394.
35. Booker, *op. cit.*:243.
36. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*:78.
37. This is also the message in Aesop's 'Androcles and the lion' as well as a Chishona narrative entitled 'The lion, the snake and the man' (Granger, 2007:76-80).
38. Booker, *op. cit.*:102.



Olosi lives happily ever after

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a man and his two wives. One of these women gave birth to a boy called Olosi.¹ Olosi could do magic. He had a star on his forehead. When he lifted this star, he became an adult who had money like a white man.

His father's other wife saw that star and became jealous. She grabbed Olosi and threw him into a pool. But that child did not drown – he did not even become wet.² So, she tried once more. When she went to fetch firewood far in the veld, she again threw him into the river.

People looked for him in all the villages in the district. A certain man said, 'I saw the child when I was collecting firewood near the river. He was in the water, but the river had not swept him away.' They went there and found Olosi. They returned home with him.

Olosi saw that he would be killed there. He lifted his star and became an adult.

'Mother, I think these people will kill me. I am leaving. I am going to find work.'

'Ah! You want to leave and look for work while still so young?'

'Yes, I am leaving to go and work my mother.'

Olosi's mother agreed and he left. He met a certain thin old man who was wearing a skin infested with lice.

The man said, 'Hey you! What makes you think you will find work with a nice suit like that? You will not find anything at all. People do not give work to a person who looks wealthy.'

That young man said, 'Really? Well then, give me your skin to wear.' So the thin old man gave Olosi the skin, while he put on the suit ...

When the boy arrived at the next village, people said, 'Go away! We do not want a person covered in lice!' Olosi went to another village. Those people said, 'We really do not want a person crawling with lice! But we will take you to chief Baulo.'

Chief Baulo said, 'Come here, you. I will hire you.' He built the boy a small house far away from his own.⁴ He only went there to call Olosi for work.

That young man was so tired, the first night he just slept. The second night he lifted his star and became a white man with money.

The following day the chief said, 'Olosi, stay and look after my home. I am going to a social gathering. There is a white man I am going to see.' He left and Olosi remained behind. He lifted his star. A horse came there, *kha-kha-kha-kha!* The boy put on a white suit. He mounted his horse.⁵ The horse went *kha-kha-kha-kha!* It arrived at the social gathering. Everyone saw the white man!

Chief Baulo returned home. He said to his daughter, 'My child, go and fetch Olosi.' She went and called Olosi.

The chief said, 'Olosi, the social gathering that took place over there was very big. Hey, we saw a white man. We really enjoyed ourselves.' Olosi replied, 'Really? Is that so?' The chief said, 'You: just go to bed.'

The following evening, after he had finished his work for the day, the chief called his daughter. He said, 'Go and call Olosi.' That girl came to Olosi's house and quietly peered into the window. She saw Olosi lifting his star. A lot of money appeared in front of him. He was red like a white man!⁶

She called out, 'Hey, Olosi! You have been summoned to the chief's place!' Olosi quickly started closing his star, but the girl said, 'Do not close it! Do your magic for me.' Olosi refused. She pleaded and pleaded. He relented and opened his star for her.

That child of Mr Baulo visited Olosi every evening. Mr Baulo asked, 'What is it you do there with Olosi?' She said, 'Olosi and I are chatting. We are just chatting. He makes me happy.'

Shortly afterwards the girl said, 'My father, I want a big white wedding.'⁷ Her father asked, 'Whom do you want to marry?' She answered, 'Ołosi.' Mr Baulo shouted, 'I will kill Ołosi! You will never marry him!'⁸

That child cried and cried and cried! The chief said, 'Ołosi is not the kind of person one marries! I do not want him! I am chasing him away!'

That white man suddenly arrived there and said, 'Mr Baulo, wait a moment so that we can first see this person who is called Ołosi.' The chief replied, 'But Ołosi is just the one who stays outside.'⁹ The white man said, 'Leave your daughter to do as she wants.'

And so they started to plan the wedding. They waited for Ołosi to come. Instead, they found a certain handsome white man on a horse wearing a white suit coming towards them, a white man with money.

The horse went *kha-kha-kha!* 'Is this Ołosi?' Mr Baulo tore his own suit off in frustration and threw it down! He shouted, 'No! This cannot be Ołosi!'

He went to Ołosi's house but did not find him there. He was confused. 'What is going on here?' Ołosi said, 'Yes, this is really me.'

And so Ołosi married his child, he married her. Yes, he lived with her. They had money!

Havha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 17 June 2011

Zachary Tshamano's stories of Olosi and Dzwee both describe the adventures of a young man entering adulthood. However, in a deeper sense they could not be more different.

Dzwee's adventure portrays a young man affected by experiences in the mysterious 'other world.'¹⁰ Dzwee returns home from his journey as a mature, socially integrated person. He is the ageless culture hero in a world that values qualities like courage, perseverance and spirituality. His 'whiteness' is a psychological, moral and spiritual condition. This condition is the template of Booker's model of so-called premodern storytelling that is expressed in 'the older German tradition of *Bildung*, of the arts as crucial to create a flourishing human personality.'¹¹

Then there are stories like that of Olosi in which characters undergo no or little transformation. Hence, for both Olosi and Alice in Wonderland, their trip is 'such a curious dream,' and their journeys take 'on a fragmented, subjective character, becoming more like personal dreams or fantasies.'¹² Accordingly, 'we may be able to achieve all those outward goals which conform to the norms of society, such as earning a living, getting married, setting up a new home, establishing a family. But all these landmarks can be achieved without any great depth of self-knowledge ... [many remain] inwardly ... frozen in a kind of perpetual adolescence.'¹³

Whiteness in Olosi's transformation is largely expressed by means of imagery that shifts from symbolism to iconicity: Olosi initially has money like a white man; later he is 'red' like a white man; eventually he *becomes* that white man. There is little evidence that he has transcended his naivety and emotional immaturity. His story does not revisit his earlier state of incompleteness: while Dzwee ultimately comes to achieve mastery over the animals, the old man who exploits Olosi's inexperience and swindles him out of his suit, does not reappear.

Even Olosi's beloved achieves her objective not by means of growth, but manipulation: she has a childish fit that enables her to blackmail her father emotionally. This is in contrast to the kind of plot in which heroines play a courageous role in liberating the hero.¹⁴ This is not to suggest that she and Olosi lack growth altogether:

they do become socially integrated through marriage. And although Olosi relies on magic, he does use it creatively and strategically.

As 'Thunder returns' and 'A hero learns a lesson' show, magic is a common recourse in *ngano* when people lack control over their circumstances. In a similar Chishona *ngano* entitled 'The magic herdboy,'¹⁵ a young man magically brings rain and happily ends up marrying the chief's daughter. The difference in these stories is that the young hero's goal is not the intentional accumulation of personal wealth. His actions are brought to bear on the entire community: he brings rain to all, with its undertones of community and supporting relations – the boy's growth also is that of his village.

In contrast, Olosi's transformation is achieved instantly by the activation of a magic star in an 'ego-centred fantasy.'¹⁶ That this is an apparent aberration of the heroic narrative is borne out by the older symbolism of stars in South African cultures. Stars generally are associated with fertility, rain and the renewal of life. The most important ones appear at times of planting and harvesting.¹⁷ Junod¹⁸ furthermore notes in his description of the Tsonga boys' initiation school that 'the time of the year chosen for the opening of the school is a month during which the morning star appears, in winter. *Ngongomela*, Venus, is the herald of the day. She precedes the sun, so she must lead the boys to their new life, from darkness to the light.'

Junod¹⁹ also documented a fascinating, extensive narrative in which the heroine has a 'brilliant' star on her forehead. This star provides the girl with beauty. Importantly, however, her beauty seems to be metaphoric, because it is compared to 'that which is in heaven,' i.e. it appears to be symbolic of spirituality. Similarly, the central female character in a Xironga narrative 'had a sun on her forehead, and, furthermore, she was the source of life for the whole village.'²⁰

But can there be any link between Olosi's story and life in the Limpopo Valley? Scheub²¹ remarks of narrative heroes that they are emblematic of change. Their stories reveal in telescoped, intensified images transitional periods in social life: 'It is the shift from one kind of society to a new society envisioned by and imaged in [narratives of the hero], [that] in some way typifies a cultural ethos.' And to make the change, 'the hero moves to the boundaries of his community' where social redefinition takes place. Narrative fantasy alerts us to the latent meanings and realities of such redefinition. It exposes a culture's vision of new possibilities as the hero moves through an interim period into history.

Although Zachary Tshamano is a bright-eyed, optimistic young man, the reality is that local young people have little means to escape their poverty. Blacking²² fittingly defines precolonial society as 'closed,' yet 'open to all.' Put differently, although it features various forms of stratification, it 'guarantees social status.' Kriel²³ similarly remarks of Shona society that 'the entire concept of status has been changed, with new status symbols and people in positions of status. Acquired status is becoming more and more important in relation to the inherited type.'

The fantastic journey Olosi undertakes therefore should come as no surprise: we may not control the world but we are masters of our imagination. Olosi's adventure hints at the long local history of mine, domestic and farm labour for white employers. It also expresses the material objectification of race relations in South Africa, with populist politics consistently underlining the distinction between the white 'haves' and the black 'have-nots.'²⁴ Julius Malema famously emerged not very far from Zachary's village in similar modest conditions to become president of the ANC Youth League. It is from this platform that he proclaimed: 'We want *everything* that white people have, this is what we are fighting for ... Money talks. As long as we have no money, we will always be subservient.'²⁵

Although the political economy of race is expressed clearly in Olosi's story, the crass materialism of the newly rich and politically empowered, images of whom bombard the poor in the mass media on a daily basis, may be a much more immediate

template for a changing worldview. Kenny Kunene, flamboyant owner of the infamous Johannesburg nightclub ZAR remarked: ‘This is our life, mah man ... This is our style. We just can’t help it. It’s a new-money society. Look, I get paid to party.’²⁶

This life-style locally is referred to as the ‘3Cs,’ and its components are a car, a cell-phone and cash.²⁷ The 3C life-style is most evident in the town of Thohoyandou that mushroomed within three decades from a rural village to a massive commercial centre. Its material attraction initially was reflected in its folk name *Mavhoneni*, ‘At the place of glittering lights,’ at the centre of which is still the successor of the original extravagant ‘homeland’ casino. It is in response to almost overwhelming material development and its attendant values that a song from the late 1980s noted:²⁸

<i>Ndi do ni rengela TV musadzi wanga.</i>	I will buy you a TV my wife.
<i>Na tshidimela ni do gidima ngatsho.</i>	And you will also travel in a train.
<i>Na aeroplane ni do fhufha muyani.</i>	And you will fly in an aeroplane.
<i>Vha do tama.</i>	They will admire you.
<i>Goloi ya hone ndi heilani yo</i>	Our car is that one with the tinted
<i>phemiwaho wethu.</i>	[permed] windows.
<i>Ndi u mu funa mani.</i>	Doing these things shows my love, man.

Joel Netshitenzhe, ANC national executive committee member, accordingly criticises what he calls the lack of engagement by the black middle class in the discourse on the nation’s vision and the shaping of positive value systems for society in favour of strategies for survival and climbing the steep social ladder.²⁹ In other words, Olosi’s society is open to all, but closed at the same time: freedom is an illusion belied by the trappings of conspicuous consumption. Instead of ‘development towards wholeness and maturity’ there is an ‘amassing of hard cash,’ an expression of ‘the desire of the ego for external gratification.’³⁰

Olosi’s story therefore very well may be a rare example in the history of *ngano* of postmodern folklore, a genre that is rooted in mass-communication technology and that involves ‘new social roles, new classes, and a new political economy that collectively allow for the reframing of traditional folklore forms in the new space of advanced consumer culture.’³¹ It expresses the familiar Marxist position that the commodification of culture ‘creates a magic spell over society ... so that, enchanted and blinded by commodity fetishism we act against our own humane interests.’ In this process, ‘abstractions and social relations tend to become regarded as things – they are objectified. In the extreme case, the objectified becomes reified and appears to take on its own agency – it becomes fetishized, and this fetishism, in turn, finds expression in folklore.’³²

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1. Derived from Alois.
 2. Suggesting that drowning is metaphoric of some unspecified, non-lethal harm, perhaps psychological oppression.
 3. A mother’s reluctance to see a daughter or son leaving home upon maturity is a common theme in *ngano* (see e.g. ‘A thin old woman’ in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:51-65).
 4. This arguably not only is indicative of the boy’s low status, but also of his immaturity.
 5. Ownership of a horse is associated with wealth and status. Famous chief Rasimphi Mphaya ([British] ‘Empire’) Tshivhase (c. 1900-1952) accordingly still is remembered for his legendary wealth:

<i>Ri divha Mphaya.</i>	We know Mphaya.
<i>Munna we a vha a tshi dzhia mbonndo</i>	He was a man who used a
<i>thanu a vhotha ngadzo fola.</i>	five-pound note to light a cigarette.

Munna we a vha a tshi dzhia kholomo
 yothe a i thavhela mahunguvhu.
 Munna we a vha a tshi tshimbila nga
 bere yawe.
 Kha vha dou pfa! Kapata!

He was a man who used
 to kill an ox for the crows.
 He was a man who used to ride on
 his horse.
 Listen! Clippety-clop!

(From a song by guitarist Solomon Mathase; Kruger, 1994:84.)

6. A reference to sunburnt skin.

7. *Mutshato*, a wedding in the Western style, as opposed to *mbingano*, a traditional wedding.

8. Booker (2004:261) describes the ‘tyrant’ or ‘Dark Father’ in stories as a ‘bully who uses his power and strength in an aggressive, cruel way to impose his will on others. He may also be doing so to preserve an established structure of authority and hierarchy, like the unrelenting fathers of Comedy who refuse to allow their sons to marry girls of humble origin.’

9. See note 4.

10. Booker, 2004:98.

11. Dutton (2009:126), citing Joseph Carroll.

12. Booker, *loc. cit.* Booker’s argument is that ‘the ambiguities and cynicism of modernism have driven literature away from the moral edification seen through most of storytelling in history ... By offering up too many antiheroes and focusing on the moral ambiguities of life, modern fiction has ... lost its moral bearings’ (Dutton, *op. cit.*:129). The result of this is that ‘the inward aspect of the original archetype, as the story of a hero’s personal maturing to Self-realisation, has virtually disappeared.’ André Malraux similarly remarks: ‘The secret divinity of the 20th century is Science. But Science is incapable of forming character.’ (Chatwin, 1990:121.)

13. Booker, *op. cit.*:565. Guitarist Mmbangiseni Mphaga of Mukula accordingly notes in a song:

Ndi humbula zwiḽa kale ndo dzula
 ndo ḽigeda.

Ndi tshi ḽa nda nwa.

Zwino zwo no fhela.

Ngauri ndo no hula ho sala u ḽi shumela.

I remember my youth when I lived
 without a care.

I had enough to eat and drink.

That is now over.

Because I am now an adult, I have to work.

(Song extract; Kruger 1994:293.)

14. See Booker, *op. cit.*:270. For example, ‘Faithful Florentine’ is a German narrative in which Alexander, the ruler of Metz, goes on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. However, he is taken prisoner by a Turkish ruler. The ruler becomes aware that Alexander’s betrothed, Florentine, is waiting faithfully for his return. He sends a soldier to search for Florentine. The soldier finds her, and falls in love with her. She rejects him and he returns home. She follows him disguised as a pageboy. She ends up in the palace of the Turk where she expresses her sorrow in harp songs. The Turk is so affected by her performance that he releases Alexander (see Ives & Billeadeux, 1982).

15. Tracey, 1986:78-82.

16. Booker, *op. cit.*:577.

17. See Breutz, 1969:206-209; Stayt, 1931:207.

18. Junod, 1927, I:75.

19. Junod, 1927, II:266-275.

20. Baumbach & Marivate, 1973:103.

21. Scheub, 2010:99.

22. Blacking, 1969a:69.

23. Kriel, 1971:235.

24. Chipendo (2012:148) similarly cites the Chishona expression ‘He has a good life like a white man.’

25. Extract from a speech made at Bantu Bonke township in the Vaal Triangle, 23

October, 2011 (*Beeld*, 24 Oct. 2011).

26. Madondo, Bongani. The last supper at club ZAR. *Mail and Guardian*, March 2-8, 2012. The report refers to Kunene's 'carnavalesque flamboyance.'

27. Jaco Meyer, North-West University, interview 2010.

28. From a song by guitarist Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila, Tshakuma, 1988 (Kruger, 1994:387).

29. Cited by Kwanele Sosibo: 'Cracks in the rainbow made visible.' *Mail & Guardian*, July 6-12, 2012.

30. Booker, *op. cit.*:353, 380.

31. Dorst, 1997:658.

32. Tangherlini, 1997:534, citing Jack Zipes and Michael Taussig.



Elisa Madzanga



Here is my ID book. See, I was born in 1940 on the other side of the mountains, over there at Nzhelele. My father was Samuel Ramphabana. He worked with those malaria people, spraying houses. My mother was Luvhengo Mulea. She ploughed her field. We were two children. I am now the only one left.

When I was a child, our family lived at Douwline. That farm is not far from here. I worked in the kitchen. I cooked meat, rice and eggs; also pumpkin: this was my favourite. I learnt to bake apple and banana pudding. First you cut the banana into slices. Then you mix eggs, sugar and milk. You pour this mix onto the bananas. Then you bake the dish in a coal stove.

When I grew up and moved here to Fholovhodwe where I still live, I baked these puddings outside in an oven. We made that oven from stones and river

clay. Folovhodwe is the place of many, many stones. We even build our houses with them. Anyway, you first build the walls of the oven, like a box with three sides. Then you place a piece of corrugated iron on top of the walls. Now insert another sheet half-way down: this is where the baking tray is placed. The fire is made at the bottom. Another sheet of iron covers the front during cooking. A hole is sometimes made at the back so that the smoke can escape.

Today we no longer use clay ovens, but we do cook a lot on open fires. When you are a pensioner like me, what can you do? Electricity is expensive. And I am a widow. My husband was Isaph. He worked there at Tshikondeni Coal Mine before his death. I have two sons and a daughter. One of my sons is called Ntsemeni. He used to be unemployed for long. He now drives a coal truck at Tshikondeni.

Ntsemeni took me to Shakadza about five years ago. We went to have the maize from our field milled. On the way back the bakkie collided with a bus. You know, those bus drivers do not care. That man cut a sharp corner and we collided. My leg was broken and it was put in a plaster cast.

My other son Litshani teaches at Dzimauli Secondary, here at Folovhodwe. My daughter Tshinakao used to live at Sagole. That is the place where hot water comes from the ground. One day she took me to Donald Fraser Hospital so that the doctor could treat my eyes. When she returned home, her husband chased her away. This is why she now lives with me.

I do not always go to the hospital when I am ill. About ten years ago my heart started to beat violently. I also had diabetes, and then suffered a stroke. I was so scared. I travelled all the way to Sambandou to visit a herbalist. I stayed there for six months. My heart was healed on the first day after I was given some medicine. The healer made cuts on my legs and steamed me with herbs. I am now healthy again.

I used to belong to the International Pentacostal Church, but it is too far. So I now go to the ZCC here at Folovhodwe. We people of the church must care for others. People must not be selfish. Remind me to tell you the story of a man who stole his

baby's food. Anyway, one day a family from Zimbabwe came here, asking for work. There are many poor people from Zimbabwe who roam here, looking for life. So now the Maphophe family lives here with us. They are Frans, Esther and their young son, Asathaluli, whose name means 'I do not care.' Frans works in my son Litshani's field next to the river. Esther helps us around the home.

You know, looking at Frans and his family who had to leave their home: our family still lives together here at our place. I have many happy memories of my youth and all the things our family did together. Here, look at my photographs. This strong young woman is me, standing next to my father's herd of cattle at Sagole where we used to live. Here you see me in the uniform of my burial society. This was at Thohoyandou during the time of Mphephu.¹

Must I put on a different dress for the photograph? No? And you like my bonnet? OK, take your snap!

[Elisa Madzanga inexplicably started losing weight during 2011-2012, becoming only a shadowy reflection of her former ebullient self. She was admitted to Donald Fraser Hospital where she passed away in January 2013.]

1. A reference to Patrick Mphephu who headed the Venda 'homeland' during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Pumpkin seeds

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a man and a woman and their two children. One child was still a baby. Now, that year there was big famine. People asked, 'What will we eat?'

That man went out into the veld to look for food. He saw a pigeon pea¹ tree and climbed into it. This tree had ripe peas. So, that one climbed to the top of the tree, lay down on his back on a big branch and feasted on the peas while singing:

[Narrator]

Mundoze, mundoze-i!

Ha vhuya mundoze.

[Chorus]

Ndi tshila nga muri mundoze.

Pigeon pea, pigeon pea!

The peas have returned.

The pigeon pea gives me life.

Those peas were falling down. They carpeted the ground! The man climbed down. He picked them up and ate them over there. He arrived back home. His wife and children were very hungry.

'Now, we are dying of hunger. What will we eat?'

'I don't know.'

So, that woman left and started picking blackjacks.² She picked them. She came home, cooked them and ate them with her children. When she gave some to her husband, he said, 'Thanks, but I don't eat weeds.³ I don't need anything.'⁴

So, it became morning. The man again left for the veld. Those peas carpeted the ground. Now, that father nibbled. He chew, he ate! He sang, *Mundoze, mundoze-i ...*

That woman started looking for him. She followed his tracks to see where he had gone to. When she arrived there at the tree, she found him with those peas, picking up and eating, picking up and eating! She stared at him for a long time. Then she exclaimed, 'Ah! So! This is why you say you do not eat blackjacks! It is because you are secretly gorging yourself on pigeon peas!'

She left him and found certain people pounding their maize. They gave her bran. She returned home, pounded it and made soft porridge for her baby. She put the porridge down to cool off.

Now, by this time there were no more pigeon peas. When the husband came back from the veld, he went to sleep. He woke up and ate the porridge of the baby!

The woman woke up later and asked in dismay, 'Ah, where is the porridge of the child?'

'It was eaten by the cat! That porridge: the cat ate it!'

'Really?'

'Yes!'

The next day the woman made porridge again. That night the father woke up and ate all the soft porridge again. Hey, that father ...

'Could it be that the cat eats the porridge day after day?'

'Yes.'

The woman asked for advice from neighbours who said, 'Listen, you: take pumpkin seeds, put them on your eyes and sleep on your back.'

Now, the following night that man woke up to steal the porridge of the baby again. His wife seemed to be awake because of the seeds on her eyes!⁵ The man said, 'Ah! No! My wife: why are you not sleeping? What is wrong?' That woman woke up and said, 'Nothing is wrong, I just am not sleepy tonight.'

The porridge of the child was still there the next morning. The woman did the same the following night. And so her husband was becoming very hungry!

‘Ah, you: wife, why don’t you sleep nowadays? What is the matter?’

‘I am not sleeping because I want to catch the cat that steals the porridge of the baby.’

The next night the woman took those seeds off and went to sleep. That porridge was gone the next day.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 29 October 2008

This *ngano* corresponds to various degrees with stories from other parts of southern Africa⁶ (also see ‘Surviving famine,’ p. 27). A San narrative documented by Bleek describes an irresponsible husband as ‘a bad man. He eats far away; he eats up things on the hunting-ground.’⁷

What these kinds of story have in common is that the culprit is somehow punished. In this version he is humiliated when his wife tricks him with her pumpkin seeds. In ‘The fruit of the *ndoza* tree’ (see note 6) the wife reports the matter to the entire village: ‘The father stood disgraced and had nothing to say.’ In ‘A man steals milk during famine,’ he is forced to eat ash, while he is banished to spend the rest of his life in a corner in ‘The greedy spider.’

At the same time, ‘Pumpkin seeds’ has the same kind of hopeless outlook of other *ngano*: the wife won the battle but lost the war, since the husband emerges untransformed from events. Human weakness and greed is timeless.

The narrator and her audience remarked that the kind of dereliction of duty by the husband described in this story is so serious that it would be referred to a tribal court. Junod⁸ similarly cites ‘gross selfishness’ by a husband as a cause for divorce, and notes that ‘many tales tell the story of a man who in time of famine succeeded in killing an antelope, kept the meat for himself and did not give any to his wife and children.’

1. *Munḏodzi* (*Cajanus cajan*). Pigeon peas are a nutritious food that is consumed fresh or dried, or made into flour.

2. The weed *Bidens pilosa*, whose leaves are cooked in water and eaten during times of famine.

3. Lit. a tree.

4. Lit. I live off a large knife only.

5. When scrubbed, some pumpkin seeds become white and therefore are visible at night.

6. It correlates closely with ‘The fruit of the *ndoza* tree’ (Baumbach & Marivate, 1973:163-171) and ‘A tree to sing to’ (Smith, 2004:63-67). Stories with a similar theme have been collected by Granger (2007:116-118; ‘The greedy spider’), Le Roux (1996: 268-279; ‘A man steals milk during famine’), Nenzhelele (1968:5-6; ‘*Muḥwe munna na musadzi wawe ḥwaha wa ḥḏala*’), Postma (1957:122-127; ‘*Ranretloa en die botterblomblare*’) and Scheub (1992:417-437; ‘A man hides food from his family’).

7. ‘Death on the hunting ground,’ cited by Lewis-Williams, 2000:52-77.

8. Junod, 1927, I:199.

♩ = 100

Doh is C | ḷ : d :- | ḷ :- : ḷ | ṣ : ṣ : d | : :
Mu - ndo - ze, mu - ndo - ze - i.

| ḷ : ṣ :- | : : | : : | ḷ : ḷ : ḷ
mu - ndoz'. Ha vhu - ya

| d : d : d | ḷ : ṣ : ṣ | ḷ ṣ : f̣ : f̣ | : : :
Ndi tshi - la nga mu - ri mu - ndo - ze.

| ḷ : ṣ :- | : : | : : | : : | ḷ : ḷ : ḷ
mu - ndoz'. Ha vhu - ya



Florence Mphoshomali

I am Florence Ndidzulafhi Mphoshomali. I live here at Muswodi-Dipeni. But I was born there at Mianzwi, near Thohoyandou. It was in 1960.

My father was Piet Nditsheni. He helped to build a dam at Muswodi. This is why our family moved here. My mother also still lives here. Her name is Tshinakaho Netshidane. She used to plough her field and sell beer.

Yes, I did go to school, but only up to standard 2. The school fee that year was 40c: my father no longer could pay. So I left school while I was a bit big.

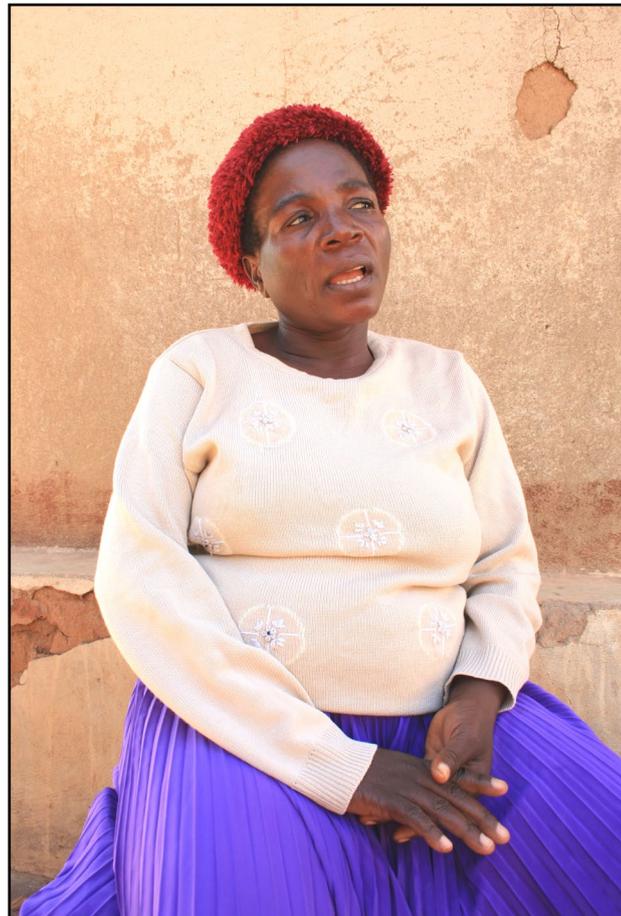
I then worked on a farm near here. It is called Emridge. I helped to pick mangoes and water the trees. I worked there for four months. Then I left to work on a vegetable farm. I watered pumpkins and squashes. But I hurt my head when carrying metal water pipes.

During this time my father wanted me to marry, but I refused. Then my grandmother came to me in a dream. She spoke to me. And so I returned home and married when I was eighteen. My husband is Gideon Mphoshomali. He is a miner at Tshikondeni Coal Mine.

I have seven children: they are three sons and four daughters. One of them ran away from school. The others are persevering. Two are in Thohoyandou, over there at the technical school. It is difficult to pay school fees, to buy uniforms, to buy them new clothes. I struggle to help my children, but I will not give up: I know how hard life can be if you did not go to school.

I have two large fields, I plough sorghum there, but only when it rains. When pensions are paid, I go there and sell clothes, cooking pots, peanuts and mopane worms.

There are a group of us here at Muswodi and Folovhodwe. We put our money together and hire a bus to take us to Natal. We travel to Newcastle, Pietermaritzburg and Durban to buy cheap clothes from Indian wholesalers. These clothes arrive by ship from China. When we buy clothes, we sleep there outside their shops.



Sorrow

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain young man whose father and mother had been eaten by a monster called *Dagalume* while they were hunting. He remained behind with his father's second wife.

Now, that young man was heartbroken. He said, 'I ... now ... my father has died. And my mother too.' He decided to follow his parents by eating the monster.

But what had happened was that the monster itself had been killed. That other wife of his father: she went to the place where they were selling the meat of that monster. She went there pretending to buy that meat. But instead of buying the meat of the monster, she bought some beef.

That boy, now: that wife of his father served him that meat. Then he started his song:

[Narrator]

Hee, hee, Dagalume lia la khotsi anga!

Nama ya kholomo a thi li.

Ndi la ya Dagalume.

[Chorus]

Dagalume!

Hey, hey, *Dagalume* ate my father!

I do not eat beef.

I eat *Dagalume*

That wife of his father felt very sorry for him. She asked, 'Now, what shall we do? There is nothing to be done. You say you do not eat beef, only the meat of *Dagalume*. I gave you beef knowing that you should not eat *Dagalume*.'

That boy continued to cry and sing, *Dagalume lia la khotsi anga* ...

The woman had given him the meat even though she was also in sorrow. She said, 'Now, I still do not know what to do. What do you think I should do?'

That boy left and started climbing the mountain where his father and mother had been eaten. He arrived over there and again sang in sorrow, *Dagalume lia la khotsi anga* ...

But he could not find *Dagalume*. He was wasting his time because people had already killed that monster.

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 30 September 2009

This is the only *ngano* in this collection whose actual origin is known. Florence Mphoshomali created the story following the death of her father when she was about eighteen. This was her first encounter with death, and it came as a huge shock to her. Her sorrow (*vhutungu*), she explained, was profound and enduring. This story is her way of expressing her feelings to herself and others.

The name of the monster, *Dagalume*, derives from *daka*, wilderness, untamed veld or dark forest, and *lume*, to bite. But of course, this is no real monster, but death, so that an image is created of an outer, predatory darkness that devours humanity.

The young man finds his experience of death overwhelming. He keeps on singing his song, and climbs the mountain (physically as well as metaphorically) where death occurred: for him there is only one way out of his emotional labyrinth, and that is to consume death itself: in other words, to commit suicide.

The co-wife plays a central and unusual role: she typically is the adversary in *ngano*.

Asinathi Nenzhelele



I am one of many living here in Fholovhodwe who grew up at Tshirundu,¹ there where the Nzhelele River and the Limpopo River come together. I was born there in 1963.

My father is Frank Mahandana. He left my mother when I was still a child. He went to live in Polokwane. I did not know him during that time. He came back to live nearby at Muswodi-Dipeni when I was an adult. He makes bricks and sells them to people who build their own houses.

My mother was Liza Musandiwa. When my father left, she remained working there on the farm of Lallie Fourie. Her death came as a shock to me because I was her only child. Happiness is something you find in a large family.

I have been unwell ever since. My illness worries me because it interferes with my farm work. The left side of my body contracts and I am in pain. A doctor in Thohoyandou has given me medication, but the pain comes back. So I pray for healing when I go to our ZCC services. We drink tea there and discuss our health while others sing and dance.

I did not go far at school. I left in grade 6 because I liked living at home. My mother also became ill and had no money for my schooling. I had to collect firewood for her. She taught me to cook.

We swam and fished in the Nzhelele River. When Lallie's children came home from boarding school in Pretoria during vacation times, I used to play with them. What I liked best was swimming with them in their cement dam. When at home, I always played stone games and skipped rope.

My school was called Nzhelele Primary. This name is still used for a school there in Nzhelele district. But my old school closed when our people became few on white farms.

We had to cross the Nzhelele River to get to that school. When the water rose, we stripped and put our clothes and books in a plastic bag. Then we tied the bag around our neck and waded across.

My teacher was Julia Dzumba. This was so long ago, I do not remember much. But I do recall us singing:

<i>Vhana vha tshikolo.</i>	Children from school. ²
<i>Iyani tshikoloni.</i>	Go to school.
<i>Tsimbi i khou lila:</i>	The bell is ringing:
<i>Ding dong be!</i>	Ding, dong, dell!

My husband is Albert Nenzhelele. We married here at Fholovhodwe when I was 21. Albert puts down paving stones there in Johannesburg. I see him every few months.

We are happy because our field is next to the river. My husband's father, Phineas Nenzhelele, was the first owner of the field. I leave for work at 6:00 in the morning, and I return late afternoon. These are long hours. When my boys were small, my mother looked after them.

I sometimes rent a tractor. The owner ploughs a section and then asks R180. My field has five sections. I plant chillies, beans, maize, peanuts and sweet potatoes. We

eat some of our harvest, and the rest is sold. A man comes and collects it with his pick-up.

My mother is the one who told me stories. I am a quiet person but my voice is strong when I tell the stories she taught me. It is as if her power speaks through me. I only have sons, and they will not take these old stories through their life. Gabriel is 26. He is waiting to hear whether his application for employment in the police has been approved. Mutshinyalo is 21. His name means 'One who is poor.' He has no job. He sometimes works with me in the field.

1. See 'The Land Acts,' p. 33.
2. Sung to the tune of *Frère Jacques*.

A big hero

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, certain girls were sitting at the river. They saw a young man approaching. He had come from a town in Zimbabwe.¹

Now, that man arrived there. He found the girls washing clothes. He sat down and said, 'I am asking for water. One of you must give me some.'²

Those girls were arguing among themselves.³ Then one of them stood up. 'Hey, hey, Tshinakaho! Are you going to give him water, this man we do not know?'

Again that young man said, 'I am asking for water.' Tshinakaho got up and gave him water, and he drank. He asked, 'Who would like to go with me to my home?'⁴ He really wanted to leave with Tshinakaho because she gave him water. Those girls replied, 'We do not know who will go with this stranger.'⁵

The man asked, 'If I sing my song, will you sing with me?'

'Yes, we will sing.'

That young man started to sing:

[Narrator]

*Vheiwe vhasikana.*⁶

You girls.

No tevhera mvumo.

We follow the voice.

Aa-dende-ahee!

Ah, the musical bow!⁷

Bvumo ya makore!

A big voice!

No tevhela bvumo.

We follow the sound.

Luvhaivhai!

Lightning!

[Chorus]

Ruka rudende.

We follow the voice.

The man took his briefcase and left with that girl who gave him water. He went on singing, *Vheiwe vhasikana* ... The rain pelted down! The sky thundered! The lightning struck, *gu!* At last the young man arrived with that young woman over there at his home.

They had four children. Then the young woman announced, 'I want to visit the home of my parents.' Now, that man went with her. Along the way the woman said to him, 'Help me so that I can carry one of the children on my back.'

That man answered, 'Let them walk! They will walk!' And so they walked. First the children followed their parents. Then the father started walking at the back. The children were now in the middle. They walked and walked.

Suddenly that man changed! He changed right there and became a monster!⁸ That woman started to sing:

[Narrator]

Mashango a kule ha yiwi, mmawee!

Mother!⁹ Do not go to places far away from home.

A dina nga penda pendani, mmawee!

Mother! He threatens me because he changes.

[Chorus]

Phenda ngulu.

Changes like lightning.

That man swallowed his children! When he changed, he picked up a child and swallowed her and then another child!

That woman looked back and saw only two children. She made them walk in front of her. The husband followed them. 'You must keep walking,' he said. He suddenly

turned off the path.

When the man returned, he had changed into a monster again. That woman kept on looking behind her. She saw that man covered in fur. She started to sing, *Mashango a kule ha yiwi, mmawee!* ...

That man said to his wife, 'Hey, why are the children walking in front of you? Did I not tell you that I will help you carry them?'

The woman muttered, 'Something is wrong here. Where are the other two children?'

The monster turned off the path again. He returned as a man. They went further. Those children were walking behind their mother again. The woman sang, *Mashango a kule ha yiwi, mmawee!* ...

The monster picked up another child and swallowed him! Only one child remained. That hateful monster's stomach was swelling like flour that is raising.¹⁰ Those children were alive inside his stomach!

When they arrived at the home of that woman's parents, people rejoiced, 'Hey, our child has returned!' They invited the son-in-law into the house. They put down the reed mat for him. They slaughtered goats and cattle. That son-in-law was eating over there.

The woman said to her parents, 'People must know that I had four children. Now, they were swallowed by this man. Only one remains.'

That big hero¹¹ went to bed after his heavy meal. He started snoring. They took pestles and hit him on the stomach! When his stomach burst, all those children came out.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 10 February 2007

Places where water is collected and clothes are washed are central to plot construction in *ngano*, as this obviously is where people meet and young girls can be accosted by men who want to take advantage of them. Asking for water is a standard prelude to conversation which often leads to improper proposals of marriage that usually conceal some threat (also see 'Foolish girls' that follows).

Men who accost girls at watering points and lure them away almost always are described as Zimbabwean. This is not strange as many Venda families are of Zimbabwean origin. Given the implicit warning in this kind of story against trusting strangers, this distant origin points to any strangers whose morals and motives are unknown and therefore suspect (see 'The outsider as villain,' p. 49). However, the link with Zimbabwean identity also may be related to the conflict that must have characterised the migration of Venda people from Zimbabwe.

The situation on the river bank in this story accordingly is marked by uncertainty and fear. The girls are arguing amongst themselves when asked for water because they sense that something is wrong with the young man.

As explained (see 'The animal spouse,' p. 51), the theme of men who change into wild animals or monsters is common in *ngano*. Although some narrators attach literal meaning to their actions, the narrator and her audience explained that the act of swallowing in fact signifies kidnapping. The husband seems aware that his mercurial, aggressive nature has alienated his wife and children, and he fears that they will not return from their first visit to his in-laws. As elsewhere in this collection, we see here an almost desperate act motivated by a perceived threat to the ego (see 'Goodbye').

The young man's beautiful singing voice persuades the girl to accept his offer of marriage. The singing voice is regarded as having magical qualities because it can influence people (see 'The power of song,' p. 71). Loud and confident singing (here

portrayed in the man's 'big' voice, lit. the noise of the clouds) accordingly is a basic aesthetic requirement in performance. In addition, singing requires cooperation and may promote amiability. The girls agreeing to sing with the young man is an indication that he has overcome their suspicion.

The narrative is exceptional in the way it forecasts and describes the aggressive nature of the husband. His booming voice is beautiful as well as threatening. It expresses his bad-tempered aggression that is mirrored in the violent storm accompanying the departure of the couple. Pouring rain, thundering skies and flashes of lightning are portents of the drama about to unfold.

In Zulu culture, thunder similarly expresses anger, 'untrustworthiness and an undependability.' The image of lightning in turn is linked to a 'rough, thoughtless, careless and hasty way of doing anything.'¹²

1. The narrator explains that this is an ancient story and that the origin of the man points to the Zimbabwean ancestry of many Venda people. She also learnt the story from a Zimbabwean narrator.
2. Lit. the one who will give me water is among you girls.
3. They are uncertain about the motives of the young man.
4. This is a marriage proposal.
5. Lit. we are going with this person who is not known to us.
6. Chishona for 'vhasidzana,' 'girls.'
7. *Dende*, the gourd-resonated musical bow. This was a common instrument used for courting purposes.
8. *Gokhonono*: 'Ugly big contemptible insect; ugly animal, e.g. baboon; undefined fearsome creature (imaginary, e.g. to frighten children with)' (Van Warmelo, 1989:69).
9. The image of a mother often is called up in times of stress. The woman is referring to her marital conflict.
10. This expression also sometimes derogatively describes a pregnant woman.
11. This is meant ironically and mockingly.
12. Berglund, 1976:37-38, 250-251.

♩ = 78

Doh is C | m' | m' : d' : m' | m' : m' :- | : : | : : | : : m' |
Vhei - we vha - si - ka - na. No

| : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :- |
Ru - ka ru - de - nde!

m' : m' : l | l : l :- | : : | : : m | m : l : l | m : l :- | : : | : : |
te - vhe - ra mvu - mo. Bvu - mo ya ma - ko - re!

| : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :- | : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :- |
Ru - ka ru - de - nde! Ru - ka ru - de - nde!

| m : s : s | m : s :- | : : | : : | m : l : l | m : l :- | : : | : :
 Aa, de - nde, a - hee! Aa, de - nde, a - hee!

| : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :- | : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :-
 Ru - ka ru - de - nde! Ru - ka ru - de - nde!

| m : s : s | - :- | : : | : : | m : l : l | - :- | : : | : :
 Lu - vhai - vhai! Lu - vhai - vhai!

| : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :- | : : | : : | d : m : m | d : d :-
 Ru - ka ru - de - nde! Ru - ka ru - de - nde!

♩ = 92

Doh is C | d' : r' : r' | r' : d' : d' | - : l : l | f : r :- | : : | : :
 Ma - sha - ngo a ku - le ha 'wi mma - wee!

| : : | : : | : : | : : | : : | : : | d' : d' : l . l
 Phe - nda ngu - lu

| d' : r' : r' | r' : d' : d' | d' : l : l | f : r :- | : : | : :
 A di - na nga pe - nda pe - nda - ni mma - wee!

| : : | : : | : : | : : | : : | : : | d' : d' : l . l
 Phe - nda ngu - lu



Martha Kwinda

Please take a seat here on my front porch. No, I am happy here on the ground – this is the way our parents taught us to sit in company.

This is the old part of Folovhodwe. It is hilly here: one can see far to the east. We are near the river where our people settled long ago to find water and farm. You know, I am one of those older people who were born in a hospital. It was in 1958, there at Musina.

My parents worked on a farm. That farm was next to the Crocodile River, which people now call the Limpopo. My parents worked in the vegetable fields. When my mother went to the field with my sister who was an infant, that farmer said, no, it is better that you work there at the farm house.



You know, it sometimes is difficult to find a babysitter when you have to work. I went to school only up to standard one. Then my mother took me away to look after my little sister. When you have a baby, and you take her to the fields where you work, you need someone to look after the child. Do you know that story about Mrs Duiker who looks after the baby in the field? I will tell it to you.

After my father died, my mother went to live with his brother, there at Tshirundu.¹ Many people who live here at Folovhodwe know that place. I remember a lot about growing up there. When I was about nine or ten, I went to *musevheto* initiation school. My mother also took me to the African Apostolic Church, that church of the drum. We had no church building: we gathered on a hill. We cleared the ground, then we put stones in a circle. The minister prayed and blessed people while the spirit of God was in him. I remember him becoming very agitated.

You know, living next to the river there, we caught fish. We even poisoned pools to get them. Sometimes we used nets.

Christmas was a special time. We took two large burlap bags and walked to the shop. There we bought bread, tea, coffee and sugar. I also remember eating toffees, those round ones. We bought them from farm shops, not in Musina, but there next to the river where we lived. They were round and fat, like the teats on a cow.

My husband and I divorced about five years ago. He now lives with another woman there somewhere in Mopane where he works for the soldiers [the South African National Defence Force]. If I were a widow, I perhaps would have thought of remarrying. But my mother told me to be faithful, to have one man in my life only. So, I will not remarry. I am afraid of being worse off than I am now as a divorced woman.

I have seven children. Two have passed grade twelve, two are married. No one has a job and I am still several years away from pension. My alimony is R800 per month. My daughter has two children for whom she receives R500 in child grants. We use this money to put the children through school.

My church is the ZCC. You see it when you cross the bridge. We people of the church, we are worried about our young people who steal and drink. They have no jobs.

1. See 'The Land Acts,' p. 35.

Foolish girls

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a group of girls. They were ten. One day they went to fetch water at the fountain. Now, as they were drawing that water at the fountain, a young man arrived there. 'I am asking for water.'¹ So, they gave him water to drink. After drinking he said, 'I am going.'

Those girls asked, 'Where are you going?'

'I am going to Zimbabwe.'²

'Zimbabwe? We want to go with you.'

'No, Zimbabwe really is too far.'³

'No, we want to go with you!'

'OK, let us go.'

They started walking. They walked and walked. After walking a while, that young man started to sing:

[Narrator]

Ra vhasikana a vha na maano!

The girls are foolish!

Ra vho tovhela magwenyambe!

They are following the monster!⁴

Ramagwenyambe li no dya vhanu!

The monster that eats people!

Ra kure-ndidza, kure-ndidza!

[Meaning unclear]⁵

Ra ku-kwiti-kwiti na vho-mukwati.

It eats the girls.

[Chorus]

Havhuya masiridende!

[Meaning unclear]⁶

Now remember, there were ten girls. This monster swallowed the first girl.⁷ So, five plus four remained.⁸ They went further. They walked and walked and walked! Along the way the young man starting singing again, *Vhasikana a vha na maano!* ...

Things went on like this. Then the youngest girl⁹ said, 'Hey, what is happening?¹⁰ When we started we were ten, and now we are only five plus three. Where did the other two go?' But those other girls mocked her, 'We know that we are all together!' That young man also said, 'Of course we are all here! Let us go. There is a big house where I live.'

They walked and walked. When they arrived there at the man's homestead, they entered that big house. Later they went to bed. When they were fast asleep, that young man got up. He sang, *Vhasikana a vha na maano!* ...

Those girls woke up! They could now see that this small girl was right: their friends were disappearing! They now were only five plus two!

In the meantime news about their disappearance had spread back at home. Their parents gathered. They went to the chief's place and reported: 'Our children left with a person when they were collecting water at the fountain.'

The chief asked, 'Where did they go?'

'We don't know where they went. But give us a magic bird. This bird will help us find our girls.'¹¹

Truly, the chief gave a bird magic charms. The bird flew away. It landed on top of that big house just as that monster started to sing again, *Vhasikana a vha na maano!* ... When the monster sang *ku-ri-ndidza, ku-ri-ndidza!* he wanted to grab another child. But the bird flew down there in front of that house with its magic. All those girls started to wake up. The door opened slowly and there the bird stood. 'You girls: come and follow me, come and follow me!' The girls left with that bird. After walking far, they came to the chief's homestead where they found their parents gathered. Those parents said, 'Honourable chief, we thank you for bringing back our children by giving

magic to that bird. Here, take these cattle as a gift.'

Ha vha hu u fhela ha lungano.

The story is finished.

Fholovhodwe, 28 September 2010

1/2. See the previous story ('A big hero') as well as 'The outsider as villain' (p. 49) for the significance of water collecting points and the identity of the young man.

3. The young man merely pretends that he does not want the girls to accompany him. Not only does this conceal his true motive and offer a clue to the dramatic events to follow, but it also emphasises the foolishness of the girls who insist on accompanying him.

4. *Magwenyambe* is a scary monster (like the conventional bogey figure *tshidada*) that is invoked by adults in order to educate children by means of fear.

5. The narrator did not know the meaning of this phrase. Translator Pfananani Masase suggested that it may indicate an action, perhaps of the monster swallowing the girls.

6. The narrator could not explain this line. However, it may be alerting the girls to danger. In similar stories, the chorus phrase indicates that it is the singing (to the accompaniment of the *dende* braced gourd-bow) that enables the man to control young women. See Kirby (1968) and Kruger (1986) for descriptions of this bow.

7. As in the previous story ('A big hero'), the references to the young man eating and swallowing the girls is less a metaphor for assault or rape as it is a core image meant to scare children so that they will avoid strangers.

8. This is a way of numbering commonly used by the elderly. Similarly, one hundred may be referred to as ten tens, or five twenties.

9. In typical narrative fashion, the youngest children, lacking the strength and authority of their elder siblings, usually are accorded the most courage and intelligence.

10. *Ro no shotha*, lit. we are running short.

11. Birds are important characters in many stories of the world (see 'A strange hero,' p. 56; also see the following motifs in Thompson, 1955: 'Bird as messenger,' B291.1; 'Bird reveals murder,' B131.1; 'Bird reveals treachery,' B131.2). They often are messengers or even rescuers because of their ability to fly (see 'Fortune lies ahead' and 'A fool is always eating' in this collection, as well as 'The flamboyant rooster' and 'The girls and the dove' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:26-28, 70-74).

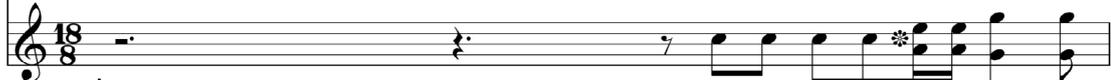


♩ = 96



 Doh is C | m' : m' : r' | r' : r' : s | d' . d' : d' . s :- . | : : | : : | : :

 Ra vha - si - ka - na a vha na maa-no!



 | : : | : : | : : | : d' : d' | d' : d' : m'. m' | s' :- : s'

 Ha - vhu - ya ma - si - ri - de - nde!



 | m' : m' : r' | r' : s : s | d' : d' : s | : : | : : | : :

 Ra vho to - vhe - la ma - gwe - nya - mbe!



 | : : | : : | : : | : d' : d' | d' : d' : m'. m' | s' :- : s'

 Ha - vhu - ya ma - si - ri - de - nde!



 | m' : m' : r' | r' : s . s : s | d' : d' : s | : : | : : | : :

 Ra - ma - gwe - nya - mbe li no dya vha - nu!



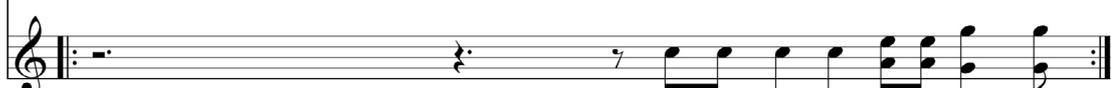
 | : : | : : | : : | : d' : d' | d' : d' : m'. m' | s' :- : s'

 Ha - vhu - ya ma - si - ri - de - nde!



 | s : : s : s : d' : s : : s | s : d' : s | : : | : : | : :

 Ra ku - re - ndi - dza, ku - re - ndi - dza!



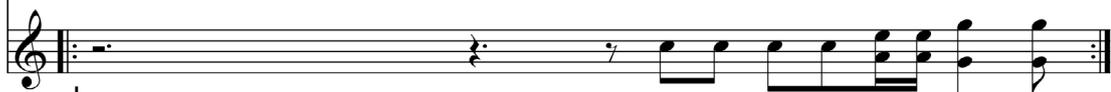
 | : : | : : | : : | : d' : d' | d' : d' : m'. m' | s' :- : s'

 Ha - vhu - ya ma - si - ri - de - nde!



 | s : : s | s . s : s . s :- . s | d' - :- . d' | s : : | : : | : :

 Ra ku - kwi - ti - kwi - ti na vho - m'kwa - ti.



 | : : | : : | : : | : d' : d' | d' : d' : m'. m' | s' :- : s'

 Ha - vhu - ya ma - si - ri - de - nde!

* Sing either line

Mrs Rock-Rabbit

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

It was summer and a woman was hoeing her field. Her young child was with her. She grumbled, 'I cannot work and also look after you.'

Mrs Rock-Rabbit came out of her cave in the mountain. She basked in the sun. She heard that woman complaining. She said, 'Let me go there. I will tell the woman that I will nurse her child.'¹

But what Mrs Rock-Rabbit really wanted to do is to take that child for herself. So, she got up and scampered down there. She called, 'You who are working!' That one answered, 'That's me!'

Mrs Rock-Rabbit said, 'I always hear you grumbling about this child who troubles you when you must work. Give her to me to look after. I will care for her from morning to late afternoon. You will then be able to work. In the evening, when the sun has set, I will bring the child back. You will go home and tomorrow you will return with her.' And so the woman agreed.

At sunrise the next morning, Mrs Rock-Rabbit saw that woman going to her field. Truly, she came down the mountain. She arrived at the field and said, 'I came to take the child.'

The woman gave her child to Mrs Rock-Rabbit who turned around and left. She arrived at her home there in the mountain and sat down with the child. She played with her, played with her! When it became evening, the woman sang her song:

[Narrator]

Iwe tshimbila, vhuisa niwananga, ndi bebe. You, little rock-rabbit, return my child,
I want to carry her home on my back.

[Chorus]

Bundu tsha lela. Mrs Rock-Rabbit is nursing the child.

Mrs Rock-Rabbit came down the mountain and returned the child to her mother. There the mother was: she was going home. She arrived there and went to bed. The next morning she got up and went back to the field with her child.

Mrs Rock-Rabbit saw her. She went to the field and took that child again. She left with her and went over there to the mountain where they played together.

When it became dark that woman started singing, *Iwe tshimbila vhuisa ...* Mrs Rock-Rabbit heard her and returned the child. That was the second day.

On the third day that woman again foolishly gave the child to Mrs Rock-Rabbit. When evening arrived, she started to sing, *Iwe tshimbila, vhuisa ...* But this time Mrs Rock-Rabbit stayed in the mountain with that child!

The woman saw that it had become dusk. 'It is evening and Mrs Rock-Rabbit has not brought back my child. Is it because she went far today?' She again sang her song, *Iwe tshimbila vhuisa ...*

The light was fading fast. That woman was crying, 'Hii-hii, hii-hii! Where did Mrs Rock-Rabbit take my child? Why does she not return with her?' She cried while singing, *Iwe tshimbila vhuisa ...*

Darkness had fallen. That woman stumbled home on the footpath. She stopped, stood and listened. Then she sang that song for the last time, *Iwe tshimbila, vhuisa ...*

When she arrived home, her husband asked, 'Where is the child?'

'I gave the child to Mrs Rock-Rabbit to nurse.'

'Now, where did she take the child to?'

'I do not know, she did not return with her.'

That man grabbed his wife and beat her. He beat her and she died.

Lydia Matshusa

My family comes from Muswodi-Dipeni. I was born there in 1957. My parents are deceased. My father was Andries Mulaudzi. He worked in Johannesburg doing something, I don't know what. When independence came to Venda, he returned home.¹ He found a job as gate guard there at GG² at Masisi.



My mother was Maria Mulaudzi. She was the second wife. There was a third wife too.

My husband was Simon Matshusa. He is now deceased. He had four wives. I am the last. You have met Sara Matshusa. She lives next door to me, here at Folovhodwe. She is Simon's third wife. That surprises you? Yes, there is a difference in age of about thirty years between us.

You know, even if I say so myself, I was a beautiful young woman. Many young men wanted to be my boyfriend. My father became afraid that I would marry a young nobody. So, he decided that I should marry Simon because he had a shop and many cattle. But he was forty years older than me. This meant that I would be a widow for most of my life.

When Simon died, the family argued over the shop, there at Muswodi-Tshisimani. Now the shop belongs to others. This was very, very

bad for me. Life was heavy, it was a *nwaha wa ndala*, the time of big drought in my heart.

I live with my children. They are four: three boys and a girl. My first-born is Tshilidzi. He works in Musina. He is a medic. The second son is Hulisani. He was born in 1980. He works at that place many of our men know, it is Tshikondeni Coal Mine. The third child is Tryphina. She is divorced and she lives here with me. Khodani is my youngest. He is at the University of Venda. He studies mining.

My elder sons: they do help me, and Khodani too. You see how beautiful our homestead is: they are the ones who planted our shade trees, *mutshikili*,³ and paved the footpaths. They used the stones that we find here at Folovhodwe.

I used to make *malabi* for Tambani⁴ because we need soap to wash with, and food to eat. I was one of the first members of Tambani. I also have my own field. I used to plant maize and beans, also peppers. Those peppers: we plant them with chillies, then we send them to Johannesburg produce market.

The Church of the Nazarene: that is my church. I do not like the life of today. Too many people smoke and drink. I do not do that. We older people see that our children no longer have respect. They do not get up to give us chairs or listen to our stories.

In any case, I no longer am able to tell stories or embroider. You have heard that I had a stroke in 2009. People told me you wanted to visit me last year. But I was not well. After that business of the shop, this is the biggest challenge in my life. I spent three weeks in Donald Fraser Hospital.

The stroke was here on the left side of my body. I can use my arm and hand, but

I have to do exercises every day. The biggest problem is walking: I can only shuffle very slowly and I must use a walking stick. Everything seems to have slowed down: walking, talking, thinking. It is almost as if I am living in a dream. As you can see, I have lost weight; and overnight I find that the hair at my temples have become grey. This is the time when I look back to my youth, when I was beautiful and had life.

But I have hope. The government gives me *mundende*, a disability grant. I visit friends and neighbours and I like to watch TV. I even go to church, but people have to drive me there.

1. Referring to the formalisation of 'home-land status' in 1979. The appointment of Andries Mulaudzi is indicative of the expectation at the time that people should be given jobs in local government by traditional leaders who were looked up to and required to 'care' for their people.

2. Government Garage, the transport section of the civil service, used here as a metonym for the civil service.

3. Natal mahogany, *Trichilia emetica*.

4. A reference to the Tambani Embroidery Project. See 'Tambani,' p. 31.

A thief

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a certain old woman who had a field. She said, 'Hey, I have a problem. I need a person who can guard the field for me.'¹ Now, that Mrs Duiker² said, 'I will be your guard.' She went over there to the field.

Now, that old woman used to leave her home early in the morning. She always passed by a baobab tree. There was water inside the baobab.³ She would collect some and go further. Later she would arrive at the field and put her water calabash down. Then she hoed and hoed. When she was thirsty and tired, she drank that water.

Now, that Mrs Duiker said, 'I will keep watch over there at the fields.'

The old woman had a grandchild she always carried on her back. Well, one day that Mrs Duiker said, 'Now, about the grandchild of that old woman.'⁴

The old woman arrived over there at the field and put the child to sleep. She started to hoe on the other side of the field. Mrs Duiker said, 'I want to take the grandchild of that old woman.' While that old woman was hoeing over there, that duiker started to stalk the child.

The old woman had a song she always sang:

[Narrator]

Ntsa ya n̄wana.

Ntsa ya n̄wana ndi nayo.

Ndo wana ntsa ya n̄wana.

Nda ri, 'Ndelele n̄wana.'

Ntsa ya n̄wana ya lela.

I ḁo bva i tshi vho ṭoḁa u dzhia n̄wana.

[Chorus]

Dumbu ḁi na n̄dala.

A nursemaid.⁵

I have a nursemaid.

I found a nursemaid.

I said, 'Nurse the child.'

The nursemaid is caring for the child.

Soon it will want to take the child.

The big stomach is hungry.⁶

The old woman saw that the duiker wanted to take the child. She went over there and sat down in the shade. She fed and fed and fed that grandchild of hers! She sang her song to chase Mrs Duiker away, *Ntsa ya n̄wana* ...

That duiker knew that the old woman had seen her. She said, 'Now, I will sneak to the other side of the field and hide without the old woman noticing.'

The field had an entrance at the back.⁷ The duiker went around, she went around and entered there.

That old woman was working again. She was busy hoeing. The duiker went around, far around! She stole that child! She also took all the old woman's things and ran away.

That old woman remained behind and sang, *Ntsa ya n̄wana* ... But there was nothing!

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story ends.

Fholovhodwe, 10 March 2007

This is a variation of the previous narrative ('Mrs Rock-Rabbit'). It explains how people are undermined by those they know and trust. In particular, it describes how friends and neighbours may enter your property and steal things from you.⁸ Such people are represented by the duiker, an antelope well-known for raiding crops. It is small, and moves in a stealthy and nimble way. Lydia Matshusa explained that the duiker has a 'bad heart': this person has possessions and children, but steals and kidnaps anyway, since stealing is a way of life for her.

Matshusa also explained that the child's mother is not married to her father. Her actual husband or new partner refuses to care for the child, so the grandmother has to look after it. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that the child is disowned to avoid conflict between the two men. As the biological father, the first man has rights and obligations in relation to his child, and they are likely to give rise to a quarrel.

As so often happens, the woman has many burdens to bear. While old women often are expected to look after young grandchildren, the woman in this story struggles to combine that duty with having to work in her field.

1. Crops need to be guarded against birds and animals like bush pigs and baboons.
2. The small antelope *Sylvicapra grimmia*.
3. Lit. this baobab had a water calabash. This is a reference to the accumulation of water in the hollows of baobabs (see 'The girls in the baobab'), and it suggests that the field was a long distance away from the woman's home.
4. The duiker is shifting her attention from guarding the fields to the child.
5. Lit. a baby duiker.
6. Referring to a hungry infant.
7. The fields are surrounded by a fence (see note 1).
8. Miguel de Cervantes fittingly noted 400 years ago that 'there is no greater or more subtle thief than the one within one's own doors; and so the trusting are killed in far greater numbers than the cautious' (from 'The dogs' colloquy'; see De Cervantes, 1984).

♩ = 148-152

Doh is C | m : m : d | d :- : | : : | : m : m | r : r : m | m : d :- | : : | m : m : m
 Ntsa ya nwa-na. Ntsa ya nwa-na ndi na-yo. Ndo wa-na

| : : | : : | d : d : m | m : d : d | : : | : : | d : d : m | m : d : d
 Du-mbu li na nda-la. Du-mbu li na nda-la.

| m : m : d | d :- : | : : | : d : d | r : r : r | d : d :- | : : | : m : m
 ntsa ya nwa-na. Nda ri nde-le-la nwa-na. Ntsa ya

| : : | : : | d : d : m | m : d : d | : : | : : | d : d : m | m : d : d
 Du-mbu li na nda-la. Du-mbu li na nda-la.

| r : r : r | m : d :- | : : | : f : f | m . m : r . r : m | m : d :- | : : | : :
 nwa-na ya le-la. 'Do bva 'tshi vho to-da 'dzhia nwa-na.

| : : | : : | d : d : m | m : d : d | : : | : : | d : d : m | m : d : d
 Du-mbu li na nda-la. Du-mbu li na nda-la.

Munkondeleli Mathunya



I have no stories for you today! I have told you what I know! Well, all right, I am always happy just to chat.

There is a place in Mutale district called Muzila. I was born there in 1927. My mother was Tshavhungwe Kwinda: she ploughed there. They were four wives. My mother's children were five. Only my sister and I remain.

Nyaledzani Mathunya was my father. His other name was Charley. Very long ago he worked in Johannesburg. There were no trains or taxis: he walked there with no shoes. When he came back years later, he walked again. Now, sometimes those people who walked to Johannesburg: when they came back, their children did not know them.

My father had many cattle, goats, donkeys and also fields. You know, leafy vegetables are things we eat a lot. But my father! He hated them. He said they are nothing but leaves under which snakes like to crawl. His favourite food was meat.

Our family never was hungry. We stored our maize in holes in the ground. Yes, we covered those holes, so we had food during winter, and when there was drought. We did not have to look for food in the veld.

My father was a special person. He looked after all of us. He wanted us all to eat together. When he went out to his cattle and fields, we young children always went with him. It was just our family. We were close, we did not see many other people. This was not always good for me.

What I remember as a child is riding a see-saw. It was made from a pole. When I now walk past the primary school, I see that children play on it, but it is made of iron and painted in many colours. As children we also played *mahundwane*,¹ the family game. We played that we are husband, wife and children, and that we cook food. Our children were dolls made from clay. They had eyes and a nose, and we wrapped them in a cloth. This was so long ago.

There were no schools. No, we went to *domba* initiation. That was the time we cut river reeds from which to make the *lugube* musical bow.²

Muzila was also the place I met my husband, Jim Mathunya. Like my father, he worked in Johannesburg, there at the crushers in Springs, and also in Delmond. Later we lived there at Mopane. My husband became a foreman on the farm of Tottie Opperman Fourie. He herded cattle and goats. We were also given some space to plant maize, water melons and sorghum. Tottie often gave us meat. Those were good times.

I had three boys and five girls. Only two girls and one boy remain. One of my children died before she arrived here on earth. The others died from illness when they were adults. Here is my daughter Elisa: she is in a wheelchair. She sells fruit and vegetables next to the road. She is here every day: when it is cold, she is here, when it is hot, she is here. And there is a lot of dust from lorries and cars.

Although we are happy, we worry about our young people. They are not faithful to their partners. They have no respect for us old people.

I am Flora Kwinda's neighbour here at Fholovhodwe. I see Ina le Roux³ gave her some chicken wire for a fence. Now she has started her own vegetable garden. Yes, without a fence the goats will eat everything. My fence is strong, and my garden is big. I am happy because there is a tap in my yard. This is why you see me eating vegetables and porridge. I am old now, but I am still strong.

I add chicken and goat manure to my soil. This is why everything grows so well: avocado, mango, *ni*,⁴ lemon, orange, paw-paw, beans, lettuce, sugar cane and marula.

-
1. See 'Playing with dolls,' p. 53.
 2. See Kirby (1968) and Kruger (1986) for descriptions of this bow.
 3. See 'Tambani,' p. 31.
 4. The fruit of the dikbas or long-live, *Lannea discolor*.

The babysitter

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a woman. She went to the fields. When she arrived there, she gave her child to a duiker to care for. The duiker left with the child and played with her. At the end of the day, that woman called:

[Narrator]

Hee, iwe ntsa, wee!

Nndele iwananga, a mame.

Thoho yawe ndo vhamba ngoma.

Ndo twa ndi tshi tamba ngayo.

[Chorus]

Kulende-kulende-we, dangali kulende!

Hey you, duiker!

Bring my child, I want to breastfeed.

Its head is injured.¹

I played with it.

Playing roughly with the child!²

That duiker returned the child.

The woman woke up in the morning. She went to the fields and the duiker took the child again. When the day ended, the woman called for her child, *Hee, iwe ntsa, wee!*

...

When the child was brought there, she truly was in pieces. The duiker only came with the head. This is the end of the story.

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 10 June 2009

This is a version of the murderous babysitter motif (see ‘Mrs Rock-Rabbit’ and ‘A thief’). Its images are meant to be interpreted metaphorically. In other words, the child is not murdered as the story suggests. This event merely functions hyperbolically to warn children not to trust strangers. As in the case of ‘Child of my mother,’ this story is no more than the kernel of more extensive versions. It is clear that not all narrators have the same skill. However, this version is valuable because it confirms the central didactic function of the story.

1. Lit. stretched like the skin of a drum, or held down with force.

2. The chorus line portrays the violent way the duiker treats the child. *Dangali* indicates shaking.



Child of my mother

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there were girls who went out to collect *murombe* fruit.¹ They met an old woman. She said, 'Give me some of your fruit!' And so one of the girls gave her some.

Her younger sister ran home and reported what she did. When the elder sister arrived home, she was beaten. She ran away and entered a pool in the river.

The other girls went to fetch water from the river early the next morning. The younger sister went with them. The girls helped each other to lift their pots on their head after collecting water. The younger sister had no one to help her. She remained crying at the river.

Her elder sister started to sing from the water:

[Narrator]

Nwana wa mme anga.

Child of my mother.

Ro vha ri tshi ya thombeni.

We went [will go] to fetch wild fruit.

Ra țangana na lukegulu.

We met an old woman.

Wa mpha thombe nda țusa.

We gave away some of the fruit.

Dzau wa shavha nadzo.

You ran away with your fruit.

[Chorus]

Wa ima, nda hwesa

Wait, I will help you lift.

The elder sister came out of the water and helped the younger sister to lift the pot. That younger sister left for home. When she arrived there, people asked, 'Who helped you to lift the pot?'

'I lifted the pot alone.'

'You are lying: how did you manage the pot?'

'I am telling you: I lifted it.'

That younger sister went back to the river. When she arrived there, the same happened: The others left, and she remained behind crying. Her elder sister sang from the water, *Nwana wa mme anga* ... Then she helped the younger sister to lift her pot. The younger sister went home. When she arrived there, her family repeated their questions. She replied, 'I lifted the pot alone.'

This was when that father secretly followed her and the other girls. That father arrived there at the river. The elder sister started to sing, *Nwana wa mme anga* ...

When she emerged from the water, her father caught her. They went home.

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 10 June 2009

Similar stories have been collected by Jacottet,² Le Roux³ and Smith.⁴

The two Tshivenda versions show how divergently a particular theme may be approached. 'To be human again' (collected by Le Roux) is an extended, profound tale of the rigidity of social conventions, the oppression of the weak and spiritual redemption. In this tale, the old woman's request for fruit actually is a marriage proposal. But because she has no social standing, the proposal is rejected. In fact, the girl's parents beat her to death and her body washes into a pool where benevolent spirits heal her 'to become human again.'

The structure of 'Child of my mother' only contains a kernel of 'To be human again.' The complex metaphors of the latter are absent here. What remains is a typical

story used to warn children to avoid outsiders. Mukondeleli Mathuya identified the old woman as some dirty stranger that children habitually are warned against (see ‘The old hag,’ p. 49). The pool similarly is not a place of spiritual healing, but merely a setting allowing the sisters to reunite. The elder sister simply is taken home at the end: life goes on and this is just another episode of a stubborn child who runs away after punishment and who eventually returns home.

1. The spiny gardenia, *Gardenia amoena*.
2. Jacottet, 1908:166-175; ‘*Mosimoli le Mosimotsane*.’
3. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:84-92; ‘To be human again.’
4. Smith, 2004:29-34; ‘Sister of bones.’

♩. = 76

Doh is F | ṭi . ṭi : ṭi . ḷi : ṣi | ṣi : : | : : | : : | : : |

Nwa - na wa mme a - nga. _

Wai - ma - nda hwe - sa.

R'a ri tsha tho - mbe - ni.

Wai - ma - nda hwe - sa.

Ṭa - nga - na lu - ke - gu - lu.

Wai - ma - nda hwe - sa.

Wa mpha tho - mbe nda thu - sa.

Wai - ma - nda hwe - sa.

| ṭ :- :ḷ | ḷ .ḷ :ḷ :ṣ | - : : | : : | : :

 Dzau wa sha - vha na - dzo.

| : : | : : | : : | : : | : : | : :

 Wai - ma - nda hwe - sa.



Flora Kwinda

You know, here at Folohodwe I am surrounded by others who also tell stories: next to me lives Mukondeleli Mathunya and across the road is the house of Selina Mavhetha. Asinathi Nenzhelele's yard is behind mine: we both make *malabi* [applique blocks] for Tambani.¹ I have known Asinathi since we were small. We used to live at Tshirundu, along the banks of the Nzhelele River. I was born there in 1958.²



My father was Joe. He worked on that farm where we stayed. He planted oranges, tomatoes and sweet melons. I was proud of him. He went

to night school, and so he became a person who could read and write. Not many people who worked on farms long ago were able to do that.

My mother was his only wife. Her name was Athikhatali, 'I do not worry.' She often was troubled because she did not have a full-time job: her job was small. People like her sometimes were called by farmers to pick vegetables and fruit.

My mother had six daughters: I am the fifth. There was no school at Tshirundu when we were young. We just stayed at home where we played and helped with chores like collecting firewood. I also liked to catch fish in the river with my friends. We used bags to do that. There were many fish in the water.

My grandmother lived with us. It is from her that we heard *ngano*. But when you grow up, you start liking other stories too. And so I started going to stokfel³ where we played records and danced.

The farm was sold when I was already grown-up. That new owner did not have work for my parents, so we moved here to Foholovhodwe. This happened long ago.

One good thing about Tshirundu is that I met my husband Ben there. He worked on another farm. After we came to live at Folohodwe, he started driving a big machine at that mine called Venmag.⁴ Those machines are called *maganda-kanda*: things that take big steps. Ben is now a pensioner.

Those of us who are members of Tambani often visit each other. Then we work together on our *malabi* while we chat. I love the beautiful shiny colours of the thread we use to embroider our stories.⁵ My favourite story is that of the girl and the zebra, the horse of the veld. It is a story of secret love that ends in sadness.⁶

I must work for Tambani because our family is big, and we often are hungry. So, I feel happy when I am paid for my *malabi*: this means that we can look forward to buying something nice to eat, like bread, bananas and meat. Ina⁷ has helped me by giving me a roll of chicken wire, and I have started a vegetable garden in my yard. The best time of the month for us is pension day. Then we smile and there is happiness for a short while.

I have seven children: there are four daughters and three sons. Lucy lives in Johannesburg. I do not know what she does for a living – I almost never see her. Daniel stays at Mutale with his wife and two children. He works in Polokwane: this is far from his home. Dora is married and she lives close by, there at Muswodi. Sedzani is twenty-five and she lives with me. My daughter Athikhatali is fourteen and in grade eight. Then I have a son in grade ten. He is called Athivhadini, 'I must not trouble you.'

Mbulaheni, is my last-born, he is in grade seven. His name means 'Kill me.' This is a name people often choose for their children when things are bad in the family.

The two child grants we get help to keep the children at school. But we struggle and the children trouble me when they argue over food and when they want money for the school's tuck shop. Parents like us agree that tuck shops are bad.

Now, we want new houses, the RDP.⁸ You know, those houses of the old people: they need lots of work. We must always repair the walls with mud and smear the floor with dung. Another big problem is finding grass for the roof. It is dry here, and the goats and cattle eat everything. So, we have to walk very far to find grass.

Because we wait so long for the RDP, we build our own houses. The roof we like is that iron one. But to build is expensive, so it takes long. When we finish a room, we move inside; then we finish another room and we move inside. But there is no money for the ceiling. So our houses are very hot in summer. The old houses were better when it was hot. And those people who build: their work is not so good. The walls are not straight and they even collapse. The doors and windows do not fit properly. We must tie down the roof with big stones because of the wind.

In any case, we built our own small house and moved out of our old house with its grass roof. In 2009 one of the children took a candle ... she took a candle to look under the bed. That bed was on fire, our whole house was on fire. Things were very bad then. We had no place to sleep and there was nothing to eat. I was sick with worry. I became thin and ill.

But in 2010 the RDP came. They built us a new home. Life is a bit better now. We can play music on our radio again.

[Flora Kwindu died of heart failure in 2011. At the time the vegetables in her new garden had just started to sprout.]

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1. A reference to the Tambani Embroidery Project. See 'Tambani,' p. 31.
 2. See 'The Land Acts,' p. 35.
 3. A rotating credit association whose monthly meetings involve socialising and dancing.
 4. A magnesite mine that has been in operation since the 1990s.
 5. The embroidered cloths depict scenes from *ngano*.
 6. This is a tender yet violent story of illicit love between a young woman and a suitor not approved by her family (see 'The young woman and the zebra' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:129-132).
 7. Ina le Roux, manager of the Tambani Embroidery Project. See note 1.
 8. The RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) was a government initiative implemented in 1994. Aimed at poverty alleviation and economic development, its most visible face is cheap, mass housing. Although the programme has been superseded by others with different names, these houses still commonly are referred to as 'the RDP.'

The Limpopo provincial government provided about 10 000 RDP houses to the poor in 2010, with a target of 15 000 in 2011. The scheme is notorious for the poor quality of its housing, but contractors that provide substandard housing are now blacklisted (*Limpopo Mirror*, March 4, 2011).

The python healer

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain man and his three children. This man became very ill. He said to his children, 'No healer can cure me. Only the python can. Now, my children, follow his tracks to his hole over there so that he can heal me.'

The eldest son said, 'I will go.' He arrived and sat in front of the hole. He sang:

[Narrator]

*Ndo da u hwala Gwalagwala-
Nyangalambuya.*

*Vha nothi ndi danikwe.*³

*Izwi nda da.*⁴

*Izwo u nga li?*⁵

Vha no dzisa phano.

Ndi tshi dzha: ndi tshi dzha tshini?

[Chorus]

Nyangalambuya.

I came to fetch¹ Gwalagwala-
Nyangalambuya.²

Let him cure me.

If I come out.

Won't you eat me?

Others run away from here.

I will not run away: why should I?

The python slithered from the hole! The young man ran away! When he got home, he shouted, 'My father, the snake scared me! You will die!'

The second child said, 'I will go.' When he arrived at the python's hole, he sang, *Ndo da u hwala Gwalagwala-Nyangalambuya ...* The snake said, 'I am coming out!'

'Help!' the boy shouted. He too ran away. 'Ah! Father! I am afraid of the snake!'

The youngest boy said, 'Let me go! My father will not die if I can help it.' When he got to the snake's hole, he started to sing, *Ndo da u hwala Gwalagwala-Nyangalambuya ...* The python uncoiled and slithered until it was outside! But the boy did not run away. He was quiet and courageous! The python coiled and coiled and coiled around him! Its head was on the boy's back! Then the boy left with the snake.

He found his father sleeping. The snake uncoiled! It started to lick the sick man. It licked his whole body. It finished. Then it slithered back to the boy. It coiled and coiled and coiled around him!

The boy left with that snake. He was afraid that it would drag him into its hole. He kicked with his feet against the sides of the hole⁶ so that he could not be pulled inside.⁷ The snake uncoiled and went deep into the hole. The boy rushed home and found his father cured.

The father said to his two eldest sons, 'Look! See what he did? The year I die, this young one who saved me must inherit my possessions: cattle, goats and all my other property. You will not get anything.'

Ha vha hu hone a fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 10 February 2007

This is an extended version of the same story told by Johanna Muleba (see p. 146).

In typical narrative style, it is the youngest son who successfully comes of age by means of his character rather than brute power, therefore undermining an often oppressive hierarchy based on age. This is dramatised structurally by means of the principle of the 'contrasting three.'⁸ In terms of this formula, the cowardice of the two elder brothers is offset against the courage of the youngest brother.

The youngest brother, however, is not transformed into a super-hero: his fear of

being dragged into the python's hole shows that he too is just human. And although he can look forward to receiving material wealth, the implication arguably is that real prosperity accrues to those who overcome irrational fear. In different terms, it is a matter of 'pull up your socks, have vision, and face new life with confidence.'⁹

Discussions of the often conflicting relationship between siblings are marked by mirth but also concern. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that discord usually arises from jealousy, especially when a child is favoured (e.g. when a mother brings home sweets from town).

The image of the python in this narrative is popular and very old, and it also characterises Chishona and Xitsonga stories.¹⁰ Snakes similarly have magical and healing properties in European narratives.¹¹

The python has extensive symbolic meaning in Venda culture. It features in the symbolism of *domba*, the girls' initiation school¹² and is regarded as a spiritual force. A rock painting in the western area of the Limpopo Valley (Mapungubwe) accordingly shows a creature with 'horns like an antelope, the body of a snake, and dorsal fins like those of a fish. The "snake" was painted in such a way that it appears to be moving into and out of the rock face ... Its form and its relationship to the world beyond the rock face unequivocally suggest that it is a spirit entity of some kind.'¹³

The python accordingly is associated with fertility, spirituality, healing and magic. Stayt¹⁴ notes that the python sometimes is called a 'water-snake' because it prefers cool, watery places. From this has emerged an association with rain, and therefore 'it is tabu for any python to be killed at the time when rain ordinarily begins to fall, or during the following six months, which is the time of the planting, growth, and ripening of crops.'¹⁵ Strict protocol applies to the killing of the python during the remainder of the year. During this time, the head and tail of the python may be 'buried in the cattle kraal to ensure fertility of the cattle.'

In turn, the oily residue that remains when python fat is cooked, is smeared on the skin of a new-born baby to ensure a long and healthy life. This is thought to allow a child to 'slide' out from trouble (translator Tshifhiwa Mashau). When dripped into an ear, a person is able to hear even the softest sounds.¹⁶

Translator Pfananani Masase remarks: 'There are traditional healers who are initiated in the water by the snake of the water. There is a belief that snakes can give traditional healers power [to heal]. The mountain snake also has this power.' ('*Hu na nianga dzine dza twasa u bva maḏini, dzo twasisiwa nga ḡowa ya maḏi. Kanzhi-kanzhi hu na lutendo lwa uri ḡowa dzia kona ufha nianga maanda. ḡowa ya thavha na yone hu tendiwa uri i na maanda hayo.*')

The 'snake of the water' is called *Mmamulambo*, a name derived from Sesotho. It features in the malignant spirit world, and is cared for by supernatural creatures called *zelehane* that have human hands. The snake enchants its prey with its eyes, and only healers can control it with their magic substances. Theft of the eggs of the snake is linked to misfortune. When the snake is looking for its eggs, it leaves destruction in its wake. In particular, it strikes at houses with a corrugated iron roof that reflects light and shimmers like water. People say this is why these roofs often are painted.

The python ironically also is used to punctuate the end of life: dying persons who slip in and out of consciousness is helped to pass away by burning the skin of the python next to them (Mathuvhelo Mavhetha). This procedure has been described by Stayt¹⁷ who indicates that it usually is carried out for 'a very aged person, who has been ill for a long time.' The dying person is suffocated in the process. 'This is done for purely humanitarian reasons in order to lessen the death agony and "set free the spirit" of the dying man.'

Among the Zulu,¹⁸ the python is 'the snake of the sky' or 'the animal of *iNkosi*' [the Supreme Being]. It is associated with healing and spirituality, and with pools to which it gives its 'coolness,' described as 'calmness and even temperament ... even when it

is facing death.’ The python also is a symbol ‘of great power, expressed in physical strength and ability.’ This latter meaning may explain the role of the python as the fearsome force the boy must overcome in his personal transformation.

1. Lit. carry. This happens when the python eventually coils around the youngest son.
2. The name of the python, *Gwalagwala*, is derived from *lwala*, to be ill. *Nyangalambuya* was translated by Mathuvhelo Mavhetha as ‘You live in a beautiful place.’
- 3/4/5. Chishona phrases.
4. Also *Izwi nda swika* (If I arrive).
6. Lit. he crossed his legs.
7. Typical of narratives which describe a process of personal growth, this story also involves a number of crises that increase in intensity and end with a final, violent confrontation (see Booker, 2004, as well as ‘Dzwee’s journey’ in this collection).
8. See Booker, 2004:232.
9. A remark made by an adult Venda researcher to a young, irresponsible wandering musician (Kruger, 2001:12).
10. See Baumbach & Marivate (1973:61-69; ‘Khanimambo the python doctor’), Bloomhill (1960:107-115; ‘The song of Harinda’), Granger (2007:59-64; ‘The princess and the python’), Junod (1927, II:248-251; ‘The disobedient child and the big snake’), Le Roux (1996:749-766; ‘The python that was a healer’), Nenzhelele (1961:38; ‘*Raulinga ri toḁa nianga*’), Stayt (1931:331-333; ‘Song about the python’) and Tracey (1986:10-13; ‘Nyangara the python’).
11. See e.g. *Die drei Schlangenblätter* and *Die weisse Schlange* in the Grimm collection.
12. See Blacking, 1969a.
13. Eastwood, E. & C., 2006:123.
14. Stayt, 1931:309.
15. Among the San and Khoekhoe (who once inhabited the Limpopo Valley) ‘snakes are believed not only to cause rain to fall but to “control” water sources’ (Eastwood, E. & C., *op. cit.*:123, citing Ansie Hoff).
16. Among the Zulu, ‘many diviners claim that they smear their bodies with the fat of snakes “in order to make the vision sharp”’ (Berglund, 1976:184).
17. Stayt, *op. cit.*:161.
18. Berglund, *op. cit.*:60, 62, 141.



♩ = 144

Doh is C | : | :s' |s' :s' |s' :s' |s' :s' |s' :f |m' :- |m' :m' |m' :- |d' :- |l :- |s :-
 Ndo ḡa u hwa-la Gwa-la-gwa-la-Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Hae - ya.

|d :- |d :d |d :- |h :- | : | : |h :- |h :l |h :- |f :- | : | :
 (Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya.) Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya.

| : | : |s' :f |l' :l' |s' :s' |s' :s' |m' :- |m' :m' |m' :- |d' :- |l :- |s :-
 Ndi da - ni - kwe Gwa-la-gwa-la Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Hae - ya.

|d :- |d :d |d :- |h :- | : | : |h :- |h :l |h :- |f :- | : | :
 Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya.

| : | : | : | :d' |d' :r' |d' :- |m' :- |m' :m' |m' :- |d' :- |l :- |s :-
 I - zwi nda da. Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Hae - ya.

|d :- |d :d |d :- |h :- | : | : |h :- |h :l |h :- |f :- | : | :
 Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya.

| : | : | : | :d' |d' :r' |r' :d' |m' :- |m' :m' |m' :- |d' :- |l :- |s :-
 I - zwo u nga li? Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Hae - ya.

|d :- |d :d |d :- |h :- | : | : |h :- |h :l |h :- |f :- | : | :
 Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya.

| : | : |s' :s' |l' :s' |s' :s' |s' :f |m' :- |m' :m' |m' :- |d' :- |l :- |s :-
 Ndi tshi dzha.Ndi tshi dzha tshi - ni? Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Hae - ya.

|d :- |d :d |d :- |h :- | : | : |h :- |h :l |h :- |f :- | : | :
 Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya. Nya - nga - la-mbu - ya.

Leah Madzhie

You know, when white people came to our land we had to take names they knew. It was especially good if you took a name from the Bible. So you may call me Leah, although my Tshivenda name is Nkhangweni, which means 'Forget me.'

I was born at Tshilapfene. That village is in the district of chief Tshivhase. It was in 1939. My father also had an English name. He was Alpheus Madzhie Ratshihule. My mother was just called Naledzani Siphuma. Her father was a Sotho. He used to live near Polokwane. He moved to Ramasaga, there next to Tshilidzini Hospital, during the big war [World War II] because he was scared of dying alone in some far-off place.

My mother lived at Matangari, that place in the mountains where people have those nice fields.

After she married my father, she joined his family at Tshilapfene. My father worked in Alexandria in a factory that made door latches. My mother always took me along to visit him. We used to join him for a couple of months, then we returned home again. When we lived at home, my mother farmed.

When I was about nine or ten, I started to tend our family's cattle after school. I had to leave school after standard six because we were poor. You know, I do not remember very much about school except the sketches our drama club performed. I will never forget that Zulu dance song about love that went: 'You are calling me! You tell me you are strong!'

My mother had three daughters and a son. I was born second. My sisters and brother are now deceased. My father had ten wives, and my mother was the second. There was much jealousy and arguing between those wives. And so seven of them deserted my father.

My husband was Petros Nndanduleni Kwashamba. We met at Matangari where he farmed with his father. I fell in love with him and we married in 1963 when I was twenty-four. Later we moved here to Muswodi-Tshisimani where I now live with my daughter Maria. My husband was a healer.

I used to work for short periods on farms around here. We planted and harvested tomatoes, cucumbers and butternuts. Some of those farmers were hard on us, but others were kind. The cruel ones beat workers who were lazy. But then there was Willem: he farmed along the Nwanedi River at Mukuyu, on the other side of Sagole. He looked after us and allowed us to rest.

I have four children. There is my daughter Thivhilei. Her name means 'I do not worry.' She lives with her family at Thengwe. I have a son who works on a game farm near Tshipise. His name is Avhaphani, 'They do not understand each other.' My other son Milingoni is a builder. Maria who lives with me, is my lastborn. She is forty



years old. Then there are our animals that we love so much. Our cats are Tshangi¹ and Meisie,² and our dogs are called Funi³ and Blackie.

Maria and I really struggle to survive. All we have is my pension and it is so small. The best day of the month is when people gather near the headman's place for their pension. When I receive mine, I buy chicken, flour and soap. There is no money for other nice things.

Maria is strong and she works hard. She raises goats, but it is difficult to find feed for them. Our small herd of kids can strip a long branch of its leaves in no time at all.

Our vegetable garden is next to the house. The soil is sandy but deep. Ina⁴ is the one who gave us a roll of chicken wire: if your garden has no fence, the goats will eat all your vegetables.

We have no tap near our home. We have to connect our hose to a tap that is in the road behind our neighbour's house. When we are not watering, we keep the hose rolled up, otherwise it will be damaged or stolen.

We had such a big spinach harvest last year that we even sold some of it. We also plant bitter watermelons. See me peeling one of our butternuts here. I cook the butternut with its leaves, and then add marula nuts that I first grate. I also like to add tomatoes, onions, herbs and spices when I can afford them. This dish is called *mbovhola*.

We also cook and dry vegetables that we keep for winter. When there were elections⁵ some weeks ago, people came and put up president Jacob Zuma's face on a pole outside our fence. After the elections I took down the poster. It is large and very nice for drying my vegetables. But I use the back only.

1. 'Howler,' from Afrikaans *Tjankie*.

2. Afrikaans for young girl.

3. 'Lovey.'

4. Ina le Roux of the Tambani Embroidery Project. See 'Tambani,' p. 31.

5. Municipal elections, 2011.

Trouble like pouring rain

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a certain old woman and her husband who hired a young man to look after their cattle.¹ So, that young man herded those animals. He took them out into the veld to graze. He always returned with them at sunset.

Now, one day they started to treat him badly. They took cattle dung and put it in his food. They poured urine into the cooking pot. When he said he wanted to eat, they brought him that food. And so he stood inside the byre and sang:

[Narrator]

Vhakalanga a vha na maano.

The Karanga people are not clever.

Vha dzhia mulisa wa niombe.²

They take a cattle herder.

Vha mu bikela malovhe.

They cook cattle dung.

Muroho vha ita mirundo.

For vegetables there is urine.

[Chorus]

Ha vhuya, mvula mutshotshotsholi.

It returns, the rain that pours.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 27 September 2009

The young cattle herd is an orphan, and this story is a short but powerful indictment against orphan abuse. Booker³ notes that ‘a striking feature of the myths and folk tales of the world is how often their central figure is an orphan.’ African narratives and songs abound with links between orphanhood and suffering. Guitarist Mbulaheni Netshipise accordingly sings:

Litshani zwisiwana.

Let orphans be.

Zwi di tshilele.

They are just children.

Zwi do di tou dzhiwa nga ene Mudzimu.

They belong to God.

*Vhathu, litshani u shengedza zwisiwana
ngauri ndi vhathu vhane vha tshila na riṅe.*

People, do not ill-treat orphans
because they are part of us.

Ni songo vhulaha, ndi zwisiwana zwa riṅe roṅhe.

Do not kill orphans, they are all
ours.

(Tshififi, 27 November 1989; Kruger, 1994:189)

This story does not follow the conventional theme of an orphan overcoming all odds. As in stories like ‘The aeroplane in the water’ and ‘Pumpkin seeds,’ it resounds with rock-hard pessimism.

The addition of dung and urine to food is not to be interpreted literally but as a metaphor of general abuse. Similarly, the reference to rain in the chorus line is not concrete. The image of pouring rain represents the force of the abuse from which there seems no escape.

1. The narrator indicated that people who were hired as cattle and goat herds in the distant past were compensated with the second calf or kid born from every cow or she-goat in the herd.

2. *Nombe*: cattle; an archaic word that occurs in proverbs and the extinct Tshitwanamba

language (Blacking, 1967:119).

3. Booker, 2004:277.

♩ = 92

Doh is C | t : r' : r' | r' : d' : d' | t : l :- | : :
Vha - ka - la - nga vha na maa - no.

| s : s :- | s : s : f | m : s :- | s : s : s
mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li. Ha vhu - ya,

| r' : r' : r' | r' : r' : d' | d' : t : l | - : :
Vha dzhi - a mu - li - sa wa ño - mbe.

| s : s :- | s : s : f | m : s :- | s : s : s
mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li. Ha vhu - ya,

| t : r' : r' | r' : d' : d' | t : r' :- | - :- :
Vha mu bi - ke - la ma - lo - vhe.

| s : s :- | s : s : f | m : s :- | s : s : s
mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li. Ha vhu - ya,

| d' : m' :- | m' : r' : d' | d' : t : l | - : :
Mu - ro' vha i - ta mi - ru - ndo.

| s : s :- | s : s : f | m : s :- | s : s : s
mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li. Ha vhu - ya,

| t : r' :- | r' : r' : d' | t : r' :- | : :
Mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li.

| s : s :- | s : s : f | m : s :- | s : s : s
mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li. Ha vhu - ya,

| t : r' :- | r' : r' : d' | t : l :- | : : |

 Mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li.

| s : s :- | s : s : f | m : s :- | s : s : s |

 mvu - la mu - tsho - tsho - tsho - li. Ha vhu - ya,



Sara Matshusa

I am now an old woman. When you are old, you sit and remember the past. But while my memories are many, my words are few. I prefer to keep my thoughts to myself. Perhaps others will tell you more about me.

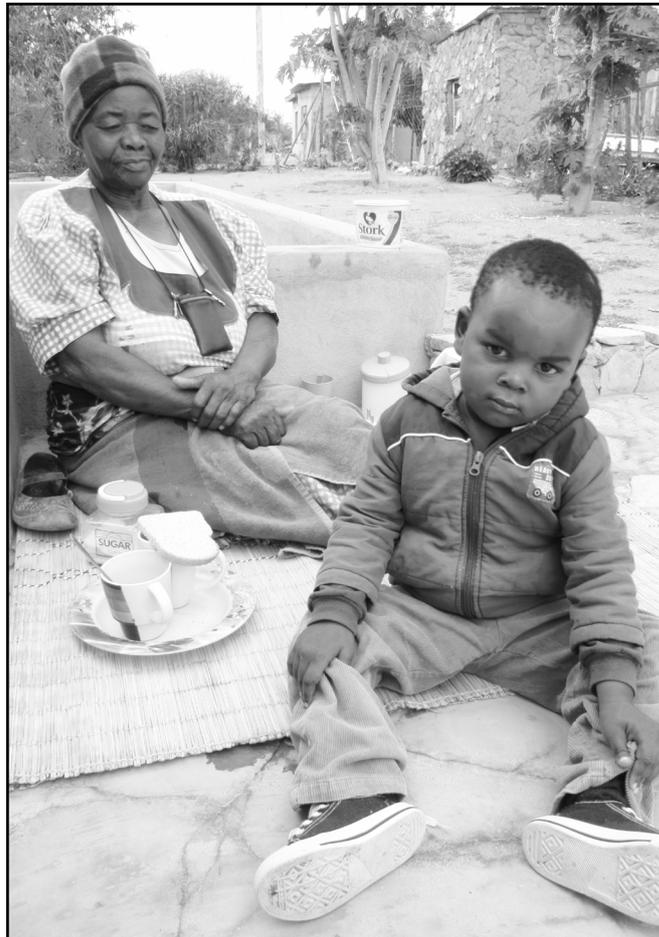
I have lived here in Folovhodwe my whole life. I was born over there at Tshikudini ward. See here in my ID book: the year was 1929.

My parents worked in their fields. My father was Andries Dovhani Mavhetha. My mother was Mazuwo Mamavhulo. I have one sister and three brothers. I am the eldest, then comes James, and there is Mathuvhelo who is sitting next to you. Piet is his younger brother: he used to be a minister, and he always worked with Ina when she was collecting *ngano*.¹ Salphina is our last-born sister. She lives at Muswodi-Tshisimani.

You know Lydia Matshusa from next door. Yes, Simon Matshusa was our husband. I have four children. There are two sons, there are two daughters. Those sons: they work for the government. Hudson is a records clerk at the Makhado magistrate's court. Samuel is a clerk in the Department of Education at Sagole. My daughter Flora is involved with the ANC but nobody knows exactly what she does. My other daughter Betty also lives next door. She is one of those people who follow pension pay-outs. On pension day she sells vegetables from our field, and fruit like oranges and *bambahosi* [grape fruit]. She also sells clothing and salt. She has a big bag of salt from which she sells small scoops.

I also have a field. What I plant there is maize, beans, pepper, chillies and spinach. You see me cooking porridge and vegetables on the fire here. Let me feed little Piet who is visiting today. His father is Tshimbeloni, the son of my deceased brother Piet. A tight family is a good thing. We may argue but we are together.

1. See Le Roux, 1996.



Marriage

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a young man, a young man who wanted to marry.¹ When marrying his girl, he invited certain young men, he invited certain girls. Those young men were many, man! Now, they left for the homestead of the girl's family.²

But that young man was being cheated by the girl because she already had another suitor she had decided to marry. That other man said, 'I will marry you,' and she agreed. Now, when he saw the young men and girls leaving for the bride's family, that first suitor sang:

[Narrator]

Ahee-ahee, n̄e, ndi n̄e ndavhu!

Hey, hey, I, I am going along!³

Ndi yo n̄wa vhudzwaḷa.

I am going to drink sorghum beer.⁴

Dzwaḷa dzhwa mphoho.

Beer made from sorghum.

N̄e, ndi n̄e ndaha.

I, I am going along.

[Chorus]

Sala ka mai, sala ka mai.⁵

Stay with your mother, stay with your mother.

That girl said to the young man, 'Why are you following me? I will come back to you, not so?'⁶ She took her cell phone and gave it to him.⁷ He understood his young girl. So he said, 'All right, go with your other beloved. I will stay here.'

Those young men and girls did not understand what was going on. They were travelling to the in-laws. They were walking in a line.

The young man who was rejected started to sing again, *Ahee-ahee, n̄e, ndi n̄e ndavhu!* ... 'Oh no!' that girl exclaimed, 'Why is that person not turning back? It is better for me to give him these beads.' She took her beads off. 'Here are the beads. Do not follow me again. I am leaving. I will return.'⁸ He said, 'All right, you will come back for me.'

They arrived at the bride's home. The girls entered and they were welcomed. They sat down inside the house on reed mats.⁹ They settled down, they settled down.

Those people asked their new son-in-law, 'Why are you leaving and not taking a seat?'

'No, I have a runny stomach.' And so he left in a hurry.

The first young man was hiding in the morning, during sunrise. He sang his song again, *Ahee-ahee, n̄e, ndi n̄e ndavhu!* ... He came there and saw that girl he loved so much. He came closer and sat down on her legs.¹⁰ When those people saw that, they said, 'Hey, hey, is this girl in love with a lion?'¹¹ No, no, get out, get out, get out!

That was when both of them were chased away. The wedding guests returned home.

Ha vha hu uri ndi u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 10 March 2007

This narrative portrays conflict accompanying the social and legal complexities of marriage. Marriage is one of the cornerstones of social organisation. It not only formalises new networks of interdependence through the joining of families, but also involves the transfer of bride wealth to the bride's family, who in turn may use it to settle their debts and allow the marriage of a son. The breaking of marriage agreements (as well as divorce) may lead to conflict and court cases, and is therefore avoided. The complexities of the case in question may explain why the narrative does not

offer any clear conclusion. In any case, the original marriage agreement would carry considerable weight.

Blacking¹² cites a lesson (*mulayo*) from the girls' initiation school in which instructions are given to a newly-married woman. One of these is for the woman to be faithful: 'You must look only on the face of the man who acquired rights over you. If you go to other men: men will chop each other with axes ... If you still have a boyfriend: you must reject him and say to him, "I am now a married woman and have been taken by my husband."'

Explanations for the refusal of the young woman to honour her initial agreement differ. Mathuvhelo Mavheta, offering a perspective not uncommon among men, suggested that she was 'devious.' He noted that women like to exploit men, getting from them what they can. A contrasting, and more nuanced explanation acknowledges the first marriage agreement but goes on to suggest that the girl subsequently meets a man she falls in love with. The woman twice indicates that she will return to her first suitor (see notes 6 and 8), perhaps suggesting that she is in love with both men, and is experiencing divided loyalty.

1. Lit. when young men and women do marriage.
2. Marriage proceedings can be a lengthy affair, and they usually involve several visits between the families of the couple.
3. The spurned young man joins his rival's friends in order to protest against the breaking of the marriage agreement.
4. Gifts of beer are common during marriage proceedings.
5. A Chishona phrase. The rejected man is telling the girl not to leave for the home of her new in-laws.
- 6/8. The girl seems to experience divided loyalty and love.
7. She is bribing the young man to cancel the marriage agreement.
9. Junod (1927, I:104) describes this spreading of mats for the fiancé as 'the act of hospitality par excellence.'
10. This is the man's way of claiming his right to marry the woman.
11. Indicating that they disapprove of the radical, aggressive behaviour of the young man.
12. Blacking, 1969a:96.

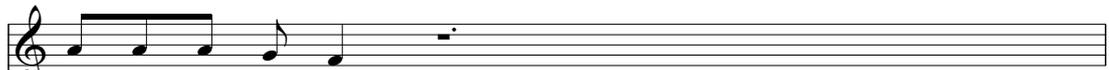
$\text{♩} = 96$

Doh is C | l : l : s | f : f : | : : | : : | : : | : :
 Nꞑe ndi nꞑe nda - vhu.

| : : | : : | m : m : m | m : r :- | r : r : d | d :- :-
 Sa - la ka ma - i, sa - la ka mai.

| l : l : l | s : f : f | : : | : : | : : | : :
 Ndi yo nꞑwa vhu - dzhwa - la.

| : : | : : | m : m : m | m : r :- | r : r : d | d :- :-
 Sa - la ka ma - i, sa - la ka mai.



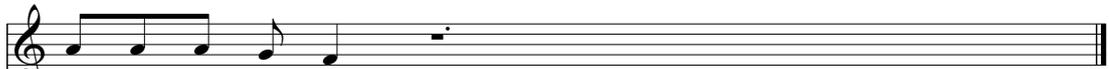
 | 1 : 1 : 1 | s : f :- | : : | : : | : : | : : | : :

 Dzhwa - la dzhwa mpho - ho.



 | : : | : : | m : m : m | m : r :- | r : r : d | d :- :-

 Sa - la ka ma - i, sa - la ka mai.



 | 1 : 1 : 1 | s : f :- | : : | : : | : : | : : | : :

 Nḡe ndi nḡe nda - ha.



 | : : | : : | m : m : m | m : r :- | r : r : d | d :- :-

 Sa - la ka ma - i, sa - la ka mai.



Mathuvhelo Mavhetha

I was born here in Folovhodwe in 1938. During that year there were many locusts that people caught and ate. You pull off the wings, and then gut and fry them. And so I came to be called Mathuvhelo, from *thuvha*, to pluck.

Although I have travelled for most of my life, my home always has been here. It is the place of my mother's family. This is why I have so many relatives here. I know almost the entire village.

My father came from Thengwe. See, he was very poor. His father and mother died when he was still small. Then he went to live with his sister. She married here and he followed her. When he became an adult, he came to my mother's place to marry her. Then we were born here.

My father's name was Andries. He worked on the railway at Waterpoort, there at Mopane. He took us there from here. He also farmed there when I was growing up. My mother always ploughed. Her name was Mazuwo.

I have a bigger sister, Nyawasedza. The second is James. He is deceased. The third is me. There is Piet who also is deceased. There is a sister at Muswodi. We were five children. But we are only three now.

My father had another wife. She made nine children. All are still alive. They are all over the place. I do not know who lives where. I am now old and confused about them.

My schooling started here in Folovhodwe Primary. The school building was made from clay and stone. There was one house with two rooms: one for grade A and B, one for standard one and two. There were no proper windows. There were only holes with sticks for the frame. The roof they made with poles and reeds, then they tied grass. The bench chairs were made from clay. The teacher was Mr Mahungedzo. We learnt two times one, two times two. We had no book to write in. There was a slate.

We also sang there. One of our songs went like this:

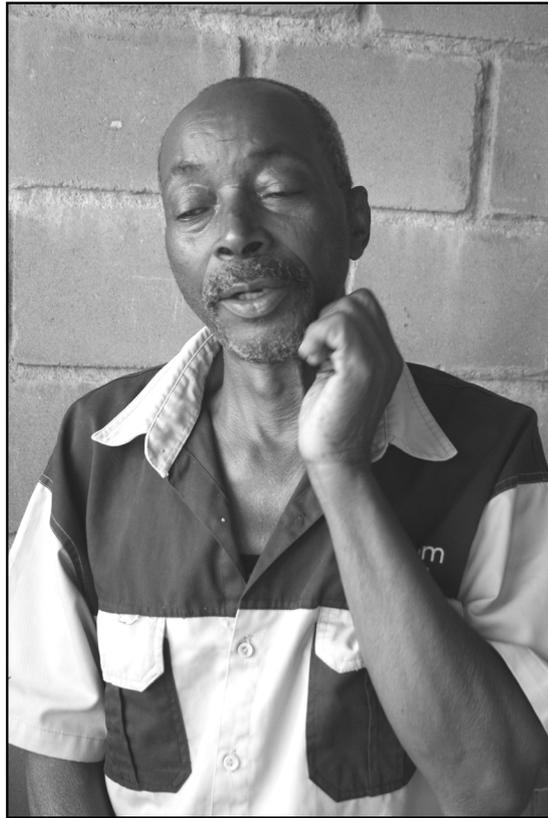
*Goloi, goloi ya Tshimange,
yo pana, yo pana nga mbevha.
Mutshaeli, mutshaeli wayo
ndi luaviavi, ndi luaviavi.*

The cart, the cart of Tshimange,
is pulled, it is pulled by mice.
Its driver, its driver is
a chameleon, a chameleon.

You see, donkeys are slow like a chameleon. But when you whip them, they start running, running fast as mice.

I went to school for a few months only before we moved to Waterpoort in 1949. My father took me to Louis Trichardt [Makhado] to school. I learnt a bit better there. My father rented a room for me there in Louis Trichardt, from Nengwekhulu. I went home near the weekend. I left school in standard two in 1956. My father said he was going on pension, and that there was no more money for school.

My father worked for the railway at Waterpoort. He repaired tracks. The tracks of long ago: they made sleepers. He put them under the tracks, he threw gravel. He made



the gravel straight with a level. There was a white man there: he went with the small railway car. They picked the car up and put it on the track.

They made a fence this side of the track, and that side. Now, our house was inside the fence. There was a lot of trouble because we were next to the track. The train flattened fowls and goats. We struggled a lot to sleep because the train made a noise. You did not know it was the train: everything shook and screamed. You also shook in your dream, and you were disturbed.

There by the railway: there was a white woman. She made soap from pig's fat. Once we stole that pig's fat from the twenty litre drum. It was hilly there where we lived. The track went up and down, rrrrr! Now, we wanted that train to stop. We smeared the track, almost two kilometres. Now, that train, when it comes, it stands! Yes, then the train stopped. It slid back again! There on the train are two small drums. So, they threw sand on the tracks ...

There was no bed or sofas in our house. We struggled so much. Once, when it was very hot, my mother brewed beer. A customer became sleepy from drinking and went to sleep on the track. When the train came, he was fast asleep. Another man saw that, 'Hey, there comes the train!' He ran, took the man's legs, and pulled him off.

There was no school at Waterpoort, there was nothing. What plan could I make? So, I worked in the kitchen, there on the farm of oom Bill Geyer. It is there that I picked up a bit of Afrikaans. Oom Bill sowed tomatoes during that time.

I worked in the kitchen. That kitchen: we washed the pot, the cooking pot, and the pan. Now, when we made the pots dirty with cooking, we had to carry them outside where there was a tap. I had to wash them there. I took sand, there was no cleaner. Outside there we used sand and that soap made from pig's fat. Now, as I was scouring *korr-korr!* there, that small daughter of oom Bill came and pissed in the pot. She said, 'Hey, boy! Boy!' and pissed in the pot. I could not stop her – the mother was watching through the window.

When I finished washing the pot, I had to take oom Bill's food to him, there at the tree where they loaded the tomatoes. The railway came during that time, the railway came with the big lorry. It carried the harvest to the station. From the station they took it to Johannesburg produce market.

Now, that missy, she pissed in the pot I had just cleaned. I was busy with the other pot, *korr-korr!*, then she pissed in the pot. I beat her. The madam was watching! The missy cried, 'Hey, hey! Why are you beating me?'

'Because you pissed in the ...'

'No, man, you are talking nonsense!'

Many stories there ...

The madam said, 'OK, OK, come Johannes, come, take oom Bill's food to him.' She wrote on a piece of paper. 'Give this to the oubaas.'

'Yes.'

'Take that piece of paper and the tea and give them to the oubaas.'

I was dense. The oubaas ate and read that piece of paper.

'Huu! You need a hiding! You were naughty over there at the house!'

Oom Bill called Jack, the boss boy. 'Jack, come here! Catch him!'

When Jack came, I did not know he wanted to catch me. He grabbed me.

'E! What is the matter?'

'Yes, come, come!' I was taken there. He took the whip ... I was still small. I cried, cried, but I did not argue.

I went back. The missy laughed at me. She saw the tears rolling. I did not wipe them.

'Yes, you got a good hiding!'

OK, the next day she pissed again. I beat her, I beat her! She cried and they watched me through the window.

'Oh, you are starting again!' The mother wrote on another piece of paper.

'Come, take the oubaas his food. Take this food to the oubaas.' And the same happened.

The third time I hid that piece of paper. I had learnt my lesson. I threw it away! I went and gave the oubaas his food. All was well. I came back.

The oubaas came home that evening.

'Hey, hey, why did you not punish him?'

'What? I did not know!'

'I gave him a piece of paper.'

'He did not give it to me. OK, OK, we will make a plan.'

I was caught.

'Why did you not give me the piece of paper?'

'Oubaas, I did not bring you the piece of paper because I would be beaten! So, I threw the piece of paper away.'

'Now, you are devious!'

'No, I am not. I just don't want another beating.'

'Then why were you naughty over there?'

'Missy pissed in the pot I had washed. The madam saw her, but she said nothing! When I chased her, she said I beat her. Lies! I did not even beat her hard.'

'Oh, missy is naughty!' Then the oubaas gave her a good hiding! That story is finished. Did you hear it well?

Then I looked for work in town, there at the shop of the Indian: 1956, 1957, 1958. We carried bags on the head – maize flour onto the lorry that had to go to Sibasa.

After that I came back to Folovhodwe and took my wife, Maemu, in 1959. During that time there was only *lobola-lumalo*. This means I only paid with cattle, not with money too. I gave one ox because I was poor. My wife had no father, she had no sister, she had no brother.

We made only two children. The third child died in 1970. She became ill there at home, then we took her to Gouldville [Donald Fraser] Hospital. The other children are still alive. One is married near us. This is the girl, Ndileni, little Sanna.

My second wife is a Zulu. I had a job in the Department of Water Affairs. They took me on. We built the Luphephe Dam here. Then I went with that job. From here we went to Tshipise where we dug a canal. From Tshipise we went to Tzaneen where we dug a canal and built a dam. From Tzaneen we went to Standerton where we built another canal; from Standerton to Ermelo where we worked at that small dam, the Loskop Dam; then from Ermelo to Piet Retief; from Piet Retief to Durban. But at Piet Retief I chose that Zulu woman, Martha.

I came home here. Then I spoke to my other wife: look, we like sons but we have none. They can chop wood, they can herd cattle. Then, my wife and I, we spoke: let us get another wife. This is how I got that Zulu.

Martha is still young. She was born in 1959. When I got her there at Piet Retief, she had two sons by another man. But he had left her. One son became very ill with HIV and then he died.

We made two sons, one daughter. My son Patrick works in Botswana. He makes thatch roofs. They build those things there. His small brother Andries, he is still at school. He is fifteen years old. My daughter married two months back. She lives just here.

There at Luphephe Dam:¹ I worked there. When we worked there, we made the foundation. We first dug into the mountain, like this ... Now, that mountain: sometimes they took dynamite. Now, the dynamite, it shook! After it shook, they took the cement and the air compressor and the drum. They put the cement in the water. They stirred it. The drum took nine packets of cement. They stirred it, they stirred it, they stirred it ... We drilled a hole with the jackhammer. That cement went inside. You walked

with the cement bucket. You took a small hammer. The crane lifted you up. You were hanging against the dam wall. Then it left you there. Now, if you wanted to move on, you called it back.

At Water Affairs in Durban I worked with the white man and the heavy truck. We carried that other caterpillar on the trailer. And so I saw Wesselsbron, so I saw Hoopstad, I saw Bloemhof. I worked for Water Affairs for 27 years. I have nothing to show for it now ...

In 1978 the strike kicked me out in Durban. Then I returned home. That man I worked with, he did not like me. He hated me. When we went away with the truck, I had to get up at night. I had to light a fire, I had to cook for him. So I said, 'No, man! We are all working together. Why don't you cook your own food? Let us buy food in town. You have money, not so?' Then we argued there. He said I was useless. When the strike came they said, 'Thank you!'

Then I returned to Folovhodwe. I went to the coal mine at Tshikondeni. I worked there in the mine with dynamite. I have the certificate of dynamite. That candle, I took that candle. I put the cable that burns in the candle. We drilled holes in the wall: four holes, one, two, three rows, twelve holes. We put the candles inside. We came out of the tunnel. We unrolled the cable, we ran! Over there, we had to press the plunger, *thuu!* Then, *buuu!* Then you saw the wall, the wall was thin. When we exploded the dynamite, that wall bulged! It fell down! It killed people! Ten people died there. I was only hurt by chunks of rock falling on me. They took us to the clinic, the hospital.

I worked there for eleven years. I started in 1989, until 2001. A shift was nine hours: we went underground at 6 o'clock, and came out again at 2 o'clock. It was a bad job, but when you are looking for money you must go to a dreadful place: underground. This is where you must not go. The roof falls on you. There were ten people: the roof fell on them. One shot, *vuuu!* It is asking for trouble to work underground.

I came out after eleven years, then I got pension. I now live at home. The government said, 'People who are 65 years: we are giving you pension.' Now they pay R960 [in 2009].² First we buy maize flour: R300 for 80 kg. We finish that in one month. We must pay for funeral insurance. I pay for two: one is R70, one is R50. These trousers I am wearing are R20. We buy a piece of meat, and bread too. The bread lorry comes from Musina. We have a spaza shop here: washing powder, cooking fat, soap, onions ...

Now, we found this other place that pays us. We plant chillies. Now, those chillies: we buy 30 kg bags at the agricultural co-op in Musina, we buy tags, we buy fertiliser. Those things are expensive, also the poison that kills cockroaches. We put the chillies in the bags and sell them in Johannesburg. We post them here. There is a pick-up that drives to Musina. We sell tomatoes and potatoes by the basket, just here. And mangoes and bananas. But the bananas here: they go nowhere. They are not so good.

We peel the potatoes. Sometimes we add fat, salt. Sometimes we cook it like this: we buy mayonnaise and add it. Sometimes we buy rice, Tastic Rice. We add tomato sauce, then we stir. But what I really need is meat. Sometimes I cook it. Sometimes I put it on the fire, and burn it, with wood, burn it, like a barbeque. Then we go to the Indian trader, and we buy soup. Then we take tomatoes and onions and pepper and make a stew. Ah! It is nice! We dish it up on top of the rice.

That shop of the Indian: that is a difficult matter.³ We do not always know quite how to run a shop. But the Indians support each other, then they rent a shop. Other Venda people had a shop here, but they did not have support. Then that Indian trader came here.

We drive to Musina because there are things we need, like fruit, poison for cockroaches, fertiliser, going to the bank. The cheque for the chillies from the Johannesburg produce market goes to the bank. I have a savings account with ABSA.

The taxi to Musina and back is R60: clever people eat poor people. Poor people

cannot remain standing. Those clever people are the ones robbing us. They say, 'Yes, we will do this and that. We will bring!' But they will not come. There at my field: the problem is irrigation water. That water, we get it once a week, half-day. Some weeks come, the canal is blocked. That man who is in politics, he says, 'OK, let us conquer the world!' But when we get up in the morning, we do not find that the streets are covered with loaves of bread we can take and eat ...

When something is wrong, we go to the headman, to tribal court. Here, what we always moan about is piped water and roads so that we can walk and drive. We want them to scrape the road. The politicians say, 'We will repair! We will provide!' We phone the newspapers so that they can wake them up. The media shakes them until we see them coming by car. Hey! Today they want a meeting ...

There are many branches of the Apostolic African Church at our place. I have been pastor since 1995. I used to be very naughty because I smoked weed and drank beer. Weed makes my head mad. When I smoke it, I want to laugh by myself. I eat a lot, but not juicy food like tomatoes: dry food like biltong. Weed makes people stupid. When I smoke, I see many things, think many things. I see many bad things, I think bad thoughts.

Once I attended a funeral at Thohoyandou. I became so drunk afterwards that people had to help me back, all the way to Folovhodwe. I am not ashamed to admit this because I know drinking is bad, and because I have stopped doing it.

We used to be many people in church. Then, those clever people: they made a mistake. The big man of the church, he died. Then the church split. Now we are five only. We have church on Sunday two o'clock to four o'clock. I read everything in the Bible, then I speak by mouth. I find it easy to preach. What is difficult is helping people who suffer. When I visit people like Lydia Matshusa who had a stroke, my tears fall out.

The best thing in the Bible is love. When we have on-going love, we will do good things. Love made God to come here. He came to be born here. He came to earth. Then he died. God stood up again. When he stood up, he made other people stand up too. He made Adam from clay and then blew spirit into him.

We have the *tshigubu* drum that we sing with. When you pray straight, you do not have to ask for anything. God himself will come to you, and you will speak in tongues. Because I read there in the Bible. The Bible speaks nicely. It shows you the correct way.

You know, there are many good people here at Folovhodwe. Then there are those who cannot find the right way. There was another man who used to steal whatever he could. Once somebody bought a large roll of plastic irrigation pipe and offloaded it at his field. Then that other one came at night and took the entire roll, just like that! He also smuggled cigarettes from Zimbabwe. This is big business. No, he was bad. Then, one day, he was speeding on the road to Tshipise. He had an accident and died. We buried him one Saturday morning. Everybody was there: his family and those who knew him. We all cried a lot. When we lowered him into the ground, we thought: yes you bastard, *sleep*.

1. See 'The irrigation scheme,' p. 28.
2. R1220 in 2012.
3. See the discussion that follows 'Dzwee's journey' for further explanation of this statement.

♩ = 144

Doh is C | ḷ : - : ṣ | - : f̣ : f̣ | f̣ : f̣ : ṃ | - : ṛ : : | ṣ : - : f̣ | - : ṃ : ṃ | ṃ : ṃ : ṛ | - : ḍ : :
 Go - lo', go - loi ya Tshi-ma - nge. Yo pa', yo pa - na nga mbe-vha.

ḷ : - : ṣ | - : f̣ : f̣ | f̣ : f̣ : ṃ | - : ṛ : : | ṣ : - : f̣ | - : ṃ : ṃ | ṃ : ṃ : ṛ | - : ḍ : :
 Mu - tsha', mu-tsha - e - li wa - yo. Ndi lu', ndi lu - a - vhi - a - vi.

The wandering musician

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

Now, there was a village with many girls. Some of those girls went out to collect firewood. One of them had a feather in her beaded headband. When they arrived in the veld to gather their firewood, she took the feather off and put it safely away on the ground. Later she picked up her bundle of firewood and carried it home.

On the way home that girl remembered: 'Oh dear! I forgot my feather, I must turn around!' When she arrived back there, she found a musician. He caught her and put her inside his drum! Then he left with her on his travels around villages.

He arrived at the first village and said, 'I have a drum that sings!'

'Does your drum really sing?'

'Yes. When it sings, will you give me porridge to eat?'

'Yes.'

So, that old man took his drum and put it down. He sang:

[Narrator]

Ngoma, lila-lila.

Drum, sing-sing.

A ri, duu! duu!

It says, duu! duu!¹

[Chorus]

Nga dzi lile mavhili-vhili.

It makes a pleasing sound.

That man, when he travelled around at homesteads, he used to do that. He used to do just that!

Now, one day he arrived at a homestead where people said, 'OK, old man, come inside and have porridge.' That man went inside the house.

Then the girl sang from inside the drum. She sang:

Vhasidzana vho vha vho bva.

The girls went out.

Vho ya thavhani u yo tamba.

They went to play in the mountain.

Ha ri nga musi vha tshi vhuya,

When they returned,

munwe a hangwa muthenga.

a certain one forgot her feather.

A huma a tshi ri u yo dzhia.

She returned to fetch it.

Ndi muthenga wawe we a hangwa.

It was her forgotten feather.

A wana tshilombe tsha Gole.

She met a musician of Gole.

Tsha mu longa nga ngomu.

He put her inside the drum.

Those people took that drum. They picked it up and carried it over there to the back of the homestead. When they got there, they tore open that drum skin. When they tore it open, they found the girl. They took her out and brought her to safety.

They took the drum and repaired the skin. They took it back to the house. That musician came out after having eaten. He took his drum. It was not heavy any longer: there was nobody inside ...

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

This is where the story dies.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 30 September 2008

This is a truncated version of an ancient narrative I first heard in 1984. It is entitled 'Tshilombe tshi na ngoma lila-lila' ('The wandering musician who instructed the drum to sound') and it was told to me by Wilson Ravele (1901-2005), a xylophone player

from Makonde. He in turn heard the story from his father (ca. 1860-1944) when he was a young boy. The story also has been documented by Nenzhelele.²

The complete story has a variety of endings, all of which depict the punishment of the musician. Mavhetha remarked that he had forgotten about this concluding part of the story. A popular ending, shared by South African narratives with the same theme, describes angry villagers filling the drum with reptiles and insects that emerge and attack the musician when the drum is sounded again. In a different version, told by Sophie Phungo³ of Folovhodwe, villagers put the carcass of a dog in the drum. The musician is humiliated as he ponders how a girl managed to change into an animal.

This is a story of lost innocence, in the same vein as 'Foolish girls' and 'A smart bird': in all these cases girls in their puberty come face to face with a threatening world. They also share a journey that leads them to insight.

The girl's 'rebirth' in 'The wandering musician' is symbolised by her emergence from the drum, a variation of the 'swallowing monster' motif (see 'Smelly blankets'). A similar story exists in the Isixhosa repertoire. Here the girl is released from the bag of the kidnapper: 'It is her emergence from the belly of a swallowing monster: she has been reborn, a woman.'⁴

The story sometimes is told with a giant or a cannibal as the villain, especially in Sesotho.⁵ There is also an Isizulu version in which the villain performs on the *isigubu* gourd bow.⁶

The musician in the story by Mavhetha is a *tshilombe*. The *tshilombe* used to be a musical wanderer who roamed the countryside and performed at villages in return for food and beer.⁷ The homesteads of chiefs were some of their favourite haunts, and some chiefs even appointed them as court musician (see the reference to Gole or chief Mphaphuli in the girl's song).

The *tshilombe* is a less malignant character than the cannibal or lion-man in *ngano*. He is a degenerate scoundrel who cannot control his sexual urges and who neglects his family.

1. The narrator seemed to be impatient, and did not allow the song to be repeated. Accordingly, not only was the song performed rather hastily, but the exact rhythmic placement of this phrase (performed once only) also is unclear. However, an attempt has been made in the transcription to retain the imitation of the drum pattern.

2. Nenzhelele, 1968:43-44; 'Tshilombe tsha ngoma.'

3. Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012.

4. Scheub, 1992:178-200; 'A girl is kidnapped.'

5. Jacottet, 1908:62-68, 'Tselane'; Martin, 1942:61-64, 'Lelimo en die towermus'; Postma, 1950:102-112, 'Tselane'; Kruger & Nxumalo, 2003:15-16, 'Tselane and the cannibal.'

6. Callaway, 1970:30-34; 'Uhlakanyana.'

7. See Kruger, 2001.



| s_i :- : s_i : se_i : l_i : l_i . l_i : se_i : fi : m_i : m_i : : : :
 A hu - ma a tshi ri u yo dzhi - a.

| : : : : : : : : : : : : : t : t : t : t
 Sa - lu - nga - no!

| s_i :- : s_i : s_i : t_i . t_i : t_i : t_i : t_i :- : l_i : : : : :
 A wa - na tshi - lo - mbe tsha Go - le.

| : : : : : : : : : : : : : t : t : t : t
 Sa - lu - nga - no!

| t_i :- : l_i : s_i :- : m_i : fi :- : m_i :- : : : : : : : :
 Tsha mu lo - nga 'ngo - ma.

| : : : : : : : : : : : : : t : t : t : t
 Sa - lu - nga - no!

Sara Munyai

My home was not always here at Fholovhodwe. I was born in the mountains, there at Harambuda, a wet place of cliffs, caves and waterfalls.¹ See my ID book: there is a mistake. The year was 1946, not 1950 as the ID shows. This means I am four years further away from pension. I want the government to change the date of my birth. I am a poor widow and we often are hungry. I can only do some work in the fields when people want to hire me. I no longer see so well and I have a weak hand. People can be so greedy. Do you know the story about the aeroplane in the water?

There always is a lot of rain in those mountains where I was born. They are not dry like here at Folovhodwe. It means people can plough their fields there, like my parents did. My father was Kleinbooi Netshilonwe. My mother's name was Shonisani Nyambeni. We were five children: there were two daughters and three sons.

I did not go to school. The old people used to say that school makes girls mad. They did not want their daughters to meet so many boys there at school. Girls had to be looked after so that they could get married properly. Of course, we did meet with boys at home, especially when we danced *tshifasi* – that is a dance for young people.² But our parents looked after us so that we remained virgins until our wedding.

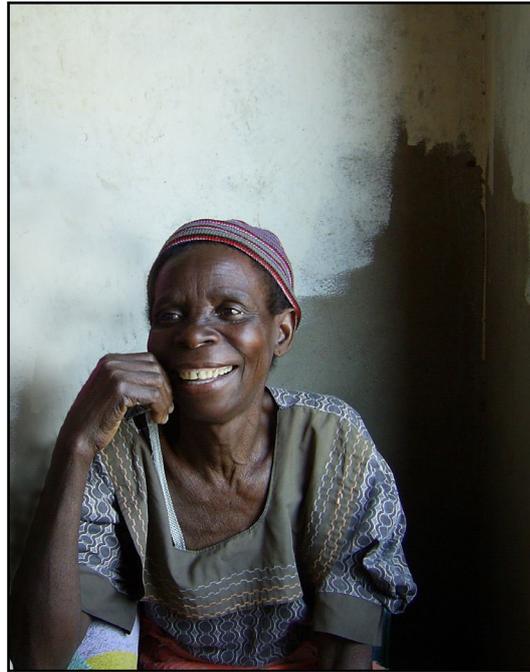
My husband was Wilson Gumani. I lived with him at Diepkloof in Johannesburg. He worked at Park Station. I cannot remember what his job was. I just recall him taking the train to work early every morning.

I have two sons and two daughters. One son works in Johannesburg. He is called Nkhumeleni Netshilongwe. He has my father's surname. It is a mistake that happened when his ID was prepared – first my ID, then his: can the government not do anything properly? Anyway, Nkhumeleni lives in Thembisa and he drives a forklift. My other son works on a forest plantation at Waterpoort. His name is Mbofheni, 'Tie me up.' My father gave him the name. He was complaining that the payment of bride wealth ruined him and that it was as if he was tied up.

My daughter Rosemary Gomani and my young granddaughter Melita live with me. Rosemary is in grade 11. She should have married her young man, but he suffered a stroke, and so she is an unwed mother.

I had some luck last year: I received my RDP house. People could see I was struggling. My house number is 187A. The government comes around and paints a number on your wall or door, anywhere, and they make a mess.

You know, this new house is good for sleeping in: it is dry and warm. The problem is the ancestors do not know *mazenge*,³ these houses with corrugated iron roofs. Even I was not born in a house like this. No, the ancestors only know those old houses with thatched roofs, and hoes and donkeys. They are troubled. There at Makonde, where Raluvhimba⁴ passed through, there is now a dam. There is a fence around it, and we cannot get inside to our sacred place. So, when I speak to the ancestors, I do so in my kitchen or my old bedroom: they are built in the old style. There is a different place for the God of the church. I speak to him too. I am a member of the Apostolic African Christian Church.



1. The praise of Ha-Rambuda accordingly goes:

*Ri fhanu Dzimauli-tshi-wa-
nga-matembele!*

Hune wa pfa ndala wa lila.

Thavha ya hone i wa shotha la maḁi.

We live at Dzimauli where they
descended with vines!

A place where you cry when you are hungry.

Where water drips from the mountain.

The first line refers to a time of war when the enemy lowered themselves down the steep cliff behind the chief's homestead with vines (see Kruger 1993:461).

2. *Tshifasi* was performed by young teenagers who gathered in a public space in the village on moonlit nights. Boys and girls lined up on opposite sides of the dance ground, and then performed in pairs in the middle. This was a socially sanctioned way of meeting the opposite sex (see 'Mr Dirty Pants').

3. From *zinc* and Afrikaans *sink*.

4. Raluvhimba is one of the forms of the Venda supreme being. He is believed to have passed through Makonde in the central mountains where he left his imprints on a rock face.

The aeroplane in the water

Salungano! Salungano!

This is where the story starts!

There were two brothers called Jack and Jim.¹ Jack was the elder brother and he had no cattle. Jim was the younger brother. He was the one with a herd. The brothers had no mothers.²

One day they left for the veld with the herd. When they arrived at the grazing, that Jack grabbed his brother. He tied him up in a bag, and threw him into a pool! Jim remained over there, sitting in the water. Jack led the cattle away: they were now his.

After a while Jim saw a certain old man. There he was, herding his own cattle.

‘Hey, you! Old man! Come here! Come and see here in the water!’

‘What is it?’

‘There are Bramaan cattle! There is an aeroplane! Everything is beautiful!’

That old man waded into the pool and untied Jim. But now Jim grabbed him and tied him into the bag! Jim came out of the water and led the old man’s cattle away.

When he arrived home, Jack exclaimed, ‘You? I tied you inside the bag to die! How did you escape? And where did you get the cattle?’

Jim answered, ‘Hey, there were Bramaan cattle inside that pool. Look, I have returned with them.’

‘Tie me up my brother!’ Jack urged. So Jim put him inside a bag. He tied the bag and dragged and dragged it!

He arrived at the pool. Jack asked, ‘Hey, where are the cattle?’ Jim replied, ‘Stay there in the water: you will see them.’

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

Fholovhodwe, 30 September 2008



The theme of greed and jealousy, and the conflict it creates between brothers, of course is universal.³ Guitarist Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila from Tshakuma describes the greed of young unmarried women, noting that, ‘Even if a young man utters two or three words such as “Hello lovey, I will buy you an aeroplane, she agrees”’ [to be loved].⁴

What makes ‘Jack and Jim’ unusual is that it does not conform to the usual hero-villain relationship between brothers so common in *ngano*. Instead, the narrator explained, all three characters in the story are equally corrupt. So blinded is the old man by his greed that he fails to identify the clearly exaggerated, ridiculous promise of an aeroplane. This, then, is a hopeless story about the eternal avarice of humans. Booker⁵ correspondingly typifies Shakespeare’s writing as showing ‘a human world in which everyone is caught up in the fog of self-deceiving egotism. Everyone is trying to trick someone else ... human society [is] made up of countless deceiving, scheming little egos.’

1. Similar to ‘Tom, Dick and Harry.’

2. This means their father had two wives. This helps to explain the conflict between the brothers.

3. See e.g. ‘The turnip’ in the Grimm collection in which a brother also is tied into a bag.

4. Kruger, 1994:262.

5. Booker, 2004:536-537.

Part V
Tshivenda texts



Anna Matlari

Vhasidzana muvhuyuni

Salungano, salungano!

Holu lungano lwo vha lu tshi aniwa nga mme anga. Vha tshi ri anela.

Hu na Vho-Tshisimba. Zwino, havha Vho-Tshisimba vha tshi dzhia kholomo dzavho. Vha tuwa nadzo dakani. Thiri, vhatukana vha a lisa. Ee, kholomo dzi a lisiwa. Zwino, havha Vho-Tshisimba vha tshi dzhia kholomo dzavho. Li tshi tsha vho vuwa vho bva nadzo dakani. Li tshi kovhela vha a vhuya nadzo.

Zwino, Vho-Tshisimba, vhasidzana asivha vha yo reda khuni. Duvha li khou fhisa la tshilimo. Vho ya u reda khuni henengei dakani. Vha tshi ya u reda khuni henengei dakani havhala vhasidzana. Zwino, vhasidzana avha vho no vha na dora. Vha khou reda hanengei hune Vho-Tshisimba vha lisa hone kholomo.

Vho-Tshisimba vho di dzulela vho di tika. Hu na muvhuyu muhulu. Hoyu muvhuyu muhulu u na hangei ntha khomba khulwane ya damu, ya u fara maḍi. Havha Vho-Tshisimba vha nwa henefho maḍi. Vha tou diela dzimbambo vha ratha ngadzo vha tshi ya ntha u nwa hangei. Vho no fhedza u nwa vha tshi vhuya vha tomola mbambo dzavho.

Hauwa, vho di dzulela vho di tika murini kholomo dzavho dzi khou fula. Ha, Vho-Tshisimba: Zwino, kholomo dzavho dzi tshi khou fula, vhalala vhananyana vha vho pfa dora. Hai, vha tshi ri ndi ya nakudze vho hwala madzanda avho a dzikhuni, vha khou ri ri a tuwa.

A! Vho-Tshisimba vha mbo di ri, 'Axa!' Vho di tika nga muvhuyu. Vha tshi ri, 'Axa!' Vho di tika nga muvhuyu. Vhasidzana vha tshi hasha! Vha wana ndi Vho-Tshisimba vho dzula vho di tika. Vha khou lisa kholomo.

Hai, vhalala vhasidzana vha vha vha tshi ri, 'Aa, wee! Vho-Tshisimba!'

Vho-Tshisimba vha ri, 'Ndi zwone! Ndaa! Dzikhomba dzanga! Vhafumakadzi vhanga vho nakelela vho no reda dzikhuni! Ehee, ndi nga ni thusa nga mini?'

Vha ri, 'Yowee! Ri na tshililo, Vho-Tshisimba!'

'Vha ri ndi tshililo tsha mini-ha dzikhomba dzanga?'

'Vha tshililo ndi tsha maḍi! Ri na dora. Ro fa nga dora!'

Vha ri, 'Yowee, vhana vhanga. Zwino, habe hangei ni nga si kone u namela na nwa hangei ni khou zwi vhona arali ni nga ri no rali.' (Vhananyana avha ndi vhasidzana vha fumi vha khou di redela dzikhuni. Vho ya u reda dakani kule. Ndi fumi la vhasidzana.)

'Na vha vhasadzi vhanga nothe, na mpfuna nothe ndi nga diela dzimbambo na ya nwa maḍi hangei ntha nga muthihi nga muthihi na ratha kana na ratha nothe. Na nwa ni tshi dzula hangei ntha, ni tshi nwa ni tshi dzula henengei ntha.'

Hai, vhasidzana vha ri, 'Ngoho, Vho-Tshisimba, riṅe ri a vha funa, wee, ri a vha funa! Ri nga si vhuye, ra vha litsha, ri do vha vhasadzi vhavho. Kha vha ri fhe maḍi, ri nwe ngauri hayani ndi kule.'

'Hai, ndi zwone.'

Vho-Tshisimba ndi u diela dzimbambo dzavho. (Thi ri, vhasidzana vho tenda u dzewa nga Vho-Tshisimba, u ri vha wane maḍi.) Ndi u diela dzibambo dzavho. Khevhalala vhasidzana vha ratha henengei. Vha tshi nwa vha tshi tumba henengei ntha.

Vha ri, 'Ni nwe nga muthihi, ni nwe henengei ni dzule henengei. Ee, ndi do kona u do tomola dzimbambo dzanga musi no no fhedza u nwa nothe no lingana na kona u tsa nothe nda kona u tomola dzimbambo.'

Vha nwa, vhasidzana ngei vho fhelela. Vho no nwa, vhalala vhasidzana vho no takala. A thi ri, zwino, dora lo fhela.

Vha vha vha tshi thoma, vhasidzana vhe henengei ntha ha muri, vha ri, 'Hai, vhone Vho-Tshisimba, vha humbula uri riṅe ri nga tou funa mukalaha mungafho? Onoyo

wa mavhudzimatshena, wa mbale? Hai, hai, hai, hai! Rine ri nga si fune mukalaha wa dzimbale, ri nga si vhuye ra dzewa nga mukalaha wa dzimbale!’

Vho-Tshisimba vha mbo di takuwa, vha mbo di ri dziḷa mbambo dzavho: Tomo-tomo-tomo-tomo! Vha vhea tsini na muri vha dzula. Ee, vha thoma, vha ri,

[Musimi]

A ri tsha ni lamba Madzinga, haye!

Ndi ri, a ri tsha ni lamba inwi Madzinga haye.

Hee, mulisa wa mahombe nyanga Rathovhele.

Ee, ee! Madzinga Tshimbale.

[Vhabvumeli]

Tendeleka, tendelesa!

Ndi Vho-Tshisimba vha khou sea vho dzula fhasi. Vhasidzana vha khou luvhelela vho dzula ngei nṯa. Haiwaa, vha ri, ‘A ri tsha vha lamba, a ri tsha vha lamba Vho-Tshisimba! Madzinga tshimbale! Ee, a ri tsha do vha lamba, ri do vha funa, a vha ri pfi ri tshi ri. A ri tsha ni lamba Madzinga, haye! ...’

E, e, vha tshi sea, vha tshi khou takalela vhasidzana vha tshi khou ri, ‘A ri tsha vha hana, ri a vha funa.’ Vho-Tshisimba ndi hone vha tshi dovha vha tshi dielela dzimbambo, vha tshi diela dzimbambo. Vhaḷa vhasidzana vha tshi tsa vhoṯhe vha tshi tsela fhasi. Vho no tsela fhasi, vho no tsela fhasi, vhasidzana vha ri miku-miku madzanda dzithohoni. Vha ri,

[Musimi]

Ndi ri, a ri tsha vha funa, wee, Madzinga!

Ri ri, a ri tsha vha funa Madzinga, haye!

Mulisa wa mahombe nyanga Vho-Rathovhele.

Ee, Madzinga Tshimbale.

[Vhabvumeli]

Tendeleka, tendelesa!

E, e, vha khou zwi vhona ndi Vho-Tshisimba? Vhasidzana vho no hwala madzanda kha dzithoho. Vha khou tuwa. Vha khou landula Vho-Tshisimba uri a ri tsha vha funa ngauri Vho-Tshisimbavho no tomola dzimbambo dzavho, vho no vha tomelela dzimbambo, vhasidzana vha tsela fhasi.

Vhasidzana vho fhedza u nwa maḍi. Zwino, vho hwala dzikhuni dzavho vha khou tuwa. Vho-Tshisimba vha sala vha songo tsha wana musadzi. Vho-Tshisimba vha khou vhuya na kholomo dzavho nga madekwana. Vhasadzi vho ṯala. Vha khou zwi vhona?

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

Nguvho dzi no nukha

Salungano, salungano!

Ehe, a na niwana wawe wa muthannga wa mutukana wa phedzi. Ehee, zwino, hoyu mutukana a tshi dzula nae. A si tsheena mme awe na khotsi awe. O sala na makhulu wawe.

Ehee, zwino, makhulu wawe vho lima tsimuni. Makhulu wa hoyu mutukana vho lima, vho lima. Tsimu ya hone i tsini na thavha. Ehe, nga phanda ha vha na tivha lihulu li no nwa tshipuka tshinwe na tshinwe. Ehee, zwino-ha, henefhoi havhalani mukegulu, tsimuni yavho hu na miroho, hu na mavhele.

Zwino, mavhele o no hula. Vha ri kha houḷa mutukana li tshi tsha nga matshelo,

‘Duvha liṅwe na liṅwe ṅwana ṅwananga, ndi kha ḍi thoma ndi ye murohoni.’

Vha tuwa na tshithatha, vha tshi tuwa na tshithatha vha tshi ya masimuni. Vha tshi swika masimuni, vhone a vha ki muroho, vha ya nduni ya dzindau, ya dziphukha, ya dzindou na dzindou. Dzine dza vhuya na dzinama dzadzo dzi tshi ḍa dzi tshi anea. Vhone vha swika vha fhahulula mihwaba, vha tshi fhahulula, vha tshi fhahululela muthathani.

Vha tuwa vha ya tsimuni vha swika vha ka, ka muroho. Vha adza-adza nga nthā vha vhuya vho hwala. Zwino, vha tshi vhuya vho hwala, vho ḷa ḍuvha lithihi.

Li tshi tsha ḷa mmbamatshelo, ‘Mutukana,’ vha ḍi ralo, ‘Ndi ya murohoni.’ Vha tshi swika ngei, a vha yi murohoni vha a fhira. Ee, vha tshi swika hangei na hedzila dziphukha dza sia dzo vala nṅḍu yadzo. Mathuna havha mukegulu, vha tsimuni vho no pfa luimbo lwa hezwilani zwipuka zwi tshi bva nga matsheloni vhone vho bubela masimuni.

Zwipuka zwi tshi bva nduni yazwo zwi tshi tuwa zwi tshi ya u tshela hangei ḍakani zwi tshi imba nṅḍu i tshi valea. Zwi tshi vhuya zwi tshi imbelela zwi tshi ḍa, nṅḍu i tshi vulea. (Vha khou zwi vhona?) Ee, zwino, vhone-ha nga matsheloni vha tshi ya hangei vha tshi swika hangei nthuni ya hezwila zwipuka, vha thoma luimbo lune vha lu imbelela. Vha ri,

[Musimi]

Wa mmbvulela Luti!

[Vhabvumeli]

Matshelo ndi tsa mbatela.

Vhaḷa mukegulu vha dzhena vha dzhia dzila dzinama. Vha tshi bva vha dovha vha imbelela munangoni wa nṅḍu. Vha ri, ‘Wa mmbvulela Luti! ...’

Vothi ḷa ri nyaṅa! Vhaḷa mukegulu vha namba vha hwala dzila dzinama dzavho, vha tuwa.

Zwino, houḷa mutukana, a ri, ‘Kuku, wee.’

Vha ri, ‘Hi!’

‘Vhone, kha vha ḍo tou mmbudza: Vhone vha tshi vuwa, vha ri, “Ndi ya murohoni.” Vhone vha tshi vhuya murohoni vha vhuya na ṅama. ṅama iyi vhone vha i wana gai?’

Vha ri, ‘A ni litshi u ntsengisa? Litshani u ntsengisa, inwi sokonou ḷa fhedzi.’ (Vha khou zwi vhona?) Vha khou bika dzila dzinama, vha tshi ḷa na uḷa muḍuhulu.

Ha swika zwe phukha dzavhuya dza vhona muthambi wadzo. ‘Uri naa uyu muthambi washu: U khou ḍa u tshi fhahululwa nga mini? Ngauri riṅe ri tou ḷa nyana.’ (Vha khou zwi vhona? All right?) Phukha dza ri, ‘Zwino, ri tou zwi ita hani izwizwithu dzinama dzashu dzi tshi khou fhela?’

Hai, dza namba dza ṅomba, dza dzhia nakudze. (Zwino, a thi ri, kale ho vha hu si na mafagi, ho vha hu tshi itiwa dzikhali dza dzinnkho.) Dza dzhia nnkho khulu dza ṅomba halwa, dza bika halwa hadzo. Ha, dza bika halwa vhuḷa dza fhedza dza vhu sutshela, dza fhedza vhuḷa halwa vhu khou vhila.

Vhu tshi vhila, mukegulu u a tuwa u ya henengei u ya u dzhia. A tshi swika, a ri ḍivhi uri kana iwe dziphukha ni vha no tou itisa hani munangoni, ndi afha ri sa tsha ṅalukanya. (Vha khou zwi vhona?)

Mukegulu a tshi swika a tshi dzhena a tshi fhahulula dzinama, a tshi fhahulula dzinama dzawe a tshi longela muthathani.

Vothi ḷo no valela mukegulu, li si tsha tenda u vulea. Vothi ḷa mbo ḍi nyaṅa! Li tshi nyaṅa! Mukegulu u a imbelela, ‘Wa mmbvulela Luti! ...’ Vothi a ḷi tsha vulea. Vothi a ḷi vulei. Hai, mukegulu a ṅwa nga henefho.

Li tshi ri e dza vha dzi tshi vhuya dziphukha. Ee, vha vha vhane vha muḍi vha tshi vhuya, vhane vha nṅḍu. Mukegulu ho ngo bva. Dza vha dzi tshi ri, ‘Wa mmbvulela Luti! ...’

Mukegulu, vothi li tshi vulea, dzone dzi khou nyaga u dzhena, mukegulu ndi u mbo di ri na zwiḷa zwithatha zwawe nga ngomu linkoni liḷa la halwa vhilivhili nga ngomu! Dzinguvho dza tangamela nga nṯha. Nnḍu ya vha i tshi dzhena. Nḍou ya vha i tshi ri nga musingo, i tshi ri ya wana mukegulu nga ngomu na zwiḷa zwithatha, I tshi doba vhaḷa mukegulu, ngulungundu! Ya dzhia zwiḷa zwithatha ya dobeledza ya ri, ngulungundu!

Mukegulu, fhaḷa nṯwana u vhona mukegulu a vha vhuyi hayani. Li a kovhela u a lala, hai, u a lala. Zwi tshi vuwa tsha matshelo, hai, mukegulu a vha vhuyi. Li a kovhela, nṯwana u khou sokou dzinga-dzinga. U khou sokou mona-mona, a tshiḷa zwidadza nyana zwiḷa. Hai, li tshi kovhela, fhaḷa u ya lala.

A ri, 'Ndi ita mini naa? Hai, mukegulu, ndi do vhona pulane.' Mutukana ndi hone a tshi tuwa, a tshi ya tivhani heliḷa lihulu. A tshi swika hafhaḷa tivhani lihulu, hu na muri muhulu.

Houḷa muri muhulu u na dzingala dzo raliho dzo kokovha hafhaḷa damuni. Houḷa muthannga a swika a ita vhura hawe. O tṯwa a tshi ita na vhura hawe, a tshi vhu fula zwavhuḍi, a ita vhura hawe, a vhu ita u nga tshigidi. (Vha khou zwi vhona?) A vhu akha zwavhuḍi. A tshee o nakudze a tshi ita.

A tshi swika ngei mulamboni tivhani, a dzhia a nyaga matanda. A ita luṯandala nyana lwawe henefhaḷa nṯha ha muri. A tumba henefhaḷa nṯha ha muri.

Hai, khezwo, ḍuvha li a ṯavha o ya nga matsheloni-tsheloni, ḍuvha li tshi ṯavha dza vha dzi a ḍa. Hu ḍa tshiṯwe na tshiṯwe hafha. Hmm, a vhe itshi ḍa khanga ya vha i tshi ri, 'Kerr-kerr!' ya vha itshi nwa maḍi. I tshi nwa maḍi. A i litsha ya nwa. Hezwila i tshi fhedza u nwa i tshi ri i a tuwa. A ri,

[Musimi]

Buka, iwe ndi iwe wa ka dya maivhavho?

Asi nṯe nda ka dya maivhavho.

Vha ka dya maivhavho vha tshe po.

Vha na makwanga nyenyedzi!

Vha na gongoli nga ndi gwana!

[Vhabvumeli]

Dya mandile-ndile.

Ha, a ri, 'Tuwa!' Ya tuwa. Ha, itshi tuwa ha namba ha vha hu ya ḍa nṯa i ya fhufha, i ya fhufha. I tshi ḍa ya nwa maḍi, ya nwa maḍi, a i litsha ya nwa. Ee, hezwila yo no fhedza u nwa i tshi ndi a tuwa, a vha u ya i thoma. A ri, 'Buka, iwe ndi iwe wa ka dya maivhavho? ...' Hai, a ri, 'Dituwele zwau!' Ee, ya tuwa. (Vha khou zwi vhona? Zwino, phukha ndi nga si dzi fhedze nga u vhani dzo ḍalesa.)

Ha vha hu tshi ḍa ndau. Ya vha itshi ḍa itshi nwa. I tshi nwa fhaḷa, a i litsha ya nwa. Hezwila i tshi nwa i tshi tou fhedza i tshi ri i a tuwa a i thoma. A ri, 'Buka, iwe ndi iwe wa ka dya maivhavho? ...' Ha, a ri, 'Tuwa!'

Ahaa, ya vha i tshi ḍa. Ha vha hu tshi ḍa vhone, i ya ḍa nḍou. Ya vha i tshi ḍa, ya vha i tshi nwa maḍi. Mutukana a ri, 'Yenei ya thumbu nngafha? Ha, heyi ndi do i vhona.' Hai, ya fhedza, i tshi ri ndi a tuwa a vha u a i thoma. A ri, hai, a i dovha, a ri, hai, a i dovha mani, a ri, 'Buka, iwe ndi we wa ka dya maivhavho. Ahee, ndi nṯe nda ka dya maivhavho! ...'

A namba a vha o fhedza ngayo, thuu! I tshi ri vhili-vhili ...! A vha a tshi dzhena a tshii ṯhapula nga libanga lihulu a tshi pfee! Mukegulu a vha a tshi bva na zwithatha nga ngomu. A tshi bva a tshi gidima na zwithatha. A ya a dzhia zwithatha zwiḷa a vhea ngei kule.

A dzhia makhulu wawe a ṯanzwa, a ṯanzwa a vha ṯambisa vha vha vha sikunu. Ee, dzila dzinguvho dze vha ambara a sukela, a sukela a sokou di vha ambadza dzo ralo.

Ehee, ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

Khotsi ndilani

Salungano, salungano!

Ha mbo ri i musadzi e na munna wawe. Munna wawe a tshi shanduka a ita ndau. A tshi lisa kholomo dza khotsi awe. A tshi vuwa vho vula kholomo o ya nadzo dakani. A tshi vhuya hafha nga madekwana. A tshi swika hangei dakani na dziinwe dzindau u a shanduka a ita ndau. Vha vhulaya kholomo nthihi vha la.

A tshi vhuya hafha hayani, a kona u ri, 'Baba, inwe kholomo ndo i nyaga, a i vhonali.'

'Hai! Yo vuliwa matsheloni nwananga? Na tuwa nayo dakani?'

A ri, 'A thi divhi uri i nga vha i gai.'

Hai, zwo fhela lo lala.

Li tshi tsha matshelo u a dovha u ya vula u ya tuwa. A tshi tuwa, hai, u khou di swika vha ita mushumo wonoyo vha vhulaya inwe, vha di la.

A tshi vhuya a di ri, 'Baba, inwe kholomo a i ho.'

'Aa, mulandu?'

'A thi divhi khotsi anga: Dzi khou to xela.'

Hai, khotsi a vha na ndavha nazwo, zwo fhela. Zwino, musadzi khoyu, musadzi wawe u ri tsha ndi sinde thanga. A tshi ri ndi sinde nduhu hafha dza u kodela muroho. Ehee, ndi hone hu tshi da mbevha. Mbevha i tshi da ya ri, 'Tsk-tsk-tsk! A u mphithanga nda shenga, ndi tshi do u vhudza mafhungo anga?'

Houla muthu a i thatha heila mbevha. 'Ha! A i tuwele hangei kule.' A i thatha. A tshi i thatha, mbevha ya swika ya tumba-tumba ngei kule ya dovha ya vhuya.

U khou sinda u khou sefa. Zwino, mbevha ila ya dovha i tshi vhuya ya ri, 'Tsk-tsk-tsk! A u du mpha-vho thanga nda shenga ndi tshi do u vhudza mafhungo anga a vhudi?'

A dzhia a tusa a i posela. A tshi i posela fhalala, mbevha ya la, ya la. Yo no la tshikhala-nyana, ya ri, 'Ndi khou nyaga uri ndi u vhudze mafhungo. Munna wau hangei dakani, a tshi tuwa na kholomo, a tshi swika u a shanduka a ita ndau, a vhulaya kholomo a la na dziinwe dzindau.'

Ula musadzi, 'Eya!'

A ri, 'Ee!'

Musadzi a ri, 'U di vhuya a tshi vhudza khotsi awe a tshi ri, "Inwe kholomo a i ho."'

A ri, 'Ha, i do vha yo liwa nga ene na dziinwe dzindau.'

'Ha, right, zwino ndi do tou mu ita hani u yo muthu?'

'A, hai, musi kholomo dzi tshi fhela ni khou da u liwa na vhana.'

'Zwino, ndi tou ita hani iwe mbevha?'

Mbevha ya konouri, 'Ha, iwe, hu na thaidzo. Iwe u tou tuwa wa ya hayani ha hau.'

'A, ndi tshi tuwa ndi tshi ya hayani ha hashu ha nga ntevheli?'

A ri, 'Hai, u mbo di dzhia zwitemba. Zwitemba zwi no swika zwa fumi kana zwitanu. Panga tshinwe wa panga mabete, tshinwe wa panga tsikidzi, tshinwe wa panga dzinnda, tshinwe wa panga nakudze zwothe, na mabete, u tshi panga. Hezwi a tshi u tevhela, a tshi da o shanduka, iwe u sokou dzhia linwe litemba wa pwasha. A tshi sala a tshi doba a tshi la, iwe u do vha u tshi khou tuwa na vhana.'

Ha, ngangoho ula musadzi ndi hone a tshi di lugisela, ndi hone a tshi ita nga u ralo. Haiwaa, li tshi kovhela nga madekwana o no panga mademba awe a vhetshedza nduni. Ehee, munna a tshi vhuya na dzikholomo a hu na thaidzo.

Ula u khou vhudza munna wawe na mazwale wawe: 'Ha, nne matshelo ndi ya hayani.'

'Ee, ni khou tuwa na nnyi?'

'Ndi tuwa na vhana.'

'Hai, ndi zwone.'

‘Hai, tshimbilani.’

‘Nne tali ndi tshi ya dzikholomoni.’

‘Ha, ndi zwone.’

Ula u khou vula kholomo, u khou tuwa, lo no tsha. Hai, ula a tshi sala fhala vhala vha vho tamba. Mademba ala awe nga ngomu muthathani. O hwala nga muthatha. Asuula, u ya tuwa. A tshi tuwa, ula o vula kholomo, ho ngo tuwa. O tou dzi tatedza a huma. A vhuya, a tshi vhuya, a da a banda. O bandela musadzi hoyu. U ri u do mu vhulaya ndilani na vhana.

Hmm, zwino-ha, ula musadzi o hwala mademba awe. O ambadza na vhana vhawe, vho no tamba, vho no lingana. Houla u ya hwala lila lithatha lawe. U ya tuwa. A tshi tuwa, a tshi tshimbila, a tshi tshimbila, a tshi tshimbila.

U namba a pfa mukosi u ya lila murahu. A tshi ri, ee, murahu u wana, hai, kei ndi ndau! I khou da i tshi gidima.

A ri, ‘Ala mafhungo khea e nda vhudzwa nga ila mbevha.’ A namba a vha u ya li lata linwe litemba. A tshi ri li thuu! Li tshi sala fhala. Lila dithu la sala li tshi ri, ‘Nemeneme dza pano dzi nga kunda ku pera!’

A ri, ‘Ni gidime vhananga, a ri ni gidime ri tavhanye ri swike!’

La vha li tshi la, li tshi fhedza fhala, la vha lo thoma luimbo. Li tshi ri, ‘Ee, ku lila mutendele!’

Li tshi gidima, a vha a tshi ri linwe litemba, puu! La balangana, zwi tshi tshatshama fhasi, la tva li tshi doba. Li tshi sala li tshi doba henefhala. Ene a vha a tshi khou tuwa na vhana vhawe.

Ahaa, li tshi yo fhedza fhala, la vha li tshi thoma u imbelela. Ahaa, li tshi ri, ‘Nemeneme dza pano dzi kunda ku pera!’

La vha li tshi fhedza. Li tshi fhedza fhala, la vha lo thoma luimbo, ‘Ee, ku lila mutendele!’

Hai, a lata ngo ralo, ngo ralo. Haiwaa, u vhuya fhala a tshi swika hayani. A tshi swika hayani, fhala mademba o no fhela, vha khou swika mudini. Vha tshi swika mudini, a tshi wanaha hu tshi khou nwiwa mahalwa. Ndi hone a tshi di dzulela, a dzula na vhana vhawevha tshi mu omelela.

Mukwasha u ya adzelwa thovho fhala. Ehee, u ya dzula, ehee. Vhathu vha khou nwa mahalwa.

Hmm, ndi hone nwana a tshi vho ita zwenezwo, a tshi vho ita. ‘Makhulu, khotsi anga ndilani!’ U divhadza makhulu wawe. ‘Khotsi anga ndilani vho tshimbila vha khou ri tswenya! Vha tshi ita “Nemeneme dza pano dzi nga kunda ku pera!” Mme anga vho phwasha gumbu! Ahaa, vha tshi fhedza hedzilani nemeneme, vha tshi fhedza hedzilani nemeneme ula vha khou ri tevhela vha tshi gidima vha tshi imbelela. Vha tshi ri, “Nemeneme dza pano dzi nga kunda ku pera!”’

‘Hai, thoma u dzhie muwadzi wanga u yo vhea.’ Nwana u khou dzhia muwadzi u ya vheya. A tshi vhuya nwana a tshi da a tshi dzula.

Nwana u ya thoma futhi, ee, ‘Kuku, khotsi anga ndilani. Ee, vha tshi imbelela, vha tshimbila vha khou imbelela “Nemeneme dza pano dzi nga kunda ku pera!”’

‘Hai, ida u dzhie badzhi yanga hei u thome u ye u i vhea nduni.’ Hmm, a dzhia nwana a isa nduni. A tshi vhuya nwana, a tshi vhuya nduni. A tshi da, a tshi dzula. Ee, u khou dovha, nwana u ya dovha, ‘Kuku wee, khotsi anga ndilani, o tshimbila, o tshimbila, o ri, “U dendele, u dendele! A wa mpho nwana a zhota?”’ A mu shapa mulomo!

‘Mme anga a pwasha, nthu! A lata, o lata. Khotsi anga o sala. Ee, “Nemeneme dza pano dzi nga kunda ku pera!” Mme anga, ra gidima, ra gidima! (Hu khou amba hetshila tshana tshi mutanani.) Ha, zwino-ha, ri swika fhano mudini, khotsi anga kevha.’

Zwino-ha, ndi hone-ha, tshi ri zwino o no fhedza zwothe, a tshi khou di ralo, na zwienda: ‘Dzha zwienda u yo vheya.’ Ehee, zwino o no sala nga hemmbe na vhurukhu, o vhea na dzibadzhi.

Ehee, a vha n̄wana a tshi vhuya, a tshi ḁa a tshi tumba. A tshi ri, ‘Ei, ei, oi, ee! Kuku, khotsi anga n̄dilani. O ri, o, u dende!’

Ha a namba a ri, ‘Zwino, ndi ḁo dovha nda ri u ye u vhea mini?’ A namba a thoma, a namba a dzi ḁuvhudza a tshi rali a tshi dzi fhala, a tshi dzi fhala! Mamvele a namba a ri, ‘Mvingi-mvingi, mvingi-mvingi!’ Yo no vha ndau! ‘Ai, ai, o, i, e, ku lila mudende!’ U vho nyaga u zhota vhatu havhala vha re hafhala halwani.

Khotsi a uḁa musadzi ndi hone vha tshi gidima vha tshi dzhena n̄duni. Vha tshi vho dzhia tshigidi. Vha tshi vho mu thuntsha nga tshigidi!

Ha mbo ḁi vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

Tshinoni tsha vhuḁi

Salungano, salungano!

Ho ri e vhasidzana. Vhasidzana vha ya khunini. Vha ya u reḁa dzikhuni. A thi ri, kale ho vha hu tshi reḁiwa dzikhuni kule-kule.

Hai, vha tshi swika henengei. Hu na mulambo muhulu. Havhala vhasidzana vha ya u reḁa khuni nga hangei seli ha mulambo. Zwino, vho no reḁa khuni dzila nga seli ha mulambo. Hai, mulambo ndi u mbo ḁi ri mvula i khou na mulambo maḁi tate! Vhasidzana a vha tsha kona u pfuka u vhuya ngeno hayani na khuni. Vho no sokou kuvhangana, vho sokou kuvhangana nga fhasi ha muri. Mvula i khou ḁi na. Uri vha ḁo pfuka nga gai? A hu tsheena u pfuka. Na n̄dala yavho.

Hai, ha mbo ḁa tshinoni. Tshinoni tsha ḁa tshe, prrr! Tshe n̄tha ha muri tsha ḁa tsha tumba.

Ngei hayani vha khou nyaga. Vho gidima na shango vho vhuya vho tou neta.

Vhasidzana vha khou ḁi tou tshila nga one maḁi vha tshi ita vha tshi nwa. Hanefho ndi he tshinoni tshi tshi tumba fhalala tshe, ‘Hai, vhasidzana, khezwi no rali no tou tumba afha ngei hayani vha tshi khou ni nyaga?’

Vha ri, ‘Ro thivhelelwa nga mulambo. Ri ḁo pfuka nga gai? Ngauri mulambo wo ḁala.’ Hai, tshinoni tsha ri, ‘Vhuḁi.’ Tsha fhufha n̄tha ha muri tsha tumba fhasi. Tsha ri, ‘Idani ngeno vhana vhanga.’

Vha namba vha swika vhasidzana vhalala. Tsha vha panga magakwani, tsha vha panga magakwani, tsha vha panga-ha! Tsha vha tshi a tuwa zwino. Tsha fhufha tsha vha tshi a tuwa tshi nyanga miḁi ya musanda. Tsho fhufha tsha mbo ḁa tsha mbo ḁi ri hanefha Phaswanani tsha ri gide. Tsha mbo tumba fhalala murini. Tsha ri,

[Musimi]

Ntsumbedzeni Ha-Malebane, silili!

Ke morwaḁedzhi vhanana vhawe.

Tsha swika muthavhani wa mutasiri.

[Vhabvumeli]

Silili, si nya ntika?

Hai, vha ri, ‘Ha-Malebane a si fhano.’ Tshinoni tshila tsha mbo fhufha. Tsha vha tshi a tuwa tsha vha tshi a swika afho nthuni, afha Manetoni. Tsha swika tsha kivha hanefhala muvhuyuni. Tsha vha tshi a thoma u imbelela. Tsha ri, ‘Ntsumbedzeni Ha-Malebane, silili! ...’ Hai, vhalala vha tshi bva vha ri, ‘Ha-Malebane a si fhano.’

Ee, haiwaa, tsha vha tshi a tuwa tshinoni. (Ee, ha a thi nga tou isa kule-vho lini. Ndo tou ana ndi tshi guma hone kha vha livhuwe. Solanga n̄ne ndi tshi khou vha anela lungano.) Hai, tsha swika Folovhodwe. Tshi tshi swika Folovhodwe, tshi tshi dzhena tsha ri gidi hanefhala murini. Haiwaa, tsha vha tshi a thoma luimbo lwatsho. Tsha ri, ‘Silili, si nya ntika? ...’ Vha ri, ‘Haiwaa, Ha-Malebane ndi fhano.’ Haiwaa, tshinoni

tsha ri, 'Adzani dzithovho dzi bve hafha murini dzi tshi ya hafhalani nduni.'

Ha, vha namba vha adza dzithovho. Tsha namba tsha tsela fhasi ha muri nthā ha thovho. Tsha namba tsha tsitsa vhalā vhana. Tshi tshi tsitsa vhalā vhana, tsha ri, 'Vhahulwane ni songo lila ngauri nne vhana ndo wana vhana vho hanganea vho dalelwa nga mulambo. Zwino, nda ri ndi vha thuse ndi vha hwale ndi tshimbile ndi tshi vhudzisa nga misanda na misanda.'

Hai, vha ri, 'Hai, ndi hone Ha-Malebane fhando, Muthavhani wa mutasiri.'

Haiwaa, vhalā vhana vho kusulwa fhalā. Hai, vhalā vhana khevhala vha tshimbila nthā ha dzithovho. Vha dzhena nga ngomu nduni. Vha adzelwa na thovho. Vha dzula na tshinoni tshavho.

Hai, vhafuwi, vhamusanda vha dia tsimbi vha kuvhaganya vhalā vho-mia vhana na vho-khotsi a vhana vhe vha vha vha tshi khou lila nga vhana vhavho vha sa vha vhoni.

Vha ri, 'Idani ni vhone vhana vhanu. Vhana vhanu a sivha vho vhuya.'

Hai, vha tshi da vha tshi gidima! Vho-mme na vho-khotsi thovhela vhotakala. Vha tshi swika hanefhala vhana vhavho khevha. Vho ri vho diswa nga tshinoni khetsi. Hai, zwino, tshinoni tsho ri disela vhana.

'Zwino, ri nga tou ita hani afha fhethu?'

Ha, vhamusanda vha ri, 'Ha, na nne ndi a takala. Ndi nga tou mba nda tou tshi thavhela kholomo.'

Tshinoni tsha ri, 'Hai.'

Vha ri, 'Zwino, ri u garabele nguluvhe?'

Tshinoni tsha ri, 'Hai.'

'Zwino, ri tou thavhela khuhu, ri tou livhuwa ngauri wo ri isela vhana vhashu? Ri vha ro no tangana thoho vhana vhashu ri sa vha vhoni. Ri u thavhele khuhu?'

Tsha ri, 'Hai.'

Vha ri, 'Mbudzi?'

'Hangwani.'

Tshe, 'Nne ndi vha ndi tshi tou nyaga he re ni na zwiinwe zwithu zwi no nga malungu zwine na nga mpha nda tou di khavhisa.'

'A! Malungu fhedzi-fhedzi? Ro tou tambula ngaurali ri tshi nyaga vhana, nahasi wo ri thusa wo ri disela vhana.'

Tsha ri, 'Haneo malungu nne ni nga nthusa ngao. Ndi do di ambarela.'

Hai, vhafumakadzi vha di dina. Vha ya vha yo dzhia malungu vha disa. Vhanwe vha disa na mabandele a dzikhunduni. Hai, tshinoni tsha dzhia malungu ala tsha takatela. Tsha naka tshinoni!

Ha, tshinoni tsha ri, 'Zwino, ndi a onesa, ndi a tuwa.'

Ha, vha ri, 'U a di onesela zwau tshinoni.'

Tshinoni, hai, tshinoni tsha dzhena badani. 'Salani na vhana vhanu.'

Ha, tshinoni tshi tshi tshimbila, tshi tshi yo tuwa. Tshi tshi swika tsha wana lukhohe li tshi khou devha thebvū. Li khou devha thebvū dza lo li tshi la, li tshi devha thebvū dza lo li tshi la.

La ri, 'Ai! Iwe, tshinoni. Hei, khezwi wo tou naka nga u tou rali? Izwi zwe wa ambara wo zwi wana gai?'

Tshinoni tsha ri, 'Tsho, nne ndo zwi wana Ha-Malebane. Ndo mu hwalela vhana vhawe. Ndo wana vho dalelwa nga mulambo. Vha sa koni u pfuka. Nda vha pfukisa nda vha isa Ha-Malebane. Nda swika ngei, vhafumakadzi vha nthusu nga malungu. Afha ni tshi vhona ndo ambara ndo rali ndo naka.'

Lukhohe la ri, 'Do nthusu u thome u mphe uri nne ndi ambare ndi vhone kana na nne zwi a mpfanela?'

Hai, tshinoni tsha mbo bvula nga vhu la vhudahela tsha mbo dzhia tsha fha lukhohe. Lukhohe la dzhia la ambara. La ambara, la ambara la faneliwa.

La ri, 'Zwino, ndi tshi imba luimbo lwanga afha uri ndi tou tshina nga aya malungu u do mmbvumela?'

Tshinoni tsha ri, 'Ee, ndi do u bvumela.' Hai, tsha ri,

[Musimi]

Lwa musidzana mungafha.

Ndi a tshitakana, lule.

A ho tshantshata-ngoli.

[Vhabvumeli]

Tshangana! Lule, lukhohe, lule.

Tshinoni, ha, 'Iwe, lukhohe, khezwi iwe u tshi vho tshina u tshi vho sokou dzhena mulindini u si tsha da? Nne ... malungu anga u sa disi malungu? Nne ndi khou nyaga u ambara ndi nyaga u tuwa.'

Lukhohe tsha ri, 'Ndi kha di thoma ndi tshine nyana. U thome u ime, nne ndi khou tshina.' Ha, la ri, 'U bvumele fhedzi, "Lwa musidzana mungafha ..."'

Hai, lukhohe la namba lo shavha na ala malungu! Tshinoni tsha sokou sala tsho tumba henefhalo munangoni wa mulindini wa lukhohe. Lukhohe a li tsha bva. Ndi hone duvha li tshi vho kovhela tshinoni tshi tshi vho vhona uri zwino ndo kovhelelwa nga duvha. Tshinoni ndi hone tshi tshi vho takuwa tshi tshi di fhufhela-ha.

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

Tshinoni tsha nkuku

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha e mukegulu. A na niwana wawe wa munna na musadzi wawe. Vha na danga lavho lihulwane la kholomo, na phulu khulu.

Zwino, havhala vhathu, munna vhalo vha lovha na musadzi wavho. Vha tshi lima kholomo dzi khou fula nga thungo. Hoyu mutukana u khou dzi lisa.

Zwino, hu na mahosi. Mahosi vha khou vhilela u dzi dzhia. 'U ri mukegulu a nga namba a tou dzula na mutukana uyu vha dzula na kholomo idzi? Kholomo hedzi ri a dzi dzhia dza vha dzashu.' Vha khou zwi vhona?

Zwino, havha mukegulu hezwi vha tshi tuwa, vha tshi swika tsimuni, e vha dzhia thanga. E, dza magwadi vha fha houla mutukana. Vha ri, 'Ni hadzinge dzone ni sevhe ngadzo. Ni songo hadzinga hedzi dza mafhuri nga uri dzi nga do thivha dzindeve.' Ehe, vha khou zwi vhona?

Zwino-ha, kevho-ha. Zwino, kholomo dzi khou fula. Havhala mukegulu vha khou di lima zwilimo zwavho.

Ha vha vha tshi takuwa ndi vho-Nefolovhodwe. Vha ri, 'Rine ri yo dzi dzhia. Vha nga si tou dzula na kholomo na mutukana mutukutuku.'

Hai, vha vha vha tshi swika vha tshi dzi titimba henefhalo. Vha da vha sevhene vha tshi dzi titimba vha tshi dzi swoga. Vho ruwa nga vhamusanda.

Vha tshi dzi titimba, a vha a tshi takuwa mutukana, a tshi bva nga ngomu thumbani. A vha a tshi ri,

[Musimi]

Ahee, iwe nkuku wee!

Kholomo dzi a tuwa!

Dzi tuwa na vhafhio?

Dzi tuwa na Malema.

Malema-mala-vhathu!

Tserere nda livha ndila.

Tserere nda gobagoba.

Tserere nda luma ndila!

[Vhabvumeli]

Tshinoni tsha nkuku!

Vha vha vha tshi swika mukegulu. Vha vha vha tshi dzi thivha. Vha vha vha tshi dzhia onoyu munwe wa vhu sevhene. Vha ri tshanda itshi. Vha ri, kothlo! Vha khaula, vha lata fhasi. Vha swoga kholomo dzavho na ula mutukana a vha humisela murahu.

Vha tshi swika ngei la vha divha li tshi khou kovhela. Dzi khou ya dangani. Vha swika vha di lalela lo kovhela vho bika vhuswa havho. Vha dzhia mafhi ala avho o katha a dzila kholomo vha swika vha la vha fura vha di lalela. Haiwaa, vha a di lalela.

Li a tsha la matshelo. Vha tshi yo vuwa, mushumo ndi wonoyo vha ya tsimuni. Vha tshi swika ngei tsimuni. Kholomo dzi khou fula, mukegulu u khou lima.

Ahaa! Vha vha vha tshi ri, 'Ro takuwa-ha.' Ndi vhanwe zwino! Ndi vha gai? Ndi vhanwe, vha la vha Folovhodwe vho balelwa.

Hu vho da vha gai-ha? Hu vho da vha gai ha dziinwe khosi? Hu da vha vho-Tshiungani nga hanengeo. Vha vha vha tshi swika. Vha vha vha tshi dzi titimba kevha ndi vha eiti. Vha tshi dzi titimba. Vha tshi takuwa, mutukana a vha a tshi ima. 'A vha mpfi?' Ndi ri, 'Yowee, nkuku wee! ...'

Mukegulu a vha a tshi swika. A vha a tshi ri, 'E-e, a dzi hume kholomo!' A vha a tshi dzi thivha nga phanda. Haiwaa, a mbo dzhia ula munwe munna muthihi. A mbo mu vhea bemu la lufhanga kokotolo mavhudzi! A ri, 'Tshimbilani vhamusanda vha yo ni vhona uri no baleliwa nga dzanga kholomo.'

A huma na kholomo dzawe na mutukana wawe. Vha lala. Haiwaa, la tsha. Ha, li tshi tsha matshelo vha khou vula. Dzi khou vuliwa kholomo. Vha tuwa-ha na mukegulu kevha. Vha ya ngeyo masimuni. Mutukana a di dzi hadzingela dzila thanga, dzila dza magwadi. Zwino-ha, mutukana ndi afha a tshi vho yo hadzinga thanga dza mafhuri. Ndi ua thanga dzila dza mafhuri. Mukegulu ndevhe ndi u dzinga. Mukegulu ndevhe ha tsha pfa.

Hai, vha vha vha tshi ri henengei tsimuni vha vha vha tshi bva. Hai, ndi vha gai? Ndi vha henengeo Ha-Tshikundamalema. Vha vha vha tshi ri, 'Ri yo dzi dzhia nahasi. Rine ri do vhuya nadzo.'

Ha, vha vha vha tshi da vha tshi dzi titimba dzila kholomo. Ha a vha a tshi takuwa mutukana. A ri, 'Iwe, nkuku wee! ...' Mukegulu a vha tsha tovhela. Ndevhe dzo dzinga nga dzila thanga. Hai, ndi afha a tshi tuwa navho a tshi khou enda a tshi khou imbelela.

'Pfutseke! Humela murahu mutukana ndi iwe! U ri tovhela u ya gai? U tshi ri tovhela murahu na kholomo dzau? Kholomo ro tuwa nadzo. U do shona. Ri khou dzi isa hayani.'

Ha, kevhalala, vha khou tuwa nadzo. Vha tshi dzi khada. Ene u khou sokou imbelela. A tshi ri, 'Iwe, nkuku wee! ...' 'Tserere nda livha ndila' a i tshe eho ngauri ndevhe dzo dzinga.

Ndi afha vha tshi swika nadzo mudini. Vha tshi dzi panga dangani.

Ha, vha ri, 'Zwino ro dzi panga afha dangani, ri thavha nthihi.'

A ri, 'Hai, vha tshi thavha vha nga di thavha yeneila ya phulu.'

Ee, yo phulelwa, i na muhala hafha dziningoni. Kholomo dza kale dzo vha dzi tshi namelwa.

A ri, 'Vha nga vhulaha yeneila.' O sokou tumba munangoni wa danga.

Haiwaa, vha ri, 'Ndi zwone muthannga. Ri do vhulaha yeneila, na inwi ni do la.'

A ri, 'Hai, zwo luga, ndi do la.'

Ha, vha thavha kholomo ila. Vha via kholomo ila. Vha ri manamani. Vha tshi tshi la nama ya kholomo.

Hai, a ri, 'Vathu vha tshi la nama ya kholomo hei, a vha adze mukumba.' Vha adza mukumba.

A ri, 'Hai, vha tshi la vha dzhie marambo vha a kuvhanganyele hafha ntha ha

mukumba. Hu songo vha na linwe line la sala. Othe a dzule ntha ha mukumba. Na thoho vha vhee hanefhala.’ Hai, vhalala dzinama dzila.

Ha, la kovhela la mbyandamela.

Ula mutukana ha pfi, ‘Hai, iwe u do lala nga hafho kuduni hokwo.’

Ha, a ri, ‘Ndi do vuwa, ndi tshi huma matsheho.’

Ha, a ri, ‘Ndi zwone. Mukumba ha, mukumba na marambo eneo vha sokou kuvhanganya henefho vha vhee henefho.’

Hai, vhalala vhatu vha kuvhanganya. Ula mukumba vha vhea hanefhala.

Mutukana a lala. He a lala hone vhalala vhatu vha tshi edela nga khofhe, ula mutukana a vuwa, ayo tsheta thuba yawe. A khwatha zwavhudi thuba yawe, a i khwata. A dzhia izwo zwishonga zwe a vha e nazwo. Ene mune a i fhonda, a fhonda thuba yawe. A dia kholomo ila.

A tshi huwelela a tshi ri, ‘Ha, iwe nkuku hayani! Kholomo kha i vuwe.’

A vhona kholomo i tshi ntsha milenzhe. Ha, a khou imbelela a tshi i dia ya ntsha thoho. Ha, a imbelela mutukana a tshi i dia. A tshi ri, ‘Nkuku wee! Kholomo i a tuwa ...’

Kholomo ya vuwa ya takuwa ya ima. A namba a khedebula dzila kholomo dangani. A namba a dzhia kholomo ila, a namba a namela. A fara muhala wayo. A swoga dziinwe kholomo dza namba dzo tuwa, dza namba dzo humela hayani.

Ha vha hu a fa ha lungano.

Mukololo o nonaho

Salungano, salungano!

Vhasidzana vho tuwa na iwana wa musanda. Vha tshi ya dzikhunini, vha tshi swika hangei dzikhunini na mmbwa ya musanda. Ha pfi ri tshi ya khunini hangei ri tshi swika-i, ri totane ri vhone o nonaho. Vha khou zwi vhona?

Zwino, vha tshi swika henengei khunini, vho no fhedza u reda dzikhuni, vho ita madzanda avho vho vhofha, ha pfi kha ri totane ri vhone o nonaho. Ndi hafho vha tshi totana. Vha tshi vho tota Mutshekwa wa mukololo, ha pfi mukololo o nona.

Ndi hone a tshi vhulaiwa. A tshi vhulaiwa, hu tshi vhasiwa mulilo, a tshi hotshiwa dzinama dzila. Vha tshi la, vha tshi la, vha tshi la! Vha dzhia marambo vha fha mmbwa yawe. Zwiila mmbwa ila i sa le marambo.

Ha pfi, ‘Kha ile marambo!’ Ya hana u la marambo. Hezwiila vha tshi tou hwala madzanda, vha tshi ri, ‘Ri a tuwa!’

Mmbwa ya thoma luimbo. Ya ri,

[Musimi]

Havha vhasidzana.

Ngei khunini na vhone.

Ri swike, ri totane.

Ri vhone o nonaho.

Ho nona Mutshekwa.

Mmbwa ya musanda

ya fhiwa kurambwana.

Thi li mune wanga!

[Vhabvumeli]

Mbulungwane, mbulungwane.

Vhalala vhasidzana vha ri, ‘Aa, kheyo, i tshi vho imba i tshi ri o nona Mutshekwa. Mmbwa i khou da u ri ambulula. Hei, hai, hei, mmbwa a ri tou i vhulaha.’

Vha rula madzanda. Vha dzhia heila mmbwa, vha i vhulaha. Vha tshi i vhulaha ila mmbwa, vha dzhia vha i dielela mulilo vha i fhisa. Vha hwala madzanda, vha tuwa, vha tshi tuwa! Vha tshi tou ri phanda, vha wana mmbwa ila khei! I khou da, i tshi gidima. I tshi ri, 'Havha vhasidzana ...'

Ha pfi, 'Zwino, ri do tou ita hani? Ri do tou ita hani ngoho? Hei mmbwa i khou ya uri ambulula. A ni ipfi? Uri i khou ya uri ambulula iyi mmbwa-i. Hai, ri nga tou ita hani? Ro i fhisa, yo bva muliloni, i khou ri tevhela. Zwino, ri tou ita hani?'

Muñwe a ri, 'Hai, a ri tou i vhulaha. Ri tuwe nayo, ri i dzedzemise ri swike ri i posele ngomu madini. Ee, ri tou i posela nga hafhala damuni helia lihulu.'

'Lifhio damu?'

'Lenelia la Mutovhori, Ri yo posa nga ngomu Mutovhori.'

Haa, ngoho, vha i vhulaya, vha i vhulaya! Vha hwala ila mmbwa vhaswika henefhala Mutovhori. Mutovhori ha ri vhlivhili. Vha huma vha swika vhari madzanda avho dzithohoni.

Haa, vha tshi hwala vha tshi tshimbila vha tshi tou ri tshitoki, vha vhona khei, i murahu. I tshi vhidzelela, 'Havha vhasidzana ...'

Vha vha vha tshi khou swika mudini. Vha ya midini yavho, vha ya midini yavho. Mmbwa i luga hayani. Thi ri, a ina mune, mune wayo o vhulahwa. I tshi swika hayani ya tumba mukotoni. Ya tumba ya furalela mudini ya lavhelesa henengei hune vha bva hone ndila yo furalela mudini. Ee, ya thoma u imbelela, 'Havha vhasidzana ...'

Mudini vha ri, 'Ai, mmbwa i khou imbelela kheyo. I tshi ri thi li mune wanga. Ii, thi mmbwa yovha yo tuwa na Mutshekwa. Uyo Mutshekwa o sala gai yone yo vhuya?'

Vha takuwa. 'Hee, iwe vhasidzana wee!'

Vhala vha mudini, Alidzuli avha a tshi ri, 'Aa!'

A tshi ri, 'Aa!'

Vha ri, 'Inwi Alidzuli, ifha no tuwa na Mutshekwa? Zwino, ri tshi vho vhona mmbwa iyi, mmbwa i tshi khou imbelela., Uyu muñwe u gai? We na tuwa nae Mutshekwa.'

'Hai, rine ro mu sia a kha di vhofha. Ro sia a kha di vhofha dzikhuni henengei. Rine ra ri ni do tevhela. A ri tshimbilani ndi do ni fara ndilani.'

'Eya?'

'Ii.'

'Zwino, iyi mmbwa hufha i khou imbelela? Iyi mmbwa i tshi imbelela.'

'Hai, pfutseke! A ituwe mani!' Hai, i khou ri dina!' Vha khou i dia ila mmbwa. I a tuwa, ya monelela nga hangei. Hai, i ya vhuya. I tshi vhuya ya dovha ya da ya tumba henefhala, 'Havha vhasidzana ...'

Vha ri, 'Hai, ri fanela uri ri tevhela mmbwa hei.'

Hai, vha namba vha dzhena ndilani vhamusanda. Vha namba vha tshimbila vha tshi yela henengei hune ya khou imba yo lavhelesa hone. Hai, ya tevhela murahu, ya tevhela murahu ya mbo fhira phanda ha vhamusanda. I gidima phanda, i tshi imbelela, i tshi ralo 'Havha vhasidzana ...'

Ya vhuya ya swika ya ri henefhala tshivhasoni fhiri-fhiri-fhiri na marambo ala khea Mutshekwa. Vha khou zwi vhona?

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

Johanna Muleba

Munna kha dzhasi la vhukuse

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na muñwe munna kale. Hoyu munna hoyu, o vha a tshi shanduka a ita pfeñe.

Zwino, o vha ena musadzi wawe. Ena musadzi wawe, a vHINGA musadzi wawe. A tuwa nae hayani. A tshi swika hangei hayani ha hawe, zwino, u vho dzula. U vho shanduka, onovha pfeñe!

Zwino, musadzi a thoma u mangala. A ri, 'Aa-aa! Nñe ndo funa pfeñe, wee!' Zwino, a ri, a imba luimbo,

[Musimi]

Mato o tswuka ngani?

Pamangavhini!

I milenzhe tshini?

Ndi milenzhe yanga!

Tshimbilani, ri vhone!

Kusada-kusada: Izwo-ha!

I zwanda ndi tshini?

Izwi ndi zwanda zwanga!

Farani-ha, ri vhone!

Dzungu-dzungu: Izwo-ha!

Khe ni sa fari zwone?

Uyo mutshila tshini?

Iyi ndi mbaḁo yanga!

Remani-ha, ri vhone!

Kukatshu-kukatshu: Izwo-ha!

Khevha sa remi zwone?

Kukatshu-kukatshu: Izwo-ha!

Aya makuse tshini?

Idzi ndi nguvho dzanga!

Bvulani-ha, ri vhone!

Kudzungu-kudzungu: Izwo-ha!

Khevha sa bvuli zwone?

Kudzungu-kudzungu: Izwo-ha!

Maḁo o tswuka ngani?

Ndi no bva afho mutsini.

[Vhabvumeli]

Tavhaila! Tavhaila!

Pfene kha muri wa muswiri

Salungano, salungano!

Hoyu muḁhannga ovha ena musidzana wawe, u khOU ya u muvhINGA. Hezwi a tshi ya hangei ha vho-makhulu u khOU ḁi vhuya fhedzi a songo mudzhia. A dovha liñwe ḁuvha a vhuyelela a ri, 'Nñe ndi khOU nyaga musidzana wanga.' Vha ri, 'Haa, musidzana ni nga tuwa nae.'

Hezwi zwo thoma ngauralo hoyu muḁhannga hoyu ene na musidzana wawe vha khOU tshimbila vhoḁthe, vha tshi khOU tshimbila vhoḁthe. Zwino, a ri, 'Nñe ndi na ḁora.

Zwino, ndi na dora! Ndi nga tou zwi itisa hani?’ U fhedza henefho, a ri, ‘Nne vha sa mpha maḍi ndi khou huma.’

A hu na mulambo, ndi maḍi a bvaho kha lutombo. A ri, ‘Nne ndi do huma.’

Hai, muḥannga a mona-mona a mbo ḍi dzhia dugu tshikwamani. A swika a ri, ‘Ee, kha lutombo, arali a kuvha-kuvha iḷa tshika a dovha a nambatedza kha lutombo.

A ri, ‘Idani musidzana.’ A tshi ḍa hafho u kha ḍivha muthu sa zwezwo. Yaa, mara ha shanduki ni. Zwidoya kha pfene zwi tshiya phanda!

A hamula, a hamulela musidzana houḷa mulomoni. Musidzana u khou nwa maḍi, u khou nwa maḍi! A ri, ‘Kha ri tuwe!’

Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila. Vha swika vha wana muswiri khoyu. Pfene ḷi nḥa hangei ha muri.

A ri, ‘Nne a thi tsha fhira. Nne na mpfulela haḷa maswiri haḷa, na mpha nda ḷa nne ndi do kona u tuwa na inwi tshothe.’

Muḥannga a doba ḍinga, gwada. A tshi posa kha ḷia pfene, gwada helia ḷa balea. A dovha futhi u khou nyaga u ḥakela houḷa musidzana.

A ri, ‘Na sa mpha nne thi nga tuwi.’

A doba helia gwada. Hezwi a tshi vho posa ḍinga, pfene ḷa ṽinga-ṽinga uri ‘Ndi nga tou ita hani uḷa muthu?’ ḷa mbo ḍi fula swiri, ḷa posa hangei fhasi! ḷi tshi posa fhasi houḷa muḥannga a gavha.

A dovha hafhu a dzhia ḍinga. Hezwi a tshi posa pfene hangei, pfene ḷa ri ‘Ndi do tou itani?’ ḷa dovha ḷa fula maswiri, ḷa posela fhasi!

A ri, ‘Khezwo zwo fhela! Zwino, ri dzhena ndilani, ri a tuwa.’ Asizwo-asizwo, vha tshi tshimbila. Ndi hezwi vha tshi tuwa na muḥannga wawe vha tshi swika mulamboni hafho kha ... (Shango ḷa hone ndo ḷi hangwa mani. Ndo vha ndi tshi do ḷi amba.)

Haya maḍi a tou seluwa nga fhasi. A tshi seluwa nga fhasi, zwino, hoyu musidzana a ri, ‘A hu na inwe ndila, ndi yeneyi fhedzi. Zwino, ri do tou wela nga ngai?’

A ri, ‘Ri wela nga henefha.’ Ndi wa muḥannga.

A ri, ‘Nne a thi weli hafha maḍini. A thi khou nyaga hezwo lini. Ri do tou ita hani? Thi nyagi hezwi zwithu lini.’ Luya lungano zwenezwi lu tshiralo, zwezwo u fhedza henefho ndi hezwi muḥannga a tshi vho ri, ‘Haa, zwo luga.’ A mbo ḍi dzhia mavu a shula hoḥe, a shula hoḥe, a shula hoḥe!

A mbo ḍi vha u khou vHINGA musidzana wawe. Ndi u tuwa nae.

Ha mbo ḍi vha u fa ha tshitori.

Lungano luṽuku

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṽwe mufumakadzi a na muhadzinga wawe. Hoyu musadzi ovha a si na ṽwana lini. Zwino, vho hadzingana, hoyu muhadzinga u na vhana.

Zwino, a ri, ‘Ndi tou ita hani? Ngauri khezwi ndi si na ṽwana.’ A swika a vhumvumba ḷawe. A ita na ndevhe na zwoḥe zwa fhelela. A tshi pfi Mbugwe, hoyu ṽwana u pfi Mbugwe Tshiulu.

Zwino, zwi tshiralo, havha mukalaha vha na kholomo dzavho, vha na vhatukana vhavho. Vha khou ḍi bva, vha khou ya nḍa, vha khou ya u lisa. Hezwi vha tshi yo lisa vha khou ḍi bva na houḷa ṽwana, mara ndi vumba. Vha tshi bva nae ngauri o vha a si na ṽwana. U khou bva nae, vha tshi bva nae, vha khou lisa.

Zwino, nahasi houḷa ṽwana o no bva, mvula ya thoma u bvuma. Vha nḍa hangei, hangei Madzhawu. Vha dzula mulamboni Ngondodza. Ndi hune vha dzula hone.

Zwino, houḷa mufumakadzi u khou ḍi pfa mvula i tshi khou bvuma, a ri, ‘Yowee! ṽwananga u do niwa nga mvula!’ Huufha a Mbugwe Tshiulu?

Avha a tshi bva zwino. U khou imbelela,

[Musimi]

Mbugwe, Mbugwe, ahee, Mbugwe Tshiulu!
Lavhelela dzhatsha, ahee, Mbugwe, mutshavhona!
Nwana wanga o vhumbiwa, mutshavhona!
Ndo muvhumba, ndi tshiulu!

Kole lo lelemela.

Nwananga ndi tshiulu.

[Vhabvumeli]

Lavhelela dzhatsha!

Lu khou lelemela, lu khou lelemela, lu khou lelemela! Nwana u khou sokou thukhuwa dzindeve! Hezwi mvula i tshi i tou thuu! U sokou ndevhe thukhu!

Itshi kani i khou tou ita hani, musadzi u khou imbelela hayani. Hezwi vhaḷa vha tshi swika, o noka ndilani nwana ngauri lo vha li vumba nga mbilu u vhavha ngauri ovha a si na nwana.

Vha tshi vhudzisa, 'Uri u gai Mbugwe Tshiulu?'

Vha ri, 'Ro mu sia ndilani ngauri o noka.'

Musadzi ndi u lila-i! A tshi lila fhaḷa, u khou lilela nwana ngauri nwana wawe o vha e tshiulu o muvhumba. Ngauri o vha a si na nwana o vhumba nga vhutungu. Ha mbo di vha houḷa nwana, a mbo divha o lovha ...

A tshi lovha. Musadzi ndi u mbo di di tuwela a ya ha hawe.

Lwa mbo divha lu khou fhela. Lwa tou vha lutuku nyana.

Madambi

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu munna kale. Hoyu munna a na musadzi wawe. Havha na mme awe. Havha vhathu vha la vhathu. Ndi vha kale, ndi Masarwa.

Zwino, zwi tshi ralo fhaḷa hoyu munna a ri, 'Mme anga: Hoyu musadzi o no nona. Ndi khou ri ndi khwine ri tshi muvhulaha.' Mme vha tenda.

Munna wa hone u pfi Radzhimu. Zwi tshi ralo-ha. A ri, 'Hezwi ndi tshi bva ndi tshi ya hangei nnda, vha sale ni tshi muvhulaha.'

Ha bva muḱwe musadzi wa next door. A da a dzula heneḱha. Zwino, a ri, 'Musadzi wa nwananga, idani ndi u vheule.'

Musadzi wa nwana a ri, 'Hai, ndi thoma u vheula vhone.' Ngauri o no vhudziwa nga houḷa musadzi, uri fhano u khou toḱwa u vhulawa. Madekwana fhano vha khou la vhathu.

Radzhimu ndi u tuwa. A tshi sala uḷa musadzi, a ri, 'Nḱe ndi thoma u vheula vhone.'

Vha ri, 'Hai, nandi, musadzi wa nwananga, mavhudzi au onovha mahulwane. Ndi khou nyaga uri ndi u vheule.'

Houḷa a ri, 'Hai, ndi thoma u vheula vhone.' Ngauri kale hovha hu si na redza lini. Ndi hedziḷa phanga. Musidzana, mazwale vha tenda.

Musidzana a gwadama zwavhudi-vhudi. Houḷa muḱwe u khou di musinyedza. Alu vhea, a thoma a vheula, a vheula hangeno phanda. Hezwi a tshi yo rembuluwa a vha a tshi lu litsha lufhanga nga hafha mutsingani. A tshea havhaḷa mazwale!

U fhedza heneḱho, a mbo di vha dzhia a vha longa khalini. Avha a tshi khou vha bika. Zwino, a tshi khou vha bika, a dzhia hedziḷa thundu dza mukegulu ha ambara ene. A dzhia dzawe a fhahela muthambini uri hoyu Radzhimu a tshi vhuya hangei nnda azwi divhe uri houḷa mufumakadzi ro mu vhulaha.

Haiwaa, Radzhimu u a vhuya. A tshi vhuya fhaḷa, u wana uḷa musadzi o di puta nga

dzila thundu dza mukegulu.

A ri, 'Mme anga!' (Ndi ene ala Maguvhu.) 'Luya lushumo ndo shuma?'

Ha pfi, 'Ii gi shumile nwanaga.'

Ha pfi, 'Zwino, vhone a vha vuwi vha la?'

Vha ri, 'Hai nwanaga, ke a lwala.'

'Tsua, tsua mma!'

A ri, 'Hauwa nwanaga, ke a lwala.'

Ha pfi, 'Sssp!' Radzhimu u khou kapula mme! A tshi fhedza fhala, a tshi vuwa nga matsheloni. U khou bva u ya u zwima.

Musidzana a ri, 'Malo!' Avha a tshi vuwa musidzana, a tamba a fhelela. A dzhia thundu dzawe dzila a ambara. A dzhia hedzila thundu dza mukegulu a fhahela hafhala muthambini. Musidzana a bva na murumba. Hezwi a tshi bva, a ima hafha munangoni. A ri,

[Musimi]

Radzhimu u lile mmae!

[Vhabvumeli]

Ka ri ke tshelana-tshelana mmae!

Radzhimu a ri, 'Malo! Houla musadzi o vhulaha mme anga!' Ari a tshi vhuya a vhuya ngau gidima. A tshi da mudini a wana musidzana u khou lidza murumba a sokou ri, teda. 'Radzhimu u lile mmae! ...'

Houla musadzi na munna vha na madambi vhothe. Avha a tshi vhea madi. A tshi swika musidzana a wana mulambo wo dala. A ri,

[Musimi]

Tshiwawa khoba-khoba-khoba!

[Vhabvumeli]

[Vhabvumeli]

Khoba-khoba-khoba!

Ala madi a mbo di fhira avha a tshi tuwa. Hezwi a tshi yo gidima. A wana thavha yo ima khei. A ri, 'Yowee! Radzhimu u khou swika zwino!' A ri,

[Musimi]

Ndou pada- pada- pada!

[Vhabvumeli]

Pada- pada-pada!

Heila miri ya balangana. Thavha ila yavha i tshi tuwa. A tshi tuwa, a vha u wana tshikwara. A ri, 'Yowee, yowee! Ndi hone nne ndo tambula. Ndi do tou ita hani? Nne, wee!' Ndi hezwi a tshi dovha u huwelela futhi. A ri, 'Ndou kha ide i pade tshikwara!' Ndou ndi u fhedza hii, a vha a tshi tuwa musidzana.

A swika a vhea masefo. Hezwi a tshi vhea masefo a tshi swika henefho a wana masefo kheo. A ri,

[Musimi]

Pfuko pfuka-pfuka-pfuka!

[Vhabvumeli]

Pfuka-pfuka-pfuka!

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

Mukundi o guda ngudo

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu shangoni hu si na maḁi. Shango lo tou oma loṁthe heḁi.

Ho vha hu na vhatukana vhavhili. Ndi Johannesi na Samuele. Khotsi avho ndi Vho-Mavhetha. Vha na vhatukana vhavhili havha. Vha na kholomo dzavho. Zwino, kholomo dzi khou gwadama shango loṁthe. A hu na maḁi u tuwa hoṁthe.

Hoyu mukomana, hoyu: Vha sokou ri, 'Idonu bva na kholomo ni ye hangei mani. Vholisa, vholisa, a tshi vhuya nga madekwana. Kholomo dzi khou nembelela.'

Hei, zwino, hoyu mutuku, hoyu u na vhuṁtolo na madambi awe. Hoyu mutuku a mbo ḁi ri, 'Baba, kha vha litshe, ndi tuwe nahasi mani. Haa! Anga dzi kona, u ḁo dzifha-ni hu si na maḁi?'

A mbo ḁi tuwa mutukana, a tshi tuwa a mbo ḁi godima thavha ya Madzhawu. Hu na gandwa la Madzhawu. Zwino, kholomo dzi sokou ḁa dzi tshi fembedza maḁi haala a kale-kale. Haa, mutukana a mbo ḁi mona-mona, mona-mona. A vhuya a mbo ḁi ima heneḁhala, ndi hoyu mutuku u na madambi awea u bvisa maḁi hafhala gambani. A imba, a ri,

[Musimi]

Mamvula tembelele.

[Vhabvumeli]

Mamvula tembelele.

Haala maḁi, zwino, a mbo ḁi tou bva gandwa la mbo ḁi tou ri phaa! Kholomo dza Vho-Mavhetha dza nwa thovhela.

Hezwi dzi tshi yo vhuya dangani shango la mangala la Folovhodwe. La ri, 'Dza Vho-Mavhetha dzo nona ngaurali, mulandu? Dzi khou la mini?' Vha ḁa vha ri, 'Vho-Mavhetha, naa kholomo dzavho dzo tou nona ngaurali dzi khou la mini?'

Vhone vha ri, 'Vhone, dzo bva na mutukana mulovha. A thi divhi uri o dzi lisa ngafhi. Haa, dzi khou nya matshimba thovhela. Vha khou hama mafhi mani.' Ngauralo-ngauralo.

Zwino, ha ri liṁwe ḁuvha Vho-Mavhetha vha ri, 'Hai, onoyu ṁwana, onoyu: Imani ndi bve nadzo nṁe.' Vha vha vha a dzi khada Vho-Mavhetha. Vha ya henengei Madzhawu. Dzi khou gidima dzi ya henengei gandwani. Dzi khou swika dzi khou sokou fembedza. Vhone vhaa dzi khada, kholomo a dzi tendi u ya hangei ḁakani. Vha ima vha ri duu! 'Ei, afha fhethu hu tshi nga hu khou nukha maḁi!' Haa, vha ri, 'Ndi uri kholomo hedzi ndi kale nga maanda hu si na maḁi.'

Vha swoge kholomo, vha vhuye, dzi khou lila. Vha ri, 'Iwe, mutukana! Ndi ngani hedzi kholomo ndi tshi swoga fhala gandwani, dzi sa tendi na u bva?'

A ri, ndi u ri, 'Haa, vhone vha-mukalaha, a vha koni u lisa.'

Ula-vho a ri, 'Matshelo ndi ḁo bva nadzo.'

Ndi mukomana hoyo, avha a tshi bva nadzo kholomo, u ya henengei Madzhawu. Kani ndi tou ita hani, kholomo dzi khou sokou lila. Dzi khou ḁa heneḁhala gandwani. U a soga u a vhuya nadzo. 'Haa, nṁe, kholomo Vho-Mavhetha: Nṁe a thi tsha dzi lisa, dzi ḁo lisiwa nga onoyu mutuku.'

Vhone vha ri, 'Iwe ṁwananga, nṁe na nṁe mulovha dzo ntambudza zwone dzi si na na maḁi lini.' Ula a mbo ḁi ri, 'Kha vha ime, ndi bve nadzo.' Vhono sala fhala, vha ri, 'Hoyu mutukana, ndi nyaga u mulonda nga murahu. Ndi vhone hafho hune a khou ya u twa hone.'

A tuwa nadzo mutukana. U vhuya o kuvha thundu dzawe dzo tshena. Vhaṁwe nṁa afha vha khou sedza. Haa, a tshi bva nadzo mutukana, dza la, dza la, li tshi tou-ri, ee. Nga ma-afternoon zwino. A tshi ḁa fhala u khou dovha u khou tshina, 'Mamvula

tembelele ...' Haala maḍi ndi u dovha ndi u tou bva.

Vhone vha ri, 'Hoo, mutukana wanga. Ndi hezwi! Vha vha vha tshi ri nana vha tshi ḍa nga murahu hawe. A tshi tou ri, 'Ee! A sokou ima a tshi sokou rali.'

Vha ri, 'Mathina iwe ḥwananga, u khou ri riṅe ri khou tambula, mathina iwe u khou ita aya mafhungo a maḍi.'

Hai, no, vho bva na vhaḥwe vha havho futhi vhaḥwe vha pfi Vho-Elias. Vha ri, 'Hai khona, hoyu ḥwana, hoyu u tou vha na milandu.' Havhaḷa munna ndi u tuwa. Vha ya vha ramba mmbi ya musanda. Vha ramba shango lothe ḷa vhuya kha ḷa mutukana. Vha ri, 'Hoyu mutukana, kholomo ndi ene ane a khou nwise, a khou ita maḍi haya.'

Ndi hezwi shango lothe ḷi tshi mufha kholomo, kholomo, a tshi fhiwa kholomo, mutukana a tshi fhiwa kholomo. Vha ri, 'Kha imbelele.' Mutukana a tshina, a tshi tshina 'Mamvula tembelele ...' A tshinela shango lothe.

Ndi hezwi lungano lu tshi fhela o no fha vhatu maḍi.

Vho-Nḍou vho guda ngudo

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu si na maḍi shangoni. Zwino, hedzi kholomo na phukha dzi khou nyaga maḍi. Vha kuvhangana vha langana. Vho-Tholo vhothe na Vho-Nḍou na vhothe vha ri, 'Zwino, maḍi ri tou ita hani? A ri yo gwa mulamboni.'

Vha tshi swika mulamboni. Vha tshi gwa, maḍi ha bveleli. Zwino, hetshi Tshibode tsha ḍa tshi tshi khou tshimbila. 'Zwino, no kuvhangana afha vhanna, ni khou nyanga mini?'

Vha ri, 'Ri khou nyaga maḍi. A huna na maḍi mulamboni.'

Tsha ri, 'Kha ri gwe.'

Vha ri, 'Haa, riṅe ro edzisa a ri vhoni na tshithu.'

Tsha ri, 'Nṅe ndi khou nyangau edzisa ndi gwe.'

Vha ri, 'Haa! Henewe u na milenzhe mituku-tuku, u nga vhuya wa gwa mulindi ra wana maḍi?'

Tsha ri, 'Hai khona, mani, ndi a edzisa!' Tshavha tshi tshi dzhena nga ngomu. Havhaḷa vhatu vho no gwa bidzhana.

[Musimi]

Fulugudu!

[Vhabvumeli]

Maḍi a bvelela!

Havha hu khou thoma ha bva thophe. Hu tshi bva thophe fhaḷa, vhanna vha ri, 'Haa, kha vha vhuelele mani! A ngavha maḍi a tshi ḍo bva! Tsha dovha tsha vhuelele futhi.'

Havhaḷa Vho-Nḍou vha khou ri, 'Tshibode a tshi nga iti tshithu. Tshi khou tou rundela mirundo nga ngomu mani!'

Tsha ri, 'A thongo rundela mirundo, hafha ndi khou tou gwa ni tshi khou mmbona-vho.' Ndi havha Vho-Muzhou, ngauri vha na lunyadzo ngau vhona tshi tshituku.

Tsha dovha tsha vhuelela, 'Fulugudu! Maḍi a bvelela! ...' Tshi vho dzhena nga ngomu zwino. Haala maḍi tesu-tesu ... Maḍi ndi u bva kha hetshila tshibode. Vhanna vho sokou farelela mulumo. Vha ri, 'Dani u vhona!' Vho-Nḍou vha ri, 'Hai!'

Zwino, tsha dzhena nga ngomu. Haala maḍi o no bvelela. Tshi khou nyaga u tamba thophe.

Vho-Nḍou vha ri, 'No, hai-hai, nṅe ndi nga si tambelwe nga tshithu hetshi mani!' Vha tshi doba vha tshi latela hangei kule!

Hai, vhanna vha ri, 'A si zwone hezwi zwithu vhone, vha muhulwane. Vha songo ita hezwo. Ro vha ri tshi khou ḍoḍa maḍi ri sa a wani. Zwino, hoyu munna o ri thusa.'

Haa, vhaḷa vha ri, 'Kha vha ḁe vhone. Vha thome vha ḷambe. Ri ḁo nwa ngauri ri khou lila maḁi. A ri a wani.'

Havha vhaḅwe vho kuvhangana heneffho. Zwino, ndi hezwi vha tshi ḁa tshi tshi ḷamba tsha ḷamba! Uri fhedza-ha, tshibode tsha dzula nga hangei. Vhaḅwe vha khou ka maḷari. Vha khou tshi adzela uri tshi dzule havhuḁi ngauri tsho ri fha maḁi. Ndi hezwi tshi tshi dzula maḷarini. Haa, vhatu vhaḷa vha khou dzhena nga ngomu. Vha khou nwa aḷa maḁi.

Na Vho-Nḁou vho no vhofoholowa nga u pfa vhaḅwe vhatu vha shango vhoḥe vha sa tendi uri Tshibode tshi ḷatiwe ngauri ndi tshone tsho bvisaho maḁi.

Ha mbo ḁi vha u fa ha lungano.

Munna o waho

Salungano, salungano!

Hafha fhethu, vhone vho rali, vha na mufumakadzi wavho. Hoyu mufumakadzi wavho u na khaladzi. Zwino, ena khaladzi, vhone vha na dambi ḷine vha konou vhidza nḁou i hangei ḁakani ya ḁa khavho vha i vhona.

Zwino, ḷiḅwe ḁuvha vha ri, 'Kha ri ḷuwe roḥe hangei nḁa.' Vha bva vhoḥe na mulamu wavho. Hoyu khaladzi wa musadzi wavho, vha tshi swika hangei, vha ri, 'Aa! Iwe! Nḅe ndi a vhidza dzinḁou, vha i vhona.'

Uḷa a ri, 'Haa! Ya?'

A ri, 'Ee!' Vha ri, 'Namela hafha!'

Vha dzhia thanda. Hu na tombo ḷihulu nga maanḁa ḷilapfu uri nḁou itshi ḁa hafhaḷa a sa shavhe. A namela, a namela hafhaḷa nḥa.

Vha ri, 'Mulamu, ndi khou ḷuwa zwino. Ndi khou ya u i khada. Ni songo shavha, ni sokou dzula heneffho, ni ḁo ḁi vhona ḷi tshi ḁa.'

A ri, 'Hoo.'

Vha vha tshi ḷuwa. Vha tshi swika hangei, vha shanduka, vha shanduka, vha ita nḁou! Vha vhuya vha khou imbelela. Vha ri,

[Musimi]

Ahee, mulamu: Wa vhona zhou.

Ahee-aa, woza tuke

Hai! Bvunga-bvunga!

[Vhabvumeli]

Nzhenzhe-kunzhe!

Hezwi i tshi khou rali i tshi bvunga-bvunga. I khou rovha miri, i khou hovha miri, i tshi ḷaḥa hangei kule! (Zwino, hezwi ndi tshi ri bvunga-bvunga, ni tou ri e nyana ni tou imba zwavhuḁi. Ndi ḁo pfa ni tshibvumela.) 'Hee, mulamu, wee, hee, wa vhona zhou ...'

Ndi hezwi houḷa mulamu, vhone vha tshi ḷuwa, vha swika vha ita muthu. Uḷa o sokou dzula heneffhaḷa, a ri, 'Ee! Vhone vho vha vhe gai?' Vha ri, 'Hei, nḅe ndovha ndi tshi ofha, ndo namela thavha heḷa, hango mmbona? Ndo namela ḷa thavha!' 'Hai, itsai, ri ḷuwe.' Hezwi zwi tshiralo fhala.

Vha tshi vhuya uḷa muthannga a ri, 'Hei, nḅe, namusi Vho-Mavhetha vho ntshumbedza nḁou.'

'Aa, wai vhona gai?'

A ri, 'Aa, ndo namela tombo ḷihulu. Nda vhona ḷi tshi ḁa ḷinḁou. ḷi tshi kuvhanganya miri, ḷi tshi kuvhanganya miri, ḷi tshi ḷaḥela kule hangei! Ndo ḁi dzula heneffhaḷa nḥa ha tombo.'

Houla mungana a ri, 'Zwa vhukuma! Na nne, matshelo ni vhidze Vho-Mavhetha, ri tuwe rothe. Ndi nyaga u vhona ndou.'

A tshi da kha vhone vha ri, 'Iwe a u nga wi?'

A ri, 'Haa, a thi nga vhuyi nda wa mungana wanga, khezwi o i vhona. A tshi nde ndi ntha ha toambo.'

A ri, 'Hai khona, u songo shavha wa fhufha u do vunde. Iwe u sokou dzula henefho, hezwi u tshi li vhona li tshi da. Li tshi padula miri, li tshi padula miri, u songo shavhani!'

Vho-Mavhetha ndi u bva na ula mutukana. Vha tshi swika henefha, ndi u tika thanda ila. Ula mutukana ndi u namela lila toambo.

Vha ri, 'Ndi khou tuwa. Hii! Ndi khou ya u dzi swoga. Mara i do da i nthi.' Vha swika Vho-Mavhethangei ndi u shanduka, ndi u ita ndou. Vha vha vha tshi vhuya vha khou vhidzelela, 'Ahee, mulamu: Wa vhona zhou ...'

Ngoho, ula mutukana ndi u mbo di fhufha! Hezwi a tshi fhufhela fhasi, ula mutukana, milenzhe fovhe thumbuni!

Vho-Mavhetha, vha tshi zwi vhona, vha ri, 'Yowee! Nwana wa vathu! Wee, nne-nne!' Vho-Mavhetha ndi u swika ndi u shanduka. Ndi u vhuya vhonevha muthu.

'Iwe, Pitiroso! Pitiroso! Wee! Hee! Ndi ngeno!' Vha tshi swika vha wana ula nwana o wa o vunde. Milenzhe yo fovhela thumbuni. Vho-Mavhetha a vha tsha kona uri vha nga ri mini.

Vha vhuya, ula nwana vho mubeba. Vha tshi mubeba, vha tshi muisa ha hawe. Vha ri, 'Yowee! Nne ndo thuba nwana hangei dakani o tou wa.' U ri, 'Ndo vha ndo namela muri. Ndi hezwi nne ndi tshi vho mubeba ndi tshi vho vhuya nae.'

Hu uri vhe Vho-Mavhetha vha vhone vho mukungaho a tshi do vunde a tshi shavha ndou.

Ndi hone u fa ha lungano.

Nwana wa mbilu

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na muthannga a na musidzana wawe. Hoyu musidzana wawe u khou di ya hone henengei ha vho-makhulu. A tshi swika hangei ha vho-makhulu, u khou nyaga musidzana wawe. Mathina havha vho-makhulu a vha mufuni. Vha bika vhuswa na muroho vha isa hangei nduni.

Vha tshi swika hangei nduni, hoyu muthannga u na tshinoni tshawe. Tshinoni hetshi, tshi a amba. O bva natsho hayani. Khotsi awe na mme awe vha a divha nga tshinoni hetshi. Vha a divha uri una tshinoni. Hoyu nwana u tshimbila na tshinoni.

Zwino, nahasi zwi tshi vho ralo fha ndi hezwi vho-makhulu vha tshi shela mushonga kha muroho, vha litsha vhuswa. Hezwi muthannga a tshi yo la, tshinoni tsha da. Tsha ri,

[Musimi]

Nwana u na mbilu.

Vhuswa u le zwau.

Muroho u lenge.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Mutshavhona, we dada!

[Vhabvumeli]

Mutshavhona dada!

Hai, a litsha houla muroho, a la vhuswa fhedzi. Hauwa, houla nwana a tuwa a ya hayani. A tshi swika hangei hayani, a dzula maduvha nyana.

A dovha futhi u a vhuya, u khou di vhuya e ethe. A tshi swika ha vho-makhulu. U khou da u nyaga musidzana wawe. Vho-makhulu a vha mufuni musi a tshi dzhia hoyu musidzana. Vha ri, 'Nahasi, ngauri vhuswa, o ri longa vhuswani.' Vha longa vhuswani.

Tshinoni tshi khou zwivhona uri vha khou longa mushonga vhuswani. Hai, vha tshi tou svela nnda, a tshi tamba zwanda uri ndi a thoma u la futhi. Tshavha tshi a bva. Tsha ri, 'Nahasi u songo la vhuswa, i la muroho.'

[Musimi]

Nwana u na mbilu.

Muroho u le zwau.

Vhuswa u vhu lenge.

Ti-ti-dolilo, mutshavhona we dada!

[Vhabvumeli]

Mutshavhona dada!

Hai, a mbo di litsha vhuswa vhu la, a la muroho fhedzi. A tshi la muroho fhedzi, tshinoni tsha dovha hafhu tsha vhu lela tshikwamani. Tsha dzula nga ngomu tshikwamani. Hai, zwa mbo di fhela zwo di ralo.

Zwino, a tshi yo vhuya holwu lwa vhuraru, a khou da u vHINGA. U khou di tshimbila e ethe. Vha ri, 'Hoo, mutukana uyu, namusi ha nga tuwi, ri do mulatisa.' A thi ri, ho pfi a le muroho fhedzi, vhuswa a songo la ngauri ho longwa mushonga nga tshinoni hetshila. Ene a konyolola matanda ndevheni. A ri, 'Tshinoni tshi khou dina badi, mani. Tshi nyaga uri ndi sa dzhie musidzana wanga.'

Ndi hezwi vho-makhulu vha tshi disa zwiliwa. Vha shela mushonga kha muroho, hangei kha vhuswa vha sa shele. A tshi tamba zwanda, a tshi ri ndi a la. Tsha mbo di bva tshikwamani. Na tshone tshi dzhena sambeloni tsha tamba. Vho shela mushonga zwino hafhala kha muroho. A vho ngo tsha shela kha vhuswa. A tshi tou ri ndi nwate vhuswa, tshavha tshi a thoma. Tshi khou imba tsha ri,

[Musimi]

Nwana u na mbilu.

Vhuswa u le zwau.

Muroho u lenge.

Ti-ti-dolilo! Mutshavhona, we dada!

[Vhabvumeli]

Mutshavhona dada!

A ri, 'Wragetag!' A dzhia tshinoni. A svela natsho ngei nnda. A swika a tshi kanda nga matombo! A tshi kanda nga matombo, a vha u a vhuya.

A tshi tou vhuya henefhala, a tshi ri ndi a longa tshanda fhala vhuswani tsha dovha tsha imba futhi, 'Nwana u na mbilu ...' A ri, 'Wragetag, tshinoni a tshi pfi itshi!' A vha tshi tshi dzhia a swika a tshi kanda a tshi fhisa! A tshi tou fhisa fhala, a tshi tou vhuya. A tshi tamba zwanda a tshi ri ndi nwate, tsha vha tsho dovha, 'Nwana u na mbilu ...'

Hai, ula muthannga, zwino, o sokou ima ha tsha divha uri a ite mini. A ri, 'Tshinoni itshi, nne a thina mushumo na zwine tsha khou amba, ndi a la zwithu hezwi.' 'Nwana u na mbilu ...'

Nwana ula a tshi la, u vho ri ndi a tuwa hayani. A tshi tshimbila-tshimbila, tshone tshinoni tshi nae. Tshi kha divha tshikwamani. Hezwi a tshi pepeleka! A tshi wa, a fa!

Ndi hezwi tshi tshi tuwa, tsha gidima tsha swika tsha ima ntha ha muri. Tshinoni tsha imba tshi tshi khou vhudza vha hayani. Tshi vhudza mme na khotsi, 'Nwana u na mbilu ...'

Vha ri, 'Mulandu ndi mini? Tshinoni tshi tshi tou imba ngaurali? Nwana washu

angavha o fa? Hufha tshi tshi ri ho longwa mushonga? Haa, imani, ri londe!’

Vhone vha takuwa na mukegulu, vha tshi tshimbila. Tshone tshi phanda. Tshi khou di kavha tshi tshi vha imela, tshi tshi imba. Tshi tshi tuwa, asizwila! Tshi tshi swika henehala. Vha wana ula nwana o lovha. Vha ri, ‘Yowee! Nwana washu o lovha!’ Ndi hezwi vha tshi tuwa nae. Vha tshi swika hayani. Vha swika vha mugwela.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

Munna a tshi hana u tshina

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu na muthannga a na vhuhwe hawe ha vho-makhulu. Zwino, a tuwa a tshi yo dala ha vho-makhulu. Vho-makhulu vho inga halwa. Vha tshi inga halwa, vha khou ingela mukwasha, a de ri muvhone.

Haiwa, mukwasha a vha a tshi swika. A tshi swika fhala, a swielelwa nduni. A tshi nga matshelo, halwa hono vhila, thi ri. Vhathu vho dala khoroni. Vha khou nwa halwa. Hu khou tshiniwa hangei nda.

Zwino, hu tshi tshiniwa hangei nda, vhasidzana khevha vha ri, ‘Iwe, a u takuwi wa tshina?’ Vhanwe vha tshi khou tshina ngei nda. Zwino, houla mukwasha u khou ofha u yo tshina hangei nda.

Zwino, vhasidzana vha khou sokou ri, ‘Hai, iyani ni yo tshina nandi, iyani ni yo tshina, ri do da ra ni bvumela.’ U fhelela henefho. Vha khou tuwa na houla mukwasha.

Vha khou swika, vha khou muadzela dzithovho. Mukwasha ndi udzula. Vha di takuwani nandi, a ni takuwi na tshina? Ngauri o tou pfa uri ndi do haniwa nga musidzana, a si u takuwa. Avha a tshi luthoma luimbo lwawe,

[Musimi]

Lule-lule-haa, lule-lule, Vhukalanga.

Lule-lule-haa, lule-lule, Mutshangana.

Zwa mukadzi:

A zwi lengiwi wa zwilega zwina.

Shima!

[Vhabvumeli]

Lavhelela dzhatsha!

Linowa lihulu li no fhodza

[Musimi]

Vho-khotsi vha a fa.

Ndo do dzhia nanga.

Nda da, u songo ntshavha.

Thi nga shavhi nanga.

[Vhabvumeli]

Talavhanda.

Hoyu wa u thoma o shavha. Hezwi a tshi shavha, hu tshi da hoyu mutuku. A da a imbelela sa zwezwila, Vho-khotsi vha a fa ...

Yavha i tshi khou bva, ndi nowa. Ya da ya mutanda-tanda-tanda-tanda! Ya vhea thoho hafha ntha ha thoho yawe.

A vha a tshi khou vhuya hengei a tshi khou imbelela. A tshi khou di imbelela, a tshi ri, ‘Ndo vhuya na nanga.’

A da na heila nowa. Ya da ya bva khae, ya tanda khotsi awe! Havhala khotsi vha

vuwa, vha fhola.

A dovha a mbo dii hwala futhi, a tshi i vhuedzedza hangei bakoni. Haa, a tshi vhuya hangei, khotsi vha mu fha madanga, zwothe na dzitshelede vha mu fha.

Ha mbo vha u fa ha lungano.

Nyamukamadi Ndou

Ludzimu

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na n̄wana na mme. Zwino, hoyu mme awe vha lovha. Vha tshi lovha fhala, a sala na mukomana wawe. Zwino, houla murathu wawe, u na u hahelwa na u hu divha hafhala fhethu.

A ri, 'Haa, hufha ndo tou sala ndi nthihi. Ndi khwine n̄ne ndi tshi tuwa ndi ye ha n̄wana wa mme anga.' Ngoho, a swika mani. Houla n̄wana a tangana na lukegulu mulamboni.

Holuya lukegulu lwa ri, 'Musidzana, ni khou ya gai?'

Musidzana a ri, 'Ndi khou wela hafho seli.'

Ula a ri, 'Idani ni nkhuṭe zwanu musidzana.'

Ula ndi u huṭa. Thi ri, ha divhi tshithu, ndi u muhuṭa. A tshi muhuṭa, lwari puru nambate, lwa nambatela houla musidzana. Ula musidzana thovhela onovha mukegulu, lwone lwonovha musidzana lwo takatela na malungu lwo tou nakelela.

U ya swika mudini. A sendela tsini na n̄wana wa mme awe. A sendela a tshi khou lila o lavhelesa n̄wana wa mme awe. A lila o lavhelesa n̄wana wa mmeawe!

A ri, 'Inwi ni khou sokou lila. Ulwu lukegulu lutshena-tshena lu na nnda. Zwino, lu khou sendela tsini na n̄ne! Lu khou nyaga mini?'

Ula a sokou sendela mani, tsini na n̄wana wa mme awe. Haa, mme awe vha zwivhona zwauri hoyu n̄wana wanga ha khou divha hoyu murathu ngauri ono shandukiswa nga holwu lukegulu onovha na nnda.

'Ndi khwine n̄ne ndi tshi sendela tsini, n̄ne mme awe.' Hai, ngoho, mme vha sendela tsini vha dzula n̄tha ha muri. Vha ri,

[Musimi]

Gurundu mudzindele.

Wa dzhia n̄wana wa mmai.

Wa dzhia mutsinda zwetswe.

Wa dzhia wa longa mumba.

Wa dzhia wa longa nduni.

[Vhabvumeli]

Wa lila nduni.

Ula n̄wana mukomana wa hone a ri, duu. A ri, 'Haa! Haa! Hii! N̄wana wa mme anga ndi hoyu mani! Hai, n̄wana wa mme anga! Vhannani wee! Hele liivha li khou mmbudza li ri, hu na n̄wana wa mme anga. Ndi khou dzhia nda muita zwi si zwavhudi. Zwino, hoyu wa mutsinda ndi khou mudzhenisa nduni. Ho fanela hu holuya lukegulu mani.'

Houla mukomana wa houla ni o itwaho tshidaela. Ndi lwone mani, avha a tshi takuwa houla musidzana. A swika a ri, 'Takuwani, takuwani inwi! Ho gwiwa nando!' Ya gwiwa mulindi ya dzhenisiwa dzikhuni hapfi, 'Lu do sutuka nga u pfa mulilo u tshi vhavha.'

Haa, ha pfi, 'Yaa! Vhoinwi! Dzhenani hafha! Tshimbilani inwi! Thomani inwi! Inwi no ambaraho thomani!'

Haa, lu tshi tou ri nandoni, heneila nandoni khulu. Lwa swika lwari muliloni puvhuu! Lwa nyengelela, luya lukanda sutu! Lwa dzhena kha ula n̄wana wa mme awe.

Houla mukomana wawe a takala nga maanda. A sea mani. A ri, 'Hitshi, ndi tshi tou dzhia dithu line ndi si lidivhe li khou tshatshama nnda? Zwino, khoyu n̄wana wa mme anga. Kha de ngeno n̄wana wa mme anga.' A mudzhia a mudzhenisa nga ngomu nduni. A mufha zwiliwa a la a fura.

A ri kha lukegulu, 'Iwe, iwe yo dzula hafhala, u songo tsha dovha wa kanda hafha lini.' Lwa swika lwa diposa nga ngomu duvhani. Holuya lukegulu lwa takuwa lwa swika lwa dola miora, lwa dola miora, lwa dola miora, lwa dzula henefhala miorani, dzumbudzani, henefhala tshithuluni huno thuphwa miora.

A ri, 'U songo tsha dovha wa kanda hafha lini! Ndi khou fha nwana wa mme anga zwiliwa.' Holuya lukegulu lwa sokou dzula lwo sokou omelela ndi lutshena-tshena. Muvhala walwo u sokou fana na mavu.

A ri, 'Haa, ndi do u lugisa, u ngasi kande lini. U dzula ena nando. Nando i dzula hafha, na nwana wa mme awe u dzula hafha zwino mudini. 'Ndi do u latisa.'

Haa, ngoho, luya lukegulu lwa sokou dzula henefhala lu khou ri ndi do fhiwa zwiliwa, ndi do poseliwa.

A dzhia nwana wa mme awe a ri, 'Haa, thi tsha lunyaga holwu lukegulu. Ri sokou lu litsha henefhala, lu do fa nga duvha.'

Haa, nwana wa mme awe o dzula henefhala. U khou la zwiliwa. O takala nga maanda ha mukomana wawe.

Ha mbo di vha lungano luya lu khou fa.

U la na zwipuka zwa daka

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na musadzi. Hoyu musadzi ovha e mubva. Ovha a sa funi mafhungo a u shuma. Ovha a tshi pfana na mafhungo a u bikela zwipuka. Nahasi ngoho, a tshimbila-tshimbila, a tshi nga sa nwana asapfiho.

Hezwi li tshi kovhela nga madekwana, vha ri, 'Naa Mugele u gai-naa?'

'Nne a ri divhi, ri ne rovha ri khou tamba nae henefha-henefha.'

Ngoho, ula nwana a khou di tshimbila, a khou di tshimbilela, a tangana na ndau.

Ndau ya ri, 'Ni khou ya gai mukololo?'

Ula a ri, 'Iwe! Nne a thi na na mufarisi mani!' (Mufarisi u khou amba muñwe.)

Ula a ri, 'Zwino, ni nga si mpfune?' Ndi heila ndau.

Houla musidzana a ri, 'Nne ndi ni funa nga maanda mani! A si vhone Vho-Ndau?'

Vha ri, 'Ee, ndi nne munna wa maanda mahulu!'

Ha pfi, 'Hee, nne a thi a thu vhona munna wa u naka ngaaurali.' Ha pfi, 'Zwino, vho fara mini hezwo zwe vha fara?'

Vha ri, 'Izwi, hezwi zwe nda fara ndi mbila. Zwino, ni nga si de na mmbikela musidzana?'

Ha pfi, 'Zwino mudini wavho vhone Vho-Ndau ndi nga ngai?'

'Hafhala Madzhawani. Ni khou vhona fhala Madzhawani, fhala tsini na thavha, henefhala tsini na thavha. Nne ndi dzula tsini na thavha, ndi hone mudini wanga.' (Hu khou ambiwa mabako.)

Zwino, haa, ula musidzana ndi u mbo di ri murahu. U swika vha swika-ha muhulwane vha ri, 'Zwino, kha vhammbikele hafhu vhuswa musidzana.' Ula musidzana a dzhena fhasi thovhela. A bika vhuswa, a bika vhuswa, a bika vhuswa! Avhu vhetshela ngei kule.

Ha pfi, 'A sevhedze, a tou thoma nga u ntsevhedza tshiakha na zwivhindi, a dise ngeno.'

Ndilo dza hone matombo. Ha swika ha dzhiwa ndilo dzila dza matombo. Ha vheiwa vhuswa. Ha dzhiwa nama ya sevhedzelwa henefhala.

Ha pfi, 'Kha dise ngeno.'

Ha pfi, 'Haa, izwo zvevha fara ndi mini?' Ndi houla musidzana.

Ula a ri, 'Aa, ndi mbila dzanga.'

Ha pfi, 'Dani u nndidzela ndi do pfa.'

[Musimi]

Tseke-wee-ntseke.

[Vhabvumeli]

Madanda a vhila-vhila.

Ha pfi, 'Munna wanga, vhannani! A ri tou khisana! Yuwiyuwiyuwi! Ndi vha funela zwenezwi. Munna ndi do muwana gai? Munna wa u naka? Ane a tou lidza nda pfa na mitodzi yanga i tshi tou ri mburu-mburu! Vho-Ndau, ngoho, ndi khou tou vha funesa.' Ha pfi, 'Yuwi! Zwino, ndi vha disele?' Ha pfi, 'Khezwi, khezwi zwiliwa.'

U tou tuwa, u tou nekedzela, u tou isa na zwanda zwavhudi. A swika, a vhea, a losha. Ya la, ya la, ya la!

Zwino, havho Vho-Ndau havha, hezwi vho no la, vha a vuwa nga matshelo. Ha pfi, 'Mufumakadzi wanga, hezwi ndi tshi vhuya-ii, mbila dzanga ni songo dzi farani.'

Ha pfi, 'Ee!'

Houla musidzana a ri, 'Aa, u anya! U khouri nne ndi do funa ene ano sokou mpha nama fhedzi. Nne ndi nyaga na tshikoli.' Ula musidzana tali ndi u tuwa, u ya mulamboni. U yo ka madi, u wana tshinungu.

'Vhone ndi vhone vho nnyi-ha? U khou vhona mavhala ala habe! 'Ifha vhone ndi tshi ri ndi a vha fara vha mphaya?'

Ha pfi, 'Houla munna wanu houla wa ndau, ni tshi khou ri nia mufuna, nia mufuna. Nne ndi nga mudia nga maanda, ndi nga mudia nda mububudza.'

Ha pfi, 'Vhanga mudia? Onoula wa mano mangafha na manala mangafha? Na mufara inwi nungu inwi?'

Ha pfi, 'Ai, idani ni dzhie tshikoli!' A swika ula musidzana ndi u fhiwa tshikoli. Ha pfi, 'Yaa! Ndi do swika ndi tshi otsha!'

'Mara ndi sala murahu ha inwi. Inwi ndi khou ni vhona uri ni vho penya badi. Ni khou tou la mini?'

Ha pfi, 'Nne ndi khou la zwivhindi na zwiakha. Haa, mihwaba hone tshi ambi-lini, yo tou dala yo tou rali.'

Ha pfi, 'Kha ri tshimbile.' Hii, tshinungu tshi ri,

[Musimi]

Ri bve, ri dzhena!

[Vhabvumeli]

Bvulela danda!

Ha pfi, 'Holu luimbo lwanu lwo naka: Ri bve, ri dzhena ...'

Matsina ndi Vho-Ndau vha khou vhuya vha khou dodela, i khou dodela havhala Vho-Tshinungu. Vho-Tshinungu fhala vha tshi ndi ri, 'Onoyu muthu wa mato matswuku-tswuku-tswuku-tswuku! Nne, mara ndi nga munambatela, mani!'

Ha pfi, 'Kha vha sendele tsini, ndo vha wanetshedza namusi! Vhone, ndi vhone vho no sala na musadzi wanga vha tshi mufha tshikoli. Ndi do vha wana namusi! Ndi u vhone iwe tshinungu!'

Tshinungu tsha ri, 'Wa tshete! Wa tshete! Wa tshete!' Tsha vaya ndau kha zwanda. Tsha sala tsho nambatela henefhala na mipfa thovhela!

Vho-Ndau vha tshi ri, 'Kani-kani-kani-kani! Ndi thiraye ndi tshi dise nga fhasi! Ndi tshi die two feet.'

Tshinungu tshi sa ponyoke, tsha nambatela, tsha nambatela.

'Heiwe tshinungu! Ibva tsini hanga u khou mvaya nga mipfa mani!'

Tsha ri, 'Thi nga do vhuya nda u litsha, tsha nambatela!'

Hai, ndi do tshilatisa arali tshi sa ndivhi zwavhudi. Tshavha tshi tshi dzhenisa lino zwino. Tsha ri tomo! Tshi tshi khou tomola mipfa tshi tshii latela kule. Tshi tshi ri u

fara ıla mipfa tshi tshi i dzhidzhivhula tshi tshi i ılațela kule, ndi ndau zwino. Tshai vula tshai konyongedza, tshai konyongedza, tshai konyongedza ndau, ya konyongedza na ala mano, nga ala mano. Tsha rovhekanya, tsha rovhekanya tshinungu, ya tshi ılațela kule hangei! Tsha vha tshi tshi tuwa.

Ha vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

Tivhani ıla zwifho

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na munna na musadzi a na vhana vha ten. Vhana havhala vha fumi. Zwino, houla munwe a vha a tshi pfi Devhula. Zwino, houla Devhula e ene nwana wau fhedzisela. A tshi nyalea kha vhathu vhothe.

Ula a vhidza vhana. A ri, 'Idani.' Ho vha hu na ndala khulu. Heyo ndala yo vha i khulu nga maanda. A ri, 'Hai, nne, vhana avha ndi do vha fha-ni? Vha do fa musi nga ndala. Ndi khwine ndi tshi vhulaha Devhula. Ndi ene ane nda khou vhona uri u a vhulahea. A fa, havha vhana vhang vha do tshila vhothe.'

Ngoho, a muvhidza ula nwana. Houla nwana a sendela. A mudzhia, a muputekanya. A mudzhenisa mutuluni, a swika a musinda.

[Musimi]

Hayani hanga thi sindi.

[Chorus]

Devhula!

Ula nwana ndi u fa.

Ula a ri, 'Zwino, ro tshila vhananga.' A mufhefhera, a mufhefhera, a mufhefhera! A ri, 'Haya marambo awe, haya, iyani ni yo aposa hangei tshithuluni.' Vha swika vha shela tshithuluni. Vha dzhia nama yawe heilani, vha dzhia vha vhea khali. Vha bika nama yawe, ya ita vhuswa.

Ha pfi, 'Idani-ha! Ri le vhananga!' Vha la vhal, vhana vha takala. Zwifhatuwo zwavho zwa penya.

Khotsi vha vhuya. Vha vhuya vho hwala dzimpfo. Vho fara mbani na dziotshi na dzinzie. Vha ri, 'Idani, ri le! Khezwi vhananga, ndi tshi ri u sedza vhananga, ungari avhaho naa?' Vha ri, 'Munwe u gai? Devhula u gai?'

Vha ri, 'Rine a rongo muvhona, haho hafha-ni.'

Vha ri, 'Ni a zwifha, ni do mmbudza.'

Havhala vhana vha hana. Vha ri, 'Hai!'

Vha ri, 'Zwino, no fura mini?'

Vhala vha ri, 'Hai, nne, mme ashu vho ri fha zwiliwa. Ee, ri tshi khou nwa na tie, ri khou tou nwa na tie. Vha ri itela mukapu, ra la. Zwino, vha ri fhana nzie, ra la. Vha ri fha na notshi na mbani.'

'Ndi zwone zve vha ni fha?'

Vha ri, 'Ee, na zwinwe zwithu a ri divhi uri ndi zwithu-de.'

Vhala vha ri, 'Ho luga, a ri tuwe.'

Ha na mvula khulu. Heila mvula ya na nga maanda! Ya mbo di kumba haala marambo a Devhula. Ya swika ya a isa tivhani. A swika tivhani la tshitangadzime na zwifho. A swika a dzula nga ngomu marambo halani.

Ula a ri, 'Nne, nwananga Devhula, ndi a mufuna. Imani ndi thome ndi tuwe ndi ye hangei tivhani la zwifho, ndi thome ndi yo vhudzisa.' A swika hangei, a swika a imba zwine a imba zwone. A ri, 'Naa nwana wanga u hone-naa?' Ula nwana a fhindula. Ono magiwa nga vha kale-kale vhane a sa vha divhe.

Uḷa a ri, 'Nḡe ndi hone baba. Vho ntsinda, vha nnyita vhukhopfu.'

Vha ri, 'Zwino?'

Vhaḷa vha ri, 'Hai, khavha imbe luimbo.'

A bva khotsi a houḷa ḡwana a huma. Vha ḷa vha swika hayani vha ri, 'Kha ri tuwe. Ri ye hangei tivhani ḷa zwifho.' Vha tuwa na vhakomana vhawe na mme awe.

Vha swikavha ima vha ri, 'Ni ime heneḡho, ni songo sendela tsini na tivha heli.' Vha swika vha imba. Houḷa ḡwana a thomisa, 'Hayani hanga thi sindi ...'

Helia tivha ḷa kukumuwa! Lavha tivha lihulu nga maanda ḷi no ofhisa! La kukumuwa ḷanga thavha ḷa ri, phwaaa! La mubvisela nḡda helia tivha. A bva e ḡwana. Vho vha vha sa tsha mudivha lini. A tshi divhiwa nga khotsi awe na mme awe uri Devhula o vha o tou itisa hani.

A bva a mutshena-tshena-tshena-tshena! O magiwa zwavhudi, na milenzhe yawe, na nayo dzawe, na thoho yawe, na mavhudzi awe zwavhudi!

A ri, 'Ndi ḡne khotsi anga, ndo vhuya. Ndi havhaḷa mme anga vho ntsinda houḷa ḡwaha wa ḡdala. Vha nnyita vhukhopfu. Zwino, ndo vhuya, thi tsha do fa. Thi tsha do dovha nda lovha na luthihi. Ndo tshila tshoḡhe.'

Ndi u fa ha salungano.

Miriam Vhengani

Mufumakadzi tshisimani

Zwino, ha vha hu na muñwe munna. Hoyu munna a tshi khou toḁa mufumakadzi. Zwino, houḁa munna a tshi khou ḁi tshimbila na shango, a khou tshimbila na shango, a tshi khou toḁa musadzi.

Zwino, a swika kha liñwe shango line ḁa vha ḁa kule-kule ḁi no pfi Vhukalanga. O swika hangei Vhukalanga. Zwino, a khou ḁi enda a tshi vhudzisa a wana muñwe mufumakadzi.

A ri, 'Nḁe munna ndi a mu toḁa, mara munna ane nda mu toḁa musi a tshi mmala-i, a thi toḁi u maliwa nga tshelede, a thi toḁi u maliwa nga kholomo, ndi khou toḁa mukumba wa ndau.'

Zwino, houḁa munna a tendelana nazwo. A ri, 'Ho luga, ngauri nḁe ndi khou toḁa musadzi ndi ḁo tshimbila nda toḁa mukumba wa ndau.'

Nangoho, houḁa munna a tuwa, a tuwa, a tuwa, a tuwa, a tuwa, a tuwa, a tuwa! A swika kha liñwe shango. A tshi swika kha liñwe shango, a tshi khou di tshimbila a tshi gonya mivhundu na dzithavha. A tshi lalela na milamboni a swika hune a wana hune ndau dza nwa hone maḁi. A tshi wana hune ndau dza nwa hone maḁi, a lalela hedziḁa ndau dzi tshi tuwa. Hedziḁa ndau musi dzo no tuwa hezwi dzi tshi khou swika hanengei phanda. Houḁa munna a swika a wana hune dza vha dzi tshi khou sia hone vhana. A tshi swika a tshi wana danga lia.

U ri, 'Vhana matsina dzi tshi bva vha sala afha?'

A dzumbamela. O no dzumbamela, hezwi ndau dzi tshi dovha dzi tshi bva dzi tshi tuwa dza ya u zwima dza sia zwidawana. Zwino, dzo no sia hezwiḁa zwidawana. Zwino, hezwiḁa zwidawana hezwiḁa musi zwo sala houḁa munna a wana inwe ndau ine ya vha i tshi khou dzula nga thungo nga hangei. Yo no vha ya kale. Heiḁa ndau a i vhulaya. A ambara mukumba houḁani wa heiḁa ndau.

Zwino, o ambara houḁa mukumba wa ndau, a swika a dzhena hafhalani kha hezwiḁa zwidawana. Zwino, o no dzula hafhalani kha zwidawana hezwiḁa, hedziḁa ndau khulwane musi dzi tshi vho vhuya u zwima dza wana hu na ndau khe. Dza sedza heiḁani ndau. Hezwi musi dzo no sedza heiḁani ndau.

Zwino, dza ri musi dzi tshi vho bva, dza ri, 'Hoyu ndi makhulu muhulwane kha sale na havha vhana. U sala a tshi linda.'

Zwino, a tshi khou linda hanefhala, hedziḁa dzi tshi vuwa dzi tshi tuwa dzi tshi ya u zwima. Houḁa munna a mbo ḁi swutula tshiñwe tshidawana.

Hu uri tshiñwe tshidawana tsha u thanyela thungo tsho mbo ḁi ri, 'Aa! Onoyu muthu ndi makhulu-ḁe a na murungo kha thumbu?'

A tshi khou vhona thumbu yo rungiwa. Ngauri o vha o vhona houḁani mukumba o no vhulaya heiḁani ndau a tou runga hafha kha thumbu.

Zwino, musi o no runga hafhalani kha thumbu. Zwino, kuḁa kwana ku khou tamba ku khou tamba kwa tolela. Kwa ri, 'Aa! Naa ndi makhulu-ḁe onoyo a na murungo kha thumbu?'

Hai, hedziḁa ndau dziñwe khulwane dza ri, 'Hai, iwe bvelai kule hangei ndi makhulu hoyu.' Dza tuwa dzi tshi khou ya u zwima.

Houḁa munna o no sala hafhala a swutula tshiñwe tshidawana. A tshi swutula tshiḁa tshidawana, a shavha. A ri u gidima-i, a ri u gidima-i, a ri u tuwa-i!

Hedziḁa ndau dzi tshi vhuya dzi wana tshiñwe tshidawana a hu na, makhulu a hu na. Dza thoma u londa zwino, dza thoma u londa, dza thoma u londa! A mbo ḁi wana muri a gonya. A tshi wana muri a tshi gonya, hedziḁani ndau dzi tshi swika hafhalani murini. Dza fhira dza vhuya dzi tshi khou londa vhuḁala. Dza swika dza wana uri, hai, muthu ha ngo fhira hafha kha hoyu muri. Dzi tshi sedza nthā dzi wana uri khouḁa nthā- nthā hangei. Hedziḁa ndau dza mbo ḁi lala nga fhasi, dza mbo ḁi lala nga fhasi, dza lala nga

fhasi hanefhala.

Houłani munna a tshi vhona uri zwo vhfha ndi vhusiku la tsha dzi sa tuwi dzi tshi khou twa hanefho. A, nga duvha la vhuvhili munna na ene u vho pfa ndala na dora. A ri, 'Ha, zwino, ndi nga tou zwi ita hani?' Zwino, houłani munna a mbo di dzhia houłani mukumba a mbo di u posa fhasi. A tshi u posa fhasi houla mukumba, hedzila ndau dzi tshi ri bibiri! Houłani munna o wana tshifhinga tsha u tsa. Houla munna a mbo di tsa, houla munna a mbo di tsa a shavha. A shavha dzila ndau dzi khou sala dzi tshi vho lwela ula mukumba. A namba o tuwa khoula.

A tshi yo swika hangei shangoni, habe ha khou tshimbila duvha lithihi hoyu muthu, u khou tshimbila maduvha manzhi manzhi! A tshi enda a tshi awela. A vhuya a swika.

A tshi swika khoula mufumakadzi, a ri, 'Hai, mufumakadzi, zwino, ndo vhuya na mukumba wa ndau. Ndo u wana khoyu.' O wana onoula wa tshidawana tshe a swutula.

A! Ula mufumakadzi a edzisa mani! A ri, 'Hai, mukumba u ya mpfanela hoyu, hayi mukumba u ya mpfanela hoyu!'

A ri. 'Ee! Mukumba ndi wavhuđi. Zwino, mufumakadzi wanga, zwino, nne-vho a thi nyagi hezwinoni. Nne zwino ngauri iwe ndo ya nda u nyagela mukumba, nne ndi khou nyaga mađi a sa lili tshidula.'

Houla musadzi zwino a thoma u doba phaphana. U ya tuwa. Zwino, u khou tuwa nga mashango. A tshi sokou swika a tshi dzhena zwisimani. A tshi swika fhano tshisimani, u sokou swika a ima nnda. O di fara phaphana yawe na khavho. U a swika a thoma u imbelela. A ri,

[Musimi]

Li no zwivha ripi, a vha ri vhoni-naa?

[Vhabvumeli]

Hu na Nemukololo wa lilombe.

Nga murahu u do pfa hu tshi lila tshidula tshi tshi ri, 'kokorr! kokorr!' A zwi pfa uri hafha zwo bala. U a fhira zwino. Zwino, u a toda tshinwe tshisima kha linwe shango. A tshi swika, u di dovha a ima nga nnda. A tshi swika a tshi ima fhala nga nnda. A imbelela, 'Li no zwivha ripi ...' A! Tshi do lila tshidula, 'kokorr! kokorr!'

Hai, u a fhiruludza. Ei, a tshimbila. O tshimbila a tshi di ri kani ndi dzhene fhano ndi zwezwo, kani ndi dzhene fhano ndi zwezwo.

A vhuya a swika hune a wana hone tshinwe tshisima, a tshi wana tshinwe tshisima. U a swika u ya imbelela, 'Li no zwivha ripi ...' A tshi imbelela, a tshi imbelela, a pfa ho tou duu! A ri, 'Ha, zwi amba uri hafha ndo swika hone.'

U a thoma u swika fhala fhethu. A tshi swika fhala fhethu u a thetshela. U a thoma u ka haalani mađi. U a thetshela. A tshi thetshela mathina hafha fhethu mađi a difha nga maanda a tou nga mutoli wa notshi! Aa! Mathina hu na dziphukha hafho fhethu. Ene ndi u kakata ala mađi ndi u fura zwino. Thumbu ndi u fura. Thumbu i tshi fura, ha tsha kona u takuwa. Matsina tshisima ndi tsha dziphukha dzothe. A tshi kha di vha o dzula hanefhala ha tsha kona u takuwa. Ha tsha kona u ita tshithu, o zwimbelwa nga ala mađi. O kelela manwe o shela fhala kha tshipapana, ha tsha takuwa. Zwino, o sokou dzula hanefhala kha tshipapana.

Ha mbo di vuwa ha da tshinoni nga matsheloni. Tshi khou da khetshila. Khetshila tsha swika tsha kavha kha muri tshi khou nyaga u nwa mađi. Tshi wana muthu ha tuwi tsini na tshisima. Hai, tsha tuwa. Tshi tshi tuwa fhala, a tshi kha di vha o dzula hanefhala hu da muvhuđa u khou do nwa mađi. U tshi swika fhala muthu, muthu ha takuwi. Muvhuđa u khou ofha-vho u swika tsini. Hai, muvhuđa wa mbo di tuwa. U tshi tshi tuwa ha mbo di da tshibode. Tshibode tshi tshi swika tshi khou nyaga u nwa mađi, tshi wana muthu o dzula hanefhala ha takuwi. Tshibode na tshone-vho tsha mbo di huma-vho. Hai, phukha dzothe dza dia muduba dzi tshi di da: Vho-Mapfene, Vho-Phala ...

Uḽa muthu o sokou gwadama hanefhala. A tshi kha ḽi gwadama fhala hu khou ḽa ndau i khou ḽa u nwa maḽi. Hai, i tshi swika fhala ndau i wana muthu khouḽa. Hai, ndau ya lingedza uri i sinyuwe, i sinyuwe, i sinyuwe ngauri yo vha ina ḽora. I swike tsini hawe.A! ya sokou penyisa maḽo! A, na yone ya ḽala.

Ha mbo ḽi vha hu tshi khou swika Vho-Nḽdou. Vho-Nḽdou vha tshi tou swika: Khevhalala vha khou ḽa, kevhalala vha khou ḽa, kevhalala vha khou ḽa! Vha swika vha wana muthu khouḽa o dzula hanefhala. Ha muthu ha tsha kona u takuwa, zwo no ḽangana na u tshuwa. A tshi tou vhona Vho-Nḽdou, na ene zwa zwo no ḽangana na ḽora na ḽala. Thumbuni ho kukumuwa nga maḽi haala. Habe, haalani maḽi a notshi a ḽo sokou tou mu zwimbela ha nga furisi a si vhuswa. A tshi tou! Ee, ha mbo ḽi vha Vho-Nḽdou vha khou swika. Zwo no ḽangana ḽa musadzi. A mbo ḽi lovhela hanefhala.

Ha mbo ḽi vha u fa ha lungano.

Mukololo ane a eḽela u lenga

Zwino, ho vha hu huḽwe kha liḽwe shango. Zwino, kha helo shango li ḽa vhamusanda. Zwino, havha vhamusanda vho vha vhe na vhafumakadzi vhaḽanu. Zwino, hu na muḽwe mufumakadzi muthihi ane vha mu funesa. Zwino, hoyu mufumakadzi a vha na ḽwana wawe wa musidzana. A tshi vha na ḽwana wawe wa musidzana. Zwino, houḽa musidzana a hula a tshi khou farea zwavhuḽi aḽwana wa vhamusanda, ene mukololo ane a fhira vhakololo vhoḽe nga u funiwa.

Zwino, musi o no aluwa vhamusanda houḽani ḽwana ha swika tshifhinga tsha uri u khou ḽoda u maliwa. Musi a saathu maliwa nga mulayo, a thoma a itelwa zwoḽe zwa vhuḽambo ho teaho ha vhakololo ha musanda. Vhamusanda vho no sumbedzisa u ita vhuḽambo ha mukololo wavho, ha di bva-vho vhaḽwe vha liḽwe shango.

Vha ri, 'Riḽe ri khou tama hoyu musidzana.'

Zwino, vhamusanda vha ri, 'Ii, nḽe ndi khou zwi pfa uri ḽwananga ni khou mu tama. Zwino, nḽe, ḽwananga hezwi ni tshi mu dzhia, ha shumi, ha shumisiwi, ha biki, ha swieli, ha ki maḽi, ha siḽi. A hu na na mushumo na muthihi une a u ita.'

Zwino, a thi ri, yo vha i ndowelo ya uri ndi mukololo wavhuḽi u dzula o adzelwa nga hangei murahu ha tshamudane. Zwino, a tshi dzula o adzelwa murahu ha tshamudane hanengei, ndi uri u tou bikeliwa, a iseliwa zwiliwa, a ḽa. Musi o no fhedza u ḽa, ha isiwa maḽi. (A! Vhathu a ni tsha ita salungano!) A ḽi ambusa sa mukololo wa musanda. Zwino, nzulele yawe yeneḽa, hune a dzula hone, u tou farelwa maalo a swika a aleliwa a dzula hanefho. A tshi ya nduni a tshi ya u eḽela, hu tou ya ha takuliwa maalo a isiwa nduni. A itelwa zwoḽe a eḽela.

Zwino, ha ḽi ḽa vhathu vhanzhi vhanzhi vha tshi ḽi huma.

Vhamusanda vha tshi khou ri, 'Nḽe, ḽwananga hoyu ha maliwi. Ndi ri, mukololo ha maliwi hoyu.'

Vhaḽwe vha ri, 'Riḽe ri a mu funa. Ri nga ita zwoḽe zwine vhamusanda vha zwi ḽoda.'

Vha ri, 'Thodea yoḽe ndi khou ipfa. Ndi khou ri ḽwananga ha shumi.'

Aa, a vho vha ri, 'Riḽe ri khou mu dzhia hoyu mukololo. Nangwe a sa shumi, ri ḽo swika ra si mu shumise.'

Ai, vha tendelana na vhamusanda. Na vhamusanda vha khou pfa u pfi mukololo a tshi tuwa ha nga shumi. Nangoho, vhalala vhathu vha tuwa naye mukololo zwavhuḽi, ho thoma ha itiwa zwoḽe zwithu zwine vhamusanda vha zwi funa.

Vha ri, 'Ha hu na zwine nḽe nda zwi funa-i: Ni tou ḽa na phulu khulwane ya ḽa ya ḽavhiwa. Musi yo no ḽavhiwa heḽa phulu, hoyu mukololo ha konou dzudzanyiwa na tuwa nae. A hu na tshinwe tshithu tshine nda tshi ḽoda.'

A, nangoho, vha tshi tendelana na vhamusanda, 'Ndi zwone.'

Uḽa mukololo ha itiwa zwa phulu yeneḽa ine vhamusanda vha khou i ḽoda. Ha,

vha tshi swika na ila phulu ya thavhiwa. Vha wana ho kuvhangana magota na vhatu vhothe.

Ha pfi, hoyu mukololo, musi a tshi tuwa hafha mudini wa musanda, u tou tuwisiwa ha tuwi a ethe. Ha tou itelwa mafhungo a dziphelekedzi dza vhasidzana. U tuwisiwa nga magota a vhamusanda na vhatu vhenevha vhahulwane. Nangoho ha dzheniwa ndilani. A swika a vheiwa hanengei vuhadzi vhune a khou ya hone.

Hai, nangoho mukololo o dowela zwiḽa zwa mafhungo a uri a vuwe o di edelela. A, nangoho, mukololo a vuwa o edela. Zwino, mukololo o edela. Havhala vhatu vha hafhala mudini vha thoma vha zwi kondelela maduvha nyana. Vha tshi kondelela maduvha nyana, vha tshi mu itela zwithu zwothe. Hai, ha swika hune vha ri, 'Hai, rine ri nyaga u vhona uri ndi ngani hu tshi pfi hoyu muthu ha shumi, ha iti na tshithu na tshithihi.'

A, vha thoma u mu vusa zwino nga matsheloni. Zwino, vho no mu vusa nga matsheloni, vha ri, 'Kha vuwe a tohole.' A! Uḽa musidzana a si vuwe a tohola-ni. A si vuwe. A sokou dzula a lila, a sokou dzula a lila, a sokou dzula a lila! Ha, vha tshi da, nangoho vha wana ha khou tohola, u khou sokou lila. Vha dzhia houla muthatha wa mavhele vha u humisela tshisikuni. (Habe tshisikuni ndi mafhungo a uri fhasi. Hu tshi pfi tshisikuni, hu tou gwiwa fhasi ha vha na mulindi ha sheliwa mavhele nga ngomu.) Ha, vha di dovha vha a humisela, vha dovha vha nama tshila tshisiku.

Ha, vha dzula maduvha, vha dzula maduvha. Zwino, nga liḽwe duvha vha dovha vha buba, vha ri, 'Kha vuwe, a swiele.' Houla musidzana a sokou vuwa a sokou dzhia luswielo. A dzula nalwo fhasi a sokou lila, a sokou lila! A, vha zwi vhona zwauri ha khou swiela. U khou sokou lila. Vha dzhia luswielo vha vhea. Ha, vha dzula maduvha, vha dzula maduvha.

Aa, vho no dzula maduvha vha dovha vha ri, 'Hai, ri a dovha ra ya u fukula tshisiku, mani. Ra mu fha mavhele hoyu muthu.' Aa, hezwi zwa namusi u do tohola!'

Zwino, hezwi vho no dzhia haalani mavhele vha a vhea hangeini nḽa, vha dzhia mutuli na musi. Vha mu vhidza, vha ri, 'Khaade!' A, a takuwa a ya hanefhala hu re na mutuli na musi.

Vha ri, 'Rine, namusi ri khou toḽa uni fundedza u tohola, ni tohole.' Houla musidzana a sokou vha lavhelesa. Vha dzhia haalani mavhele vha dzhenisa mutulini. Vha ri, 'Farani musi hoyu.' Houlani musidzana a dzhia houḽani musi a u dzhenisa hanefhala kha mutuli. Zwino, houḽani musidzana a tshi khou thoma u tshoka haala mavhele. A mbo di thoma luimbo lwawe. A tshi thoma luimbo lwawe, a mbo di thoma u imbelela. A tshi khou imbelela. A tshi ri,

[Musimi]

Hayani hashu a ri tsha siḽa.

Ha Vho-Phophi na Vho-Tshililo.

Ri siḽa nga lunanga lwa nḽou.

[Vhabvumeli]

Di-di-dimile, dimile.

A tshi ralo a thoma u lila mani, a thoma u lila, u khou lila, u khou lila mani, u khou lila, u khou imbelela, u khou lila! O di ima hanefhala na mutuli onoula na musi. Hanefhala fhethu ha mbo di thoma u vulea. Hu tshi khou vulea hanefhala, houla ḽwana, vha thoma u vhona hezwi o di ima hanefhala a tshi khou di imbelela. U khou sakha. U khou sakha a tshi ya fhasi! U khou di imbelela, 'Hayani hashu a ri tsha siḽa ...'

Hai! U khou namba a tshi sakha a tshi tsa fhasi. A tshi mbo di ri ngoli fhasi ḽa ḽwana. Fhala fhethu ha mbo di valea. Hu tshi valea fhala fhethu, havhala vhatu vha thoma u lidza mikosi na mini. Zwino, 'Yo-yo, a vha tsha mu vhona!' O no sakha fhasi na mituli zwezwiḽa na misi yo mbo di tsa fhasi hanengei. Ai, ha vha khakhathi khulwane nga maanda! Zwino, a vha tsha divha zwauri vha do tou ita hani. Mathina

houłani n̄wana a tshi khou sakha hafhalani.

Hezwi o sakha o tuwa a yo dzumbuluwa hayani hangeini. O tshimbila nga fhasi. Hanefha vha sa mu vhoni. Havhala, a tshi swika hangeini, vha tshi vuwa nga matsheloni vha wana o ima murahu ha pfamo. Musi o ima murahu ha pfamo, vhatu vha khou ya vha tshi tolela.

Vha ri, 'Aa! Musi u nga ri ula mukololo u hone, khoyu?'

Nangoho, vha tshi swika ngei vha wana ndi mukololo. Mukololo u khou lila, tshililo tsha hone a tshi khauwi u khou lila.

Vha thoma u kuvhanganya vhakoma, magota na vhatu. Zwino, vho no kuvhanganya magota haalani na vhakoma na vhatu, tshililo tsha ula n̄wana a tshi tsha khauwa. Na lumbo lwolwula, zwino, lu khou dovha u vuwa. Zwino, u khou repotela hangeini. Uri vha khou mangala u tshililo itshi ene a vhuya hani. Zwino, ngauri ha khou tou kona u talutshedza, uri n̄e ndo vhuya ngauri ndo vho ndi tshi khou sindisiwa. A thoma u imbelela lumbo lwolwula, 'Hayani hashu a ri tsha sinda ...'

A! Vha mbo di thoma u zwi divha uri, hai, hoyu muthu o vha a tshi khou sindisiwa. Ngauri ripoto yawe hei ya u imbelela a tshi khou lila a tshi khou raloi i khou amba uri o vha a tshi khou sindisiwa hangei murahu.

A, vhamusanda vha mbo di huma. Vhadinda vha ri, 'Tuwani ni yo thuba thundu yothe ya hoyu muđi.' (Habe thundu ya kale lwo vha lu lupfumo lwa kholomo na dzimbudzi.) Vha mbo di ruma vhadinda. Vha ri, 'Tuwani ni yo thuba thundu yothe i vhuye, ni vhuye nayo.'

A, nangoho vha mbo di swika hangei havhalani. Vhatu vho fara mapfumo na mini. Vha dzhena vha tanga houłani muđi. Vha mbo di thuba kholomo dzothe. Vha mbo di swoga dzothe. Vha mbo di tuwa nadzo vha swika.

Vha ri, 'Musanda, ro vhuya nadzo.'

Vhamusanda vha ri, 'Hai, no vhuya nadzo? Nothe khunyeleli matshelo.'

Nangoho, ha mbo di khunyeleliwa fhalaha. Ha dovha ha itwa zwiła zwe a ri a tshi tuwa ha thavhiwa heila mboho. Ha nangiwa mboho kha dzedziła kholomo, ya thavhiwa. I tshi thavhiwa, i tshi khou hotshiwa, i tshi khou liwa.

A, ula n̄wana a mbo di thoma u khaula tshiła tshililo.

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

U toda u divhisisa nga ndavha ya khanga

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu muñwe munna o rema tsimu yawe khulu nga maanda. A tshi dzula kule na vhanwe vhatu.

Ha swika he a mala mufumakadzi. Zwino, vha dzula henengei na mufumakadzi. Vha lima mavhele manzhi, na nduhu nnzhi, na phonda nnzhi. Zwino, haa ho dzuliwa, hu tshi divha hu hayani. Hai, vhana vha khou bebiwa.

Zwino, hoyu wa munna tshiñwe tshifhinga a ri kha hoyu mufumakadzi, 'Heyi tsimu i khou ri balela.'

Hoyu mufumakadzi a ri, 'Hai, ho vha hu si na vhuthada. Vhone vha khou humbula mini?'

Zwino, hoyu wa munna a ri, 'Ndi khou humbula u dzhia muñwe mufumakadzi.'

Haiwa, vha dzudzanya fhungo lavho. Nga ngoho vho no li dzudzanya, vha tendelana. Nga ngoho a dzhia muñwe mufumakadzi mutuku. Haiwa, ha di dzuliwa, hu khou di limiwa miñwaha i khou di ya.

Zwino, hoyu munna o vha e muzwimi. A tshi bva a tshi ita a tshi yo zwima. A tshi di vhuya na dzinama dza dziphukha dzi tshi liwa.

Zwino, hoyu mufumakadzi a tshi dzhena hafho muđini, a kha divha n̄wedzhi, thi

uḷa munna ndi muzwimi, u a vhuya na ntsa, a vhuya na phala, a vhuya na tholo. Ndi tshisevho tshi khou ḍi liwa.

Zwino, ha swika he houḷa munna a vhuya na khanga. Houḷa mufumakadzi a ri, 'Haa, nṅe, khanga thi li.'

'Haa, eya! A vha li khanga? Haa, ndi zwone.' Houḷa munna a tuwa a ya u mutodela nama ya phukha. A ḍa a vhea mutumbu wothe muḍini.

A ri, 'Mutumbu khowo wa phala.' A ri, 'Nṅe, ngauri ano maḍuvha ndi khou zwimela hafha tsini ngauri khanga dzi khou dzhena hafha tsimuni dzi tshi pala. Ndi khou vhona uri heyi nama yavho i ḍo thuvha. Riṅe ri dovha ri tshi khou sevha nga khanga.' Hai, nangoho, vha tendelana.

Hai, hu khou ḍi dzulwa, hu khou ḍi liwa, ndi hayani. Liṅwe ḍuvha uḷa munna u khou vhuya na khanga. Uḷa mufumakadzi, u wana uri uḷa mufumakadzi muhulwane, o bika khali ya khanga. Uḷa mufumakadzi ndi u dodela.

A ri, 'Haa, nahasi ndi tou i thetshela hei khanga.' Aa, ndi u tusa thango, ndi u ḷa nama ḷa. Aa, mufumakadzi u tou thetshela khanga apfa uri i khou ḍifha. Hei, aa, ndi u tou roḍa tshidudu tshothe zwino!

Hai, vhaḷa vhatu vha vhuya ngei u lima. Vha wana mufumakadzi. Tshisevho? A ri, 'Hai, nṅe a thi ḍivhi, hufha ndi sa li khanga?' Haa, vhaḷa vhatu vha thoma u mangala. Muthu a sa li khanga, khanga ya ya ngafhi-ha? Haa, vha fhumula!

Vha ḍi dzula mushumo u wonowo vha tshi bika tshidudu tsha khanga. Vha sokou wana a hu na khanga. Aa, musadzi u khou tou imelela ḷa khanga.

Ai, zwino zwa vhuya zwa swika hune zwavho vha luṅanya havha vhamufumakadzi. Mukalaha a tshi vho humbulela uri kani hoyu mufumakadzi u vho tou bika iyi nama avho sokou ḷa e eṅhe? Hai, ndi khwine ndi ite mini? Ndi vha kuvhanganye havha vhafumakadzi. Nangoho, a kuvhanganya vhafumakadzi vhawe.

Ono vha kuvhanganya, a ri, 'Vhoinwi vhafumakadzi, ndi khou vhona uri heli fhungo ḷa khanga li khou ḍi dina ngauri hafhu i tshi khou ḍo bikiwa tshidudu tsha sala tshi si na tshithu. Zwino, nṅe zwine nda khou zwi humbula, ndi khou humbula u kuvhanganya vhabebi vhanu nothe hafha vha ḍa vha kuvhangana hafha muḍini.'

'Ee, hai, ndi zwone, ndi zwone.'

Hai, ha tuwiwa, ha ya u dzhiiwa vho-makhulu vha hoyu musadzi muhulwane. Ha tuwiwa ha ya u dzhiiwa vho-makhulu vha hoyu mufumakadzi mutuku.

Uḷa munna a ri, 'Nṅe ndi tshi ni kuvhanganya ndi khou ni kuvhanganyela mafhungo haya: Nṅe ndo ri ndo dzula na muṅa wanga-ii. Ndi mudzia u zwima, ndi a zwima phukha inwe na inwe. Hafha muḍini ra ḷa rothe. Mara ha swika he hoyu mufumakadzi mutuku a ri, "Ene heyi khanga ha li." Zwino, ra tendelana nae. Zwino, onori khanga ha li, riṅe ri tshi vho ri ri khou bika khanga hafha-ii. Ri vho wana khanga ḍuvha liṅwe na liṅwe a hu na hafha tshiduduni.'

Ei, zwino a ri, 'Nṅe ndi na mbilaelo. Ndi khwine ri tshi tuwa ra ya ha vho-maine nda yo vhonisa heyi ndavha, ngauri i khou nndina. I khou fhedza nṅe ndi sa ḍivhi uri ane a khou ḷa tshidudu tsha khanga ndi mufumakadzi muhulwane, ane a khou ḷa tshidudu tsha khanga ndi uyu mufumakadzi mutuku naa?'

Hai, nangoho vho-makhulu vha ri, 'Hai, ri ya ya.'

A ri, 'Nanga ya hone ine ra ḍo ya khayi i ḍovha i seli ha mulambo.'

Aa, nangoho, asivhaḷa, nga matsheloni vha a vuwa vha dia muduba. Hai, vha tshi swika henengei seli ha vho-maine. Vha swika vha ima seli holunoni vha vhidzelela.

Vho-maine vha ri, 'Ndi hone. Zwino, ndi ḍo tou vhidzelela ndi ngeno seli. Ndi ḍo akha lurale lwanga lune muṅwe na muṅwe a ḍo dadamala ngalwo u vhuya a tshi swikela hafha hune nṅe nda vha hone. O ḷaho nama ya khanga ni ḍo muvhona'

Nangoho, vhaḷa vho-maine vha akha lurale lwavho nga ngeno seli. Vha dovha vha akha nga ngei seli. Lwavha lulapfu uri lu pfukee. Haiwaa, lwa thoma zwino u shuma luya lurale.

Vha ri, 'Kha hu thome nwana nga muthihingamuthihi.'

Zwino, hoyu muñwe mufumakadzi o vha e na vhana vhavhili. Zwino, hoyu muñwe wa kale o vha e na vhana vhaṭanu na muthihi. Ha pfi kha hu thome vha onoyu mufumakadzi. Hai, ndi hezwi hu tshi dzhena ñwana muthihi. U khou wela-ha uḷa ñwana. (Ni bvumele!) A tshi vho thoma u wela, uḷa ñwana a thoma u imba,

[Musimi]

Ro vha ro ya u lima.

Ro wana khanga yo ḷiwa.

Lutsinga lwa mbiḍi khauwa!

Ri vhone havha vhalimi.

[Vhabvumeli]

Di-di tshama di-diñwe.

Haa, zwi tshiralo ngoho, houḷa mutukana a wela. Hai, ha ḍa muñwe mutukana hafhu wa vhuvhili. Lwaralo u ṭanga luya luimbo, 'Ro vha ro ya u lima ...' Ngoho, havhaḷa vhana vha houḷa mufumakadzi vhoṭhe nga muthihi nga muthihi vha wela vha swika hangei seli ha vho-maina.

Hai, ha tevhelela, ha pfi havha vhana vha hoyu mutuku avha tevhele. Haiwa, havhaḷa vhana vha houḷa mufumakadzi mutuku vhoṭhe vha wela, kevhaḷa! Vha swika vha ima hangei seli hu na vha komana.

Zwino, ha pfi nahasi hu dzhena vhane vha miṭa. Ndi vhone vhane vha fanela u wela nga holu luṭale zwino. Haiwa, ndi hezwi hu tshi thoma mukalaha, 'Ro vha ro ya u lima ...' Houḷa munna asiḷa, ambo ḍi wela. Hai, zwavha zwavhuḍi.

Zwino, hu khou ḍa vhafumakadzi, vha khou ḍa u wela. Hai, ha mbo ḍi thoma mufumakadzi honoyu muhulwane, 'Ro vha ro ya u lima ...' Ee, uḷa mufumakadzi a mbo ḍi wela. Havha zwino vhabebi vhoṭhe vho sala seli ha mulambo hangei. A vho ngo wela-ni, vha fanela u sala seli hangeno.

Ndi hezwi hu tshi khou ḍa hoyu mufumakadzi mutuku zwino. Ndi u thoma liga ḷa u thoma, 'Ro vha ro ya u lima ... hii-hii!' Ai, u kha ḍi hii-hii, 'Lutsinga lwa mbiḍi lwa mbo ḍi ri khau!'

Madini aḷa kumvu nga ngomu! A tshi kumvu nga ngomu, vhabebi vhawe vha tshi ralo fhaḷa vha tshi gidima navhone vha mbo ḍi ya vha yo fhelela tivhani ḷeliya! Vha khou lwela uri vha nule ñwana. Hai, zwa mbo ḍi vha zwo bala.

Hai, ha mbo ḍi vha u pembela ha uḷa muñwe mufumakadzi na mukalaha. Vhana vhawe vhavhili vha mbo ḍi ḍisalela ngauri vhovha vha songo ḷa tshidudu.

Ha mbo ḍi vha u fa ha lungano.

Vho-Marukhu a mashika

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu mufumakadzi na munna vha na muḍi wavho. Havha vhatu tshiñwe tshifhinga vho dzula, vho dzula vha ri, 'Ri fanela uri ri ṭuwe ri ye ha vho-makhulu ri yo dala.'

Nangoho, zwavha zwithu zwavhuḍi, vha ṭanga lwendo lwavho. Vha khou tshimbila, vha khou tshimbila. (Zwino, kale mufumakadzi o vha a tshi hwala mufaro nṭha ha ṭhoho a beba na ñwana. Munna a fara dzhasi ḷawe na thonga.)

Hai, u khou ṭhavhela. Vha khou ḍi tshimbila, u khou tshimbila. Musi vha tshi tshimbila vha tshi swika phanda hangei. Mufumakadzi u ri, 'Ndo no neta. Kha ri thome u dzula fhasi, ndi awele, ndi mamise ñwana.' Mukalaha a ri, 'Haa, kha ri tshimbile, ri ḍo awela mulamboni hangei.'

Hai, musadzi wa vhatu u khou kondelela o ḍi beba na ñwana. Zwino, hezwi vha

khou ɖi tshimbila masiari othe, ngauri u dala ha kale ho vha hu nyendo ndapfu. (Ho vha hu tshi bviwa fhano nga milenzhe ha swikiwa henengei ha Tshivhasa hangei).

Ha ri musii vha ndilani henehala, nangoho vha swika tsini na mulambo. Zwino, vha tshi vho swika tsini na mulambo houla, li vho thabama ɖuvha. Vha khou tshimbila.

Hezwi li tshi vho thabama-ii, ndi tshifhinga tsha dziphukha dzi tshi yo nwa maɖi mulamboni. Vha tshimbila vha vha swika henehala mulamboni vha rula mufaro. Vha tshi rula mufaro, ula a tshi vhea na nwana fhasi a tshi mama. Vho no awela fha vha ri, 'Ri tou thoma ra tamba. Zwezwi ri tshi tou wela mulambo, ri khou ya u welela midini.'

Zwino, zwenezwi vha khou tamba hafhala, havha hu khou ɖa phukha dzi khou ɖa u nwa maɖi. Ai, phukha khedzi dzi khou ɖa, dzi tshi ɖa dzi khou ɖa dzi khou imbelela. Phukha dzi khou vhuya, khedzi dzi khou ɖa. Dzi khou humbula u ɖa unwa maɖi, ndi tshithabama.

[Musimi]

U mawawa, vulele, dzi ende mashango!

[Vhabvumeli]

Vulele, dzi ende mashango.

Zwino, vha a thoma u thetshesela. Namusi vha tshi thoma u thetshesela fha uri naa mukosi une wa khou ɖaho ndi wa mini? Vha a thoma u bva fha maɖini. Vha tshi yo bva fha maɖini, aa, ndau dzavha dzo novha tsini dzi khou vhona nwana. Dzi nyaga u dzhomba houani nwana. Mufumakadzi a dinalea, mani. Munna u khou shavha!

Mufumakadzi kou u ri 'Ndi tou fa nadzo hedzi ndau!' A gidima mufumakadzi a swika a dzhia nwana wawe. Dzila ndau, yavha khakhathi na ndau dzila! U khou lwa a doba nwana wawe houla, na ene a konou gidima na nwana wawe. Ono shavha onovha phanda, munna o bva nga dziwe, musadzi o bva nga dziwe. Hee, zwino, vha vho todana zwino vhonovha phanda. Vha tshi yo wanana, ii mukalaha vhonovha basoba mani! Mukalaha vho ri u shavha vha tshuwa hono itea na zwiwe-vho. Zwino, mufumakadzi ono beba nwana wawe.

Vha khou tshimbila u sokou ri, 'Naa hu khou nukha-ni naa? Naa hu khou nukha-ni naa?'

Munna a ri, 'Hafhu nne nda kwata ndi a nukha, habe nne nda kwata ndi a nukha. Ni kha ɖi dovha na vhudzisa? Ndi tshi khou nukha nne nga u kwata. Nne nda kwata ndi tou ralo ndi a nukha.'

Mufumakadzi u khou zwi pfa uri, 'Hai, u kwata hou ha u nukha, hai, ndi do di sokou kondelela.' Mufumakadzi u khou tuwa. Habe mifaro yo no sala hangei na zwithu zwe zwavha zwo hwaliwa.

Mufumakadzi a ri, 'Li tshi swifhala na minukho yeneyi i khou ɖi nukha?'

'Ee, a thi ri, nne ndo kwatesa ngauri ndau yovha i tshi khou doba nwana. Habe nne nda kwata ndi a nukha.'

Vha tshi swika phanda mufumakadzi vha ri, 'Ri tou thoma ra litsha zwi fha konou dzhena hafha maɖini.' Mukalaha a tenda. Hai, nangoho vha vhuya vha swika henengei maɖini. Hai, li tshi swifhala vha vha tshi dzhena fha maɖini.

Vha khou thoma u talutshedza. Uri, 'Nne, ro ri ri tshi swika nga hangei seli ha mulambo. Ra vho ita zwauri ri vho nyaga u thoma u tamba. Zwenezwi ri tshi ri ri fhedzisa u tamba, ro ya zwiambaroni. Ri pfa mukosi u tshi khou lila, matsiko mukosi ndi wa dzindau.'

Na vhenevho vhatu vha ri, 'Iina, mukosi ndi wa dzindau! A hu tambwi lo kovhela hafho fhethu.'

Lia kovhela nga madekwana. Li tshi kovhela nga madekwana. Hu dala vhasidzana henehlo. Vha khou ɖa u vhona mukwasha. Mukwasha ula ono ɖi shela na maɖi. O no ɖi dovha u tamba, o vhelela-vho, ndi muthu.

Zwiḷa vhaḷa vhasidzana vho ḁala fhaḷa. Ha mbo ḁi pfi hu khou iwa zwifasini. Vha tshi khou ya u tshina tshifasi henengei, vha tshi tuwa. Uḷa munna na ene u a tevhela.

A tshi swika henengei u ri, ‘Nne hezwi zwithu ndi zwi ḁivha nga maanda hezwi. Ndi zwiḁivha nga maanda hezwi zwau tshina tshifasi hezwi.’

Vhasidzana vha ri, ‘Ndi zwone! Ri khou ḁoda ene muthu wa u kona.’

Hai, hafhu zwino fhaḷa vhasidzana vho foḷa hangei seli, ene u nga hangei seli na luno, ngauri vhatu vha fanela uvha seli na seli. Thi ri, vhatu vha fanela uvha seli na seli vha tshi tshina zwifasi zwavho. Munna u vho thoma ḷuimbo ḷawe kheli,

[Musimi]

Hee, hee, nandi vhasidzana!

Hezwi ri tshi tamba, ni sendele murahu.

Hu na buka livhi.

La matambo mavhi.

Gidi-gidi, zhoto!

[Vhabvumeli]

Ndi-lindee, ndi-lindee!

Zwino, a tshi khou ita ngauralo havha buse ḷono ḁangana, u khou tou fhufhela nḁha vhukuma hoyu muthu. Mathina hezwi a tshi ‘gidi-gidi zhoto,’ ai, ene ono shanduka houḷa muthu! U vhonga ndi libuka lia, u khou doba musidzana muthihi! Hai, a tshi yo muposa nga ngei kule, u dovha a vhuya buse li sa athu fhelela helia.

U a dovha luya ḷuimbo lwawe. Vhatu vha kha ḁi pfa vhasidzana mutani vha pfa ndi-lindee a i tsha fhela nga hangei, Hee, hee, nandi vhasidzana ...! Haa, vhaḷa vha vhuya vha zwivhona uri zhoto-zhoto hei hu tou nga ri khou fhela hezwi hu tshi swika kha zhoto.

Vha litsha helia buse. Vho no balangana. Vha tshi vho vhalana vha wana vhana vhaḷa vho itani, a hu tshe na vhana, vhana ho no sala vhananyana vhatuku. Vhavho gidimela mahayani vha tshi shavha.

Vha tshi swika vha tshi ri, ‘Hei, riḁe uvha hangei ri na muthu we ravha ri tshi khou tshina nae tshifasi uri ene u zwi kona nga maanda!’

Aa, uḷa mukwasha u vhona uri zwo vhifha ndi u bva nga dzinzanyo avha o ya.

Ha mbo ḁi vha u fa ha lungano.

Matamela Makapile

Zwivhuya zwi tshee phanda

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ndi musadzi, ndi munna, vha na vhana vhavho. Vha ri kha havha vhana vhavhili, wa tanzhe na o tovhelelaho, vha ri, 'Kha ri vha vhulaye, vha khou fhedza zwiliwa.'

Vha ya muedzini nga matsheloni. Vha vha rumbulela nga murumbula, vha tshi vha rumbulela nga murumbula, vha vha vha fa! Vha tuwa vha sia vho fa.

U sala vha vha vha mbo di vuwa vhothe. Vha tshi vuwa, vha ri, 'Ri songo ya mudini wavho. Ri songo vha tevhela, ngauri ra vha tevhela vha do ri vhulaya u fhira hafha.'

Ndi hone vha tshi ya u wana bako. Vha tshi swika vha mbo di ima munangoni. Vha imba luimbo. Bako la mbo di vulea. Vha tshi dzhena vha wana hu na zwithu zwothe nga ngomu: Maswa, mavhele, maguyo a u kuya, dzhikhali dza u bika, madi, zwothe!

Wa munna u vho vuwa a tshi bva a tshi ya hosongwe. A tshi tuwa a tshi ya hanengei hosongwe, a tshi vhuya nga madekwana. Ee, a imba tshiimbo. Hetsho tshiimbo, a tshi tshi imba houla wa khaladzi u khou zwi pfa uri o vhuya. Vothi la vulea a dzhena. Mushumo ndi wonoyo. A tshi sokou di tuwa, a tshi twa hanengei, a tshi vhuya, a tshi vula.

Linwe divha a tshi tuwa. O imba muinwe o lalela a tshi khou zwi pfa. Ula ndi u sala ndi u ya, ndi u imba hanefhala, ndi u imba. Ula a ri, 'Hai, a si ene.' A di fhumulela.

A vuwa nga matshelo a bva. Ula muinwe o thetshesela zwezwi a tshi imba a bva. A tshi tuwa ula ndi u da ndi u ima hanefhala a mbo di imba, a mbo di imba.

A tshi vhuya nga madekwana, a ri, 'Nne, fhano linwe divha u tshi vhuya a u nga nngwani.'

'Ngani?'

A ri, 'Hu na vathu vha no da vha tshi imba hafha. Zwino, vha tshi imba hafha, arali vothi la vulea la tenda vha do nndzha.'

Ula a ri, 'Ha, kha ri tuwe khaladzi.'

U vuwa ndi u mbo di bva nga matsheloni ndi u tuwa. Vha da vha wana huinwe hu tshi sokou vha na dzimbudzi na dzinngu. Ho sokou dala!

Vha ri, 'Ha, kholwu ludzula, ro lu wana.'

Ha mbo di da tshinoni. Tshinoni tsha mbo di kavha. Tsha ri,

[Musimi]

Litshai izwo!

[Vhabvumeli]

Zwivhuya zwi tshee phanda!

Ula a mbo di litsha. A mbo di fhira. A tshi fhira u ya u wana dorobo khulu ina dzikholomo, dzinngu, mini. Zwithu zwo dala! Zwithu zwothe hanefho. Vha ri, 'Lula ludzula kholwu, ro lu wana.'

Hezwi vha tshi kha di tou vhea thundu fhasi, ula wa khaladzi a tshi ri tshimbili-tshimbili. Tsha vha tsho swika. Tsha ri, 'Litshai izwo ...' Vhala vha mbo di litsha, vha mbo di fhira. Vha tshi fhira vha yo wana mudu. Hoyu mudu vha u wana wo dala vhasadzi fhedzi u si na vhanna na lukegulu luthihi.

Vha tshi swika, vha tshi dzhena vhe ro kovhelelwa. Vhala vha ri, 'Zwo luga.' Vha vha fha zwiliwa. Vha la, vha takala. Ho dzuliwa hu khou nwiwa na mahalwa.

A vha o takuwa mukegulu a ri, 'Ndi khou pfa munukho wa muthu wa munna, ndi khou pfa munukho wa muthu wa munna, ndi khou pfa munukho wa muthu wa munna!'

A, vha mbo di vhuya vha mu wana uḽa muḽhannga. Vha tshi mu wana, vha ri, ‘Ri edela rothe hangei nduni yanga.’

Hu na mmbwa mbili. Vha swika, vho edela hangei. Muvegulu ya vuwa vhusiku uri u nyaga u mu vhulaya habe. Ho no bva ḽa ḽa lino. ḽa mmbwa i tshi hrrrrrr!

‘Hai, hai!’

Uḽa a ri, ‘Kha vha lale, vha songo try zwiḽwe zwithu, dzi ḽo vha vhulaya.’

O dovha o lala. Lwe, nngwa dze fhano!

La vhuya ḽa tsha. Li tshi tsha muvegulu, ‘Vhe mmbwa edzi ndi khou nyaga u dzi vhulaela kholomo.’ Kholomo dzo tou ḽala. Ndi u sokou dzhia ḽikolomo ḽihulu thukhe. Ndi u fha dzila mmbwa. Dzo ḽa dzo fura. Dzo dzheniswa nduni. Dzo lala dzo litsha na nama. Dzo khokhelwa, dzo khokhelwa nga matombo! Dzi tshi khokhelwa nga matombo, dzi si vule ni.

Ha pfi, ‘Iwe muduhulu, ri khou bva ra ya masimuni u ya u nthemela luhuni lwanga.’

Uḽa a ri, ‘Ho luga, makhulu.’

Ndi u tuwa. Ndi u ya hanengei masimuni. Ndi u swika vha ri, ‘Muri mulapfu-lapfu.’ Vha ri, ‘Luhuni lwanga kholuḽa hafhaḽa nḽa.’ Uḽa munna fhulu-fhulu ndi u swika kha luḽa luhuni. Ee, lwa vha lwo thoma. Lwa ri,

[Musimi]

Tshe-tshe-tshe-turu!

[Vhabvumeli]

Tshetshethula nga ludzino lwangu.

Uḽa u khou vhidza nngwa dzawe. U khou vhidza Nyaluvhengo na Matshena. Dza vha dzi tshi swika nngwa. Dzi tshi swika teli dzi wana muri wo zwi pfa. Ndi u lu batekedza. Luḽa lukegulu ndi u sula tshisudzi! Mmbwa dzila ndi u fa! Hai, mmbwa dzila ...

U ḽa u khou di imba a henengei nḽa ha muri. Dziḽa mmbwa dza vha dzi tshi vuwa hafhu. Dzo u vuwa dza tou lu angarela, dza tou lu pfamukanya nga zwipida nga zwipida.

Uḽa wa munna a vha a tshi tsa. A khou ralo u khou imbelela, ‘U khou tsa! U khou tsa!’ A tshi tou ri fhasi kwaḽa. Ndi u remekanya dzila dzikhuni, a tshi remekanya, a tshi khokha, a tshi remekanya. O no vhidzelela vhasadzi a ri, ‘Idani na khuni.’

Vhasadzi vha ḽa vho fara luhuni luthihi-luthihi. Ndi vhanzhi! Vho ḽa nadzo, vho ḽa vho longela. Uḽa o rema uḽa muri munu o khokhela nḽa ha lukegulu. Lwo swa o lu khuthedzela, lu tshi swa a tshi khuthedzela, a tshi khuthedzela. Lwa vhuya lwa tou lotsho lwa sala lu miora fhedzi. Vha fhedza vha tshi dzhena kha heḽa miri vha tshi tshi phusukanya, vha tshi phusukanya, vha tshi phusukanya, vha tshi phusukanya, vha tshi phusukanya! Heḽa miora.

Vha ri, ‘Kha ri ye hayani.’ Zwino, vha vhuya hayani. Vha tshi vhuya hayani, vho ḽa vho dzula. Mme na khotsi kevha, vho mbo di swika.

Vha tshi swika, vha ri, ‘Ro kovhelelwa.’

Vhaḽa vha ri, ‘Ha, ho luga.’ Ndi afho vha tshi dzula, vha tshi fhiwa zwiliwa, vha tshi ḽa.

Houḽa wa mutuka a ri, ‘Zwino, nḽe ndi afha vha a nḽivha naa?’

Vha ri, ‘Mukene ndi nwananga.’

A ri, ‘Na nḽe.’

A ri, ‘Uḽa wa musadzi o dzulaho fhaḽa, vha khou mu divha naa?’

Vha ri, ‘Thi mu divhi.’

A ri, ‘Mugede, vha a mu divha naa?’

Vha ri, ‘Ndi a mu divha dzina ḽawe. Nḽe thi tsha mu vhona.’

A ri, ‘Khoyu.’

Teli fhaḽa vho di dzulela hu vho nwiwa mahalwa. Vhaḽa vhakegulu na vha kalaha vha vho lila.

Vha ri, 'Litshani u lila. Havha ndi mme anga ndi vhakoma. Avha ndi Vho-Makhadzi.'

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

Kile dza vhuya

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ndi shango lo oma. A li na na maḍi na mathihi. Lo tou oma lo tou te!

Havha vhatukana vha tshi ya ḍakani hangei. Hu na muḥwe mutukana a no imba tshimbo tsha bvisa maḍi vha wana muedzi i tshi elela. Zwi sokou tou ralo vha tshi sokou bva vha tshi twa vha tshi ita maḍi.

Muḥwe a vhuya a vhudza khotsi awe. A ri, 'Khotsi anga, vha ri tevhele hangei. Hu na muḥwe mutukana a no ita zwiḥwe zwithu vha ḍo zwi vhona.'

Nangoho, vhaḷa mukalaha ndi u bva ndi u ya ndi u dzula nga fhasi nyana ha muedzi. Vho no bva, vha dzula nḥa hawo. Vha ri, 'Itani-ha zwiḷa zwithu.' Ha, uḷa mutukana vha mbo di mu luvhelela. Uḷa mutukana avha u a zwi ita. A imba tshimbo tshawe tshetsho tshihulu,

[Musimi]

Dza Munzhelele.

[Vhabvumeli]

Kile dza vhuya.

A tshi imba,

[Musimi]

Tshipandu-tshipandu, ngelengende!

Thovhele u ralo, ngelengende!

U pandani mavula? Ngelengende!

Vhathu vha a fhela, ngelengende!

[Vhabvumeli]

Tshavha, tshipanda mavula.

Maḍi a mbo di hovhoma. Vhaḷa mukalaha vha ṭamba, vha ṭamba! Vhana vha kha ludzula. Vha vhuya ngeno hayani, vha ya musanda. Vha ri, 'Hoi, zwi khou itwaho nga avha vhana ngei ḍakani, vha ita zwiḥulu.'

'Vha ita mini?'

Vha ri, 'Vha ita maḍi.'

Vhaḷa vha ri, 'A! Vha ita maḍi?'

Vhaḷa vha ri, 'Ii.'

Vha ri, 'Zwino ...'

Zwi itwa nga mutukana wa Vho-Mugede. Uḷa mutukana ha rumelwa vhaḍinda. Hu pfi uyu mutukana kha ḍe na vhaḥwe vhatukana vhawe. Zwino, na vho-mmeawe na vhathu vhothe. Nṭeli-ha, vha kuvhangana. Musanda vha ḍala. Vha ri vhaḥwe vha khou nyadza. 'A nga vhuya a ita tshithu, onoyu ḥwana?'

Uḷa ḥwana vha khou tamba nae vhatukana ngei. Vha khou di mu vhombedza. Vha ri, 'Imba tshiḷa tshimbo tshau.'

Uḷa a ri, 'Ha, inwi no nḍisa vhathuni.'

Vhaḷa vha ri, 'Imba, ṭavhanya.'

Uḷa a mbo di zwi thoma. Vha bvumela. A mbo di litsha tshiḷa a imba 'Tshipandu-tshipandu.' Tsha mbo di 'pandu,' aḷa maḍi, vha sokou wana maḍi kheaḷa. Vha sokou wana milambo i sokou elela, i vho sokou elela! Ndi u mbo di dzula-ha shango lo ita

zwavhuḍi.

Ha mbo ḍi vha u fa ha lungano.

Mashudu Mathala

Vho-Devhele vha tshi wela fhasi

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na muiwe munna e na vhasadzi vhawe vhavhili. Zwino, havha munna vha na vhasadzi vhavhili: Havha muhulwane vho vha vhe na zwiṭori. Havha muhulwane vho vha vha tshi pfi Vho-Devhele.

Vha ri, 'Vhone, Vho-Devhele, a vha bike.' Havhala Vho-Devhele nga vivho. Vha hana vha ri, 'Hai, nne a thi biki.' Havhala munna vha ri, 'Iwe! Bika!'

Houla mufumakadzi mutuku a bika. U khou di shuma, u khou di shuma, ndi dzharatani yawe. U khou mona-mona, u khou ita zwothe.

Havhala muhulwane, vha tshi vhona a tshi ya kha houla musadzi mutuku. Vha ri, 'E! Hoyu musadzi mutuku u do ndzhiela vhuhadzi hanga! A tshi tou kona u bika ngaurali. 'Zwine ndinga ita zwone ndi nga ita mini? Ndi tou ita tshitori tshine hoyu musadzi a sa tshi vhone.'

Vho-Devhele vha mbo di mona vha mbo di ita ndandula. Vho-Devhele vha tshi ita ndandula, ndi u dzhia ndandula heila ndi u vhea kha khali, ngauri kale hovha hu si na dzibodo. Ho vha hu tshi bikwa nga dzikhali.

Ndi u tiba, ndi u tuwa ndi u ya u shuma zwine vha khou shuma zwone. Vho tiba zwithu zwavho hangei.

Mukalaha u khou vhuya. U khou bva hune a bva hone. O neta, u khou nyaga u awela a le.

A tshi swika a ri, 'Mukene, wee!'

Ula musadzi mutuku a ri, 'Aa!'

'Idani ngeno!' Ula musadzi ndi u da. A tshi da.

'Hai, itani zwa u la, ndi khou nyaga u awela.'

Ula mufumakadzi a ri, 'Hai, zwithu ndo tshuna zwofhela.' Ndi uyo takula khali ndi u da ndi u vhea. Vhakalaha vha kale vho vha vha sa sevhedziwi, vho vha vha tshi tou sevhedza vhone vhane. A tshi swika vha mukalaha vha tshi tibula khali ila.

Vha ri, 'Ee! Ndi mini zwenezwi? Hai, tshee ndi tibe!'

'Mukene, wee!'

'Aa!'

'Idani!' Ula mukene a tshi swika a ri, 'Mufumakadzi wanga, itani zwiliwa ri le.'

Ula mufumakadzi a ri, 'Hu ita nne hani-hani ngauri nga maduvha ndi vhone vhane vha ita? Nne ndi pfa ndi tshi tshuwa.'

Vha ri, 'Hayi mufumakadzi wanga, nahasi ndo ni fha permission ya uri: Itani.' U kho nyaga uri a vhone mini? A vhone hezwi la zwire nga ngomu.

Houla mufumakadzi ndi u tibula. Houla mufumakadzi a tshi tibula a ri, 'Ee, mulandu?'

Ula mukalaha a ri, 'Nne ndovha ndi tshi khou ni vhidzela uri ni vhone haya mafhungo.'

'A thi divhi.' Musadzi houla a tshuwa a tetemela. A ri, 'Ene ha zwi divhi.'

Houla mukalaha a ri, 'A ni zwi divhi hani-hani ngauri hafhanoni ro dzula mudini washu ri vhararu? Zwi sumba uri arali zwi sa divhiwi nga inwi, zwi divhiwa nga nne, zwi sa divhiwi nga nne, zwi divhiwa nga havha muhulwane. Vhone Vho-Devhele! Kha vha de.'

Vha tshi swika fhalala, vha ri, 'Milandu iyi?' Vhalala vha ri, 'Nne a thi zwi divhi.'

Houla mukalaha a ri, 'A hu na thaidzo na nthihi vhafumakadzi vhangana. Zwino, ri ri tou kuya lwendo kholwu, lu sa do ri lutanya. Ri ya wela ri ya phafula.'

Vha tshi tuwa vha tshi ya hangei phafula. Vha tshi swika hafhalala, ndi mulambo muhulu khoyu. Hu na tivha hafho hune ha khou iwa hone, hu tou weliwa ndi seli. Mara

hu weliwa nga lutsinga. Lutsinga vha nga dadamala khalwo. Vha wana vhatukana vha khou di tamba, vha khou di tamba, vha khou di tamba.

Vha ri, 'Rine ri tshi khou tamba hafha. Ro lindela vhatu vhane vha bva kule na tsini. Vhane vha khou nyanga vho-maine. Ra konou vha dededza ra vha i sa hone.'

Vhala vha ri, 'Rine ri khou nyanga vho-maine.'

Ndi hezwi vha tshi tshimbila, mukalaha houla u phanda. Houla mukalaha a tshi ri phanda a tshi ri longondo. A vha a tshi thoma holuya luimbo. A tshi ri,

[Musimi]

Devhele bikani.

Na vuwa no lamba.

Zwino zwo itani?

Zwa vuwa no tenda.

[Vhabvumeli]

Mbutsha muninga.

Houla mukalaha o ima hangei seli. Habe vha pfuka nga muthihi nga muthihi.

A ri, 'Khahu tevhele a khou tevhelaho nne.' Houla musadzi mutuku a thoma, 'Devhele bikani ...' Ndi u dadamala ndi u fhira. O wela, o wela seli.

Houla mukegulu muhulwane, houla o itaho zwila zwiitori: A vha a tshi thoma zwino, u khou di dzudzanyela zwino. U khou lila nga maanda, 'Devhele bikani ...'

U tou swika hafhala vhukati ha mulambo houani, holuya lutsinga lwa mbo di ri, duu! Vho-Devhele ngwanda ngauri Vho-Devhele vho vha vho ita zwithu zwine zwa savhe zwone. Ngauri houla mukalaha arali o vha o tou sumba, a sumba, a sumba, a sumba, zwo do fhedza zwi songo ita zwone, ngauri munwe na munwe o vha a tshi dovha a tshi khou itani. A tshi khou lamba, a thi ri?

Zwino, zwo bvela khagala ngauri mune o itaho hetshila tshitori o mbo di ri, lutale, lutale lwa mbo di dzhumbuka vhukati. Houla mukegulu, houla o itaho tshitori hetshila, houla mukegulu ambo di wela vhukati ha ma di.

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

Salani

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu munwe munna a na musadzi wawe. Houla mufumkadzi a beba nae vhana vhavhili. Houla mufumakadzi a tshi beba nae vhana vhavhili, houla musadzi a lwala ma to. A tshi lwala haalani ma to a houani musadzi, ma to haalani, houla munna a takuwa, (Zwithu zwa kale ho vha hu si na zwibadela), a takuwa a ya u ka ma tati a mutanzwa.

A da a ka, a ka, a shela houani mufumakadzi ma to. A tshi shela houani mufumakadzi ma to, houani mufumakadzi ma to haalani a mbo di vha bofu. Houani mufumakadzi a tshi vha bofu, zwana ndi zwiituku.

Houani munna a ri, 'Iwe mufumakadzi wanga, ndi khwine ndi yo dzhia hoyu murathu wau hangei ha hau, ngauri arali ndi nga mala munwe musadzi wa inwe tshaka ha nga koni u fara havha vhana zwavhudi. Zwino, arali ndi nga dzhia houani murathu wau, u do kona u fara havha vhana.'

Houla musadzi a zwi pfesesa nangoho. A ri, 'Izwo ndi zwone, sa niwana wa mme anga.'

Houla munna a ya a mala houani musadzi. Houani musadzi a da afha, houani musadzi a tshi da hafha. Houani musadzi na ene a mbo di vha na niwana.

Houla mukomana wawe, a muvhudzisa a ri, 'Murathu wanga, u na niwana wa mini?'

A ri, 'Ndi na n̄wana wa mutukana.'

A ri, 'Zwo ita zwavhuḍi badi, n̄wana wa mme anga, ngauri u na n̄wana wa mutukana muthihi, n̄ne ndi vhavhili. Malaifa a hafha muḍini, lupfumo lwa hoyu munna ndi havha vhana vha vho riṅe vhararu. Zwisumba uri heyi ndaka ya hoyu munna, a i nga yi nnda. I ḍo pusukana kha vho riṅe henefha.' Matsiko houla murathu wawe, ha khou zwifuna. U khou nyaga uri ndaka heila i ya nnyi? I yawe.

Ndi hezwi houla musidzana, houla muhadzinga wawe, a tshi ri, 'Mukomana wanga, n̄wana u khou lwala.'

A ri, 'N̄wana u khou lwala naa?'

A ri, 'Ii.'

'Zwino, ni tou zwi itisa-itisa hani?'

A ri, 'Ni ḍo vhona uri ni ḍo tou zwi itisa-itisa hani kha hoyu n̄wana.'

Hetshila tshana tsho no ḍivha tshitukana tshihulwane, tshi khou ḍi aluwa. Habe muthu a tshi vuwa u khou vuwa a tshi aluwa. Houla musidzana, matsina hafha ene mbiluni yawe hu na zwe a puta. A ri, 'Hafha fhethu nga ndila ine havha na ndaka ngayo, hoyu nda sa mutuwisa hoyu, hoyu n̄wana wanga hanga badzheti hoyu. Ndi fanela u tuwisa hoyu.' Ndi u dzhia lisaga la mugayo. Ndi u dzhia ndi u putela houla n̄wana. Ndi u ḍi dzhenisa madini! Ndi u mutiba bavuni.

A tshi mutiba bavuni, mme a houla n̄wana u khou ḍi bva a ri, 'N̄wana?' Ene ndi u dzhia houla n̄wana wawe wa lushie ndi u mufha.

A ri, 'Hoyu n̄wana musi a si houlandi.'

A ri, 'Ndi onoyo, ndi ene n̄wana wavho.'

A ri, 'Hoyu n̄wana a si ene.'

A ri, 'N̄wana ndi onoyo.'

U ḍo itani? Ndi bofu ha vhoni. Naho a pupuruka, u ḍo ita mini? Houla wa bofu a zwi vhona zwauri hezwi zwithu a zwi tsha tou vha zwithu zwa vhukuma lini. Houla wa bofu ndi u swenda ndi u ya badani, ndi u swika ndi u imba,

[Musimi]

Iḍani, ni ḍo vhona.

[Vhabvumeli]

Thevhele mutete.

Vhana vha khou ḍi tamba. Vha khou fhira, vha khou fhira. Mulandu? Ula a ḥalutshedza uri hezwi ndi tshi khou imba, ndi khou imba ngauri n̄wananga thi muvhoni.

Vhana a thi ri vho ḍowela u tamba nae ula. Havhala vhana vha bva hafhalani kha havhala vha sa vhoni vha ḍa hafha nduni.

Vhala vha tshi khou imba ngei vha tshi ri, 'N̄wana a vha muvhoni?'

Houla a ḍi amba zwe a amba zwone, kana novha pfutsekisa kana no ri mini. Thi ndi muḍini wawe.

Munna houla nahasi u a vhuya. Munna a tshi yo vhuya u a nyaga n̄wana. Vhana hu khou ḍa, vhenevhalani vhavhili.

'N̄wana?'

'Dzi mufhandani, dzi mafolani, a zwi tsha pfala.'

'N̄wana?'

'N̄wana ha khou ḍivha uri u nga gai.'

Ula a ri, 'Hai, a hu na thaidzo, u ḍo bvelela.' (Zwithu zwa kale zwovha zwi tshikonda.)

Houlandi a tshi tuwa a tshi ya u nyaga tshipholisa hangei. Vha tshi tshimbila vha tshi goda, vha tshi goda, vha tshi goda. N̄wana o no tshinyala. N̄wana fhasi ha bafu!

Ula a vhidza vhathu vhothe. A ri, 'Vhoiwi vhathu vha next door vhane nda dzula na vhoiwe fhano. N̄ne ndi kale ndi khou dzula fhano na vhoiwe. Mafhungo anonga sa haya, matula haya n̄ne a thi athu u a vhona. Ndi nga si sokou levhela vhathu ndi tshi ri

ndi vhoiwe. Zwithu zwi ðivhiwa fhano muðini wanga.’

Havhala vha kwama na vhamusanda. Vha ri, ‘Hai, zworalo a zwi tswenyi ni, iwe u songo dzhaya, ri ita tshidele. U tshi swika u songo vhuya wa thanyisa muthu. Ri shuma hoyu mushumo ra fhedza. Nga murahu ha u fhedza mushumo hoyu. Ra konou u shuma hoyu mushumo muhulwane.’

Ngoho, vha lugisa houla ñwana, vha vhulunga houla ñwana. A ri, ‘Musadzi wanga, tombani halwa. Thi ri, ro ita mbulungo hu si na tshithu. Zwino, tombani halwa.’

Havhala vhakalaha vha dovhe vha vhuye fhano muðini. ‘Ri lugise mafhungo.’

A kakarika a ri, ‘Zwo fhela.’ A gagadika, a gagadika, a gagadika a ita zwithu zwawe zwothe, zwa fhela hezwiwa zwithu. Hovhula halwa ha tuðiwa.

Havhala vhakalaha vha vhidziwa vha vhuya. Ha dzhena vhakalaha vhararu hafhala nduni. Ha pfi, vha vhofhe nga nnzi dza mpando. Vha pfuna nnzi havhala vhakalaha. Vha dzhena nga fhala nduni. Ene avha a tshi dzhena. Houla munna a sundiwa ha pfi, kha bve a tuwe a do vhuya nga zwifhinga.

U dzhena fhala nduni vha vhofha. Muiwe a fara ngei, muiwe a fara ngei! A takanyea, a takanyea, a takanyea, a takanyea! A fhedza a tshi vho laela.

Vha dia mulindi henefhala nga ngomu. Vha vhulunga, vha fukedza zwothe. Na havha vhana vhavhili vhosalaho a vho ngo vhuya vha vhona uri ho itea mini. Na houla wa bofu ha ngo vhuya a vhona uri ho itea mini.

Mbulungo kheila yo fhela. Houla munna a tshi vhuya fhala muðini.

Ha mbo ði vha hu u fa ha lungano.

Zacharia Tshamano

Lwendo lwa Dzwee

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu munwe muṭhannga a tshi pfi Dzwee. A dinalea hayani. A semana na vhabebi. A ṅala a ri, ‘Ndi a tuwa!’

A tshimbila a ya ḍakani lihulu line a sa ḍivhe uri ndi la gai. A swika a wana ndau. A lingedza u shavha. Ya ri, ‘U songo shavha! Idani u ṅtomole mupfa, ndo ṭhavhiwa.’ A ya, a i vangula. Ya ri, ‘U songo tshimbila u tshi vhudza muthu na muthihi zwauri wo vangula nne, nahone wo amba na nne.’

A tshimbila a swika a wana khovhe i nṅa ha maḍi. Ya ri, ‘Hee, iwe, Dzwee! Ida u ndzhie u mposele maḍini!’ Dzwee a lingedza uri u a shavha. Ya ri, ‘U songo shavha, mara fhedzi u songo vhudza vhathu uri wo amba na nne.’ A dzhia khovhe a i posa maḍini.

A tshimbila a swika a wana bere. Bere ya ri, ‘Hei Dzwee! U khou ṭḍani afha ḍakani lihulu-hulu?’

Dzwee a ri, ‘Ndi khou sokou tshimbila, a thi ḍivhi hune nda khou ya hone.’

Bere ya ri, ‘U ḍo liwa nga zwivhanda ngauri hafha fhethu ndi kule na zwiṭentsi.’

A namela bere. A gada nayo, a gada nayo! Ya swika ya mutsitsa zwiṭentsini. A swika a wana shopo lihulu la magula. A ri, ‘Ndi a humbela mushumo.’

Magula vha ri, ‘Ri khou fha tshikepe wa namela wa ya oversea wa yo dzhia khii na musadzi.’ Vha mufha na zwiliwa a ya oversea. Vha munamedza tshikepe.

Muḍi wa hone wo tingiwa nga dzindau. A tshi ri u a dzhena ndau dzari dzia mu la. Heila ndau ye a i vangula ya ri, ‘Ha liwi, o nthusa hoyu.’

A dzhena muḍini. A bva na musadzi. Vha dzhena tshikepeni. Vhonovha vhukati ha lwanzhe musadzi a dzhia khii a posa lwanzheni.

Vha tshi vhuya fhaḷa magula vha ri, ‘Khii dzi gai?’ Musadzi a ri, ‘Nne ndo posa maḍini. Ri a u ruma futhi. Tshimbila uyo pala khii lwanzheni.’

Vha mushelela na zwiliwa. Dzwee a dzhena kha tshikepe. A dzula maḍuvha mavhili tshikepeni a lwanzheni a khou sedza. Heila khovhe ya muvhona ya ri, ‘Hee, Dzwee, u khou ṭḍa mini afha?’ A ri, ‘Ndi khou ṭḍa khii.’

Khovhe ya langana na dziṅwe khovhe maḍini, ya sedza khii. Ya thunyuluwa na khii. Ya ri, ‘Khii khedzi.’ Ya mufha khii.

Dzwee a humela murahu. A tshi humela murahu, vha ri, ‘Hee, hoyu muthu ri nga si mubadele. O ri shumela zwinzhi. Tshelede ndi nnzhi heyi.’ Vha dzhia vha muvalela tshikamarani tsha mulilo. Vha mufhisa, vha mufhisa! A sa fe! A bva a mutshena-tshena-tshena!

Havhala magula vha ri, ‘Hei!’ Inwe boso ya magula ya ri, ‘Na nne ndi nyaga u dzhena ndi tswuke sa hoyu.’ Ya dzhena ya fa! Magula vhoṭhe vha tuwa. Shopo lavha lawe.

Ha ḍa ndau. Ndau ya ri, ‘Hee, Dzwee, u kha ḍi zwihumbula u ri ndi nne ndo u lamulelaho u tshi khou ṭḍa u liwa naa?’ Dzwee a ri, ‘Iwe a u dzuli na vhathu. Tuwa u ye ḍakani!’

Ha ḍa khovhe. Khovhe ya ri, ‘Hee, Dzwee, u kha ḍi zwihumbula uri ndi nne we nda u thusa nga u ṭḍela khii naa?’ Dzwee a ri, ‘Iwe, dzhena maḍini, iwe a u dzuli na vhathu.’

Bere ya ḍa. Ya ri, ‘Hee, Dzwee, iwe u kha ḍi zwihumbula uri ndi nne we a u ḍisa afha naa?’ Dzwee a ri, ‘Iwe, bere, i ya u vha u khou la mahatsi hafhala, a u dzuli na vhathu.’

Ha vha u fa ha salungano.

Olosi o tshila zwavhudi nga murahu

Salungano, salungano!

Hovha hu munna a na vhasadzi vhavhili. Muñwe musadzi a beba ñwana a re na magic. A re na ñaledzi hafha kha phanda. Heila ñaledzi a i timbula, u avha muhulwane a wana a na tshelede ine yavha na mukhuwa.

Houla musadzi a zwivhona. A dzhia ñwana a muposa madini. Houla ñwana a sa nukale. A dovha futhi. Havhala vho ya khunini a humbula u dzhia houla ñwana a muposa madini. A ya a muposa.

Vhathu vha mutoda muḍi wothe, vha mutoda shango lothe. Muñwe munna a ri, 'Ndo vhona ñwana ndi tshi khou bva khunini hangei e madini. A songo vhuya a nukala, ende futhi a sa eleli.' Vha ya vha dzhia ñwana. Vha mudzhia vha vhuya nae muḍini.

Houla ñwana a zwivhona uri ndi a fa hafha fhethu. A tibula ñaledzi yawe a vha muhulwane. A tshivha muhulwane a ri, 'Mma, ndi a tuwa, ndi yo shuma.'

Vhala vha ri, 'Aa! U a tuwa wa ya u shuma zwino u mutuku so?'

A ri, 'Ndi khou tuwa ndi khou ya u shuma mmeanga. Havha vhathu hutou nga, vha do mmbulaha.' Ndi u mutendela a tuwa a yo shuma.

A tangana na tshiñwe tshinna tsho ambara mukumba ure na dzinnda. Tsha ri, 'Hee iwe! U khou ya u shuma wo ambara sutu naa? U nga si do vhuya wa wana mushumo na luthi.'

Houla muthannga a ri, 'Mphe hezwo zwe wa ambara.' A mufha mukumba. Hetshila tshinna tsha tuwa tsho ambara sutu ...

A tshi swika muḍini muñwe vha ri, 'Rine a ri toḍi muthu wa dzinnda.' A pfuka a ya kha muñwe muḍi vha ri, 'Rine a ri toḍi muthu wa dzinnda.' Ha pfi, 'Nne ri tou ya ha khosi Vho-Baulo.'

Vho-Baulo vha ri, 'Idai, ndi u thole.' Vha mufhatela kuḍu kwawe kule na nḍu yavho. Vha tshi tou ya vha tshi muvhidza nga mushumo.

Hoyu muthannga o vha a tshi pfi Olosi. Houla muthannga: Ha ri vhusiku ha u thoma a eḍela. Ha vhuvhili a tibula ñaledzi heila a wana e mukhuwa a na tshelede.

Nga ḍuvha litevhelaho havhala munna vha ri, 'Olosi u sale na nḍu-ii. Ndi khou thoma nda ya vhuḭamboni. Hu na mukhuwa ane a khou ya u vhoniwa.'

Vha tuwa, Olosi a sala. A tibula ñaledzi yawe. Ha ḍa bere tsini. A ambara sutu tshena. A namela bere yawe. A ri, kha-kha-kha-kha! A swika vhuḭamboni. Vha muvhona.

Havhala Vho-Baulo vha vha vha a vhuya. Vha ri, 'Ñwananga, iyani u vhidza Olosi.' Vho-Baulo vho vha vhe na ñwana muthihi fhedzi wa musidzana. Vha tshi vhidza Olosi.

Vha ri, 'Olosi, hovha hu zwihulu zwe zwavha zwi tshi khou itiwa hangei. Hei, hovha hu na mukhuwa o ḍa namusi. Namusi ro diphina. Mukhuwa ro muvhona.' Olosi a ri, 'Ndi zwavhudi.' Ha pfi, 'Iwe, tuwa u yo eḍela.'

Nga litevhelaho nga madekwana o no fhedza u shuma mishumo yawe yothe vha vhidza ñwana wavho wa musidzana. Vha ri, 'Iyani, ni yo mmbidzela Olosi.' Houla musidzana a swika a tou dodela. A wana Olosi o tibula ñaledzi. Phanda hawe huna dzitshede, o tswuka e mukhuwa.

A tshi vhidzelela a ri, 'Hee, Olosi! Hu pfi idani!' A tshi tiba, a ri, 'U songo tiba!' A ri, 'Nnyitele ndi vhone.' Olosi a hana. A muluvhelela, a muluvhelela. A vhuya, a tenda. A muitela. Vhusiku vhuñwe na vhuñwe houla ñwana wa Vho-Baulo a tshi dzula e henengei.

Vho-Baulo vha ri, 'U ya u toḍani hangei ha Olosi?' A ri, 'Olosi u vha a khou nndzuwela, ri vha ri tshi khou tou dzuwa. U vha a tshi khou ntakadza.' Hu si kale-kale houla musidzana a ri, 'Khotsi anga, avha nnyitele mutshato muhulu.'

Vha ri, 'U nyaga u malana na nnyi?' A ri, 'Na Olosi.' Vha ri, 'Ndi do mu vhulaya!'

Zwino, Olosi a si muthu wa u malea!

Houla nwana a lila, a lila, a lila! Vha ri, 'Olosi a si muthu wa u malea. Nahone Olosi ndi khou muthatha a tshi tsha mutoda.'

Haala mukhuwa a ri, 'Vho-Baulo avha thome vha ime muthu hoyu wa u pfi Olosi ri thome ri muvhone.' Vha ri, 'Ndi Olosi wa nda.' Ha pfi, 'Kha vha mulitshe a ite zwine a khou funa hoyu nwana.'

Wa itiwa mutshato. Ha sala zwauri Olosi a de. Vha wana hu khou bvelela muwe mukhuwa nga bere o ambara sutu tshena o naka, mukhuwa a re na tshelede. Bere ya ri, kha-kha-kha!

'Ndi ene Olosi hoyu naa?' Vho-Baulo vha vula sutu vha lata fhasi! Vha ri, 'A si Olosi hoyu!' Vha tshi yo sedza nduni vha wana uri Olosi haho. Vha tshi ri, 'Mini ndi mini?' Olosi a ri, 'Ndi ne.'

A tshata na nwana wavho, a mumala, a dzula nae. Avha na tshelede!

Havha u fa ha lungano.

Elisa Madzanga

Thanga dza mafhuri

Salungano! Salungano!

Ndi munna na musadzi a na vhana vhavho vhavhili. Hoyu munwe ndi lushie.

Zwino-ha, hoyu n̄waha wa ndala khulu. Zwino, ha pfi, 'Ri la mini?' Houla wa munna a bva. A tshi bva hangei a swika a namela muri. Hoyu mundoze wa hone wo vhibva. Zwino, he wa vhibva hone, a tshi gonya houla a swika a ganama n̄tha ha muri. A ri,

[Musimi]

Mundoze, mundoze-i.

Ha vhuya mundoze.

[Vhabvumeli]

Ndi tshila nga muri mundoze.

Dziḷa ndoze dza wela fhasi. Dzi tshi ḍala fhaḷa fhasi! Wa munna ndi u doba, ndi u la hangei.

A tshi swika ngei muḍini. Havho musadzi na vhana vha khou fa nga ndala. Zwino, vha tshi yo u vhuya, vha ri, 'Zwino, ri tshi khou fa nga ndala. Ri yo la mini?' Vha ri, 'Hai.'

Zwino, ula musadzi a tuwa a ya u ka mushidzi wawe. A tshi ka mushidzi, a ḍa, a bika, a la na vhana. A tshi fha khotsi, vha ri, 'Hai, n̄e thi li muri. Ndi ḍo tshila nga banga fhedzi.'

Hai, ula musadzi, li a tsha. Munna ndi u dovha ndi u tuwa. 'Mundoze, mundoze-i ...' Ndoze dziḷa ndi u ḍala fhasi. N̄teli, mukalaha u khou kukuna, u khou kukuna, u khou kukuna!

Ula musadzi u khou londa zwino. U londa nga lwayo uri a wane uri vha gai. A tshi ḍa hafhaḷa fhasi ha muri, u a sedza, u a sedza! U wana kevha vha khou doba, vha khou la, vha khou doba, vha khou la dziḷa ndoze. Ula a ri, 'Aa! Ndi zwone! Zwine vha vhuya, vha tshi ri: "A thi li mushidzi!" Hu uri vhone vha khou la ndoze afha, ndi zwone zwezwo?'

A ya kha huḅwe a wana vhaiwe vha khou sinḍa mavhele avho. Vha mu fha mufumbu wa mavhele. A sinḍa houla mufumbu. A vhuya nawo, a ḍa a itela mukapu n̄wana. Havhala vhana vha tshi la.

Zwino, nahasi hezwila o rinda mukapu, havhala munna muri wo no kuvha houla. A tshi vhuya hafha, vha edela. Ula o rinda mukapu o vhea. Houla mukalaha ndi u vuwa ndi u la mukapu wa n̄wana!

Ula a tshi vuwa, a tshi ri, 'Aa, mukapu wa n̄wananga?'

'Ha, wo liwa nga tshikadzi. Houla mukapu: Tshikadzi tsho la.'

'Ea?'

'Ii.'

O dovha o rinda. Vho edela. Vhone mukalaha ndi u vuwa vhusiku. Ndi u kapula ula mukapu wo fhela. Hai, vhone mukalaha!

'Tshi nga vha tshikadzi tshi no tou la mukapu ḍuvha na ḍuvha?'

Vhala vha ri, 'Ee.'

A tshi ya kha vhaiwe vha ri, 'Hai, iwe, dzhiani thanga dza mafhuri u vhee hafha maḥoni u ganame u rali.'

Zwino, houla wa mukalaha a tshi vuwa. U ri, 'Aa! Hai, musadzi wanga, nahasi a u edeli ngani? Hi, u sa lali? Hu na mini?' Hei, ula a ri, 'Hai, ndo sokou ḍi fhatutshelavho.'

U khou ri o fhatuwa ala maṭo ndi thanga. Li a tsha matshelo mukapu wa ṅwana u hone. Vha a dovha futhi: Madekwana u khou ḍi eḍela a tshi rali. Ngei ṅdala mukalaha i khou hwaya.

A ri, ‘Aa, iwe musadzi, iwe kee ano maḍuvha u tshi nga a u eḍeli? Wo tou ita hani?’

Uḷa a ri, ‘Hai, nṅe a thina khofhe ndi nyaga u vhona hetsho tshikadzi.’ (Tshikadzi tshiḷa, tshikadzi a tshi ho.)

Mukapu wo vuwa u hone. Matshelo u a bvisa dzila thanga u a eḍela. Mukapu uḷa wo fhela.

Ha mbo ḍi vha u fa ha lungano.

Florence Mphoshomali

Vhutungu

Salungano, salungano!

Hovha huna muñwe munna, a na vhasadzi vhavhili na mutukana wawe. Kha havho vhasadzi vhavhili havha uri hoyu muñwe o vha a si tsheho. Ho sala muthihi. Hoyu munna wa hone o vha o liwa nga liñwe libuka li no pfi ndi Dagalume.

Zwino, houla mutukana, a vha na mbilaelo. U ri, 'Nne, zwino, a vha khotsi anga vha si tsheho. Ende na havha mme anga vha si tsheho. Nne na nne ndi khwine ndi tshi tou namba na nne-vho nda tevhela khotsi anga na mme anga.'

Ngoho, zwino, ha wanala honouri, helia buka lo laho khotsi awe na mme awe ha pfi lo vhulaiwa. Houla muthannga nge a pfa hu tshi pfi heila dithu lo la khotsi awe, a sokou vhona unga na ene aralini a li la helia buka, u do namba a tevhela khotsi awe na mme awe.

Havhalani mmame wawe, vha namba vha ya hune ha khou rengesiwa heila nama. Vha ya vha renga heilani nama. Vha tshi renga heilani nama-ii, zwi amba uri, ha dovha havha hu uri hu na inwe nama ya kholomo.

Houla mutukana, zwino, hezwi mmame wawe vho musevhedza heilani nama ya kholomo. A thoma u imbelela luimbo,

[Musimi]

Hii, hii, Dagalume lia la khotsi anga.

Nama ya kholomo a thi li.

Ndi la ya Dagalume.

[Vhabvumeli]

Dagalume!

Havhala mmame wa hone vha thoma u pfa vhutungu. Vha ri, 'Zwino, ri do ita mini? A hu na zwine ranga ita. Inwi, zwino, ni khou vhona unga, zwino, ni sa li iyi nama ya kholomo ni tshi ri ni la iyi ya Dagalume. Nne ndo ni fha heyi ya kholomo nga u divha uri heyi ya Dagalume ni nga si kone u ila sa izwi i lone lo laho khotsi anu na mme anu.'

Houla mutukana a hana a khou sokouri, 'Dagalume lia la khotsi anga ...'

Mmane wa hone na vhona vha sokou hana vho tungufhala. Vha ri, 'Zwino, nne a thi divhi uri iwe ndi do tou zwi itisa hani.' Zwi amba, 'U ri iwe u khou vhona uri nne ndi nga tou zwi itisa hani?'

Houla mutukana a tuwa a ya henengei thavhani hune ha pfi ho liwa khotsi awe na mme awe hone. A swika henengei a kho di dovha a kho di imba, 'Dagalume lia la khotsi anga ...'

Havha uri u khou sokou di tswenya ngau lila ngauri a thi ri lia Dagalume lovha lo no di vhulaiwa. Havha uri ene u khou sokou gonya thavha nge a pfa hu tshi pfi khotsi awe na mme awe vho liwa nga Dagalume thavhani. Havha uri a hu na uri u do li vhona he lo Dagalume ngauri vhathu vho li vhulaha.

Ha mbo di vha ndi u fa ha lungano.

Asinathi Nenzhelele

Tshifhungu

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu vhanwe vhasidzana vho dzula mulamboni. Zwino, vha vhona muñwe muṭhannga a tshi khou bva tshikhuwani. A muṭhannga wa Zimbabwe.

Zwino, houḷa muṭhannga a ḍa a dzula hanefho. A wana vhasidzana vha tshi khou kuvha. Zwino, a ri, 'Ndo vha ndi tshi khou hambela-vho maḍi. A ne a ḍo mpha maḍi kha vhoiwe vhasidzana.'

Havhala vhasidzana vha tshi khou kaledzana. Zwino, muñwe a mbo ḍi takuwa. A ri, 'Eya, eya, Tshinakaho! Ni khou vha fha maḍi, hanevha munna vhane ri si vha ḍivhe?'

Houḷa muṭhannga a ri, 'Ndi no kumbera-vho mvura.' Havhala vhasidzana muñwe a mbo ḍi takuwa a mbo ḍi mu fha maḍi, a nwa.

A ri, 'Ndi nnyi ane a tama u tuwa na nne hayani ha hashu?'

Havhala vhasidzana vha ri, 'Evho, riṇe a ri tuwi na muthu ane ri si mu ḍivhe.'

A ri, 'Nda imba luimbo lwanga ni ḍo mbvumela?'

Havhala vhasidzana vha ri, 'Ee, ri ḍo bvumela.'

Houḷa muṭhannga o vha a tshi khou toda u tuwa na houḷa musidzana we a mu fha maḍi. O fara brief case yawe, a mbo ḍi vha a tshi thoma. A ri,

[Musimi]

Vheiwe vhasikana.

No tevhera mvumo.

Aa-dende, ahee!

Bvumo ya makore!

No tevhela bvumo.

Luvhaivhai!

[Vhabvumeli]

Ruka rudende.

A mbo ḍi tuwa na houḷa musidzana we a ḍo ka maḍi. Zwino, havhala vhasidzana vha tshi sala hafhalani.

Mvula i khou penya. Hezwi lupenyo lu tshi fhira, vha wana u ri musidzana houḷa ha tsheeho, houḷa we a ḍo dzhia maḍi a fha houḷa muṭhannga wa Zimbabwe.

A hana a tshi khou imbelela, 'Vheiwe vhasikana ...'

Hezwi i tshi, gu!, vhavhai. Mvula i khou bvuma! Lupenyo hezwi lu tshi penya lu tshi ri vhaivhai!

A mbo ḍi namba u tuwisana na uḷa musidzana. Zwino, a swika nae hangei ha hawe. A dzula nae. A vha na vhana.

A ri, 'Ndi khou nyaga u tuwa hayani ha hashu.' Vhana wawe vho vha vho no vha vhuṇa. Zwino, u ḷa muṭhannga ari ndi ḍo mu fheletshedza. A mbo ḍi namba a mu fheletshedza.

A tshi swika ndilani, a ri, 'Mmbebiseni muñwe ñwana.' Houḷa munna a ri, 'Tshimbilani! Vha ḍo tshimbila!' Vha mbo ḍi enda vha tshi khou tshimbila. Vhana vha sala murahu. Khotsi a sala murahu. Vhana vha dzhena vhukati. Vha khou enda vha tshi tshimbila, vha tshi enda vha tshi tshimbila.

Matsina houḷa munna u a shanduka, a vha gokhonono! A tshi shanduka hafhala, a tshi ita gokhonono!

Vha enda vha tshi khou tshimbila, vha tshi khou tshimbila. Houḷa musadzi a mbo ḍi thoma luimbo,

[Musimi]

Mashango a kule ha yiwi, mmawee!

A dina nga penda pendani, mmawee!

[Vhabvumeli]

Phenda ngulu.

Houḷa munna a mbo ḍi enda a tshi khou tshimbila. Zwino, houḷa munna matsina u a shanduka a tshi mila vhana. Hezwi a tshi ralo, a doba ṅwana muthihi, a mila, a dovha hafha muṅwe.

Houḷa musadzi a tshi hasha murahu, a wana vhana ho sala vhavhili. A dzhia vhana a fhirisa phanda. Munna a sala murahu. Houḷa munna a mbo ḍi khona. A ri, 'Ni vhe ni tshi tshimbila.'

A tshi vhuya hangei houḷa munna a mbo ḍi vhuya o shanduka, o ita gokhonono. Houḷa musadzi a tshi enda a tshi sedza murahu. A wana houḷa munna o no vha na mamvele. Uḷa musadzi a mbo ḍi vha a tshi thoma, 'Mashango a kule ha yiwi, mmawee! ...'

Uḷa munna a mbo ḍi ri, 'Ayi, why ni tshi dzhia vhana na fhirisa phanda? Ifhani ndo ni vhudza uri ndi ḍo ni thusa u beba vhana?' Uḷa a ri, 'Ndi khou vhona u ngari hafha fhethu a zwi khou tshimbila zwavhuḍi. Vhana khufha ho no sala vhavhili?'

Houḷa munna a mbo ḍi khona. A vhuya a muthu. Vha enda a tshi khou tshimbila. Havhala vhana vha dovha vha vhuisiwa vhukati. A ri, 'Mashango a kule ha yiwi, mmawee! ...'

A mbo ḍi doba houḷa muṅwe ṅwana a mila. Ha sala muthihi.

Zwino, vho no vha tsini na u swika hayani. Hayani ha houḷa mufumakadzi, vha mbo ḍi vha vha tshi swika.

Helia liduna lo no tou kukumuwa lo no vha liduna lihulwane. Havhala vhana vha khou tshila nga ngomu thumbuni yawe.

A tshi swika vhakegulu ha mbo ḍi pfi, 'Ayi, ṅwana washu khoyu o vhuya.' Vha tshi thoma u takala hanefhala, mukwasha vha mu dzhenisa ṅduni. Mukwasha, a adzeliwa na thovho a dzula nga hanengei ṅduni.

Ngeno uḷa mufumakadzi u khou bika fhalala. A tshi fhedza fhalala zwiliwa, a isa nga henengei ṅduni. Houḷa mukwasha u khou la nga hanengei. O vhulaelwa na dzinama dza dzimbudzi na dzikholomo.

Hezwi a tshi bvela hangeno ṅnda, e na vhabebi vhawe a mbo ḍi ri, 'Habe vhathu vha zwi divhe uri ṅne ndo vha ndi na vhana vhangha havha vhaṅa. Zwino, vho miliwa nga hoyu munna. Ha sala hoyu muthihi.'

Tshifhungu tsho no eḍela vhukati ha vhusiku. Khofhe dzi khou honiwa. Vha dzhia misi, vha tshi yo thula i la thumbu! I tshi yo thuthuba, ha mbo ḍi bva havhala vhana vhothe vha tshi khou tshila.

Ha mbo ḍi vha u fa ha lungano.

Martha Kwinda

Vhasikana a vha na maano

Salungano, salungano!

Vho vha vhe vhaiwe vhasidzana. Vho vha vha tshi khou ka maḍi tshisimani. Vha vhasidzana vhafumi.

Zwino, vha tshi khou ka haala maḍi tshisimani, ha da muḱwe muthannga. A ri, 'Ndi khou humbela-vho maḍi.' Vhala vha mufha maḍi anwa. A tshi fhedza u nwa a ri, 'Nḱe ndi khou tuwa.'

Vha ri, 'Ni ya gai?'

A ri, 'Ndi ya Vhukalanga.'

Vha ri, 'Vhukalanga? Na riḱe ri tuwa na inwi.'

A ri, 'Hai, a thi tuwi na vhoiwe Vhukalanga. Vhukalanga ndi kule.'

Havhala vhasidzana vha namba vha hana vha ri, 'Hai, riḱe ri tuwa na inwi hangei Vhukalanga.'

Ula muthannga a ri, 'Haiwa, kha ri tuwe.' Vha dzhena ndilani. Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila. Musi vha tshi ya phanda-ii, houla muthannga a thoma luimbo,

[Musimi]

Vhasikana a vha na maano!

Ra vho tovhela magwenyambe!

Ramagwenyambe li no dya vhanu.

Ra kure, ndidza kure, ndidza kure.

Ra kwiḱi-kwiḱi na vho-mukwaḱi.

[Vhabvumeli]

Havhuya masiri dende!

Hezwi a tshi ri kwiḱi-kwiḱi na vho-mukwaḱi. Vhasidzana vho vha vhafumi. A vha o no la muthihi. Ha sala vhatanu na vhana.

Vha dzhena lwendoni vha isa phanda. Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila! Musi vha tshi ya phanda a thoma luimbo, 'Vhasikana a vha na maano! ...'

Musi vha tshiralo-ii, houla musidzanyana mutuku kha vhothe a ri, 'Vhoiwe, hafha fhethu ro no shotha. Hufhani ro bva ri fumi, zwa zwino ro no sala ri vhatanu na vhararu. A vha vhavhili vho ya gai?' Havhala vhasidzana vhanga vho dziedzea. Vha ri, 'Hai, a zwongo ralo, riḱe ri kha divha ro fhelela.' Houla muthannga a ri, 'Ihina, ro fhelela. Hangei hune ra khou ya hone phanda, hu na nḱu khulu.

A ri tshimbile! Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila. Musi vha tshi yo swika hafhala nduni khulu-ii, hai, vha dzhena hafhala nduni khulu. Vha edela.

Musi vho no farwa nga khofhe, houla muthannga a vuwa. A thoma luimbo lwawe, 'Vhasikana a vha na maano! ...' Musi zwi tshi yo ralo hafhala-ii, vha vuwa havhala vhasidzana. Vha konou zwivhona, uri ihina mani, hoyu mutuku o amba, habe zwa zwino ri khou fhela. Ro no sala ri vhatanu na vhavhili.

Havha hu tshi khou bva fhungo hangei murahu. Vhabebi vha kuvhangana. Vha ya musanda kha khosi. Vha swika vha ri, 'Riḱe vhana vhashu vho dzhiwa nga muthu, vha tshi khou ka maḍi tshisimani.' Khosi ya ri, 'Vho tuwela gai?' Havhala vhabebi vha ri, 'A ri divhi uri vho ya kha lifhio.' Vhamusanda vha ri, 'Hu khou nyagiwa tshinoni. Tshinoni hetsho-ii tshi do fhiwa muri une tsha do tshimbila tshi tshi nyaga havho vathu ngawo.' Nga ngoho, tshinoni hetshila tsha fhiwa muri.

Tshinoni tsha tuwa. Tsha swika tsha kivha ntha ha nḱu heila.

Havhala vathu vho lala. Houla muthannga a vha a tshi thoma, 'Vhasikana a vha

na maano! ...’ Hezwi li tshi ri, ku-ri-ndidza-ku-ri-ndidza, li tshi ri li a dovha houla munwe nwana-ii.

Hetshila tshinoni tsha tsitsa muri houla wa mushonga wa tsela fhasi hafhala nduni. Havhala vhana vhothe vha mbo di vuwa. Vha tshi vuwa hafhala. Ndu heila ya vulea, i tshi vulea, tshinoni tsha ima hafhala munangoni. Tsha ri, ‘Vhoiwe, idani ni ntovhele nga murahu! Idani ni ntovhele nga murahu!’

Ha thomiwa luimbo, ‘Vhasikana a vha na maano! ...’

Havhala vhasidzana-ii vha mbo di tuwa na hetshila tshinoni vha swika mudini wa khosi. Vha tshi swika mudini wa khosi vha wana vhabebi vhavho vho kuvhangana henefhala. Ndi hezwi vha tshi ri, ‘Vhamusanda, rine ri khou pfa ri tshi khou vha livhuwa nga u ri disela vhana vhashu nga muri houla we wa tuwa na tshinoni.’

Vhamusanda vha fhiwa dzikholomo nga vhabebi vha vhana.

Ha vha hu u fhela ha lungano.

Vho-Mbila

Salungano, salungano!

O vha e mufumakadzi a tshi lima masimuni a nda hangei, a no limiwa tshilimo. Zwino, hezwi a tshi khou lima hoyu mufumakadzi, una nwana wawe a kha divhaho mutuku ane a dzindela musi a tshi khou shuma. Houla mufumakadzi u khou di shuma a tshi gungula, ‘Nwana hoyu ha koni u ntshumisa zwavhudi.’

Mbila i tshi bva hafhala bakoni. I tshi aravhela divha-ii. I khou di muvhona houla mufumakadzi uri u khou gungula nga nwana hana tshixele tsha nwana.

‘Nne ndi nyaga u ya. Nda swika nda ri, “Mphe nwana hoyu, ndi mulele.” Mara nne ndi khou nyaga u mudzhia houla nwana, a vhe wanga tshothe.’ Nga ngoho, mbila heila ya takuwa, ya tsela fhasi.

Ya ri, ‘Vhalimi!’ Ula a ri, ‘Ndi vhano!’ Ya ri, ‘Ndo wana vha tshi khou gungula nga nwana hoyu ane a vha dzindela musi vha tshi khou shuma, a vha mphe ndi mulele. Nne ndi do mulela masiari othe u bva tsha matsheloni. Vhone vha dovha vha khou shuma zwavhudi. Musi li tshi kovhela, li tshi thabama-ii, nne ndi do vhuisa nwana. Vhone vha ya hayani, matshelo li tshi tsha vha vhuya nae.’ Hai, mufumakadzi a tenda.

Mbila li tshi tsha-ii, li tshi tavha ya wana mufumakadzi khoula u khou ya masimuni awe. Yone nga ngoho ya theuwa. I tshi swika fhalala, ‘Ndo do dzhia nwana.’ Mufumakadzi o dzhia nwana o fha mbila. Mbila yo rembuluwa yo tuwa na nwana ula. U swika i khou di dzulela na houla nwana. I khou tamba nae, i khou tamba nae.

Hezwi musi li tshi kovhela-ii, mufumakadzi a imba luimbo,

[Musimi]

Iwe tshimbila, vhuisa nwananga, ndi bebe.

[Vhabvumeli]

Bundu tsha lela.

Ila mbila ya mbo di tsa na ula nwana. Ya da ya mufha mme awe. Mme awe vha a tuwa. Asizwila, vha ya mudini. La kovhela vha swika, vha lala. Li tshi tsha vha tuwa vha swika ngei masimuni. Mbila i a vha vhona. Ya da ya dzhia houla nwana. Ya tuwa nae hangei hune ya dzula hone. Ya swika ya tamba nae.

Li tshithabama havhala mufumakadzi vha thoma luimbo, ‘Iwe tshimbila ...’ Heila mbila ya vhuisa houla nwana. Ndi divha lavhuvhili.

Divha la vhuraru li a swika. Havhala mufumakadzi vho vhuya na nwana zwino. Ula mufumakadzi ndi u fha ila mbila nwana. Ila mbila ya tuwa nae houla nwana.

Divha la kovhela. Houla mufumakadzi a thoma luya luimbo, ‘Iwe tshimbila ...’

Hai, ila mbila ya mbo di di dzulela hangei na houla nwana. Ula mufumakadzi u wana duvha li tshi khou swifhala kheli. Iyi mbila namusi i sa disisi nwananga duvha lo no kovhela. Namusi kani yo tou bva ya ya kule? Uya dovha luya luimbo, 'Iwe tshimbila ...'

Duvha ndi u namba ndi u swifhala. Ula musadzi u vho tou lila, 'Hii-hii, hii-hii! Iyi mbila yo isa gai nwana? I sa vhuya nae? Iwe tshimbila, vhuisa nwananga, ndi bebe ...'

Duvha ndi u namba ndi u kovhela ndi u swifhala. Ula musadzi ndi u dzhena ndilani ndi u ya hayani. U tshimbila a tshi ima a tshi thetshelesa. U dovha luimbo luthihi hafhu, 'Iwe tshimbila, vhuisa ...'

Duvha la mbo di namba la kovhela, ndi u swika hayani.

Wa munna, 'Nwana u gai?'

'Nwana ndovha ndi tshi khou mufha mbila a tshi lela.'

'Zwino, mbila yo muisa-fhi?'

'Nne a thi divhi, mbila a yo ngo tsha vhuya na nwana.'

Ula musadzi ndi u farwa ndi u diwa nga ula munna. Ndi u mudia ula munna, musadzi ndi u lovha!

Ndi u vha u fhela ha salungano.

Lydia Matshusa

Mbava

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ho vha ha hu na vhaiwe mukegulu vha na tsimu yavho. Vha ri, 'Yuwii, ndi khou diniwa hangei masimuni. Ndi khou funa uri ndi wane muthu a ne a nndindela hangei masimuni.'

Zwino, havhala vho Vho-Ntsa vha ri, 'Nne ndi nga vha lindela hangei masimuni.' Havhala Vho-Ntsa vha tuwa vha ya hangei masimuni.

Zwino, havhala mukegulu vho vha vha tshi di ri nga matsheloni vha tshi bva hangeini hayani. Hu na muvhuyu hanefha hune vha fhira hone. Hu na muvhuyu u na khomba. Vha da vha ka ma di avho hafhalani. Vha swika vha vheya hangeini nga ngomu tsimuni. Zwenezwi vha tshi khou tahula, vha tshi khou tahula, vha ita vha tshi nwa haalani ma di.

Zwino, havhala Vho-Ntsa vha ri, 'Nne ndi do vha lindela hangeini masimuni.' Zwino, havhala Vho-Ntsa vha tshi vho linda hangeini masimuni.

Ha vha hu uri havhala mukegulu matsiko vha na muduhulu wavho ane vha dzula vho mu beba. Zwino, havhala Vho-Ntsa vha mbo di ri linwe duvha vha ri, 'Hai, houla muduhulu wa havhala mukegulu.'

Vha swika hangeini masimuni, vha mu ladza. Ha vha hu hone vha tshi khou tahula nga hangeini kule.

Havhala Vho-Ntsa vha ri, 'Ndi toda u dzhia houla muduhulu wa havhala mukegulu.'

Zwino, havhala mukegulu vha tshi khou di tahula hanengei, ene houla ntsa a mbo i vha a tshi khou dodela hangeini.

Havhala mukegulu vho vha vha na luimbo lwavho lune vha di imbelela. Hezwi vha tshi imbelela, vha ri,

[Musimi]

Ntsa ya nwana.

Ntsa ya nwana ndi nayo.

Ndo wana ntsa ya nwana.

Nda ri, 'Ndelele nwana.'

Ntsa ya nwana ya lela.

I do bva i tshi vho toda u dzhia nwana.

[Vhabvumeli]

Dumbu li na ndala.

Havhala mukegulu vha mbo tavhanyedza vha zwi vhona uri heila ntsa i khou toda u dzhia houla nwana hafhalani. Vha mbo di tuwa. Vha swika vha dzula hafhala murunzini. Vha lisa houla nwana wavho, vha mu lisa, vha mu lisa! Zwino, vha tshi di ita nga u ralo, vha tshi diri vha tshi bva hayani vha tshi di tuwa vha tshi ya masimuni.

Vha tshi swika hafhalani, vha swika vha tshi tahula, vha tshi khou di vhea zwithu zwavho hanefhala. Zwino, matsiko heila ntsa i khou di zwi vhona hezwi vha tshi dzhia zwithu vha tshi vhea hafhala. Zwino, yone i khou funa u dzhia hezwi zwithu zwa havhala mukegulu hafhalani. Havhala mukegulu hezwi vha tshi vhona uri heila ntsa i khou toda u dzhia hafhala, vha mbo di imbelela, 'Ntsa ya nwana ...'

Heila ntsa ya mbo di zwi pfa zwauri zwi amba uri havhala mukegulu vho mmbona. Ya mbo di ri, 'Zwino, zwi amba uri ndi do tou nengeledza nga hunwe nda dzumbama uri havhala mukegulu vha songo mmbona.'

Masimu o vha e na zwibuli nga murahu nga hangeini. Ntsa ya mbo di mona. Ya mona ya bva nga tshibulini tsha murahu.

Havhala mukegulu vho vha vha tshi khou di endelela vha tshi khou tahula. Vha tshi khou shuma. Ntsa ya mbo di mona, ya monolodza nga hangeini kule. Ya swika hangeini ya mbo di tswa houani nwana. Ya mbo di tswa na hezwi ani zwithu zwothe, ya mbo di shavha na nwana ula.

Vhala makhulu vha tshi sala vha tshi imbelela, 'Ntsa ya nwana ...' A huna tshithu! Ntsa ila yo tuwa na nwana!

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

Mukondeleli Mathunya

Muleli wa n̄wana

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ndi musadzi. O ya masimuni. O swika o dzhia n̄wana o fha ntsa. Ntsa ya t̄uwa na n̄wana yo ya u tamba nae. Duvha li tshi kovhela uḷa musadzi u khou vhidzelela,

[Musimi]

Hee, iwe ntsa, wee!

Ndele n̄wananga, a mame.

T̄hoḥo yawe ndo vhamba ngoma.

‘Ndo t̄wa ndi tshi tamba ngayo.’

[Vhabvumeli]

Kulende-kulende-we, dangali kulende-we!

Iḷa ntsa ya vhuisa n̄wana.

Vha vuwa nga matshelo. A dovha a ḍa a t̄uwa na uḷa n̄wana. Mushumo ndi onoyo. Duvha li tshi kovhela. U khou vhidzelela n̄wana wawe, ‘Hee, iwe ntsa, wee! ...’

N̄wana a tshi ḍa, ngoho, o t̄hukukanyiwa o fhela. O ḍa na t̄hoḥo fhedzi.

Ha vha u fhela ha lungano.

N̄wana wa mme anga

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ndi vhana vho t̄uwa, vho ya thombeni. Vha t̄angana na mukegulu. A ri, ‘Mpheni thombe, ndi t̄huse.’

Mukegulu, houḷa a mu fha. Houḷa a songo mu fhaho, a tshi swika hayani a potela houḷa o mu fhaho. Houḷani a swika a diwa. A shavha a dzhena maḍini.

Vha tshi vuwa houḷa, a tshi ya mulamboni. A tshi t̄uwa na vhaḥwe. Mulamboni wa mu hwesa. A sala a khou lila mulamboni. Mukomana wawe a imba a maḍini. A ri,

[Musimi]

N̄wana mme anga.

Ro vha ri tshi ya thombeni.

Ra t̄angana na lukegulu.

Wa mpha thombe nda t̄usa.

Dzau wa shavha nadzo.

[Vhabvumeli]

Wa ima, nda hwesa

Uḷa a ḍa a mu hwesa.

A vha a tshi t̄uwa a tshi ya hayani. A tshi swika hayani, ‘Wo hwesiwa nga nnyi?’
‘N̄ne mune wazwo ndo tou hwala.’

Vha ri, ‘U a zwifha, khali nngafha u nga i kona?’

A ri, ‘N̄ne ndo i hwala.’

O dovha o vhuielela. A tshi swika mushumo, ndi onouḷa. Vhaḥwe vha khou t̄uwa, vha khou mu sia. U khou sala a tshi lila. Mukomana wawe a imba a maḍini. A fhedza, a tshi ri, ‘N̄wana mme anga ...’

A bva maḍini, a mu hwesa. A vha a tshi khou t̄uwa hayani. A tshi swika, vha khou

ḁi dovha zwezwiḁa. A ḁi ri, 'Ndo tou hwala.'

Ndi afha khotsi awe vha tshi vho mu gada, vha mu sala murahu. Vhaḁwe vho no mu shavha. Uḁa musidzana a vha, a tshi thoma, 'Nwana mme anga ...'

A tshi tou bva khotsi awe vha mbo ḁi mu fara. A vha o tuwa.

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

Flora Kwinda

Gwalagwala-Nyangalambuya

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṱwe munna e na vhana vhawe vhararu. Hoyu munna o vha a tshi khou lwala nga maanḁa. Hezwi musi a tshi khou lwala, a ri kha vhana vhawe, 'A hu na ṱanga ine ya nga kona u mphodza. Ndi kona u alafhiwa nga ṱharu fhedzi vhananga. Zwino, vhananga, tevhelani ṱharu hangei mulindini, i ḁe i kone u nndafha.'

Nṱwana muhulwane wa u thoma a ri, 'Ndi ḁo ya.' A swika a dzula phanda ha mulindi, a imba luimbo. A ri,

[Musimi]

Ndo ḁa u hwala Gwalagwala-Nyangalambuya.

Vha nothi ndi danikwe.

Izwi nda ḁa.

Izwo u nga ḁi?

Vha no dzisa phano.

Ndi tshi dzha – ndi tshi dzha tshini?

[Vhabvumeli]

Nyangalambuya!

Ṭharu ya mbo di bva mulindini. Musi i tshi bva, muṱhannga a mbo ḁi shavha! A tshi swika kha khotsi awe, a ri, 'Khotsi anga, vha nga tou di fela zwavho, zwila a zwi kondeleliwi nga nṱe.'

Wa vhuvhili a ri, 'Ndi a ya a ḁi tswenya: Ndo ḁa u hwala Gwalagwala-Nyangalambuya ...'

La ri, 'Ndi a bva.' Na ene a ri, 'Izwi a zwi kondeleliwi nga nṱe.' A vha tshi kokodza. 'A! Baba! Zwithu zwi no nga sa izwo a zwi vhonwi nga nṱe!'

Mutukana muṱuku a ri, 'Nṱe ndi a ya. Khotsi anga vha nga si fe ndi hone: Ndo ḁa u hwala Gwalagwala-Nyangalambuya ...'

Ṭharu ya vha i tshi bva. Ṭharu ya bva, ya bva, ya ri lunzwo yoṱhe nṱa. Mutukana a kondelela. A oma mbilu a sokou tshete! La mu pomba! La mu pomba! La mu pomba! La vheya ṱoho kha muṱana.

A ṱuwa nayo a swika a wana khotsi awe vho eḁela. La pombolowa! La thoma u vha nanzwa. La vha nanzwa muvhili woṱhe. La fhedza.

Zwino, la da khae. La mu pomba! La mu pomba! La mu pomba! A vha a tshi khou shavha uri kana li ḁo tou dzhena na nne mulindini. A vha a tshi ṱuwa naḁo. A pfuna tshisenga henengei mulindini. La swika la pombolowa la ri hotsho mulindini. A vhuya a tshi tou gidima hayani. A tshi vhuya a wana khotsi awe vho fhola.

Khotsi vha ri, 'Ni khou zwi vhona? Zwino, vho iwe vhananga vhararu, ṱwaha une nda fa hoyu muṱuku we a ntshidza a wane lupfumo lwanga lwoṱhe: Kholomo na mbudzi na dzithundu. Vho iwe vhahulwane a ninga wani tshithu.'

Ha vha hu hone u fa ha lungano.

Leah Madzhie

Mvula mutshotshotsholi

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, o vha e muñwe mukegulu na mukalaha vho thola muṭhannga wavho uri a vha lisele kholomo. Zwino, houḷa muṭhannga u khou ḍi lisa kholomo a tshi bva a tshi vhuya nadzo.

Zwino, ha ḍa he liñwe ḍuvha vha tshi vho mu kolela. Vha vho vho dzhia matoko vha tshi vhea ndongwanani. Vha dzhia maḍi a hone haḷa, vha a shela hafhaḷani. Hezwi a tshi ri ndi khou toḍa u ḷa. Vha dzhia vha mu fha.

Zwino, ene a imba o ima dangani. A ri,

[Musimi]

Vhakalanga a vha na maano.

Vha dzhia mulisa wa ñombe.

Vha mu bikela malovhe.

Muroho vha ita mirundo.

[Vhabvumeli]

Ha vhuya, mvula mutshotshotsholi.

Sara Matshusa

Vhuhadzi

Salungano, salungano!

Zwino, ndi muṭhannga, ndi muṭhannga a khou nyaga u vhingwa. Zwino, a tshi vhingwa musidzana wawe, a ramba vhaṅwe vhasidzana, a ramba vhaṅwe vhaṭhannga. Vhaḷa vhaṭhannga vha ḍala mani!

Zwino, ha pfi ri khou ya ha vho-makhulu. Zwino, ha mbo ḍi namba ho takutshedzwa. Vhaḷa vhaṭhannga iṭali vho no dzula nduni u nga ri ndi vhaḱwasha, thi ri? Nahasi-ha iṭali matsiko u na muṅwe muṭhannga hangei, we ari ndo langana nae.

A ri, 'Iwe ndi ḍo u vhingwa.' Houḷa a tenda. Matsiko ene u khou vhingwa nga houḷa muṅwe muthu.

Zwino, a tshi yo ḍa ndilani, vha ri, zwino, a thi ri, vha khou bva, vhasidzana. Zwino, a ri,

[Musimi]

Ahee-ahee, nṅe, ndi nṅe ndavhu.

Ndi yo nwa vhudzhwaḷa.

Dzhwaḷa dzhwa mphoho.

Nṅe, ndi nṅe ndaha.

[Vhabvumeli]

Sala ka mai, sala ka mai.

Uḷa musidzana ndi u takuwa. A tshi takuwa, u khou ya kha houḷa muṭhannga. Houḷa muṭhannga we a vha o no mu galatsha.

A swika a ri, 'Iwe u khou dovha wa ntevhelala mini? Nṅe habe, a thi ri, ndi ḍo tou vhuya?' A dzhia founu a mu fha.

A ri, 'Hai, tshimbila nae muṭhannga wau, nṅe ndi khou sala.' Hari vha vha vhaḷa vhaṭhannga na vhasidzana iṭali a vha zwi pfi. Ndi u ri ene u pfa onouḷa wa musidzana.

A vha a tshi takutshedza. Zwino, hu pfi, 'A ri ye-ha vhaṭhannga na vhasidzana.' Vha rwa muduba khoyo. A vha a tshi thoma, 'Ahee-ahee, nṅe, ndi nṅe ndavhu ...'

'Hai!' uḷa musidzana a dovha a ri, 'uyu muthu a sa humi? Ndi khwiṅe ndi mu fhe vhulungu hovhu.' A vha a tshi bvula vhulungu. 'Khovhu vhulungu, u songo tsha dovha wa tevhela. Nṅe ndi khou tou ṭuwa. Ndi ḍo tou vhuya.' Uḷa a ri, 'Ho luga. Nazwino, u ḍo tou mmbuyela.'

A vha a tshi takuwa zwino. Ari ṭuwe vhasidzana na vhaṭhannga, iṭali ndi gwilisha kheḷo, 'Ahee-ahee, nṅe, ndi nṅe ndavhu. ...'

Vha khou nyaga u swika muḍini wa hone zwino. Hezwino, ndi hone vha khou nyaga u dzhena. Iṭali vhasidzana vha khou dzhena. Vha khou swielelwa. Iṭali ene a tshi khou zwi pfa, a tshi zwi pfa.

'Iwe khezwi u tshi sokou bva na u bva u sa vhuyi wa vha na tshidzulo?'

'Hai, ndi na thumbuni.' A vha tali a tshi khulukhuthu. A tshi bva a ri, 'Hai.'

Hezwino, ro no swika muḍini. 'Hezwi no mbo ḍi tou huma!' O dzhia tshinwe tshithu, kana ndi haka vho mu fha? 'Nazwino ndi ḍo tou humisa.'

Hezwi a tshi thoma-ha a ri, 'Vhathu, a ri dzule fhasi.' Vhathu vha dzula vha swielelwa nduni. Vha dzula nga ngomu nduni vha adzelwa dzithovho. Ho no dzuliwa, hupfi zwino iṭali, ho dzuliwa.

Ene matsiko o dzumbama! A vha a tshi thoma nga matsheloni nga matavhelo. A vha a tshi thoma, 'Ahee-ahee, nṅe, ndi nṅe ndavhu ...'

Iṭali a tshi swika nduni, a vha a tshi khou vhilaela. Hanengei hu na vhasidzana na vhaṭhannga. U swika hanengei a tshi vhona uḷa musidzana ane a mufuna, ndi u mbo

di da, ndi u mbo di milenzheni yawe tshanzha. Vhala vhathu vha tshi zwi vhona, ndi u mbo di ri, 'Hoyi, hoyi, matsiko u yu muthu o funana na ndau? Hai, hai, kha bve, kha bve, kha bve!' Ndi hone a tshi vho thatiwa.

U la muthannga, vha tshi vho shavha, vha tshi vho balangana.

Ha vha hu uri ndi u fa ha lungano.

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha

Tshilombe

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu na vhasidzana kha muvhundu wonoyo vha vhanzhi. Vha bva vha tshi ya khunini. Vha tshi swika hangei khunini ho vha hu na muñwe musidzana a re na muthenga. Zwino, a tshi swika hangeini. A tshi reḁa khuni a dzhia muthenga wawe a vhea fhasi. A tshi u vhea fhasi, a tshi khou kumbela, o no hwala. Vhe ndilani ya u ya hayani uḁa musidzana a ri, 'Yuwii! Ndo hangwa muthenga wanga. Ndi a huma.'

A tshi huma uḁa musidzana a tshi swika hangeini. A wana hu na tshilombe tshine tsha vha na ngoma. Tsha mu fara tsha mu longa nga ngomu ngomani. Tshilombe tshi tshi mu longa nga ngomu ngomani, tsha tuwa nae tsha ya miḁini.

Tsha swika tsha ri, 'Ndi na ngoma yanga i no lila!'

Vha ri, 'Iwe ngoma i no lila?'

A ri, 'Ee. Arali ya ni imbela luimbo ni ḁo mpha vhuswa nda ḁa naa?'

A vha ri, 'Ee.'

Ndi hone houḁa mukalaha a tshi dzhia ngoma yawe a i vhea fhasi. A ri,

[Musimi]

Ngoma, lila-lila.

A ri, duu! duu!

[Vhabvumeli]

Nga dzi lile mavhili-vhili.

Vha ri no. Musidzana a imba nga ngomu-ngomu a eḁhe. A ri,

[Musimi fhedzi]

Vhasidzana vho vha vho bva.

Vho ya thavhani u yo tamba.

Ha ri nga musi vha tshi vhuya.

Salungano, muñwe a hangwa muthenga.

A huma a tshi ri u yo dzhia.

Ndi muthenga wawe we a hangwa.

A wana tshilombe tsha Gole.

Tsha mu longa nga ngomu.

Houḁa munna, a tshi swika ngei hayani, a tshi swika ngei miḁini, a tshi ita ngauralo, a tshi ita ngauralo. Zwino, vha tshi swika muḁini muñwe, vha ri, 'OK mukalaha, kha vha dzhene vha ḁe vhuswa.'

Vha mu dzhia houḁa mukalaha, vha mu longa nduni. Vha dzhia ngoma heḁa. Vha swika nga murahu ha nḁu. Vha fuḁula ngoma heḁa. Vha tshi fuula vha wana hu na musidzana. Vha dzhia musidzana vha vhea nga hangei. Vha dzhia ngoma, vha runga. Vha vhea hanefho.

Uḁa munna a tshi bva nga ngei, o no ḁa. A tshi swika a tshi fara ngoma. A i tsha lemela, a i tsheena muthu.

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

Sarah Munyai

Fulaimatshini maḍini

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na murathu na mukomana Jege na Jimu. Hoyu mukomana a vha a si na kholomo, murathu a na kholomo. Vha si na vhomme.

Vha tuwa vha ya malisoni. Vha tshi swika malisoni, houla mukomana a dzhia murathu a ya a mu longela sagani a mu posa maḍini. Houla murathu a sala hanefhala. Houla mukomana o no khada kholomo a tuwa nadzo.

A vhona muḱwe mukalaha khoula. A ri, 'He, vhone, mukalaha, kha vha de ngeno.' Havhala mukalaha vha da.

A ri, 'A vha de vha vhone zwithu zwi re fhano maḍini.' Ene o vhofheleliwa sagani.

Vha ri, 'Hu na mini?'

A ri, 'Hu ri maburamane. Hu ri fulaimatshini. Zwothe zwo naka.'

Vhala mukalaha vha tuwa vha tshi swika vha dzhena. A vha vhofha sagani. Ene a bva a tuwa a khada hedzila kholomo dzavho a ya muḍini. A tshi swika hangei hayani.

Houla mukomana a ri, 'Iwe, ndo u vhofhela sagani wa fela ngomu. Nahasi wo no vhuya na kholomo?'

A ri, 'Hei, kholomo dzi re fhala tivhani le wa mposela hone a si one maburamane. U a vhoni, nne ndo vhuya nadzo.'

Ula a ri, 'Mmbofheleleni murathu wanga!'

Ula sagani ngundu. Ula ndi u vhofha, ndi u hwala, ndi u hwala! U swika tivhani liya.

'Hee murathu, naa dzi gai kholomo?'

A ri, 'A vha sale, vha tshi dzi vhona hanefho.'

Ha mbo di vha u fa ha lungano.

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2. Steyn (2012) and Coetzer (2012), writing in *Weg*.
3. *Country Life*, January 2013.
4. Kapuscinski, 2007b:321.
5. Goldberg, 1997.
6. Finnegan, 2007:55.
7. Finnegan, *op. cit.*:223.
8. See Scheub, 2010:119.
9. Foreword in Jordan, A.C., 1973.
10. Guy, 2012.
11. [www//au.int/en/sites/default/files/CULTURAL_CHARTER_AFRICA.pdf](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/CULTURAL_CHARTER_AFRICA.pdf)
12. The Oral History Association in South Africa, Mahikeng, 2011. www.ohasa.org
13. O'Connell, 2012.
14. Kruger, 2004; Kruger & Le Roux, 2007.
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16. Kruger, 1996a.
17. Eliot, T.S. Little Gidding (1942), from *Four Quartets*.
18. Le Roux, 1996.
19. Junod, 1927, II:218.
20. Mak, 2007:211.
21. Longfellow, H.W. The fiftieth birthday of Agassiz (1857).
22. Spivey, 2005:86.
23. Dutton, 2009:132.
24. Junod, 1927, II:211.
25. Dutton, *op. cit.*:118
26. Scheub, 2010:114; also see Booker, 2004.
27. Dutton, *op. cit.*:110, 118; also see Bettelheim, 2010.
28. Green, 1997:641ff.
29. Finnegan, 2007:193, 223.
30. Finnegan, *op. cit.*:184-185.
31. Lewis-Williams, 2000:40.
32. Kriel, 1971:22.
33. Kriel, 1971; Aschwanden, 1989; Scheub, 1974/5, 1975, 1976, 1992, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2010; also see Junod, 1927.
34. Le Roux, 1996.
35. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:10.
36. See Eastwood, E. & C., 2006; Lewis-Williams, 2000; Scheub, 2010.
37. Kapuscinski, 2007b:319-320.
38. Nooteboom, 1997:88.
39. Dutton, 2009:59.
40. Tooby & Cosmides, cited in Dutton, 2009:106.
41. Kruger, 1994:10.
42. Kruger, *op. cit.*:348-403.
43. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:16.
44. See Finnegan, 2007:184-185.
45. See Roemer, 1997:379-383.
46. Kruger, 1994:25.
47. Scheub, introduction in Jordan, A.C., 1973:21.
48. Junod, 1927, II:215.
49. Callaway, 1970:89.
50. Blacking, 1969a:71.

51. Lewis-Williams, 2000:17, citing psychiatrist Richard Katz.
52. See Scheub, 2010:94.
53. Dutton, 2009:23.
54. Blacking, 1969a:242.
55. Drake 2006:7.
56. Bulpin, 2011:19.
57. From a song by guitarist Solomon Mathase (Kruger, 1994:130).
58. Theroux, 2003:283.
59. Van Warmelo, 1989:261.
60. Funston, 2005:30.
61. Drake, 2006:60.
62. Adapted by guitarist Solomon Mathase (Kruger, 1994:103-104).
63. Kruger, 1994:63.
64. Dreier, 2005:6-7.
65. From 'Muniwe munna na musadzi wawe niwaha wa ndala' ('A certain man and his wife in a year of hunger'; Maumela, 1968:5).
66. Nenzhelele, 1961:29-30.
67. Kruger, 1994:327-347.
68. See www.tambani.co.za. Also see Le Roux (2009) for other descriptions of rural social relations.
69. Kruger, *op. cit.*:87-88.
70. www.vhembe.gov.za/docs/Local%20Economic%20analysis.pdf; Other estimates include 53% and 39%. See:
www.vhembe.gov.za/docs/Approved%20IDP%20final%20version%201%202007-8%20-2011-12.pdf;
www.elsenburg.com/provide/documents/BP2005_1_9%20Demographics%20LP.pdf (all accessed 2 June 2012).
71. See Kruger, 1994:109.
72. Godfrey Dederen, correspondence 27 February 2012. Also see Bulpin, 2011.
73. Eastwood, E. & C., 2006.
74. Hanisch, 1994.
75. Ralushai, 1977:29.
76. Kruger, 1996a:53, 55.
77. Kruger, 1999b; 2007.
78. Johann Tempelhoff, correspondence, 31 January 2012.
79. Emile Kotzé, personal communication, Potchefstroom, 25 September 2011. Kotzé was a state agricultural officer in Niani during the early 1960s.
80. Kriel, 1971:234.
81. Yakpo, 2003.
82. Gumbu Land Claim Committee chairman, Nelson Masikwa. See:
www.152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2006/06/11/C1/4/03.html
www.sanews.gov.za/view.php?ID=06060613151002&coll=buanew06
www.news24.com/xArchive/Archive/Madimbo-land-claim-to-be-finalised-20010626
83. www.info.gov.za/speeches/1996/f280w925
84. See Van Warmelo, 1935, map 16. A map by Swiss missionary Henri Berthoud (1903) identifies a settlement named Molongofala in approximately the same location. See: www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/res_photocoll.php?cl=AC1084
85. See e.g. the 1981 map: Messina 2230 (Pretoria: Government Printer).
86. See Kruger, 1996a.
87. From a song by Solomon Mathase (Kruger, 1994:137).
88. Kruger, 1994:474.
89. Excerpt from a song by Nndanganeni Luambo (Kruger, 1994:481).

90. Junod, 1927, II:219.
91. Scheub, 2010:14, 39.
92. Smith, 1989:1.
93. Finnegan, 2007:35, 40.
94. Jabes Mavhetha, Muswodi, 18 June 2005 (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:23).
95. Van Warmelo, 1989:222. *Milayo* that regulate social practices like marriage and divorce are codified in Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948.
96. Blacking, 1969a:70.
97. Booker, 2004:636, citing Christopher Hollis (Life with Shakespeare).
98. Nooteboom, 1997:36, discussing the nature of legends.
99. Kruger, 2004.
100. 'Pfeṅe na nngwe,' 'Baboon and leopard' (Schwellnus, 1930:26-27).
101. See Kruger, 2004:108-109.
102. See Kruger, 1994.
103. A remark made by co-researcher Elisa Mashule (Kruger, 2001:7).
104. Kruger & Le Roux (2007:131), citing Du Plessis (1940:222-223).
105. See Smith, 1989:5.
106. Blacking, 1965:47.
107. Van Warmelo, 1971:358.
108. See Sachs, 1965.
109. Scheub, 2010:106.
110. See Bettelheim (2010), Booker (2004) and Thompson, (1955), e.g. 'Ogre defeated' (G500–G599), 'Suitor tests' (H310-H359) and 'Magic' (D) for explanations of the theme of transformation in narrative.
111. Blacking, 1969b:35.
112. Turner, 1969; Van Gennepe, 1960.
113. Scheub, 1992:135.
114. Leibhammer & Bila, 2011:79.
115. Kriel, 1989:11.
116. Kriel, *op. cit.*:194.
117. Berglund, 1976:144.
118. See e.g. Berglund, 1976:59-60; Hammond-Tooke, 1981:ch. 4.
119. Berglund, *op. cit.*:147.
120. Stayt, 1931:236-239.
121. See Blacking, 1969a:87-89.
122. Booker, 2004:557.
123. Scheub, 2010:107.
124. Aschwanden, 1989:106.
125. Tracey, 1986:78-82; 'The magic herdboy.'
126. Junod, 1927, I:171-172, 213, 132-33.
127. Kriel, 1971:44.
128. See Kruger, 2008.
129. Kriel, 1971:95.
130. Jacottet, 1908:220-232; 'The mothemelle' (referring to a 'fabulous' bird).
131. Barber, 1997:805.
132. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:97.
133. See Tracey, 1986:46-50; 'The man who turned into a hyena.'
134. Oinas, 1997:840-841.
135. Kriel, 1971:54-55.
136. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:139-140.
137. Junod, 1927, I:126, 190.
138. See Dell *et. al.*, 1998.
139. Van Wyk, G., 1998:55.

140. Dell, 1998:12.
141. See Wood, 1998.
142. Wood, 1998:49.
143. Interview at Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012.
144. Junod, 1927, II:188.
145. Wood, 1998:41, citing Laydevant.
146. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:138.
147. Kruger & Le Roux, *op. cit.*:129-132; 'The young woman and the zebra.' Also see Postma, 1950:140-151; 'Tséane en die perd.'
148. Eastwood, E. & C., 2006:50.
149. Eastwood, E. & C. (*op. cit.*:128), citing a story documented by Megan Biesele.
150. See Kruger, 2008.
151. Sosibo, 2012.
152. Bettelheim, 2010:101.
153. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:70-74.
154. From a song by Solomon Mathase (Kruger, 1994:75).
155. Bettelheim, 2010:101.
156. Eastwood, E. & C., 2006:105, 111, 123-124.
157. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:68-69.
158. See Blacking, 1976; Kruger, 2007.
159. See Krige, E.J. & J.D., 1980.
160. See Kruger, 1999/2000.
161. Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:68-69.
162. Guy, 2012.
163. Kapuscinski, 2007b:316.
164. Mukula, 6 April, 1991. See Kruger, 1994:289-290.
165. Paz, 1990:65.
166. Kapuscinski, 2007b:78.
167. Theroux, 2003:18, 495.
168. Kapuscinski, 2007a:264.
169. Scheub, 2010:115; Dutton, 2009:243.
170. Spivey, 2005:13-14.
171. Jordaan, 2001; 2012.
172. Nelson Musehane, Godfrey Dederen, Johanna Muleba and Pfananani Masase: correspondence and personal communication, 2010 and 2011.
173. Van Warmelo, 1989:3.
174. Van Warmelo, *op. cit.*:260.
175. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, personal communication.
176. Tracey, 1986:xii.
177. Ntsihlele, 1997:104.
178. Le Roux, 1996:268-279; 'A man steals milk during famine.'
179. See Maumela, 1968; Nenzhelele, 1961; Phophi, 1990; Stayt, 1931.
180. Virtanen, 1997:445-446.
181. Finnegan, 2007:46.
182. Junod, 1927, II:218.
183. Finnegan, 2007:181.
184. Nelson Mandela, in Gordon, 2002.
185. Junod, 1927, II:219.
186. See Kruger, 2004:57-58; 'Mutshavhona.'
187. Tracey, 1986:78-82; 'The magic herd boy.'
188. It was performed by a grade 4 class at Malinge Primary School at Muswodi-Dipeni on 12 June, 2009.
189. As performed by 75-year old Mrs Nyadzanga Tseheli, Murangoni, 5 May 1990.

190. See Le Roux, 1996:250-251.
191. See Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:144-148; 'Mr Hippopotamus throws his weight around.'
192. See Kruger, 1986:83. This instrument also is described in Kirby, 1968.
193. Scheub, 1970:122.
194. Booker, 2004:232.
195. Goldberg, 1997:361-262.
196. See Booker, 2004.
197. Moreira, 1997:461.
198. See e.g. Scheub, 2010.
199. Scheub, 1992:373.
200. Finnegan, 2007:182, 184.
201. Godfrey Dederen, correspondence, 16 March, 2011.
202. Poulos, 1990:8.
203. Tracey, 1986:xi.
204. Scheub, 2005:xviii.
205. Scheub, *loc. cit.*
206. Smith, 1989:5.
207. As identified by Kenneth Goldstein (cited in Finnegan, 2007:164).
208. Blacking, 1967, 1970.
209. Kruger, 1986 & 2004; Kruger & Le Roux, 2007.
210. Lewis-Williams (2000:31), citing Dorothea and Edith Bleek.
211. Tracey, 1986; Kriel, 1971:210-215.
212. Dutton, 2009:147.
213. See Kruger, 2000.
214. See 'The lion on the path' (Tracey, 1986:1-5) and 'Mr Elephant sweats' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:141-143).
215. Kriel, 1971:213.
216. Blacking, 1965:23.
217. Blacking, 1970:7.
218. Blacking, *loc. cit.*
219. Blacking, 1967:20, 177, 182, 183.
220. Blacking, 1970:18.
221. Blacking, *loc. cit.*
222. Blacking, *loc. cit.*
223. Blacking, *loc. cit.*
224. Blacking, *op. cit.*:20.
225. Blacking, *op. cit.*:21.
226. Blacking, *op. cit.*:22.
227. Tracey, 1989:45.
228. See Le Roux 1996.
229. Dutton, 2009:224-226.
230. See Kruger, 2001.
231. See Kruger, 2006.