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Venda ngano narratives
Dialogues between past and present

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Introduced and annotated by

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in collaboration with

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Dedicated to the memory of

Piet Mavhetha
Tshililo Manngwe
Matamela Rasivhetshele
Takalani Munyai
Flora Kwinda
Matamela Makapile
Elisa Madzanga
Lydia Matshusa
Sara Munyai
Rosina Mulovhedzi
Mutshekwa Mudau
Nyamukamadi Ndou
Mukondeleli Mathunya

Life does not ask to be saved, preserved or protected. It asks only to be known.
Paul Myburgh, *The Bushman winter has come*

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www.nwu.ac.za/music

ISBN 978-0-620-92285-2 (e-book)
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The flamboyant rooster and other Tshivenda song-stories
The girls in the baobab: Venda stories from the Limpopo valley

Title photograph: The eastern Limpopo valley at Zwigodini
Photograph p. 1: The Nwanedi river in Nwanedi Provincial Park
Photograph p. 131: Folovhodwe
Photograph p. 421: The big baobab at Zwigodini

Preface

The annotated *ngano* song-story narratives in this book were collected in Niani, South Africa's Limpopo valley, from 2009 to 2016. Their discussion is situated at the intersection of history, ethnography, narratology and musicology.

Finnegan[1] notes that the study of African oral narrative tends to focus on 'animal tales and other light-hearted stories' rather than 'more elaborate, lengthy, or serious' stories about human life. In any case, narratives are often represented as mere plot outlines, leaving readers with 'no idea whatsoever' of any deeper significance they may harbour. In particular, 'detailed studies of the literary and social significance of the various stories in any one society are notably lacking.'

In South Africa, oral narratives of precolonial origin live on in popular printed media directed at the youth market. Often harvested from ethnographic sources that date back to the nineteenth century, their translations rarely attempt to account for original stylistic qualities. Furthermore, their intricate symbolism routinely remains unexcavated, and virtually nothing is known about their narrators. And so their worldmaking functions and aesthetics may go unnoticed, relegating them to innocuous children's stories.

The South African song-story genre in fact was at the core of the precolonial curriculum. It was a domain for the inculcation of social values articulated by means of *milayo/melao* (Venda, Sotho/Tswana). Commonly translated as 'rules' or 'laws,' this term signifies a moral code better known as *ubuntu* – what it is to be human.

Ngano are *milayo nyana*, 'small laws' that call for reflection on the contrasting nature (lit. 'footpaths') of people and wild animals: 'This is the path of wild animals, not people.'[i] The concluding narrative marker 'This is the death of the child who is a song-story,'[ii] identifies narration as an enchanting means to transmit values: Just as there must always be children, so there must be forms of artistic expression that engage social life wisely.[2]

Ngano speak of and from the past to contemporary South Africa in its turbulent engagement with the rule of law. They articulate the belief that certain ancestral values remain indispensable. These values may be essentialised as respect for self and others. As such, *ngano* draw renewed attention to ancient African worldviews and their narrative expression.

About this book

This book constitutes three main sections. The first, introductory section unfolds on interrelated levels. The main discussion is the base, while the second level comprises text boxes and footnotes. The third level is visual, and contains photographs, maps, musical transcriptions and links to audio-visual recordings. The final layer comprises source references which are relegated to endnotes with a view towards user-friendly reading.

Section 1.1 is a short vignette that narrativises some of the core features and current condition of *ngano*. This is followed in 1.2 by a discussion of theoretical approaches to *ngano* as cultural form. Section 1.3 explains the fundamental, allegorical nature of *ngano*, while 1.4 and 1.5 discuss narrative worldmaking, with special reference to *ngano* as moral code. This function is elaborated on in 1.6, which explains the relationship between *ngano* and girls' initiation. Section 1.7 focuses on the relationship between *ngano*, missionisation and schooling, while 1.8 integrates transformation in the economy, politics and mass media. Section 1.9 explains *ngano* as musical discourse, and 1.10 provides a concluding perspective. Section 1.11 returns to the introductory vignette and reflects briefly on the experience of grief and its epistemological dimensions.

The second section contains fifty-three narratives as well as biographical sketches of their narrators. The narratives are presented in parallel original and translated form, and are accompanied by detailed discussion.

The third section contains a small number of stories from previous collections that pertain to discussion, two supporting life sketches contributed by *ngano* scholar Ina le Roux, a short discussion on translation, a glossary, references and a list of sources.

Audio-visual recordings of performances may be accessed by means of the following icon:

[i] *'Heino ndila ndi ya phukha, a si ya vhathu.'* (Gavhi, 1990-3-4.)

[ii] *'Ha mbo ḓi vha u fa ha ṅwana wa lungano.'*

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following institutions and persons for their support:

- North-West University and the National Research Foundation for financial assistance.
- Narrators for entrusting me with their stories and life sketches.
- Project members Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, Pfananani Masase, Tshifhiwa Mashau, Tshilidzi Ndou and Ina le Roux for their loyalty and diligence.
- Directors in the School of Music at North-West University for their intrepid defense of slow research: Yvonne-Marié Brand, Karendra Devroop, Hetta Potgieter, Albi Odendaal, Jaco van der Merwe, Liesl van der Merwe and Chris van Rhyn.
- Nic and Christien Hoffman, Joyce Ndlovu and Gloria Ratogwa for their hospitality.
- Reviewers Jean-Marie Dederen, Franci Greyling, Thys Human, Marie Jorritsma, Ina le Roux, Cara Stacey, Johann van der Walt and Phil van Schalkwyk.
- Ina le Roux for sharing her engagement with narrators and local communities, and additional life sketches.
- Jani van der Vyver and Fransa Vorster for facilitating online publication.
- Amanda-Marié, Jamie and Laura for support and good times in the field.

Jaco Kruger, Potchefstroom, November 2020

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Section 1
Introduction

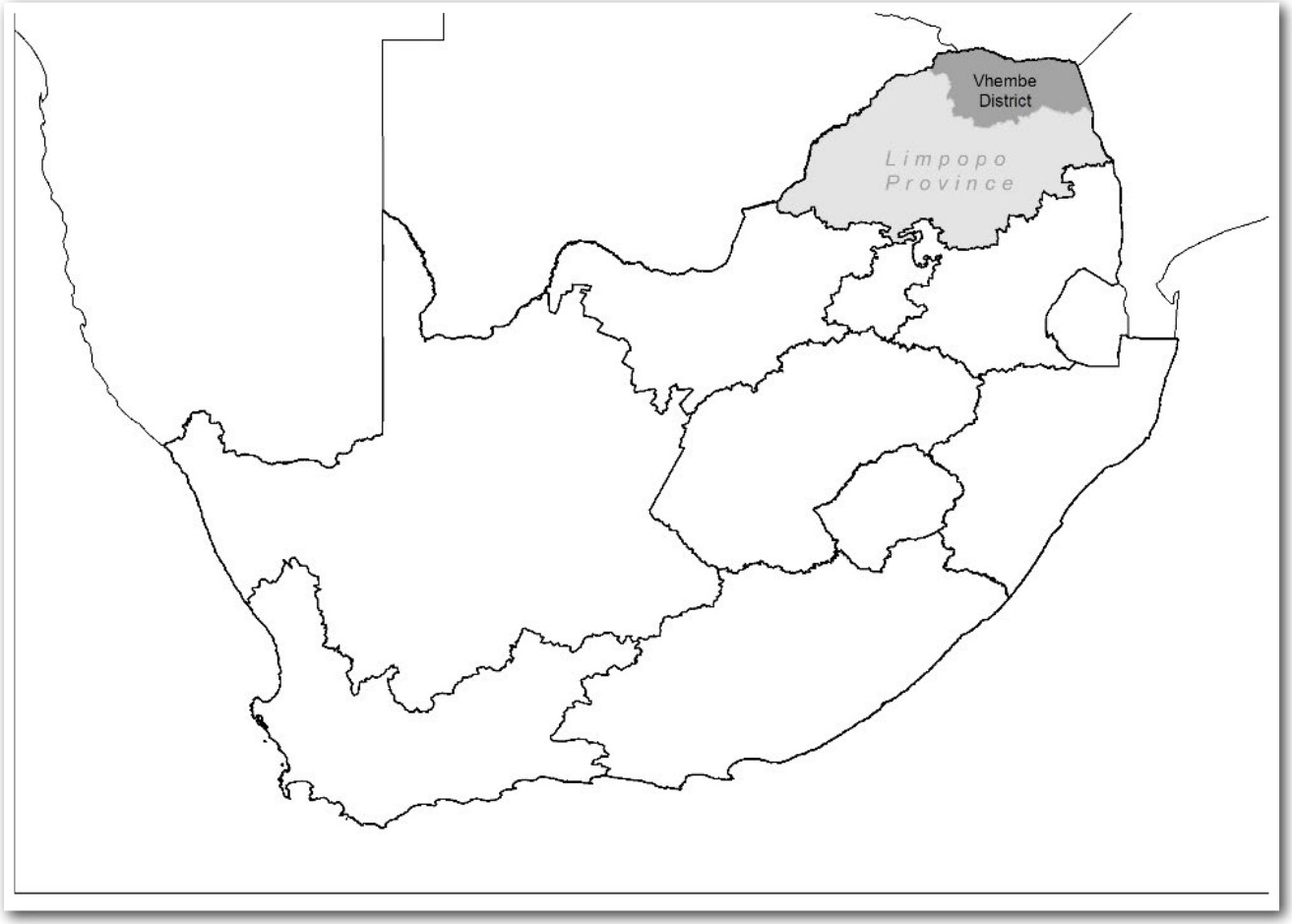

Fig. 1. Map of Limpopo Province and Vhembe District

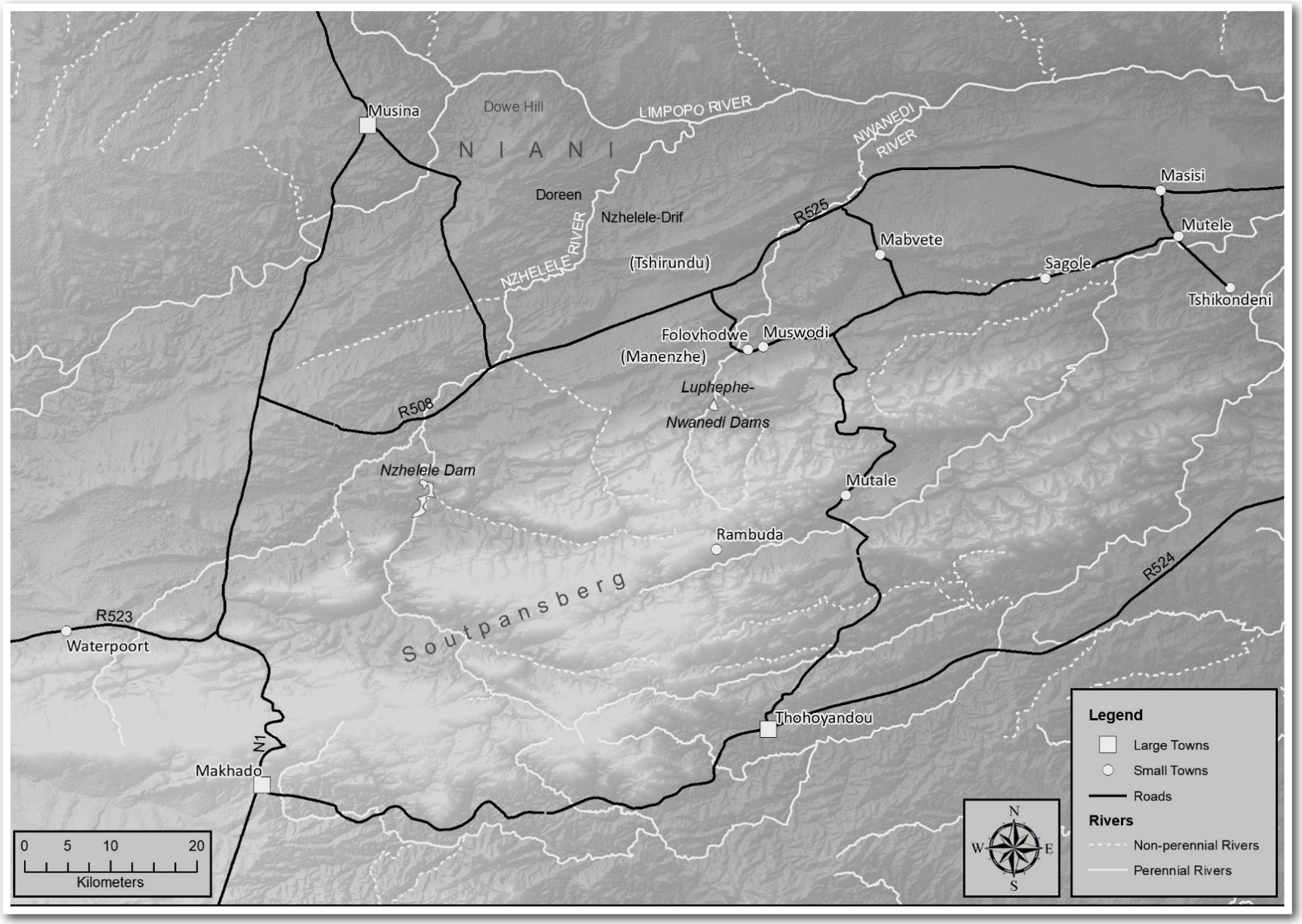

Fig. 2. Map of Niani

1.1 The little mouse returns

1 July 2015. The place is Muswodi, a village in Niani, the arid eastern Limpopo valley of South Africa (figs. 1, 2).[i] A small group of people are seated in an adobe rondavel at the homestead of Mashau Tseisi (see 2.4). This is where services of the local Dzumbululo[ii] Apostolic Church take place (fig. 3). The congregation are members of a small rural community. They come to church to seek healing in communal prayer, song and dance.

Benches line the wall. Tin hand rattles are stacked on double-sided, laced drums. A brightly-coloured icon of Christ on the cross hangs on the wall. Shifting slivers of light strike through the sparse thatch roof, illuminating the floor, wall and serene faces.

But this is not a church meeting. Tseisi is a narrator of Venda *ngano*,[iii] a narrative form of precolonial origin that integrates prose, chant and song. I have been returning to her home annually since 2009 to record these stories and document the lives of narrators in collaboration with local resident Mathuvhelo Mavhetha (figs. 5, 11). Today Tseisi's adult daughter Mpho Mashavha (see 2.20) speaks about her life, and sings a *khadi* rope-skipping song from her childhood.

An old man shuffles stiffly in. He greets politely, sits down on a bench and listens silently to talk about lives, stories and songs. Later I gather my fieldwork gear and prepare to leave. The old man asks whether he may tell me a story. I am sceptical since he merely seems lonely and in need of company. Also, I am used to hearing *ngano* from adult women rather than men. Mostly however, the stories are slipping from communal memory, and narration now rarely is a domestic event. So I propose that we meet next year. I leave and he passes momentarily into the back of my mind.

28 June 2016. I am back at Tseisi's home. During the intervening year I wrestled with feelings of guilt about the old man, as well as uncertain expectation about his offer.

He arrives once again, and we sit down and speak. Mbulaheni Johannes Phaswana (fig. 4) is ninety-four years old. He was born in 1922 to parents who were herders and farmers at Manenzhe, a village once located just west of the Nwanedi river (fig. 2).

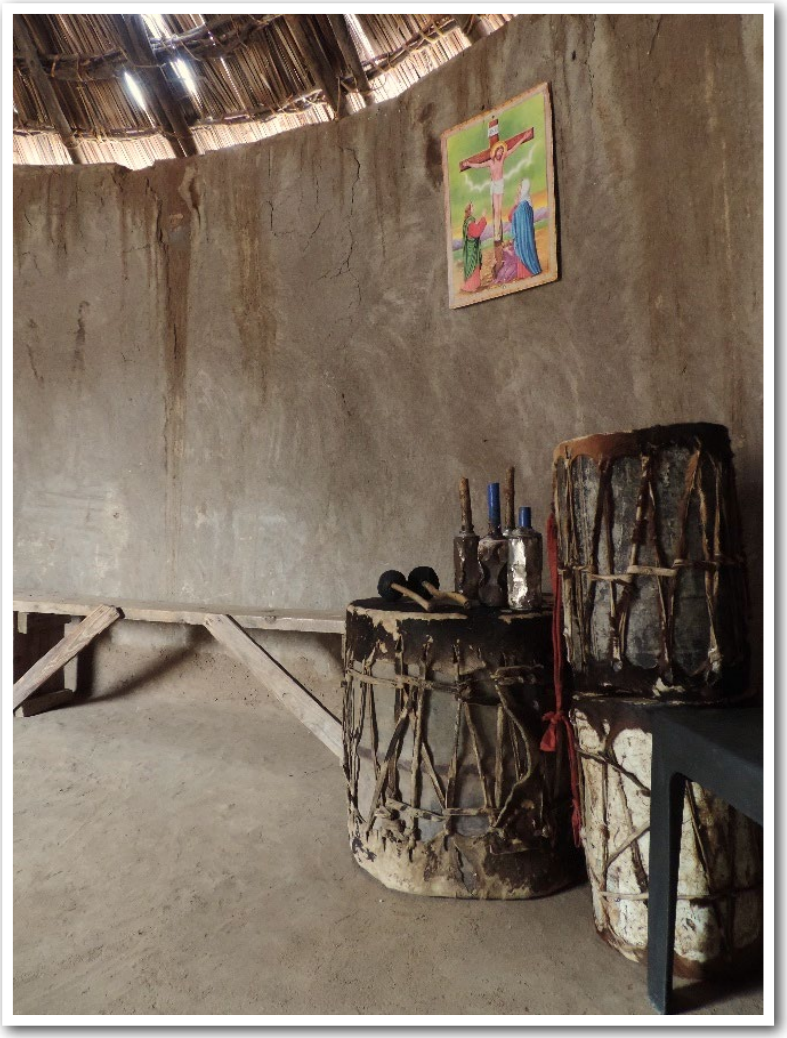

Fig. 3. Dzumbululo Apostolic Church
Muswodi, 2015

[i] For the purpose of this discussion, Niani is bounded by the N1 highway, the Limpopo river, the Kruger National Park and the Soutpansberg. The name Niani is derived from *muṇii*, referring to the tree *Lannea discolor* which is cherished for its berry-like fruit.

[ii] 'Revelation.'

[iii] Sing. *lungano*, pl. *dzingano*. Discussion omits the prefixes *lu-* and *dzi-*, and treats the concept as a plural form.

Fig. 4. Mbulaheni Phaswana
Muswodi, 2016

Manenzhe had no school. Phaswana attended the *murundu* initiation ritual for boys, and listened to *ngano* stories told by his grandmother, Mrs. Tshiwawa. The inhabitants of Manenzhe, like other local communities, were forcibly uprooted following the Land Acts (1913, 1936) that established ethnic enclaves.[i] Most villagers scattered towards the east, and went to live among nearby communities, particularly Folovhodwe and the twin villages of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Muswodi-Dipeni.[ii] Phaswana later drifted further, to Johannesburg, where he spent most of his working life as gardener and miner.

I unpack my cameras while discreetly watching the old man. His trouser bottoms are scuffed and his shoes are disintegrating. I have little hope of an articulate performance. As Tshivenda[iii] speakers remark, *'Zwa mulovha zwi a fhela'* ('That of yesterday comes to an end').

Fractured sunlight cascades though the thatch roof and settles on us as Phaswana narrates and sings slowly and clearly in the manner of experienced, older performers. His sentences are concise, and he waits patiently for the chanted *'salungano!'* response from participants before continuing his narration.[iv]

Phaswana tells two stories inherited from his grandmother.[v] In the first, naive children take honey from a wild hive tended by an old farmer. The man confronts their parents who reprimand the children and apologise respectfully to him. The moral order, briefly threatened, is restored; all is well again.

The second story tells of a barren woman who adopts mouse-children. For a brief moment she imagines taking care of delicate life, and experiencing reciprocal love. She warns her children in song not to play too far from home because there are dangerous animals and people prowling in the wild: *'Tamba u tshi vhuya ngeno tshibevha'* ('Play and come back here, little mouse'). The warning is not heeded. A cunning cat lures the mice from their nest and devours them.

I experience a moment of surprised elation. I have known this song for three decades, but not as the core image of a story. The lyrics, initially explained to me as a mere warning to young children not to wander alone in the veld, have taken on fuller meaning in a characteristic, stark portrayal of the misery of a childless woman.

This episode encapsulates some of the core features and current condition of *ngano*. Once transmitted habitually around domestic cooking fires, these

[i] 'In order to bring the Bantustan policy into effect, the state embarked on a massive forced removal campaign which led to almost 3.5 million "surplus" people displaced. Evictions were conducted from everywhere including white farms, mission stations and other homelands from the late 1960s into the 1970s' (Ramugondo, 2009:20, citing Lahiff, and Platzky & Walker).

[ii] Muswodi-at-the-Fountain and Muswodi-at-the-Dipping-Tank. The officially demarcated region eventually became known as the Republic of Venda (1979-1994). It was one of the so-called TBVC states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei). See Nemudzivhadi (1985) and BENSO (1979).

[iii] Prefixes signifying African languages are normally omitted in English, but they are occasionally retained here to differentiate between language and other aspects of culture.

[iv] Narrators like Phaswana are conscious of the ritual nature of performance. Less experienced narrators often rush their speech, barely allowing time for the chorus response.

[v] 'Respect' (2.23.1) and 'The woman without children' (2.23.2).

narratives were integral to moral education and social construction. Settlement patterns, economic practices, moral discourses and media forms that evolved since the onset of colonisation during the 19th century, gradually transformed *ngano* into their present deritualised state. The purpose of the first section of this book is to describe this history and explain why the narrative corpus now mainly shares space with oral history and myth.

This is not a simple story of loss. While live transmission has all but ceased, plots and images are being retained intact and fragmented in memory from where they are retrieved in the ongoing construction of self and others. Although polyphonic and often ambiguous, they essentially articulate a quest for values. They tell a microcosmic tale of South Africa.

Box 1. *Ngano:* A definition

Ngano are a regional form of prosimetrum[3] or song-story.[i] They involve dramatised narration in which prose, singing and chanting integrate with movement of the head, arms and torso of seated participants. This genre of world literature features well-known collections like the Mahabharata (India), One Thousand and One Nights (Persia), the Sunjata (Mali), Australian 'songlines' and Nguni *ntsomi* (South Africa).

The term *ngano* is used generically to refer to the narratives in this collection. Ethnomusicologist John Blacking[4] locates *ngano* within the domain of children's songs *(nyimbo dza vhana)*, noting that

> the word *lungano* may refer to a story which is told formally and includes a song; it may refer to that song itself, in which the audience sing chorus to the story-teller's solo; or to a number of songs of similar structure that are sung without any accompanying story (…) Stories are generally told by adults or older children, but small children join in the spoken response, *salungano!*, which follows each sentence of the story, and in the chorus of the song.

Narrator Mashudu Mathala of Folovhodwe[5] (fig. 16) explained that

> *ngano* were told when families were 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.

[i] Although the European *cante fable* may be traced to medieval times, the term only came into use during the late 19th century. 'From Old French (northern) *cante fable* from canter, variant of *chanter* to sing + fable.' https://www.lexico.com/definition/cantefable (Accessed on 16/07/20.) German: *Singemärchen* (Nicolaisen 1997:183). Makgamatha (1991:54) seems to have been the first author to identify South African song-stories as *cante fable*.

Box 2. Limpopo sojourn: A true story by Ina le Roux[i]

This is not really a story of suspense.

I got e-mails from the Netherlands, from a person called José who wanted to take photos of our embroidery group at Folovhodwe and Muswodi. I warned her that the Limpopo valley is an arid, hot place, and not attractive to tourists. It was November, the rain had not fallen yet and a warm wind was blowing. Also, the Soutpansberg is hardly around the corner from Johannesburg. But I said yes, we could meet at the Bergwater Hotel. José and a friend would be coming from Zimbabwe.

I leave Johannesburg early one morning. I am still drinking tea along the highway at Mookgophong when they call, 'Where are you?' I think, 'My goodness!' I finish drinking and hurry on. Near Polokwane they phone again, asking to meet at the Mountain Inn instead. This is where we find them in their small car around noon.

I am dumbstruck as we turn onto the dirt road to Folovhodwe. The entire world is carpeted with small yellow flowers! The Dutch are flashing their lights and we all stop. José and her friend take out their cameras. They take photos over here and then over there. 'It is not really so dry!' It sounds as if they are reproaching me for fibbing. I don't know what to say. Further towards Folovhodwe the flowers are even more dense. We find women along the road, picking their leaves and filling bags. We stop and ask. They respond laughingly, '*miroho!*'[ii] and explain that this is *tsệtwana*, the common devil's thorn that flowers almost overnight after good rain.

We arrive at Piet Mavhetha's house[iii] where his wife Selina shows us a pot of *tsệtwana* simmering on the fire. '*Miroho!*' she echoes. The Dutch are still taking photos of goats eating flowers and children collecting leaves. 'The world around here is not as dry and ugly as you said! It is paradise!' I try to explain, but they no longer seem to believe anything I say.

We gather a group of *ngano* narrators that evening. Selina and her children are there, as are Flora Kwinda[iv] and her children, and some other neighbours. The women tell their stories around a big, cosy fire while we eat the loaves of bread and tins of fish I brought. The Dutch are really enjoying themselves. Selina prepares two rooms for us in her house, and the Dutch unpack. I decide to sleep outside under the *albizia*[v] next to Selina's washing line with Diksie, her dog. I cover myself thickly with mosquito repellent.

I wake up early the next morning from the sweet smell of thorn wood smoke spiralling into the still air where Selina (fig. 6) is making a fire for tea. I sit silently next to her on the low courtyard wall. The Dutch pack their things and leave. I linger a while longer, chatting and drinking tea.

---

[i] Le Roux is a pioneer *ngano* scholar and manager of the local Tambani embroidery project. http://www.tambani.co.za

[ii] A generic term for edible flowers and leaves that are dried for use in cooked dishes.

[iii] A narrator documented by Le Roux (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iv] A narrator documented by Le Roux (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[v] *Albizia versicolor* or *muvhambangoma* (lit. 'to stretch the drum skin'). Drums are made from large specimens of this tree.

Fig. 5. Ina le Roux and Mathuvhelo Mavhetha
with narrator Sophia Nefolovhodwe
Folovhodwe, 2009

Fig. 6. Tea with Selina Mavhetha
Folovhodwe, 2009

1.2 Transformation: Sense and sensibility

Wilson Ravele (1901-2005) of Makonde (fig. 7) descended from a long line of xylophonists.[6] Musical performance linked him spiritually with his deceased father whose Karanga ancestors had migrated to the Soutpansberg from Zimbabwe during the 18th century. But this particular genealogical expression was terminated by the migration of his six sons to urban areas. The family instrument became silent, leaving Ravele with a deeply disconcerting awareness of discontinuity.

A similar sensibility also marked memories of storytelling. Young Zachary Tshamano (2.15) of Folovhodwe heard *ngano* from his mother Mashudu (fig. 16) and grandmother Matamela (fig. 87). His mother explained that these stories were told 'when people were together,'[7] and Tshamano fondly recalled the sense of belonging he experienced during their performance around a fire in the family's thatch-roof kitchen. His grandmother Matamela passed away in 2011, taking her interpretation of her remarkable stories with her,[8] while he left home for tertiary training in a distant city.

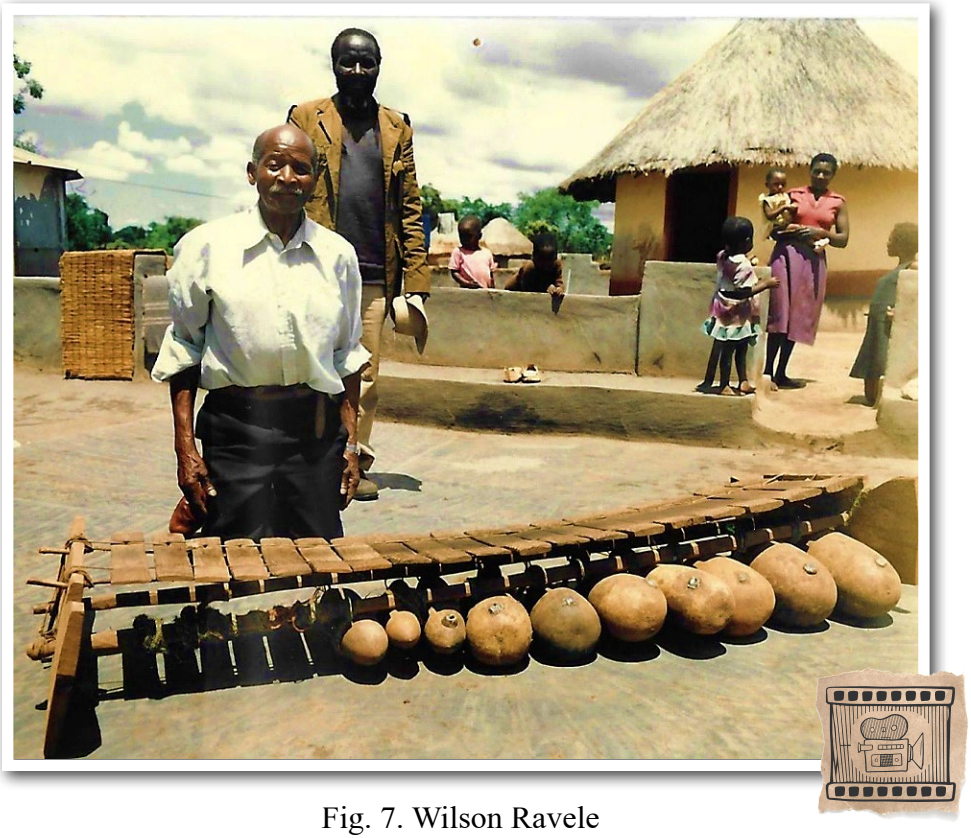

Fig. 7. Wilson Ravele
Makonde, 1986

This collection of *ngano* narratives is the outcome of an enduring engagement with certain older forms of Venda musical and literary discourse. This interest had naively been initiated by curiosity about the construction and music of instruments like the xylophone and bows.[9] However, a sense of nostalgia, often dissolving into a sensibility of rootlessness and irretrievable loss, was often articulated in musical stories (fig. 8, box 3), kindling in me a deepening awareness of an 'impalpable, barely expressible, self-imposed bond'[10] with shifting human and cultural tides.

I reflect in the postscript on the notion that empathetic engagement with a 'vanishing Africa'[i] may be irrepressible. Walter Benjamin observed that 'appreciation of the transcience of things, and the concern to redeem them for eternity, is one of the strongest impulses in allegory.'[11] Metanarratives of loss therefore typically involve the recuperation of older cultural patterns.[12]

Ntsomi song-stories continue to be deemed 'essential to the continued well-being and stability of Xhosa traditional society.[ii] It is therefore necessary for this critical information to be transmitted precisely and fully to succeeding generations.'[13] In turn, the simple presentation in schools of Zulu folktales and traditional poetry 'is far from enough, as long as there are badly informed and unenthusiastic teachers who cannot appreciate what is singularly theirs.'[14]

Similarly, in a brief yet telling moment of engagement with transformation, I noted that *ngano* narration 'usually takes a back seat when a television antenna comes to squat predatorily on a roof.'[15] This observation was prompted by Mathuvhelo Mavhetha's remark that 'TV is a witch *(TV ndi muloi).* All children want nowadays is its remote control.' Mavhetha was articulating the common concern among older people that cohering conversation and storytelling around the family cooking fire had become disrupted by television

[i] 'The fast vanishing Africa of my vanished childhood' (Van der Post, 1961: dedication).

[ii] See Dederen (2008b) for a discussion of the structuralist-functionalist perspective inherent to this view of oral literature.

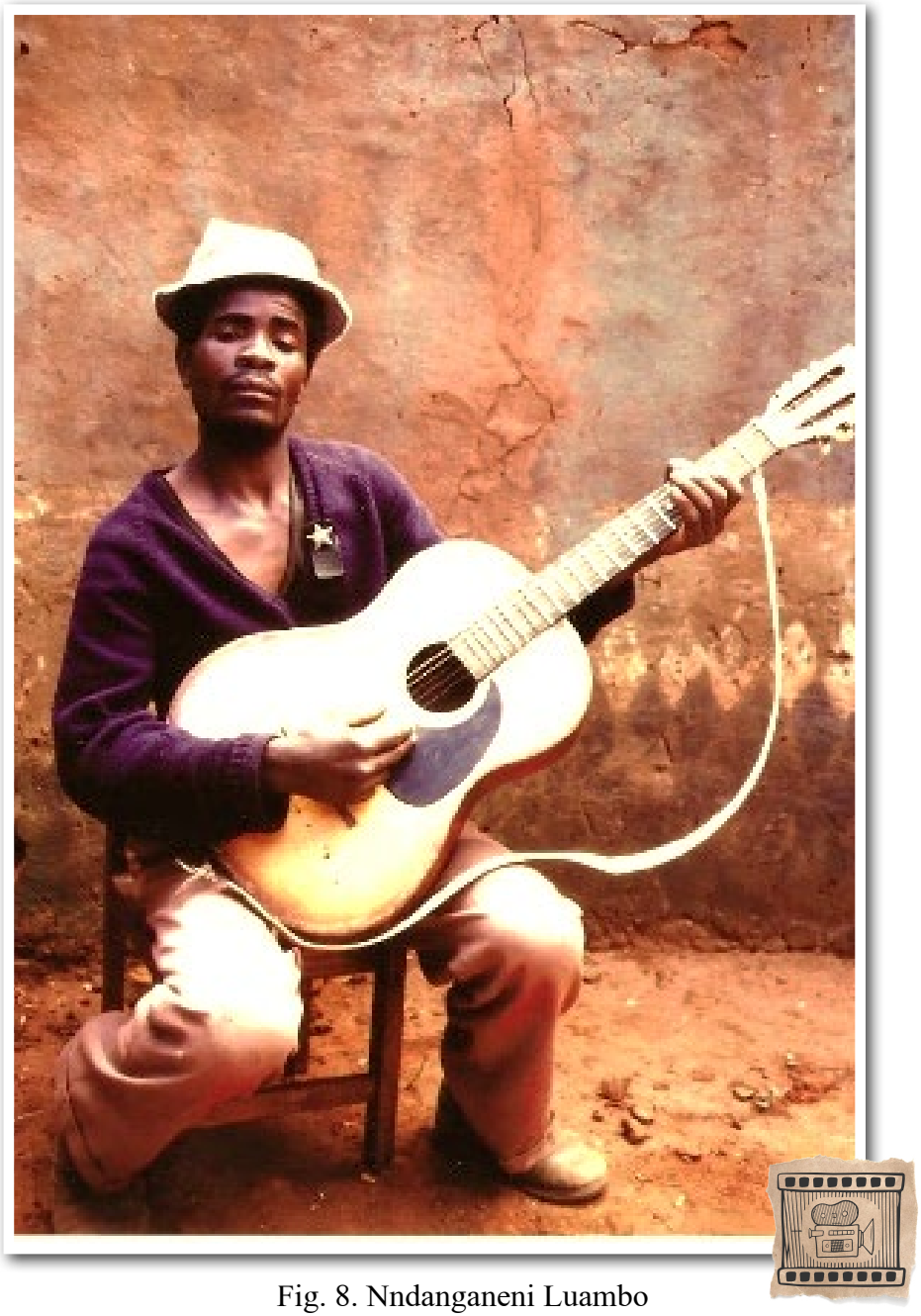

Fig. 8. Nndanganeni Luambo
Muhuyu, 1987

Box 3. Wealth of the past / Lupfumo lwa kale

Nndanganeni Luambo[i]

People of old
were rich indeed.
But they only
earned five cents.
They had cattle byres:
They were rich.
Alas, now what must we do?
Alas, now what
must we sing?
Nowadays we are
truly ashamed.
Now, even if we get money
we are still overcome.
People of old were better off.
Alas, now what must I do?
Indeed, the best
thing is to go and hoe.
Perhaps we will
become truly rich.

Vhathu vha kale nazwino
vho vha vho dzula.
Mara vha tshi
hola zukwa.
Na madanga vho vha vhe
na: Vho vha vho dzula.
Zwino, ri nga ita mini?
Zwino, ri nga lidza mini?
Musalauno nazwino ngoho
wo shona ngoho.
Zwino, vha tshi
hola tshelede,
vho vha vho kundiwa.
Vha fhirwa nga
vhathu vha kale.
Zwino, ndi nga ita mini?
Tsha khwine ndi u
ya u lima ngoho.
Ṱhamusi ndi go pfuma
ngoho ro vha ro dzula.

[i] Luambo (c. 1957-1990) was a migrant labourer and subsistence farmer (Kruger, 1993:472-482). He also earned a small income from performing at local shebeens, and from a few commercial recordings.

and mobile phones.[i]

Nuttall[16] fittingly identifies two predominant theoretical positions in literary and cultural criticism in contemporary South Africa. An older critique asserts continuity with disruptive colonial experience while a contrasting approach focuses on empowering postcolonial imaginaries and practices. These streams articulate Clifford's oscillating metanarratives, 'one of homogenization, the other of emergence; one of loss, the other of invention. In most specific conjunctures both narratives are relevant, each undermining the other's claim to tell "the whole story," each denying to the other a privileged, Hegelian vision.'[17] This necessitates a 'compelling analytical lens' on actual, often surprising dialogues between past and present.[18] For Clifford, this lens is ethnographic-historical realism, which focuses on 'material constraints, intersecting histories, and emerging social forms without imposing structural closure or developmental destiny.'[19] Within view is a 'salvational historicity' or transitional moment during which an organic, precolonial social order is 'in the process of penetration and subversion, reorganization and rationalization by nascent capitalism, yet still, for another long moment, coexisting with the latter.'[20]

The vocabulary of cultural loss[ii] is consequently contested by a lexicon of ambivalence, contradiction and contingency, especially the notion of articulation, which aims to untangle forms of power within webs of material and semiotic connections,[21] as well as translation, a concept directed at 'cultural truths that are continuously "carried across," transformed and reinvented in practice.'[22] In other words, a more appropriate analytical vocabulary 'acknowledge(s) the new command performances and commodifications of identity politics while simultaneously tracing the persistence of older practices: oral transmission, forms of social continuity and inter-cultural negotiation, and embodied experiences of place.'[23]

The history of culture is therefore viewed as a spiral, 'a figure for indigenous thriving, for transformations and returns in endless, genealogical development.'[24] While forged by systems of coercion and opportunity, culture is also shaped by historical resources such as land, kinship and ancestral norms that 'keep us who we are, as we change.'[25] These resources are typically 'rerouted by religious conversion, formations of race/ethnicity, communication technologies, new gender roles (and) capitalist pressures.'[26]

The arts seem an unlikely space for such realist, ethnographic-historical

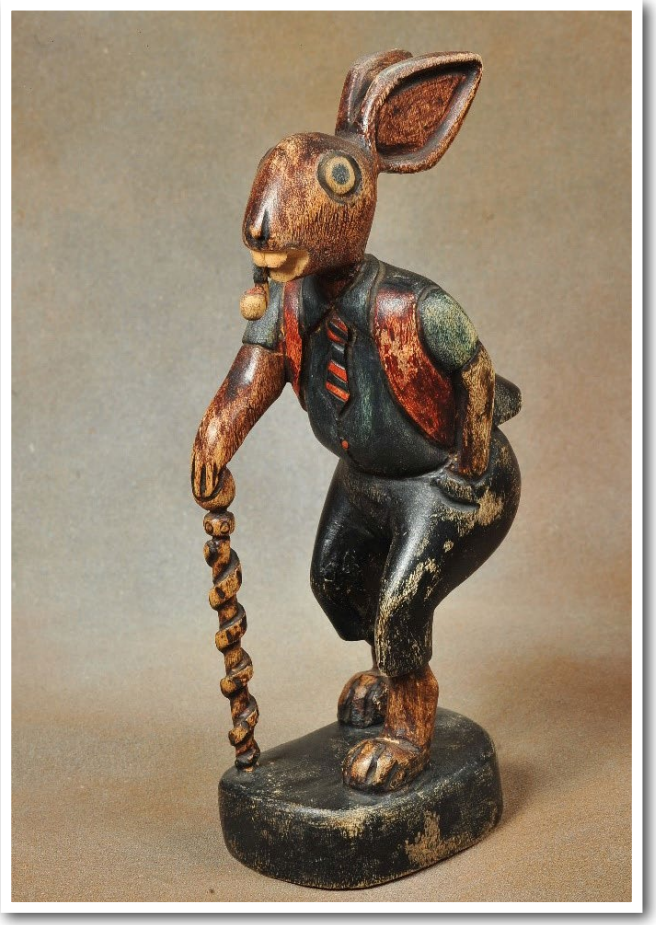

Fig. 9. Sankambe
Unknown sculptor, 1994. Wood and shoe polish, 300 mm.
Editor's collection.

[i] For those participating in older dances that were revitalised as part of the cultural nationalism of the 'homeland' era (Kruger, 1999, 2007a), political considerations were often subordinated to the value of team membership. Joyce Tshivhase explained that the radio was 'dead' because it lacked the degree of belonging generated in live performance (Tshidimbini, 17 June 1987).

[ii] Typically articulating notions of endangerment, peril, encroachment, destruction, attrition, corrosion, decay and ruin.

Box 4. Sibasa / Hatshivhasa[31]

Solomon Mathase

Sibasa! We live at Mukumbani.[i] We live in the mountains.
Sibasa! We live in the valleys. We live in caves.[ii]
We have food at Sibasa. We are happy. We live on rocky hill-tops.[iii]
Khirikhitshi![iv] We know Mphaya.[v]
He was a man who used a five-pound note to light up a cigarette.
He was a man who used to slaughter an ox for the crows.
He was a man who used to ride his horse. Listen: Kapata![vi]
My mother/father dances in a modern style.[vii] Dance! Dance! Dance!
Sibasa! The chief is Tshivhase.
The councillor is Muguru. The headman is Malusele.
We eat and dance excitedly.

Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula Mukumbani. Ri dzula dzithavhani.
Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula miedzini. Ri dzula mabakoni.
Hatshivhasa ri a ḽa. Ri a takala. Ri dzula mapfeneni.
Khirikhitshi! Ri ḓivha Mphaya. Munna we a vha a tshi dzhia mbonndo ṱhanu a vhofha ngadzo fola. Munna we a vha a tshi dzhia kholomo yoṱhe a i ṱhavhela mahunguvhu. Munna we a vha a tshi tshimbila nga bere yawe. Kha vha ḓo pfa: Kapata!
Mme anga vha tamba tshimodeni.
Khotsi anga vha thuḽa mavhoṱana. Thuḽa! Thuḽa! Thuḽa!
Hatshivhasa! Khosi ndi Tshivhase.
Ha, mukoma ndi Muguru. Nduna ndi Malusele.
Ri a ḽa. Ri a pembela.

[i] The village of chief Tshivhase.
[ii] People used to hide in these caves during times of war.
[iii] Lit. 'the place of baboons.'
[iv] The neighing of chief Tshivhase's horse.
[v] A reference to chief Rasimphi Empire Tshivhase, c. 1900-1952.
[vi] The sound of the horse's hooves.
[vii] Lit. 'to shake the buttocks.'

Box 5. Ngulumbi Civic Association

Solomon Mathase

Ngulumbi Civic Association:
It was founded here.
It needs dedicated workers.
Their homes are well cared for.
Ngulumbi, a good place.

Ngulumbi Civic Association:
Yo thoma fhano.
Ḽi nyaga vhashumi i vha na biko.
Hayani ha havho ndi ha vhuḓi.
Ngulumbi, shango ḽa vhuḓi.

investigation. However, whether public or private, they are integral to genealogical social construction.[27] The Venda expression *'Ṅwana wa mbevha ha hangwi mukwita'* ('The offspring of the mouse follows ancestral tracks') is articulated in local visual art, oral narrative and music. Women use ancient techniques to make beaded cell phone pouches featuring the South African flag while Sankambe, the most common form of the trickster in *ngano*, has become a portly retiree wearing a tie and waist coat (fig. 9).[i] *Muzika wa sialala*[ii] ('modern music of the past') in turn is a musical category that emerged from the colonial encounter. It not only constructs contemporary identities with calculated reference to precolonial values, but does so by means of the strategic integration of diverse musical syntax and semantics.[28]

Composer Solomon Mathase's[29] 'Hatshivhasa' and 'Ngulumbi Civic Association' (box 4, 5) are therefore not songs that merely 'celebrate' a marginal modernity, but in fact articulate the 'presentness of history.'[30] Repeated references to traditional leadership index social roles and statuses of precolonial origin. Mathase's narrative world, referred to by him as *shango ḽa Mudzimu* (land of God), also integrates moral values of precolonial origin with Christian tenets.[32]

Mathase (fig. 10) received several national awards for his *malende-jive*[iii] songs. His predominant performance setting is shebeens where clients join him in the musical construction of society. *Ngano* in contrast do not share the public vitality of popular music and other contemporary cultural forms. As explained, they were once habitually performed in domestic settings, but only four local instances of such transmission were documented from 2005-2016 (fig. 11).[iv] While *ngano* performance therefore no longer is pervasive social practice, Clifford[33] interrogates the simplistic assumption that 'the new

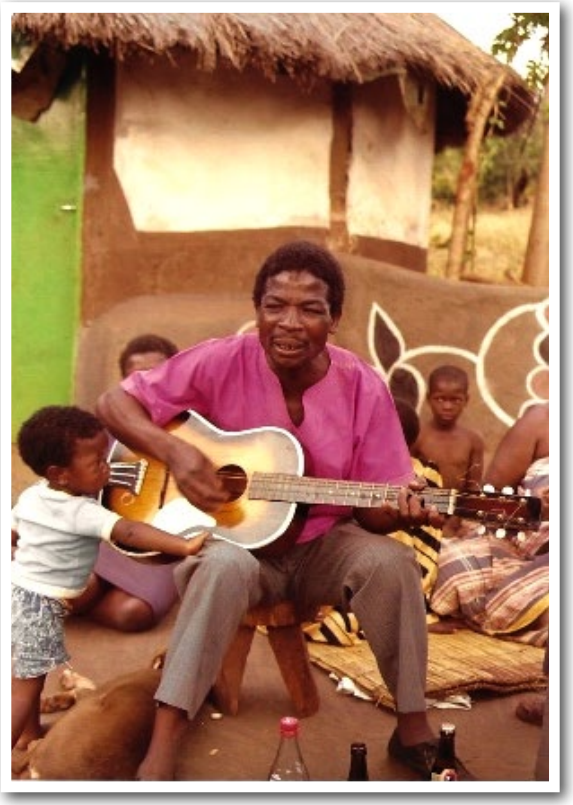

Fig. 10. Solomon Mathase
Ngulumbi, 1991

inexorably displaces the old' by asking, 'But does it? What else is going on?'

Dederen[34] marvels at the contemporary ambiguity of *ngano*, explaining that 'they express living culture and passive remembrance' and 'are neither a-temporal nor historical in any absolute sense.' Their deritualisation therefore signifies partial closure only. They have evolved as a memorial cultural resource which, like oral history, myth and customary law, is strategically accessed for social transformation.

This is not say that *ngano* memory is necessarily coherent or uniform. Differing degrees of recall relate to particular material, social and personal circumstances.[35] Several narrators whose stories appear in this collection grew up in families comprising three or four generations. Elelwani Singo (2.3) explained that she heard *ngano* from her great-grandmother who used to

[i] Among Zulu-speakers the familiar etiological tale now explains animal behaviour on the road: Dog chases anything with wheels, cars must stop for Cow and Sheep, and Goat disappears when they approach (Scheepers 2013:97-101).

[ii] From *lala* (to sleep), a reference to those who have passed.

[iii] *Malende* are festive choral dance-songs (3.3). They may take the form of *mitambo*, or dance-plays, which are embodiments of marital relations (Kruger, 2000).

[iv] Taking form as grandmother-grandchild transmission involving Zachary Tshamano, Aluwani Kwinda as well as Rofhiwa Matlari, the granddaughter of narrator Anna Matlari (fig. 11). Elelwani Singo in turn explained that she had transmitted stories to her daughter Vilas.

gather her grandchildren for stories after supper. Other narrators heard *ngano* from grandmothers who lived with them in communities of farm labourers (1.8.2). Marubini Kale (2.17) in turn explained that her grandmother told stories at her house in Musina.

Memories of stories told under these conditions often involved instantaneous recollection. If such recall flourishes in 'the sea of living memory,' then fading plots are shells on the shore, 'moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death.'[36] Enquiries about *ngano* sometimes resulted in brief performances, such as those by Mukondeleli Mathunya (2.9), and the trial run of a story by Thizwilondi Kwinda (2.7). Stories by Mathunya and Mutshekwa Mudau (2.16) in turn essentially comprise core images. Although elderly Mudau recalled the song in 'Bird watchers' (2.16.1), her truncated narrative was met with good-natured sniggering from her friends. Her memory lapse was the result of the genre's passivity as well as her age. She passed away shortly afterwards, leaving an impression of inextricable physical and cultural impermanence.

Fading memory was also evident in song performance. Although songs are not fixed, they are still subject to ancient structural design.[37] Even skilled narrators at times were unsure about the intricacies of pitch and rhythm, and it is in unstable performance that receding memory was often made most evident (1.9.3).

Many adults explained that they had not heard any *ngano* since their childhood. They simply shrugged their shoulders and explained that 'the world turns; it has been long, you can forget things.'[i] Even local tourist guides no longer are familiar with the once well-known *ngano* about Lake Fundudzi's snake deity.[ii] Elderly narrator Lucia Nelutshindwi (2.11) explained that school children consequently come to her and ask, 'Granny, what are *ngano?*'

Box 6. Returning a story

Ina le Roux documented a *ngano* from Takalani Munyai on a very hot December day in 1991.[38] The narrator gave an impressive performance, enchanting her young participants with ideophones, gestures and rising intonation.

Le Roux and I returned to Tshikundamela in 2005, wishing to document her life story for inclusion in a previous *ngano* volume.[39] After a long search, we managed to trace of one her daughters, who explained that her mother had passed away in 2003.

Munyai was born in a ruling family at Tshikundamalema. She not only knew royal customs intimately but also *ngano*. She was one of four wives of Thoga Munyai, a migrant labourer who later became a local traditional leader.

Munyai was a diligent worker who planted her own crops and farmed with goats. She cared for her children because she bought them clothes and blankets.

Munyai's daughter was unconcerned about *ngano*, and therefore unable to recall any narrative image. She kindly offered to sing 'Twinkle twinkle little star' for us. She had learnt this song in one of the first grades at school. We reciprocated by sharing 'Things are falling apart,' the story her mother once told Le Roux.

[i] Mathuvhelo Mavhetha as well as healer Jameson Nevhungoni, who was referring to the 1950s (Kruger, 2014:16).

[ii] See 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1).

Fig. 11. Narrative transmission
Storytellers Anna Matlari[i] (L) and granddaughter Rofhiwa (R)
Muswodi, 2009

[i] See Kruger (2014) for Matlari's life sketch and stories.

1.2.1 Identity narratives

Very limited documentation is available on the history of *ngano*. This introduction consequently utilises a large body of data related to music and society personally accumulated during 1983-1994 and 2005-2016. Data from the first period involves various oral genres, and adds significant detail to the landscape of change of which *ngano* have been part. Abundant use is made of data on musical performance practice as well as lyrics because they explicitly articulate views on and strategies for transformation that may be extrapolated to *ngano* memory.

Untangling *ngano* from a web of material and semiotic connections brings biographical data into play, here in the form of short life sketches. *Ngano* cannot be understood as narrativised worldview nor living memory without contextualised recollections of performance practice.

The small identity narratives[40] in this book not only offer glimpses of entangled, dialectical agency[41] but also thicken the texture of national history.[42] Anonymous narrators and standardised stories remain paramount in popular publications of South African folklore. Individuals disappear into communal obscurity, their voices are appropriated, and their stories are restyled for commercial consumption. For the preceding reasons, the identity of narrators is not concealed. Narrators voluntarily provided biographical information, and gave written permission for its release.

Section 3.2 contains supporting life sketches by *ngano* scholar Ina le Roux (fig. 5). The sketches are based on conversations with two members of the Tambani community project[i] which originated from Le Roux's interaction with narrators. The sketches accordingly expand the view of local lives.

For evident reasons, the elderly feature prominently as contributors to this volume (box 8).[ii] Narrators older than 50 years comprise 70% of the total, while 46% exceed 70. Those receiving a welfare grant total 42% while 33% are self-employed, mostly as informal traders or small-scale farmers. In keeping with general performance practice, 88% of narrators are female.[iii] Box 8 also lists narrators who are family members.

The lives of many local people, in particular older women, have not changed fundamentally since Le Roux's encounter with them during the early 1990s.[43] The refrains in life stories are inadequate infrastructure, the almost

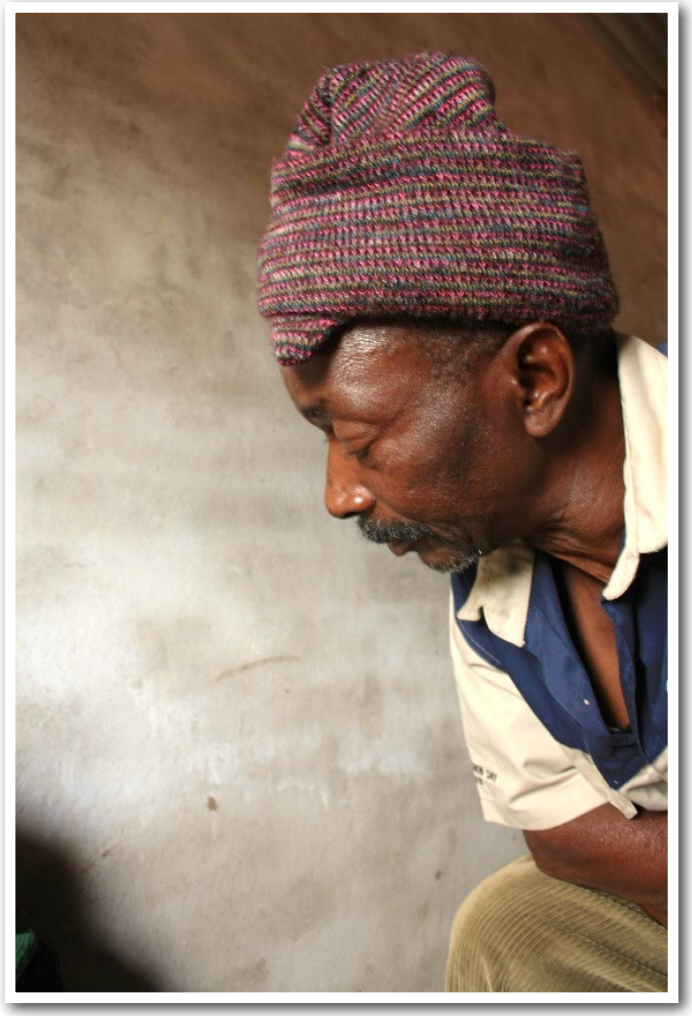

Fig. 12. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha Folovhodwe, 2011

[i] www.tambani.co.za (Figs. 101-103.)

[ii] Swanepoel's collection (1982) shows a similar age grouping, including two narrators aged twelve and sixteen.

[iii] Dederen (2012:78) similarly found that memories of *ngano* were clearest among female pensioners.

total absence of local commerce and industry, insufficient access to irrigated arable land, pervasive unemployment and poverty, reliance on social welfare, incomplete schooling and bad health.

Because these issues sometimes involve privacy and personal dignity, their reporting here has required redaction in accordance with scientific ethics. In particular, frequent disclosures of family conflict have been omitted or only cursorily represented, while identities are suppressed.

The *ngano* in this collection originate from three villages, namely Folovhodwe, Muswodi and Mabvete (fig. 2). Most of these narratives are known in other areas of the Vhembe district, and appear in collections originating from them.[44] Although translators Pfananani Masase and Tshifhiwa Mashau (box 7) grew up in the southern part of Vhembe district, they were familiar with many *ngano* from its northern periphery.

These *ngano* furthermore closely share plots, meanings, form, style and performance practice with the genre in southern Africa. However, as section 1.8 elaborates, treating these stories and their histories as homogenous may flatten out the dynamics of regional folklore, which is marked by a 'reflexive relationship with a spatially defined group' and articulates shared local experiences and worldviews.[45]

The twentieth century history of the Vhembe district evolved in diverse colonial conditions. While the consolidation of ethnic enclaves had a limited effect on populations living in the Soutpansberg, this was not the case with communities in adjacent areas like Niani, which has extensive economic resources.

Local economic interest dates back to the late nineteenth century. It involves mining and farming[i] activity that was an important factor in the forced removal of local communities during the colonial period, and which remains at the centre of land restitution and regional development.[ii] Section 1.8.3, as well as biographical data, explain how performance genres engage land dispossession. The impact of communal farm life on *ngano* performance practice is also discussed.

[i] Farming initially involved cattle, fruit and vegetables. However, there has been a significant shift to game husbandry.

[ii] There is ongoing conflict between local communities, the provincial government and coal-mining groups about access to water for the establishment of a special economic zone geared towards meeting demand for electricity and steel.

Many local life stories refer to the Fourie family that settled in Niani during the early twentieth century. Tobie Fourie is a descendent of this family, and now resides in retirement near Makhado. He was a prominent farmer in Niani. He speaks Tshivenda fluently and entered local lore on account of his nickname Mugoba (a mythical mountain snake) as well as his community engagement.

Several narrators and numerous local villagers once worked on Fourie's farms or attended the school he established. His biographical sketch is

Box 7. Collaborators

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha (fig. 12) of Folovhodwe was pivotal in accessing and interpreting *ngano*. Born locally in 1938, he often remarked that he knew the entire village, and supported this claim with a continuous barrage of loud greetings as we walked through neighbourhoods. As such he is versed in regional history and rooted in local worldviews. However, he is at home in another world too, since he traversed South Africa for twenty-seven years as civil servant and miner. He is also an exceptionally intellectual church minister, with keen interest in the human condition. As cultural inbetweener with an affable personality, he was able to harness local knowledge with the objectives of scientific research. He instantly grasped allegory as a narrative technique and analytical concept, and in so doing was crucial in teasing out complex narrative meanings.

The narratives were translated by Pfananani Masase, Tshifhwa Mashau and Tshilidzi Ndou. Masase holds a doctorate in divinity, and serves in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. Tshifhiwa Mashau has a master's degree in education, and lives in Pretoria, where she manages a literacy project. Mashau and Masase were born and raised in Mashamba and Vuwani respectively, areas in the south of Vhembe district. Their intricate knowledge of local culture and Tshivenda was indispensable in transcribing, translating and interpreting stories.

Tshilidzi Ndou holds a Diploma in Music as well as an Artist Diploma. Although less familiar with *ngano* than Masase and Mashau, access to narrators by means of mobile phone enabled him to clear up uncertainties regarding transcription and interpretation.

therefore also included in this book (box 37). It offers a unique perspective on land, farm life and labour relations. In particular, it includes references to the establishment of the Venda 'homeland' and the shadowy presence of its initial leader, Patrick Mphephu. It too is a story of memory and transformation.

Box 8. Narrators: Core statistics

Number of narrators: 24

21 female and 3 male narrators

Number of narrators per village

Folovhodwe: 15
Muswodi-Tshisimani: 6
Muswodi-Dipeni: 1
Mabvete: 2

Number of narratives: 53

Period of documentation: 2009-2016

Age of narrators in 2016

Mbulaheni Phaswana: 94
Mukondeleli Mathunya: 89 (1927-2017)
Mutshekwa Mudau: 81 (c. 1933-2014)
Nyamukamadi Ndou: 81 (c. 1935-2017)
Thizwilondi Kwinda: 79
Nthuseni Mudau: 79
Rosina Madabeni: c. 78
Munyadziwa Matamela: 78
Thinawanga Phungo: 76
Megi Kwinda: 75
Rosina Ramano: 63
Lucia Nelutshindwi: 70
Mashau Tseisi: 67
Marubini Kale: 61
Rosina Mulovhedzi: 59 (1956-2015)
Nyawasedza Mudau: 57
Lerisa Mavhodze: 53
Salfina Maliyehe: 50
Elelwani Singo: 45
Mpho Mashavha: 41
Mashudu Kwinda: 37
Tshamano Mashavha: 35
Aluwani Singo: 25
Zachary Tshamano 19

Related narrators

Mashau Tseisi and daughters Mpho and Tshamano
Nthuseni Mudau and grandson Aluwani Kwinda
Megi Kwinda and daughter Salfina
Marubini Kale and daughter Mashudu Kwinda
Zachary Tshamano, mother Mashudu Mathala and grandmother Matamela Makapile (Stories by Makapile and Mathala appear in Kruger, 2014)

1.3 Ngano are anthills

Jeannerat,[46] discussing the history of the Berlin Mission Society during the early 20th century, refers to Hasani, a traditional ruler, who had articulated the 'symbolic equivalence between the sacrifice of Jesus for human beings, a theoretical and theological concept, and the image of food.' And so he had come to interpret Christianity as spiritual sustenance rather than actual food.

Hasani's understanding derived from the 'heavily coded' quality of the precolonial world,[47] which has been described extensively in religious studies, anthropology and archaeology. Blacking[48] explains that Venda girls' initiation (fig. 17; 3.3) articulates esoteric knowledge or wisdom in 'a series of formulae in which certain familiar objects are given special names (…) and the meaning of rites and symbolic objects is explained.' The recitation and interpretation of these formulae is 'an exercise in memory and imagination' that articulates the re-birth of novices and offers 'fascinating insight into Venda culture.'

Section 1.6 explains initiation and *ngano* as related domains. Regional cosmology has correspondingly also been uncovered in oral narrative[i] as well as visual art.[ii] Certain core images in *ngano* correlate with regional rock paintings and engravings which are actual surface representations of complex thought patterns and cultural practices.

'The magic hide' (2.9.1) by Mukondeleli Mathunya tells of a man who passes away, leaving his cattle to his sons. The eldest inherits mature animals, the second calves and the youngest an ox hide only. Disappointed, the latter kneads the hide and stretches it on the ground. Termites eat the hide and an anthill appears overnight. The anthill explodes and calves as well as two girls emerge whom the young man marries. Like all Mathunya's stories, 'The magic skin' is short and simple. However, like an anthill it conceals an abundance of life.

Developing Kriel's (1971) innovative approach to Shona *ngano*, Le Roux (fig. 5) has made a pioneering contribution to local narratology (1996).[iii] She reveals *ngano* as deeply allegorical, and describes how female narrators have harnessed them to conceptualise their life. These stories are 'broad metaphors' or 'objectifications of ideas, the most pervasive of which is the quest for order within the human community.'[49] Their actants[iv] represent concepts, their plots 'allegorize an abstract doctrine or thesis,' and their 'central device is the personification of abstract entities such as virtues, vices, states of mind, modes of life, and types of character.'[50]

Aschwanden[51] identifies 'a truly amazing wealth of symbolism' in neighbouring Karanga culture, involving 'many-layered, complex connections.' He was told that symbolism is 'the language of everyday life (…) We see a similarity here (referring to symbolism). In this way, we want to express our life and its beauty. But often we cannot say directly what we feel; we have to choose another way.' Therefore, in relation to *ngano*, 'the Karanga are concerned chiefly with the symbolism behind the story and not with the precise logic of the sequence of events.'[52]

The Tshivenda term for symbol is *tshiga*[53] or *tsumbo*[54] (from *sumbedza*, to demonstrate),[v] while allegory was described by Mathuvhelo Mavhetha as the

[i] See Canonici (1996), Coplan (1994), Hofmeyr (1993) and Scheub (1975). Influenced by the study of rock art, 'Bushmen' narrative has received extensive cognitive treatment (Bleek & Lloyd, 1911; Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989; Lewis-Williams, 2000).

[ii] Nettleton (1989:76) explains in relation to Venda decorative woodcarving on doors (fig. 48), that 'the relief carvings never represent a crocodile in a naturalistic mode, but rather in a conventionalised or synthetic rendering of its most salient features. This is done through the compositional arrangement of opposed and interlaced chevrons creating diamond shapes, into which concentric circle motifs are placed across the surfaces of the mostly undivided design fields of the doors.'

[iii] Edited and published as 'The flamboyant rooster and other Tshivenda song-stories' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iv] The concept of actant is rooted in the work of Propp, Greimas and Kristeva, who show narratives to be constructed and interpreted in terms of social roles and relationships. 'The advantage of talking about actants and actantial behavioral paradigms is this: It enables the analyst to anchor stories in cognitive and sociocultural contexts (…) rather than viewing narratives as formal structures that preexist the communicative situations in which they cue a variety of inferencing strategies.' (Herman, 1999:233.) Character, in turn, 'is more or less synonymous with "individual personality" as defined in psychology: a complex of enduring traits, attitudes, and dispositions.' (Margolin, 2003:283.)

[v] Compare the Setswana equivalents *sekaô* (example) and *seka* (to resemble) (Cole, 1955:86, 111).

'inside story.'[i] Narrator Nthuseni Mudau (2.8) similarly observed that *ngano* are like *thai* (riddles) because they conceal meanings that require uncovering.

'The bull-husband' by Ntshengedzeni Kwinda (2.22.1) describes how a married couple prepare to visit the wife's family after the birth of their first child. The journey takes the small family through enemy territory. Her husband is described as a bull[ii] who, when they are threatened, folds his legs around her. Her in-laws admonish her: 'Do not say it is just an ox. It is your husband that will help you arrive (safely home).'

Nyamukamadi Ndou's 'Good and evil' (2.2.2) similarly portrays the behaviour of a newly-married couple, underscoring that marriage, as social foundation, is subject to ancestral norms. Looking for food, the wife leaves home early in the morning. 'She arrived, she had gone over there to her ancestral shrine. She did not know that it was a shrine. She merely saw a pool.'

While symbolism is a universal phenomenon,[55] it is also culture-specific, and in both these instances a young woman's naivety is evident in her failure to understand the deeper meaning of the bull and the pool. These are clear instances of metaphorical awareness.

Kriel[56] explains that Karanga *ngano* 'occupy a special position in virtue of the difficulty of analysing their symbols,' while Gunner[57] observes that the deep, context-specific symbolism of local oral genres 'impinge, often awkwardly, on written genres and the discourses constructed from them. Sometimes they seem so awkward that their powerful, difficult presence is largely ignored or at best underrated.'[iii]

The ancient allegorical operations of *ngano* accordingly require excavation by means of a cultural archaeology. The very few story collections from the first half of the twentieth century harboured unrealised potential for in-depth analysis;[58] nor was this potential brought to fruition during an upsurge of published collections accompanying the cultural nationalism of the 'homeland' era (see 1.7.2 & 1.9).

Le Roux[59] became aware of the intricate symbolism of the genre in conversations with diviner Masindi Maliyehe of Sanari.[iv] Because southern African populations share fundamental cultural attributes, Le Roux's work has also made collections of stories from the region accessible for comparison. Particularly useful is Von Sicard's volume of Shona *ngano*,[60] as well as narratives from Lesotho, collected by pioneering folklorist Minnie Postma.[61]

As mentioned, *ngano* share a symbolic universe with girls' initiation (see 1.6), and Blacking's important ethnography[62] in particular offers valuable insight into their meanings and functions. Similar ethnographies in regional cultures also serve to clarify certain stories.[63] While Le Roux's work has expanded understanding of the genre, some metaphors may only be unraveled in the context of a particular story, and therefore require interpretation by narrators. Blacking points out that the complex symbolism of girls' initiation is understood by a select group of specialists only, and that even they cannot always provide explanations of all ritual content.[64] Similarly, there are varying degrees of insight into the symbolism of *ngano*. Certain narrators offer stories and explanations that are intricate. Nyamukamadi Ndou (2.2) was most notable in this regard, but others also offered sophisticated interpretations.[v]

As explained, *ngano* as site of memory not only involves story plots but also songs, whose functions and aesthetics are discussed below (1.9).[vi] Finnegan[65] identifies a lack of focus on African oral performance practice, which may be explained by the functionalist prioritising of pragmatics over aesthetics. She notes that 'the exploitation of form, heightening of style and interest in the medium for its own sake as well as for its descriptive function can clearly be found in oral literary forms,' and that this motivates 'further study of the delivery and dramatic performance of African stories.'

Culture-specific perspectives and disciplinary divides often result in the misinterpretation of multimodal genres like song-stories. The emergence of the published folktale was typically marked by the omission of chants and lyrics integral to plots, as well as the absence of transcribed songs,[66] and studies

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[i] Afrikaans *binnestorie*.

[ii] Lit. 'the biggest ox in the byre.'

[iii] Postma (1957, preface) remarks of Sotho narratives that they conceal cultural meaning that escapes outsiders. Accordingly, their interpretation is 'by no means easy.' (*'Maklik het dit geensins gegaan nie.'*)

[iv] 'It may be more than coincidence that those narrators better able to explain *ngano* are diviners like Masindi Maliyehe (…) who deal professionally with symbolism and hidden meanings. Contemporary San shamans (…) have been found to be "more inner-directed" than others, and to have "easier access to a rich fantasy life."' (Kruger, 2014:20, citing Lewis-Williams and Katz.)

[v] Thinawanga Phungo, Nthuseni Mudau, Marubini Kale and Ntshengedzeni Kwinda.

[vi] The structure of *ngano* songs is discussed elsewhere (Kruger, 2014:75-82).

of South African folktales and folksongs still tend to pursue their objectives independently. With some exceptions,[67] detailed discussion of songs and chants in local oral narrative is rare. There is a need to address this lacuna, and to rescript song-stories as integrated verbal and musical expression.

This endeavour is curtailed by lack of comprehensive literature on *ngano* performance, as well as the passivity of the genre. Induced performances during fieldwork mostly involved a narrator and a small number of adult participants,[i] or just a narrator and co-researcher Mathuvhelo Mavhetha (as only chorus singer), and they obviously lacked many of the social dynamics and aesthetic qualities of past comunal performance.

[i] Some induced performances (particularly during school vacations) involved larger groups that included children (see Kruger, 2014:70-71; fig. 13).

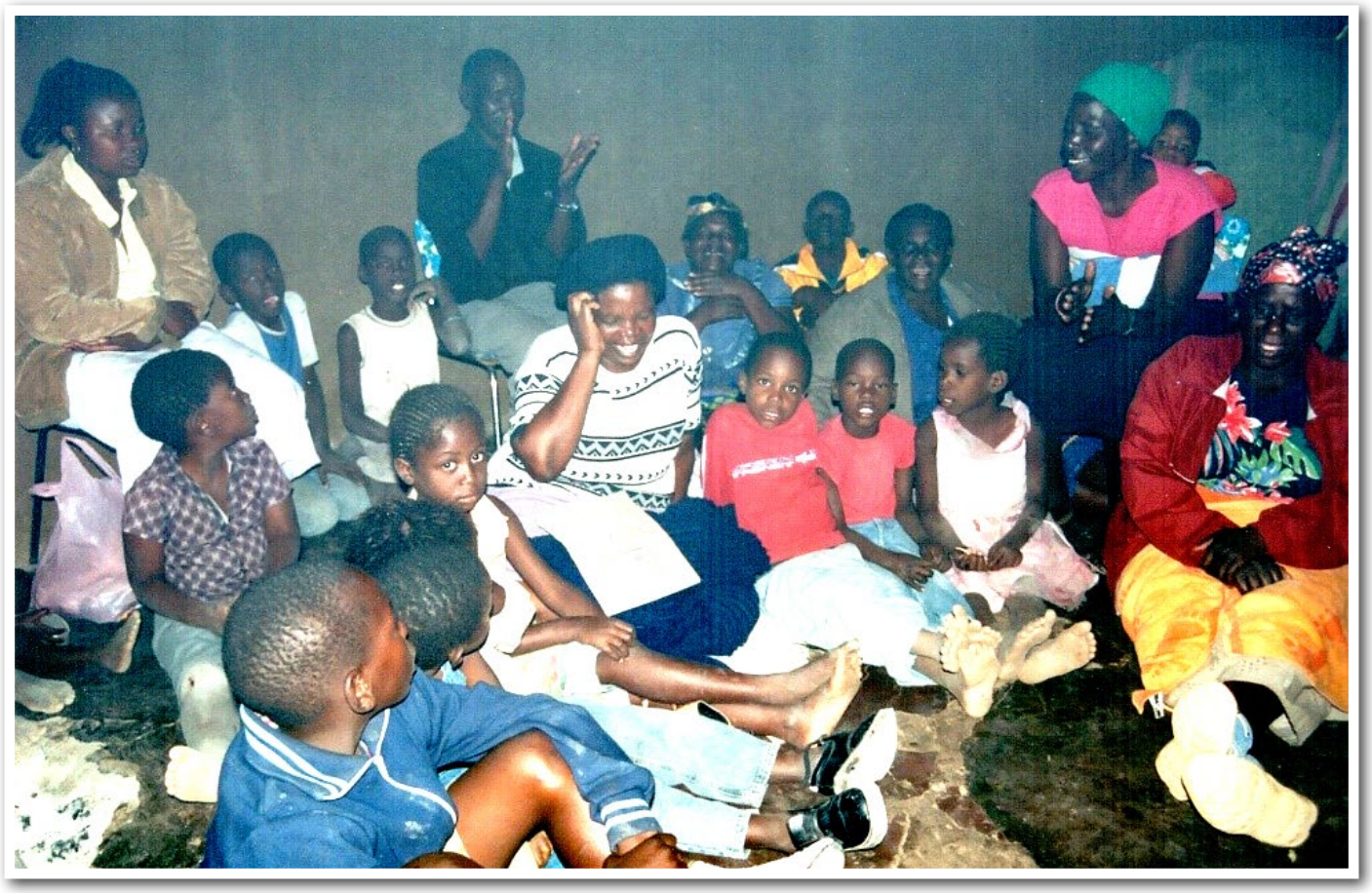

Fig. 13. Telling stories
Ngano narrator Selina Mavhetha (center) in action at the home of diviner Eni Nenzhelele (wearing a green cap). Muswodi-Tshisimani, 17 June, 2005. The book on Mavhetha's lap contains a list of *ngano* titles.

1.4 Narrative worldmaking

The preceding discussion suggests that narratives are not passive, mirror images of reality. Like xylophonist Wilson Ravele (fig. 7), the 'Bushmen' of Botswana's Kgalakhadi desert knew 'that without a story one had no clan or family; without a story of one's own, no individual life; without a story of stories, no life-giving continuity with the beginning, and therefore no future.'[68]

Expert Venda singers initiate their performance by exclaiming, *'Iḓani u vhone madembe!'* ('Come and see wonderful things!'), while Sotho poets instruct their audiences to 'listen to the wonders and tribulations of the world.'[i] The speaking, chanting and singing voice thus lifts thought and emotion from the human body into worlds shared with others.[69] Because it has the power to define, narration is 'interpretative, world-making action.'[70] 'The only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterise us and organise them according to the formal principles of narrative.'[71]

The narrative construction of life is among the first adaptive capacities to develop[72] in humans whose intelligence is expressed in 'narrative ways of knowing, interacting, and communicating.' Viewed simply, narratives offer hope 'for an existence without oppression and constraints'[73]

'Ipfi ḽanga ndi musevhe' is a common Tshivenda expression which means 'my voice is a barbed arrow.'[ii] It articulates clear awareness of the voice – especially artistic expression – as source of identity and power.[74] Classical European fairy tales were memetic linguistic formations of class relations,[75] and narratives like them navigate 'endlessly complex' social spaces, and offer surrogate experience of moral dispute and physical conflict.[76] Ricoeur's definition of stories as 'explorations in the realm of good and evil'[77] reverberates in *ngano* narrator Salfina Mashiliye's (2.6) remark that the kind of story she prefers, features 'good people overcoming bad people.'[iii] Her troubled life hints at the 'link between recurrent themes in oral traditions and real-world problems.'[78]

Dutton explains 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.'[79] Blacking[80] remarks similarly about Venda girls' initiation that mastery of speech and song is a sign of social competence and potency. Furthermore, composer Solomon Mathase (fig. 10) explained that direct reproduction of another musician's songs is 'the robbing business.' It lacks integrity and truth because 'it does not come from the heart.'[iv]

The worldmaking voice is therefore subject to a code of ethics, the source of which is divine inspiration. Mathase remarks in a song that 'the narrator of things will not speak for himself. I am talking while God is quiet.'[v] This remark is rooted deeply in the ancient discourse of the *tshilombe* musician (see 'The wandering musician'; figs. 64, 66, 111) in his role as divinely-inspired moral guardian.[81] The elderly woman in society, lacking the influence that physical power may accord, instead appropriates the power of speech. She is the model for the wise female actant in *ngano*, 'the Speaker-at-length-who-does-not-allow-interruption.'[82] Her voice, as well as that of a select cast of other actants, features prominently in the articulation of power relations.

In fact, the narrative voice defines life itself. Lucia Nelutshindwi offers an entertaining dramatisation of a small marital squabble in 'The wife in the baobab' (2.11.2). As explained (box 10), hyperbolic expression is a common quality of *ngano*, and conflict is often presented larger than life, as fantastic images perhaps conjured in moments of unbridled passion. In any case, a husband is portrayed as trapping his wife in a baobab tree from which she is unable to descend. The couple argue in song, and the story ends with the remark that the 'woman carries on singing until her voice dies away, until she dies there, because there is no way for her to climb down.'

Similarly, in 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1) by Tshamano Mashavha, a woman whose baby has been kidnapped, negotiates in song with the abductors. However, they run away with the child, and the mother's appeal for its return is met by deadly, frightening silence, which punctuates the story and

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[i] *'U mamele mehlolo le meleke ea lefats'e'* (Lenake & Swanepoel, 2004:93).

[ii] Also cited by Blacking (1969:225). The lyrics of a *tshifasi* choral dance-song (3.3) for teenagers similarly notes, 'My voice is like an arrow. If I send it to the south, it reaches there. It will return with a girl, with Nyamukamadi.' (Performed by learners of Luheni School, Tshixwadza, 29 August 1991.)

[iii] See her story entitled 'Brothers' (2.6.1).

[iv] A composer may borrow musical and verbal motifs but must integrate them with his own, shared experiences.

[v] *'Muṅwali wa zwithu ha ḓi ambi. Ndi amba Mudzimu o sokou fhumula.'* (Kruger, 1993:122.)

symbolises the end of meaningful life for the mother.[i]

The chanting and singing voice in *ngano* furthermore commonly effects transformation to altered spiritual and moral states.[ii] An enduring narrative theme is the supreme value of integrated spiritual and social wealth rather than material possession.[iii] Stories depicting coming-of-age[iv] show how their young heroes reach maturity by mastering dance-song performance, an indispensable mode of social interaction.

These perspectives on the voice are exemplified in a Tsonga narrative[83] that describes succession conflict. A dying man leaves a charm ('good luck pebbles') to be swallowed by his two sons. The 'good' brother's pebble sticks in his throat and chokes him: 'The pebble prevented Papaju from speaking. He could not even utter one word,' and so his capacity to compete for leadership is neutralised.

Papaju leaves home to find help and meets an iguana at a river. The iguana offers himself as sacrifice to redeem Papaju from his brother's 'witchcraft': 'And no-one can kill you, unless you kill me (…) As for my carcass, cast it into the pool of water, so that I may live again (…) Go home and cook (a magic) herb together with my heart. And when you have eaten them you will be healed instantly. You will be able to speak again.' The voice is therefore divinely sanctioned, and signifies resurrection, redemption, (re)creation and morality.

Fig. 14. The cannibal
Phuthuma Seoka, 1990. Painted wood, 360 mm. Editor's collection.

[i] The mother is hyperbolically punished by death in certain versions of the story (e.g. 'Mrs. Rock-Rabbit'; Kruger, 2014:225).

[ii] See 'The lion-hunter' (2.3.4).

[iii] 'Fortune lies ahead' (Kruger, 2014:179-182) and 'Dzwee's journey' (3.1.4).

[iv] See 'Thunder returns' (Kruger, 2014:183-184) and 'A hero learns a lesson' (Kruger, 2014:131-133). This is not to say that the young hero does not accrue material wealth. However, this usually is a consequence of social and psychological maturity.

1.5 Narrative as law

The core concern of cognitive narratology may be described as 'the transaction between narratives and the audiences that bring them to life.'[84] This objective invokes the standard, interrelated narratological concepts of eventfulness and tellability.[i] Their actual intricate relationship is pared down here to focus on 'the nature of specific incidents judged by storytellers to be significant or surprising and worth being reported.'[85]

Author and anthropologist Pieter (PJ) Schoeman,[86] expressing his intimate knowledge of Zulu culture, remarks that 'if you want a child to follow in your footsteps, you must give him two things (…) with two hands: food (…) and stories. Before a child goes to sleep he wants to hear a story. Then his small feet run on many distant roads. And he does not feel the thorns.'[ii]

Societies respond to their environment by means of 'the accumulated experience of previous generations,' and children are raised to believe, 'without question,' whatever adults tell them.[87] Children's stories therefore reveal how societies regard their children as well as themselves.[88]

Rosina Madabeni (2.21) explained that, when cars first appeared in the village of her birth,[iii] her parents became scared their children would be run over. 'And so they called a car *goloi ya mai-mai*, meaning a monster car!' Similarly, she remarked, performing *ngano* is an ancient way of educating children: When these stories tell of monsters, they mean to frighten them into obedience (box 10).[iv]

Burger[89] notes that literary texts are 'moral in the sense that they are reflections about how people behave and react in the world.' More specifically, they are normative and geared towards cultural legitimacy.[90] Applying this notion to oral cultures, Mueller[91] explains that 'the legal tradition of a given age, of a given people, reveals and transmits itself through rituals or tales.' Accordingly, 'virtually every tale in the Grimm collection contains a message of law – not necessarily criminal law – of justice, of punishment, or of pardon.'

The German word *märchen* (folktales) derives from *maere*, denoting important messages that 'provide a consistent guide of conduct.'[92] Folktales were therefore commonly quoted in 'sermons in both Protestant and Catholic churches, particularly in the Baroque period.'[93] Zipes[94] notes that 'certain fairy

Box 9. Stories: Preparation for life

Narrative self-construction is a remarkably systematic process initiated in early childhood.[95] The fairy tale is 'the first poetic form with which people come into contact in their lives. For most of us it is one of the deepest and most enduring childhood impressions (which) indicate(s) how much more deeply fairy tales have penetrated our general consciousness than any other book-based memories.'[96]

The transmission of norms in Venda initiation accompanied young people through 'successive stages in the growth of their social personality; and one function of (ritual content was) to prepare the mind for the reception of this vital information.'[97]

Similarly, stories told to young *ngano* narrator Zachary Tshamano (2.15) by his grandmother guided him through childhood, and enabled him to complete his schooling. A Sotho-speaker also explained that oral narratives empowered her to grow up, regulate her relationships with young men, and lead a productive life.[98] Author Mtutuzeli Nyoka in turn remarks that some of the most important stories he knows were told to him next to a fire or under a tree.[99]

Shona children are 'implicitly aware of the social criticism that *(ngano)* contain.'[100] Such criticism is evident in narrative cores that serve as ideological templates.[101] Xhosa *ntsomi* narratives, presented repeatedly to children during their formative years, similarly have a decisive influence on the development of their thinking.[102]

[i] Also, narrativity or narrability (Abbot, 2009).

[ii] Schoeman (1972:97). '*As jy wil hê 'n kind moet agter jou, in jou spore loop, moet jy vir hom twee dinge gee (…) met twee hande: dit is kos (…) en sprokies. Voordat 'n kind gaan slaap, wil hy 'n sprokie hoor. Dan hardloop sy klein voetjies op baie ver paaie. En hy voel nie die dorings nie.*'

[iii] Dzamba, in the Rambuda district.

[iv] Makgamatha (1991:3-4) identifies Sotho song-stories as *dinonwane*. He explains that the origin of this term is unclear, but that it 'has some etymological connections with the word *nono* (bogey), since *nono* is used to frighten and discipline very young children.' Compare German *shreckmärche*n and Dutch *waarschuwingssprookjes* (scary or warning tales).

tale texts have become formative and definitive, and they insert themselves into our cognitive processes, enabling us to establish and distinguish patterns of behavior and to reflect upon ethics, gender, orality, and power.'

In other words, 'where there is no rule of law, there can be neither a subject nor the kind of event which lends itself to narrative representation.'[112] Narrative by definition involves 'law, legality, legitimacy, or, more generally, authority,'[i] and its experientiality 'resides not merely in the events themselves but in their emotional significance and exemplary nature.'[113] Narrative tellability and eventfulness accordingly relate to changes of state involving 'deviation from the normative regularity applying in a given narrative world and preserving the order of that world.'[114] The moral ambiguity and contestation this involves is spatially conceptualised as 'the failure of an intended border crossing or the lethal consequences of a completed border crossing.'[ii]

Images in *ngano* of journeys, departures, arrivals, getting lost and crossing boundaries are common, and almost always invoke norms and values.[115] The journey undertaken by the two sisters in 'Child of the law' (2.17.2) is a metaphor for their transformation to adulthood.[iii] This is portrayed explicitly in another version of the story[116] in which the journey is undertaken by an old woman and her grandson who disagree about the most appropriate route. The boy insists on travelling the way of disobedience, to which his grandmother responds, 'I am telling you, but you do not listen: This is the path of wild animals, not people.'[iv] Such journeys to adulthood are a core image in many *ngano*. These stories inculcate fundamental values by dramatising entertaining and riveting adventures.

Khorommbi[117] explains that the Venda 'world-view encourages a deep respect for elderly people, who are referred to as those who brought us into the world. One's parents are one's *Vhadzimu* (gods) because they gave one life.' Certain *ngano* narrators were adamant that they could retell stories exactly as they had heard them from their grandparents and even great-grandparents. What they therefore recalled were the very words, if not voices, gestures and personalities, of their ancestors.[v]

Ngano memory in this way mediates between the departed and the living. Zulu oral narratives are conceived as products 'of the co-operation of both the living and the clan ancestors, whose span of immortality depended on being regularly remembered by the members of the lineage.'[118] *Ngano* similarly feature the opening markers 'long ago' or 'this story was told by my mother,' and stories like 'Child of the law' situate *ngano* in the realm of *zwitungulo* – sacred heritage that infuses current life with ancestral presence.

Ancestral law and its custodians are represented by a frog in 'Child of the law' (2.17.2)[vi] Amphibious animals are common genealogical symbols because of their mysterious lives under water. Like the ancestors, they too are 'down below' *(vhafhasi)*.

The frog in 'Child of the law' accordingly gives moral instruction to the sisters, and interrogates them in order to inculcate obedience, especially to their grandmothers:

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[i] 'Whatever else can be said about the various Shona folk tales, this at least is common to all of them: that they relate something about power which operates.' (Kriel, 1971:37.)

[ii] Schmid (2010:8, 13). Also see Ryan (2009:429). Hammond-Tooke (1981:84) remarks in this regard that, 'where boundaries are breached, or classifications fudged, there is an immediate concentration of concern. The "symbol work" (…) becomes more vital and intense on the boundaries.'

[iii] See the familiar 'Mother Holle' (Grimm & Grimm, 1993). For an exemplary *ngano*, see 'Dzwee's journey' (3.1.4). Canonici (1996:18) notes that 'many African folktales have a journey as their narrative frame, as if to embody the emotional journey constituted by the performance and which is the basis of growth and education.'

[iv] *'Ndo ni vhudza ni sa nthetshelese. Heino ndila ndi ya phukha, a si ya vhathu.'* A Xhosa *ntsomi* similarly describes a journey by two sisters: 'As they prepared to travel, their mother told them the way they should travel (…) She had to travel through fearful forests (…) passing by mountains and crossing streams.' (Scheub, 1975:211-217.)

[v] 'It is in our lives and not, fundamentally, in our conscious experiences that we find the memories of those who are gone. Our consciousness is fickle and not worthy of the task of remembering. The most important way of remembering someone is by being the person they made us – at least in part – and living the life they have helped shape.' (Rowlands, 2008:46.)

[vi] On the role of ancestral spirits as moral guardians, see Hammond-Tooke (1981), Stayt (1968) and Van Warmelo (1932:197 ff.). Hammond-Tooke (1981:95) explains that 'what is being worshipped in the ancestor cult, at least in its African variety, is not an individual personality, but a jural principle, that of filial piety. Among the Kgaga, it is the principle of submission to genealogical seniority that is being hymned and expressed symbolically every time the lustral (purificatory) water is poured on a shrine or a sacrificial animal immolated.'

Box 10. Hyperboles in *ngano*

Ngano abound with frightening images brought to life in performance. The most common form of the monster in *ngano* is that of *dada*, described as 'black, nocturnal, like a hyena but lacking a head, and bent on catching children.'[103] This image is the core of a well-known story (Mutshavhona; 2.13.2, 3.1.6)[i] that conjures up the imagined horrors (hyperbolised as poisoning) faced by orphans. The chorus line in the song, repeated by young participants, exclaims, *'Mutshavhona dada!'* ('Watch out for the monster/danger!'). Fear and anxiety in this way are integral to children's play experience[104] whose make-believe punishments imprint the outcome of reprehensible behaviour on their impressionable minds.

Scheub[105] remarks that pursuit by evil beings in Xhosa oral narratives 'can often be understood only on a metaphorical level' as expressive of human conflict. Death by immolation is a common hyperbole in regional narratives.[106] Inimitable Nyamukamadi Ndou describes how a monster explodes in 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3). Elsewhere[107] she portrays the fiery demise of an evil female spirit: '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!'

Repulsive old hags, cannibals, monsters and wild animals are feared figures. A Tsonga story[108] features 'a one-toothed old hag with sores all over. She often comes to this village at night, and sniffs around, in search of menfolk. And, when she finds them, she kills and eats them (…) You, too, our handsome one (the hero in the story), if she comes, you will be dead: you are her food!'

The old hag and the cannibal are not only bogeys 'but a perfect model for how not to behave – a prototype of barbarism and wickedness'[109] (see 'Cannibals'; 2.3.1).[ii] *Izimu*, the monster of Zulu narratives, is a large, cannibalistic 'semi-human being with abundant body hair' – 'the symbol of whatever is evil and disruptive.'[110] He may have long toes, nails, or teeth, like his counterparts in Venda, Sotho and Tsonga narratives.[iii] These are attributes of rapacious male sexual appetite.[111] *Ngano* narrator Nyamukamadi Ndou notes of a monster that he 'looks like a big wild animal,' and asks, 'Do you know a big animal with nails like a person? Yes, it loves girls.' ('The musician and the girl'; 2.2.3).

Because women are generally less strong than men, they lack long nails in *ngano*. Instead, they may have a long tooth, which is symbolic of the power of speaking ('The old woman with long teeth'; 2.3.2). And so the elderly female narrator surreptitiously, and with a hint of self-deprecating humour, affirms her status as wise elder.

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[i] Also see 'Spears eat those that make them' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:116-122) and 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014:139-142).

[ii] Kirkaldy (2005:232-33) cites Delius who notes in relation to accounts of cannibalism among the Pedi during the time of the Berlin Mission Society that they were 'restricted to relatively few groups who were principally distinguished by the fact that they secured their subsistence almost exclusively through raiding, and were thus seen as living on their fellows.'

[iii] The hero in a Sotho narrative is threatened by an old woman 'with a tooth longer than a pick' (Makgamatha, 1991:202-206). An old woman with a long tooth also features in a Tsonga story (Marolen, 1990:1-26).

(The frog) asked, 'Who are you sleeping with?'
(The elder sister) answered, 'I am sleeping with my granny.'
'Who eats with you?'
'I eat with my granny.'
'Who do you wash with?'
'I wash with my granny.'
Truly, that child answered like that!

The sisters undertake their respective journeys, and their obedience is tested when they encounter a revolting old woman in a river:

When (the elder sister) arrives over there, she finds an old woman kneeling in the water.
The old woman says, 'Come and scrub my back!'
That girl comes closer and says, 'What must I scrub with?'
She answers, 'With your tongue!'
That girl kneels and scrubs the back of the old woman with her tongue! Like this ... while pouring water!

Following narrative convention, the younger, more naive sister refuses to be instructed, and she is hyperbolically torn apart by lions. The story concludes with the warning, 'This is what happens to you if you do not listen! A person must listen to the law!'[i]

Such 'narration-oriented utterances' are crucial to the interpretation of *ngano* as moral instruction, since they 'create the illusion of face-to-face communication where the addressee is urged to listen, understand, sympathize, etc., not only with respect to the narrated, but also regarding the narrator and his current activity.'[119] The narrating voice in this *ngano*, as in virtually all others,[ii] withdraws 'from the spatial and temporal determinacy of the human perspective,' and becomes an everpresent, omniscient, godlike moral authority.[120]

Margolin[121] remarks that 'the whole essence of narrative would be missed if one were to deny the textual existence of narrator as stylistic and ideological position.' Dederen[122] notes that the inclusion in *ngano* of mysterious or incomprehensible elements 'expresses the ancestral origins of present-day social knowledge and social order, and grants a certain authority to the narrator/instructor.' Marubini Kale and other narrators are critical about contemporary values (box 15 & 16), and their outlook on mores aligns closely with that of the internal narrator in 'Child of the law' and similar stories. *Ngano* offer limited insight into the minds of actants: They are event-driven, third-person narratives whose comments and views are intentionally directed at a particular state of affairs.[123]

The narrating voice in 'Child of the law' explains that obedience is a quality of 'a well-mannered child of the law' *('ṅwana wa milayo, wa mikhwa')*. *Mikhwa* refers to 'good custom and manners,'[124] and the term also signifies a light whip that may be used to discipline the stubbornly defiant.[125] *Milayo* (sing. *mulayo)* in turn is

> a formulation of what is traditionally right, customary, ethical, obligatory; exhortation in support of traditional standards of behaviour; instruction in ethics; formulae and terminology as taught in initiation rites; hence rule of behaviour, commandment and (modern) law.[iii]

Jabes Mavhetha[iv] described *ngano* as *milayo nyana* or 'small laws.' This description is informed by three related concepts. Firstly, Mafela and Raselekoane[126] link *ngano* with *thero*. The root of this term is *rera*, which refers to ceremonial public speech, especially during court proceedings.[127] Secondly, *ndayo* are 'orders, commands and exercises' in girls' initiation[128] that also apply to other role prescriptions.[v] Phophi invokes this concept to

[i] *'Nga u kundwa hedzi! Muthu u ya laiwa a pfa!'*

[ii] A remarkable exception is a haunting first-person narrative describing the feelings of a widow whose daughter leaves home to become married (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:51-65).

[iii] Van Warmelo (1989:222). Hofmeyr (1993:28) similarly explains in terms of Ndebele culture that *mekgwa le melao* is 'a complex phrase meaning law, duty, right, virtue, customary observance, order (and) justice' that defines 'appropriate social conduct for girls and women.' *Mekgwa* has similar meaning in Sesotho and Setswana.

[iv] Muswodi, 18 June 2005. Jabes is the son of deceased narrator Piet Mavhetha, who was Mathuvhelo Mavhetha's elder brother and Le Roux's principal co-researcher (Le Roux, 1996; Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[v] See the discussion of 'The head is rotten' (2.4.2) for *ndayo* that apply to traditional rulers.

explain that *ngano* are a form of moral instruction,[i] and to differentiate between obedient and disobedient children.[ii] The latter are unruly because they have not been raised properly. Thirdly, Phophi also links *ndayo* with *zwivhuya*.[iii] This term is usually essentialised as virtue, but it signifies the complex synthesis of 'vital force, power, prestige, health and good luck.'[129] It is applied by narrator Matamela Makapile to evoke self-realisation, and spiritual and social wealth,[130] and has consequently been theorised as qualitative freedom.[iv]

The initial collection in the *ngano* series[131] features English synopses of stories submitted by students at the University of Venda (1986-1994). Lufuno Khorommbi's description (box 32) of *ngano* as 'warnings' is echoed in their essentialisation by these students as moral instruction, a function commonly attributed to the genre in southern Africa (box 11).[v] *Ngano* therefore share qualities with cautionary tales, whose purpose is to 'reinforce social taboos' and 'spread awareness of moral issues.'[132] As explained (box 10), the core image in a well-known story ('Mutshavhona'; 2.13.2, 3.1.6) about orphaned siblings defending themselves against evil family members, is articulated by the song line *'Mutshavhona dada!'* ('Watch out for the monster/ danger!'). This image serves as a generic warning against evil in various expressive domains, including *malende* choral dance-songs (fig. 108; 3.3).

Ethnographer Henri Junod[133] refers to Tsonga oral narratives as 'a code of elementary morals.' Dederen[134] in turn describes *ngano* as integral to an 'indigenous curriculum' that reminded 'young listeners (female and male) that the elders knew best; that disobedience would be punished; that the sharing of food was mandatory; that selfishness and hypocrisy were shameful, and that laziness was self-destructive.'

These and other core values are echoed by Tshivenda-speaking editors of *ngano* collections.[135] Mafela and Raselekoane[136] explain that these stories are lessons for life that invite reflection on greed, anger and disobedience, while promoting social cooperation, good manners and respect for older people. Madadzhe[137] in turn identifies values like courage, patience, tolerance and humility in *ngano*.

1.5.1 Moralising history

Some *ngano* may be described as narrativised historical accounts that combine the factual and the poetic, imposing 'upon events that are represented as real (…) the formal coherency that stories possess.'[138]

This subcategory is referred to as *ngano dza ndivho*. *Ndivho* signifies knowledge or information (from *divha*, to know). Mathuvhelo Mavhetha also interpreted *ndivho* as *mafhungo*. The contemporary reference of the latter is mass media news broadcasts. However, *mafhungo* also signifies narrative or tale,[139] and so Mavhetha conceptualised *ngano dza ndivho* as narratives of actual events.

White[140] explains that forms of narrativised history may be distinguished by their structure and moral content. Historical sources like annals and chronicles firstly lack qualities like coherence, integrity, fullness and closure.[vi]

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[i] *'Tshe ngano dza tshi mela, ho vha ndayo dza u vha mirole miswe vha gude zwi ri zwivhuya khadzo.'* (Phophi, 1990:foreword.) Madadzhe (1998:53-57) similarly points to *ngano* as a form of moral education. Khuba (1988:69) notes in this regard that proverbs (regularly included as a separate section in *ngano* collections) convey the 'wisdom of the people' *('vhuthali ha lushaka')*.

[ii] *'Ṅwana muvhuya, ṅwana muvhi'* (Phophi (1990:foreword). Mathuvhelo Mavhetha and narrator Maria Matamela of Folovhodwe (28 June 2016) also identified *ngano* as *ndayo*.

[iii] *'Tshe ngano dza tshi mela, ho vha ndayo dza u vha mirole miswe vha gude zwi ri zwivhuya khadzo.'* (Freely translated: 'The stories gave moral lessons to the young generation.') (Phophi, 1990:foreword.)

[iv] Kruger & Verhoef (2015). A Tsonga narrative fittingly describes rivalry between two brothers, both of whom desire traditional leadership. One brother resorts to witchcraft, which is ritually counteracted by his sibling. The outcome is that the latter comes to rule 'with a pure heart, wisdom and generosity. (He had become) an obedient young man.' ('The adventures of Papaju'; Marolen, 1990.)

[v] This is also the case with Afrikaans-speaking communities of the Karoo and northern Cape, whose stories are rooted in Khoe hunter-gatherer lore (De Prada-Semper, 2014; De Sterck, 2008). De Prada-Semper (2014:388) refers in this regard to two sisters who 'came from the Hantam area (…) Their parents moved about very often in a cart drawn by donkeys, so their children could not go to school. But that does not mean that they didn't receive an education. Their father had a special style of telling stories, and that was his way of teaching the children. The story-telling usually took place in the evenings, after supper, when the farmworkers would visit one another.'

[vi] While they may be descriptive of social conditions, 'they represent a single moment in time and a single state of affairs' (Schmid, 2010:5).

They not so much conclude as simply terminate, leaving events 'unresolved in a story-like way.' Secondly, White doubts that narrativising without some form of moralising is at all possible, noting that what is also lacking in some historical documentation is 'a social center' charged with ethical significance.

Ngano dza ndivho are not factual reports that explain the past. Instead, they are a form that draws on history as well as poetry. In other words, history provides raw data that is formalised, dramatised and moralised to articulate memories of communal as well as personal events and experiences. So Elelwani Singo's 'Cannibals' (2.3.1) appears to draw on instances of violent conflict attendant on migration and settlement. Strangers are depicted as cannibals crossing a river. While immigrants and travellers have crisscrossed the Limpopo river for centuries, this is a hyperbolic image of moral transgression rather than physical threat. The core image is expressed in the songlines 'They follow a monster! A monster who eats people.' It serves to induce fear of non-conformity in those who are young and naïve, and encourages their submission to older, experienced guardians (in this case, a grandmother).

'The young men in the cave' (2.12.1) describes how a group of young men flees violent conflict and takes refuge at a sacred site. Nyawasedza Mudau harnesses fearsome memory of local historical conflict with narrative law to affirm the timeless power of ancestors and their sacred imperatives. She shows in typical hyperbolic style how the actants are trapped by spiritual forces, and die from deprivation. Her performance dramatises a mother's highly emotional reaction to the looming demise of her son.

'The bees in the millet' (2.14.2) in turn depicts memories of raiding, once common practice. As an instance of moral law, this story is an injunction against theft. It describes the raiding of a millet field, but focuses on the farmer's emotional response. The core image of a comfortable prior life is articulated in the song. Singing eventually fades away in a profound portrayal of depression and hopelessness.

Ngano dza ndivho as instances of personal history are limited. Florence Mphoshomali's 'Sorrow'[141] is an account of her initial experience of death and how it should be rationalised, while 'My father and mother' by Munyadziwa Matamela (2.24.1) recalls family violence. Marcus Vhengani's 'Marauding baboons' (3.1.1) describes his experience of baboons that raid crops. His narrative takes the spoken call-and-response form of *ngano*. It also includes a song to which he dances. In addition, he inserts himself into the story by announcing his actual departure from the narrative event, and affirming the respect that accrues to him as an elderly man. Other examples of *ngano dza ndivho* in this collection are 'Chieftainship' (2.10.2) and 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1). Also see 'Mighty rooster' (3.1.5)[142] as well as 'The zebras are jiving' (3.1.2).

1.5.2 The art of moralising

Narrator Anna Matlari of Muswodi emphasises the need to understand narrative actions and intentions by frequently asking her participants, 'Do you see?'[i] Marubini Kale's metanarrative moralising in 'Child of the law' (2.17.2) similarly occupies a position of explicit articulation on a continuum whose opposite pole represents 'the inside view.' This pole activates the minds of actants by means of devices like access, closeness and distance,[143] and it enables narrators to manipulate the feelings of participants. This may be the reason why the children of narrator Matamela Rasivhetshele used to run home and scatter dogs in their feverish haste to hear their mother's fire-side stories.[144]

Dederen[145] remarks that children's stories from southern Africa 'are at once aesthetic and functional; fantasy and reality. They provide light-hearted entertainment and by the same token moralise earnestly.' While moralising in *ngano* is an important objective, these stories do not aim at 'wisdom trafficking,'[146] and simplistic functionalist interpretations of them must be tempered by considering them as creative art.[147]

Narrator Laura Simms is quoted as observing that 'storytelling is the direct and shared communication of something true about being alive. It is not only the story, but a communication of a living storyteller, situation, sound and rhythm of voice, silence, gesture, facial expressions, and response of listeners that makes it potent.'[148]

Scheub[149] explains that 'it is not the plot that is of primary interest to the performers and the audience. They have heard the plots expressed frequently enough. It is the performance that counts, an artistic performance built on familiar core-images.'

Venda oral performers understand this only too well. Singer-guitarist

[i] See her stories in Kruger (2014).

Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila of Tshakuma[150] remarks in one of his songs, '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] Madzivhandila was not only referring to his enthralling, epic portrayal of a young man growing up in a transforming society, but also his spirited dramatisation of narrative events.

The *ngano* narrator was therefore not merely an educator: She was also 'the virtuoso of the tribe,'[151] a magician of speaking and singing who lured her audience 'into her imaginative world with a torrent of words and mesmerizing action.'[152] She moved her head, torso and arms for expressive purposes, and exploited her expressive vocal qualities for speaking, chanting and singing. Those of her young charges who managed to remain awake around the evening fire, participated by means of short chanted and sung responses.

Scheub remarks in this regard that narrative, as moral law, is characterised by 'emotional, sentient involvement' rather than rational experience.[ii] Walton[153] explains that participation in storyworlds involves

> imagining about ourselves as well as about the characters and situation of the fiction – but not just imagining that such and such is true of ourselves. We imagine doing things, experiencing things, feeling in certain ways. We bring much of our actual selves, our real-life beliefs and attitudes and personalities to our imaginative experiences, and we stand to learn in the process.[iii]

Canonici[154] remarks that 'the simple participation in the live re-creation of a tale shows the child's readiness to be influenced, to be enthralled, and to be taken on a life journey, together with the characters that act in the story.' European fairy tales invoked 'wonder, marvel, admiration, or awe,'[155] while Shona *ngano*

> were a precious inheritance in the recital of which children were trained in imagination, feelings and humour as well as in language and moral sentiments (…) There was hardly any place for stories which were merely factual. The little community of children, who could not easily distinguish the real from the unreal (…) readily entered the world of fancy and make-believe.[156]

Finnegan[157] observes consequently that 'the bare words' of oral literature 'cannot be left to speak for themselves, for the simple reason that in the actual literary work so much else is necessarily and intimately involved.' This does not only implicate literary and social dimensions, but also performativity. It is therefore the objective of narratology to describe 'what is distinctive about narrative ways of worldmaking as opposed to other methods for using symbol systems to make and unmake worlds.'[158] Since song-stories are the 'synthesis of verbal narrative, body movement, vocal dramatics, and song (…) analyses must encompass all elements of production'[159]

Emotional engagement with experiences and events in *ngano* is effected by the spoken, chanted and sung articulation of specific, evocative experiences (core images). Some motifs generate awareness of social and natural threats. They involve ogres and wild animals, and depict flight and pursuit.[iv] Those who disobey ancestral norms tumble into pools and suffer spiritual affliction.[v] Refusing or neglecting to perform prescribed roles is punished by (metaphorical) death,[vi] social exclusion[vii] and divorce.[viii]

Participants are lured into storyworlds by means of two interrelated techniques of enchantment, namely dramatic presentation and participation

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[i] *'Vha ḓivhe uri hezwi zwine nda zwi lidza ndi uri vhone vha tshi zwi pfa. Vha tou pfa u nga ndi raisi vha khou i l̂a nga lebula.Vha khou l̂a nice-nice-nice-nice.'*

[ii] Scheub (1975:16, 173). Blacking (1969:220) notes similarly that the emotional appeal of initiation is generally more important than its cultural details.

[iii] Schmid (2010:30) explains that 'the absence of a direct relationship between text and extra-textual world does not, in any way, mean that the fictive world is irrelevant for the reader or, indeed, even that it is less relevant than the real world. On the contrary, the fictive can engage with the innertextual referents, e.g. characters and their actions, as with real, individual, concrete entities, even when s/he is aware of their fictivity.'

[iv] 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3),'The dancing lions' (2.1.1) and 'The dancing mice' (2.1.3).

[v] See 'Good and evil' (2.2.2), 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2), 'The pot of trouble'(2.6.3) and 'The young men in the cave' (2.12.1).

[vi] 'The wife in the baobab' (2.11.2) and 'The dancing mice' (2.1.3).

[vii] 'The broken water pot' (2.9.2) and 'A man refuses to marry' (2.3.3).

[viii] 'Marriage' (2.8.2) and 'We do not pound' (2.17.1).

(box 12 & 13). These techniques are evident in recordings, as well as transcriptions of the stories and their songs. They are also discussed in the annotations of stories.

1.5.3 Ambiguity and negotiation

The notion of *ngano* as 'small laws' may appear to condense and unite, resolve ambiguity, and 'deliver answers that lay further inquiry into past and identity to rest.'[160] However, while status is rigidly enforced in Elelwani Singo's 'Tortoise and Duiker' (2.3.5), it cannot simply be abstracted to other stories. Teverson[161] warns against generalising the political dynamics of fairy tales, noting that their engagement with power relations is context-dependent.

'The python-healer' (2.1.2) is a popular local variation of the universal theme of sibling rivalry. A youngest son surpasses his older brothers by carrying a fearful, magical python home to heal his ailing father. He is the only son possessing the courage, spiritual potency and musical skill (singing) to control the snake. He rises to adulthood and takes his place in history. From this perspective, the story offers a template of ideal personality to the young, while perhaps reminding adults of the responsibilities attendant on their status.

But the story offers another perspective too. Abhorring the cowardice of his elder sons, the father disinherits them. This contradicts the custom of succession according to seniority. However, images depicting emergence frequently call for reflection on norms and the possibility of mobility. The portrayal of boys and young men with exceptional skills commonly engage conventional identity constructs.[i] And this is not mere make-believe: Du Plessis[162] points out that men from non-ruling families were historically able to rise to positions of influence because of special qualities they exhibited.

The identities of *ngano* actants as such are 'neither locked into stability nor drifting through constant change but (are) multiple, contradictory, and distributed over time and place, held together contextually and locally.' This ambivalence is shared by European fairy tales, if not all narrative folklore,[ii] which tend to normalise patriarchy, seniority and other specific power relations.[163] However, they are not coherent and uncontested legal codes since they articulate negotiation and contingency. *Ngano* similarly are a poetics of potential transformation that engage their own status as ancestral law. Like other forms of Venda oral art,[164] they address the balance of power, 'that unwritten social contract on which all social action is based.'[165]

Bruner notes in this regard that ruptures of normative behaviour in narrative scripts 'are often highly conventional.'[166] In other words, canonicity and breach are mutually defining, and worldmaking in *ngano* cannot be reduced to laws of simple cause and consequence. They are a space for moral reflection rather than iron-clad rules, an 'inherently imperfect mode of knowledge, which produces gaps as it fills them.'[167] They resound intriguingly with certain qualities of modernist consciousness: absurdity, irony, conflicting truths and social alienation. These qualities, it seems, may not require specific spatio-temporal conditions. All societies continuously grapple with the need for broadly shared morals, and how and by whom they are defined.

The structural symmetry and satisfying plot closures in stories like 'The python-healer' (2.1.2) and 'Dzwee's journey' (3.1.4) are therefore resistant to interpretative closure.[168] *Ngano* are 'genuinely processual and always incomplete,' involving 'unstructurings, with their ever-evolving energies tending to no goal.'[169] This also explains why their memorial form in certain respects remains a resource for cultural negotiation.[170]

Negotiation in *ngano* mainly involves gender, seniority and political power. Zipes remarks in this regard that fairy tales 'knowingly play upon a scale of memorable and notable motifs, conventions, and topoi to engage the audience in a dialogue.'[171] Xhosa *ntsomi*[172] accordingly feature 'the younger, the weaker, the insignificant, the slower,' and Shona *ngano*[173] the 'underprivileged' and those who lack influence.[iii]

Female *ngano* performers explained to Le Roux that their stories speak of 'our lives, our suffering.'[174] *Ngano* abound with violent, primordial images that can be related in certain respects to ethnographic descriptions of their violent subjugation.[175] This correlates with the actual incidence of domestic violence

[i] See e.g. 'A hero learns a lesson' (Kruger, 2014:131-133).

[ii] 'Here, indeed, is the basic paradox of folklore, that while it plays a vital role in transmitting and maintaining the institutions of a culture and in forcing the individual to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose upon him.' (Dundes, 1965:298.)

[iii] 'The hero's ancestral social lowliness is indispensable for the polar tension of fairy tales.' (Rohrich, 1986:8.)

portrayed by Munyadziwa Matamela in 'My mother and father' (2.24.1). At the same time, the demise of the unfortunate woman in the baobab tree ('The wife in the baobab'; 2.11.2) is to be interpreted as a hyperbole. Although the story underscores a wife's duty to serve and respect her husband, the mischievous complaint that she was 'stingy with beer' hints at comedy rather than tragedy.

In contrast, several stories in this collection[i] portray the authority of women, often starkly. This is particularly evident in 'The pot of trouble' (2.6.3) in which a mother-in-law affirms control over her son's wife. As pointed out, women occupy positions of authority in various social domains.[176] The image in 'I am a rooster' (2.4.1) of a rejected woman who poisons her husband and co-wives may be hyperbolic, but it correlates with numerous anecdotes about women who, in their roles as cooks and herbalists, may resort to poisoning to settle serious domestic disputes.

Power relations in *ngano* therefore emerge from the narrativised intersection of multiple, situated identities. This is evident in the idealised role of grandmothers as loving yet strict caregivers, a role many continue to perform (fig. 16). 'Bird watchers' (2.7.1, 2.16.1) appears to be a story of distant origin now largely forgotten.[ii] Its setting is familiar, namely the extended family. The grandmother is not cast in her ideal, benign role, but as a cruel witch who exploits a naïve grandson. However, she is not treated without sympathy. While she may be experienced and wise, she is also vulnerable, and requires support as she ages. Her occasional perverse behaviour may be rooted in deep fear of aging, illness and dependence. She is the inverse image of her grandchildren who rise to maturity and prominence as she weakens and her voice fades into silence.[177]

Such ambivalence and reciprocity also is a feature of ruling power. A common saying points out that 'the chief is his subjects.'[iii] Kirkaldy[178] explains that the traditional ruler

> cannot except with extreme difficulty make any alterations in these age-old laws and customs and methods of procedure (…) while in the religious sphere of ceremonial taboo, ritual, and whatnot, he is absolutely powerless to make any alteration whatsoever except in the most judicious manner (…) In the political sphere too, not only is he hemmed in with restrictions (…) In order to get anything done, he must first assure himself of the cooperation of his (councillors) and (headmen), of his (court), and in fact of every one of real importance in the tribe.

That traditional leaders, like men who head large households,[iv] are themselves subject to role prescription, is portrayed in 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1). This is superficially a coming-of-age narrative that in fact conceals a cornucopia of meanings related to land occupation, fertility and religion. It describes a traditional leader murdering the mother of a young man who has killed a python, the deity responsible for rain. The leader is the intermediary between the deity and his community, and his murderous act seems to be committed in a fit of panic, perhaps motivated by deep fear of the mystical forces of nature, the power of shared belief, and social survival. Like the traditional leader in 'The head is rotten' (2.4.2), this story portrays no consequence for the transgressor since *ngano* restrain rather than subvert those in power.[179]

Ambiguous closure is evident in deeply poignant stories like 'We do not pound' (2.17.1), 'The man who refused to marry' (2.3.3), 'The bees in the millet' (2.14.2) and 'My mother and father' (2.24.1). The first of these stories is particularly meaningful because it was told by Marubini Kale, the narrator of 'Child of the law' (2.17.2), with its binary structure and clear outcome.

'We do not pound' is a familiar story woven around the image of arranged marriage. Typically, the husband's family fails to observe some legal clause, and the marriage is dissolved after conflict. The protagonist is the newly-married wife who is usually presented as naïve rather than 'disobedient.' Invoking a familiar, sardonic view of her as 'one of those spoilt women' who faint when required to cook, the narrator refocuses on her young husband,

[i] 'Cannibals' (2.3.1), 'Child of the Law' (2.17.2), 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2),'The wisdom of Hare' (2.3.7), 'The magic tree' (2.14.1), 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1) and 'Brothers' (2.6.1).

[ii] It was told by two very elderly narrators, one of whom (Mutshekwa Mudau) passed away shortly after documentation.

[iii] *'Khosi ndi vhalanda'* or *'Khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda'* ('A chief is chief because of his subjects').

[iv] The saying '"a father has many off-spring" points to the fact that he often heads a large family and cannot always pay sufficient attention to the troubles of individual wives. Familiarity also undermines his need for impartiality and he therefore is most careful not to show any favouritism.' (Kruger, 2014:12.)

who is usually a peripheral actant. Here he is an orphan rejected by his grandmother and aunt, and his marriage is therefore not arranged. This means he has no sure legal recourse in the conflict with his wife.

The story simply ends as follows: ‘That young man started to sulk. He left, he left for the veld. He got there and herded the cattle. After herding, he returned home. He returned during late afternoon. He left the house again because of his unhappiness.’

The same unresolved bleakness also characterises the other stories. ‘My mother and father,’ the only first-person narrative in this collection, comprises six lines only. Its brevity is exceptional yet not unmotivated, given its autobiographical origin. Its theme is perennial family conflict, specifically spousal violence. From the perspective of the narrator, the story does not require any development or resolution since it presupposes ‘default’[180] or ‘implicit real-world knowledge’[181] of this common experience among its textual community, namely family members, friends and neighbours ‘organised around the common understanding of a script.’[182] The story therefore has multiple implied closures which reside in the imagination of participants.

Fig. 15. Storage rondavel
Folovhodwe, 2009

Box 11 Oral narratives in southern Africa

The **Shona** term *ngano* 'is etymologically linked to *zano* or *mano*, which means advice.'[183] Shona children 'are not allowed to grumble; and evasions and excuses are not accepted.' Speaking to virtue, 'chicanery and vice,' *ngano* are intended to promote 'good behaviour, hospitality, generosity, self-denial, self-sacrifice and humility,' as well as care for orphans and the infirm, and respect for adults.

Tsonga narratives teach the value of 'beauty, bravery, diligence, friendship, co-operation, generosity, obedience, honesty, humility and self-confidence.'[184]

Intsomi are **Xhosa** stories 'that correct the mistakes that are found in human behaviour.'[185]

'*Ntsomi* productions are objectifications of ideas, the most pervasive of which is the quest for order within the human community.'[186]

A **Tswana** story[187] shows 'that someone who does not listen to his parents will be sorry. From that day Tlhokatsebe started learning to listen to the words of his parents.' *('Tlhokatsebe ba mo ruta gore ngwana yô o sa utlweng molaô wa bagolo a tla utlwa wa manông. Go tloga ka letsatsi lêo Tlhokatsebe o nê a simolola go ithuta go rêêtsa lefoko la bagolo.')*

'Then the girl said: "I am dead, I am dead, I am dead, I am dead. I did not listen to instructions."' *('Ngwanyana a ba a re: 'Ke šule, ke šule, ke šule, ke šule. Ha ka ba ka o utlwa molao.')*

Zulu folktales 'teach children to have a sense of duty and responsibility from a tender age. The Zulu proverb puts this succinctly:

'Ubudoda abukhulelwa' ('One needs not to be old in order to be a man or to conduct oneself like a man').'[188]

The Zulu folktale tradition does not 'encourage rebellion or even disrespect for social norms (…) However, leniency in the application of the law is suggested: once the idea of punishment and retribution has been accepted (…) society must be prepared to give the sinner a second chance.'[189]

Sotho 'folktales that incorporate morals serve to inculcate in the young attitudes and principles such as diligence and filial piety, as well as to ridicule such qualities as laziness and rebelliousness.'[190]

Several stories collected by Postma stress the importance of obedience.[191] A story entitled 'Mothemelle' features disobedient, immature and jealous girls, one of whom is described as having a 'hard head.'[192]

Box 12. Dramatic presentation in *ngano* songs

'The pot of trouble' (2.6.3) describes the punishment of a young woman who uncovers a forbidden pot belonging to her mother-in-law. Narrator Salfina Mashiliye starts in a soft, slow-spoken manner. However, as the woman uncovers the pot, Mashiliye's narrative pace and emotional intensity rise to fever pitch. She also sways her torso to demonstrate how the woman attempts to evade the spirits who emerge from the pot and harass her.

'The young men in the cave' (2.12.1) subordinates content to form. The story dramatises a historical event involving a party of young men who flee their village during a skirmish. They are forced to hide in a sacred, forbidden cave, where they are overcome by malignant spiritual forces.

These events are described rudimentally only, and the story is not action-driven. Instead, narrator Nyawasedza Mudau elects to portray the emotional response of the mother of one of the men. Her narration starts slowly, and with short sentences. It speeds up and flows over the audience response. The rapid delivery of repeated core phrases dramatises the mother's fear and despair.

'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1) is a well-known *ngano*, but few performances are as riveting as that by Tshamano Mashavha. The story describes the kidnapping of a baby from her negligent mother. While describing the actions of the mother and the kidnappers, Mashavha engages her participants by dramatising the emotional reaction of the mother. She describes how the woman appeals in song to the kidnappers to return her child. However, there is no response, and she starts to realise the consequence of her negligence. The narrator portrays her shock by means of a notable decrease in vocal intensity, dynamics and tempo, until all sound dies away, and the story ends.

'The woman who ate python eggs' (2.20.1) describes a man who collects the eggs of a python from its underground lair. His young son guards the entrance to the lair, and sings to warn his father when the snake approaches. The man finally attempts to retrieve eggs from the deepest recesses of the lair, and does not hear his son's warning. The child starts to sing and cry anxiously.[i] The singing is louder and at a higher pitch (a minor third) to draw his father's attention.

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[i] Crying as well as singing is indicated by the verb *lila*.

Box 13. Participation in *ngano* songs

Listeners participate in performance by means of specific, fixed responses during narration, chanting and singing. The meanings of core images and motifs, and the emotions they evoke, are underscored and intensified by means of repeated musical phrases and units. This is evident in the chant in 'Child of the law' (2.17.2). The emphasis in both the call and response is on the word *mpilivhili* which represents the notion of undesired, unrestrained sexuality and fertility:

(Narrator chants)
Nde nda mpilivhili!
I am going to a hot and dangerous place!
(Chorus chants)
Mpilivhili!
A hot and dangerous place!

'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2) warns against disrespecting ancestral norms, and describes how a boy flees the irate spirit of an old woman. Typical of the old hag in *ngano*, she has fearsome teeth. The narrator chants 'kekedzhulu!' (an onomatopoeia of cutting), to which the chorus responds, 'I am cutting with my big tooth!' *('Nda lukekedzhula nga lu si na gwaṋda!')*

The narrator subsequently sings, 'titimbulu!' (the sound of wading through a river), and the chorus responds, 'I am wading through the river with my big tooth!' *('Nda lutitimbula nga lu si na gwaṋda!')*

The chorus response in 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3) instructs girls to be aware of men harbouring possible malevolent intentions towards them: 'Tshangalume the monster!' *('Dada Tshangalume!')*.

'The head is rotten' (2.4.2) in turn is an injunction against poor leadership. An incompetent traditional leader is conceptualised as a snake with a rotten head, and the chorus line commands, 'Cry-cry, hack the snake's head off!' *('Lile-lile, samuninga-muninga!')*

'The child of the rat and the snake' (2.5.3) invokes the distinction between benign human and malignant animal existence. Accordingly, the children of rats and snakes are evil. The images of the snake and rat merge in the chorus response into an even more powerful figure, namely that of a snake swallowing a rat *('Thaa!')*.

1.6 Initiation and storytelling

The relationship between seniority and moral instruction portrayed in 'Child of the law' (2.17.2) is at the root of initiation ritual as well as story-telling. In 'Tortoise and Duiker' (2.3.5), large animals scold small Tortoise with his short legs:

> No! Now, you are arguing with us, saying all these things (…) Hey, this one likes to tell lies (boast). Now, I will not waste time with him. I will grab him, take off his shell and eat meat! (…) We keep on saying, 'Leave our things (seniority) to us!' You are arrogant. We are taking off your shell!

Stayt[i] remarks that 'the Venda have a rigid code of etiquette (…) Superiors and elders are treated with respect and reverence, the chief and his sister with obsequious adoration, while the ordinary everyday formalities between husband and wife and their children and friends are strictly defined and rigidly adhered to.'

The role of the older adult as initiation school instructor and expert storyteller merges in the conclusion of 'Child of the law'[ii] as well as a remark by a *domba* instructor to initiates: 'These are the *milayo* which I have told you, and it's because of my knowledge of them that I am called from one district to another. They call me for the *milayo* which I know so well. Now, listen to me, girls!'[193]

Blacking[iii] explains that women have 'considerable power and almost undisputed authority in certain fields of religious duty, home management, marriage and divorce negotiations, the preparation of girls for marriage and the control of young mothers (…) As women grow older they become more powerful and respected and play a leading role in ritual and ceremonial (life).'[iv]

The inculcation of seniority is therefore a prime objective of girls' initiation. Blacking was told that strenuous physical activities *(ndayo)* during initiation 'make the girls suffer and honour the old ones. They reinforce the patterns of seniority. That is the lesson they teach.'[194] Initiates had to fold their arms, hold their head down and conduct themselves passively: 'It is they who are taken from their homes and secluded, stripped naked and thrashed, pinched, forced to cry and feel humble, soaked in water, deprived of food and the warmth of a fire (…) All this is designed to show that a child is growing up.'[195]

Although *ngano* narration was a common skill, its performance predominantly featured older adult females.[v] Narrators Elelwani Singo (2.3) and Mutshekwa Mudau (2.16) explained that the frequent pairing of grandmothers and grandchildren as actants is a corollary of their narrator-audience and caretaker/educator-dependant relationship (fig. 16).[vi] This relationship is articulated in chanted and sung call-and-response patterns, as well as the interrogation within the storyworld of young people by older women or animals that represent ancestral authority.[vii] The older female

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[i] Stayt (1931:157). Hammond-Tooke (1981:150) similarly remarks: 'Kgaga social life is bounded by categories. There are clear rules that lay down the appropriate behaviour between men and women, political authorities and subjects, between kinsmen, affines, neighbours and members of age regiments. Age, sex and genealogical seniority are important principles of classification: it is important that people know their station. Confusion of categories and roles would lead to chaos and, in a very definite sense, these categories and rules are Kgaga society.'

[ii] 'This is what happens to you if you do not listen! A person must listen to the law!'

[iii] Blacking (1969:4, 151). Hammond-Tooke (1981:9) similarly notes that it is with the bride-wealth of a sister that a man is able to marry and set up a homestead. 'Men often refer to their cattle-linked sister as "owner" of their homestead, or as *moagi wa motse*, "the establisher of the home" (...) She is *rakgadi*, the kinsman singled out by society as being above all others entitled to respect.'

[iv] Scheub (1975:5) similarly explains that a Xhosa woman is 'the single most important influence in the lives of her young children.'

[v] Dederen (2012:78) describes how he collected 'a sample of more than hundred folktales (…) in the Vhembe district between 1995 and 1998, and again between 2001 and 2003 (…) Most of the narrators and discussants were female pensioners.' The European fairy tale similarly is 'semiotically a female art' (Rowe (1986:63, 71). The origin of the term 'fairy tale' is rooted in the female roles of 'birthing, nursing, prophesying, and spinning.' As such, fairy tales were 'not simply tales told about fairies; implicitly they are tales told by women.' Furthermore, women's 'reign' started at night after their 'lords and masters' had retired. 'Within the shared esprit of (…) late-evening communes, women not only practiced their domestic crafts, they also fulfilled their role as transmitters of culture through the vehicle of (…) tales.'

[vi] This, Singo remarked, is born out by the fact that grandfathers rarely feature in *ngano*.

[vii] See e.g. 'Child of the law' (2.17.2). Scheub (1975:173) explains that 'proper social

actant in *ngano* is often portrayed as guardian, spiritual advisor and religious authority, instructor of sexual mores and marriage counsellor. The identity of wily Hare is even integrated with that of the wise older woman in 'The wisdom of Hare' (2.3.7) where the little trickster is respectfully referred to as *'makhulu washu'* ('our granny').

The authority of the older woman is affirmed hyperbolically in 'A man without proper legs'[196] in which an old woman remarks to her daughter-in-law, 'You ate meat with your husband (…) You gave me entrails only. I paid him back by letting him be killed.'

'Cannibals' (2.3.1) by Elewani Singo in turn describes how children go to collect water. Their grandmother warns them, 'My grandchildren, there are cannibals there at the river. Watch out!' She affirms her inherited role as wise female guardian by informing them, 'Old women long ago used to tell us that there are cannibals who sing like that.'

The song explains that young girls are naïve, and that this justifies the need for obedience. The core image of the story is embedded in the lyrics which warn young girls against naivety *('A vha na maano'* – 'They are not wise'). The grandmother asks, 'Do you know that song my grandchildren?' They promptly answer affirmatively, and are told that they should sing it. In other words, song is law, which is transmitted by means of emotional involvement in performance.

The two young female protagonists in 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1) similarly encounter the unknown. They remark, 'Hey, we are lost man,' and ask, 'How will we find our way?' Their lack of direction refers obviously to their immaturity and innocence. Directions to their adulthood and citizenship are provided by the frog, a conduit of ancestral morality, who tells them, 'You will not know where to go. You will not know the things you see (...) I want to teach you. Do you know that I can punish you properly? (…) So, I have given you the law.'

The girls are models of obedience. They grow up and find their place in life: 'She walked with her basket and her walking stick. She ended up at the place she was supposed to stay.'

The authority of older *ngano* storytellers is augmented by their performance skills. Blacking[197] remarks that

> there are a few ways in which a Venda may rise above the station in life that is determined by his age or rank (…) The greatest honour seems to be accorded to those who can manipulate words and sentences, to the singer who knows or can improvise a great variety of lines in a song (…) Knowledge of words, of formal language, is magical power; this knowledge alone is often sufficient to impress people, and it need have no practical application.

The recording of 'Good and evil' (2.2.2) shows narrator Nyamukamadi Ndou interrupting the first performance of the song. She instructs co-researcher Mathuvhelo Mavhetha who struggles to grasp the chorus phrase: 'No, you are missing it. Listen. Just listen while I sing alone. You will hear, you will hear. I know how to sing. I sing very well. You must respond.'[i]

Blacking[198] elaborates on the norm of seniority, and explains that

> the main purpose of traditional Venda public education is to prepare the average Venda man and woman for a style of life that everyone should and could pursue (…) It is concerned with etiquette, behaviour towards seniors, child-birth, sex in marriage, and other cultural techniques designed to maintain good relations between people. Above all, they should be polite, neighbourly and kind (…) Public education was designed to prepare people for life by emphasizing Venda techniques of human relationships, and by forming associations of young people of the same age, regardless of their rank, family and clan affiliations. After puberty, boys and girls attended separate (initiation) schools (…) in which the instruction centred on the duties and etiquette of marriage.

While the deeply allegorical nature of *ngano* was evidently not ubiquitously understood, these stories nevertheless introduced young children to metaphorical worldmaking. Hofmeyr[199] explains that gender identity is embedded in the very nature of Ndebele story-telling, and that

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responses within Xhosa traditional communities are idealized and dramatized in production, and the need for order is fulfilled by the structural patterns which define and support custom.'

[i] *'Hai, vha khou misa. Vha ḓo pfa. Vha sokou thetshelesa fhedzi ndi thome hu nn̂e. Vha ḓo pfa,vha ḓo pfa. Nn̂e ndi a imba. Ndi imba nga maanḓa. A vhulende.'*

Fig. 16. Narrating grandmothers

Rosina Madabeni
and granddaughter Vhahangwele
Muswodi, 2014

Nthuseni Mudau and granddaughter Mashudu
Mabvete, 2012

Sara Matshusa and grandson Piet
Folovhodwe, 2009

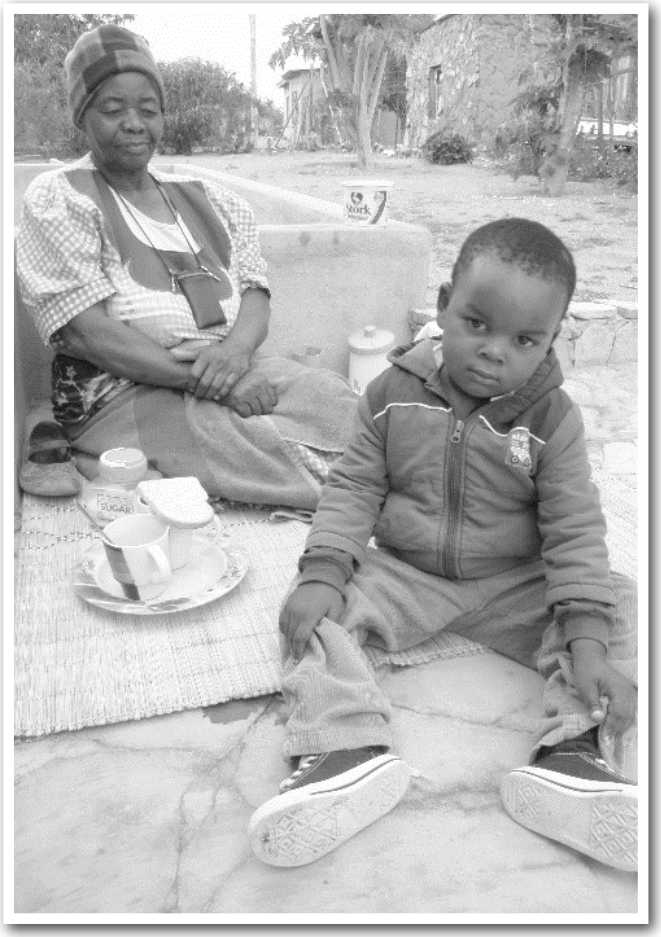

Fig. 16. Narrating grandmothers (continued)

Nyamukamadi Ndou with granddaughter Meisie and grandson Mashudu
Folovhodwe, 2013

Mashudu Mathala and grandson
Folovhodwe, 2010

male storytelling, for example, is often seen as a stage of male socialisation that prefaces initiation, circumcision and marriage (…) Much the same goes for female storytelling. It, too, belongs to a parabola of experience that passes through childhood, initiation, marriage and childbirth (…) The skill of telling this type of story is seen as essential to the female craft of socialising very young children, both male and female.

Ngano accordingly share certain symbolic operations with girls' initiation, which comprises three extended stages.[i] They transmit particular values as well as information about physical development and fertility. *Ngano* also display a significant degree of narrative connectedness[200] with *mahundwane* children's play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3) and *malende* choral dance-songs (fig. 108; 3.3), as well as children's songs, riddles, proverbs and *muzika wa sialala* contemporary dance-songs (1.2).

Dederen[201] explains that the conventional anthropological view of storytelling as entertainment, and initiation as a preeminent domain for cultural analysis, overlooks the actual pedagogical continuity between these practices:

> On closer scrutiny, the fantasy world of folklore also mediated serious social issues from the real world, while rites of passage featured a strong and functional element of play. Ultimately, both social realms were geared towards the realisation of marriage (…) Therefore, the complementarity of the sexes was the single most important theme in the symbolic discourse of folklore. It also featured centrally in the dances, mimes, songs, rites and ceremonies of ritual pedagogy (…) Indeed, a more intimate reading of many stories reveals how both the subject matter and expressive style resemble the form and content of the pedagogic experience in girls' initiation schools. The technique of interactive response (question-answer; song-chorus) is used both by the narrator of tales and the instructor of the initiation lodge, in order to enchant and instruct the audience. A more substantial analogy concerns the general mood of the tales and instructions: a curious mix of play and mystery. Now the temper appears to be light, the next moment it becomes heavy hearted. In the same fashion the discourse of the instructor/ narrator varies between informal, almost casual conversation and deep, formalized speech.

Blacking[202] argues that the content of initiation expresses the 'dismay' and 'resistance' of young people to growing up. Hammond-Tooke[203] in turn explains that children grow up and enter the uneasy period of adolescenthood when their ambiguous position between childhood and adulthood leads to the tensions and irritations of the high-spirited young *masoboro* (uncircumcised young boys). Daughters marry and involve their parents in the tricky relationship with the strangers who are now in-laws, and daughters-in-law invade the erstwhile privacy of the elementry family.

Personal interviews with *domba* instructors and initiates at the villages of Tshaulu, Gaba and Mukula[204] revealed that men preferred to marry initiated women because they 'knew *milayo*.' Girls who attended initiation were 'respectful' and 'under the jurisdiction of their parents.'[205] They were 'keen to

Fig. 17. *Domba* initiation
Gaba, 1986

[i] Blacking (1969:3-4). These stages are *vhusha*, *musevhetho* and *domba* (3.3).

show that they are mature and want to learn the laws of the school. Those who do not want to go to initiation are disobedient to their parents.'[206]

Blacking[207] explains that *milayo* in initiation 'emphasize the value of legitimate procreation and institutionalized motherhood.' They tell girls to 'look only on the face of the man who acquired rights over you (…) 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."'

Many *ngano* portray adolescent sexuality and courtship. Marubini Kale's 'Child of the law' (2.17.2) is exemplary in this regard. Its core image is that of unregulated fertility as a 'hot and dangerous place.' The narrator explained that the two young sisters in her story must learn the ability to distinguish between appearance and reality, and that it is the responsibility of elderly women to teach them judgement *(maano)* about men, sexuality and childbearing. Several other stories[i] also portray situations of sexual impropriety, while 'Child of the law' and 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1) prepare girls for responsible motherhood. The latter story is very common, and was also documented by Stayt.[208]

Narrator Sara Matshusa[209] of Muswodi (fig. 16) tells in this regard of a young man who wanted to marry: 'Now, they left for the homestead of the girl's family. But that young man was being cheated by the girl because she already had another suitor she had decided to marry (…) "Hey, hey, is this girl in love with a lion?[ii] No, no, get out, get out, get out!" That was when both of them were chased away.' The 'Bull-husband' (2.22.1) in turn describes how a young woman is sexually attracted to a man she then marries. She gives birth to a child after which the couple separate. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that 'she only wanted a baby, not a husband.'

In her study of initiation practices during the 1990s, Jeannerat[210] identifies the persistent view that wives are expected to show respect to certain superiors, who 'have the power and responsibility to take decisions over (their) life.' Older women were 'of the impression that young women no longer greeted and respected their elders in the proper manner.' They 'were sensitively aware that younger women were not keeping these norms and were withdrawing themselves from senior authority.' They therefore 'actively reflected in various ways on the right and proper forms of behaviour and relationships defined in terms of "the olden things," (specifically) the opposition and tension between the imagined past and perceived present.'

At the root of memory retention in *ngano* as well as certain categories of popular music, is the belief that certain ancestral norms and values remain indispensable. They are principally respect for self and others (especially older people) and 'good manners,' particularly in relation to sexual mores. This is evident in plots, lyrics, meta-narrative as well as explanations of stories and songs, and personal and communal views about contemporary experience (boxes 15-20).

Initiation and storytelling also instructs girls about their spousal role. While the familiar story entitled 'The snake-husband' (2.5.2) is not actually performed during initiation, an instructor explained that it 'goes with the *domba*.'[iii]

Ngano correlate in this regard with classical European fairy tales that are 'metaphorical accounts of how proper moral and ethical behavior can bring about happiness for young ladies.' They depict how girls 'should domesticate themselves, support men, (demonstrate) industriousness and good manners,' and express contentment with their lives and those in authority over them.[iv]

A *vhusha* initiation song tells a girl that 'when she first marries she is expected to work hard (…) A young wife may have only a little sleep, and then she must get up and pound maize.'[211] She is under the jurisdiction of her mother-in-law, and has to show restraint. She is told, 'You must treat your husband's mother well and give her food. You must treat your husband well and cook for him every morning.'[212] This is evident in several stories[v] that portray the induction of a young wife into her husband's family. They describe her status and duties, as well as the emotional challenges of her marital relationship.

Stories that prepare young people for marriage may feature Baboon, who is a metaphor for 'wild, harmful and irresponsible behaviour.'[213] Such behaviour

[i] See 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3), 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4), 'The python-lover' (2.2.4) and 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1).

[ii] Lion is symbolic of a man who is only interested in a sexual relationship.

[iii] Eberhardt (1958:16-17). See the discussion of 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1).

[iv] Rohrich (1986:6), Teverson (2013:59-60) and Zipes (2006:77). The familiar *bildungsroman* similarly shows young actants learning 'to fit into the world through various experiences' (Burger, 2018:97).

[v] 'The snake-husband' (2.5.2), 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1) and 'We do not pound' (2.17.1).

regretfully reveals itself after a number of years of marriage only, and comes as an unpleasant surprise to an unsuspecting spouse.[i] 'The wife in the baobab' (2.11.2) is a similarly humorous story that prepares girls for the predictability of minor marital disagreements.

As 'My mother and father' (2.24.1) shows, many *ngano*, however, address more serious marital issues, the most common of which is infidelity. This is portrayed by the motif of snakes, frogs and other wild animals as extra-marital lover.[ii]

Pools and rivers are fundamental domains of spirituality that symbolise states of moral purity and transformation.[iii] They once were central to daily life, as this is where people gathered to fetch water and wash, and *ngano* plots commonly depict clandestine riverine encounters. 'Marriage' (2.8.2) depicts a woman who is instructed to fetch water uninhabited by frogs. The moral pollution that 'frog water' *(maḓi a tshidula)* symbolises has made an ironical return in contemporary life, as the inadequate provision of water sometimes forces disgruntled inhabitants of Folovhodwe to utilise muddy water from the Nwanedi river (box 14).

As pointed out, 'I am a rooster' (2.4.1) in turn describes how a rejected wife takes revenge on her unjust husband by poisoning him. Although presumably intended hyperbolically, such action is often described in anecdotes about women who attempt to resolve marital strife by means of poison.[iv]

Many *ngano* self-evidently depict conflict related to growing up in the family. They address sibling rivalry[v] and parent/grandparent-child relations.[vi] 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile' (2.5.1) shows how a teenage girl learns her role in the family. This involves her spiritual growth, and the story casts family relations in the mould of ancestral authority, expressed by action in and around a sacred pool.[vii]

Generally, *ngano* show children developing physical prowess, mental acuity, emotional maturity and moral values. 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2) portrays a boy evading an irate spirit by means of reason and physical ability (running away and climbing trees). 'The girls in the baobab'[214] in turn shows how a group of girls outwits an old man who makes sexual advances to them.

At the same time, *ngano* portray these capacities as unfolding in accordance with gender identities. Budding physical ability in boys is partly geared towards defence and attack ('The young man and the snake'; 2.15.1). Boys mostly act individually to fend for themselves and protect the weak. In some instances this individuality is related to their role as herdsmen.

Girls in turn are commonly portrayed as naïve and vulnerable in relation to sexual violation.[viii] They are often presented in a family setting or in the company of other girls, usually in relation to their chore of fetching water or firewood. Although they may outwit their adversaries, they often require the help of wise elders or spiritual entities. As indicated above, ritual emphasises the importance of institutionalised motherhood. In other words, the portrayal of girls as vulnerable, and therefore requiring vigilance, serves the one of the fundamental principles of social organisation.

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[i] See e.g. 'The man in the fur coat' (Kruger, 2014:116-121).

[ii] 'The man who scratched a lion' (2.21.1) and 'The woman who ate python eggs' (2.20.1).

[iii] This is the reason why a group of Xhosa trance dancers participating in the Paris Autumn Festival (1989) turned down an invitation to an outing on the Seine river.

[iv] An elderly female narrator from Tshiungani explained how her husband deserted her some twelve years previously, only to be poisoned by the woman he had gone to live with (interview, 3 October 2012).

[v] 'Brothers' (2.6.1) and 'The python-healer' (2.1.2).

[vi] 'Bird watchers' (2.7.1, 2.16.1), 'Cannibals' (2.3.1) and 'The magic tree' (2.14.1).

[vii] Loubser (1988:306) explains that 'the Venda see the public assembly area, or *khoro*, at the entrance to the *musanda* (chiefly homestead), as a (sacred) pool. The chief's concern with the *khoro* is primarily to see that his followers live and reproduce according to Venda norms.'

[viii] See e.g. the following stories in Kruger & Le Roux (2007): 'Father on the footpath,' 'The cannibal's tooth,' 'The lion who hunter his daughter' and 'Things are falling apart.'

Fig. 18. At the communal tap
Muswodi, 2011 (above) and Folovhodwe, 2016 (below)

Box 14. Frog water

Folovhodwe, winter 2016. Villagers are converging on communal taps from all directions. The scene is deceptively festive. Water containers come in a multitude of sizes, shapes and colours: white, yellow, blue, green, purple, red.

An old man is slowly carting a water container in a wheelbarrow up a steep, rocky slope. A boy is labouring behind a three-wheeled water cart. Women and girls carry heavy containers on their head. The privileged transport their water on the back of pickup trucks.

There are several new neighbourhoods in Folovhodwe, and the reservoir on the hill behind the village is too small to supply the growing community. In addition, the reticulation system is inadequate. People believe that the contractor has absconded after completing a shoddy job.

Water trickles into pipes at any time of the day, and then for a few hours only. People must sometimes fetch water during the night. When the sun rises, the taps are dry. They must then drink *maḓi a tshidula* (frog water) from the Nwanedi river.

A well-known *ngano* (‘Marriage’; 2.8.2) describes a woman searching for water untainted by frogs. Her quest symbolises moral pollution.

Folovhodwe, winter 2020. Matters are worse. There is water in the nearby Luphephe and Nwanedi dams, but almost nothing reaches homes and the local irrigation project. People are forced to pay R60 for 100 litres of water. They are bitter.

Fig. 19. Fetching water
Tsireledzi Kwinda (12) and Efa Ndou (10)
Folovhodwe, 2015

Fig. 20. Showing respect in *tshigombela*
Tshixwadza, 1991

Box 15. Seniority, norms and values[i]

Selina Mavhetha[215]
The reason old people have stopped telling stories is because children no longer vacate chairs for their elders.[ii]

Rosiena Magadani[216]
We old people knew very well as children that we had to speak to our elders on our knees. And these boys who sometimes get home after dark and knock to be let in: Is this what children do nowadays?

Mukondelei Mathunya[217]
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.

Martha Kwinda[218]
My church is the ZCC. We people of the church, we are worried about our young people who steal and drink. They have no jobs.

Lydia Matshusa[219]
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.

Marubini Kale
I will never forget how strict my parents were. We were not allowed to go to the centre of town. My parents were afraid that cars would run us over on the busy highway to Zimbabwe. We also were not allowed to go outside during the evening. We had to do chores in and around the house.

Zachary Tshamano (age 15)
There are too many young people here who steal and drink. They also smoke weed that others grow along the river and in the mountains. I believe bad education is responsible for bad behaviour. Local boys want to be hip-hop stars because they like their glamorous clothing. But they forget that their heroes also use drugs.

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[i] Quotations not referenced derive from biographical sketches in this collection.

[ii] Octogenarian Galfina Jafta of Murraysburg in the Karoo similarly explained that 'there no longer are adults and children. All are now equally old.' ('*Daar is nie meer grootmense en kinders nie. Almal is nou ewe groot.*') (Kruger, 2015:295.) Local poet Sina de Wee explained that parents and children sit together, 'smoking weed and drinking liquor from the same glass. That thing is ugly! Tomorrow that child does not call you mother, but you.' ('*Ouers en kinders sit en zol rook en drank drink uit een glaas uit. Daai ding is lelik! Môre sê daai kind nie vir jou ma nie. Daai kind sê vir jou jy en jou.*') (Kruger, 2015:307.)

Box 16. Teenage sexual mores

Aluwani Kwinda (age 19)
What is a problem for me is that Venda people no longer live like they did in the past. We do not respect each other like our ancestors did. The young often disrespect the elderly, and girls wear dresses that are too short.

Nyawasedza Mudau
We older people believe that young girls nowadays become pregnant because they do not go to initiation. Even fourteen-year olds have children. I was scolded at initiation and warned to stay away from boys.

Mutshekwa Mudau
We played *ndode* stone games, and danced *tshigombela* and *tshifasi* (3.3). *Tshifasi* is where you meet your beloved. But when we went on *bepha* journeys (3.3), girls and boys were separated quite strictly.

Sophia Magoro[220]
When a girl was at initiation school, she was controlled by older women. By the last day of the school she would be silent because she was scolded so often. After initiation she was not allowed to look her parents in the face. No. And she had become unusually quiet.

We were raised strictly. This mixing of boys and girls that makes a girl expect a baby: We did not know it. No, we were raised strictly. It never happened during those times that a boy and a girl stood chatting openly. "What are they talking about?" So people would wonder.[i]

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[i] Poet Sina de Wee of Murraysburg in the Karoo remarked of her youth that, 'If you were not married you could not lie on a bed with a man in your mother's house. We were not allowed to do at that time what children do nowadays (…) If you were engaged and living with your parents, you could sit and talk and do things over there, but not on a bed. Today's young people are not afraid. Not at all!' *('En as jy nie getróúd is nie, kan jy nie saam met 'n man in jou ma se huis op 'n bed lê nie. Ons kon nie daai tyd maak soos nou se kinders maak nie (…) As jy 'n huismeisie en verloof is, kan julle maar dóér sit en gesels en als, maar nie op 'n bed lê nie. Nou s'n is nie eers bang nie. Niks!')* (Kruger, 2015:286.)

Box 17. Teenage pregnancy

World War Two was followed by unemployment, landlessness and homelessness in the Vhembe district. 'Teenage pregnancies flourished under these conditions. The men who were involved simply paid nominal bridewealth of fifteen pounds or three oxen. This absolved them from any further responsibility towards the girl and her child.'[221] Jeannerat recently reported the perception among older people that 'young women frequently became pregnant and that their lovers, young schoolgoing men, did not accept responsibility for the pregnancy.'[222]

Learner pregnancies in South Africa are most prevalent in rural areas of the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces.[223] The latter had a pregnancy rate of approximately 6% in 2008 and 3% in 2010. High pregnancy rates were reported in specific schools in Vhembe district in 2018, and learners described the difficulties they experienced to combine child care with schooling.[224]

Pregnancies are predominant in areas marked by material deprivation. Other contributing factors include peer pressure, the availability of child support grants, ignorance 'and lack of initiation in schools to guide teenagers about their roles and responsibilities.' Teenage pregnancies in most cases cause tension in families.

The Limpopo Mirror[225] reported in 2018 that

> a group of 14 virgins (recently) received certificates as part of a Heritage Day celebration that was held at the Christ Worship Centre, Shayandima. A community member, Ms. Khodani Mudzanani, said they had decided to preserve their living heritage by honouring young girls who had been tested for virginity with certificates of appreciation. 'We are remembering our living heritage through wearing Tshivenda traditional attire such as *miṅwenda* (wrap-around skirts; fig. 22), and singing traditional songs and dances. Our young girls, who paraded in front of us, are real virgins who never had sexual intercourse,' said Mudzanani.
>
> She said that the girls had volunteered to be tested for virginity and were between 13 and 23 years of age. 'They are proud of their clean bodies and the Shayandima and surrounding communities are delighted.'
>
> According to Apostle Ramudzuli Lehangwa, the Vhavenda people must teach their children to preserve culture and tradition 'and we must let them to know that they are what they are because of their culture. We encourage other parents to send their children for this heritage and cultural event,' he added.
>
> According to Lehangwa, virginity testing also helps the young girls to abstain from sexual practices that result in teenage pregnancies. He added that part of virginity testing also motivated the young girls to concentrate on educational matters.
>
> One of the young girls who were tested for virginity, Sharon Mavhungu (23), said to be tested for virginity would help her to take pride in herself because sex before marriage was a sin and one needed to be proud of being a clean girl.

Box 18. Modern girls / Vhasidzana vha zwino

Mashudu Mulaudzi, Tsianda, 1987[226]

Modern girls are like trailers, the trailers of railway trucks.
Modern girls behave like trailers, railway trailers.
When the truck travels to Giyani,
the small trailer is always behind.
When the mail truck returns from the post office,
the small trailer follows. It does not know where it is going.
It says: 'Where the railway truck driver stops, I also stop.'
And girls nowadays are the same.
Even if a young man only utters two or three words
such as 'Hallo lovey, I will buy you an aeroplane,' she agrees.
She agrees to everything!
Even a young man of fifteen can have his way with her.
The problem started when she bore a child.
She had a shortage of napkins for her baby,
and soap to wash them with.
The woman said, 'No, father of Magomboni,
I am asking you to buy napkins for the baby.'
He said, 'You are asking for nappies. Is your
house full of napkins?'
He will go inside the house and tear the lining
from Jack's jacket to be used as a nappy.
What will he do? Because he has no work.
It was his first experience of love.
Not long afterwards he became confused.
He started soliciting with an older woman, a woman of forty,
while he was only fifteen.
Those who know, say she is an old cherry.
He will go to the cafe and buy one bubble-gum only,
and give half to the woman.
The woman will pass the piece back to the boy like a football.
This is the way boys and girls have sex.

Vhasidzana vha zwino vha nga zwigariki.
Zwigariki zwone zwa raluwei.
Vhasidzana vha zwino vha tou nga zwigariki.
Zwinezwi zwa raluwei.
Musi raluwei i tshi ya hangeini Giyani,
kugariki ku ḓi vha ku nga murahu.
Raluwei i tshi vhuya poswoni, kugariki ku ḓi vha ku nga murahu.
A ku ḓivhi nahune kwa ya hone.
Ku sokou ri, 'Hanefho hune vhoraḽuwei vha
ḓo guma hone, na nne ndi ḓo guma hanefho.'
Na vhasidzana vha zwino vho tou ralo. Kuṱhannga kwa tou amba
vhuipfi vhuvhili, vhuraru. Kwa ri, 'Halo lavi, ndi ḓo mu rengela
vulamatshini,' o tenda. U amba tshino u tenda!
U vhuya a fhurwa na nga kuṱhannga
kwa miṅwaha ya fifteen years.
Musi o no vha na ṅwana zwi dina ngamaanga.
Ṅwana u kundwa na maḽeri na zwiambaro na zwisibe
zwa u tou kuvha maḽeri a ṅwana wawe.
Hezwi mufumakadzi a tshi tou ri, 'Aiwa khotsi a Magomboni, ndo vha
ndi tshi khou humbela vha tou rengela ṅwananga maleri.'
Hu pfi, 'Ni khou lila nga maleri. O ḓadza nnḓu yoṱhe naa?'
Ku ḓo sokou dzhena nga ngomu nguni kwa kherula furu ya tshikwama
tsha Dzhege ha pfi ndi ḽeri ḽa hone.
Ku iteni? Ngauri na u shuma ku vha ku sa shumi.
Ho vha hu ḓuvha ḽa u thoma ku tshi
khou thoma u thetshela lufuno.
Hu si kale ri ḓo ku wana kwo no rwiwa nga shango.
Ku tshi vho tshimbila na musadzi muhuluhulu, musadzi wa miṅwaha
ya forty, kwone ku na miṅwaha ya fifteen years.
Vha mu ḓivhaho vha ri ndi tsheri magogo.
Ku ḓo ṱuwa kwa ya khefini kwa renga tshepisi nthihi fhedzi.

Box 18. Modern girls / Vhasidzana vha zwino (continued)

Maybe it has been like this since creation.
Or maybe it is just the modern lifestyle.
O, o-o! O shame!
The spirit is strong but the flesh is weak.

Kwa nea mufumakadzi a kenya.
Mufumakadzi a phasisa wa munna a kenya ngauralo.
Ngoralo ndi mugavhisano ndi boḽa ya vhatukana na vhasidzana.
Khamusi zwo bva hone tsikoni. Khamusi ndi vhutshilo ha namusi.
O, o-o! O shame! U a funa muya wone u a funa,
u a funa n̂ama, i ro shaya maand̂a.

Fig. 21. Mashudu Mulaudzi
Tsianda, 1989

Fig. 22. *Ṅwenda* wrap-around skirts
Folovhodwe, 2010

Box 19. Values in *malende-jive*

Malende-jive is a contemporary musical genre that integrates the stylistic features and themes of *malende* choral dance-songs of precolonial origin (fig. 108; 3.3) with that of contemporary dance music.[227]

Malende is performed at festive gatherings. Songs initially were accompanied by handclapping only, to which *murumba* alto drums were subsequently added.[228] *Malende-jive* retains handclapping and drumming but typically employs guitars, keyboard and drum sets.

The themes of *malende* and its contemporary forms are eclectic, but there is clear emphasis on marital relations and sexual mores. Guitarist and singer Solomon Mathase (fig. 10) was an exponent of *malende-jive*, and he received a several awards for his stylistic innovations. While his lyrics celebrate modern life, he retains the older worldview of *malende* in his critical engagement with contemporary moral values (see 'Respect' and 'Honour your ancestors' below).

Respect / Thonipho[229]

Solomon Mathase

Respect yourself here in the land of God.
They say, a child is expected to be obedient.
They say, respect your father and mother.
You were born after me.
They say, respect your father and mother.
You will live longer.

Inwi di thonifheni shangoni la Mudzimu.
Vha ri, ṅwana no bebwaho u ene na milayo.
Vha ri, hulisa khotsi au na mme au.
Na iṅwi no begwa ndi shangoni.
Vha ri, hulisa khotsi au na mme au.
Ndi hone u go kona u lalama shangoni.

Honour your ancestors / Humbulani vhakale[230]

Solomon Mathase

Honour your ancestors.
My child, today we are just honouring.
Today you are just honouring.
I am saying this because
you left me a heritage.

Humbulani vhakale.
Ṅwananga, ṋamusi no humbula-vho.
Ṋamusi na iṅwi no nkhumbula-vho.
Ndi tshi amba ngauralo ndi humbula ngauri
vhone vho siya ifa langa.

Manners / Vha tshi dzhena mudini[231]

Solomon Mathase

God created people on his earth.
He made a beautiful world.
When they enter home, they say, 'Greetings!'
And women say, 'Good day!'
My brothers, why do you ignore this custom?
Nowadays you have no respect.
You follow a Western life-style.

Mudzimu o vhumba vhathu shangoni lawe.
O nakisa shango.
Vha tshi dzhena muḓini, vha ri, 'Hee ndaa!'
Vha wa musadzi, vha ri, 'Hee aa!'
Vharathu vhanga, no vhetshelani mulayo?
Namusi no fhunguwa.
Ho dzhena Tshikhuwa.

Box 19. Values in *malende-jive* (continued)

Modern life / Tshimanzhemanzhe[232]

Albert Raedani

Be quiet, so that I can tell you.
Old women and men:
Why should you not advise your children?
Alas, their problems are caused
by their modern life style.
Oh mother! When I advise her, she does not listen.
When you reprimand her, she does not listen.
Oh mother! Who should reprimand her?
Persevere, I am tired of her.
Let me stop advising her.

Fhumulani, ndi ni vhudze.
Vhakegulu na vhakalaha:
Vhana vhaṋu a ri vha layi ngani naa?
Vha dinwa nga tshimanzhemanzhe tshavho, wee.
Ndi tshi mu vhudza a nga si tende, mmawee.
Vha a givha, ndo no neta, wee-yee.
U tshi mu kaidza ha tsha pfa.
U kaidzwa nga nnyi? Mmawe!
Kondelela, ndo no neṱa ngaye.
A vha litshe ndi tou zwi litsha, wee-yee.

Box 20. Halleluja Hosanna / Haleluya Hosanna [233]

Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila

Falling in love with many people.
You find this one, you go with him.
You find that one, you go with him.
These are not good things.
Stay with your husband.
Stay closer to him, man.
One person is sufficient. (…)
The girl does not pass by men.
After having washed, she thinks of being
on the main road down there.
To get a lift, she puts out
a leg instead of a hand.
The thumb is normally used for getting a lift,
but she uses the leg.

Ndi u sa pfuka muthu hoyu.
Na wana uno, na ṱuwa nae.
Na wana uno, hai na ṱuwa nae.
Zwi nga si nake hezwi zwithu.
Dzulani na munna waṋu.
Ni dzule ni kwakwane mani.
Honoyu muthihi ndi ene ene. (…)
Musidzana a sa fhiriho vhanna mani.
A ṱamba, u ḓi humbula tshigontirini,
haſho fhasi.
Lifithi ya hone, i imiswa nga mulenzhe nṱhani la tshanḓa.
Gunwe heli lo itelwa u imisa lifithi,
mara u imisa nga mulenzhe.

Fig. 23. Figure of a modern young woman
Albert Munyai, Mutale, 1993. Painted kiaat,
440 mm. Editor’s collection.

1.7 Negotiating moral authority

Patrick Ranwashi (c. 1922-1993) was a guitarist from Haluvhimbi in the eastern Soutpansberg.[234] He performed with Nemakhavhani Munyai and his family (fig. 24). Both men completed their primary school education, and became migrant labourers in Gauteng during the early 1950s. After retirement during the late 1970s, they started farming on the fertile mountain slope on which their small plots were situated. Munyai once placed a large bunch of bananas from his orchard on the ground. His wife and children danced around it, and all sang, 'Our Venda, beautiful Venda. Fruit is our joy.'[i]

Guitars were introduced locally during the early decades of the twentieth century. Like other music in the colonial encounter, Ranwashi's songs fused the tonality shift of popular music and songs of precolonial origin.[235] As a form of *muzika wa sialala* (1.2), his songs also synthesised certain aspects of Christian and older religious belief

Politically disaffected inhabitants of the Cape colony first migrated to the Vhembe district during the third and fourth decade of the 19th century. They were led by notorious outlaw Coenraad de Buys, and Voortrekkers like Louis Trichardt.[ii] Encounters between immigrant and settled populations were sometimes violent, terminating in the so-called War of Mphephu (1898), which subjugated the area to colonial control. Some captives became 'slaves under a different name.'[iii] They gradually 'lost the ability to speak their mother tongues and forgot the cultural practices of their youth.'[236]

The first local mission was founded in 1863 near Makhado (Louis Trichardt) by the Dutch Reformed Church.[237] The church's missionary outreach was limited, but eventually culminated in the founding of Tshilidzini hospital in 1957.[238]

The Berlin Mission Society was most active in the district. Chief Ligegise Tshivhase informed members of the society in 1872 that 'he had already for a long time wanted teachers to come, who could teach his people to read and write.'[239] His wish facilitated the founding of the first mission at Thohoyandou (Maungani) later that year, followed rapidly by settlements at Tshakuma and Tshifudi.

Fig. 24. Patrick Ranwashi and Nemakhavhani Munyai with vocalists Miriam, Sylvia and Shumani Munyai, 1988

The Tshifudi mission was forced to relocate to higher ground on account of malaria.[240] It was re-established in 1879 near Ranwashi's home (fig. 25).[241] This was ironic since Haluvhimbi is home to the site where the supreme deity Raluvhimba (Mwali) is believed to have revealed itself,[242] and which, until recently, had served as a shrine. Narrator Tambani Mamavhulo[243] of Muswodi explained that 'there was lightning, and the sound of horns and bells. The mountain at Haluvhimbi was burning. I remember this. When he passed by here at night, it was as bright as day.'

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[i] '*Venda ḽashu, Venda ḽa manakanaka. Ri dzula hone. Ri ḓiphiṋa nga mitshelo.*' (Haluvhimbi, 1 July 1988).

[ii] Also Hendrik Potgieter and Hans van Rensburg. See Kirkaldy (2005:19) and Nemudzivhadi (1985).

[iii] Apprenticed or indentured labourers. Dutch, *inboekelinge* (Kirkaldy, 2005:19).

Fig. 25. Lutheran church
Haluvhimbi, 1984

Narrator Sara Munyai[244] of Folovhodwe explained that her new 'RDP'[i] house

> is good for sleeping in: It is dry and warm. The problem is the ancestors do not know *mazenge*,[ii] these houses with corrugated iron roofs (fig. 26). Even I was not born in a house like this. No, the ancestors only know those old houses with thatch roofs, and hoes and donkeys. They are troubled. There at Haluvhimbi, where Raluvhimba passed through, there is now a dam (reservoir). 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.

Performance of hymns is not restricted to church. Spiritual experience extends beyond church buildings to homes, school classrooms and even rural bars.[iii] Eschatological imagery is common in religious songs, and speaks to poverty and social transformation.[iv]

One of Ranwashi's favourite songs was the hymn entitled *'Tshivhumbeo tshiswa':* 'Those who are reborn, your home is in heaven. Bad child, your home is in hell.'[v] Hymns like this articulate the evangelical approach to mission theology, with its moral polarities.[245] The interrelated concepts of God, Christian, civilisation, heaven and virtue contrast with notions of the devil, heathen, barbarism, hell and sin.[246] Missionaries were accordingly opposed to

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[i] Referring to government-subsidised housing as part of the former Reconstruction and Development Plan.

[ii] English 'zinc,' Afrikaans *'sink.'*

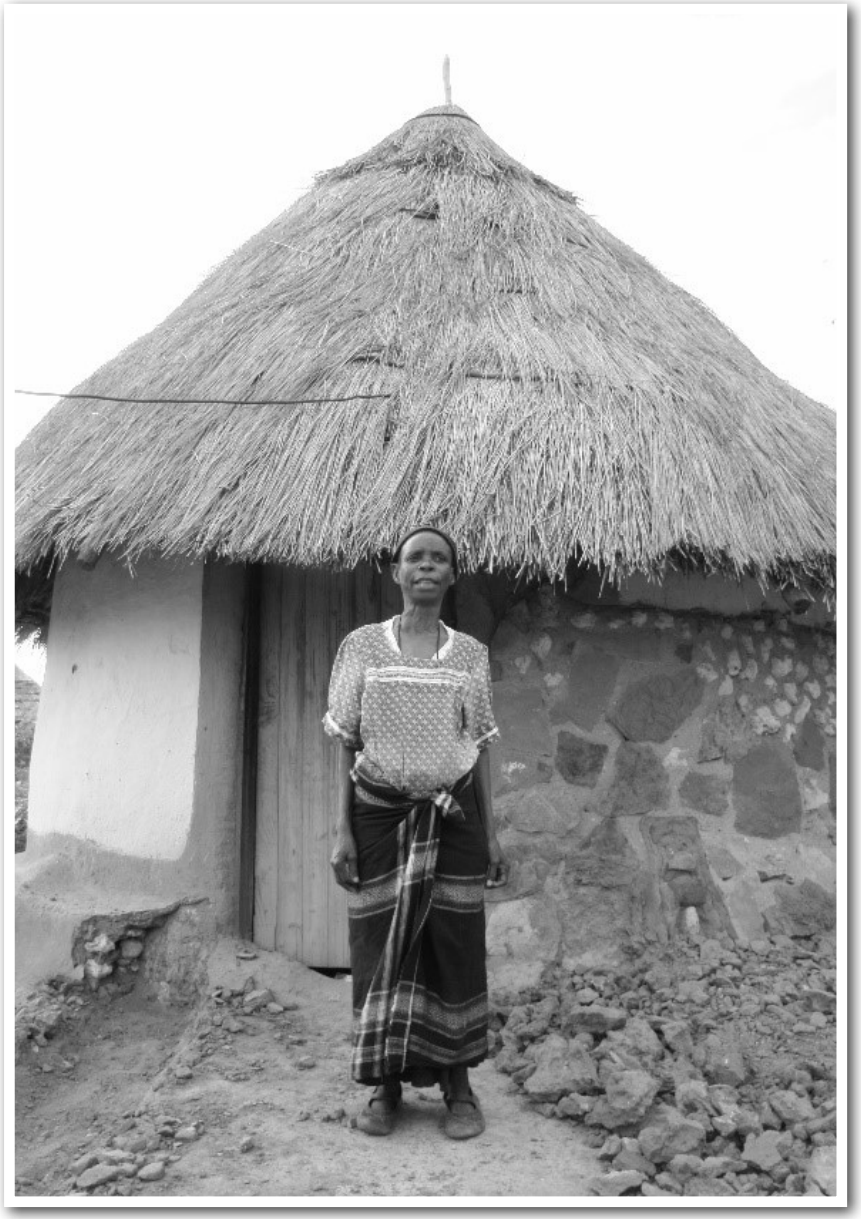
[iii] *'Mushe, Mushe! Hayani fhano ndi hukhethwa!'* ('Moses, Moses! It is sacred here at home!'). Extract from a song by Solomon Mathase (Kruger, 1993:90).

[iv] Two particularly popular hymns are *'Ri ya hayani Jerusalem'* ('We are going home to Jerusalem') and *'Iyani Mushe'* ('Go there Moses').

[v] *'Tshivhumbeo tshiswa, hayani ndi liṱadulu. Ṅwana muvhi, hayani ndi heleni.'*

Compare the hymn, 'My God is powerful. Satan is weak.' *('Ndi muhulu Mudzimu wanga. Sathane ndi tshiṱuku.')* that was was performed by Nkhwasheni Band, comprising four young teenage boys from the village of Tshapasha. They learnt the song in the Apostolic Faith Mission Church. (fig. 39).

Fig. 26. The architecture of past and present
Folovhodwe, 2007-2009



Munyai's kitchen

Narrator Sara Munyai's RDP house

Munyai's former bedroom

'superstitions,' polygany,[i] divination, initiation schools and 'heathen dances,'[ii] and threatened converts with excommunication should they not renounce them.[247] In short, 'transformation had to be total – the ecology, the economy, social relationships and the people themselves.'[248]

Two of the twelve songs documented from Ranwashi and Munyai were hymns. The remaining ten songs articulated a naturalistic worldview. The location of Raluvhimba's shrine teemed with lush vegetation and small wildlife, and provided material as well as spiritual security to the musicians. Ranwashi's songs accordingly not only celebrated God-given fecundity, but also conceptualised norms and morals in natural terms.

Similar religious ambiguity is articulated in musician Solomon Mathase's narrative world, referred to by him as 'land of God' (1.2).[249] Mathase's expression 'Jesus is Jesus' articulates the universal grounding of religious authority. His guitar therefore not merely entertained: It was a means to address morality. 'Land of God' accordingly integrated values of precolonial origin with Christian tenets, the core of which was love and mutual respect.

Mathase's ancestral ethics are articulated by the name of his youngest son, Ifa. This name signifies heritage or inheritance, but also ancestral commemoration. Mathase celebrates his lineage in one of his favourite songs, entitled '*Vhana doroba thina'* ('Children of our town'; box 21).[250]

Using dance as metaphor for the construction of contemporary life, Mathase invokes his identity as descendent of the Nyai clan, which is of Zimbabwean origin. The present-day articulates continuity with ancestral moral authority, invoked here to discourage destructive behaviour (symbolised by witches wearing leather clothes).

Xylophonist Wilson Ravele's explanation of musical narrative (1.2) as expressive of the Zimbabwean origins of his family was therefore not exceptional. Elderly musicians who continued to perform on instruments of precolonial origin (especially bows) were often viewed by younger people as eccentric and even 'mad' *(penga)*. However, performance in virtually all cases served as spiritual expression. Ancestors were engaged in private and public religious rituals where, during moments of trance, they were honoured with performance on an instrument they had once played.

A poignant instance of spiritual continuity involved a family from Tshamutshedzi in the eastern Soutpansberg.[251] My collaboration with local carpenter Elias Mulavhelesi prompted the family to order a xylophone at great cost so as to resolve family conflict. The previous head of the family was a xylophonist, and the family intended for the instrument to serve as *tshitungulo*, a sacred object to honour him and placate his anger at the conflict. However, none of his descendants could actually perform the instrument, and it remained an untuned[iii] and unplayed sacred relic.

Box 21. Children of our town / Vhana doroba thina
Solomon Mathase

Children of our town	Vhana dobora thina
are dancing excitedly.	vha na pemberera.
Dance well, you wearing	Tambani zwakanaka
leather clothes!	masimbana, iwe!
It is you, it is you	Nguwe, nguwe,
who bewitch.	muthakhati ka loya.
Children of the Nyai clan.	Vhana vha Vhanyai

[i] Hofmeyr notes that missionary opposition to polygany 'must rate as one of the significant missed opportunities for real intercultural exchange in the history of Christian mission in Southern Africa' (cited in Kirkaldy, 2005:255).

[ii] A church member explained to missionary Ludwig Giesseke in 1926: 'Learn a lesson from me, from my disgrace (…) There is undoing in intoxicating beer, even if it is brewed in the neighbouring heathen kraals. Also heathens working on Sundays, their heathen dances, their songs in the vicinity of the station have now stopped.' (Jeannerat, 2007:406.)

[iii] Although a professional carpenter, this was Mulavhelesi's first attempt at making a xylophone, hence its untuned condition.

Box 22. Religion: Narrators explain[i]

Rosina Mulovhedzi

Like my father, I am a healer. I live here at Folovhodwe. People who become healers are called by the spirits. I was called in a dream by the spirit of my father's mother. I had never even met her, but she spoke to me! She told me who she was. I was seventeen and did not know what to do. At first I refused to listen to her, and remained faithful to the Zion Christian Church. Then I became ill with a distended stomach. So I had little choice and went to train as healer.

Miriam Vhengani[252]

No, no, no! The business of healing has many secrets, so I cannot really tell you anything about myself. (But) 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* (Rituals of the Spirits; 3.3). 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.

Masindi Maliyehe[253]

Times were good then, not now. The maize grew well, with three cobs. There was so much food, one did not know what to eat first. You could not even break the thick stems of sugar cane. But we are speechless now. The land is so dry. I wonder what will happen, because children nowadays do not know what a river with water looks like. In those times the Mutale was a big river.

When it is so dry, I pray to my ancestral spirits. But I also pray to God. I usually ask that He should meet my ancestral spirits on earth and answer my prayers. I pray to Him because I know everything on earth was made by Him. The God of heaven hears me and I respect Him.

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[i] Quotations not referenced derive from biographical sketches in this collection.

Fig. 27. Divining dice for sale
Thohoyandou, 1984

Box 22. Religion: Narrators explain (continued)

Tambani Mamavhulo[254]

Mwari[i] still resides in Zimbabwe. He is there. My father once was a messenger sent by king Mphephu to appeal to Mwari for rain. I also heard that Mwari passed by here long ago. There was lightning, and the sound of horns and bells. The mountain at Haluvhimbi was burning. I remember this. When he passed by here at night, it was as bright as day.

When the white people came, Mwari stopped coming. When I suffer now, I pray and pray but Mwari does not help me. I do not pray to him anymore. He says, 'You have deserted me. Jehova must help you now.' Mwari no longer cares. He does not bring any rain, he is angry. We now eat maize planted by white people. It no longer is the maize of Mwari. Well, it is actually better for people that Mwari should stay far away. He should not come close to people.

Mpho Mashavha

My father, Piet Mashavha, was a church minister. He was very strict. We children were not allowed to wander outside at night. We always had to obey him in all respects. However, he and my mother Mashau loved us and taught us to pray constantly.

Salfina Mashiliye

I belong to the Tasululo Ministry Church. This is a church that fights against sin and bad things in life. I go there because I believe in the power of prayer. Look at this swollen finger: It was much worse before, but our minister prayed for me. I believe in the laws of God. Of these, the most important is being faithful to your spouse.

Marubini Kale

Going to church helps me to remain standing. It keeps life on track. It stops you from abusing alcohol. If you drink, your body becomes stiff and arched. The most important command is to respect God.

Thizwilondi Kwinda

My mother was a *Malombo* trance dancer. She allowed me to play the tenor drum, *thungwa*. Although I came to know trance music well, I never became a spirit medium. Today I am a member of the United African Apostolic Church. I am happy there. God's Word speaks especially to our children and their future.

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[i] Tshivenda: Mwali, also Raluvhimba. Stayt (1931:230) remarks that this deity 'is somewhat elusive, especially to the ordinary man, who is more prone to associate his benefits and misfortune with his ancestors.'

Box 22. Religion: Narrators explain (continued)

Mpho Mashavha

Because ours was a Christian home, my parents were against initiation schools. Once, when my mother was away from home, travelling, my grandmother sent me to *vhusha* and *musevhetho* (3.3).

My youngest was born in 2015. His name is Uhone. We always say, *'Mudzimu u hone'* ('God is with us'). He was born in Coronation hospital. He was a breach baby. The doctors struggled to get him out. I lost a lot of blood and had to stay in hospital for two weeks. I lost much weight. I know that God is powerful and that he cares for me. Even when I am given poison, I survive. I go to church to renew my faith in God.

Nthuseni Mudau

My marriage fell apart after my husband took a second wife. He then moved to Johannesburg. I never saw him again. I just heard later that he had died.

To survive I started working at Hope Bricks at Doreen. My mother used to work there. This was during the 1980s. This was a bad time for me. I felt rejected and hurt, and started drinking. I used to spend my wage freely on beer until only ten rand remained.

Once I went to my sister Salani in Musina to ask for money. She asked me how much food I thought could be bought with the amount spent on two crates of beer. And when a child became ill, where would the money come from?

I was ashamed and decided to turn my life around. I joined the Zion Christian Church at Hope Farm. First I had to confess to my drinking. Then I was baptised. I was dunked three times in the Nzhelele river. And so I became redeemed. I never touched beer again.

Anna Matlari[255]

I go to the Zion Christian Church. I feel safe there. Our services take place on a Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. We pray for health and drink tea together.

Rosina Madabeni

After our wedding, my husband William and I lived for a short time at Tshixwadza, and then moved to Tshiawelo in Johannesburg. William worked for the municipality's roads department for many, many years. A highlight of my life in town was going to the Lutheran church. Later I joined William in the Zion Christian Church. The most important commandment is love.

Box 22. Religion: Narrators explain (continued)

Ntshengedzeni Kwinda

I started to go to the Tasululo Ministry Church because my husband went there. I always wear my membership card around my neck. This shows my faith, and makes me feel that I belong somewhere. Going to church makes my happy. God teaches us love.

Zachary Tshamano[256]

I join our church band on Saturdays and Sundays. That is in the Church of the Nazarene.

Elisa Madzanga[257]

I used to belong to the International Pentecostal Church, but it is too far. So I now go to the Zion Christian Church here at Folovhodwe. We people of the church must care for others.

Martha Kwinda[258]

My church is the Zion Christian Church. 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.

Lydia Matshusa[259]

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.

As with Mathase's 'Land of God,' authority for narrators is grounded religiously, involving older spiritual practices and their frequent integration with Christianity (box 22).

The resilience of ancient forms of spirituality is evident in a significant number of *ngano* in this book. Certain narrators not only are traditional healers, but there also is ample evidence of the continued vitality of their profession. As narrator Rosina Mulovhedzi explained (2.5), healers have even come to collaborate with the Department of Health. *Ngoma dza Midzimu* trance rituals (3.3) also are still performed, and drums used in them may be found in local households (fig. 28).

Eight renditions of the 'The python-healer' appear in the *ngano* series (four in this book), by far the most of any particular story. The antiquity and popularity of the story is also evident in its inclusion in Stayt's ethnography.[260] Other stories in this book also involve the mystical python.[i] 'The python-healer' furthermore features in the Shona *ngano* repertoire,[261] and a shared past is evident in the retention of Shona terms in Venda versions of the story (*pano*, here; *kwala*, ill).

Nettleton[262] explains that the python has a 'connection with rain and fertility,' is believed 'to mediate between the world of the living and that of the dead,' and also is 'associated with the traditional healer' whose duality, mystery and awe-inspiring power it symbolises. These qualities also apply to other spirit mediums, and 'The lion-hunter' (2.3.4) is a typical story of the conflict attendant on the spirituality of musical performance.

Of particular significance as an instance of spiritual continuity is 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1) This complex narrative unfolds on several levels, but is especially meaningful in terms of its ancient, naturalistic worldview, one that often found expression in the songs of older musicians like Patrick Ranwashi (fig. 24) and Solomon Mathase (fig. 10).[263]

As the discussion of 'The young man and the snake' explains, ritual homage to snake deities in southern Africa dates back to at least the 12th century, involving 'a relationship between hill tops, water pools, caves and rain control.'[264] The 'cosmic serpent' is conceptualised as 'the essential life-giving essence' of nature (especially in its aquatic form).[265]

[i] 'The python-lover' (2.2.4), 'The woman who ate python eggs'(2.20.1) and 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1).

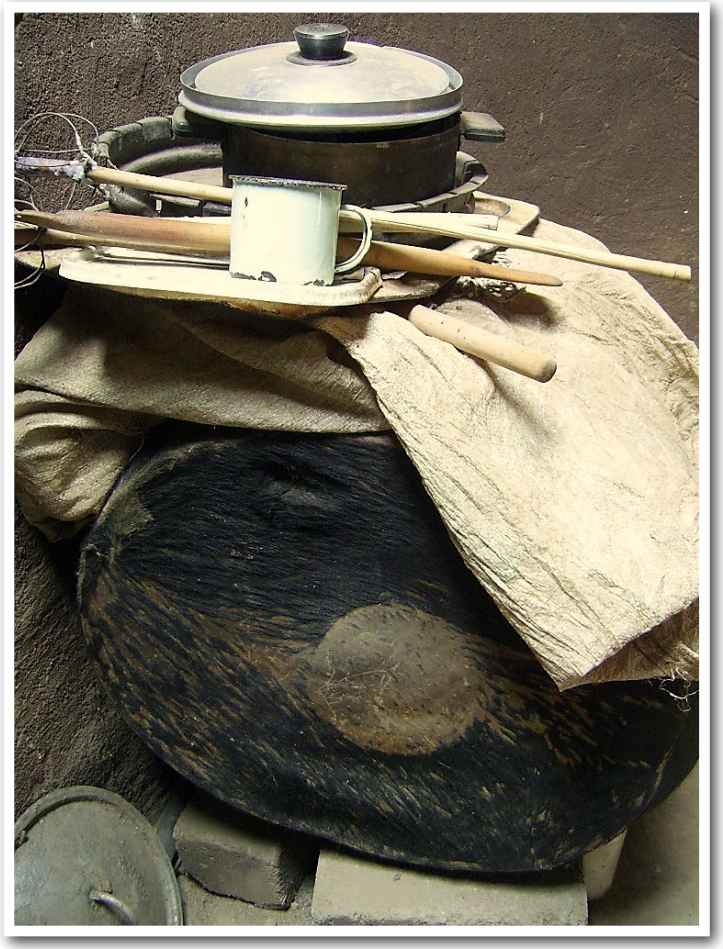

Fig. 28. Trance drum
Muswodi, 2008

Precolonial cosmology furthermore explains conflict in terms of witchcraft, which essentially 'establishes grounds for human ethical expectation.'[266] Witchcraft accusations tend to involve personal relations marked by various forms of inequality.[267]

Both 'The dancing mice' (2.1.3) and 'Death and evil' (2.8.1) articulate ongoing belief in fearsome zombies and witch familiars. The latter story also poignantly articulates a young girl's initial encounter with mortality as well as her father's desperate, grieving attempt to resurrect his wife.

Such articulation of immortality is central in the well-known story of 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile' (2.5.1). This complex narrative portrays the challenges and conflicts attendant on maturation. The pool with its amphibian residents is a regional symbol of spirituality and transformation. It receives (as a result of 'murder') an immature, 'unformed' girl in its caring embrace, and becomes the setting for her transfiguration into a young woman ready for marriage and adulthood, in accordance with ancestral norms and values. Her emergence from the pool symbolises eternal spirit and perpetually integrated community.[268]

Given the quality of *ngano* performance as the enchanting embodiment of ancestral law, and views of narrators on contemporary mores (boxes 15 & 16), the resilience of narrative memory articulating ancestral moral authority is self-evident. These include 'Child of the law' (2.17.2), 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1), 'Good and evil' (2.2.2), 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2) and 'The pot of trouble' (2.6.3).

1.7.1 Teaching God's law

The local missionary outlook was shaped by German Pietism, which 'played a major role, if not the major role, in the development of the concept of conversion and the theory underlying the practice of mission activity during the nineteenth (and much of the twentieth) century.'[269] Salvation could be attained only by adopting the Protestant ethic, with its values of self-discipline, orderliness, diligence, cleanliness and frugality.[270]

The suppression of local cultural practices not in keeping with doctrinally 'pure' Christianity impeded adult conversion, and missionaries therefore turned their attention to children, 'teaching them all the (religious) songs and stories which they knew.'[271] These children became involved in musical performance at missionary events and community festivities, such as confirmation rituals.[i]

A hymnbook entitled 'Songs of Christians and children' *('Nyimbo dza Vhatendi na vhana')* appeared around 1872.[272] It was followed by the ongoing publication of hymns translated from German. These collections evolved into 'the standard Venda hymnal, used in many churches throughout the Soutpansberg region.'[273]

An elderly woman whose childhood spanned the 1930s and 1940s remarked that Wayfarer girl guides neither swam nor climbed trees.[274]

Traditional dance was not allowed either. Activities were restricted to 'drilling' and hymn singing. 'Everything we did as Jesus ordered.'[ii]

Missionary endeavour necessitated insight into local practices and worldviews. Knowledge was disseminated by means of writings on 'the metaphysical and physical bases of the power of local rulers, the ancestors and medico-religious practitioners' (diviners).[275] These reports, as well as 'the translation of the Christian scriptures into the vernacular, and the use of vernacular expressions for critical concepts such as God,[iii] meant that the missionaries drew local religious traditions into the Christian conception of religiosity.'[276]

Missionary Reinhold Wessman[277] remarked that 'the Bawenda have ideas which remind one of the Bible. For instance, they say: "If thou sees that thy neighbour is merry, be thou merry with him. If thou seest that thy neighbour weepeth, sit thou down near him and weep."'

This observation harboured potential for 'significant negotiations of meaning.' Jeannerat, in her study of missionary records,[278] notes that 'it is essential to capture, in the texts, the moments at which the authors seem to tell us something that does not fit into the standard missionary paradigm, moments that might reflect (…) more than frames of revulsion, negotiation, opposition, or resistance' – moments that may reveal 'additional and contradictory meanings.'

Finnegan[279] explains that the main motive of early African linguistic studies was evangelisation. Their content was often 'religio-educational, preoccupied with what it was thought fitting for children to know.' She also

[i] Jeannerat (2005:12; 2007:320). A mission inspector described how 'the children on the mission station of Tshakuma had made small flags in the German colours of black, white and red to welcome him on his visit to the congregation' (Jeannerat, 2007:318).

[ii] The first *tshigombela* dance team (fig. 20; 3.3) for staff at the University of Venda was established during 1986. Only a few members were initially able to dance. Most only had vague recollections of dance steps. Some were even jokingly accused of performing Zionist dance steps (8 June 1987).

[iii] The notion of God came to be expressed as *Mudzimu*, which originally signifies ancestral spirit.

notes that 'some Christians now try to turn stories in the Congo into Christian allegories.'[280]

Berlin missionary Paul Schwellnus (1877-1946) spoke several indigenous languages and knew Venda culture well.[281] He translated the Bible into Tshivenda and Sesotho, wrote school readers and 'was instrumental in retaining many customs and their underlying philosophies and interpreting them in a Christian way.'[282]

Schwellnus became aware that *ngano* were invested with moral authority, and that they articulated certain Christian values. He published four readers from 1930 to 1948,[283] the first of which *('Mudededzi I'*; fig. 29) contains *ngano*, retold Biblical narratives and stories in *ngano* mould authored by him. The *ngano* were ostensibly selected for their transmission of values that correlated with Biblical teachings.

A story in *'Mudededzi I'* concludes,[284] 'The message is, be hospitable towards visitors.'[i] 'The Word of God' translates as *'Fhungo ḽa Mudzimu.' Fhungo* signifies news as well as advice and message. As explained (1.5.1), the term links with knowledge *(nḓivho)* and knowing *(ḓivha)*, and ultimately with *ngano dza nḓivho*, which are narratives of actual events or the 'truth.' It serves a core objective of initiation and *ngano* narration, namely the teaching of lessons *(u guda milayo)* aimed at inculcating virtue *(zwivhuya).*

The *ngano* narrator in *'Mudededzi I'* repeatedly asks the reader what a particular story teaches, or what lesson it contains.[ii] A story about Jackal and Crow (fig. 29) explains that, 'If we are foolish, we will become ashamed,'[iii] while the conclusion to *'Vhomakhulu'* ('Grandparents') asks, 'What, then, is the lesson? It is said, "Honour your father and mother so that you will lead a good life."'[iv]

The virtues that are extolled therefore include humility and respect for seniority.[v] The *ngano* entitled 'Frog and Ox' describes how Frog challenges the size (status) of Ox.[vi] He ignores his superior's warning to desist, and inflates himself until his stomach bursts. The story concludes, 'The old people used to say: "Pride has a water melon-belly."[vii] The Word of God says: "Whoever prides themself will be humbled. Whoever humbles themself will be respected."'[viii]

'Tondani vhaeni' ('Be hospitable to visitors') displays the style of *ngano*, but appears to have been authored by Schwellnus. It includes a prayer that states: 'I erred by forgetting You for long. I sinned by following the road into the wilderness. Forgive my sins; I wish to repent by learning virtue' *(zwivhuya).*[ix] Human motion along footpaths into the untamed veld inhabited by wild animals and malignant spirits is a core motif in *ngano.* As explained (1.5), *zwivhuya* in contrast is an attribute of youthful selves on their journey to ideal adulthood.

Ngano in school readers like *'Mudededzi I'* constituted significant yet fleeting social, religious and literary space. Their harnessing with Biblical narratives expedited the shift to hymns and school songs as new forms of the transmission of values This is the theme of the next discussion.

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[i] *'Fhungo ḽi tshi ri, tondani vhaeni.'*

[ii] 'This is a *ngano*; what does it teach us?' *('Ndi lungano; lu ri funza mini?');* 'What does this *ngano* teach?' *('Lungano ulu lu funza-ni?');* 'What, then, is the lesson?' *('Mulayo u' mini zwiḽa?').*

[iii] *'Ra sa thanya, ri ḓo sala ro shona.'*

[iv] *'Mulayo u' mini zwiḽa? U ri, "Hulisa khotsi-au na mme-au, uri takale u lalame shangoni."'*

[v] Other values held by the Berlin Mission Society that *ngano* narrators would have recognised include diligence, self-reliance, purity and humility. In keeping with role allocation in *ngano*, the society also portrayed women as 'chaste mothers and nurturers of children' (Kirkaldy, 2005:161-162).

[vi] Compare Tortoise's similar challenge to his seniors in 'Tortoise and Duiker' (2.3.5).

[vii] In other words, the boastful or vain are false and immoral. Their bloated belly contains no substance, only water.

[viii] *'Vhakale vho no zwi amba vha ri: "Ndi mu-ṱonga-kaṅwe, ndi thumbu ya bvani." Fhungo ḽa Mudzimu ḽi ri: "Ane a ḓi-hudza u ḓo ṱukufhadzwa. Ane a ḓi-ṱukufhadzwa u ḓo huliswa."'*

[ix] *'Ndi kanzhi he nṅe nda U hangwa nda khakha. Nda tshinya nga u ya nga nḓila ya ḓaka. Nkhangwele zwivhi; ndi tama u vhuya nga u ndededza, u mfunze zwivhuya.'*

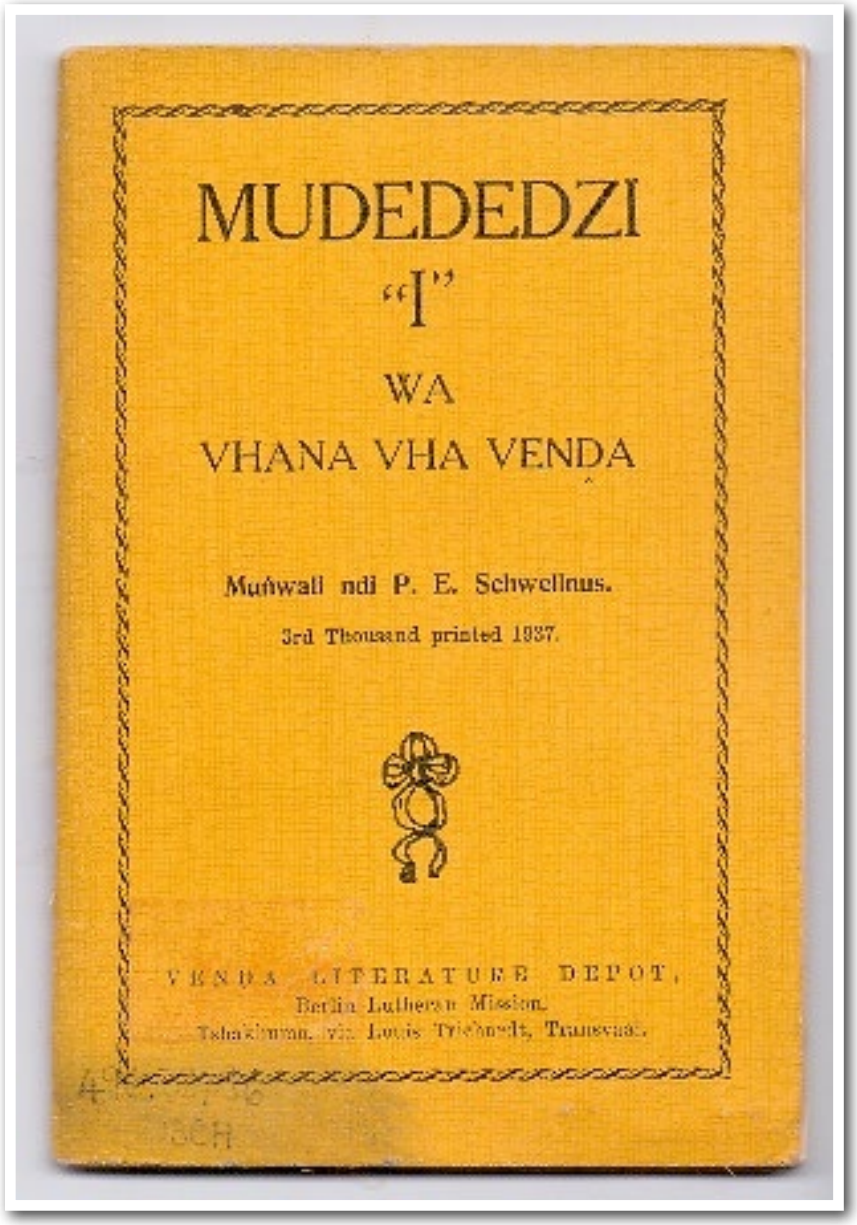
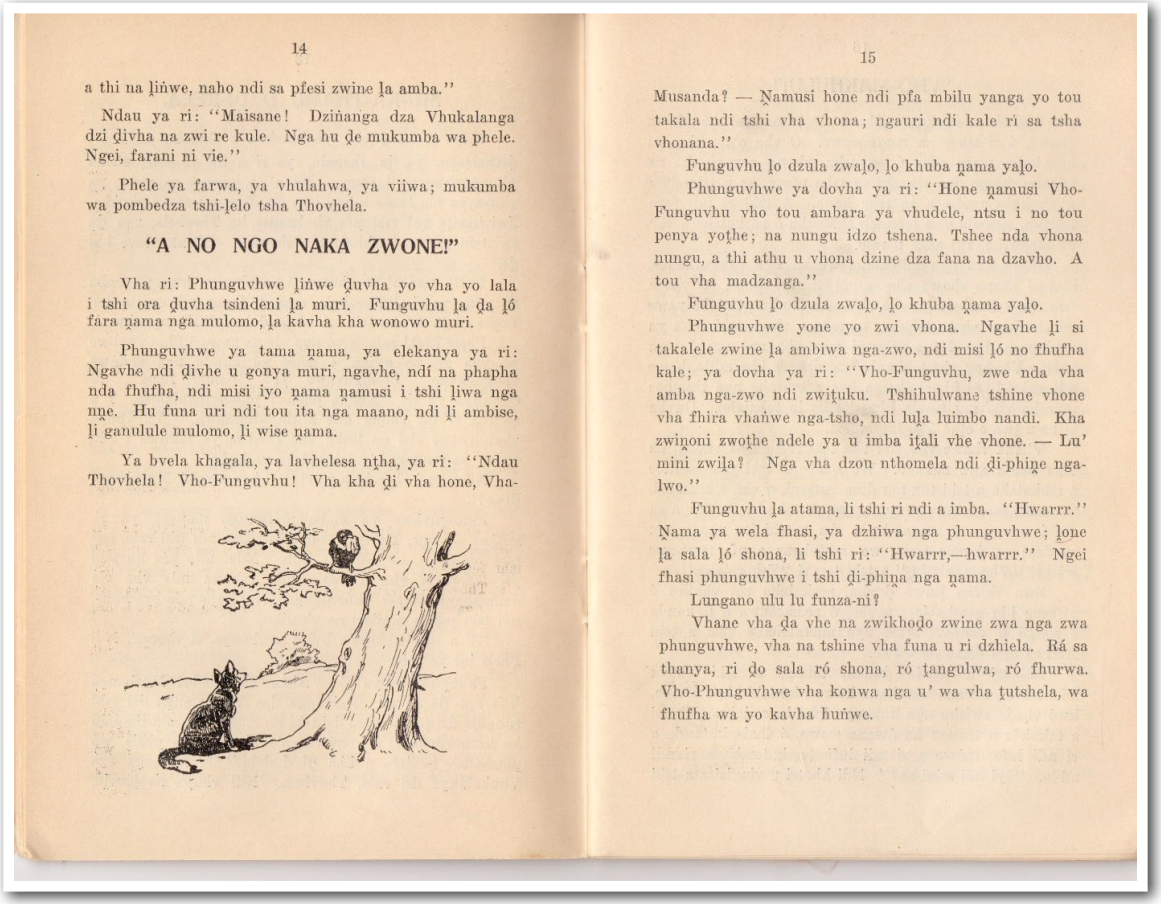


Fig. 29. Mudededzi I



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a thi na ḽiṅwe, naho ndi sa pfesi zwine ḽa amba."

Ndau ya ri: "Maisane! Dziṅanga dza Vhukalanga dzi ḓivha na zwi re kule. Nga hu ḓe mukumba wa phele. Ngei, farani ni vie."

Phele ya farwa, ya vhulahwa, ya viiwa; mukumba wa pombedza tshi-ḽelo tsha Thovhela.

"A NO NGO NAKA ZWONE!"

Vha ri: Phunguvhwe ḽiṅwe ḓuvha yo vha yo lala i tshi ora ḓuvha tsindeni ḽa muri. Funguvhu ḽa ḓa ḽó fara ṋama nga mulomo, ḽa kavha kha wonowo muri.

Phunguvhwe ya tama ṋama, ya elekanya ya ri: Ngavhe ndi ḓivhe u gonya muri, ngavhe, ndí na phapha nda fhufha, ndi misi iyo ṋama ṋamusi i tshi ḽiwa nga nṋe. Hu funa uri ndi tou ita nga maano, ndi ḽi ambise, ḽi ganulule mulomo, ḽi wise ṋama.

Ya bvela khagala, ya lavhelesa nṱha, ya ri: "Ndau Thovhela! Vho-Funguvhu! Vha kha ḓi vha hone, Vha-

15

Musanda? — Ṋamusi hone ndi pfa mbilu yanga yo tou takala ndi tshi vha vhona; ngauri ndi kale ri sa tsha vhonana."

Funguvhu ḽo dzula zwaḽo, ḽo khuba ṋama yaḽo.

Phunguvhwe ya dovha ya ri: "Hone ṋamusi Vho-Funguvhu vho tou ambara ya vhudele, ntsu i no tou penya yoṱhe; na nungu idzo tshena. Tshee nda vhona nungu, a thi athu u vhona dzine dza fana na dzavho. A tou vha madzanga."

Funguvhu ḽo dzula zwaḽo, ḽo khuba ṋama yaḽo.

Phunguvhwe yone yo zwi vhona. Ngavhe ḽi si takalele zwine ḽa ambiwa nga-zwo, ndi misi ḽó no fhufha kale; ya dovha ya ri: "Vho-Funguvhu, zwe nda vha amba nga-zwo ndi zwiṱuku. Tshihulwane tshine vhone vha fhira vhaṅwe nga-tsho, ndi luḽa luimbo nandi. Kha zwiṋoni zwoṱhe ndele ya u imba iṱali vhe vhone. — Lu' mini zwiḽa? Nga vha dzou nthomela ndi ḓi-phiṋe nga-lwo."

Funguvhu ḽa atama, li tshi ri ndi a imba. "Hwarrr." Ṋama ya wela fhasi, ya dzhiwa nga phunguvhwe; ḽone ḽa sala ḽó shona, li tshi ri: "Hwarrr,—hwarrr." Ngei fhasi phunguvhwe i tshi ḓi-phiṋa nga ṋama.

Lungano ulu lu funza-ni?

Vhane vha ḓa vhe na zwikhoḓo zwine zwa nga zwa phunguvhwe, vha na tshine vha funa u ri dzhiela. Rá sa thanya, ri ḓo sala ró shona, ró ṱangulwa, ró fhurwa. Vho-Phunguvhwe vha konwa nga u' wa vha ṱutshela, wa fhufha wa yo kavha huṅwe.

Fig. 30. 'Jackal and Crow'

1.7.2 'No education without God'

Schooling was an important factor in the gradual shift from the domestic performance of *ngano* to their literary consumption, and the emergence of the educational market may explain the publication of *ngano* and children's songs during the second half of the 20th century.[i]

The visit by Minister of Native Affairs H.F. Verwoerd to the Soutpansberg in 1954 paved the way for the establishment of the first local authorities.[285] This was followed by so-called self-rule (1969) and autonomy (1979).

The ensuing upsurge in published *ngano* collections appears to have been an expression of cultural nationalism[286] externalised most visibly in colourful choral dance-song events of pre-colonial origin.[ii] To what extent, if at all, these publications were part of any formal initiative is not clear, but Khorommbi[287] notes that early Tshivenda writers 'developed a negative attitude to their own literature in favour of that of the West. This attitude lasted until the late fifties and sixties.'

The cultural nationalism of the late colonial era, however, was not marked by any lasting or comprehensive revitalisation of *ngano* in the school curriculum. A *ngano* collection was introduced in 1987 in grade 10. Rananga[288] remarks that 'the only unfortunate aspect is that folklore has been prescribed only in Grades 10 to 12. There was no valid reason for the exclusion of folklore from Grades 8 and 9 or other grades (and) there is the threat that folklore could be phased out of the South African secondary school curriculum.'

As narrator Lucia Nelutshindwi explained (1.2), teachers now send their learners to the elderly to enquire about these stories. This involves projects in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Skills, grade R-6.[289] While the CAPS values the knowledge transmitted by means of 'indigenous' songs, games and folktales, these genres only comprise a small component of a comprehensive curriculum. In addition, teaching-learning resources are inadequate and few teachers have any expert knowledge of them. Older narrators frequently alleged that, where *ngano* were actually part of school programmes, their allegorical quality was habitually trivialised.[iii]

Composer Mmbangiseni Mphaga's song entitled, 'No education without God'[290] (box 23) articulates an enduring engagement with mission Christianity as an 'indispensable basis' for self-definition, education, economic mobility and the 'legitimacy of authority,'[291] not in 'diametrical opposition' to indigenous practices and outlooks, but in a synthesised, 'living and meaningful whole.'[292]

Mphaga was twenty-one years old, and from the village of Mukula. He was an orphan who had wrestled with poverty for most of his young life. Strict self-discipline enabled him to matriculate and become appointed in the local Department of Public Works.

Many of his songs were aimed at young people. They described his experiences and stated moral imperatives. They disapproved of laziness, jealousy, nepotism and hypocrisy, advocated respect for authority and expressed desire for prosperity and justice. 'No education without God' assimilated Christian and ancestral authority, and instructed children to go to school, instead of 'fishing, being idle and failing to think of their future.'

New forms of moral authority were evolving from missionisation and the introduction of schooling. Kirkaldy[293] explains that Christian education became a virtual prerequisite for entry into the middle and upper echelons of colonial service, especially the teaching profession.

Khorommbi[294] remarks appositely if bluntly that 'Christianity in written form has stolen the original oral tradition in religious issues which was the Vhavenda way of keeping historic records.' While literacy did not replace orality, it was a decisive factor in the dissemination of power from home and chiefly court to church, school and government office.[iv]

The parental obligation of care-giving and educating had become shared

[i] See Khuba (1988), Maumela, B. (1990), Maumela, T. (1968), Mavhina *et al.* (1977), Nemukovhani (1977), Nenzhelele (1961) and Phophi (1990; 1992).

[ii] See Kruger (1999). This correlates with the role of folktales in nineteenth century European nationalism (Teverson, 2013:91).

[iii] Rananga (2008:161, 162) similarly refers to 'ignorance, denigration and oversimplification of the storytelling art form' in South Africa, remarking that 'the broader public is oblivious of the value of storytelling and thinks of storytelling as something from the past or for very small children.'

[iv] *Murundu* initiation official Joseph Ndwamato explained that initiation lasted for six months during the 1930s, starting soon after Good Friday. However, due to the influence of 'educated people in the government' as well as church ministers, this period was reduced to three months and finally three weeks, coinciding with the winter school vacation (Tshidimbini, 30 June 1986).

by school teachers.[i] Narrator Marubini Kale (2.17) explained that it was important to her teacher at Makusha Primary School (Musina) 'that children never missed a class. If they did so without good excuse, he caned them immediately.' Nzhelele-Drif School, founded by farmer Tobie Fourie (box 37), was run by Julia Dzumba. She was described by Fourie as 'a really good person,' and she is remembered by many as a strict but loveable teacher.

The performance of oral art at school served curricular as well as moral objectives. Gloria Ndwamato and Alice Tshisevhe were teachers at the Folovhodwe Community Pre-School and Crèche, housed in the local Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (fig. 31). They had produced sixty chants for use in nursery school and grade 1 (box 24).[295]

These chants were in oral form, although their titles had been written down for record-keeping purposes. Fifteen were in English, and the remainder in Tshivenda. Some taught the alphabet, vowels and traffic rules, and others norms and values that harness past and present.

The care-giving authority of the ancestors and living elders extends to God and teachers ('An old woman,' 'My parents' and 'We arrived at school'). 'I am still young' expresses the familiar juxtaposition of good and evil, while 'Education' and 'My life' urge the performer to complete school and prepare for a professional career (portrayed enticingly by the image of a white-clad health practitioner).

'Money' ostensibly is a simple response to economic transformation. However, greed is commonly criticised in *ngano*, especially in stories that describe the hoarding and stealing of food during famine.[ii] 'Money' should therefore be interpreted in conjunction with 'Greed' as well as 'My welfare grant,' which addresses selfishness within a contemporary setting.

The theme of 'Hey parents' is sexual abuse, against which *ngano* constantly warn their young listeners.[iii] This chant is a first step towards instruction in the life orientation subject at school.

Fig. 31. The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
Folovhodwe, 2010

[i] '(School) education facilitated public embracement of the role of women as "teacher-mothers" tasked with the moral training of children as virtuous citizens in the late 19th century through the adoption of kindergartens.' (Dunning, cited in Ramugondo, 2009:213.)

[ii] For a variation of this theme, see 'The woman who ate python eggs' (2.20.1).

[iii] 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3) and 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4).

Box 23. No education without God

Mmbangiseni Mphaga[i]

Hiyo! I said, children,
go to school.
Go to school children,
you will prosper.[ii]
Hiyo! I said, children, the
ancestral spirits are with us.
Even if one perseveres with
education, there will be no
beauty without God.
Hiyo! I said, without God
there is truly no education.
Hiyo! I said, children are
improved by education.
Those who say there
is no God,
God is truly here.
Those who say there
is no God,
God is here on earth.

Hiyo! Nda ri, vhana,
dzhenani tshikoloni.
Dzhenani tshikoloni vhananga,
zwo̱the zwi do nga mavu.
Hiyo̱! Nda ri, vhana,
vhadzimu vha hone.
Pfunzo nangwe na kondelela, u si na
Mudzimu a zwi naki.
Hiyo! Nda ri, pfunzo
nazwino Mudzimu a hu na.
Hiyo! Nda ri, vhana vha
konwa nga pfunzo.
Vhane vha ri a
hu na Mudzimu,
Mudzimu u hone ngoho.
Vhane vha ri a
hu na Mudzimu,
Mudzimu u hone
shangoni.

[i] Mukula, 14 June 1986.

[ii] Lit. 'everything will be like soil.' Compare the expression *'lupfumo lu mavuni'* ('wealth of the soil').

Box 24. Chants for young children

An old woman

An old woman long ago sat
inside a clay pot with
many, many children!
She gave them vegetables
without flour.[i]
She beat them wildly![ii]
She said, 'Be quiet
and sleep!'

Tshikegulu

Tshikegulu tsha kale tsho
dzula tshiduduni na vhana
vhanzhi vhanzhi!
Tsha vha ne̱a delele
li̱ sina na vhutete.
Tsha vha bukuta vho̱the!
Tsha ri, 'Lalani̱ ni tsho̱ete!'

My parents

My parents:
It is mother and father.
My parents love me.
When I am hungry
they give me food.
When it is cold
they provide clothes.
When I make a mistake
they correct me.[iii]
They warn against danger.
They do not want
me to suffer.
It shows great love.
And I love them.

Vhabebi vhanga

Vhabebi vhanga:
Ndi mma na baba.
Vhabebi vhanga
vha a mpfuna.
Ndi na ndala
vha mpha̱ zwiliwa.
Hu tshi rothola
vha mpha zwiambaro.
Ndi tshi khakha
vha nkaidza.
Vha nkaidza kha khombo.
A vha todi ndi tshi tambula.
Zwi sumba
lufuno luhulwane.
Na nne̱ ndi a vha funa.

[i] *Vhutete:* 'fairly fine flour of pounded maize.'[296]

[ii] Because they did not want to eat their vegetables.

[iii] Lit. 'scold.'

Box 24. Chants for young children (continued)

I am still young

Lord, bless[i] my heart
so that evil does not enter.
Only Jesus must enter.
He is my Lord.

We arrived at school

We arrived at school.
We said a prayer.
We were taught,
we were taught.
We wrote, we wrote.
We ate (at school)
and became full.
We played, we played.
We went to our homes.

Education

Education is developing,
my brothers.
Even sleeping: I do not sleep.
I start with a crèche, preschool,
primary, secondary,
I finish with
tertiary education.
If you complete your studies you
will have a good life.

[i] Lit. 'treat generously.'[297]

Ndi tshe mutuku

Murena, thakha
mbilu yanga
hu si dzhene muvhi.
Hu dzhene Yesu fhedzi.
Ene Muṋe wanga.

Ra swika tshikoloni

Ra swika tshikoloni.
Ra ita thabelo.
Ra funzwa, ra funzwa.
Ra ṅwala, ra ṅwala.
Ra ḽa, ra fura.
Ra tamba, ra tamba.
Ra ya mahayani.

Pfunzo

Pfunzo yo hula,
vharathu vhanga.
Na u eḓela: Thi tsha eḓela.
Ndi thoma kha cresh, preschool,
primary, secondary.
Nda fhe dzisela nga tesiary.
Na mphedza, ni ḓo tshila
na dzula zwavhuḓi.

My life

I am Suzi.
I go to school so that I
can have a bright future.
The world nowadays wants
an educated person.
I want to be a teacher.
And what about
being a policeman?
Do not even talk
about the medical
profession where you
wear white!
Yes, if you are not
educated you will suffer.[ii]

Money

Money makes life possible.[iii]
They call me money.
I am loved by
young and old,
rich and poor.
If I am there,
life is good.

[ii] Lit. 'eat herbs.'
[iii] Lit. 'money imitates life.'

Vhutshilo hanga

Ndi nṋe Suzi.
Ndi khou dzhena tshikolo
uri ndi vhe na
vhumatshelo havhuḓi.
Ḽifhasi ḽa zwino ḽi ṱoḓa
muthu o funzeaho.
Nṋe ndi tama u
vha mudededzi.
Vhupholisa mmanga!
Ndi si tsha amba vhudokoṱela
hune wa
ambara tshena!
Ee, wa sa funzea
u ḓoḽa damba.

Tshelede

Tshelede tshiedza vhutshilo.
Vha mmbidzaho
vha ndi mashele.[iv]
Ndi funwa nga vhatuku
na vhahulwane,
vhapfumi na zwishayi.
Nda vha hone
vhutshilo vhu a takadza.

[iv] From *masheleni*, 'shilling.'

Box 24. Chants for young children (continued)

Greed!

Greed!
You find yours.
Boasting like a chick.
It grabs insects.
This one is mine!
I eat, hmm!

U dzima!

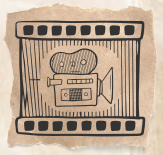
U dzima! Wa wana tshau.
Wa hina-hina
wa nga gukwana.
Ḽo fara ndodo.
Itshi ndi tshanga!
Ndi a ḽa-vho, hammu!

‘Greed’ describes how chicks fight over scraps of food. When a chick finds something to eat that is too big swallow, it refuses to share, and runs away to eat it alone.

My welfare grant

My welfare grant,
of young children.
We are suffering.
We go to bed without food.
And we have no clothes.
They[i] are dressed extravagantly.
They gamble with cards.
They carry cell phones.
They loiter around.
Mr Mushavhanamadi:[ii]
Please come and return[iii]
this welfare grant of mine.

Mundende wanga



Mundende wanga,
wa vhana vhaṱuku.
Ri khou tambula.
Ri lala na ndala.
Na zwiambaro a ri na.
Vhone vho dzhavhela.
Vha tamba magaraṱa.
Ṱhingo dzo farwa.
Vha tshi tsa vha tshi gonya.
Vho-Mushavhanamadi:
Kha vha ḓe vha phuluse
hoyu mundende wanga.

Hey parents!

Hey parents, hey parents!
My body,
my body.
It must not be abused,
it must not be abused.
Do not touch here,
do not touch here.

Hee vhabebi!

Hee vhabebi, hee vhabebi!
Muvhili wanga,
muvhili wanga.
A u tambudziwi,
a u tambudziwi.
Vha songo mpfara hafha,
vha songo mpfara hafha.

[i] Parents to whom child grants are paid.
[ii] A local police public relations officer.
[iii] In other words, ensure that my welfare is not wasted by my parents.

1.8 Exterior and interior space

Precolonial settlement took form as *miḓi*, family units usually comprising three or four generations residing in tight clusters of thatch-roof dwellings (fig. 32). This housing pattern was exemplified by the homestead of a traditional leader, described[298] as

> an interesting place, being by far the largest settlement (…) crammed with people (…) There was a public place *(khoro)*. (The settlement) was always built in a high and defendable spot (…) Inside it the steep slope was stabilized by terrace upon terrace faced with stone, with many little stairways and narrow winding streets *(mikoto)* between the high palisades surrounding the yards of individual huts (…) Such a place could not but develop a life of its own.'

Miḓi were situated adjacent to or in the vicinity of arable land, rivers and fountains. The life sketches of virtually all narrators offer glimpses of agrarian life, which is also idealised in *ngano* (box 25).

Narrator Nyamukamadi Ndou (2.2) explained that Pfumembe, her place of birth 'is in the mountains. Not many outsiders came there when I was young. We never saw any white people, and some of us still wore leather clothes. There were no schools or shops (…) We children herded my father's goats. We also had to chase baboons and monkeys from our maize fields. Later we went to initiation school.'

The life sketches of other narrators depict scenes of swimming and fishing in rivers, collecting wild fruit, ploughing with cattle, cultivating crops and hunting. These were usually group activities. Elderly Mutshekwa Mudau (2.16) explained that her 'most important chore was to collect water in a small calabash from the Tshinnane River (Tshaulu). The veld was dangerous. We girls always went to collect wood and water in a group. We sometimes argued about something, and then started fighting!'[i]

Children's leisure time activities were also a space for socialisation. Narrator Tshamano Mashavha (2.19) explained that 'we children all liked the same things: *Ndode* stone games, *khadi* rope-skipping and building *mahundwane* play-villages (3.3) which we made under a large tree in our neighbourhood. Here we cooked, smeared the floor and played as if we were married with children.'

The turn of the nineteenth century heralded momentous impact on the agrarian life-style described by narrators. Mphephu Ramabulana was defeated in 1898 by a coalition of forces led by a commando of the South African Republic.[ii] This conflict ended autonomous local rule, and, following the conclusion of the Second South African War (1902), the British established a 'Native Commissioner's camp' at Thohoyandou.[iii]

Fig. 32. Cluster housing
Tshakuma, 1984

[i] *Ngano* plots often center on groups of girls carrying out a chore. See 'Cannibals' (2.3.1) and 'The girls in the baobab' (Kruger, 2014:89-92).

[ii] According to testimony by Revs. Harm Bonnema and Willem Boshoff, the cornerstone of the local Dutch Reformed Church was dislodged from Ramabulana's village by cannon fire (Marinovich, 2001).

[iii] Nemudzivhadi (1985:25). The area subsequently became known as Gambani (Camp).

Box 25. Agrarian life in *ngano*

'A long time ago there was an old man and his old woman. They farmed. Their field was far away. They woke up in the morning, day after day. They went to farm, to farm. There was a good place for watermelons, and a place for millet, and a place for bitter melons. Yes! When they were hoeing one part of their field, crops were ripening elsewhere.' (Extract from 'The bees in the millet'; 2.14.2.)

'It was then that they moved away. When they moved away, that girl arrived at her new home. They built a house and lived there. They went out to tend their maize. These people were tending their maize. That young man also herded the cattle.' (Extract from 'We do not pound'; 2.17.1.)

'Long ago people used to farm in the mountain. They farmed open areas in valleys. They did not work with tractors. They had to watch out for marauding baboons (…) I sat on top of a rock watching out for the baboons coming through the fence to raid the maize (…) Now, when the baboon came into the field I started to sing.' (Extract from 'Baboons'; 3.1.1.)

The year 1903 was a local socio-economic watershed, involving the introduction of taxation by the colonial government.[i] This increased pressure on local populations to abandon subsistence farming and enter the labour market.

Those working locally 'stated that the Boers badly needed labour and paid a cow for a year's work.'[299] Groups of labourers first left the area during the middle of the nineteenth century to work on farms and in harbours and mines in other provinces.[ii] The desire for travel became irrepressible, and 'it was soon regarded as a disgrace if one had not been to foreign lands' and obtained cash to buy a gun, which was 'a sign of manhood.'

Oral testimony[300] indicated that the first half of the twentieth century, coinciding with Rasimphi Mphaya[iii] Tshivhase's chieftaincy (1930-1946),[301] featured the conspicuous introduction of urban cultural practices, and the consequent transformation of precolonial life. Elderly Jacob Rambuda[302] of Ha-Rambuda explained that he learnt to play the xylophone in 1911, but that the instrument started losing popularity during the 1920s, and had disappeared by the middle of the century. William Mabuba of Luheni stopped playing the xylophone in 1947[303] and Piet Musisinyani of Mangaya the *tshizambi* mouth-bow during the middle-1950s.[304]

As explained, missionaries required total conversion, and transformation was therefore also environmental.[305] The novel '*Mmanga Mawelewele*'[306] explains that Christians had 'come to teach us how best to make water canals (…) The manure gets into the earth and enriches it and brings forth good crops. Nowadays we are speechless. The Western way has become ours.'[iv]

The novel also states 'that those who followed the missionary styles of building had better houses,' and gives a vivid description of the 'beauty of the missionary house.'[307] In contrast, *miḓi* homesteads were 'not in good order.'[v] The reborn spirit thus became externalised in rectangular stone or brick dwellings, and the customary thatch-roof adobe rondavel with its framework of poles *(basha)*, came to be viewed with increasing disdain (box 26, fig. 33).

[i] Nemudzivhadi (1985:25). Local taxation in the region in fact dates back to the late 19th century (Kirkaldy, 2005:22, 38).

Dende bow-player Johannes Mavhenga sang, 'Watch out for the tax collector at the dipping tank, there at the river, there where firewood is collected.' *('Basopa muthelo madibani, fhala mulamboni, fhala khunini.')* Malavuwe, 15 May 1984 (Kruger, 1986:139-141).

[ii] Kirkaldy (2005:37-38, 50). Chief Makwarela Mphaphuli explained to missionary Koen: 'Why must I sit here (at home)? I am called a chief, but I am nothing. I just sit, drink beer and try to kill time. I want to see the world!' He consequently reached the diamond fields in 1881, accompanied by three hundred and fifty subjects. He returned the following year with a wagon drawn by sixteen oxen, having left many of his party behind (Kirkaldy, 2005:257-8).

[iii] A flamboyant leader, Tshivhase was reputed to display his wealth by riding his horse and smoking cigars. He also is reported to have used the honourific 'Mphaya' ('Empire') to praise himself (Blacking 1967:54).

[iv] *'Ano maduvha a ri tsha amba tshithu. Tshikhuwa tsho no vha tshashu.'*

[v] *'Nndu dza vhathu dzi tau divhanadza uri vhathu vha sakau tangana-natanganana.'*

Box 26. At an ugly home / Hayani ho vhifhaho

Solomon Mathase[308]

I live at a home which	Nn̂e ndi khou dzula hayani hu songo
is not beautiful like	naka na vhaṅwe vhathu.
that of certain people.[i]	Nn̂e vha a ntsea
Certain people laugh at me.	na vhaṅwe vhathu.
I live in an ugly home.	Nn̂e ndi khou dzula nga hayani,
They laugh.	hayani ho vhifhaho.
They say I am possessed.[ii]	Vha a ntsea. Vha ri ndi a lwala.
They hate me.	Vha a mmbenga.
They say I am possessed	Vha ri ndi lwala.

[i] The dwelling was an adobe homestead.

[ii] The singer is disparaged for his occupation as shebeen entertainer.

Fig. 33. *Basha*
Folovhodwe, 2010

Narrator Nyamukamadi Ndou (2.2) explained that her parents' house 'was built in the old way. People planted poles, *basha*, close to each other, then they smeared them with clay. They mixed ash with clay, and made a kind of white-wash for the walls.'

Box 27. From homestead to municipal plot

Like many other families at Ngulumbi, the Mathases[i] do not farm extensively. Available land is not enough to feed local households. Hunting is illegal and population increase has put pressure on natural food resources. Much of the natural vegetation that would otherwise have supported animal life, has been cleared in search of firewood, and in preparation for cultivation and house construction.

The grave of Solomon Mathase's father, Mbulaheni, is situated about one hundred meters from the family home. The plot used to be much bigger. One can still see a large mango tree some distance away. It was planted on ancestral land by Mbulaheni. Both the tree and grave are now located in the maize patch of a neighbouring plot.

The family got access to a field at the nearby village of Phiphidi in 1989. However, because the field is located a considerable distance from the Mathase homestead, it is difficult to maintain and guard. The size of the field is also limited, Because of this, Mathase asked his headman if he could cultivate a section of unutilized land on the border of the headman's homestead and the Mathase domestic plot. His request was denied. When he started to argue indignantly, he was fined ten rand for contempt of authority.

[i] These are edited extracts from Kruger (1993:41-42, 67-68; also see Kruger, 2001b) that refer to well-known musician Solomon Mathase (fig. 10). Ngulumbi is now a densely populated western suburb of Thohoyandou.

Box 28. Dispersed families: Narrators explain

Nthuseni Mudau

My husband was a miner from Musina. We lived in the Doreen area. My marriage fell apart after he took a second wife. He then moved to Johannesburg. I never saw him again. I just heard later that he had died.

My last-born works in Johannesburg. She is a widow. I am staying here in her house. I care for her two young daughters. She comes home two or three times a year, and then gives me cash to care for the girls.

Thinawanga Phungo

My husband worked in Johannesburg, doing something, I do not know what. He deserted me.

One of my daughters passed away. One son works for Europcar in Johannesburg. Another son works for a local mine and the third has no job. Three daughters work in Johannesburg. I talk over the phone with my daughters, and they try to visit me.

Mukondeleli Mathunya

My son works in Johannesburg as a telephone technician. His wife died. She became ill after visiting him in Johannesburg. She died when her son was only seven months old. He is now three years old. My son visits us about five times a year.

Nyamukamadi Ndou

Because I cannot walk far, my daughter collects my pension. I am worried sick about her. She has five children and her husband works in Johannesburg. He does not support his family and nobody knows what he does there in town. He only comes home at Christmas.

Lerisa Mavhodze

My husband is a clerk who works in Johannesburg. He is also from Folovhodwe. He works for a company called Vulcan. They make stainless steel products like electric fryers for big kitchens. We see each other once every two months.

Mpho Mashavha

My husband works in a Pick-and-Pay butchery in Randburg. He rents a house in Diepsloot. The children and I visit him during school vacations. He only returns home to Muswodi during Easter.

Tshamano Mashavha

My husband works in Johannesburg for people who build stages for concerts and other events. I see him only once a month. This is a problem for both of us, but at least he has a job and supports his family at home. This means he is not building a home with another woman in town.

Fig. 34. Grid residential patterns
Folovhodwe and the Nwanedi river (Google Earth)

Transforming architecture also involved the transformation of *miḓi* into households occupying small plots in grid settlements (box 27, fig. 34).[309] Described as 'betterment' or 'villagisation,'[310] this was the basis of local urbanisation, initiated by the provision of 'unpaved streets, water points at every five hundred meters, and the building of schools.'[311]

Grid settlement was accompanied by evolving social relations. While 'people's neighbours had always been their kin, their new neighbours were often complete strangers.'[312] The quality of family relations also changed. An interviewee observed that 'nowadays families tended to stick to themselves, and to independently decide on what is sanctioned or not permitted as play within their individual homes.'[313] Once family members migrate to urban areas for work, contact diminishes and the quality of relationships alters (box 28). Those separated by long distances often know very little of one another's circumstances.

Respondents in a case study[314] on storytelling in South Africa explained similarly that

> these days people are more inclined to live far away from their grandparents; they no longer live in large communities where there are aunts and grandparents to tell them stories. There is no longer an extended family; rather, there is a nuclear family since the grandchildren have immigrated to the townships with their parents (…) The mother and father are busy, their house helper has many things to do and children must go to school where they are kept very busy (…) There is no one left to tell stories (…) Storytelling requires time and a sense of creativity, but at present there is less time and connectedness between people.

Fourteen-year old narrator Zachary Tshamano (2.15) of Folovhodwe explained in this regard that

> 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 thatch roofs. This means there was no electricity. We had a separate kitchen rondavel, and cooked over a fire. This is where people used to tell stories long ago.[315]

Junod[316] explains in relation to Tsonga 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, mobile phones, bath tubs, aeroplanes, trains, bicycles, shops, ships, flats and cake. However, these objects signify little more than superficial accommodation of new material culture. Scheub[317] remarks of local oral narratives that they are 'impenetrable by alien forces' and that they unfold 'evenly and predictably along ancient cultural lines and molds.' Smith[318] 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.'

Most *ngano* similarly articulate a virtually timeless cultural space.[319] The theme of 'The flamboyant rooster'[320] is common, and describes conflict among wives in a polyganous marriage. Their husband is a migrant labourer who works in Johannesburg, and a messenger is sent to call him home. The messenger is a flamboyant rooster who flaps and crows his way south, causing embarrassment by broadcasting the family squabble. When the husband arrives home, he gives his wives a thrashing.

The passing reference to migrant labour in this story

> is a historically significant yet dispensable element: All that matters is that the husband is absent from home and that he returns there to maintain control over his wayward wives. *Ngano* in this way offer 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.[321]

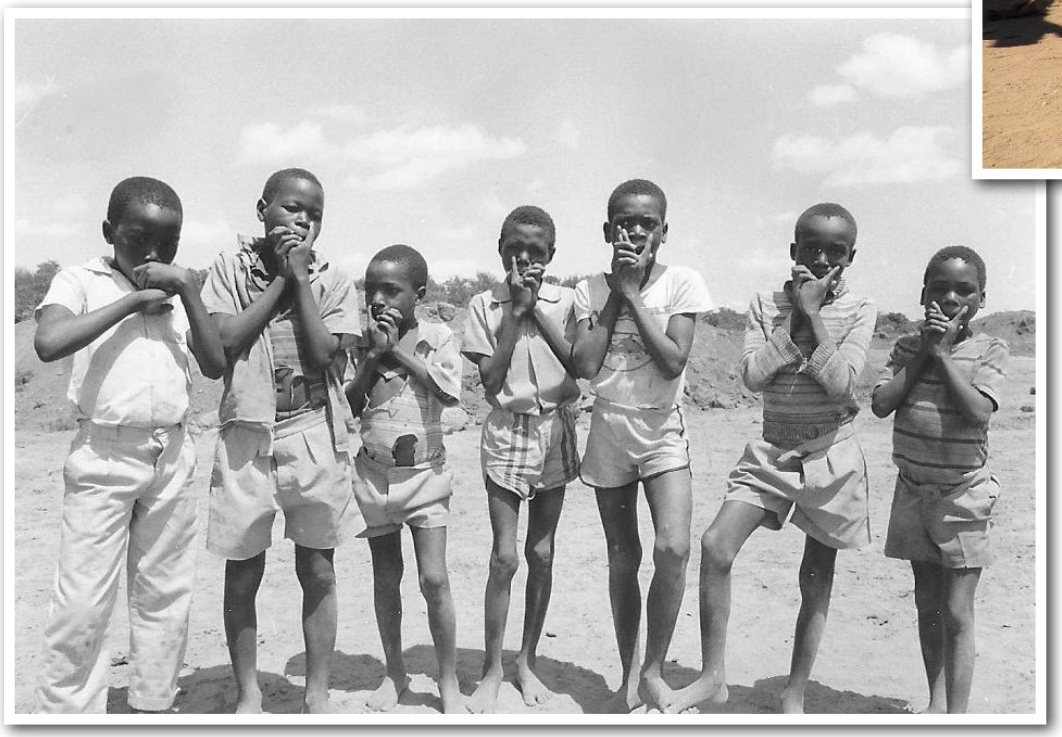
Rapid infrastructural development and proliferating economic activity has fuelled aspirations for mobility.[322] Narrator Aluwani Kwinda (2.10) remarked during his matric year (2013) that he hoped to enrol for an arts degree at university, but that he also dreamt of studying law or events management. Zachary Tshamano (2.15) in turn attended technical college after school, where he studied diesel engineering.

Material and cultural change has been so rapid that 'even parents

Fig. 35. Children at play

At the home of narrator Thizwilondi Kwinda, 26 June 2016. Some young children are playing marbles and cards, and others with wire cars. The cars have wire wheels at the back that are shaped to raise dust.

R to L: Martin Mashiliye (12), Mukona Chauke (11), Rinaye Ndou (10), Susan Mukwevho (11), Aluwani Mukwevho (9) and Tshifhiwa Ndou (11)



Mukula, 5 March 1989. A group of boys (unidentified) take a break from their soccer game to perform a *tshipoṱoliyo* ocarina song adapted for whistling (Kruger, 2004:25):

(Solo) Hey, Thivhalimi!
Iḓani, nangani Brahmani!
Come and choose a Brahmaan!
Ndo-ndo-ndi-lo-ndo!
(Imitating the sound of the ocarina.)
(Chorus) *Fhe-fhe!*

cannot relate to what their children do as play.'[323] Many children no longer are 'exposed to settings conducive to unlimited exploration of the natural environment and adventure filled engagements with others' (figs. 35, 81, 107). They are growing up in a society in pursuit of Western education, a 'decreased emphasis on regimented conduct based on Christian beliefs,' and an accompanying shift towards individualistic, secular values.

This does not mean that *ngano* have not engaged transformation. The discussion that follows shows that certain stories are significant dialogues between past and present, and social and personal lives. They articulate material and symbolic transformation, and speak to the economy, politics, history, popular culture, identities and worldviews.

Zachary Tshamano was the narrator of three coming-of-age stories. One is included here (2.15.1), and all were entangled with his personal circumstances. 'Olosi lives happily ever after,' viewed in juxtaposition with 'Dzwee's journey' (3.1.4), furthermore articulates a fundamentally evolving worldview.[324]

Olosi is a young man endowed with a magic star situated on his forehead. He migrates to town where he finds humble employment with Baulo. Olosi lifts his star and becomes a wealthy white man. Baulo meets Olosi at a grand social gathering, but is blissfully unaware of his identity. Baulo's daughter discovers Olosi's magic and befriends him. The couple fall in love and decide to marry. Baulo is furious and forbids the union. Olosi reveals his identity as a wealthy man, and Baulo relents. 'And so Olosi married his child, he married her. Yes, he lived with her. They had money!'

This story is an intricacy of experience and ideology. Olosi plays the role of trickster, a person who achieves his objectives by deception. He exploits his nature as albino to bridge the historical racial divide in South Africa. His light skin gives him instant access to wealth and power by tricking Baulo (Paul)[i] who is an actual white man, and marrying his daughter.

Olosi is a typical young actant harbouring unbridled potential for power. However, in contrast to older portrayals of youthful potency,[ii] his power is not checked. The wealth he obtains not only is instant, but also restricted to materiality, compared to the older outlook in 'Dzwee's journey' that values the integration of the material and spiritual. Olosi's story is a profound expression of new experience ad transforming worldview.

This is not to suggest that Olosi's world lacks all conjunction with the past. His foray into the new world is triggered by events typical of the old world (conflict in the polyganous family), from which he escapes to apparent freedom. However, he not only pays a severe penalty by failing to transform psychologically, but is also dependent for his material wealth on the power of magic emanating from the old world.

As indicated above, Tshamano's three stories also had personal meaning for him. They feature a young man on a life-altering journey to adulthood. These stories were told to Tshamano by his grandmother, Matamela Makapile (fig. 87),[325] who offered them as moral templates to her grandchildren.

Tshamano's biographical sketch describes how he, with the support of his mother, managed to overcome severe challenges to complete his schooling, and enrol for tertiary training. His story entitled 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1) portrays an intimate relationship between mother and son. She is the wise parent who emphasises the need for perseverance and courage on the road to manhood and married life.

Other *ngano* also had personal meaning for their narrators. Munyadziwa Matamela is one of only two narrators of autobiographical stories. 'My mother and father' (2.24.1) recalls domestic violence from her youth, while 'Sorrow' portrays Flora Mphoshomali's emotional response to her first personal encounter (at the age of eighteen) with death, namely that of her father.[326]

Mphoshomali was a local clothing trader who travelled regularly to Durban to purchase stock. However, despite her experience of the wider world, her narrative outlook, in keeping with the roots of the genre, remained essentially localised and naturalistic. She symbolises death as a monster called Ḓagalume. This name derives from *daka* (wilderness, untamed veld or dark forest) and *luma* (bite). As indicated, the veld in *ngano* lies on the periphery of human existence. It is the portal to outer, predatory darkness, where wild animals, malignant spirits and death lurk.

Rosina Ramaano's 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1) tells the familiar story of adaptation to married life.[iii] Ramaano emotionally described how her son

[i] Named after Paul Kruger (1825-1904), president of the South African Republic.

[ii] See e.g. 'A hero learns a lesson' (Kruger, 2014:131-133).

[iii] Also see 'The girl who was forbidden to pound maize' and 'The princess who slept late' (Kruger, 2014:14-16, 167-170), as well as 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1).

developed a spinal condition when he was a toddler, and how his physical disability had impacted on his romantic relationships. She explained, 'yes, it is because of my son that I remember that *ngano* about young people whose marriage fails.'

The stories by nineteen year-old Aluwani Kwinda of Mabvete in turn implicitly memorialise the forced relocation of local communities, and their demand for land restitution. This is discussed in 1.8.2.

Kwinda's story entitled 'Chieftainship' (2.10.2) furthermore portrays violent conflict between two local families. Kwinda viewed this event from a contemporary position on human rights, and condemned the subjugation and enslavement of the defeated. Invoking South Africa's racial dynamics, he explained that the families are ethnically distinct, and that their hostility is the result of their 'separate development.' A similar critical outlook is also applied retrospectively to what Kwinda regarded as discrimination against the mentally disabled ('The disabled boy'; 2.10.1).

Political consciousness also characterises a story by elderly narrator Rosiena Magadani (3.1.2).[327] Entitled 'The zebras are jiving,' it depicts Lion and his wife going on a hunt. A herd of zebra arrives at their home and parades arrogantly. They boast of their power and kick Lion's children violently. They take his *mbila* lamellophone (fig. 71) and perform a jive song whose chorus line declares, 'We will take your place as king of the animals!'

Lion returns home and finds his *mbila* damaged and unplayable. He interrogates his children who initially profess ignorance but eventually relent and nervously explain the zebras' intrusion.

Lion and his wife ambush the zebras. They 'stormed in there, bulugudu! They jumped on the zebras and broke their necks with a crack, tlo-tlo!'

Lion is symbolic of traditional political leaders who are addressed respectfully as *Ndau ya nduna!* (Male Lion!). As in Shona *ngano*, he is the symbol of authority who 'would forever maintain the status quo, seeing to it that his own wants are satisfied.'[328] However, the intracultural perspective on the power of the voice (1.4) imbues this story with deeper significance.

The zebras represent oscillating migrant labourers[i] who were instrumental in introducing (often extravagant) urban cultural practices to rural areas.[ii] They were among the first local shebeen musicians, and often had a reputation for excessive partying and womanising (box 29).[329]

The zebras' performance is irresistible. When they play Lion's lamellophone, it emits bright, metallic sound, nzelelekunze! Although speaking under duress, the lion cubs agree that jive is superior, and that their father cannot dance like the zebras from whose feet clouds of dust billow. The narrator's unusual, direct mode of address reinforces the nervous vibrancy of the encounter between the lions and zebras.

When Lion performs on his *mbila*, it only emits the sound vovongu-vongu! This dull, fuzzy timbre typically develops when the metal lamellae no longer are wedged firmly under the bridge of the instrument, and become untuned. Lion stumbles over melody and rhythm, and his song fades away.

Box 29. Migrant labourers / Magaraba

Solomon Mathase[330]

All you migrants,
come home.
All you beautiful ones,
come in.
All you hat-wearers,
come in.
I agreed to be your lover.
You caused trouble by
treading on the baby.

Magaraba,
vhuyani nọthe.
Vha lunako,
dzhenani nọthe.
Vha miṅwadzi,
dzhenani nọthe.
Ndi musi ndo vha
tendela mufunwa.
Vho dina nga u kanda
u ḽa ṅwana.

[i] The respectful term for migrants is *vhaitashango*, 'those who leave the country.' More common, but derisive, is *magaraba* (miners, 'those who dig'; from Afrikaans *grawe)* and *amakholwa* (from Isizulu, Christians; also absconders, 'those who desert their homes and disappear in cities').

[ii] At the same time, migrant groups also perpetuated older musical practices. Teams of *tshikona* bamboo-pipe ensembles residing in Johannesburg were documented as visiting the Vhembe district since the middle of the 20th century. A team from Dobsonville performed at the inauguration of headman Abraham Ramugondo at Ngudza on 28 June 1986.

The narrator explained[331] that the term *dzhaivha* (jive) was 'tsotsi language,' referring to the vocabulary and behaviour of those migrant labourers known for their arrogant, raucous behaviour. She referred to them as PWVs, an abbreviation of the term for the economic hub encompassed by Pretoria, the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) and Vereeniging. She explained that these migrants no longer are able to dance *(tshina)* older dances. 'All they are able to do is kick as they are jiving.'

The lamellophone is iconic of precolonial culture, and by implication its power relations, whose redefinition is vividly expressed by Lion's disintegrating song.[i] Magadani's story, recorded by Le Roux in 1991, foreshadowed The Council of Traditional Leaders Act (1997),[332] which is a space for the renegotiation of traditional political power and customary law within South Africa's democratic dispensation, itself shaped by the dissemination of power in the domains of the economy and popular culture, of which jive music was once iconic.

At the same time, Mashau Tseisi's story entitled 'The head is rotten' (2.4.2) should be read in terms of the continuing role of traditional rulers in local government (fig. 94). Ntanganedzeni Phuravhathu was installed by chief Ratshibvumo Rambuda in 2016 as the head of Mabvete village,[333] home to narrators Nthuseni Mudau and Aluwani Kwinda. Phuravhathu was informed that he had to 'resolve some of the matters the communities battle with,' and function 'as a link between his communities and the nearby Musina local municipality, for the delivery of services.' Rambuda also informed Phuravhathu that he had to 'treat his communities with respect, because he is a chief because of (his) subjects.' 'The head is rotten' implies that rulers, like initiates and all others, are also subject to *ndayo*, or rules of conduct.

Other narrative portrayals of transforming relationships and values involve gender and worldview. Gender relations are at the core of local popular musics. They address transforming role allocations, and are particularly critical of sexual mores.[334] Addressing an imaginary young audience around a cooking fire, Mashudu Mulaudzi (fig. 21) describes in an impassioned, humorous way how wives no longer want to care for the extended family (box 30).

This theme is taken up in a *ngano* about Jim who is a migrant labourer (3.1.3).[335] He works in Johannesburg, while his wife Tshinakaho lives at their home in Vhembe district with Jim's two younger, unmarried brothers.

Tshinakaho is a fruit and vegetable vendor. When returning home after work, she cooks dinner in a small iron pot for herself and her child. Jim's small dog complains in song that Tshinakaho refuses to feed it, and that it has to scavenge for scraps of food. The dog, in the role of animal messenger, is complaining on behalf of Jim's brothers that it is being neglected.

Jim returns home and instructs Tshinakaho to look after his brothers, in keeping with the older role allocation of wives. Tshinakaho, living her life in a transforming society, refuses to perpetuate this role. Not surprisingly, the story ends inconclusively.

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[i] As explained (1.7, box 21), certain Venda clans are of Zimbabwean origin, and closely share Shona cultural practices. But while the Shona *mbira* lamellophone features in trance rituals as well as contemporary music, and is an icon of Zimbabwean nationality, this is not the case with the Venda *mbila* that was mainly restricted to secular, domestic performance. Certain expert lamellophone players did, however, adapt older styles to contemporary commercial music, recordings of which are housed at the International Library of African Music (Rhodes University).

Box 30. Marriage / Vhuhadzi

Mashudu Mulaudzi

Nowadays girls do not stay with their in-laws.
They just peep to see how things are.
When you ask her she answers,
'I ran away from the cooking pot, pot size four.'
Children, gather round the fire-place!
Listen!
Nowadays girls do not stay with their in-laws.
When she marries into a big family,
she does not want to cook for all the children.
She wants to cook for her children and husband only.
Helelelelele! Venda!
There she is, wearing pantyhose:
She went to Thohoyandou.[i]
There she is, perming her hair:
She went to Thohoyandou.
My darling, this heart-breaker.
My sweetie, this heart-breaker.
I am telling you mother:
Will you be able to handle this?

Vhasidzana vha zwino a vha dzuli vhuhadzi.
Vha dzhia mahadzi vha tou lolela.
U tshi mu vhudzisa,
u ri 'O shavha bodo, bodo ya saizi four.'
Vhana, vho tinga zwivhaso!
Ḓo u pfa!
Vhasidzana vha zwino a vha dzuli mahadzi.
Musi o vhingwa muḓini une wa vha muhulwane,
ha ṱoḓi u bikela vhana.
I ṱoḓi u bikela ene na vhana vhawe fhedzi na mukalaha wawe.
Helelelelele! Venda!
Khoyo o phula milenze:
O ya Thohoyandou.
Khoyo o phema mavhudzi:
O ya Thohoyandou.
Dali wanga, hoyu malisambilu.
Swithi wanga, hoyu malisambilu.
Ndi amba vhone mmawe:
Vha ḓo zwi kona naa?

[i] The commercial hub of the district.

1.8.1 Successful lives: Popular media

While *ngano* like 'The zebras are jiving' and 'Mr Jim' articulate social transformation, they too have retained a measure of immutability. As this discussion explains, new narrative forms accompanied the shift from the cooking fire to the lounge with its television, followed by the proliferation of mobile phones that have accelerated the emergence of new spatial conceptualisations and practices. This development, within the context of waning subsistence culture and an emerging labour economy, opened a transformational narrative space.

Technological innovation may contribute towards the drift of certain oral practices to passivity. In *ngano*, too, performers have found their 'neighbours and relatives listening to radio, television, and phonograph or tape recordings instead of to (them).'[337] One of Le Roux's interviewees remarked, 'Who wants to listen to granny (telling *ngano*) when it is time for (the soap opera) "The bold and the beautiful" on TV?'[i]

A respondent in a case study[338] on storytelling in South Africa observed that

> at present storytelling is in a phase where it is difficult for story writers and developers to move to a new level at which stories would work within the context of our world today. When we were growing up, we did not have technology: all we had was older people (…) People have not really managed to find a creative way of integrating stories with technology (…) All local radio and television stations need stories. (…) A problem that besets storytelling (…) is that this industry is not being developed at all.

This has not been the case with Shona *ngano*. Mapara[339] explains that

> there are a few situations where granny and grandchildren interact (…) This is when there are visits by grandmothers to their children in urban areas. The grandchildren *(vazukuru)* usually ask granny to tell them *ngano*. The inverse is also true, when *vazukuru* visit the rural areas. This, however, is no longer as common as it was in the past.

The narrative role of the family elder in Zimbabwe has shifted to 'radio and television presenters, film script writers, preschool teachers, politicians as well as musicians and preachers.'[340] Shona *ngano* thus have come to address contemporary political relations, circulate in social media,[ii] shape contemporary film, and feature in school curricula as well as popular music.[341]

Websites like YouTube host Shona *ngano* performances by human narrators, but most are in animated form. Makaudze[342] remarks in this regard that, because children 'spend much time watching movies from television stations and discs, it is advisable for producers of television programmes to call for and play dramas and movies based on themes conveyed through folklore.' Shona *ngano* furthermore also receive attention from local narratologists and educators.[343] These practices cannot be separated from the dynamics of Chishona, which has in excess of fourteen million speakers, and receives extensive state, media and public support.[344] Chishona newspapers and other mass media forms regularly host public debate on topics like politics, the economy and health, and the language is a vehicle for the construction of postcolonial national identity.[345]

Tshivenda, in contrast, is a minority language co-existing with ten other official languages, and has just over a million speakers who comprise about 2.2% of the South African population.[346] 'Despite its worthy intentions, the degree to which the state has managed to attain its objectives regarding language rights as set out in the constitution is debatable.'[347] Tshivenda receives little exposure on national television. Like other minority languages, it has limited resources at its disposal, and primarily takes shape as localised oral practice.

The Department of Basic Education describes Tshivenda as 'previously marginalised,' and has earmarked it for promotion and development in accordance with its Incremental Introduction of African Languages Policy.[348] Many Tshivenda-speakers, however, regard their language and culture as

[i] Le Roux (1996:11). Postma (1957, preface) remarks of Sesotho *litsomo* oral narratives that the current generation has very little interest in them: 'The film, little translated stories, sensational magazines and brightly-coloured comics are preferred (...) The old must make way for the new.'

[ii] Mapara (correspondence, 14 September 2020) explains that 'what we realize is that the telling of folktales continues through other means, of late even through Twitter by one of Zimbabwe's novelists, Ignatius Mabasa.'

irrefutably side-lined. 'Our culture is rich and yet very much undermined,' remarks Lufuno Khorommbi (box 32). This ubiquitous complaint harbours feelings of exclusion and disempowerment.[349]

For some, this has reached a point of 'self-marginalisation.'[350] This may be attributed to 'resigned language realism,' an awareness that majority languages are a prerequisite for socio-economic mobility.[351] There is one newspaper,[352] some on-line magazines[353] as well as websites dedicated to local affairs, culture and history.[354] What is significant about them is that they predominantly engage the world by means of English.

The Tshivenda radio station Phalaphala FM is exceptional, and serves approximately 65% of South Africa's Tshivenda-speaking population.[355] The station describes it market as 'young, upwardly mobile visionaries (who are) rooted in culture yet versatile and flexible to learn other languages.'[356] This may explain why the station, as well as those serving Sesotho and Xitsonga-speakers, do not have programmes dedicated exclusively to mother-tongue storytelling. The Tshivenda 'storytelling programme ha(d) been scrapped owing to a lack of support from business people and non-governmental organisations (and) a lack of interest in such a programme among management.'[357]

This is not to say that *ngano* narratives, in particular their songs, have no presence in local popular culture. Some songs have been adapted to other, extant styles of older music, in particular *malende* choral-dance music (3.3). Certain songs have furthermore entered the repertoire of local vocalists, in particular choristers (3.1.6).[358] The song in the popular story of 'The snake-husband' was performed at school,[359] while the song *Tshinoni tsha nkuku* (3.1.5)[i] was sung almost daily by Lewis Tshinavhe on Radio Thohoyandou during the 1990s.[ii]

The evolving approach to language and culture links with children's leisure activities. Narrator Mpho Mashavha (2.20) explains that she, like many other children of her generation, liked *khadi* rope-skipping. One of her favourite rope-skipping songs integrates English and Tshivenda: *One, two, three, silele, second, open, dizele, hoy, hoy, dizele!*[iii] *Tseretsere*[iv] hopscotch in turn was performed in English only: 'First you draw circles in the sand. Some of these circles are then given names like "boy," "girl" and "school." Others are named after vegetables, fruit, animals and mountains. Players take turns to call the name of a circle, and to kick an object into it. The person who scores the most hits, is the winner.'

A case study of play and leisure time behaviour among three generations in a single Venda household shows that 'boundaries that define what counts as play have become increasingly blurred, with technology and the media appearing to be the most influential agents of change'[360] The appeal of new media forms was often cited as the reason music of precolonial origin had decreasing appeal (fig. 36; box 31).

Elderly Mukhethoni Mphaphuli from Tshiulungoma attributed the disappearance of the Venda xylophone to the influence of popular music radio broadcasts.[361] It was common to see groups of young people dancing to radio music on the veranda of rural shops during the 1980s, especially during the end of the month after salaries had been paid.

Wilfred Phophi[v] of Tshifudi in turn explained that, when a man proposed marriage to a young woman, she asked, 'Is there music in your house?' This did not refer to musical skill, but to a radio or record player that had become symbolic of the good life. Not surprisingly, such change was often accompanied by uncertainty, and Phophi remarked that local communities did not know whether they were 'going forward, backwards, or kicking to the side.'

These emerging patterns help to explain why, in the above-mentioned household case study, the family television was the backdrop to daily life, one that shaped schedules such as bedtime, 'following the end of the local television soap opera Muvhango.'[362]

Favourite viewing content included soap operas, music videos, films and a variety of musical genres. Merolla[363] motivates the need to bridge

[i] The story in which this captivating song features, describes the heroism of herdsmen during raids (Kruger, 2014:107-110).

[ii] This kind of dialogue between *ngano* and contemporary popular culture is at the root of current Zimbabwean *ngano* scholarship. It is beyond the focus of this study, and there is scope and need for similar research into Venda *ngano*.

[iii] *Silele* and *dizele* refer to ducking when the rope swings over the head of the jumping child.

[iv] An onomatopoeia for shuffling.

[v] Tshifudi (6 and 23 April 1984). Phophi was a well-known local cultural expert who collaborated with government ethnologist Nicholaas van Warmelo (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948.)

Box 31. An entertaining day

Folovhodwe, 26 June 2016. The village is alive. Today is dipping day. Cattle are converging on the dip opposite the Zion Christian Church. After a brief, nervous dunking, they disperse along the main dirt road where impatient drivers nudge past them. Gaggles of fowl cross the road at frenetic speed, with their necks stretched forward, as if in a Road Runner cartoon. Pickups with passengers sway from side to side as they attempt to dodge the worst sections of the road. Pedestrians are also skirting the herds. They are enveloped in clouds of chalk dust.

The dust settles on women selling vegetables and roasting maize cobs under a baobab tree. It is time for municipal elections again, and the tree is adorned with political posters that promise change. They have been placed high up the tree's thick trunk, safe from vandals. One cattle herd has finally managed to gather his animals, and is taking them home. He is in his twenties, and wears dreadlocks. He is accompanied by his dog and is listening to a small radio.

A cart, pulled by two donkeys, cuts through the commotion on the main dirt road with reckless abandon. Dust billows from the hooves of the animals and the cart's wheels. The young driver holds the reins while standing. He is driving the cart like a warrior. He is wearing ear phones and is listening to music.

Fig. 36. Generations
Tshizambi bow-player Petros Rambofheni enjoys a visit by his sons who work in Johannesburg. He is entertained by their radio-cassette player. Mphagane, c. 1989.

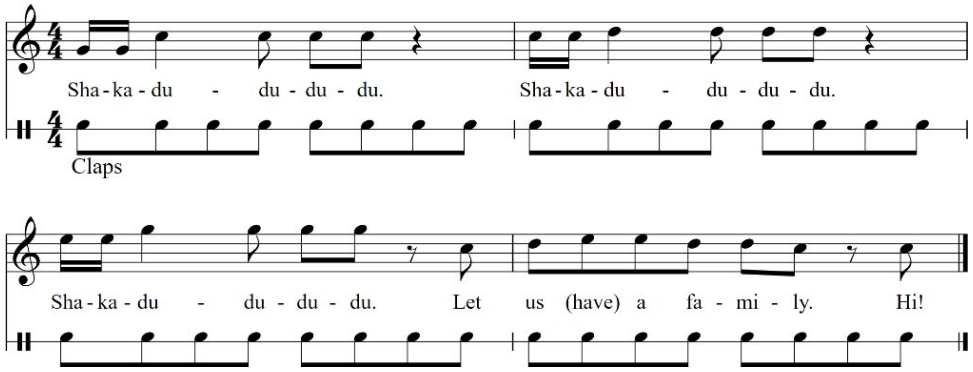

Fig. 37. Let us have a family
Malinge Primary School, Muswodi, 2009

arguments pivoting on loss and innovation[364] in the field of African oral literature by means of Kaschula's concept of technauriture, which accounts for the actual interaction between orality, literacy and electronic media in the reconceptualisation of desires and identities. The twelve-year old daughter in the family correspondingly sang often, mostly alone. She sang 'as she did house chores, and even as (her siblings) engaged in physical games. She was also easily prompted into singing, especially by songs on television. She sang almost anything: opera, gospel, popular American and South African songs, television programme theme songs and advertising jingles.'[365]

Such musical exposure and engagement was externalised in a variety of wider social settings. One of them was Malinge Primary School, situated in the village of Muswodi-Dipeni. This is where girls from the grade four class sang, 'Sha-ka-du-du-du-du. Let us give (have) a family' (fig. 37). This song expresses the ideal of motherhood so central to initiation and *ngano*, but in contemporary form. It features unusual interlocking handclapping and the harmonic-melodic patterning of popular music.

American and local soap operas were especially popular among family members in the case study, who constantly 'navigated between channels in order to stay abreast of the storylines in "Passions," "Days of our Lives," and "The Bold and the Beautiful."'[366]

The twelve-year old daughter 'got most involved in the drama of whatever soap opera she watched. She was familiar with all characters and understood the plots, often showing strong emotion as she imitated lines.'[367] Her nine-year old brother 'would also often make comments during television shows,'[368] and there was constant, critical engagement by family members with moral issues in soap operas.

The popular Tshivenda soap opera 'Muvhango' ('royal feud')[i] 'was a constant subject at school, prompting (the children) to watch every day in order to always have something to contribute.'[369] Local soap operas portray their largely black casts as successful and sophisticated.[370] Key to their plots 'is how certain conventional, partisan, parochial and hegemonic discourses are reworked so that they resonate with evolving, post-apartheid, urban experiences.'[371]

Fig. 38. Smearing the courtyard
Folovhodwe, 2016

[i] 'Muvhango' also features Sepedi and Xitsonga. Launched in 1997, the Broadcast Research Council pegged its viewing figure in 2019 at 5,2 million (*Beeld*, 22 May 2019).

This is also articulated in 'Elelwani,' the first Tshivenda film to be screened in cinemas (2012). Based on the eponymous novel,[372] it tells the story of a young woman, Elelwani, who returns home from university with her suitor Vele.

Elelwani discovers on arrival that she had unwittingly been contracted into marriage with the sponsor of her studies, who is a traditional leader. She initially rejects this arrangement but relents after much introspection and verbal confrontation about the mutually defining relationship between democratic rights and *milayo* customary laws, especially those that regulate seniority and gender identities.

Vele remarks that the younger generation no longer wants to be 'held ransom' by ancestral culture. 'Hello! This is the new South Africa!' Elelwani similarly argues that life has changed, that she now wears beads of her choice: 'I am Elelwani. And I am free.' Freedom to her means release from *milayo:* 'No more picking up cow dung' (for smearing floors and wall; fig. 38).

As explained, the early decades of the twentieth century were characterised by rapid social transformation. A group of Karanga migrants working on the Musina copper mine performed locally and in Makhado as Musina Band from about 1936 to 1947.[373] The group featured a female vocalist and five male instrumentalists who performed on bass, violin, drums, guitar and saxophone.

Instruments like these came to embody socio-economic mobilisation (fig. 39), and elderly women who still performed mouth-bows during the early 1980s explained that young people viewed them as 'uneducated.'[374]

Keyboards, guitars and drums are instruments of choice for secular and church bands (especially in the Lutheran and Apostolic Faith Mission church). Young Zachary Tshamano (2.15) described how he joined the band of the local Church of the Nazarene:

> There were about ten members in the band. Our instruments were a drum kit, bass guitar and three keyboards. I started learning the keyboard and drums. We were often invited to play at weddings. This earned us pocket money. It is important to have instruments in your church because people who live a modern life like them.

The versatility and relative affordability of guitars placed them in the hands of entertainers at shebeens (fig. 10) as well as professional buskers. Home-made guitars were common, and many successful older musicians honed their skills on them.

Nkhwasheni ('Break Me') Band of Tshapasha in Rambuda district comprised four members aged nine to eleven (fig. 39).[375] The band's only guitar had untuned strings and its neck lacked frets. The drum set comprised tins with inner-tube membranes. Bottle tops threaded onto wire served as cymbals.

The rudimentary nature of the band's instruments was mirrored in their short songs which, in the style of *muzika wa sialala* (1.2), exhibited the structural principles of older as well as contemporary music. Not unexpectedly, their lyrics expressed familiar themes: 'Education! It is education!' and 'My God is powerful, Satan is weak.'[i]

The skills developed in settings like these served older age groups, such as Mmbangiseni Mphaga's Current Stars Band, who comprised teenagers (fig. 39). As a form of *muzika wa sialala*, their songs expressed older values as well as contemporary ambitions. They acknowledged traditional leadership, promoted parental respect and human rights, and articulated consciousness of popular culture as a means of self-definition and class mobilisation.

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[i] *'Pfunzo! Ndi yone pfunzo!'* and *'Ndi muhulu Mudzimu wanga, sathane ndi tshiṱuku.'*

Box 32. Repossessing heritage[i]

Mercy O'Connor (née Munyai)[376]

I was born in 1992 in Tshianzwane, near the Mutale river. I met my Irish husband there in 2012, and we moved to Ireland in 2014. We brought our daughter, Saoirse[ii] Azwihangwisi[iii] into the world during the following year. I would love for my daughter to learn *ngano* songs and stories from a young age to keep her connection to my culture and heritage. These are the songs and stories that I grew up learning and enjoying at home and at school. When we visit Tshianzwane we find that many of these songs and stories are not taught to my nieces and nephews.

The other thing is that I am worried about my daughter's ability to learn Tshivenda. She loves songs and rhymes so much that she has learned most of her English words through them! By teaching her these songs, and reading these stories to her, I will make her enthusiastic about learning Tshivenda.

Lufuno Khorommbi[377]

Ngano is part of our heritage and a way of transmitting warnings. Our culture is rich and yet very much undermined. Any literature that has to do with Tshivenda interests me. Just to know that someone is interested in writing about our language, culture and heritage is a matter of interest to me.

John Mphaphuli[378]

My school learners attend *murundu* initiation to discover their roots. They are reviving their tradition, just like German and Portuguese South Africans do when performing their traditional dances.

Ntshengedzeni Rananga[379]

All local radio and television stations need stories because The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa requires us to use our own languages. We need to tell our own black stories to define our identity.

Kenosi Magosha[380]

My mother-tongue is Setswana. I am married to Godwin whose mother tongue is Tshivenda. Godwin grew up at Nzhelele in Venda whereas I am from Mabopane in Pretoria. My first encounter with Tshivenda was through friends on campus when I was studying, but the real deal was when I got married.

We have a toddler who is mostly exposed to English. We stay in an English area, and Godwin and I mostly speak in English, given that we are not fluent in each other's language. I would like our son to get a balanced perspective by experiencing the literature and culture of both the Venda and Tswana people. I would also like to afford him the opportunity to learn our mother tongues and be fluent in them. The compilation of *ngano* stories is also of value to me personally as I'm learning Tshivenda. This will allow me to connect better with the people in Venda when we visit my husband's family. I am also aiming to understand Venda culture through stories.

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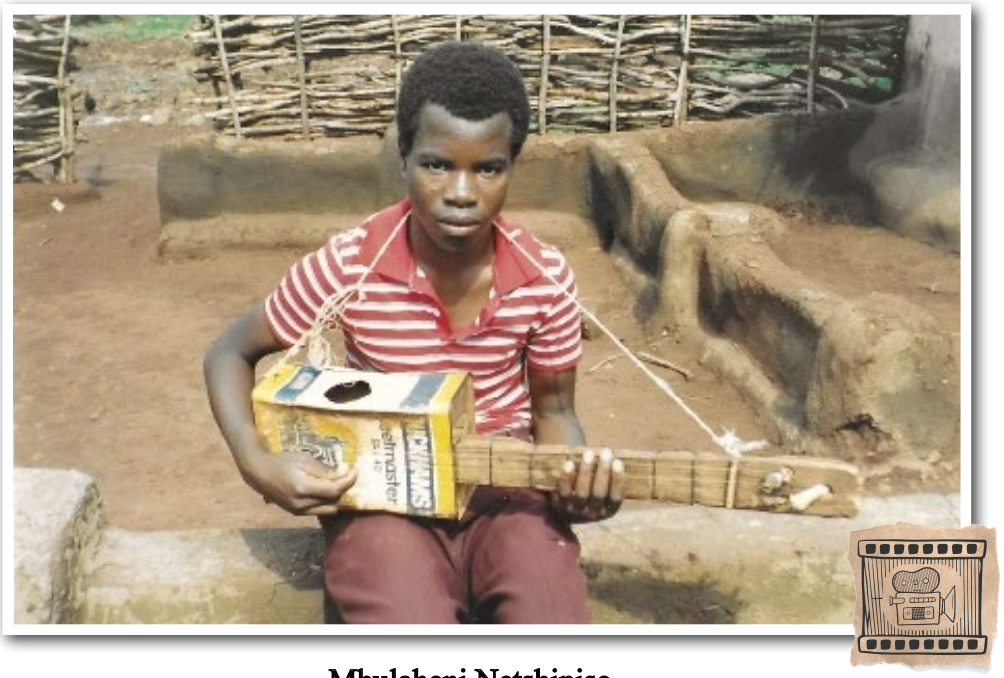
[i] The publication of a previous collection of stories was reported by the Limpopo Mirror, a regional newspaper (https://www.limpopomirror.co.za). This resulted in personal correspondence with readers.

[ii] 'Freedom.'

[iii] 'Unforgettable.'



Mbulaheni Netshipise
Tshififi, 1989

Nkhwasheni Band
Tshapasha, 1990

Fig. 39. Musical mobilisation

Current Stars
with Mmbangiseni Mphaga kneeling
Mukula, 1991

1.8.2 A landscape of contestation

I first visited the villages of Muswodi and Folovhodwe during the late 1980s. Conditioned by the heavily cultivated, verdant slopes of the Soutpansberg, I struggled to comprehend existence in the arid, rocky valley undulating towards the Limpopo river.

These villages were situated in a lunar landscape, with clouds of white limestone dust billowing from the wheels of passing vehicles. There was no obvious evidence of farming. A few small herds of goats wandered around, devouring all edible objects. There was no significant commercial activity, only a few small spaza shops and forlorn road-side stalls selling fresh produce.

Bohlman[381] explains that no place 'is innocent of history. It is that absence of innocence that urges the ethnographer to look for new forms of history and to struggle to understand the reasons for the disjuncture between past and present.' I had not envisaged that return visits to investigate a sacred drum and a unique *tshikona* bamboo-pipe dance group (boxes 35, 36) would open a portal to a history of forced relocation.

Land occupation in the Limpopo valley dates back many centuries. The area features stone and iron age sites as well as rock art.[382] Archaeological and oral evidence dates initial settlement to no later than c. 800 AD.[383]

The area encompassed by the Nzhelele and Nwanedi river was under the jurisdiction of Mphephu Ramabulana. The local ruling families were Nedondwe (Tshipise), Manenzhe (west of the Nwanedi river), Nefholovhodwe (Domboni, north of Folovhodwe) and Tshirundu. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that the Tshirundus controlled a swath called Tshikale along the Nzhelele river, while the Nefolovhodwes claimed the Nwanedi river and its immediate vicinity. Apart from brief, non-specific allusion to local skirmishes in the *ngano* entitled 'The young men in the cave' (2.12.1), there is no oral testimony of conflict between these families, and they are presented as a regional alliance in a praise poem (box 33).

The Tshirundus occupied a series of fortified stone-walled villages between 1860 and 1913 (fig. 41).[384] Early settlements in the Limpopo valley were usually elevated for defensive reasons (fig. 40),[i] and many still harbour historical and spiritual meanings as places of origin. They comprised secluded hilltops reserved for leadership, and enclosures at lower levels for other residents and livestock respectively.

Fig. 40. Hilltop settlement
Zwigodini, 2013

Historical narratives of the main site, situated in the Tshirundu hills,

> identify two major occupational events. During the first event, a wealthy headman known as Mulungufala occupied the site (fig. 42) and more than one thousand of his followers lived in the adjacent landscape during a time of relative peace and stability. A second, short-lived event is marked by the forceful appropriation of the site by Mulungufala's stepson and feared diviner, Kham-Kham. This period is characterised by instability and conflict, followed by an abrupt abandonment of the site.[386]

Following this event, residents resettled west, towards and along the Nzhelele river. Narrator Nthuseni Mudau (2.8), describing her youth in the area, explained that

[i] The walls in fig. 40 are of 19th century origin, but the site dates back to the iron age (Jean-Marie Dederen, personal communication).

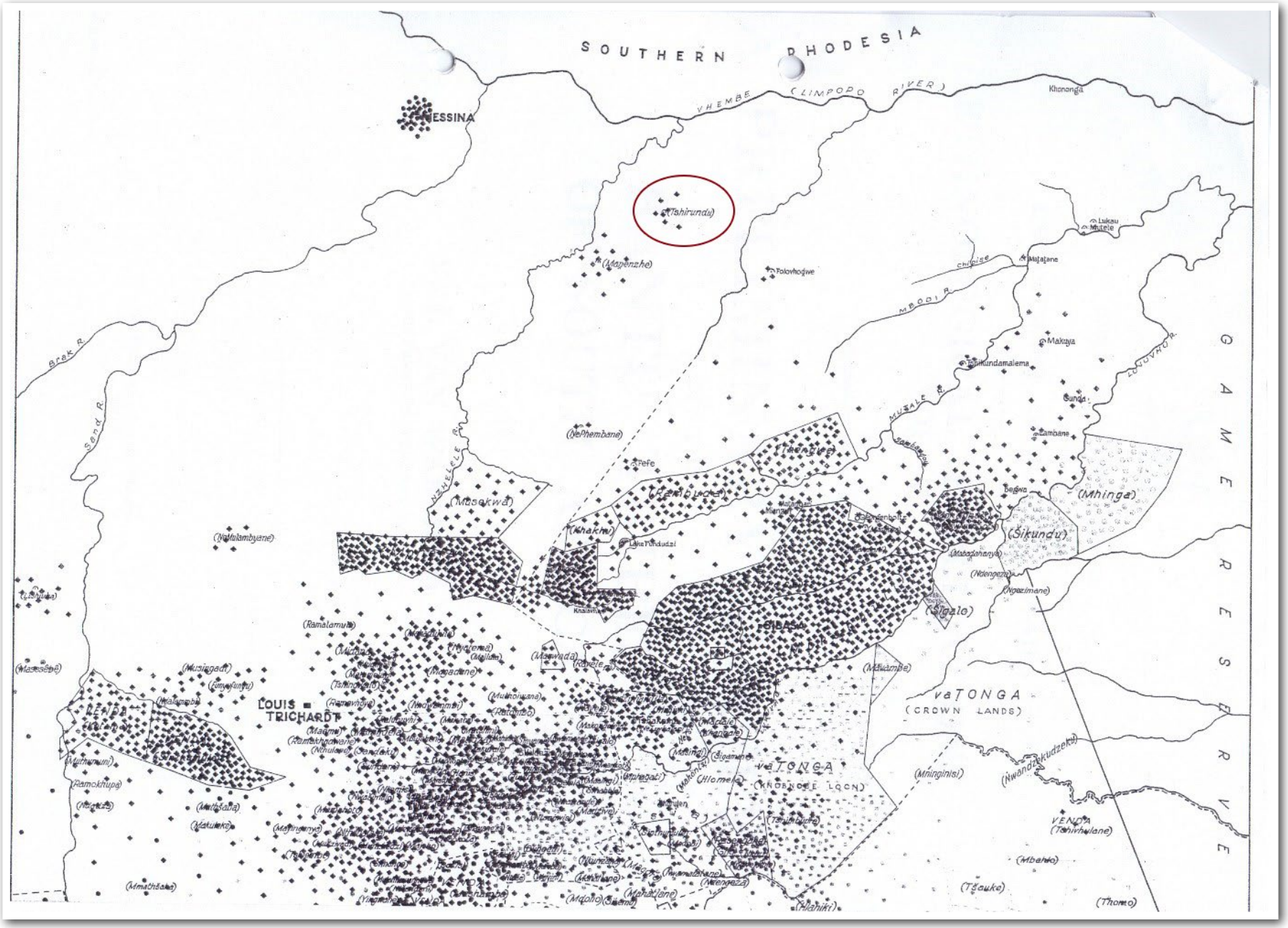


Fig. 41. Map of the Soutpansberg
showing Tshirundu (Van Warmelo, 1935)

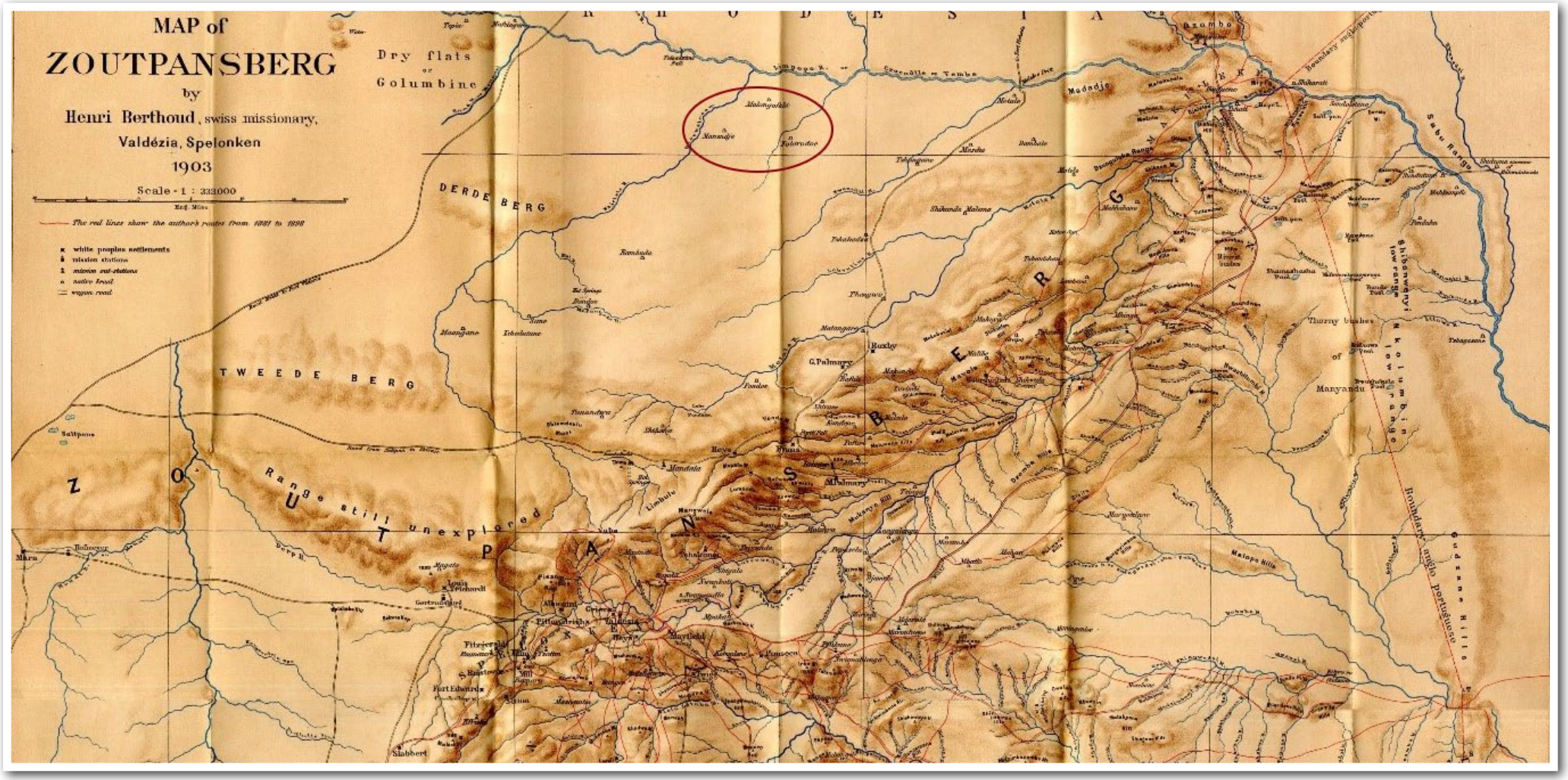


Fig. 42. Map of the Soutpansberg
showing Mulungufala, Folovhodwe and Manenzhe[385]

> we started to farm there (…) We (children) had to herd and dip our family's cattle. They were more than twenty. We also ploughed with them (…) We picked our maize, stamped and winnowed it, and then made porridge. We also fished in the river, using reeds and hooks baited with porridge.

Mavhusha Tshikale was the last Tshirundu ruler. He died in 1974, and may have been buried on the farm Frampton.[387] Tobie Fourie (box 37) explained that Lal Fourie (no relation) 'farmed at Stoffel, on the western side of the river, opposite our farm, Nzhelele-Drif. Some Tshirundu people lived there because there was water and less malaria than in the mountains. They moved away before my time, but I knew old man Tshirundu who lived on oom Lal's farm.'

The occupation of Tshikale by the Tshirundus around 1860 coincided with the arrival of the Boshoff family.[388] They were poachers who operated beyond the reach of the state. The area did not escape British attention either, which focused on copper deposits at Musina.[389]

Land surveying started after the end of the Second South African War (1902). The first Land Act was proclaimed in 1913, and the colonial government granted land east of Musina to soldiers returning from World War I. Farms were proclaimed across Niani, and forced resettlement of local populations carried on intermittently until the mid-1970s.

A state map of the region (fig. 43)[390] displays a fascinating entanglement of names. Precolonial presence is signified by the names of prominent natural features, namely Dowe hill (near the Limpopo river) and Tshirundu hill, both sites of occupation, and the Nzhelele and Nwanedi river.

The names of two precolonial settlements were ironically appropriated to signify the farms Chirundu and Folorodwe. Most other farm names reflect colonial presence. They tell stories of distant origins, hope and fear: Woodhall, Charlotte, Boulogne, Vrouensbrom (Women's Grumble), Voorwaarts (Marching On), Grootsukkel (Big Struggle), Hope and Solitude.

The geometric shape of these farms (the result of surveyance) visualises the legitimacy of land appropriation, in contrast with the amorphous hills and meandering rivers that carry Tshivenda names. The map is a landscape of intersecting histories, conflict and the vicissitudes of ownership.[i]

Narrator Elelwani Singo (2.3) was born at Hatshirundu in 1969. The extended family to which she belonged was headed by her grandfather. He had six wives and twenty-six children, while Singo was one of eleven siblings. She explained that the police and local farmers gave instructions for evacuation in 1976.[ii] The family did not understand the politics of dispossession, and did not know how to resist. Singo remarked that she would like to return to her place of birth but is concerned that her family will not be able to reoccupy all their ancestral land.

Most residents of Tshirundu relocated to the closest villages unaffected by land demarcation. Muswodi-Tshisimani ('Muswodi-at-the-fountain') was a popular destination because of the presence of water. However, the flow of its fountain had already been decreasing. It has since become virtually dry, its former vitality only evident in the presence of reeds and large shady trees that invite the weary.

Lack of water prompted some migrants to relocate once again, now to nearby Folovhodwe, which is situated on the bank of the Nwanedi river,

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[i] 'In the mid-1990s a foreign consortium started to buy up the farms in this area (Tshikale) and set out to create a particular vision of an African landscape. Their aim was to conserve an area of Africa in a so-called pristine or original state for generations to come (...) This transformation of the land (…) was defined by the possibility of traveling through an Africa that had no people, a country that was nothing but wilderness and game (…) This particular vision (…) manages to elide while at the same time claiming what can plainly be seen on the present landscape, including Stone Age sites, rock art, and early and middle Iron Age sites, as well as the later sites. These sites are not understood as evidence that this land was exploited, struggled over, and changed by people for hundreds or thousands of years, but rather as more evidence of its failed modernity and, therefore, its "natural" states as being empty of human agency.' (Mathers & Kruger, 2008:77- 78.)

Surveyance of the Limpopo river, described as 'a thousand miles of mystery and adventure,' started towards the end of the 19th century. 'Few men, if any ha(d) navigated the whole course of the Limpopo. Maps with blank spaces marked "unsurveyed" attracted a Messina engineer name Ramke soon after World War I and he set out in a rather clumsy boat.' He failed but eventually reached the Indian Ocean by canoe in 1925 (Green, 1968:35).

[ii] Apparently as a prelude to the founding of the Venda 'homeland' in 1979.

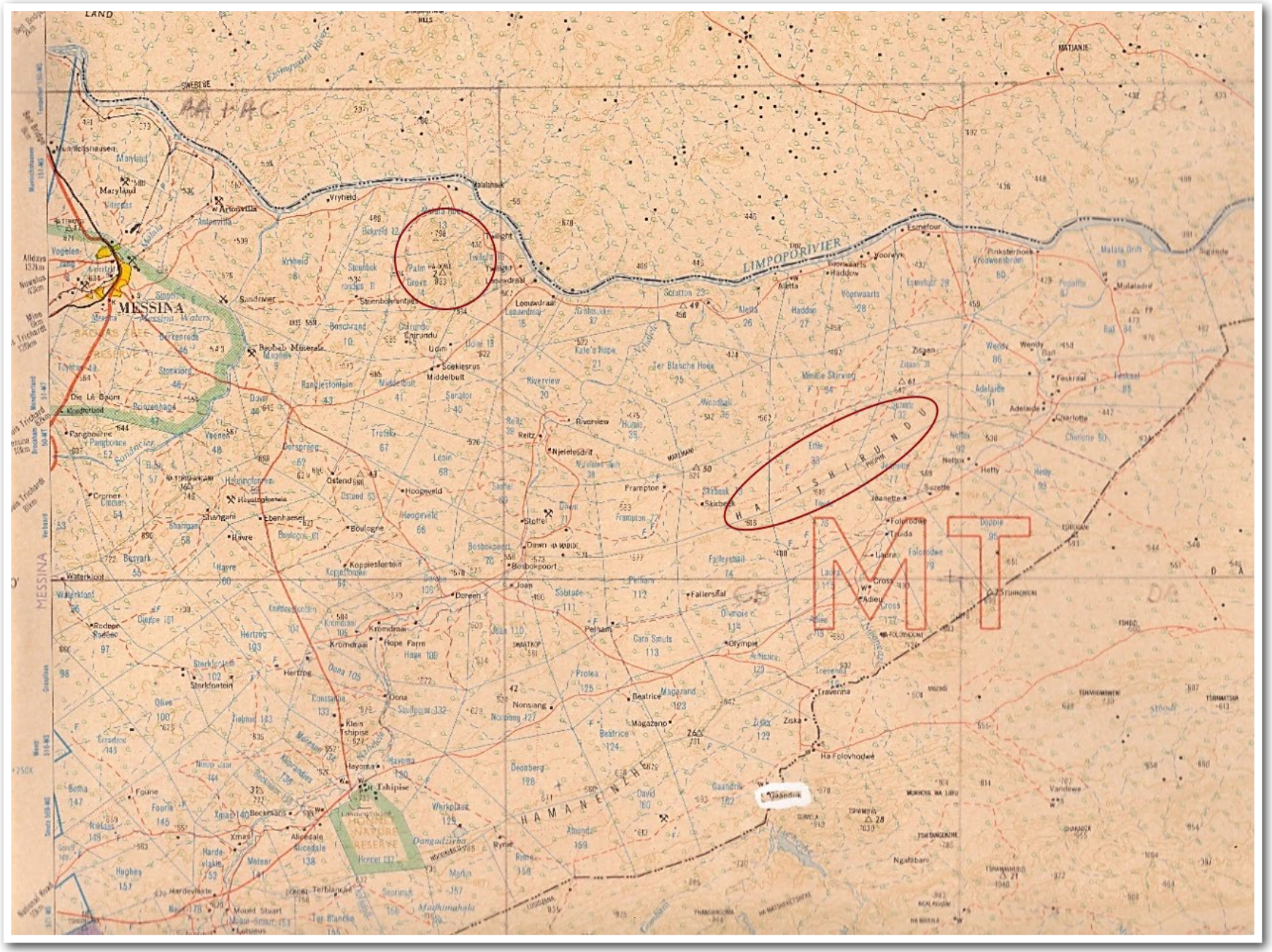

Fig. 43. Map of the Soutpansberg
showing Dowe and Tshirundu hill[391]

where an irrigation scheme was founded during the late 1950s.[i] Some families lacked resources and viable destinations. They became employed as labourers on the very land they once owned.

It is not clear why regular enquiries about removal elicited few memories. However, Singo was only seven years old when her family relocated. Also, given the early twentieth century onset of removal, passing time is a self-explanatory factor. Memory may furthermore involve omissions resulting from sub-consciously suppressed trauma.[392]

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha spoke inconclusively about the emotional legacy of dispossession, explaining that people's most pressing concern was their return to ancestral land. Several claims have been lodged in accordance with the Restitution of Land Rights Act (22 of 1994). They are being processed, and resettlement is eagerly awaited.

Eleven narrators whose stories are included in this collection were either born on local farms or spent their earlier life there.[ii] Tobie Fourie explained that fruit and vegetable farming is labour intensive. He disapproved of the social separation that migrant labour involves, and allowed the families of his employees to join them on his farms. They had free access to firewood and water, and were frequently provided with venison (especially kudu). They were also allowed to plant crops on pockets of unutilised land.[iii] Narrator Thizwilondi Kwinda (2.7) explained that her 'parents planted their own crops on Lallies's (Lal Fourie) farm. We grew sweet melon, gem squash and millet. We also collected fruit in the veld.' She and her husband were employed on the farm their entire working lives, and only retired when it was sold to a foreign consortium.[iv]

Families of farm labourers often comprised three or four generations.[v] Their size and relative stability prompted the founding by Tobie Fourie of Nzhelele-Drif Primary School. The school and its only teacher, Julia Dzumba, are remembered fondly by many. They are memorialised by Elelwani Singo (2.3) in a song that verbalises the familiar interdependence of education and Christianity: 'We are children of the school at Nzhelele. We children, we loudly praise Jehova-of-the-clouds.'

The cohabitation on farms of several generations ironically perpetuated *ngano* performance. Narrator Hangwani Ramaano (2.18) was born on Emmerich Farm along the Nwanedi river in 1953, and this is where she heard *ngano* from her grandmother, Musumuvhi Nekhumbe. Nyawasedza Mudau (2.12) in turn grew up on the farm of Lal Fourie. She explained that her 'father's mother also lived on the farm. Her name was Mrs. Tshifhumulo. She is the one who told us stories.'

Salfina Mashiliye (2.6) and her mother Ntshengedzeni Kwinda (2.22) lived on the farm Nzhelele-Drif. It is here where Kwinda heard her grandmother Lavhengwa telling stories. Mashileye's grandmother in turn was called

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[i] Despite of the lure of the scheme, it is small, and accommodated only twenty-four plot holders on seventy hectares in 2009 (Van Averbeke, 2012:425). Current plot holders complain about inadequate irrigation, explaining that 'there is water in the river but nothing in our fields.' Their profit is reduced by the high cost of fertiliser, pest control and transport. They are also vulnerable because of persistent drought and their dependence on market agents in Johannesburg (Kruger, 2014:28).

[ii] They are Elelwani Singo, Marubini Kale, Nyawasedza Mudau, Salfina Mashileye, Lucia Nelutshindwi, Thizwilondi Kwinda, Ntshengedzeni Kwinda and Munyadziwa Matamela. Some of the narrators whose stories appear in the 2014 *ngano* collection include Flora Kwinda, Asinathi Nenzhelele and Mashudu Mathala.

[iii] Afrikaans *afvalgrond*. Citing the work of Du Toit, Wisborg *et al.* (2013:9) explain that agrarian relations in South Africa are not only shaped by economic factors but also notions of identity and culture. So, for example, paternalism views farms as family-like communities, 'where relations of affinity and mutualism are combined with those of hierarchy, authority and male dominance (…) The paternal role (entails) obligations to workers beyond waged employment and providing food rations and protection, and these obligations (are) seen as mechanisms of control rather than expressions of generosity, and discretionary rather than rights-based.'

[iv] Wisborg *et al.* (2013:2) note that stories about farm workers and dwellers losing their homes, land and livelihoods persist. 'In Limpopo we often met such stories of broken relations and broken lives: these elderly people had spent most of their years on just one or two farms; they had accessed land for their own use and had owned livestock; yet, when asked to leave, they saw no option but to comply and eviction cases were unrecorded.'

[v] Such farms are 'total institutions' (Wisborg *et al.*, 2013:8), in other words, places of work and residence. A contemporary case study (Wisborg *et al.*, 2013:31-40) of a farm in the Vhembe district notes that 'many (employees) have built homes and brought up children on the farm (…) This is visible in the workers' compound on the farm, which resembles not so much a "hostel" situation (…) as a "village." Unlike the dilapidated homes in compounds on some other farms, here are well-built and well-maintained thatched mud houses, usually surrounded by a small low wall enclosing a yard with plants or trees and occasionally chickens.'

Athikhatali. 'She lived near us on the farm. She told us *ngano* around a fire in her courtyard. When you became sleepy, you just shuffled off to bed. Many, many children listened to her stories.'

The relative intactness of families was not restricted to farm communities. Narrator Marubini Kale 2.17) was also born in the Tshikale district, but her family moved to Musina where her father worked. 'The mother of my mother also lived close to us, and it is she who told *ngano* stories to us children. She was called Lavhengwa. She told stories around the kitchen fire in winter time.'

1.8.3 Narratives of reclamation

The villages of Folovhodwe and Muswodi occupy diasporic borderland between the former Venda enclave and appropriated ancestral land in Niani. This marginal swath is relational:[393] Its populations are physically and emotionally located in the immediate vicinity of Tshirundu, but distant in political and legal terms.

Clifford[394] discusses the interdependence of identity, culture and ancestral land in worldwide engagements with 'invasive state and transnational forces,' and explains that

> native claims for recognition, land, cultural rights, and sovereignty always assume a continuity rooted in kinship and place. It is easy to understand this sense of belonging as essentially backward looking – tradition as inheritance, as a 'residual' element in the contemporary mix. However, when conceived as historical practice, tradition is freed from a primary association with the past and grasped as a way of actively connecting different times: a source of transformation. A vision of unified history thus yields to entangled historical practices. [395]

Maps of Niani are part of the polyphonic construction of a complex landscape.[396] Voices emanating from Folovhodwe, Muswodi and other local villages thicken its texture by means of anecdotes, stories, praise-poetry, dance-songs and myths. Far from meaningless, they integrate as a space of memorialisation, spirituality and political engagement.[397] Most prominent are the myth of Wada, a sacred drum, and a unique *tshikona* bamboo-pipe dance team. These modes of mediation have been discussed elsewhere,[398] and are only briefly revisited here (box 35, 36).

Historical memory and local narrative superimpose a network of human tracks on the Limpopo valley. These tracks also unfold in the geographical domain of *ngano*.[399] Footpaths connect in-laws ('The dancing lions,' 2.1.1; 'The bull-husband,' 2.22.1) and they feature in stories involving the flight motif ('The old woman with long teeth,' 2.3.2). This collection also features several stories about local migration, invasion and conflict.[i] Also prominent is the archetypal journey to adulthood that is submerged in descriptions of young people wandering across wild, unknown territory ('The girls and the frog,' 2.2.1).

Notions of home and belonging are also expressed by means of references to natural phenomena, especially rivers and mountains. It is not coincidental that *ngano* documented in Niani often depict the baobab. This tree is not common in the Soutpansberg with its subtropical climate. In contrast, it grows abundantly in the hot, dry Limpopo valley where it supports human and animal life.

The tree accordingly features in several *ngano*. 'The girls in the baobab'[400] as well as 'The wife in the baobab' (2.11.2) are engaging portrayals of social conflict, while the tree serves as refuge for the hunted and destitute in other stories.[ii]

The stories in this collection by nineteen-year old Aluwani Kwinda of Mabvete must be interpreted in terms of this narrative geography, as well as the recent history of Niani. Kwinda's stories were told to him by his paternal grandmother. 'Chieftainship' (2.10.2) integrates factional conflict with young love while 'The disabled boy' (2.10.1) invites reflection on the treatment of the mentally disabled. Both stories situate action in the Tshikale district. Kwinda's understanding of them is informed by his knowledge of family history, and his view on identity, culture and human rights.

Kwinda explains in his short life sketch (2.10) that he started his school education in Johannesburg where his father was a building contractor:

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[i] 'Chieftainship' (2.10.2), 'Cannibals' (2.3.1), 'The bees in the millet' (2.14.2) and 'The young men in the cave' (2.12.1).

[ii] 'A thin old woman' and 'The lion who hunter his daughter' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

> After primary school my father said, 'I am sending you back to Niani because I do not want you to forget that you are a member of the Kwinda family. Johannesburg will make you forget your family history. I want you to have a rural education.' This means that I am constantly thinking of who I am and where I belong. Identity to me means having freedom to decide who you are. Being a Kwinda who is Tshivenda-speaking is important to me.

Kwinda opens 'Chieftainship' by remarking that 'long, long ago there was a district. This district, it was for Venda people. It was called Tshinyamulela.' The story concludes with an idealised portrayal of the past:

They went to a distant place.
They arrived and were welcomed with open arms. They arrived there. They were welcomed.
They started to hoe, they farmed.
They went for worship. They took fruit over there to the chief's place.[i]
The rain fell because they worshipped Ṅwali.[ii]
They started to eat.
Children were born.
There was happiness. There was peace.

Action in 'The disabled boy' in turn takes place against the slopes of Dondwe hill, situated at Tshipise, the location of a popular hot spring.[iii] The assumption that the spring was a colonial discovery is described as

> an apartheid lie. The Dondwe community, under the Nedondwe royal house, had been staying at Tshipise for hundreds of years before Mr. Fogwell allegedly 'discovered' it. The Dondwe community was forcibly uprooted by apartheid authorities in the 1950s and 1960s to make way for a resort. The history of the Dondwe community is unfortunately not acknowledged at Tshipise, more than fifteen years after the death of apartheid.[401]

[i] Referring to *thevhula*, the annual harvest ritual.
[ii] The creator spirit.
[iii] Said to derive from *'tshisima tsha u fhisa'* ('the fountain that is hot').

Narrator Mavhungu Lukwa of Folovhodwe (b. 1954) explained[402] that she attended girls' initiation at Dondwe during the 1960s. The village was headed by Phaswana Nedondwe, and finally evacuated around 1971.

Land ownership is narrativised most elaborately in the myth of Wada as well as praise-poetry The myth is common local knowledge while the praises of local families are still known to older people.

Naledzani Nefolovhodwe,[403] who was a young girl during the locust infestation of 1923, described how her family farmed with *luvhele*, *mufhoho* and *makhaha* (millet varieties) at Domboni, the ancestral village of her family, located between Tshirundu and Folovhodwe. She recited a praise poem that integrates references to the Folovhodwe, Manenzhe and Tshirundu ruling families (box 33).

The opening line refers to the location of Niani between southern Zimbabwe (Galanga) and the Soutpansberg. It portrays the area as dependent for its survival ('eating') on its neighbours, implying shared histories and genealogies. As noted (box 21), several Venda clans originate from Zimbabwe, and some local residents still have contact with family living there.

Hamanenzhe, birthplace of narrator Mbulaheni Phaswana (1.1, 2.23), was located immediately west of Folovhodwe (fig. 2). This village was also forcibly evacuated. Naledzani Nefolovhodwe explained that the sacred ancestral hills of the Nefolovhodwe and Manenzhe families face each other across the Nwanedi river. They are known as Mukuyu and Phophamaḓi ('Dripping water'). The praise also memorialises Hatshirundu as well as Domboni, the original settlement of the Nefolovhodwe family, and reminds the listener that their ruins are sacred.

Narrator Nthuseni Mudau (2.8) in turn recited an independent praise poem of the Tshirundu family (box 34). The praise refers to the Tshirundu polity as well as the poet. It is a succinct distillation of a history of strength and peace that culminates in defeat. The term *mafhundumuka* compares the power of the polity to that of a bull. The animal is strong because he has access to a fountain and the shallow pool that has developed around it. He also grazes on the surrounding grass.

The meaning of the second line is unclear. However, the image of the lion seems to expand that of artistic power. It also may symbolise conflict. A dry fountain could refer to the wet-dry cycles that mark

Niani,[404] as well as a victorious enemy. In any case, life seeps away like a

Box 33. Praise poem by Naledzani Nefolovhodwe

Folovhodwe is the leader of Niani which
is between Venda and Zimbabwe.
Tshikashule of Manenzhe.[i]
Manenze is the ruler.
There is nobody who does not know Manenzhe.
He knows through the darkness of rain.
Tshivhala installed Lord Netanda.[ii]
Tshikashule[iii] at Manenzhe only becomes full with heavy rain.
Domboni[iv] of Muingamela has abundant firewood and water.
Men have many building poles.[v]
Tshipandwi is beautiful.
Stonewalls are not beautiful for building a house.[vi]
Lutshindwi[vii] belongs to a sly one
who pretends to get what he wants.

Folovhodwe ḽa mulanga Ṋiani ḽo ḽa nga Venda na Galanga.
Tshikashule tsha Ha-Manenzhe.
Manenzhe ndi Murena.
Na vha na a sa ḓivhi Manenzhe.
A ḓivhe nga swiswi ḽa mvula.
Tshivhala o ḓo vhea Ṅwali Netanda.
Tshikashule tsha Ha-Manenzhe tshi sa ḓaliho
nga mvula u na tshiḓalaho nga mavhilivhili.
Domboni ḽa Muingamela ḽo inga khuni na maḓi.
Vhanna vha inga mabasha.
Tshipandwi tsho naka.
Mitsheṱo a tshi naki u fhaṱa nnḓu.
Lutshindwi ndi ḽa nya vhandalala u nge
fuvhuvhu u kone u ḽa vhufa ha tombo.

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[i] One name of the sacred mountain of the Manenzhe family.
[ii] Netanda was a ruler of the Manenzhe family. Ṅwali is the name of the creator spirit, and may signify sacred kingship here.
[iii] Perhaps a water pan.
[iv] The sacred mountain of the Nefolovhodwe family.
[v] Referring to *basha* wattle-and-daub construction (fig. 33).
[vi] Ancestral ruins are sacred and must not be disturbed.
[vii] A village near Tshirundu. This line could allude to the conflict between Mulungufala and his step-son as referred to by Mathers and Kruger (2008).

shrinking fountain until only memories and ruins are left.

Stories about Niani, told from an aboriginal perspective, are links in a chronological chain. They proclaim actual and spiritual connections with places and ancestors, and imagine a tranquil, fecund past. The reclamation of land at the same time not only articulates particular continuities with the past, or aims at redressing injustice and restoring dignity. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained,[405] '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.'

Local resident Sani Mudau (3.2.2) remarked similarly that

> Mudau is a well-known surname in Niani. We are *vhalanda:* ordinary Venda people, people of the land, with no status. We don't get jobs in the South African government because we are not an important family. They ignore us and we don't even fight back or make a scene (…) A government official drives past in a fancy car but does not even look left or right. He just watches out for the corrugations and the potholes and thinks of his cool house and the fridge with beer there in the outskirts of Thohoyandou.

These statements verbalise an enduring local perception of Niani as economically marginalised, underpinned by the notion that what is out of sight is also out of mind. As explained, poverty and unemployment is rife while poor infrastructure severely impacts on the quality of life. The world of stories, myths, poetry and music generates emotional energy and nurtures hope for a better life.

Box 34. The Tshirundu praise / Tshirendo tsha Tshirundu

Nthuseni Mudau

When we are praised, it is said
that we are the powerful people
from Tshirundu.
That praise poet wakes
up at the fountain,
there where he slept.
When that lion gets up there
will no longer be water
in that fountain.

Ri tshi vho rendiwa, hu pfi ndi
vho-rine vha ha
Tshirundu-mafhundumuka.[i]
Tsharandau uyo vuwa
gandwani, hafha e a
vha o lala hone.
Arali ya takuwa heila ndau,
gandwa li ya
fhela madi hala.

[i] Also, *makhundumuka.*

Box 35. The myth of Wada[406]

Wada is a sacred drum that belongs to the Nefholovhodwe ruling family. 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 featured prominently in events surrounding the forced removal during the 1930s of the Nefolovhodwe family from their village, situated at Domboni, just north of present-day Folovhodwe.

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. There is little detailed oral testimony of the evacuation of the Nefholovhodwes, but none of the required rituals took place. This resulted in the family leaving their sacred drum in a cave at Domboni.

The period immediate following removal is shrouded in myth that describe efforts by 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 (fig. 44).

The tree became a sacred site during this time and 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, the spirits of the drum held him captive. Only after prayers were offered to them, was he released. His punishment was to remain a short person for the rest of his life ...

Wada was returned to its original location at Domboni after the reincorporation of the Venda enclave into South Africa in 1994.

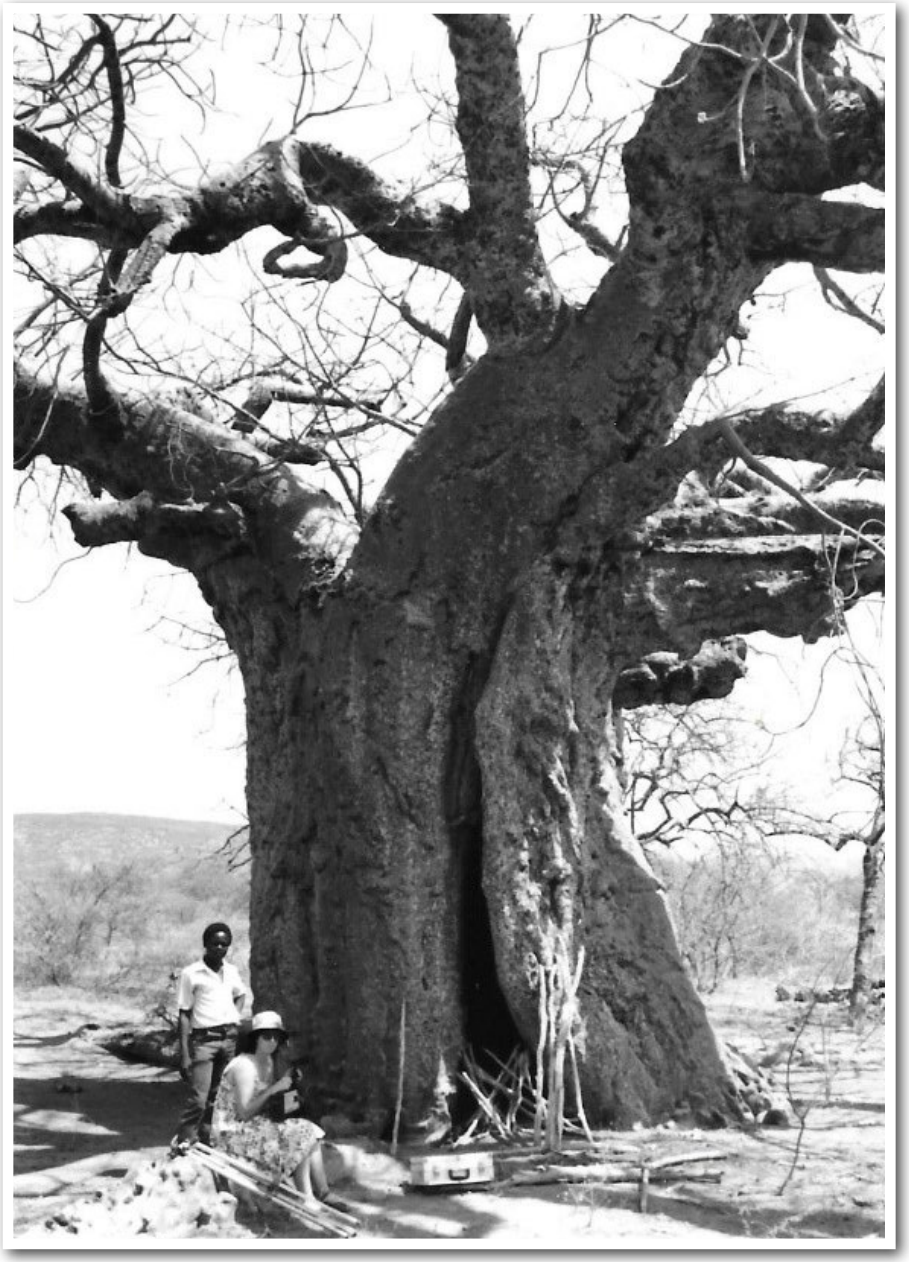


Fig. 44. The Wada shrine
with assistant Solomon Mankhili and colleague Gina Buijs
Muswodi, 1988

Box 36. *Tshikona* at Muswodi-Dipeni[407]

Tshikona, the Venda bamboo-pipe choral dance is emblematic of ruling power as well as egalitarianism. Pipers were historically adult males, while drummers sometimes also included women.

The village of Muswodi-Dipeni received instruction from the Department of Education and Culture to enter a women's *tshigombela* choral dance team (fig. 20) for the regional agricultural show at Mutale during the early 1980s. However, local women were not familiar with *tshigombela* dancing which was historically restricted to central and southern areas of the Soutpansberg. Efforts among villagers to organise *tshikona* dancing instead initially failed. Although the headman owned a set of pipes, his *tshikona* group had long been disbanded as men left their economically depressed and arid district to seek employment. Most local boys had never seen *tshikona* performed at their village and did not respond to prompts to establish a dance team.

A number of adult women, however, still had recollections of *tshikona* performances at their village. A local woman, Nyawadzulesa Madou, mobilised a small group of friends, and under her leadership they approached their headman who agreed to their request to establish a *tshikona* team.

The presence of broken drums did not impede the determined group of women. They constructed their own drums (conventionally a male occupation) from large tins and a big iron cooking pot. They started rehearsing in September 1982, and gave their first performance in January 1983. Outsiders initially were shocked to see women performing a male dance, but came to accept their involvement as an innovative novelty.

Fig. 45. *Tshikona*
Muswodi-Dipeni, 1988

Box 37. Tobie Fourie: Snake-of-the-Mountain

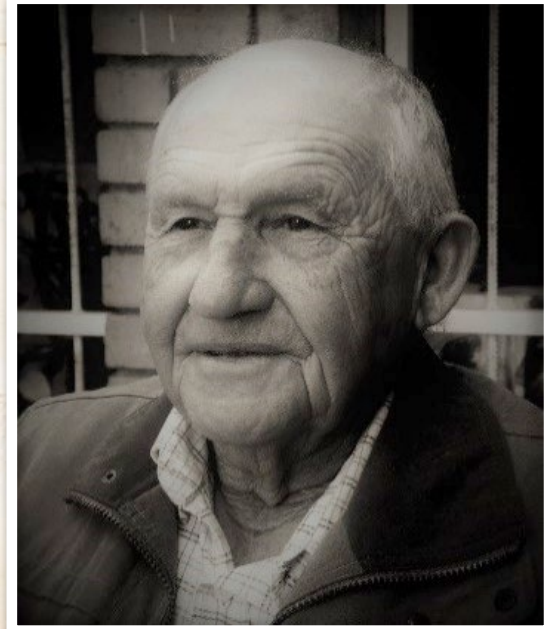
My grandfather Andries Fourie trekked with a herd of merino sheep from Ladismith in KwaZulu-Natal. He arrived in Pietersburg (Polokwane) in 1912. He trekked around Blouberg at the western end of the Soutpansberg and settled at the farm Naus on the banks of the Nzhelele river where it exits the mountains on its way to the Limpopo river. This is where my father, Joubert, and his five brothers grew up. My father was born in 1903, and he was only nine years old at that time. Can you imagine him traveling by wagon and on foot for 1000 km?

My father went to school at Mopane up to grade four. He joined my grandfather on the farm when he was about fifteen years old. My father planted maize and wheat, but mostly for our own use. His business was vegetable farming along the Nzhelele river. He also went to work at Musina copper mine for six or seven years, there at the smelters.

My father first rented land for some years. He made a living from vegetables and then started buying land. He first bought the farm Keerweder, along the eastern shore of Nzhelele dam, during the early 1930s. A big part of the farm was in the mountains, and this is where our family's history with livestock started. The farm was bought by the state during the early 1950s when Venda was being demarcated. The farm formed a bulge into the mountains, and to make the border less winding, it became part of Venda.

My father also owned the farms Dawn, Nzhelele-Drif as well as Frampton, which he bought in 1947. He had a bookkeeper in Louis Trichardt (Makhado) who failed to submit his tax returns. This made the government very angry! The fine and outstanding tax was so big that my father had to sell Dawn and Nzhelele-Drif, as well as half his cattle.

But my father was a fighter. He later bought the farms Ettie and Minnie Skirving, so he again had three farms. Yes, Ettie and Minnie Skirving are unusual names. I think that when those old land surveyors travelled around on horseback for long periods, all they could think of was their women, like Doreen, Beatrix, Charlotte, Ziska, Wendy, Adelaide, Jeannette, Truida, Laura … the list goes on!



I was born in 1942 at the Moedersbond ('Mothers' League') in Louis Trichardt, there in Joubert Street where the private hospital now is. My mother was very strict with us children and our friends because we were always up to mischief. If one was naughty, she thrashed everyone.

My nickname, Mugoba, was given to me by one of my childhood pals, Ntsieni Piet Murunzi. It is from friends like him that I learnt to speak Tshivenda, which is like a mother-tongue to me.

My father always had a couple of race horses in the stable. During New Year's celebrations people had races at various places such as Alldays and Musina. Here at Louis Trichardt, when I was only six years old, I was tied to a horse with thongs so that I could not fall off during a race! When I came home during school vacations, Ntsieni and I rode our horses. We exercised them and rode them into the dam where we played with them.

One day, I cannot remember exactly when or where, I said something, or Ntsieni said something, or we could not agree about something, and so we clashed. Yes, and then we had a fist fight! But now, I was five years younger than him, and much lighter and smaller. Then I punched him! I split his eyebrow, here … but he still refused to submit. We started to grapple and I bumped his head on the ground a couple of times. Then he called me Mugoba in a fit of anger. Mugoba means 'Snake-of-the-Mountain.' It is a magic snake that local people fear. I know that snake,

it is black, pitch-pitch black. When it comes into the sun, it shines, it glistens. Its head is broad and triangular. Mugoba keeps to rocky areas. I think it hunts birds, rats and mountain rabbits. People called me Mugoba for many years, but nobody uses the name nowadays.

Schuitdrif along the Nzhelele river eventually became our family farm. This is where I used to play with Patrick Mphephu, the first president of Venda. He was quite a bit older than me, but we got to know each other very well. My father and his father also were good pals.

Higher up the mountain, behind Schuitdrif where there are ruins,[i] there is a road that takes you to old Khakhu. Chief Khakhu, I will never forget, had a leather brief case. He and Patrick's father used to come and visit my father at Schuitdrif. Then they would all sit there under a tree. This is very important to Venda people: You do not cross the threshold of their home. I never knew what the inside of people's houses looked like. You sat outside, under a tree. All important things are discussed there, not inside a room. Before we White people came here, Venda people lived in small rondavels. A chief could not get his entire council into a rondavel. And this is why tradition is: You meet under a tree. This is the proper way of doing things. It even shows respect.

When we were grown up and Patrick had become president, he once asked me to come and see him. When you go to a chief, especially the president of Venda, out of respect for him you take him a present, a gelded goat, not a ram or a ewe.

I asked him, 'What will we be talking about?'

He said we would be talking about serious matters.

I tied the goat to the back of the pickup. I got there to Patrick's place, and found his councillor. He bid me welcome and told me to go to Patrick's office.

I said to him, 'Hey, go and tell him, tell him he is breaching custom. We don't talk inside a house.'

When I came there to the office, Patrick said, 'No, that story has now changed.'

I asked him mockingly, 'Have you now become an elevated person?'[ii] You should have heard us talking after that!

I returned to Schuitdrift from agricultural school at Brits in December 1962. I was twenty years old and irresponsible, and so I just fooled around at home for a while.

My father had 280 cattle at that time. He had bought an Afrikaner herd from my mother's family in the Cradock district in 1948. He had four important keys for the farm. There was the key for the gate, the key for the small overnight shelter, the key for the storeroom and the key for the saddle room. He threw those keys to me and said, 'Now you are in control of the animals on all our farms.'

I had to travel between cattle posts. But when my father fell behind with harvesting oranges, he used to say, 'Come and help.'

My father, my brother Andries and I bought Nzhelele-Drif[iii] from the Roux family. The name of the farm refers to the route along which people in the past travelled from Niani to Musina.

There were a few families of labourers living on our farm Frampton. They staffed cattle posts. There also were general labourers who lived dispersed on our others farms, those old people who first worked for my father. Their grandchildren grew up with them. Now, when I showed those grannies a book with pictures, they would hold it upside down. So my wife and I decided, no, something must be done. It was sad to let my children go to school, but those farm children could not. So I applied to the Department of Education to start a school at Nzhelele-Drif, but they turned it down. I applied again, and they turned it down once more.

I became very annoyed. I decided to start at the top! And so I went to

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[i] Referring to the famous Dzata ruins.

[ii] Afrikaans, *'hogere mens.'*

[iii] The farm is still known today by local villagers as Drievoet (lit. 'Threefoot'), derived from Dutch, *drift.*

see Sybrand van Niekerk, Administrator of Transvaal. He had a farm not far from Nzhelele-Drif where he used to hunt during the winter. I knew him well.

I said to him, 'No, no, no! You can't do this to me! You really can't do this to me!'

I continued, 'My children go to school, and those farm children cannot even write their name! No, man, things do not work like this.'

Then, with a glass of whisky for him and a beer for me, we came to an understanding. I said, 'Oom, here is my phone number, I won't wait longer than a week.' Things went fast after that ...

The school did not have a formal name. I suppose it was just called Nzhelele-Drif School. It was housed in an old homestead on the farm. We restored the bigger rooms. Some learners had to walk seven or eight kilometres to school. I think the school went up to grade five. From there they went to a larger school on Peter Knott's farm at Doreen.

There was one teacher. I cannot remember the name of the first teacher, she disappeared overnight. She was replaced by Julia Dzumba. She came from Blouberg district. Old Julia is still alive.

The children were extremely boisterous. They played so roughly you could not install windows in the building! They shot at them with catapults and everything else. During the first year of her teaching, Julia lodged complaints about the ringleaders to me about once a month. Then I would go there and give a few hidings,[i] and then we would carry on again.

At one point I had to dish out so many beatings[ii] that I asked Julia, 'What should we do?'

She said, 'Let them break down the school, then they can sit outside.'

I said to them, 'Remember, if you break down the school, you will sit outside, under those mopane trees. And they are small, so most of you will sit in the sun.'

And so things became better! But jokes aside, I never had a serious problem with that school. Julia was a really good person. The school closed down when I sold the farm. The farm now belongs to a Danish consortium.

Fruit and vegetable farms always employed large numbers of labourers. Harvest and migrant labour did not make sense to me and other farmers. This meant women had to sit at home, away from their men. So people lived in communities on several large farms. Hope Farm belonging to the Cawood family had a big number of people living there. Of course, labourers did not have residential rights, yet some of them spent most of their lives on a particular farm, and retired there.

The understanding between farmer and worker was: You could erect a dwelling, and you had free access to water and firewood. This was assumed, people did not even negotiate this. Things are totally different nowadays, but then it was normal that labourers should live where they worked. The old people who worked for my father and later for me had access to pockets of land on our farms where I planted crops for them, or they planted for themselves. They got meat twice a day, whatever was available, but mostly venison. I had a very big chest freezer. My foreman Andries kept the key. He drank so much that he shivered and eventually died. His job was to keep the freezer fully stocked.

We milked for our kitchen and made our own butter. Workers got our excess milk. And when we harvested vegetables, they knew they could take second and third grade products.

I had a young worker, Tshimangadzo.[iii] I cannot recall his surname, but he was sharp, really sharp. I taught him to do many things, especially driving caterpillars, tractors and pickups. I would give him four workers, and they had to drive from one cattle post to the next, doing whatever was necessary.

Some workers threatened Tshimangadzo with witchcraft because he

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[i] Afrikaans, *'trek 'n paar velle los daar.'*

[ii] Afrikaans *'lat inlê.'*

[iii] 'Something amazing.'

was like a son to me. So he deserted and went to work in a mine. When he walked in there, they put him to work on those flatloaders that rocks are transported with. He had been working for three months when he was killed in a rockfall ...

On Woodhall that I owned, we once needed to erect a fence quickly. I had four old hands working for me. We were sitting under a tree, discussing the matter.

I said to them, 'All right, this is what we have to do: We need to complete one kilometre a week. What do you say? How many people do we need for this job?'

So we arrived at the number forty. There was no place for a lazy person, and those four hired, fired and punished.

I would just go to them and say, 'I have a problem with this man: Others are doing his work for him.'

One would then take his arm and drag him into the veld. What they did to him, I don't know. I just heard lots of shouting. Some would come back to work, others not.

Yes, farming can be rough. There were certain farmers – we called them lazy arses[i] – who charged labourers two pounds and five shillings to farm on their land. The Transvaal Agricultural Union had heated debates about this at the Musina showground. Most of us opposed this way of doing things. We also argued against twelve-hour workdays. I considered this inhuman, and said so. For this I was insulted coarsely many, many times. This was hard on me. But nowadays, when I go to a funeral of a Venda person, 150 people come and greet me.

I was close friends with Lal Fourie. He farmed at Stoffel, on the western side of the river, opposite our farm, Nzhelele-Drif. Some Tshirundu people lived here because there was water and less malaria than in the mountains. They moved away before my time, but I knew old man Tshirundu who lived on oom Lal's farm.

Before and during independence[ii] there was the promise of big development and better access to schools, and many people decided to relocate to Venda and become migrant labourers on farms.

I spoke to them and they chatted with me. When I stopped somewhere on a farm, they would ask me, 'What do you think? Will this arrangement work or not?'

So we had a *khoro* (community meeting) there at Nzhelele-Drif School. People decided it would be better for grandparents and grandchildren to move to villages where schooling was easier.

I gradually started shifting from farming to the marketing of meat and milk. My cattle had increased to about 700, but there were many problems with permits and quotas during the 1970s. So I said to my father I wanted to buy a butchery.

He said, 'You are on your own.'

So I continued farming, and appointed a manager for my butchery in Musina. Following this, I bought a local dairy. This was in 1979. The dairy had been neglected very much. It belonged to two brothers who argued about whose turn it was to milk the cows. I do not know why I bought the dairy. There was no such thing as market research. Our dear Father walks an unpredictable road with you. He knows, but you do not know. You just come to understand that you have to push the wagon while He leads. However, I knew there was little fresh milk available at that time. People mostly used powdered and condensed milk.

The dairy initially had seven cows that produced 33 litres of milk. We delivered 66 half-litre bottles to a shop in Nancefield (Musina). And so I moved from Nzhelele-Drif to Musina with about 150 cows during December 1984. It rained so much that no truck could get near the farm. In any case, we then had an oversupply because the town consumed only 700 litres per day. Then Samson Nelwamondo came from Venda to buy milk from me ... And so my business grew and developed into Limpopo

[i] Afrikaans, *'luigatte.'*

[ii] Referring to the Venda enclave (1979-1990).

Tobie Fourie: Snake-of-the-Mountain (continued)

Dairies. The dairy has become huge and produces various products. It is located here at Ledig,[i] outside Makhado, where we live. It is now managed by my sons Joubert and Tobias. My wife is Sannie, and we also have two daughters, Francis and Rona.

Life is good and our community is close. I say a morning prayer in Tshivenda for all who work in and around our homestead. When we have our annual church fête in the centre of town, they all come to buy cakes and farm produce. This is an important day in our community calendar.

The other day I overheard some old women in our kitchen mocking a young man because he did not know the Tshivenda term *(tshiukhuvha,* fig. 46) for the raised doorstep of an adobe rondavel that keeps rainwater out. We laughed at this because young people usually deride the elderly for not keeping pace with new things.

Ledig Farm, Makhado, 24 June 2016

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[i] Idle

Fig. 46. *Tshiukhuvha* raised doorstep
Tambani community project
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2009

1.9 Ngano songs

Initial descriptions of the structure, functions and aesthetics of singing and chanting in *ngano* appear in previous volumes.[408] The purpose of this discussion is to revisit some of these qualities, and elaborate on them in relation to the narratives in this book.

While *ngano* songs lend themselves to extensive structural analysis, a socio-narratological approach directs attention to their role in narrative worldmaking. This consequently requires focused formal descriptions.

Discussions[409] of musical performance in southern African song-stories show that chanting and singing not only serve unfolding plots: formal, tonal-melodic, rhythmic and other musical features infuse narrative images with meanings and emotions; they also portray motion and charge onomatopoeia with poetic quality. Furthermore, cultural passivity is specifically evident in unstable *ngano* musical performance, which is described below (1.9.3).

Finnegan observes that songs in African oral literature are 'infinitely more common than would appear from a cursory reading of published collections.'[410] Haring typifies African narratives as essentially 'hybrid,' observing that their integration of prose and verse is conventional.[411] While such integration is variable, 'it is safe to say that singing is an element that is worth looking for in tales of all kinds.'[412] There is a consequent need 'to characterise the actualities of poetic systems and to investigate the relationship of forms within each system.'[413] However, the demands of musical transcription and analysis may place the interpretation of songs beyond the scope of literary description. Furthermore, entrenched, culture-specific views of music may relegate and even disregard singing altogether, resulting in what Finnegan describes as a 'profoundly misleading' approach to African oral genres.[414]

Fortune *et al.*[415] explain that the songs of Shona *ngano* 'are usually omitted in printed versions. Even when they are included, the extent to which they are repeated and the proportion of time they occupy is often not made clear.' This lacuna was also identified by Von Sicard[416] who directs attention to the importance of singing in these stories.[i] Makgamatha, in turn discussing Sotho *nonwane* song-stories, observes that

> certain structural and stylistic elements of the folktales show more prominence in tales recorded from 'classical' storytellers than in others recorded from storytellers who have been influenced by modern literature. For example, while the classical storytellers find themselves called upon by tradition to include songs in the tales, the modern storytellers do not find these elements either obligatory or interesting. The former narrators are inclined toward giving a full, detailed *nonwane* production for entertainment, while the latter are inclined toward concentrating on the content and 'cutting a long story short,' as it were.[417]

This practice also applies to the literary production of Venda *ngano*. As explained (1.7.2), the cultural nationalism of the late twentieth century was manifested by an upsurge of published collections. *Ngano* came to be viewed as short stories intended to occupy a rightful place in world literature.[418] Certain editors accordingly adapted *ngano* plots to models of the written short story, omitting core qualities of oral performance, such as incremental repetition, call-and-response patterns, and songs.

Only two older collections of Venda *ngano* feature musical transcriptions, namely those by Stayt,[419] who may have received missionary assistance,[ii] and Muedi,[420] who represents *ngano* songs by means of sol-fa notation.

1.9.1 Form and meaning in *ngano* songs

The essential quality of all *ngano* is joint performance by a narrator and participants, involving various call-and-response patterns. As explained below, this core feature is geared towards narrative worldmaking. This is not to say that all *ngano* involve musical performance. While some narrators insist on the inclusion of songs, others explain that certain stories (also in this book) were transmitted to them without musical content. This also applies to Shona *ngano*.[421]

Scheub[422] observes that songs in Xhosa *ntsomi* narratives are a 'major structural thread' around which details cluster. This is also the case with *ngano*, of which 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1) is exemplary. This well-known story describes how a baby is kidnapped by Mrs. Duiker. The plot unfolds

[i] *'(U)nd vor allem den gesungen Partien besondere Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken.'*

[ii] Stayt was visually impaired.

by means of three song performances. In the first, the mother tells Duiker to fetch her child for baby-sitting. At the end of her working day, she asks Duiker to return her baby. It eventually becomes clear that she was duped when Duiker and her accomplice (Mrs. Elephant) run away with her baby while singing, 'We ate your child!'

Although a distinction is made in *ngano* between speaking *(amba)* and singing *(imba)*, it is common for actants to 'say' and 'cry' songs *(a ri:* he/she said). In 'Respect' (2.23.2), the narrator indicates that the protagonist 'sang and said' the song *(U ya imba, a ri)*. In other words, song is conceptualised as a narrative mode that integrates with prose.

However, singing also has special qualities and functions, and is commonly shown to effect physical and moral transformation in actants. Songs, rhymes and formulae in the Grimm brothers' fairy tale collection similarly are ritualising and distancing devices which, 'in their condensing and intensifying force, transcend ordinary human speech.'[423] They are often performed by 'supernatural beings or human beings temporarily enchanted. (They) convey magic and therefore are appropriate for those who address beings in the possession of such power.'

The magical qualities attributed in *ngano* to musical performance links with the latter's fundamental role in African spirituality. In *ngano*, as in religious ritual, the spirit world can often only be accessed by means of musical performance. This is exemplified by *Ngoma dza Midzimu* (Ritual of the Spirits) trance dance (3.3),[424] but it is also a common attribute of local forms of Christianity. Python (2.1.2), Hippopotamus and Crocodile (2.5.1) are spiritual entities that can be addressed only after they have been invoked by singing.

Singing, especially when embellished, also expresses the emotions of actants. Musical instruments are described as *zwilidzo*, objects that are made to cry. *Ngano* frequently indicte that an actant 'started to sing while crying.'[i] In 'Goodbye,' a story by Mashudu Mathala (fig. 16) of Folovhodwe,[425] the mother of a murdered child remarks, 'I am singing because I do not know what happened to my child.'

Kriel[426] remarks of singing in Shona *ngano* that it 'makes a very deep contact in the human heart' by effecting

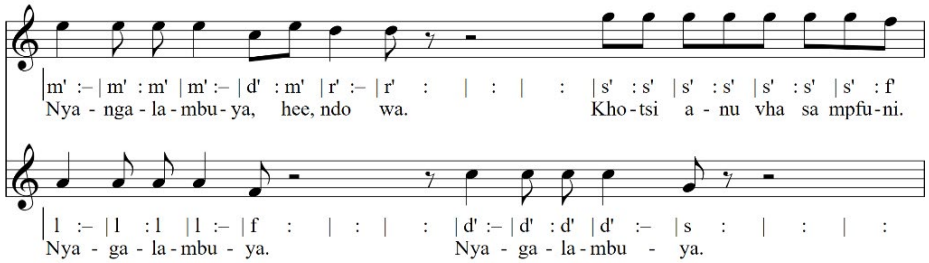

Fig. 47. The basic tonality shift in *ngano* songs

a relationship of rapport among those who listen to the story, which is far more direct than a mere appreciation of the fact that this power operates for the listeners to know that song affected something between two people in a story. It is probably far more congenial still to experience the emotional bond it is affecting at the very moment among those who are listening (…) Rapport is achieved as the result of sharing the story, rather than by entering vicariously into the role of people who are pictured as so related.

Engagement with the world of *ngano* thus taps deeply into the subconscious. As explained (box 10), hyperbolic images are intended to imprint the consequence of disobedience on young minds. *Ngano* performance once educated 'children of the law' by means of participatory narrative enchantment. This may be the reason why some narrators preferred to initiate performance with song.[ii] Singing immediately immerses participants in storyworlds. I argue from general observation of regional musical performance that it entrains participants in shared bodily states. Short, repeated verbal phrases, metrical units and tonal shifts appear to induce mesmerising emotional effect.[427]

Such musical structuring is evident in fig. 47, which is the song in 'The snake-husband' (2.5.2). Blacking[428] identified a basic bi-tonal shift in older styles of Venda music. This shift involves two roots positioned approximately at tone apart. The chorus pattern in fig. 47 consists of two metrically balanced phrases (comprising twelve pulses each). Each phrase gravitates towards one of the roots (F and G) of the tonal shift.

[i] *'U khou ita a tshi lila.'* See e.g. 'The pot of trouble' (2.6.3).

[ii] See Lucia Nelutshindwi's rendition of 'The python-healer' (2.11.1).

Musical performance in *ngano* narration and their plots constructs actual and narrative lives; it articulates power and identity, organises hierarchies, negotiates alliances and aims at effecting amiability and reconciliation.

The ogre in 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3) remarks that he will overcome his quarry 'because I can sing with my lamellophone.' In 'Marriage' (2.8.2), mighty Elephant is entranced by singing and instrumental accompaniment, and it is singing in 'The python-healer' (2.1.2) that allows the protagonist to engage the spirit world. *Ngano* often describe how musical performance enables actants to escape mortal danger.[i] 'The dancing lions' (2.1.1) portrays performance as a strategy for the resolution of conflict. Participation in choral dance-songs aims to suppress feral impulse and effect a benign humanity. People are differentiated from animals by their capacity for singing. While the mother in 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1) sings, the kidnappers of her child (Duiker and Elephant) are only able to chant monotonously. The narrator explains, 'That woman did not really understand what those people (the kidnappers) were saying, and the way they were speaking.' In other words, the singing, virtuous (if naïve) human occupies a moral position opposite to that of the chanting, cunning animal.

Worldmaking in *ngano* accordingly often invokes musical performance. Stories about the itinerant *tshilombe* musician ('The wandering musician'; 2.1.4) are recalled fondly. This performer has low status yet plays an important social role, and is therefore viewed ambiguously.[429] He is a musical expert who entertains as he observes society incisively. However, he seldom practices what he preaches. He is typically a womaniser, and *ngano* accordingly present him as a symbol of immorality.

'The head is rotten' (2.4.2) similarly involves a musical event. Here too, musical power takes front stage. The story laments, and is critical of inept, corrupt leadership, represented by a headless snake. The protagonist (a traditional leader) wears a hat that falls off during performance, so revealing his weakness.

'The head is rotten' depicts singing as a strategy for self-assertion. Generally speaking, artistic skill is a sign of individual competence. This is made especially evident in *ngano* that describe growing up. It is the ability for musical expression that enables the hero in 'The python-healer' (2.1.2) to tap spiritual potency. In 'The disabled boy' (2.10.1), the young protagonist in turn 'stepped onto the dance ground. He started singing now, introducing himself to people.'[ii]

The musical construction of identity not only is a theme in *ngano*, but also a function of their performance. Prose, chants and songs are virtually always structured by call-and-response patterns. A song leader is called *musimi,* one who plants a song, while the Chishona term is *murambi*, a person who summons or mobilises others.[430] Chorus parts are performed by *vhabvumeli* (Tshivenda) and *vabvumiri* (Chishona). These terms describe the ideal 'thunderous' *(bvuma)* communal production of musical sound.

The various call-and-response forms of *ngano*, and the terms for song leader and chorus, embody worldmaking action. In particular, the status of the narrator as moral authority and skilled musician is expressed in her role as song leader.

In contrast to the interactive nature and cohering function of solo-chorus performance, individual singing symbolises marginal states. *Ngano* about exceptional abilities usually feature solo singing as a means to achieve states of spirituality. Ancient forms of specialised labour such as hunting, iron smelting and pottery involved exclusive ritual practices that sourced benign spiritual power. In 'The lion-hunter' (2.3.4), a man is transformed into a lion as he sings his ritual song. One of his wives spies on him and discovers his special capacity. This undermines his status as head and provider of the family. In typical hyperbolic fashion the outcome of this transgression is death.

While interactive performance is the norm, it is understood that musicians may perform alone under particular conditions. Adult cattle herds could still be observed performing on lamellophones and musical bows during the 1980s. However, the *tshilombe*, who in the past performed for income at large homesteads, and at shebeens in more recent times, was often censured for singing alone. The moral stance supporting this aesthetic is also evident in 'The man who refused to marry' (2.3.3). The transgression in the story relates to marriage, fertility and sexuality, and the protagonist's moral outsidership in this regard is articulated in his solo performance.

[i] 'The lion on the path' (Tracey, 1986) is exemplary, but similar stories feature a variety of large or dangerous animals. See 'Mr. Elephant sweats' and 'Hippopotamus throws his weight around' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[ii] Lit. 'making himself known.' Von Sicard (1965:182) documents a Shona *ngano* in which an actant is instructed, 'Dance so that I can recognise you.' *('Tanze, damit ich dich erkenne.')*

Box 38. Worldmaking in *ngano* chorus responses

The wife in the baobab (2.11.2)

Chorus: *Hunḍule hae!* (Take me down, please!)

This story hyperbolically affirms spousal statuses and roles. A woman is trapped by her husband in a baobab. The chorus pleads repeatedly for her husband to let her descend. He refuses and she carries on singing until she dies.

The snake-husband (2.5.2)

Chorus: *Ndi-ndee, ndi-ndee!*

This story is one of many that invite reflection on the conflicts of married life. *Ndi-ndee* is a common utterance of sadness and dismay (see the next entry). Here it expresses the emotional condition of the husband at his treatment by his father-in-law.

Brothers (2.6.1)

Chorus: *Salundee!* (Chishona *sarunde).*

Salundee! is a common lament in Venda and Shona[431] *ngano.* Here it expresses the turbulent emotion attendant on vicious sibling rivalry

The child of a snake and a rat (2.5.3)

Chorus: *Thaa!*

Thaa! depicts a snake swallowing a rat. It is an image of utterly reprehensible human nature.

The baby-sitter (2.19.1)

Chorus: *Kulenge-kulenge, ḍangali-kulenge-kulenge.*

This well-known *ngano* describes the kidnapping of a baby. The verbal and musical qualities of the chorus line express the rough treatment of the baby, and aim at inculcating an awareness of maternal responsibility.

The old woman with long teeth (2.3.2)

Chorus: *Kekedzhulu!* and *Titimbulu!*

These chants portray images of snapping teeth and wading in water. The actions are performed by the frightening spirit of an old woman who pursues a boy. They show her power, and what may happen to those who disobey ancestral authority.

1.9.2 Decorating songs

Blacking[432] notes that the music of the Venda Zion Christian Church involved 'highly ornamented, slurred singing in which the pitch of tones was deliberately varied in order to heighten expressive feeling (...) When a hymn was under way, people felt free to "let go" with slurs, glissandi, ornaments, and short phrases in double time.'

Such embellished expression is referred to as *mato/matho*[i] *a luimbo* ('song decoration'). Narrator Thinawanga Phungo explained that it is associated with an outstanding vocalist *(nambi)* who displays exceptional skill *(vhukoni).* Mathuvhelo Mavhetha[433] described the performance of a singer at a local funeral as highly decorated, and explained that it had profound emotional effect on him.

Feld[434] notes in his study of the aesthetics of the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea that all terms for 'water motion, waterway parts, and particularly waterfalls are polysemous with the semantic field of sound. Terms of intervals, contours, and other structural aspects of song form are invented this way. Song parts are metaphorized as bends of waters, or branching structures of trees.'

The aesthetics of Xhosa music in turn involve a culinary metaphor, namely the 'salting' of singing by means of cross-rhythms, parallel melodies, harmonic and non-harmonic additions and new lyrics.[435]

Mato/matho a luimbo is located in a synesthetic domain that integrates hearing and sight. Included in this domain is *maṱo* (eye),[ii] *mathoma-thoma* or *mathama-thama* (dappled colour patterning as on walls or leopards)[436] and *maṱongo* (ornaments).[437]

Narrator Sophia Nefolovhodwe[438] explained that *mato/matho* 'beautifies' singing *('nakisedzela luimbo')* as well as clay pots where it is referred to as *mato/matho a khali* ('pot decoration'). Decoration also characterises objects like wooden doors, houses, bowls, drums (fig. 48) and xylophone slats (fig. 49),[439] as well as leather clothing.[440]

Women embellish their pottery with incisions and indentations (fig. 48).[iii] Any meanings these decorations may have, remain largely unknown. Lawton only notes that there is a connection between the decorations and functions of particular pots,[441] while Van der Lith found no symbolism in their surface patterns.[442] Van Warmelo's study[443] of royal beer pots in contrast shows that these vessels were symbolic of ruling power. They were ancestral relics and served exclusive ritual purposes.[iv] For this reason, little is known about the meaning of their decorative patterns.

Women make two shallow, adjacent indentations in their pots with their thumb and index finger. These indentations are referred to by some as *maṱo a khali* or 'eyes of the pot.' Certain women explained to Van der Lith that their pots needed eyes to see where they were going.[444] However, others denied this, arguing that 'they are not the eyes – the pot cannot see. They are the eyes of the pot because I see it.'[v]

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained *mato/matho* as the eye spots on animals. These spots, and the patterns they are part of, generally serve defensive purposes. Spots on dogs (above their eyes, as with Doberman pinschers and huskies) may deceive their predators into thinking they are constantly alert. Awareness of such spots is evident in *Tshamato/Tshamatho*, a common Tshivenda name for a dog.

Eye spots on insects may similarly disorient predators. Spots on butterfly and moth wings are referred to as *mato/matho a mafanedza*, 'the beautiful eyes that cannot see.'[vi] The semantic fields of *maṱo* (eye, seeing) and *mato/matho* (pattern, decoration, representation) therefore intersect. The finger indentations on pots are actual signs of ownership, and *maṱo* and *mato/matho* integrate vision and visual representation.

Discussions with Mavhetha and narrators about the symbolic operations of *mato/matho* invoked several related concepts. The first of these is *tshiga* (sign or representation; 1.3). Munyadziwa Matamela and Emily Lukwa of

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[i] The precise inflection and pronunciation of the term is unclear. *Mato* takes the cerebral 't' and features high-low or middle-low vowel inflection, as does *matho* with its aspirated 'th.'

[ii] *Maṱo* employs the interdental 'ṱ' and its vowel inflection is high-high.

[iii] As the figures show, certain surfaces are also coloured with graphite. Pots produced since the colonial period were also painted, while pictorial designs (often of animals) started appearing on pots in the tourist trade.

[iv] Van Schalkwyk (1989). Van Warmelo (1944:47) indicates that their multi-mouthed design served political rank, and that 'the junior wife, whose office it is to pass the vessel around, knows which opening is reserved for her lord.'

[v] I.e. the finger indentations identify the pot as their property.

[vi] Narrator Salfina Mashiliye explained accordingly that her Venda first name, Mafanedza, signifies a beautiful object, like a picture.

Fig. 48. Decoration

Fig. 48. Decoration (continued)

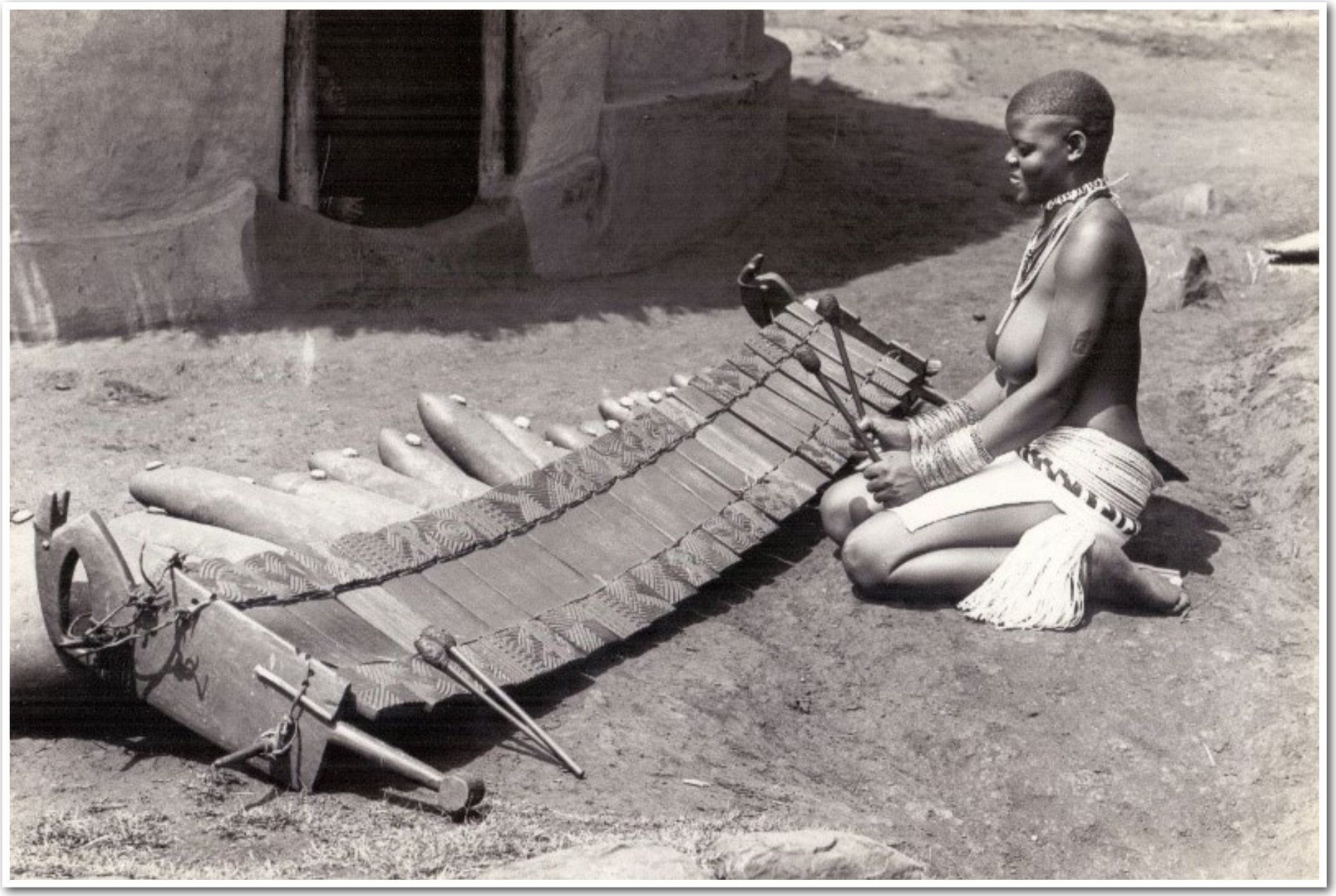


Fig. 49. Xylophone decoration
Matamela Takalani, wife of chief Mphaphuli, Thohoyandou, 1923

Folovhodwe[445] described *mato/matho a luimbo* as *mafhungo* (statement, narrative or news),[446] in other words, a specific form of vocal expression.

Mavhetha and Thizwilondi Kwinda[447] identified a continuum between song lyrics *(maipfi*, words) and *mato/matho*. This correlates in some respect with the ideological and sensory polarity on Turner's symbolic continuum.[448] While the ideological pole rationalises principles of social organisation, 'at the sensory pole, the meaning content is closely related to the outward form of the symbol. (Here) are concentrated those *significata* that may be expected to arouse desires and feelings.'

Also apposite is Labov's expressive phonology[449] which refers to 'changes in pitch, loudness, rate of speech and rhythm, as well as the emphatic lengthening of vowels or whole words.' More than merely 'reflecting' emotions, the speech act renders accounts of events 'by creating a nexus or link between the experiencing self and the world experienced.'

Maipfi (lyrics) are conceptualised as musical 'speaking,' while *mato/matho* are more closely allied with singing. Mavhetha and Sophia Nefolovhodwe[450] of Folovhodwe explained that song performance may involve lyrics only, or the spontaneous alternation of lyrics and ornamentation, but not ornamentation only. *Maipfi* and *mato/matho* come 'from one mouth,' but the latter serves a different purpose.

Anna Matlari of Muswodi-Tshisimani[i] explained *mato/matho* in terms of *tolola*, which signifies response or repetition.[ii] Applied to *mato/matho*, *tolola* refers to the expansion or clarification of an idea or affect. Nthuseni Mudau of Mabvete[451] similarly conceptualised lyrics as the roar of a lion, and *mato/matho* as 'the echo of its voice.'

Johanna Muleba of Muswodi-Tshisimani[iii] in turn referred to the aesthetics of dance to explain the relationship between lyrics and their ornamentation. Conditions of dance performance may lead dancers to express their physical experience by means of exuberant exclamations. Mavhetha in this regard described feeling as *pfa*, a term that signifies all sensory experience other than sight.[452]

In short, the essential function of *mato/matho a luimbo* is to transmit the feelings accompanying narrative action by means of embellished vocal delivery. Makgamatha[453] explains that 'songs appear at critical points in the tale, when the character is under severe mental or physical stress, and they thus serve to express the emotions of fear and grief, as if ordinary dialogue or prose would be insufficient to fulfil the same function.' Scheub[454] similarly notes that songs are performed 'at the height of crises, when the artist seems to have no recourse but to express herself in song.'

Melodic glides are the most common form of *mato/matho* in *ngano*. They almost always descend, and express anxiety. They often shape the common exclamations of dismay *mawee!* ('mother!'), *wee!* or *wee-ha!* [iv] In 'The child of the rat and the snake' (2.5.3), a swallowing action is represented by means of a glide on the word thaa!

Certain meanings of *mato/matho a luimbo* require further investigation. In particular, the relationship between *mato/matho,* vocables and humming is unclear. Mavhetha explained that, while vocables do not have independent lexical value, they nevertheless have meaning in narrative contexts. So, for example, any chain of vocables constructed around *ndee!* (fig. 58) expresses a state of apprehension. The line *holundee-aa-ee-aa!* ('The dancing lions'; 2.1.1) accordingly verbalises fear, while the line 'She came back, *lundee-lundee-salundee!'* ('Brothers'; 2.6.1) articulates the feelings of a man betrayed by his brother. Elsewhere Salundee even becomes the name of a kidnapped young woman.[v]

It is also not clear whether body movement is regarded as *mato/matho*. Such movement is restricted in performance, but may represent narrative actions and their emotional content with great effect. Salfina Mashiliye's performance of 'The pot of trouble' (2.6.3) is outstanding in this regard. The story and its song describe how a young woman tries to shield herself from angry spirits that are flying around her, and the narrator sways her body and waves her arms to dramatise the woman's evasive actions.

The precise relationship between pitch level, melodic contour, tonality and affect in the older musics of southern Africa largely also remains speculative. Henri Junod, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, attributed the 'sadness' of Tsonga music to its generic descending, saw-tooth melodic

[i] 29 June 2016. See her stories in Kruger (2014).

[ii] 'Relate, report or repeat' (Van Warmelo, 1989:383).

[iii] See her stories in Kruger (2014).

[iv] See 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4), 'Good and evil' (2.2.2) and 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1). *Wee!* defies simple translation. However, few contemporary English terms convey its expressive quality as well as the archaic 'alas!'

[v] 'A thin old woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:51-56).

shape.[i] Blacking[455] in turn identifies the melody of an initiation song as rising and therefore expressing 'determination,' followed by a 'slight uncertainty' that suggests a quest. Another song expresses 'dismay' at growing up, with a melody that is 'sad and plaintive' in the 'minor' mode. The song is followed by one in a 'major' mode, with a prominent 'optimistic' rising fourth.

Initial conversations with narrators did however lend some support to Junod's interpretation of descending melody. After discussing[456] the plot of 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4) with narrator Sophie Phungo, I asked her to sing its song (fig. 50), while I visualised its melodic contour manually. Pitch levels in older Venda music are commonly understood in relation to 'thin' and 'thick' vocal quality (see below). However, they also may involve spatial conceptualisation. Nyamukamadi Ndou realised that she had pitched the song in 'Good and evil' (2.2.2) too high for Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, who performed the chorus part. She repitched the song a third lower, instructing Mavhetha, *'Kha vha tsela fhasi'* ('descend'). In other words, pitch may be expressed in textural as well as spatial terms.

Phungo and Mavhetha indicated during intensive discussion that the descending contours in the song of 'The wandering musician' are expressive of crying and anxiety. However, it must be understood that this meaning is context-dependent. The melody of *tshikona*, the well-known bamboo-pipe choral dance, also is essentially descending,[457] yet the dance is performed at solemn as well as festive events.

Narrator Rosina Mulovhedzi similarly expressed awareness of the descending melodic contour of the song in 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile' (2.5.1; fig. 51). However, she explained that it portrays a mother's sorrow at losing her child, as well as her joy, knowing that her daughter is cared for by ancestral spirits.

Narrators identified a basic correlation between bodily and emotional states, and the dynamic level of performance. Blacking describes the performance of older styles of Venda music as 'almost destructive.'[458] This aesthetic is rooted in the notion of performance as embodied community. However, this is not the only quality of performance. Narrators explained that mental and physical conditions associated with low energy and mental stress are expressed by means of soft singing.

Singer-guitarist Solomon Mathase (fig. 10) was known for his boisterous performances at shebeens. However, he explained that musical expression at times was also individual and contemplative. This, for example, occurred at night in his bedroom, when he was pensive and reflected on his deceased father. Then his guitar no longer produced dance music. Instead, it became an instrument of pacification and dreaming (box 39).

Fig. 50. The song in 'The wandering musician'

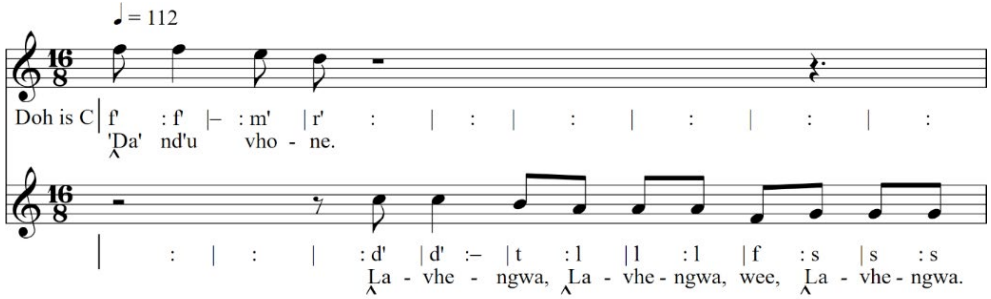


Fig. 51. The song in 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile'

[i] *'Les chants de ces tribus paraissent generalement si tristes'* (cited in Bill, 1983:4). The descending melodic shape was subsequently quantified by Johnston (1971, 1973).

Voice quality and register are also employed as expressive resources. Voice categories identified by narrators are

- *ipfi u pfalesa:* a high, clear voice, associated with girls
- *ipfi ḽisekene:* a voice that is thin and/or soft
- *ipfi ḽidenya:* a voice that is thick and low
- *ipfi denya:* a loud voice
- *ipfi u honedzela:* low, 'indistinct throaty mutterings.'[459]

The changing of voice register in *ngano* serves a number of functions. Johanna Muleba of Muswodi-Tshisimani portrays the heavy trampling of an elephant by descending to the lowest reaches of her voice (fig. 52; call pattern).[460]

Voice change typically is a strategy to conceal identity. It is instrumental in *ngano* (and other narrative cultures of the world) where male monsters speak or sing in the voice of the mother of a young girl they want to abduct. 'The snake-husband' (2.13.1) by Lerisa Mavhodze features a variation of this motif. In this story, a woman sings in the thin voice[i] of her daughter to lure her son-in-law (a snake) from his bedroom.

Lucia Nelutshindwi ('The wife in the baobab'; 2.11.2) dramatises a conversation between an anxious wife and her irate husband by means of different voice registers. Such register switching is more elaborate in Salfina Mashiliye's 'Brothers' (2.6.1). Here a jealous elder brother converses in a normal 'thick' voice with his younger sibling who is trapped in a cave. The latter is in a state of exhaustion, and sings in a 'thin' voice. The elder brother also imitates his voice to mock him.

Particularly vivid emotional expression occurs in 'The woman who ate

[i] *'Ha vha imba nga luipfi lusekene.'*

Box 39. My guitar / Kaṱara yanga

Solomon Mathase[461]

I dream with the guitar. I will die with it.
They say, they regard me as mad.
I do not forget. I will die with it.
They ask, what do you do with this guitar of yours?
They say I gladden hearts with my guitar.
My guitar causes no trouble.
There is happiness because of my guitar.
It is my friend. I will die with it. Always. I will die with it.
My friend, my guitar. I have been playing the guitar for long.
My friend which pacifies hearts.
The guitar is my friend. I will die with my guitar.
When am I with it? I am with it at night.
They know me here.
This wife of mine. I will die with her.

Nṋe ndo lora kaṱara. Ndi fa nayo.
Vha ri, na nṋe vha nnyita mpengo.
Nṋe thi hangwi. Ndi fa nayo.
Vha ri, tshiitisi tshaṋu ndi mini nga heyi kaṱara yaṋu?
Vha ri matakadzambiluni ndi kaṱara yanga.
A hu na khakhathi ndi kaṱara yanga.
Ndi madakalo ndi kaṱara yanga. Ndi mungana wanga. Ndi fa nae.
Lini na lini. Ndi fa nayo. Mungana wanga, kaṱara yanga.
Nṋe ndi lini ndi na kaṱara. Mungana wanga marudzambilu.
Khonani yanga ndi kaṱara.
Kaṱara yanga ndi fa nayo.
Naa ndi ngafhi ndi na iwe?
Ndi vhusiku ndi na iwe. Vha ḓivha nṋe shangoni la fhano.
Hoyu musadzi wanga. Ndi fa nae.

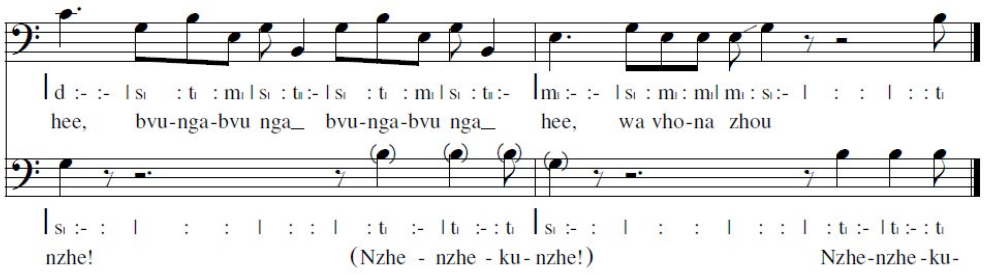


Fig. 52. The musical representation of a trampling elephant

python eggs' (2.20.1). Here a young boy guards the entrance to the lair of a python whose eggs are being stolen by his father. When he sees the snake approaching, he sings to warn his father, and they flee. They return several times and the man is finally too deep in the lair to hear his son singing. The boy realises his father cannot hear him, and narrator Mpho Mashavha explains that 'the child started to cry while singing.'[i] Here she sings louder and raises the pitch of the song by approximately a tone. The father still fails to hear his son, and Mashavha lifts the pitch of the song by another tone.

[i] *'Ṅwana a thoma u imba a tshi khou lila.'*

1.9.3 *Ngano* musical performance and memory

'The language you cry in' is an astonishing documentary film about musical memory spanning centuries and continents.[462] It tells the story of a five-line song documented among the Gullah people of Georgia in the United States during the 1930s, and the epic journey to its well-spring in Sierra Leone.

Bohlmann[463] explains that musical objects may enter the present from the past by means of 'tune families or patterns of variance.' The vocabulary of *ngano* lyrics, as well as their formal and tonal-melodic structures, similarly are clearly redolent of an ancient past shared with neighbouring Shona speakers.[464] Certain features of *ngano* and other categories of oral art express awareness of history, genealogy, migration and land occupation. This is evident in the lyrics and call-and-response form of the song 'Children of the Nyai' (box 21).[465]

Tracey[466] notes 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.' This is evident in the saw-tooth tonal-melodic design of a *ngano* song performed by Nyamukamadi Ndou (fig. 53).[467] Based on the fundamental tonal shift of older Venda musics (fig. 47), the call comprises two metrically balanced phrases that center on G and A respectively.

Fig. 53. Shona tonal heritage in *ngano*

Scheub[468] describes chants and songs as 'relatively stable' and 'retain(ing) their structure more completely than any other element in the (Xhosa) *ntsomi* tradition.' This is attributed to their function as core image as well as their 'tight construction.'

The stability of certain *ngano* songs is manifested by their perpetuation in other musical categories, especially the local choir repertoire. It is also evident in Rosina Madabeni's performance of 'The man who scratched a lion' (2.21.1). The narrator lost track of the plot during her performance, and sang the song briefly to herself to refresh her memory. However, these instances are relatively limited. As explained, *ngano* memory is marked by degrees of recollection and forgetting, and it may be the intricate structural qualities of songs, rather than basic narrative images, that slip from memory first.

Ngano song transcriptions, presented by means of notational software, may imply perfect immutability and memory at odds with actual variation and forgetting. Shared *ngano* songs not only differ among narrators, but even in repeat performances by individuals.[i] Songs that are slipping from memory are self-evidently prone to inconsistency and uncertainty.

Musical transcription is furthermore determined by cultural conditioning and individual sense perception,[469] and is therefore subject to ambiguity. This is mediated to some degree by structural descriptions[470] of older Venda musics which are useful for identifying instances of apparent instability attendant on cultural passivity.

Such instability mainly involves varying tempo, pitch and metre. Pitch level may meander a half-tone up or down. Thinawanga Phungo raises the pitch of her call pattern in 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4) during performance, while the chorus pitch remains stable. Changing tempo also adds instability to this song.

Varying meter is the predominant element of instability, and is discussed below. Some of Phungo's phrases in 'The dancing lions' (2.1.1) are relatively stable, but others are abruptly shortened, catching the chorus unawares. They miss their entry, which is unexpectedly demanded earlier, and it is filled in quickly by the narrator.

[i] Minor melodic and rhythmic variations are common in Venda songs, and certain transcriptions take the form of the most frequent repetition. In some other cases transcriptions are amalgamations of several repetitions of a song (as in 'The python-healer'; 2.1.2).

Narrators often taught the chorus response to participants just prior to (or even during) performance. When the latter struggled to master their part rapidly, solo-chorus alternation was unstable, affecting metre and rhythm. In some cases narrators therefore attempted to sing both call and response patterns, with similar results

1.9.3.1 Metrical ambiguity

Neither narrator Aluwani Kwinda nor his chorus singer performed the chant in 'The disabled boy' (2.10.1; figs. 54, 55) confidently. The lyrics may once have existed in song form, becoming more chant-like with passing time. They are not performed as rhythmically as chanting, although they are as fast. The pitches are quite stable and appear to be shaped by speech tones, so much so that a feeling of tonality shift emerges, which is rare in chanting. Kwinda's 'Chieftainship' (2.10.2; fig. 56) similarly shares characteristics of singing and chanting.

The transcription of the metrical organisation of the chants in 'The disabled boy' is approximate only, and no meter is indicated. The duration and organisation of both call and response patterns varies, as does their exchange, and the song consequently conveys a sense of circularity rather than strict cyclic repetition.

The song in 'Chieftainship' is accompanied by clapping, and as such the meter of the total patterns (14 and 16 pulses) is clear. While the chorus phrase is stable, the number of syllables in the solo phrases varies, resulting in total patterns of differing lengths. This is unusual, since cycles in Venda songs almost always have uniform meter.

Kwinda's varying meter is particularly significant when compared to the solo part in 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile' (2.5.1; fig. 57) by Rosina Mulovhedzi. The metrical structure of this song is conventional in that the solo and chorus phrases are of fixed duration[ii] (five and eleven pulses respectively). The number of syllables in the solo phrase varies from four to six, which are made to fit the available metrical space. Whereas Kwinda takes as much time as needed to fit syllables into the metrical pattern, and produces a rather free and arguably unstable performance, Mulovhedzi ensures that her lyrics are contained within a fixed meter.

[ii] See the detailed discussion of this feature in Kruger (1986).

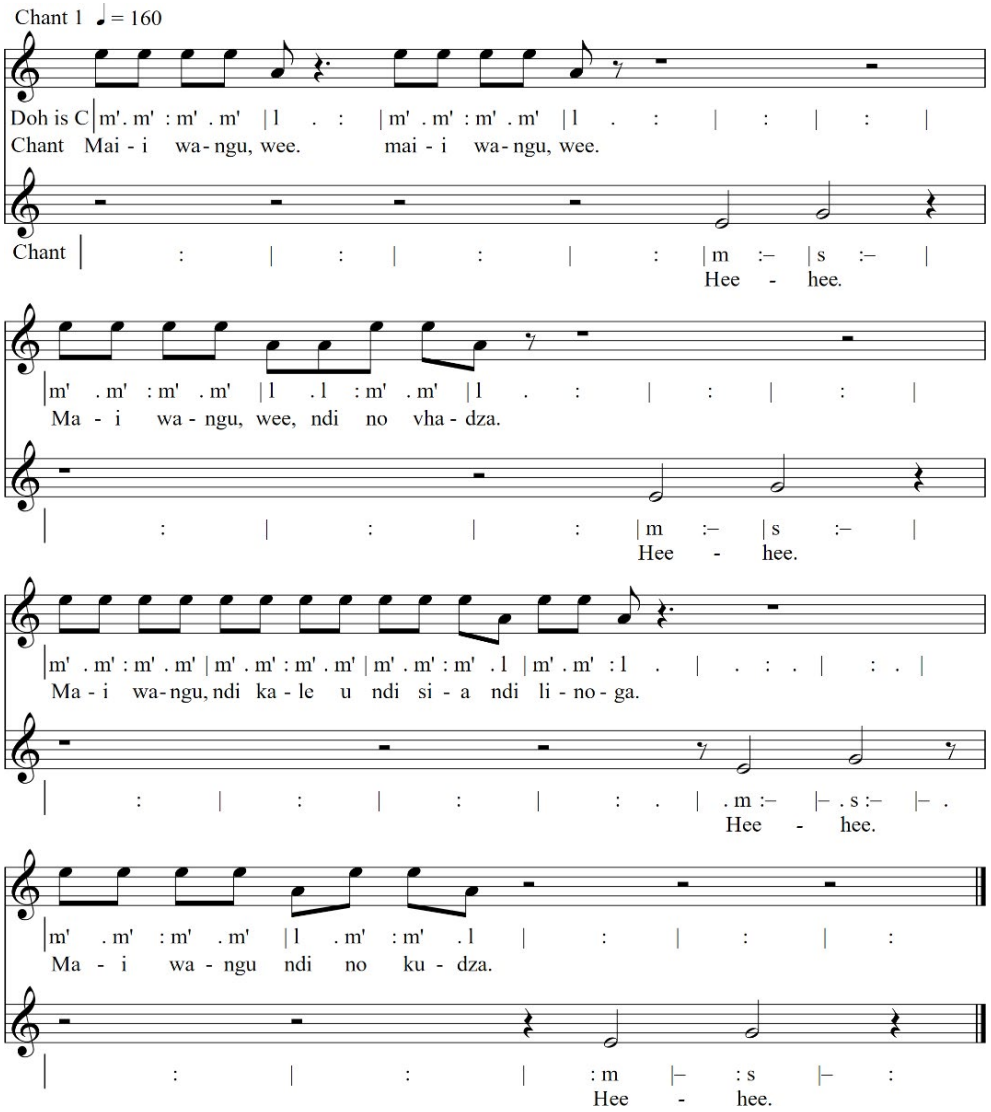


Fig. 54. Meter in chant 1 from ‘The disabled boy’

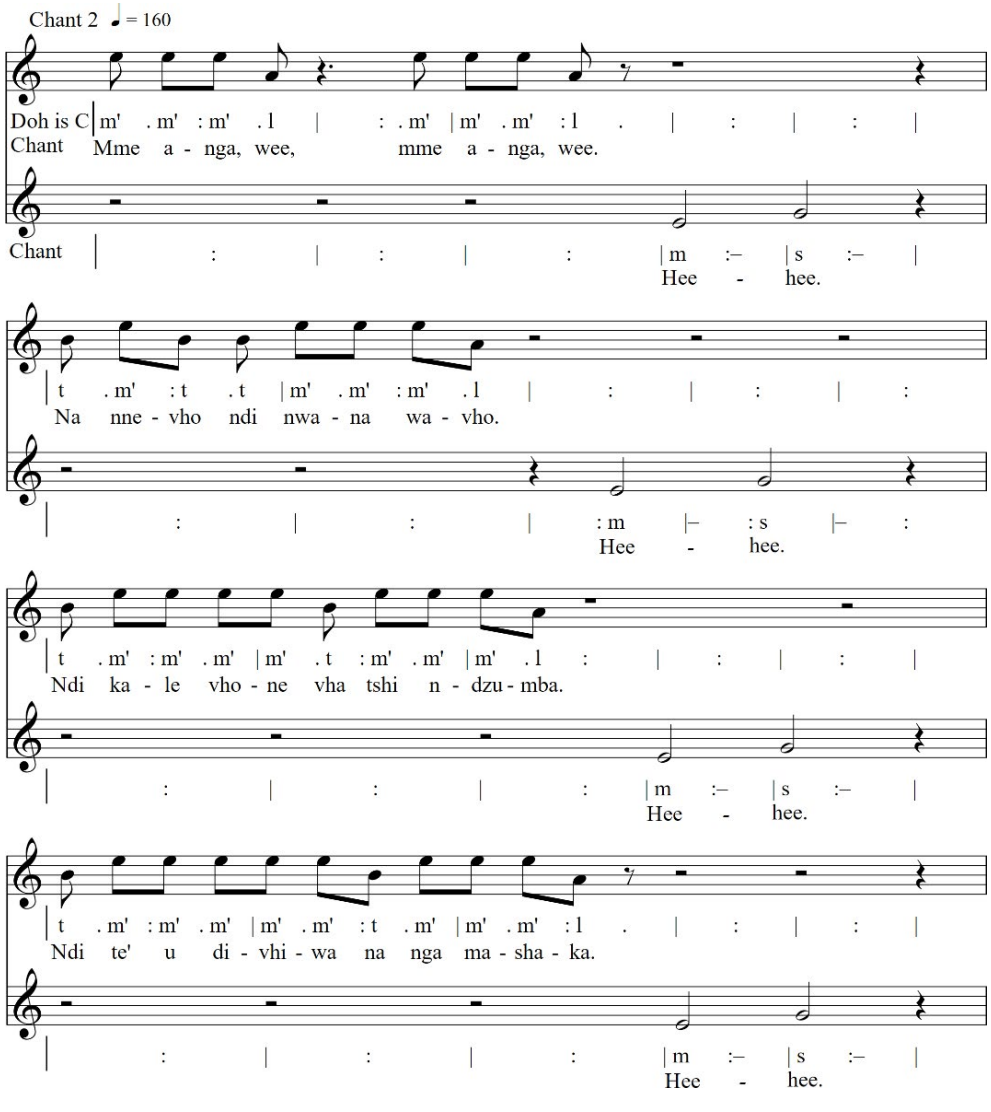
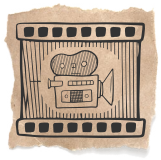


Fig. 55. Meter in chant 2 from ‘The disabled boy’



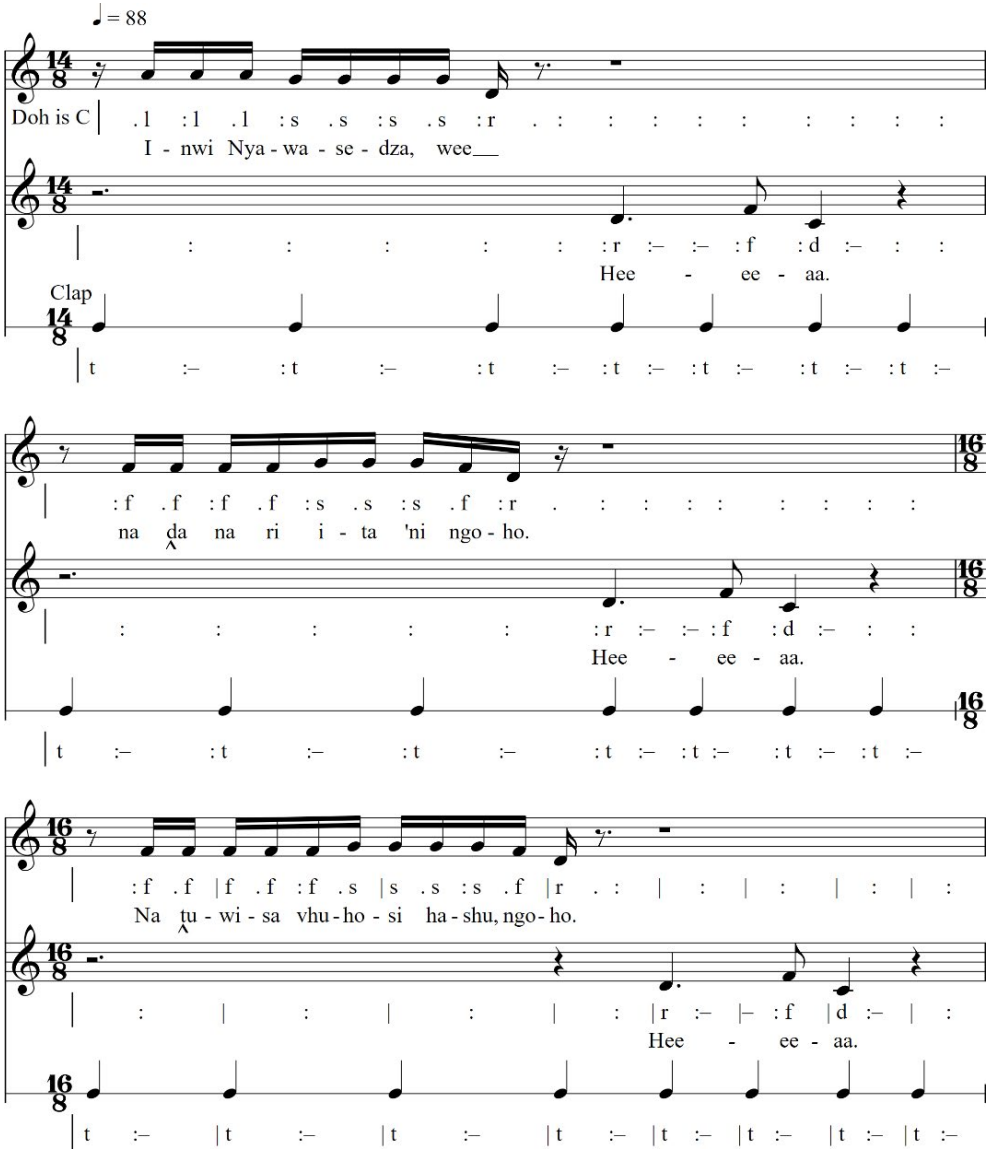


Fig. 56. Meter in the song from 'Chieftainship'

Fig. 57. Meter in the song from 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile'

The meter of Salfina Mashiliye's 'Brothers' (fig. 59) is unusual. The first two total patterns comprise 27 pulses and the second two 26 pulses. These are unique meters, and the transcription may therefore be inaccurate. However, it may be more than coincidence that the chain of vocables constructed around the *ndee!* core also occurs in another *ngano* song[i] whose total pattern comprises 30 pulses (fig. 58).

The last nine beats of the total patterns are fixed. As in the case of Aluwani Kwinda's chants, differing meter results from the duration of the solo phrases, which contain eleven and nine syllables respectively. However, there is no

[i] See 'A thin old woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:51-56).

elongation of syllables in the last lines to fit the initial meter.

The narrator's assertive personality is evident in her performance of both solo and chorus part (despite the presence of a capable chorus singer), and it therefore is not clear whether her eventual need to breathe between phrases may have effected the meter. This is also the case with her performance in 'The python-healer' (fig. 60) where her breathing impacts on the solo-chorus exchange.

The chorus phrase of *ngano* songs usually is relatively short and fixed. Solo phrases in contrast mostly are longer and may carry expansive narrative content. This results in melodic variation and unconventional meter.

Most *ngano* songs share their metrical organisation with older Venda musics, comprising 12, 15, 18 or 24-pulse cycles based on 3-pulse beats.[471] Patterns comprising 16 pulses are less common in other styles, although quite prevalent in *ngano* songs. *Ngano* songs also feature much less conventional metrical patterns, such as those comprising 14, 20, 21 and 28 pulses.[i] Unusual meter also characterises certain instrumentalised songs.[472] Furthermore, a *ngano* song by Mukondeleli Mathunya[473] significantly shifts from an initial 12 to a 15-pulse pattern. This may be the consequence of fading memory, but the shift is consistent and appears intentional.

[i] See 'Mr. Hare scrubs his heels' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:34-40), 'A smart bird' (Kruger, 2014:102-106), 'The woman at the fountain' (Kruger, 2014:162-164), 'Mrs. Rock-Rabbit' (Kruger, 2014:223-224) and 'The wandering musician' (Kruger, 2014:257-60).

The performance and structural organisation of certain *ngano* songs is open to interpretation. Unusual and varying metrical construction may very well be conventional for the genre. On the other hand, the entire narrative culture is characterised by passivity, if involving degrees of recall, as evident in meandering pitch level, differing tempo, varying meter and uncoordinated call-and-response singing in certain songs.

Meter as a domain of transformation is not restricted to *ngano* songs. Certain strands of popular culture involve the simplification and reduction of the metrical and rhythmic structures of older styles of Venda music.[474] There is an enduring creative engagement between the 12-pulse cycle with its irregular beats and polyrhythmic structures and the regular 8-beat mono-rhythmic foundation of much contemporary commercial music.

Fig. 58. The *ndee* vocable chain

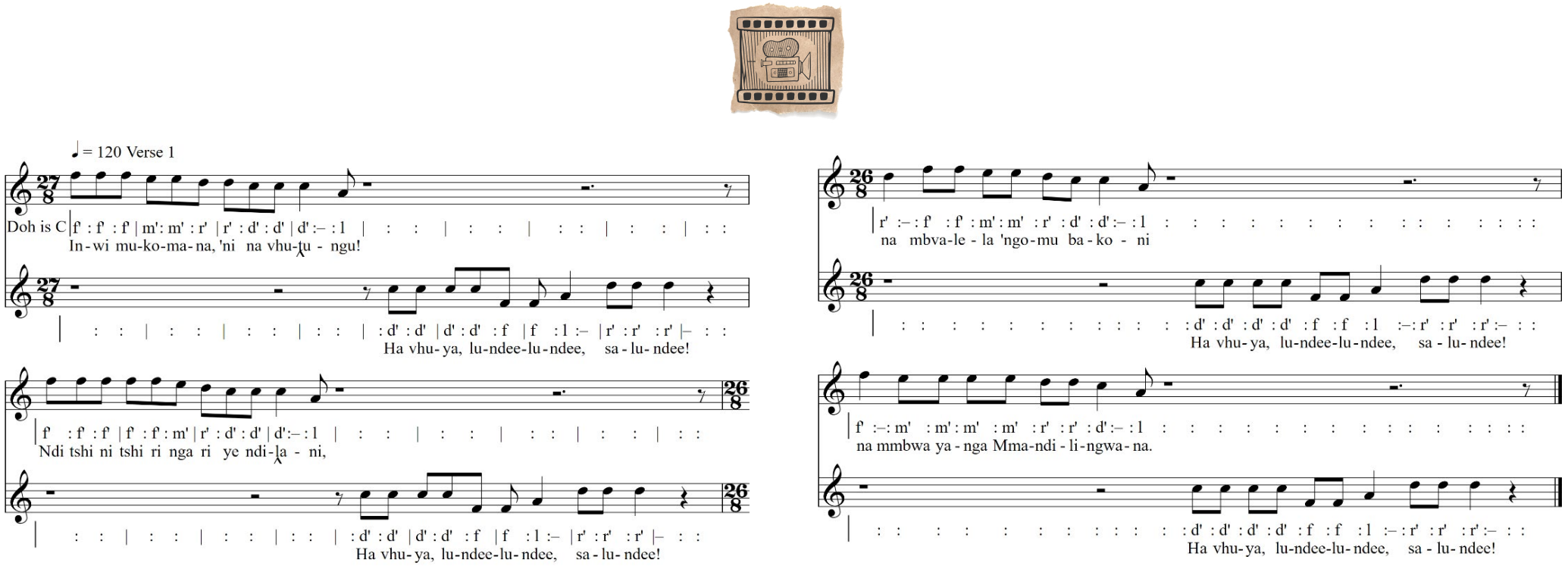


Fig. 59. Meter in the song from ‘Brothers’

Fig. 60. The song from ‘The python-healer’

1.10 A concluding perspective

Narrator Mukondeleli Mathunya (2.9), recalling her childhood during the 1930s, described travelling with her family from rural Doreen, situated along the Nzhelele river (fig. 2), to the town of Musina to buy sweets for Christmas. While Mathunya had detailed recollection of real-life events like these, her memory of *ngano* was restricted to core images only.

The recent history of *ngano* involves the deritualisation of an ancient narrative practice in a transforming material and social environment. *Ngano* memory articulates time, process and change[475] by means of the selective sourcing of precolonial culture. They offer images of self-sufficiency and the mastery of life in relation to dwindling agrarian activity, unemployment and infrastructural deficiency, urbanisation with its spatial and economic patterns, evolving technologies and media forms, and the intricate webs of identity they involve. What essentially activates narrative memory is concern about children growing up in these conditions. *Ngano* narrators, as well as musicians and sculptors, embrace transformation but are concerned about perceived indifference to certain ancestral values and norms. They understand shifting power relations and readily adopt new technologies. What they do not tolerate is lack of mutual respect, and it is to this that *ngano* memory speaks.

It is worth reiterating Blacking's crystallisation of the precolonial curriculum as 'etiquette, behaviour towards seniors, child-birth, sex in marriage, and other cultural techniques designed to maintain good relations between people,' especially courtesy, neighbourliness and kindness.[476] *Ngano* in this way constitute a hagiographic world[i] ordered by *milayo* law as a 'point of fixity' that 'seeks to classify all phenomena'[477] and does 'not admit fundamental surprises.'[478] As Le Roux explains, the ancient socio-political order may occasionally stumble, but it marches on.[ii]

Ngano memory therefore continues to express the timeless rhythmicity of growing up, courtship, marriage, procreation and infertility, aging and fear of isolation, mortality and spirituality. Narrator Florence Mphoshomali's outlook remained essentially localised despite her experience of the wider world (1.8). The narrative spatial continuum of village–fields–veld essentially still draws its core imagery from an agrarian economy and its thousand-year old naturalistic worldviews.[iii] *Ngano* therefore tend to offer only faint images of people moving in a changing world, one that remains largely peripheral to the precolonial centre.[iv] Nevertheless, the engagement with *ngano* by young Zachary Tshamano and Aluwani Kwinda suggests potential for some form of narrative return in the future lives of the current generation of grandchildren (fig. 16). Despite fundamental change in children's play activities, *khadi* rope-skipping and *ndode* stone games, common to the childhood of narrators, remain evident in local settings. The worldmaking function of *ngano* may realise as long as memory endures and grandparents and grandchildren interact.

While *ngano* are 'small laws,' they are not monolithic expressions of power, and often confront the conventions they uphold.[479] They unfold surprisingly and disquietingly[480] along a continuum of inevitability and indeterminacy. It is in this processual, contingent quality that their transformational potential resides.

Middle-class views on *ngano* (box 32) lay claim to the potential power of Tshivenda in the national political economy rather than the moral foundation of these stories. The elderly female narrator no longer is 'the incarnation of tradition.'[481] Her moral authority is shared by church and school, which embody contemporary experiences and ambitions. But, as narrators argue, teachers cannot replace them as *ngano* narrators, nor is school home.

Blacking[482] describes the local worldview during the 1950s as 'closed,' noting that it recognised 'every sort of individual contribution' to communal welfare. This evident in the circumscribed, perfectly integrated cosmos of 'Dzwee's journey' (3.1.4). The opposite of this, Blacking explains, is a world

[i] Originally, the description of the lives of saints as moral blueprint.

[ii] *'Die orde struikel … en stap voort'* (Le Roux, 1996:60).

[iii] See 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1). Zipes explains that, 'as our environment changes and evolves, so too do we change the media or modes of the tales to enable us to adapt to new conditions and shape instincts that were not necessarily generated for the world that we have created out of nature.'

[iv] Mhlambi (2012:148, 152) similarly explains that older 'isiZulu fiction seems to find it difficult to suggest that young people, let alone maidens seeking to escape traditional entrapment, should migrate to cities (…) IsiZulu fiction is seemingly unable to move beyond presenting the countryside and the city as mutually exclusive binaries.' Also see Zipes (2006:152-153).

which is 'open in the sense that you in principle can be what you want, but that there are restrictions like race and religion that prevent you from achieving your ambitions.'[483] This is the world of Olosi (3.1.4), Mr. Jim (3.1.3) and the jiving zebras (3.1.2). These actants are not ensured of security in a familiar, supportive environment, and they must invent themselves. Awareness of the potential for self-realisation is evident in all renditions of the *ngano* of the young boy who fetches the python-healer. However, it requires Olosi and Mr. Jim to make such realisation relevant to the present.

Local soap operas and other expressive genres articulate choices and means of empowerment that the national constitution makes possible. Olosi's intrigues foretell the emergence of Original Venda Hustler (OVH), a contemporary commercial brand of clothing and event management that 'thriv(es) off a symbiotic relationship with the simultaneous growth in Tshivenda rap music. Central to OVH is the concept of the "hustle" as a means of making ends meet in an economic environment characterised by high youth unemployment and increasing inequality.'[484] OVH became popular as a means by which young Tshivenda-speakers could assert historical continuity. This they did by supporting an enduring claim to cultural uniqueness 'while presenting a challenge to the generational logics of traditional leadership which upheld it.' The brand gave expression to a 'counter discourse against dominant, older male voices' and the 'stereotypically subordinate position of women.' While women hold their own in *ngano*, they generally must do so within the restrictions of patriarchal culture. And so the spousal conflict portrayed in 'My mother and father' (2.24.1) endures. However, as Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained, abusive husbands now often leave divorce court owning only the clothes they wear.

The stories by Zachary Tshamano and Aluwani Kwinda are exemplary of the processual quality of *ngano*. Their articulation of maturation, identity, history, land and politics involve minimum departure from actual experience.[485] However, this not only applies to plot, and herein lies profound irony, namely that the transforming social world no longer sustains the ancient interactive oral performance practice of the genre.

Fig. 61. Jack Lambani Halambani, 1984

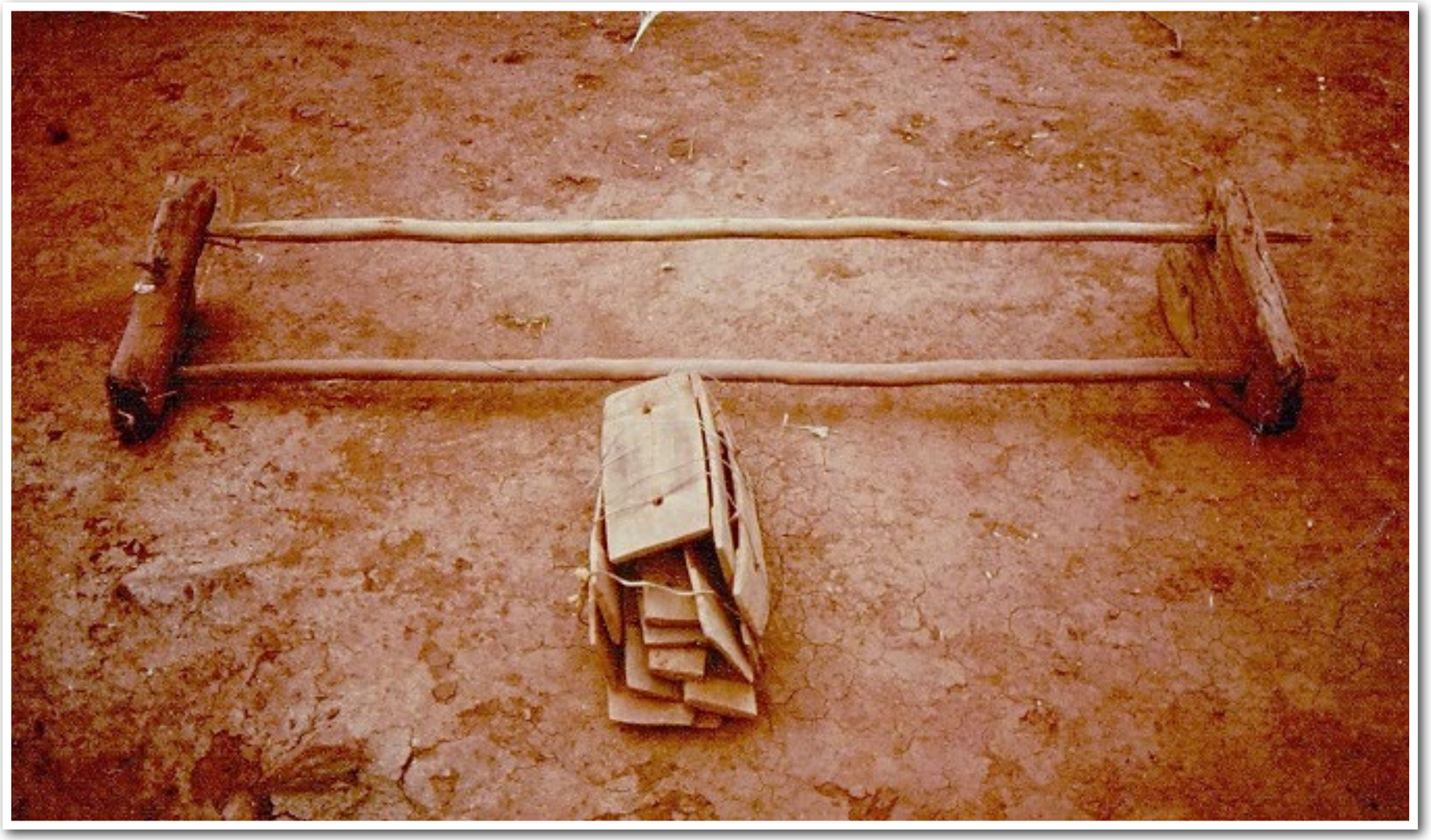


Fig. 62. Tshikelange Nelamvi's xylophone
Maungani, 1984

1.11 Postscript: Narrativising grief

I first encountered a Venda *mbilamutondo* xylophone (fig. 49) during 1981 in the Kirby collection of musical instruments housed at the University of Cape Town. This was followed by a visit in 1983 to the Soutpansberg, where I had hoped to find evidence of remaining instruments.

Elderly assistant Gerson 'Tiger' Nemaembeni and I travelled for days in the central districts. While many people had memories of the xylophone, nobody was aware of any existing instrument.

Taking Nemaembeni home to Maungani[i] one day, he recalled that one of his neighbours, Tshikalange Nelamvi, was known for his musical expertise, and could possibly have information for us. Nemaembeni was as astonished as I when 93-year old Nelamvi pointed behind me to a partly intact[ii] instrument I was practically sitting on.

'Journeys rarely begin where we think they do,'[486] and I could not have anticipated that my encounter with Nelamvi was the start of a trail that would end in my engagement with storytellers some three decades later. When I returned to Nelamvi's homestead in 1984, I found that he had passed away, taking with him all his untapped knowledge of xylophone practice.

A deceased's possessions are ritually secluded during the period of mourning.[iii] The slats of Nelamvi's instrument had therefore been removed. Both musician and instrument had become silent (fig. 62).

This would become a familiar sight: Xylophone slats rolled up (fig. 61), suspended from fences and tree branches, played with by young children, and damaged by wear and tear, water and insects. Similar incidents involving the fading of musical voices of a passing generation repeated themselves countless times, finding ultimate expression in the constant passing of *ngano* narrators (see the dedication).

Narrator Lydia Matshusa of Folovhodwe (fig. 63) once was a beautiful, energetic young woman.[487] She suffered a stroke in 2009 and was hospitalised. She lived in seclusion until passing away on 20 March 2013. I visited her in 2011 at her house in Folovhodwe, and observed in my field notes:

> Mathuvhelo Mavhetha remarked that what had happened to Lydia makes his 'tears fall out.' To him, as a church minister, preaching was easy, but pastoral caregiving extremely difficult.
>
> Everything about Lydia had become slower, much slower; she seemed enveloped by slow-motion numbness. She had become quiet; even her eyes seemed quiet, as if covered with a veil; they were distant, yet penetrating. She had lost some weight and walked extremely laboriously; there was now a hint of grey at her temples.

During 1988 I recorded several songs from guitarists Patrick Ranwashi and Nemakhavhani Munyai of Haluvhimbi (fig. 24). I returned to them in 1991 to speak to them about their music. An extract from my field report on the meeting reads:

> Today I returned to Haluvhimbi to interview Patrick Ranwashi and Nemakhavhani Munyai. It was very hot, and I struggled slowly up the hillside. Near Patrick's house two men were sitting in the shade of a large old avocado tree. I greeted them and proceeded towards the house. Only then did I realise the older man was Patrick. He was thin and brittle as a reed. He explained that he had been ill for about six months. He said there was a 'snake' in his stomach, and that he was not going to hospital, because he did not want to die there. He demonstrated the way he had to sleep because of his illness: on his side in a foetal position, with his hands under his head. It was almost as if he was preparing to return to the rich soil of Haluvhimbi with its birds and wild fruit he once sang about. Someone brought Patrick's guitar, but it just lay mutely there.

---

[i] The site of the first mission in the central districts, now a suburb of Thohoyandou.

[ii] The instrument had been made by Nelamvi in c. 1937. As in all cases of xylophones that we encountered, the frame and slats of the instruments were intact, yet the fragile calabash resonators had perished.

[iii] *Zwi a ila shumisa thundu ya mufu* (It is forbidden to use the possessions of a deceased person).

During a brief moment of repose in the course of our engagement with *ngano* narrators, Mathuvhelo Mavhetha asked me, 'Why are you here?' Of course, he knew all the obvious answers. He was actually implying: Why take the trouble to study stories from the past?

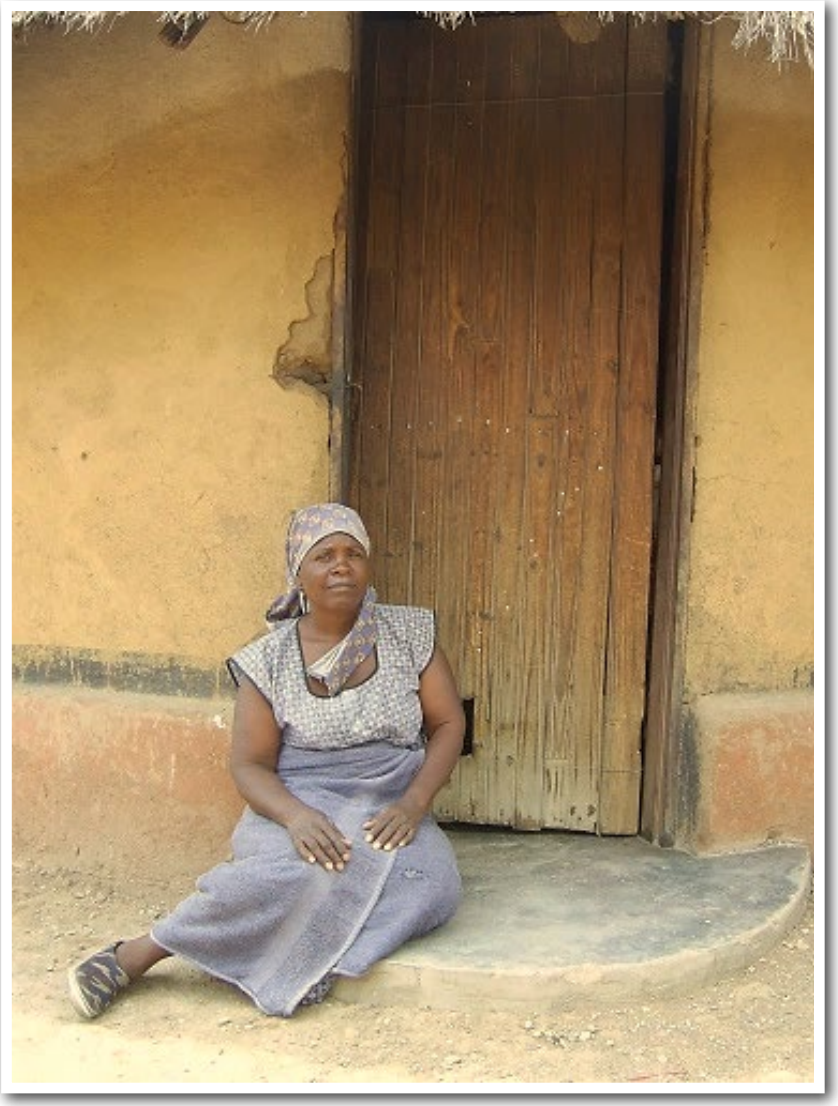


Fig. 63. Lydia Matshusa
Folovhodwe, 2008

I had no immediate answer to this question. However, his query triggered gradually deepening awareness that my experiences of passing people and culture had effected personal transformation I had always sensed subliminally, yet struggled to fathom. I too had come to understand the power of a past neither dead nor even past;[488] an understanding that grief, suspended for years[489] may surreptitiously produce a transfigured self.

Ethnography historically tended to stall at the threshold to self- awareness and human connectedness,[490] requiring emotional distance from that which passes. However, the deeper affective impact of social transformation cannot be ignored. The perception of lost past coherence, so Steiner[491] argues, 'appears to be an almost organic, recursive process' that 'matches some profound psychological and moral need.' Perhaps we attribute physical qualities to cultural practices because they are so heavily invested with the meaning of life. Salvage anthropology, now discredited, once was an emblematic response to the drastic natural and social changes brought about by the industrial revolution. It harboured an 'awareness of the destructive impact of European civilization on native peoples and their cultures,' and the dismal colonial record of survival, justice and historiography.[i] Cultural salvage was therefore driven by the notion that 'unless we know all men, we can understand no man,' and that without capturing the cultures of others, 'we inevitably lose something of our own identity.'[492]

And so ethnographers have gradually come to understand that life is not simply itself: It 'partakes what we breathe into it, it is touched by our moods and memories.'[493] The point of participant-observation, Chernoff argues, is 'to gain access to the material of fieldwork through emotional response.'[494] Kisliuk suggests that we 'ask ourselves whether an experience changed us in a way that significantly affected how we viewed, reacted to, or interpreted the ethnographic material.'[495]

I had come to suspect that emotional involvement had sustained an urge to engage memories of an ancient cultural practice, and to reconstruct stories and songs. And so our nature as life-seeking humanity may surreptitiously shape our scientific approach to culture. If, in this process, we occasionally

[i] Gruber (1970:1291-1294). Dorothea Bleek noted that 'for me (…) the collection and recording of the remaining Bushman culture is of greater value than the exercise of comparing. That can be left to later generations to deal with, but what we do not record now will be lost forever.' (Cited in Weintroub, 2014:16.)

Box 40. Trails of song

I went shopping at a supermarket in Thohoyandou today.[i] Radio Thohoyandou broadcasts are often heard in shops, so I was not surprised to hear singing. However, the sound quality was unusual, and I soon discovered that the singing was live and emanating from inside the shop. I followed its source and found a guitarist performing for staff members at the meat counter. He was a skinny, shabbily dressed old man performing with a thin, reedy voice. I overheard the staff saying that he frequently comes to play for them. One told me he had composed a song about her. She always gives him money which he deposits inside his instrument.

The old man reminded me of *dende* bow-player Elias Ndou I recently saw busking at the shopping centre. The contrast between these musicians and their surroundings was stark. The guitarist's clothes were scruffy and his instrument old and battered. I was surprised that he was not asked to leave the shop.

Ndou in turn was dressed in modern clothing but also wore his diviner's head-dress.[ii] There was a textural difference between him and the plush furniture, electronic devices, shiny lamps and glassware beckoning behind gleaming shop windows. He seemed displaced and anachronistic, a musician from the past who was leaving an evanescent trail of song in a transforming landscape.

[i] Edited extract from field notes (6 June, 1991).

[ii] Although Ndou was not a diviner, *tshilombe* musicians like him functioned as conduits of ancestral morality, and this was symbolised by his diviner's headdress.

succumb to the recuperation of a timeless past, it is perhaps because we write for no necessity other than our own.[496]

Personal fieldwork encounters over a period of twenty-five years frequently had involved the often feverish tracking of musicians and storytellers rumoured still to possess old musical instruments or remember ancient songs and stories. It is impossible to deny or suppress the profound effect of enduring engagement with their passing. What started out as naïve interest in older cultural forms evolved into entangled personal and social histories, and finally a web of life. I had unwittingly become an actor in the social drama I was investigating,[497] internalising experiences of individuals constantly departing from landscapes themselves changing. This had yielded 'melancholy knowledge,'[498] an awareness that their stories had become my own, and that all were allegories of transformation and transcendence.[499] Therefore, if we surrender to the notion of vanishing Africa, it is because we experience the vanishing self in Africa.

A cultural archaeology had become a form of self-defence, perhaps even of the will to live. 'Life is a memory, then it is nothing,' Cormac McCarthy observes in his typical bleak way.[i] Therefore, 'of the telling there is no end'; or, as Thinawanga Phungo explains in 'The dancing lions,' the man 'listened and found that the song did not end.' Life is the evolving story humanity tells itself. And when the story recaptures the past, it reaches beyond fleeting existence and offers defence against that relentless adversary of all life: transience and oblivion.[ii]

[i] 'He was but some brevity of a being (...) His claim to the common life of men became tenuous, insubstantial (…) He sees the world slipping away. All about him is an enormous emptiness without echo.' (McCarthy, 1995:145-148.)

[ii] Stefan Zweig, in Buchmendel (1929): *'Dass man Bücher nur schafft, um über den eigenen Atem hinaus sich Menschen zu verbinden und sich so zu verteidigen gegen den unerbittlichen Widerpart alles Lebens: Vergänglichkeit und Vergessensein.'* http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/die-unsichtbare-sammlung-7042/3

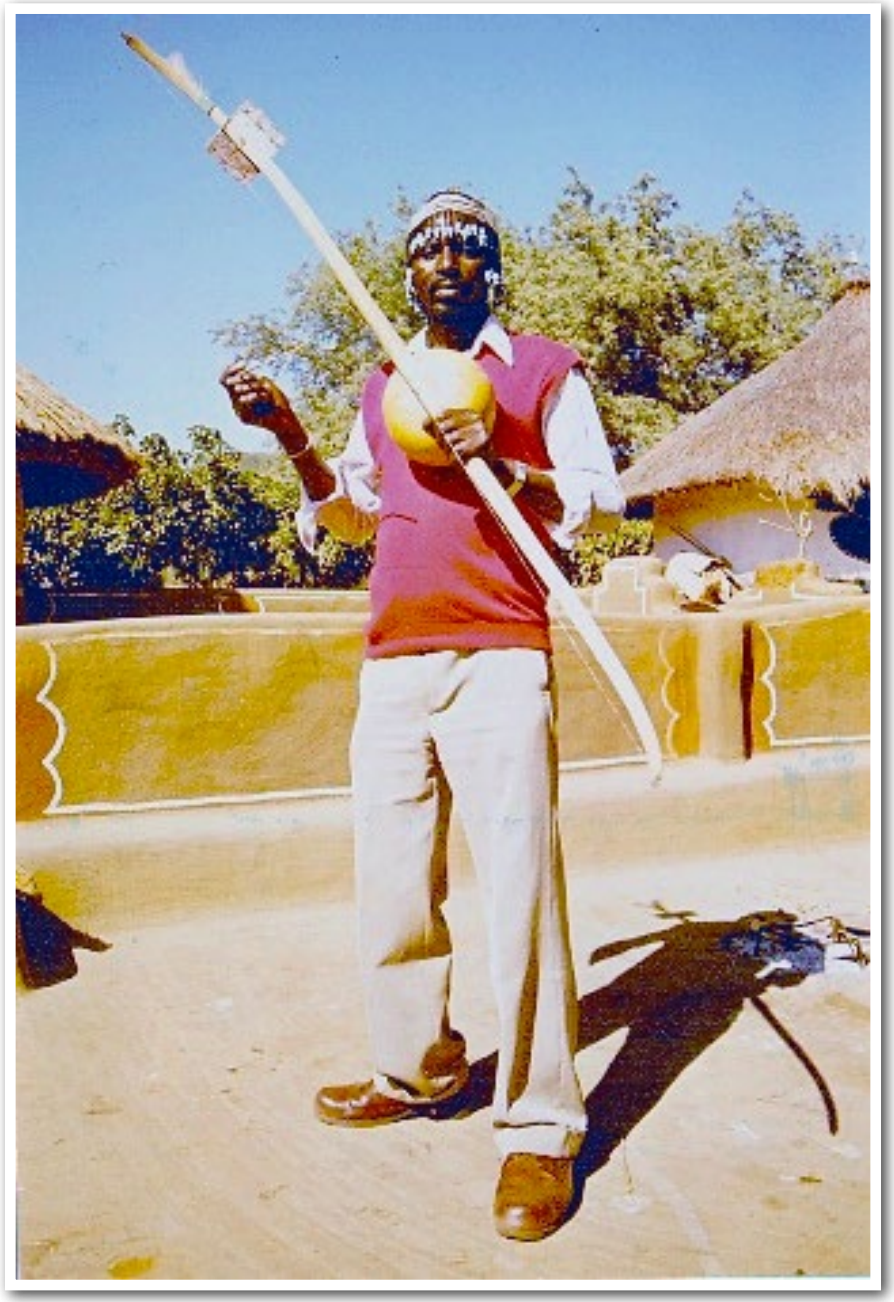


Fig. 64. *Dende* bow-player Elias Ndou
Mangaya, 1984

Section 2:
Life sketches and narratives

2.1 Thinawanga Phungo

My names are Thinawanga[i] Sophie. I was born in 1940, there at Haelula in the Rambuda district. My father was Andries Mapharalala. He had a Tshivenda first name, but I can't remember it – so many things have happened in my life. He worked in Johannesburg, doing something, I do not know what.

My mother was Muofhe Mukondeleli. She planted crops and hoed her field. She also made clay pots. When I was a little bit big, she taught me how to do that. Look, shards of pots I used to make are scattered in my yard. We no longer use clay pots, only ones made from metal and iron.

I did not go to school. This is what happened to girls in the past. My mother needed me around the house, and to help with farming. I had my own little mud house there at our *mahundwane* children's villages (fig. 107; 3.3). I always smeared its floor.

We also played *ndode* stone games and danced *tshifasi* (3.3). My mother's mother was Nyadzani. She is the one who told us *ngano* stories. When I grew up, I went to *musevhetho* and *domba* initiation (3.3).

My parents had six daughters and two sons. Three of my sisters live in Johannesburg. They are domestic workers. One brother works on a farm at Doleen,[ii] here in Niani. My other brother does something with computers in Johannesburg.

My parents separated when I was a young girl. Then my father died. My mother and we children moved to the farm of Genis, there at Cross Farm. We built ourselves two small houses there.

Our family helped Genis to farm with tomatoes, chillies, potatoes and onions. Each worker got her pay and a 50 kg bag of maize flour. We also received beans, tomatoes and other vegetables. Genis sometimes gave us venison, especially kudu meat. Life was good. We got on well with Genis. Our only complaint was the long working day, from six in the morning until six in the afternoon.

We went to the shop for clothes, washing powder and bread. For frying our food we bought Wholesome Fat that came in a glass jar. I always asked my mother to buy me ginger biscuits and toffees! She joined other farm workers over the weekend for drinking beer and jiving.

Genis had three girls. They were Ennelu, Jean and Linda. Their mother was Connie. They skipped rope with us. We could speak some Afrikaans while they could speak a little Tshivenda, and so we managed to understand one another well enough.

I stayed on the farm until I got married. My husband also worked for Genis. He drove lorries and tractors. This helped him to get his heavy duty driving licence. He deserted me and became the driver of a beer truck between Johannesburg and Musina. He collapsed in 2009 and died. We had five girls and three boys. One of my daughters passed away. One son works for Europcar in Johannesburg.

Another son works for Venmag,[iii] and the third has no job. Three daughters work in Johannesburg. Like my sisters, they also work in people's houses. Only one is married. Another daughter is learning to work on computers. I talk over the phone with my daughters, and they try to visit me.

After my husband left me, I moved to Folovhodwe. Here I found a job with Public Works, installing water pipes. This work was very, very hard for me. Our foreman was Maligana. He was quite strict. I worked for him until I went on pension.

[i] 'I have nothing.'

[ii] Doreen.

[iii] A local magnesite mine that has been in operation since the 1990s (Paul, Guest & Nel, 1997).

The house I live in here at Folovhodwe is mine. Twelve grandchildren live with me. Because of problems at their home, all of them need me, but I am only a pensioner. My deceased daughter had eight children. Three of them died and her five remaining sons live with me. Their father married another woman. That wife did not want his children to live in her home. This is why they now live with me.

My pension is R1220 per month,[i] and I also receive three child grants, giving me another R840. So, all of us must survive on R2060 per month. We just scrape through with food because we also have a small orchard and vegetable garden. I have a few mango trees. When the harvest is good, I send their fruit to the atchar factory, but I cannot depend on this income.

After spending our money on food, there is nothing left for school. This means the children are not completing their education. We go to the Living Gospel Church to ask God for mercy. The church is just next to the main road, not far from the clinic. We women like to make the church building beautiful. We polish the floor and make covers for the benches. I like our minister. The Spirit of God enters us when we sing.

I decided not to remarry after my divorce. I already had eight children and I struggled to look after them. More children would have made matters even worse. Although I suffer, I refuse to give up. My house and yard must always be very neat and well cared for. One of my grandsons has started to shape shrubs around the house. One already looks like a chair (fig. 65).[ii]

Fig. 65. Chair-shaped shrub

[i] All amounts during 2013.

[ii] Afrikaans poet Adam Small (2014) remarked that human dignity is pursued under all conditions. *('Dat menslike waardes onder alle omstandighede moontlik is.')* He noted that the subaltern do not necessarily sacrifice their dignity and courtesy, evidenced in the forms of polite address used by beggars on the Cape Flats.

2.1.1 The dancing lions / Ndau dzi no tshina

Here comes a story!

There was a man. This man had his children and wives.

Now, they started leaving to visit their family. Ah, the family lived far away! This is how things were long ago ...

They went on foot. When they arrived at a water pan, they found lions. These lions were many! They were with their children.

The lions started to say, 'Hey! Meat! Meat! Our meat! Our meat!' This is what the lions said.

Now, when they said, 'Meat! Meat!', the man muttered to himself, 'Eh! No! Today I will be killed with my children.'

So, he said to the lions, 'Now, wait! I will start my song. Then I can be killed.'

Now, truly, that man started to lead the song.

He said, 'I am asking even you, Lions: Help us nicely. Sing and let the dust rise! Let there be a lot of dust! We will dig into the ground while dancing with my wife and children. Do not fool around when you dance! Raise a big cloud! This song will only end when we are tired!'

He said to his wives, 'And then we will escape with our children!'

Hah, indeed, the lions agreed. They replied, 'Hah, good.'

Truly, the lions started to gather, they had a meeting there.

The man started the song now, he started the song.

He said, 'Now, respond loudly!' Yes, the man started to sing. He sang,

(Narrator)
Holundee-aa! Holundee-aa-ee-aa![i]
Today we are dying with our babies!

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na munna. Hoyu munna o vha e na vhana na vhasadzi vhawe.

Zwino, u khou ṱuwa u ya u dala lushakani. Aa, lushaka lu dzula kule. Zwithu zwa kale ...

Vha tshimbila nga milenzhe. O ri a tshi swika ishani, a wana hu na dzindau. Ndau hedzo ndi nnzhi, dzi na vhana.

Ndau dza thoma u ri, 'Hei, nama! Nama! Nama, yedu! Nama, yedu!' Nga dzindau hedzo.

Zwino, dzi tshi ri 'Nama! Nama!,' munna a tenda, a ri, 'Eh! Hai! Nahasi ndi khou fa na vhana vhanga. Zwino, imani, ndi thome ndi ite luimbo lwanga, na kona u mbulaya.'

Zwino, ngoho munna houḽani a vha tshi khou thoma u sima luimbo.

A ri, 'Ndo vha ndi tshi khou humbela na vhone Vho-Dzindau: Ni thuse nga maanḓa. Ni imbe ni fukule buse. Ḽi vhe ḽihulu! Ri tou gwa fhasi hafha, na musadzi wanga na vhana vhanga. U songo tshina zwa u tamba ni! Ri ite buse ḽihulu! Hezwi luimbo lwo fhumula ro no neta.'

'Ni ḓo kona u ya nnḓa na vhana vhanga.'

Ha, ngoho dzindau dza tenda. Dza ri, 'Haa, izwo ndi zwone.'

Ha, ngoho dzindau dza thoma u ita muṱangano.

Vhone vha thoma u ima nga tshavho. Ḽa vha ḽi tshi thoma luimbo zwino, ḽi tshi thoma luimbo zwino. Ha pfi, 'A ri bvumele zwino ngamaanḓa.'

Ee, munna a vha a tshi thoma u sima. A ri-ha,

(Musimi)
Holundee-aa! Holundee-aa-ee-aa!
Namusi vho lovha na zwixele zwangu.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ndi enda-vho.

[i] The term *holundee* is identified elsewhere (Le Roux, 1996:585) as the name of a wife. However, in Phungo's song the term is a link in a chain of vocables that expresses a state of anxiety (see fig. 58; 1.9.3.1). When actants in *ngano* are overcome by emotion, they habitually revert to this form of expression.

The dancing lions / Ndau dzi no tshina (continued)

(Chorus)
I will also sing along.

It happened like this!

The dust, when they danced together, a big cloud rose up!

The man said, 'I see the dust is rising. They are dancing with their tails upright! Good heavens, they are dancing!'

When the dust had covered everything, that man started to run away with his children and wife. They ran! They were listening to the lions singing. They huddled together and heard them. They just saw clouds of dust!

The man was glad to have escaped. He listened and found that the song did not end. The man was happy to have escaped.

This is the death of the child of the story.

Folovhodwe, 24 September 2013

Ndi hezwo-ha!

Buse ḽo ri ḽi tshi ṱanganedzana ha vuwa buse ḽihulu!

Vho ri, 'U vhona buse ḽi tshi balangana. Vho ri u tshina vha imisa na madzhila! Vho ri u tshina, thovhela!'

Buse heliyani ḽo no ḓala, houḽa munna a mbo ḓi thoma u shavha na vhana vhawe na musadzi wawe. Vha shavha! Vha tshi thetshelesa. Vha sokou pfa ho ṱanganedzana. Vha wana buse ndi ḽihulu!

Munna a takala o ṱuwa. A tshi thetshelesa a wana na uri luimbo a lu tsha fhela. Munna a takala o ṱuwa.

Ha vha uri ndi u fa ha ṅwana ha lungano.

The theme of Thinawanga Phungo's story is familiar in regional narratives.[500] Lion features widely in them, where he enjoys contradictory status. He represents leadership, political power and male authority, as well as aggression, peril and untamed wildness.[501] He is usually king in stories dealing with animals, and a marauding predator in relation to human beings.[502]

The humorous quality of these stories is striking. In Hugh Tracey's rendition, the lion keeps on stepping closer to a retreating, singing man to hear him better. In Le Roux's version, the lions are joined by Elephant who remarks after a lengthy bout of dancing, 'We are tired, let us sit.' As Phungo's narrative explains, the lions become so enthralled by their dancing that their tails become erect.

These humorous images conceal the menacing nature of Lion, perhaps to make the stories palatable to younger listeners. Dederen[503] explains that the social realm of *ngano* storytelling 'is not always a happy one. Antagonism is a recurrent theme. It features in multiple forms: sibling rivalry, enmity between relatives, jealousy between co-wives, domestic strife etc.'

The lion in Tracey's story in fact threatens a married couple who are travelling to the wife's parental home. Their confrontation with Lion arises because the wife has ignored the husband's travelling instructions, thus challenging his authority. In Le Roux's version, lions confront spouses who are separating. They are travelling to the woman's family where she plans to resettle. Le Roux,[504] reporting a conversation with the narrator, notes that the lions represent witch familiars wanting to kill the couple for a magic potion. This seems to identify Lion as an external, natural threat to marriage, but the

link with witchcraft supports the fact that he rarely serves to depict humans in conflict with an impersonal natural world. Instead, he features more prominently in a variety of roles in stories that deal with marital conflict.

While the father in the family (like the traditional ruler)[i] is commonly referred to as the lion of the house,[505] he also is an aggressive, short-tempered man who may abuse his wife and desire sexual relations with his daughters and young girls.[506] His fearful wife often flees with her children to escape his wrath. Expressed by means of the familiar flight motif, she tricks him by scattering food behind them, and so reaches her parental home safely. In extreme cases Lion may be killed by his in-laws.

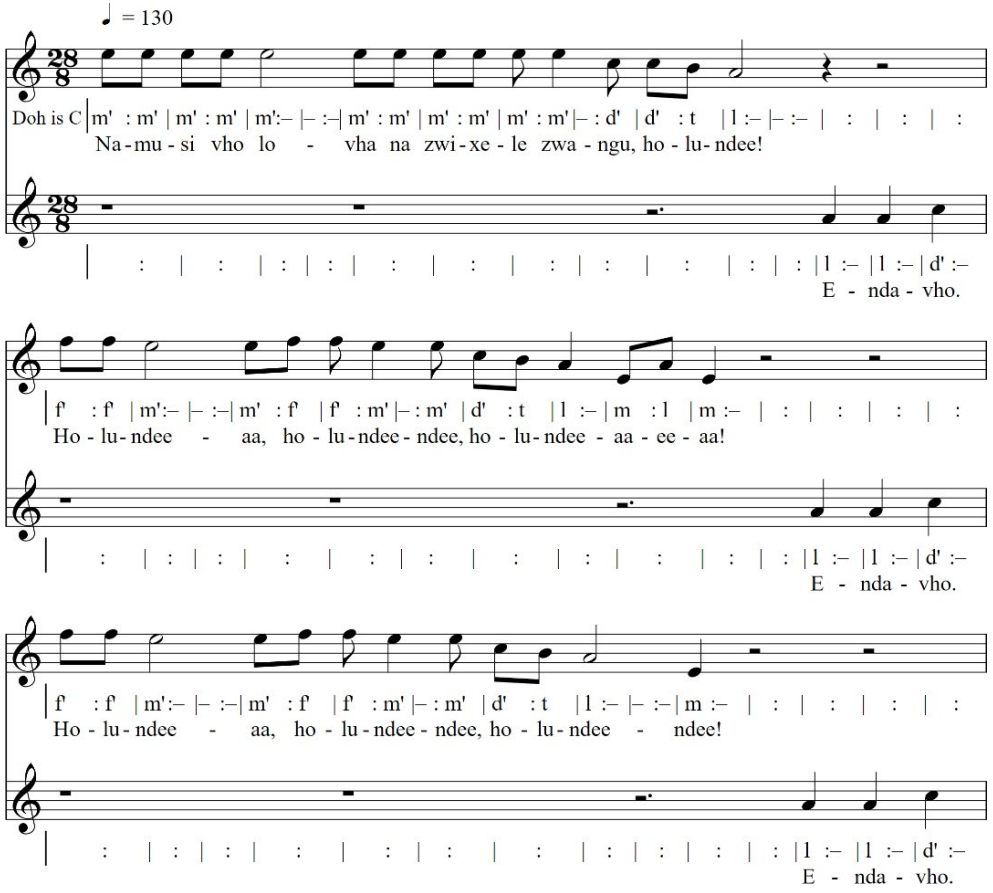
The stories entitled 'The woman at the fountain'[507] and 'Marriage' (2.8.2) portray conflict caused by unrealistic expectations newly-weds often have of married life. The wife typically expects her husband to kill a lion or leopard and give her its hide to wear. In another story, the husband's status as protector and head of the family is undermined by a portrayal of him as a coward who fouls his trousers in an encounter with a pride of lions.[508]

The use of subterfuge to overcome peril is a common motif in *ngano*. It usually involves the ascendancy of physically weaker yet shrewd persons over their more powerful and often dim-witted adversaries. Kriel[509] notes in his study of Shona narratives that the intelligence of Lion 'does not quite match his power and prestige.' The presence of Lion and other dangerous animals like Elephant[510] trigger human courage and shrewdness, as well as cowardice. These animals accordingly may be lured into enthusiastic dancing. The cloud of dust that consequently rises up offers people an opportunity to escape.

But the invitation to sing and dance is more than a form of subterfuge. Conflict ideally is resolved by rituals that promote social cohesion, especially those that involve communal musical performance. Stories of dancing wild animals contain descriptions of and statements on musical aesthetics. The core image is that of choral dance-songs whose collaborative performance raises a cloud of dust. They are expected to be performed with enthusiasm, and involve loud singing and energetic dancing.

A good performance ideally never ends: It is a microcosm of an enduringly harmonious society. In practice, however, it carries on until too much dust rises, and all become tired and sweaty! When performance meets these criteria, it becomes trance-like.[ii] It takes apparent magical hold of humans and tempers their impulses.

Lion in fact occupies the threshold between human and feral qualities, between the forces of social construction and disintegration. And so the aggressive lions take on humanoid characteristics. Their feral nature becomes transformed by singing and dancing. We become human in performance and thus create conditions for the resolution of conflict. However, the lions' tails are raised at the same time, and so animal nature lurks forever in humanity.



[i] Stayt (1931:239) notes that 'a number of people, particularly individual chiefs, are believed to return to earth after death in the form of animals. The lion is the most usual animal in which a spirit returns to earth.'

[ii] States of trance are commonly expressed by the verb *hwala:* 'take on shoulders, lift up to carry' (Van Warmelo, 1989:88).

2.1.2 The python-healer / Nyangalambuya

Here comes a story!

Now, there was a certain man who was ill. This man was the head of the village.

Now, he was so ill, he had to go to traditional healers and doctors. But he was not feeling better.

Someone said, 'There is a certain healer, there in the mountain. If you are not afraid, I will take you there.'

The man who was ill replied, 'No, I am not afraid. Let us go.'

The other man said, 'Good, let us go.'

The younger brother took him there, the younger brother took him there.

They arrived and sang a song,

(Narrator)
Father is ill.
Nyangalambuya.[i]
You leave your things here.[ii]
Get up and run away!
(Chorus)
Nyangalambuya.

Hey, the healer started to come out because of the song! When he came out, the younger brother ran away, ran away! He threw his hat down! He left his possessions there.

They returned home.

They said, 'Hey, hey! What we saw was too much for us. No, no, we

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu na muṅwe munna we a vha a khou lwala. Hoyu munna ndi muṋe wa muḓi.

Zwino, a vha a khou lwala vhulwadze he ha ita uri a gidime na dziṅanga na madokotela. Munna ha fholi hoyu.

Ha, muṅwe muthu a ri, 'Hu na iṅwe ṅanga hangei thavhani. Arali vha sa ofhi, ndi nga vha isa hone.'

Vha ri, 'Haa, a ri ofhi lini. Ri a ya.'

Vha ri, 'Ho luga, kha ri ye.'

Ha takuwa murathu wa hone khotsimunene. Khotsimunene vha tshi ya.

Vha tshi swika hu tshi imbiwa luimbo,

(Musimi)
Ṱaṱe na gwala-gwala.
Nyangalambuya.
A sia zwidate pano.
Takuwa vho dongola!
(Vhabvumeli)
Nyangalambuya.

Hee, ṅanga i tshi thoma u bva ngauri i bva nga luimbo. I tshi bvela nnḓa, khotsimunene vha ri u shavha, vha ri u shavha! Vha vhuya vha sia na zwithu henefhaḽa. Vha laṱekanya na miṅadzi!

Vha vha vha tshi ṱuwa.

Vha ri, 'Hei, hei! A zwi vhonwi zwi re afho! Hai, hai, nne zwo mmbalela! Hei, na ri tou baleliwa ṅanga ro i wana? Ra tou baleliwa ngoho-ngoho muthu a vhuya a tou fa?'

Ha pfi, 'Hayi, zwo bala?'

[i] This is the name of the snake, and it means to live well and in health after being healed.

[ii] A reference to people dropping what they are carrying and fleeing the snake.

failed! Must we really give up, now that we have found the right healer? Truly, will we fail until this man dies?'

Others said, 'Let someone else go, a certain woman. It is the younger sister of the wife.'

The younger sister of the wife left.

She said, 'I am going, man. I am going to fetch this healer so that my brother-in-law can be healed.'

Ah, when she arrived there, she asked, 'Ah, hey, can I sing?'

When she arrived there, this person started to sing. She sang the song. The healer started to come out!

That one, the healer, started to sing in a deep voice, 'Father is ill ...'

Those people! Ah! She ran away, that person! She also left her things behind. People heard that she had been defeated.

'What I saw there was too much for me!'

Ah, the child said, 'I am going.'

They said, 'Hey, hey! Do not take the child there. Leave these powerful things.'

The child said, 'No, we cannot leave things as they are. My father is dying. I will return with the healer.'

They refused.

He repeated, 'I will go and return with him.'

The child left. He arrived and started to sing.

The snake answered from the hole over there, 'Father is ill ...'

That big snake came out! It coiled around the child, coiled, coiled!

Hey, the child walked with the snake's head facing him! He went with it.

The snake was singing when it arrived at the sick man's place, 'Father is ill ...'

The ailing man saw him! He woke up, not knowing what to do, man!

When he wanted to flee, the others restrained him.

They said, 'How can you run away? Look at what the child did.'

Ha pfi, 'Hu ṱuwa muṅwe nakhuthe. Muṅwe wa musadzi. Ndi murathu wa musadzi.'

Murathu wa musadzi a tshi ṱuwa.

A ri, 'Ndi a ya, mani. Ndi yo dzhia heyo ṅanga. Khotsimuhulu wanga vha fhola.'

Aa, a tshi swika hangei, 'Ai, hai, ndi imbe-thii?'

A tshi swika hangei, muthu a thoma u imba luimbo holuyani. A tshi imba luimbo, ṅanga ya thoma u ri i ya bva.

Uḽa a vha a khou thoma u honedzela ṅanga, 'Ṱaṱe na gwala-gwala ...'

Havhaḽa vhathu, aa, a vha a tshi shavha, uḽa muthu! A tshi shavha a ḓi sia zwithu henefhaḽa!

Ha pfi, zwo kunda. 'A zwi vhoṅwi zwi re a fha.'

Aa, ṅwana a ri, 'Nṋe ndi a ya.'

Vha ri, 'Hei, hei! Vha songo isa ṅwana. Kha vha litshe zwikunde hezwi zwithu.'

Vha ri, 'Hai, riṋe ri nga si litshe. Khotsi anga vha khou fa. Nṋe ndi ḓo vhuya nayo.'

Vha hana.

A ri, 'Nṋe ndi khou ri ndi ḓo vhuya nayo.'

A vha a tshi ṱuwa ṅwana. A tshi swika vha vha vha tshi thoma u imba.

Yone i tshi fhindula i hangei mulindini, 'Ṱaṱe na gwala-gwala ...'

Ḽa vha ḽi tshi bva ḽinowa heḽiani. Ḽa mukata! Ḽa mukata! Ḽa mukata!

Haa, ḽa tshimbila ḽo isa thoho khae kha tshifhaṱuwo! A ṱuwa naḽo.

Ḽi tshi swika, mulwadze ḽi khou ḓi imbelela, 'Ṱaṱe na gwala-gwala …'

Mulwadze a tshi thoma u tou vhona! A vha a tshi vutsheledza a tshi kumba-kumba, mani! A tshi ri u a shavha vha mugideledza.

Vha ri, 'Vha ḓo shavha hani? Kha vha vhone ṅwana.'

A vha a tshikonḓelela mulwadze. Ḽa dzhena nga ngomu. Ḽa munanzwa, ḽa munanzwa, ḽa munandzwa, ḽa munandzwa!

A dovha a ima ṅwana. Ḽa mutanda, ḽa mutanda, ḽa mutanda!

The python-healer / Nyangalambuya (continued)

The patient persevered. The snake went inside the house. It licked the man, licked, licked, licked!

The child stood up again. The snake coiled around him, coiled, coiled!

The child said, 'So, now, I am leaving.'

As he took the snake back there, it sang a few times, 'Father is ill ...'

The snake uncoiled and entered the hole.

This is the death of the story.
Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012

A ri, 'Haa, zwino, ndi a ṱuwa.'

A tshi ṱuwa a tshi ḽi isa henengei, ḽi tshi ita ḽi tshi imbelela, 'Ṱaṱe na gwala-gwala ...'

Ḽa swika ḽa tanduluwa ḽa dzhena mulindini.

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

Nyangalambuya the python-healer is a popular figure in Venda and Shona[511] *ngano*. Phungo's story is one of at least eight documented Venda versions,[512] four of which appear in this collection. Their ancient roots are evident in their retention of Chishona terms such as *pano* (Tshivenda, *fhano:* here) and *kwala* (Tshivenda, *lwala:* ill).

Snakes are not usually conceived as real in *ngano*, although such portrayals may serve to install fear in young participants and intensify their narrative experience. Instead, they are 'snakes of the mind,' ancient symbols of cosmologies that link conscious and subconscious experience.[513] Tobie Fourie (box 37), who grew up among Tshivenda-speakers in Niani, links magic and reality in his description of Magoba, the mythical mountain-snake, as 'a magical snake that local people fear. I know that snake. It is black, pitch-pitch black. When it comes into the sun, it shines, it glistens. Its head is broad and triangular. Mugoba keeps to rocky areas. I think it hunts birds, rats and mountain rabbits.'

The python-healer is sometimes referred to in *ngano* as 'snake' or 'the big Snake-of-the-Mountain.' Narrator Thizwilondi Kwinda identifies the python-healer as *tharu*, the python (2.7.2). Zachary Tshamano ('The young man and the snake'; 2.15.1) also refers to the snake-deity by this name. *Tharu*'s identity is confirmed by the evocative motif of the snake coiling around the young hero of the story.

Although attacks on humans by pythons *(Python sebae natalensis)* are uncommon, the size of these snakes and their habit of strangling prey makes them feared. *Beeld* newspaper[514] reported an attack by a four-metre python on a woman in the Lephalale district of Limpopo Province. The victim recounted that the python was very strong. It had a big head and teeth, and there was 'blood all over' from its attack.

Shona *ngano* are generally descriptive of the dread and awe people have of mythical snakes, especially the python-healer. One narrator refers to the 'horrible dark lines' around this snake's mouth.[515] The story also describes a person falling backwards into a river in shocked response during an encounter. In another Shona version of the story, the mythical creature takes the form of a fish.[516] The fish has a horrifying appearance that makes people shout and flee.

The fear that people have of the python finds expression in *ngano* in relation to politics. In a story entitled see 'A thin old woman,'[i] the snake represents the

[i] Kruger & Le Roux (2007). In the same collection, also see 'The king and the

king and his relatives who simply 'swallow' the weak.

While portrayals of the python-healer's fearful appearance may serve dramatic objectives, they essentially underscore the hero's courage, and therefore signify his potential for accomplished adulthood. Most stories tell how actants drop what they are carrying in their desperate haste to escape ('You leave your things here'). Others describe how the python drags a person into its lair. Core images portray the snake coiling around the hero, and either facing him directly, or putting its face on his shoulder.

The python frequents various types of habitat including mountains and rivers that are prominent symbolic spaces in older African cosmologies. They link with spirituality, healing and magic, and certain animals that inhabit them feature in myths and other narrative genres.

A rock painting in the western area of the Limpopo valley (Mapungubwe) shows a creature with 'horns like an antelope, the body of a snake, and dorsal fins like those of a fish. This figure 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.'[517]

Thinawanga Phungo and Mathuvhelo Mavhetha indicated that Nyangalambuya derives its potency from distant mountains and wet areas that shelter powerful, revered spiritual forces. A version of the story documented by Le Roux[518] notes that 'The healer is there at the river' *('Ṅanga ya hone i hangei mulamboni')*. Nettleton[519] explains that the python has a 'connection with rain and fertility,' is believed 'to mediate between the world of the living and that of the dead,' and also is 'associated with the traditional healer.'

Central to Phungo's story is the belief, described by translator Pfananani Masase, 'that snakes can give traditional healers power (to heal). Snakes of the mountain and water have this power.' Masase explained that the snake of the water is called *Mmamulambo* (Mother-of-the-River). It inhabits the malignant spirit world, and is cared for by *zelehane* supernatural creatures who have human hands. The snake enchants prey with its eyes, and only healers can control it with their magical substances.

Conceptualised as spiritual forces that interact with humans, certain amphibious animals are liminal beings. Healers, as spirit mediums, are similarly liminal, and the python symbolises their duality, mystery and awe-inspiring power. This is evident in a Tsonga variation of 'The python-healer.'[520] Here, as in certain Venda variations, there initially is no mention of any snake, but of the healer as a person: 'Masingi was well-known far and wide, because he was such a wonderful divinator. Even if someone was at the point of death, Masingi was able to bring him back to life.'

Those initially sent to call Masingi for healing, cower in his awesome presence, and flee: 'He ran away at once and returned home. He was frightened to see Masingi, the divinator, Masingi the healer, the Snake-mixer-of-healing-potions.'

This meaning is expanded when the snake coils around the young boy. However, after healing the patient, the initial, distant relationship between Masingi and the villagers changes (but only after the courageous action of the hero). The villagers initially hide from him when he arrives, and observe him from a safe distance. They eventually celebrate the patient's recovery with a feast, and reward Masingi.

Similar cohesive ritual is referred to in 'The magic song.'[521] In this story, villagers are jealous of a hunter who changes himself into a predator by means of a secret, magic song. After conflict, the man agrees to share his song, and the villagers gather amicably at his home. Conciliatory social actions and rewards appear to entrench the liminal status of healers as spirit mediums.

As explained, coming of age is a prominent theme in *ngano*. It takes conventional form in all versions of 'The python-healer,' namely that of the youngest son[i] who must rise to take his position in adult society. Canonici[522] explains that 'collective memories and ethical standards need to be pegged on to outstanding characters who summarise in themselves the aspirations of the group. The fictitious hero seems to become a corporate personality, a representative of the whole community.'

In addition, there are interesting if predictable distinctions between the way ideal male and female personality is represented in *ngano*. The hero is usually male, in keeping with his ageless portrayal in myth and legend.[523] This is arguably related to the male role of hunter and warrior. The woman

musician' and 'The lourie who was not a bird' for depictions of the abuse of political power.

[i] Phungo's story is one of two versions (the other was documented by Le Roux, 1996) that feature a young woman, but only as a person who fails to call the python-healer.

in turn, while not without heroism of her own, is often cast in the role of the vulnerable, unmarried girl or as a wife involved in domestic drama.

The youngest is often pitted against older siblings in disputes over the rights and power that accrue to different age-sets. While customary law favours the eldest son as the successor to his deceased father, it is often challenged by younger siblings with exceptional skills. A notion that runs through *ngano* is that intelligence and virtue trumps physical power. In addition, *ngano* engage power relations and contest conventional role allocations by projecting credible alternatives.

The young hero is the only person who demonstrates the courage, perseverance and incipient spiritual power to engage the snake.[i] In this sense he embodies – or at least aspires to – spiritual maturity and potency. In several versions of the story, he inherits his father's wealth, especially his animal herds. This is not actual reward for courage but an indication that he has evolved successfully into a young adult. He has surpassed the preceding generation and is preparing to succeed his father who is also scared of the snake.

Bravery and other heroic qualities are not the only ideal character traits. Adulthood is also marked by the capacity to communicate effectively, and this includes musical expression. It is no coincidence that communication with the python takes the form of singing in all versions of the story, and that the snake is identified as Nyangalambuya in the song only. As explained, music is a privileged form of spiritual experience and expression.

The coming-of-age theme is cast in that universal form which is structured by the number three. This number corresponds with 'the most general forms of human behaviour'[524] and is crucial to narrative 'growth and transformation'[525] where it is the minimum number required for portraying similarity and contrast. 'The Python-healer' involves the 'contrasting' or 'double negative' three[ii] in its presentation of two failed attempts at summoning the healer, followed by a successful, concluding attempt.[iii]

This kind of narrative design typically opens with the presentation of some deficiency, in this case illness.[526] In *ngano* such deficiencies typically undermine personal and social wellbeing. Apart from illness, they commonly depict drought and various forms of social conflict. Narrative structuring then typically follows a process of amelioration and/or degradation.[527] 'The python-healer' self-evidently entails the former, showing how the patient is healed. Amelioration is effected here by the youngest son, who acts as 'an agent endowed with initiative.'[528]

The unfolding of the plot may also involve the 'coupling'[529] of amelioration and degradation: Failing seniors (usually siblings) are symbolic adversaries who recede into the background. They appear humiliated and are excluded from material 'compensation,' whereas the young hero is offered the 'reward' of ideal personality.[iv]

The python in turn initially is a feared adversary. Overcoming him requires courage and other ideal human qualities.[v] The core image is that of a boy with the snake coiled around him, and with their heads facing each other as they sing in antiphonal fashion. In this way '(t)he amelioration process is then organized into behaviour which implies that it takes on the structure of a network of ends and means.'[530] In other words, the boy and snake have become allies. The alliance affirms the healer's power and special status, while benefitting the boy who hones and proves his fitness to emerge from childhood and engage the world with courage and wisdom.

This is not effected by means of aggression but negotiation that takes the form of interactive musical technique. Bremond fittingly distinguishes between strategies for alliance negotiation that involve intimidation or 'seduction.'[531] The seductive power of choral dance music is evident in the preceding story, and is replicated in many others.

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[i] See the repeated references to his perseverance in Salfina Mashiliye's version of the story (2.6.2).

[ii] Booker (2004:231). Booker also defines other forms of the threefold structure, namely simple or cumulative, progressive or ascending, and dialectical.

[iii] Of the four versions of 'The python-healer' in this book, three feature the number three, while Thizwilondi Kwinda extends the first number to four, with a fifth contrasting phase.

[iv] In keeping with the symbolism of inheritance, the implied humiliation of seniors does not suggest that their status is undermined. Conventional adulthood is not in need of any compensation since it is its own reward. Although the youngest listeners may derive some consolation from the narrative humiliation of older brothers and sisters with whom they experience typical sibling rivalry, the story is intended to offer the youngest a vision of ideal adult qualities.

[v] In Bremond's terms (1996:69), a sacrifice.

♩= 148
Doh is C
Ta - te na gwa-la-gwa-la. Nya-nga-la-mbu-ya. Ta - te na
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
gwa - la - gwa - la. Ta - te na gwa - la, hee. Nya-nga - la - mbu - ya. Hee -
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
ya, ya - ha - ya. Nya-nga - la - mbu - ya. Hee - hee - ya
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
hee - ya ha - ha. Hee, Nya-nga - la - mbu - ya. Hee, a si - a zwi -
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
da - te pa - no, haa. Hee, Nya-nga - la - mbu - ya. Ta - ku - wa
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
vho do - ngo - la. Hee, Nya-nga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.

2.1.3 The dancing mice / Zwitungulo

Here comes a story!

There was a certain old woman and her grandchildren. She owned sacred things of her ancestors. These things were mice. Now, they lived with her, they lived with her.

The old woman said, 'These things, I must also show them to my grandchildren.' Now, she called, 'Hey, my grandchildren!' She called them in the morning when there were no people around. 'My grandchildren! Hey, come and I will show you something special.'

Those children gathered. When those children had gathered, they sat down. She said, 'You must sit here.' She opened her granary[i]. She said, 'Sing!' When these children were singing over there, they sang like this,

(Narrator)
Go inside![ii]
Karanga.[iii]
We have seen
Beating together![iv]
Pay heed![v]
(Chorus)
Karanga.

Those mice came out! They were dancing, they were dancing!

The old woman asked, 'Do you see, my grandchildren?'

The grandchildren said, 'Yes!'

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṅwe mukegulu a na vhaḓuhulu vhawe na zwitungulo zwawe. Hezwo zwitungulo zwo vha zwi zwa mbevha. Zwino, o ḓi dzula nazwo, o ḓi dzula nazwo.

Mukegulu a ri, 'Hezwi zwithu hezwi, ndi fanela uri ndi sumbedze na vhaḓuhulu vhanga.' Zwino, a ri, 'Vhaḓuhulu vhanga, wee!' U khou vha vhidza nga matsheloni hu si tshena vhathu. 'Vhaḓuhulu vhanga, wee, iḓani ndi ni sumbedze zwiṅwe zwithu khezwi.'

Vhaḽa vhana vha kuvhangana. Vha tshi kuvhangana vhaḽa vhana, vha dzula fhasi. A ri, 'Ni dzule henefha.' A vula ḓulu ḽawe. A ri, 'Imbelelani.'

Hezwi vha tshi imbelela hafhaḽani, a ri,

(Musimi)
Dzhenani munga!
Kalanga.
Wa tsitsi vhoni.
Bukuṱa no gala zwa kupana!
Zuwo zwa ku vhona sese wa tsitsi vhoni!
(Vhabvumeli)
Kalanga.

Hezwiḽa zwibevha zwa bva! Zwa ri u tshina, zwa ri u tshina!

Vha ri, 'No zwi vhona, vhaḓuhulu vhanga?'

Vhaḓuhulu vha tenda.

Zwa vhuyedzedzwa ḓuluni ha pfi, 'Ni songo silingai! Hezwi zwithu a zwi silingiwi! Ndo tou ri ndi ni sumbedzise. Ni songo vhuya na dovha. Ndi ḓo ri liṅwe ḓuvha nda dovha nda ni itela.'

Vhaḓuhulu vha tenda.

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[i] The mice's liar.
[ii] I.e. into their nest. This is an effort to contain the mice.
[iii] The name may refer to a spiritual entity, a possibility supported by the events in the story.
[iv] I.e. the mice are attacking the old woman.
[v] Lit. 'watch well.'

She took the mice back and said, ‘Do not be disobedient. Hey! These things are forbidden! I told myself that I must show them to you. But do not do it yourself. I will show you again on another day.’

The grandchildren agreed.

The old woman got up the next morning and left home. She went to the fields. The grandchildren remained and did what they were forbidden to do.

They sang that song, ‘Go inside …’ They did that!

Then[i] the mice became angry! The grandchildren had gone and broken the taboo! As they were breaking the taboo there, the mice were singing that song of theirs, ‘Go inside …’

Those mice were upset! They ran and followed the old woman to the fields. They were running! The children were behind them! They tried to chase them back home! The mice dodged the children. They ran and arrived at the fields. They arrived and bit that old woman! They beat that old woman! That old woman started to go down on her knees!

This is the death of the child of the story. When they say, ‘Bukuṱa no gala zwa kupana zuwo,’ they mean, ‘We see you, but you must look carefully.’

The mice had become upset. They had left for the fields where they killed the old woman.

Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012

Makhulu vha khou vuwa vha tshi bva. Vha tshi ya masimuni. Vhaḓuhulu vha khou sala vha tshi kadabula zwibevha hezwiḽa.

Vha tshi ḓi imba zwenezwiḽa, ‘Dzhenani munga! …’

Vha tshi ita zwezwiḽa!

Zwibevha ḽiṅwe ḓuvha zwa mbo ḓi kwata! Vha ya vha zwi kadabula.

Vha tshi zwikadabula fhaḽa, vha ḓi imba lwonoluya luimbo lwauri, ‘Dzhenani munga! …’

Zwibevha hezwiḽani zwa mbo ḓi ṅala. Zwa mbo ḓi shavha zwi tshi tevhela mukegulu masimuni. Zwa ri u gidima! Vhana vha murahu! Vha tshi zwi thatha u ri zwi vhuyelele! Zwi khou sokou phepha nga thungo. Zwa gidima zwa vhuya zwa swika masimuni. Zwa swika zwa luma uḽa mukegulu! Zwi tshi rwa vhaḽa mukegulu! Uḽa mukegulu vha mbo ḓi vhuya vha gwadama!

Ha mbo ḓi vha u fa ha ṅwana wa lungano. Hezwi hu tshi pfi, ‘Bukuṱa no gala zwa kupana zuwo,’ zwi ri, ‘Ri khou ni vhone ni vhone sese.’

Zwimbevha zwa mbo ḓi ṅala. Zwa mbo ḓi ṱuwa zwa ya masimuni zwa vhulaha mukegulu.

[i] Lit. ‘one day.’

The sacred objects owned by the woman are known as *zwitungulo*. They are inherited and come to embody lineage, spirituality and morality. *Zwitungulo* include black bulls or he-goats *(makhulu:* 'grandparent') that represent maternal ancestors.[532] However, they more commonly are durable objects like spears, axes, beads, clothing and even musical instruments.

Evil in older Venda cosmology essentially takes form as witchcraft. Witches employ familiars – animals they control and use to sow discord and harm others. Hammond-Tooke[533] notes that most witch familiars *(dithuri)* are small, carnivorous mammals. Their common form in Venda culture is that of *thuri*, the pole-cat. Le Roux[534] documents a similar story by healer Masindi Maliyehe who explained that evil forces should not be named directly, and that the mice in fact represent pole-cats. Mice, as domestic rodents, often are associated with female life.[i]

Hammond-Tooke[535] notes that witch familiars 'are not real animals and can change shape and metamorphose into human form (…) Owning a familiar can be very dangerous, especially if you do not know how to feed it properly. *Dithuri* must be fed by their owner on (…) "soft porridge" (…) meat and milk, and, sometimes, human flesh.'

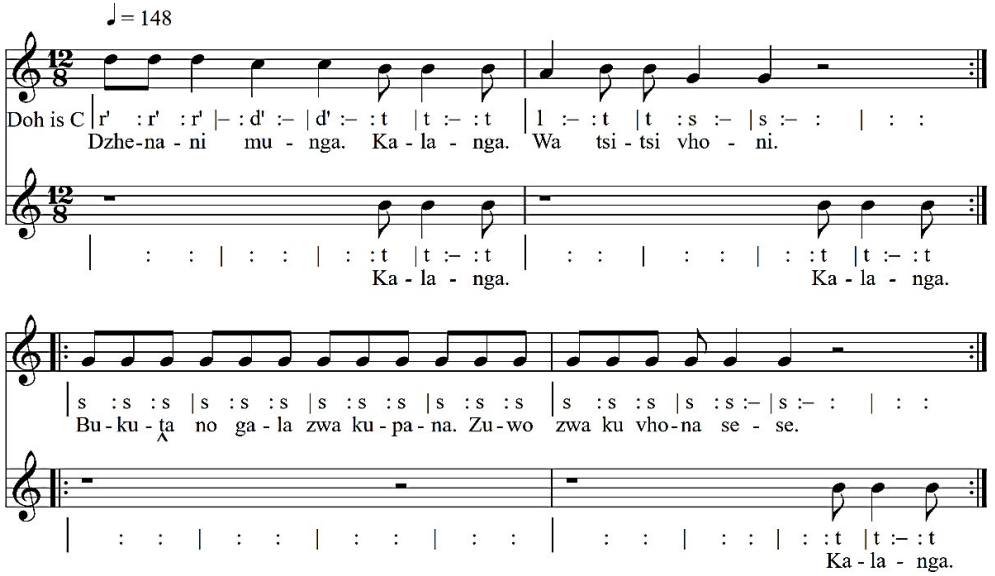
Pfananani Masase describe an incident he witnessed at Mashamba in the southern part of the Vhembe district during his teenage years (the 1990s). A close neighbour, who was a healer, was found dead outside her home. Her entire body was covered in thorns. Some claimed that she was murdered by members of the community in retribution for immoral behaviour. However, her children explained that she had been sleeping in the house with them when she went outside, and that they would have heard any commotion. The explanation was that she had been attacked and killed by some spiritual entity.

Shona *ngano* 'suggest that friendship with animals is dangerous. Although men are occasionally concerned, it is more often women who transgress and burn their fingers.'[536] Kriel notes here that 'the culprits are often childless women who adopt animals. In some instances it appears that the animal is not even required to do any work, but is merely loved and fondled, and treated in a way that humans should not treat animals.'

For Shona women, 'barrenness is more bitter than death,' and their hope against 'the finality of death' is rooted in procreation.[537] Many of their narratives 'contain references to women who have no children. In various cases where a woman tames an animal to grind or work for her in any way, the point is stressed that she has no children.'[538]

The outcome of the woman's transgression is clear. *Zwitungulo* and the practices associated with them involve certain proscriptions. Those who wilfully commit transgressions in relation to them may expect punishment and even death (see 'The pot of trouble'; 2.6.3).

A significant number of *ngano* indicate that individuals who possess extraordinary spiritual power are obliged to shield its source.[ii] However, the woman secretly assembles the children to initiate them into her malignant practices. Witches are thought to involve children in their activities because they are naïve and can be controlled with relative ease. Accordingly, the woman becomes the victim of her own evil intentions, while the children escape punishment with a warning contained in the song line *'Zuwo zwa ku vhona sese wa tsitsi vhoni!'* that instructs them to learn from the transgressions of others.



[i] See 'Father on the footpath' (Kruger, 2014).

[ii] E.g. 'The magic song' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), 'A man falls' (Kruger, 2014) and 'The lion-hunter' (2.3.4).

2.1.4 The wandering musician / Tshilombe

Here comes a story!

There once were five girls. They left to collect firewood. They arrived in the veld and started to chop wood.

They finished chopping. They were carrying that firewood. They were walking and walking.

They found a certain old man who was a wandering musician.[i] They saw that old man.

He said, 'Come here!'

Those girls refused. Those girls ran away! They dropped their firewood.

The old man started to run! As he ran, he caught the smallest girl! He grabbed that small child! Those others ran away. He grabbed that small one. He left with her and his drum.

He took that drum and opened it, that one! He put her right inside the drum. He closed that drum again. He was strong![ii]

Those others had already left. He carried his drum. He did not go where the other girls went. He went to the other side, to another district. When he arrived there, he found many people![iii]

He greeted, 'Good day!'

Those people replied, 'Good day to you!'

He announced, 'I have my song here with me!'

Those people said, 'OK, sing!'

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na vhasidzana vhaṱanu. Vha ṱuwa vha tshi ya khunini. Vha tshi swika khunini vha tshi reḓa.

Vha tshi tou fhedza u reḓa, vha tshi hwala hedziḽa khuni.

Vha tshi tshimbili-tshimbili, ha wana muṅwe mukalaha khoyu. Mukalaha uḽa vha tshi muvhona.

A ri, 'Iḓani ngeno!'

Vhaḽa vhasidzana vha thoma u hana! Vha tshi shavha vhaḽa vhasidzana, vha tshi laṱa khuni.

Mukalaha a mbo ḓi vha gidimedza! A tshi vha gidimedza, ha balelwa muṱuku! A mbo ḓi dzhia hokuḽa kwana kuṱuku. Havhaḽa vha ṋamba vho ṱuwa. A tshi dzhia kuḽa kuṱuku o vha e na ngoma yawe.

A dzhia a vula heiḽani ngoma, heiḽani. A ku longela nga ngomu ngomani henefhaḽa. A dovha a vhamba heiḽa ngoma. Ya khwaṱa!

Havhaḽa vha namba vho ṱuwa. Ene a hwala ngoma yawe. A si tsha ya hangei. A ya kha liṅwe shango thungo. A tshi swika henefho a wana vhathu vho ḓala!

A ri, 'Ndaa!'

Vhaḽa vha ri, 'Aa!'

A ri, 'Nne ndi na luimbo lwanga hafha!'

Vhaḽa vha ri, 'Haa, kha vha imbe!'

Hai, a thoma u imba fhaḽa.

A ri ngoma yawe, nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Ha ri tshete! A dovha a ri, nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Houḽa a re ngomani a thoma u imba zwino. A ri,

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[i] *Tshilombe* (pl. *zwilombe*; figs. 64, 66, 111). Member of a social class largely obsolete in contemporary life, the *tshilombe* was a musical wanderer who performed at villages in return for food and beer. The homesteads of chiefs were some of their favourite haunts, and some chiefs even appointed them as court musician.

[ii] It usually takes several persons to fit the skin of a large drum.

[iii] *Zwilombe* frequented large settlements because they offered better opportunities for performance and reward.

So, he started singing there. His drum went, nduu-nduu-nduu! Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! But it was quiet inside! He played again, Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! That one inside the drum now started to sing. She sang,

(Narrator)
Oh dear! My mother!
I found a spirit squatting![i]
It entered the trance dance.
Bomo! Hit resoundingly on the head![ii]
You are scared of dying![iii]
When will you die?[iv]
The drum is crying!
(Chorus)
(Spoken) When they are happy, they sing,
(Sung)
You must sing loudly!

Hey, people said, 'This song is beautiful! This song is beautiful! Hey, give him beer!'

(Musimi)
U-vhuu! Mmawee-haa!
Ndo wana lombo ḽo tumba!
Ḽa nndzhenisa ngomani-haa.
Bomo nga ḽinyeke, haa!
Kutata ku fa kalo, haa!
A no ḓo fa lini? Haa!
Ngoma lila-lila!
(Vhabvumeli)
Kha dzi lile mavhili-vhili!

Haa, vhathu vha ri, 'Luimbo lwo naka holwu! Hei luimbo lwo naka! Hei, kha ri vha fhe halwa!'

Vha fhiwa halwa fhaḽa. Vha ṅwa, vha ṅwa!

Hai, vha ri, 'Ri khou fhira.'

Hai, ngungundu-ngungundu-ngungundu!

Vha khou fhira na ngoma yavho. Haa, vha tshi swika huṅwe. Haa, vha ḓi wana vhathu khevha. Aa, vha vha vha tshi dzhena.

Vha ri, 'Hai, nne hafhu ndi tshilombe ndi na luimbo lwanga.'

Vhaḽa vha ri, 'Kha vha imbe, tshilombe. Ri pfe luimbo. Haa, vha thoma ngoma yavho.'

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[i] The second and third song lines contain wordplay that connects the *tshilombe* concept with that of *Malombo* trance dance (3.3) and its *Lombo* spirit (Kruger, 2000, 2002). *Ngoma* is a term that indicates trance dance as well as drums, so that the girl inside the drum is linked with a trance dancer and *tshilombe* spiritual inspiration.

[ii] *Bomo* is the sound of the drum. The girl is sitting upright, with her head just under the drum skin. She is hit on the head when the drum is played.

[iii] Referring to the frightened girl. This phrase is of Karanga origin, and as such points to the ancient origin of the story (see Von Sicard, 1965:277-79).

[iv] The *tshilombe* is speaking to the girl. This is a good way of frightening young listeners!

He was given beer there. He drank, he drank!

So, he said, 'I am going further.'

The drum sounded, ngungundu-ngungundu-ngungundu!

He went further with his drum. Hah, he arrived at another place. Hah, he found people there. Ah, he entered that village.

He announced, 'So, I am a *tshilombe* who can sing well.'

Those people replied, 'Sing, *tshilombe*. We will hear you. Hah, start with your drum.'

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

Hey, that child was silent!

Now that child started to sing, 'Oh dear! My mother! …'

'Hey, your song sounds beautiful, man! Hey, hey, hey! Your song is beautiful! Hey, hey, give us the drum. We will try to play that drum.'

That man said, 'No! It is played by the owner only.'[i]

They gave him beer, they gave him beer!

Hah, he said, 'I am going further.'

So, they answered, 'That is good.'

He went further. He arrived at a certain village. But it was the village of that girl!

Hey man, he found that beer had been made there! It tasted nice!

So, he arrived there where the beer was. Hah, he drank more than usual! He became drunk, very drunk!

While drinking he said, 'I am a *tshilombe*. I have a beautiful song.'

They said, 'Hey, sing! There is no problem. Sing!'

He started to sing there. He was singing. He started on the drum. It went, nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

The girl started to respond, 'Oh dear! My mother! …'

They said, 'Hey, this is beautiful! We have never heard anything like

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

Hai, ula ṅwana hwii!

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

Ula ṅwana a thoma, 'U-vhuu! Mmawee-haa! ...'

'Hai, ha pfi luimbo lwavho lwo naka, mani! Hei, hei, hei! Luimbo lwavho lwo naka! Hai, hai, kha vho do ri fha. Ri tou dzama yeneyo ngoma.'

Vhala vha ri, 'Hai! I lidzwa nga nne mune wayo.'

Vha vha fha halwa, vha vha fha halwa!

Haa, vha ri, 'Nne ndi a fhira.'

Aa, vha ri, 'Ndi zwone.'

Vha vha vha tshi fhira. Vha tshi swika kha muṅwe mudi. Mathina kha mudi wa honoula musidzana!

Vha wana, hee, ho tombiwa, mani! Hovho vhu khou difha!

Aa, vha tshi swika fhala. Haa, vha vhu wela kharamela! Vha vhu ṅwa, vha vhu ṅwa!

Vho no vhu ṅwa, vha ri, 'Nne ndi tshilombe. Ndi na luimbo lwanga.'

Vha ri, 'Haa, a vha lidze a hu na na thaidzo. Kha vha lidze!'

Vha vha vha tshi thoma u lidza fhala. Vha tshi lidza. Vha tshi thoma ngoma.

Vha ri, nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

A vha a tshi thoma u bvumela, 'U-vhuu! Mmawee-haa! ...'

Vha ri, 'Haa, holwu lwonaka holwo! A ri athu u lu pfa. Kha vha ṅwe, kha ri ṅwe!'

Haa, vha khou ṅwa, mani! Hafha fhethu hu tou nga hu na muṅwe ane a khou bvumela a nga ngomu hafha fhethu! A si havha munna fhedzi lini? Hai, kunakele kwa hone! Hai, hu na muthu ane a khou bvumela.

Vhala vhambo di vhambulula ngoma, vha vhambulula, vha

[i] The *tshilombe* is hiding his crime. However, this is also a reference to him guarding his status as spiritually-inspired, expert musician.

it! Drink! Drink!'

Hah, he was drinking, man! But it seemed that someone was responding from within the drum! Was this man not alone? Hey, this is too beautiful! Hey, there is a person responding!

Those people removed the skin, removed it, removed it!

The *tshilombe* was dead drunk while they were removing the skin. He was so drunk that he had fallen asleep!

They were removing the skin inside the house. When they removed the skin, they found that child. Hey! Hey! The child was pale from hunger. Dear God! She was very weak!

While they were taking her out, they planned to cause the *tshilombe* some trouble ...

They made soft porridge. They cared for her. They gave her water. They lay her down.

That big drunk old crocodile became sober. He said, 'I am leaving.'

Hah, they answered, 'Go well. Hah, thank you, go well.'

He walked some distance. Hey, he wanted to play as he walked.

'I was really drunk, man! Let me try to sing.' Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Silence … Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Silence …

Those people, when they opened the drum, they put a dog inside! A dead dog!

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

'Hey! Hey! This person is dead, man!'

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

'Hey, she is dead! Hey, I am now going into dense bush where no one can see me.[i] I have arrived and am sitting down.'

Hah, nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Silence …

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

vhambulula!

Vha tshi vhambulula, thada yo fa. Yo kambiwa yo tou ḽee.

Vha tshi vhambulula fhaḽa vho i dzhenisa nga ngomu nḓuni. Vha tshi fhedza u vhambulula, vha wana ndi ṅwana khoyu. Hee-hee, ṅwana ano tou vha mutshena-tshena. Thovhela, nga nḓala! Ha tsha kona na u kona ṅwana!

Vha tshi mubvisa fhaḽa, vha tshi ita khakhathi …

Vha tshi murindela mukapu. Vha tshi muḽisa. Vha tshi mufha na maḓi. Vha tshi yo mu ladza fhaḽa.

Ngwena yavha i tshi kambuluwa. Ya ri, 'Nne ndi a tuwa.'

Haa, vha ri, 'Kha vha tshimbile. Haa, ro livhuwa, kha vha tshimbile.' U swika ngei phanḓa. Hai, ndi u thoma u dzama.

'Ndo vha ndo kambiwa, mani! Tshe ndi ḓo thoma ndi dzame.' Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Hwii ... Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Hwii ...

Havhaḽa, vho ri u vhambulula, vha longela mmbwa nga ngomu! Vho i vhulaha!

Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

'Hai, hai, o fa hoyu muthu, mani! Hai, o fa mani! Haa, ndi u to ya fhethu havhuḓi dungunudzini zwino. Ndi u swika ndi u dzula.'

Haa, Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu! Hwii! Nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu-nduu!

Ha pfi, 'O fa!'

Haa, ndi u mboḓi dzula fhasi, ndi u vhambulula, ndi vhambulula!

Ha pfi, 'Aa, yaa, o fa!'

Zwino, a tshi yo bvisiwa hafhaḽa uri a vhoṅwe uri ngoho-ngoho o fa!

Ndi u ri a lavhelesiwaha pfi, 'Haa-haa, muthu a ka shanduka! A ka shanduka muthu, mani! Haa, makumbutshini, makumbutshini, madzhevhe! Ṅwenze, heyi mmbwa, mani! Hai, a ka shanduka! A ka shanduka muthu! Hai, ndi ngani tshi tshilopa!'

A dzhiiwa a kokodzeliwa tsini. A imisiwa ha pfi ndi thome ndi ntshe

[i] The veld is a common narrative domain of subterfuge and evil.

‘I say, she is dead!’

Hey, he sat down and opened, and opened the drum completely. ‘I say again, hey, she is dead!’

Now, as he opened the drum there, he saw that she was truly dead!

He said, ‘Hey! Hey! This person has changed! She is a changed person, man! Hey, intestines, intestines and ears! The spinal cord of this dog, man! Hey, she has changed. She is a changed person! Hey, I am taking your blood out!’

He pulled her closer. He put her upright so that he could spill her blood. He again pulled her closer. He pulled her closer. That person again looked at her.

‘Hey, I will take out the blood. Has this person changed? Ears, intestines, spinal cord! Hey, no! Hey, a changed person, man! Hah, a person has changed!’

So, he tried to take out the blood. And so he cut out the liver.[i] He took it out, that liver. He looked and found that, no, it is a dog, man! This is not a person! It is a dog! She had not changed, it is just a dog! He left it there.

This is the death of the child of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012

[i] Canonici (1996:215) notes that ‘African folklore attaches a widely-spread symbolism to the liver. Together with blood and heart, the liver is considered the repository of the life principle.’

tshilopa. A ḓi dovha a kokodzeliwa tsini. A tshi kokodzeliwa tsini. Uḽa muthu a ḓi dovha a lavhelesiwa.

‘Haa, ndi ḓo ntsha tshilopa. Muthu o tou shanduka? Maḓevhe, makumbutshini, ṅwenze! Hai, hii! Mmbwa, mani! Hoo, a ka shanduka muthu, mani! Haa, muthu a ka shanduka!’

Hai, a linga u ntsha tshilopa. Zwi tshi ralo, tshivhindi tshiḽa a tshi via. A tshi ntsha, tshivhindi tshiḽa. Ha lavhelesiwa a ḓi wana uri, hai, ndi mmbwa hei, mani! A si muthu lini! Ndi mmbwa! Hango tou shanduka, ndi mmbwa! A mbo ḓi litsha.

Ha mbo ḓi vha ndi u fa ha ṅwana wa lungano.

Dederen explains that some *ngano* 'have been passed on, relatively unchanged, for several generations.'[539] A case in point is the story of a *tshilombe* musician (figs. 64, 66, 111) who abducts a young girl and holds her captive in his drum. I first documented this story in 1984 from xylophone player Wilson Ravele (1.2)[i] and again from Mathuvhelo Mavhetha in 2012.[540]

This story, as well as Nyamukamadi Ndou's 'The musician and the girl,' features the *tshilombe* who is an expert, wandering performer. He is generally viewed as a degenerate scoundrel who cannot control his sexual urges, and does not care for his family. However, he is less malignant than the cannibal or lion-husband in *ngano*.[541] The narrator explained that the *tshilombe* is admired for his artistic ability ('This song is beautiful! Hey, give him beer!'). However, this ability comes at a price, because it is what attracts young girls and married women to him. He is despised because he seduces them, will not marry or do any 'normal' work.

The *tshilombe* shares certain characteristics with the monster figure *(izimu)* in Xhosa and Zulu narratives (box 10).[542] The latter is 'a large semi-human being with abundant body hair (...) supposed to have some physical deformity.' He is 'the symbol of whatever is evil and disruptive' and is 'always hungry for human flesh,' especially of 'weak and helpless young girls.'[543] The *tshilombe* in turn is a man whose hyperbolically recast image serves to discipline children.

Unlike arch-prankster Hare,[ii] the *tshilombe* is an unsuccessful trickster. Canonici[544] remarks that trickery seems acceptable in the world of animals, 'but not in human society which cannot accept escapades intended to disrupt social order and harmony. The human trickster must pay dearly for his sins.' The *tshilombe* therefore plays a 'grotesquely comic role,' in particular that of foolish dupe.[545] A popular ending to *tshilombe*-type stories in South African cultures describes angry villagers filling the drum with reptiles and insects that emerge and attack the musician when the drum is sounded again. In Phungo's narrative, the *tshilombe's* humiliation is depicted by his drunkenness and initial failure to recognise the carcass of the dog.

This narrative also portrays lost innocence, a core theme in *ngano* where girls in their puberty come face to face with a threatening world. Girls in such stories usually embark on 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 familiar 'swallowing monster' motif. In a similar story in the Xhosa *ntsomi* repertoire, 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.'[546]

Aschwanden[547] explains of neighbouring Shona culture that 'boys up the age of about six are called *chikomana*, which is diminutive form of *mukomana* or adolescent. The root of these terms is *kukoma*, to be obstinate. In turn, a girl between six and ten is called *chipotera*, from *kupotera*, 'to look for protection and help from others.'

This explanation aligns with the roles of girls and boys in *ngano*. Obstinacy is a personality trait in many coming-of-age stories, but more pertinent is that the notion of protection links with the socio-economic status of girls.

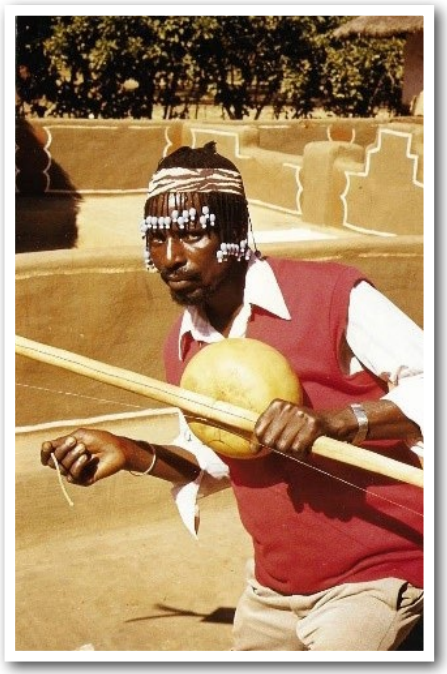
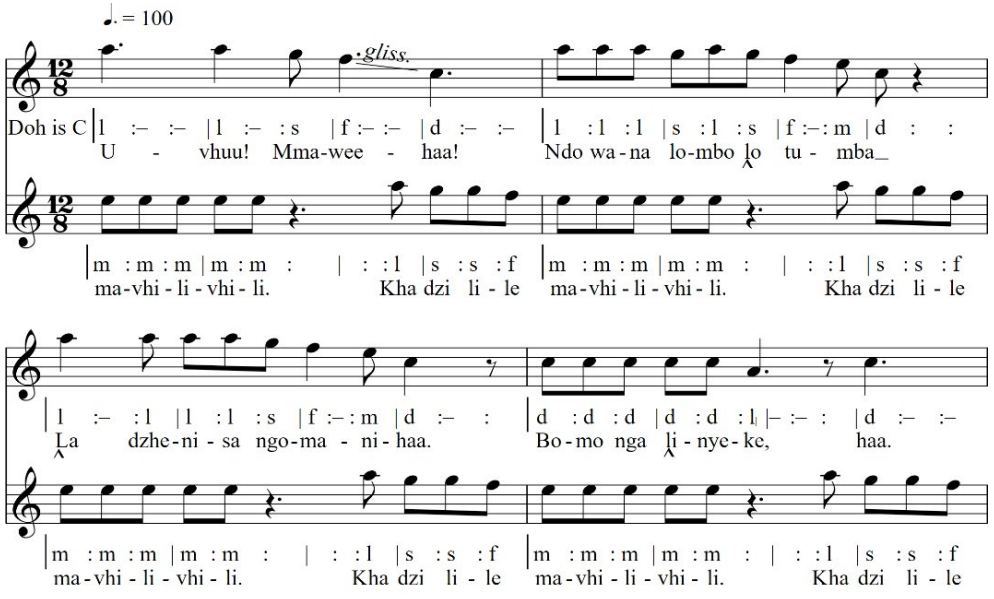


Fig. 66. *Tshilombe* Elias Ndou Mangaya, 1984

[i] Ravele had heard the story from his father (ca. 1860-1944).

[ii] See e.g. 'The wisdom of Hare' (2.3.7).


♩. = 100
gliss.
Doh is C
l :– :– | l :– : s | f :– :– | d :– :–
U - vhuu! Mma-wee - haa!
l :l :l | s :l :s | f :– :m | d : :
Ndo wa-na lo-mbo lo tu - mba_
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
l :– :l | l :l :s | f :– :m | d :– :
La dzhe-ni - sa ngo-ma - ni - haa.
d :d :d | d :d :l |– :– : | d :– :–
Bo-mo nga li-nye-ke, haa.
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le

d :d :d | d :d :l |– :– : | d :– :–
Bo-mo nga li-nye-ke, haa.
d :d :d | d :d :d | l :– : | d :– :–
Ku-ta-ta ku fa ka-lo, haa.
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
d :d :d | d :d :– | d :l : | d :– :d
A no do fa li - ni?__
l :l :l | d :t :l |– :– : | d :– :–
Hae - aa, ngo-ma li-la-li-la, haa.
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
l :l :l | d :t :l |– :– : | d :– :–
ngo-ma li-la-li-la, haa.
d :d :d | d :d :l |– :– : | d :– :–
Bo-mo nga li-nye-ke, haa.
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le
m :m :m | m :m : | : :l | s :s :f
ma-vhi - li - vhi - li. Kha dzi li - le

2.2 Nyamukamadi Ndou

Like others who live here at Folovhodwe, I was born in the Nzhelele district, at Pfumembe village[i] I think I am about 75 years old.

My father's father was called Khalusi. My father's name was Magoba. I cannot remember when he died, but I know he was born when the first locusts came (1915).[548]

He had fields there at Pfumembe. He farmed with maize and millet his whole life. He also planted tobacco and marijuana. Yes, he smoked that stuff and also sold it. 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 also had a herd of cattle. And so we made cream that we put in our porridge. It was like butter, and we smeared our body and face. But my favourite food was sweet potatoes with milk. We also liked to eat *maranga* pumpkin. That you also cook with milk.

Pfumembe is near Nzhelele dam, over there where white farmers lived. My mother Johanna worked in the kitchen of a man called Patrick. His sons were Thysie and Japie. They farmed with tomatoes. My mother cleaned and cooked for them. During that time some people still baked in a clay oven.

New-born babies like me stayed inside the house with their mother for five months after they were born. My grandmother looked after 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 *tshipande* cockroach and a *sheshe-ḓanga* worm. 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 poles, *basha*, close to each other, then they smeared them with clay (fig. 33). 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 white people, and some of us still wore leather clothes. There were no schools or shops. 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 parents had six children. My younger brother Phalalani lives at Lutshindwi. That place is between here and Vhembe (Limpopo) river. My younger sister Nditsheni and I live here at Folovhodwe. We often visit each other. We enjoy doing this. My elder sister Ntsundeni is deceased. My two brothers William and Maligana have also passed away.

We children herded my father's goats. We also had to chase baboons and monkeys from our maize fields. Later we went to initiation school. Here we were told about marriage, about what is expected from a wife and husband.

What I also remember clearly from this time is playing the mouth-harp, and the mouth-bow, *lugube* (fig. 67). We sang '*Tshitaka tsha Gole*'[ii] and '*Vho-*

[i] An earlier version of this life sketch appears in Kruger (2014). This is an updated version that accounts for interviews conducted during 2013 and 2014.

[ii] '*Tshitaka tsha Gole ndi dzunde. Ndi dzunde ḽa Nyamutshenuwa.*' ('Chief Mphaphuli's cemetery is his field. The field of the scared woman.') 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).

Mammbegwana, holele' [i] on the *lugube*. My brother William also taught me to sing with the *tshihwana* (fig. 68). This was not only an instrument for boys. See, this is how we plucked the string ...[ii] But when we became adults, we stopped singing with those instruments. They are for young, unmarried people only. When you are older, you have other things to do.

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. Because I can only hobble around my house, I must hire a pickup to drive me when I want to go to church. The church is only two kilometres from here, there next to the bridge across the Nwanedi river. Drivers want R40 for this short trip. When I complain, they tell me fuel is very expensive. How can I afford this?

Fig. 67. *Lugube* bow-player Flora Shonisani
Khubvi, 1984

You know, my father's brother, Abel Tshibalo, was blessed with mysterious spiritual power. Once, when I was still a young child, Abel passed a farm at Waterpoort, there in the mountains above Makhado. He saw a man leading oxen. They were pulling a sleigh with the carcass of a cow. It had been 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 Tshibalo Jonas Mudau. He worked in a shop near Musina. They sold things like hoes, firewood and clothes. He had a herd of cattle that he had tended for him along the Nwanedi river.

But when white farmers came[iii] he had to move his herd to Lutshindwi. My grandmother lived there. I met Tshibalo when I went to visit her. We lived near my grandmother after our marriage, and later moved to Folovhodwe.

I gave birth to twelve children. Seven of them are still alive. I also have many grandchildren. I live here in the homestead of my son, Samuel Tshibalo, where I have my own small house. He works at a milk factory but I do not know where it is.[iv] His wife is Khathu. She has four children. Two of them sleep with me here in my house.

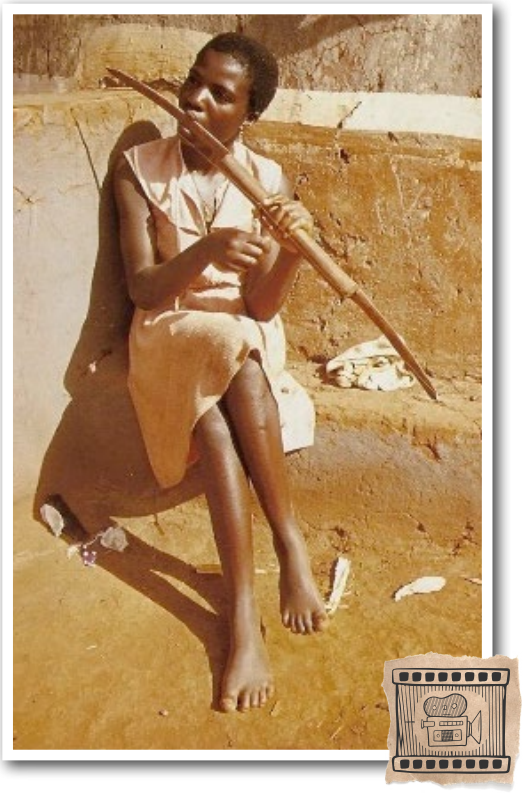


Fig. 68. *Tshihwana* bow-player
Nngwedzeni Tshamano
Phiphidi, 1984

[i] *'Vho mammbegwana: Ri tamba ri tshi ḽa mini? Ri tshi ḽa mburutata, tshilo tsha vhaṱanuni.'* ('We, the swallows: What do we eat when we play? We eat sweet potatoes, the favourite food of the chief's junior wives.') This is a girls' *musevhetho* initiation song (Kruger, 1986:43).

[ii] Ndou indicated that she used to pluck the bow of the string by pinching it between thumb and forefinger. Players also used a thorn (and subsequently, a safety pin) to strike the string. This produced a louder, sharper sound.

[iii] Referring to land invasion and forced relocation.

[iv] Tshibalo was a machine operator at Clover in Olifantsfontein.

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. If not, people come and break them. They drink and smoke weed, and then cause trouble.

Building a house is so expensive that it may take several years to be completed. Samuel hopes to fit a roof next year or the year after that.

The thing that worries me most is that we do not have water at home. People say water is coming, but I do not see it. I am now old. My feet are swollen all the time, and sometimes it is easier just to crawl when I want to sit outside in the sun. At other times I am better, and walk very slowly with a stick. But getting up and sitting down is always difficult. This is why my eldest son is coming to fetch me. I am going to live with him in Musina.

Because I cannot walk far, one of my daughters collects my pension. I am worried sick about her. She has five children and her husband works in Johannesburg. He does not support his family and nobody knows what he does there in town. He only comes home at Christmas. Yes, Mr. Mavhetha, a matter likes this turns your heart into a clenched fist. I agree that it is better to have a husband and father who is ill and unable to work, rather than one who simply ignores his family.

When you meet my daughter, you will see that her shoes are broken from wandering all over Folovhodwe, hoping to find work. All that keeps the family from starving is child grants. Their house is built from stones they picked up here in the village. Rich people also sometimes use these stones. Zimbabwean builders come and use them to build strong and beautiful homes (fig. 69). But when you are poor and cannot afford a builder, you just pile the stones on top of each other and then plaster them roughly with mud. When your house is built like this, people have nothing but contempt for you.

(Nyamukamadi Ndou relocated to Musina in 2015 and passed away during April 2017.)

Fig. 69. Decorated stone wall
Folovhodwe, 2010

2.2.1 The girls and the frog / Vhasidzana na ḓula

Here comes a story!

There were girls. These girls were very close friends.[i] They used to go to the veld together.

One day they said, ‘Let us go to the place of birds.’

Indeed, they found a bird coming towards them.

One of them was carrying her calabash. She said, ‘Hey, there is milk in this calabash, man.’

The other one also had a calabash. ‘Hey, there are loose beads in my calabash.’

Those children were walking because they were trying to catch the bird. But this bird did not want to be caught. They walked, they walked, they walked! After walking a while, they entered dense bush.

The bird came near them and flew up, thiriii![ii]

‘This bird is beautiful! I will really try to catch it.’

The bird came near and flew up again, thiriii!

The bird left. It went further.

‘Ah, let us follow, man. We will catch it, man!’

But those children had wandered far to places they did not know. They were entering mountains with trees, and they did not know the place. They were struggling to follow the bird through dense bush.

This bird flew on and on, and returned to them, defecating something. They received those things, they received those things that were dropped from the stomach of the bird. It is dropping inside the calabash.

‘This big calabash must be filled. I will eat.’

The other one said, ‘I want beads so that I can string and wear them.’

That bird flew further into the mountains. It arrived in certain mountains the girls did not know.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na vhasidzana. Havha vhasidzana vho vha vha tshi pfana badi. Vho vha vha tshi tshimbila nga ngomu ḓakani vhoṱhe.

Vha tshi ri, ‘A ri ye zwinonini.’

Ngoho, vha wana tshinoni tshi tshi khou ḓa sa zwezwi.

Uḽa o ḓifara tshitemba tshawe. A ri, ‘Ei, hei ndi khou ri tshitemba tshi na maḓhi, mani.’

Muṅwe o fara-vho tshitemba tshawe, ‘Ei, hei afha hu na vhulungu.’

Zwiḽa vhana vha khou ḓi tshimbila ngauralo vha khou lusa uri vha tshi fare. Hetshi tshinoni a tshi tendi u fariwa-ni.

Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila! Vha tshi khou ralo, vha tshi khou ḓi tshimbila, vha tshi ya henengei ḓakani.

Tsha ḓa tsini navho, tsha ri, ṭhiriiii!

‘I tshi tshinoni tsho naka nga maanḓa, nne ngoho ṱoḓou ri ndi tou tshi fara.’

Tsha ḓa tsini hawe tsha ri, ṭhiriii!

Tshinoni tshi khou ṱuwa, tsha ya huṅwe.

‘Aa, kha ri tshi tevhele, mani, ri ḓo tshi fara, mani!’

Matsiko havhaḽa vhana vha khou ya kule nga maanḓa hune vha sa hu ḓivhe. Vha vhona vha khou dzhena vhukati ha dzithavha na miri a vha huḓivhi na u huḓivha. Vha khou sokou tshotshoma nga u vhona tshinoni hetshiḽa.

Hetshiḽa tshinoni tshi khou ḓi fhufhela, tshi tshi tshimbila, tshi tshi ḓa tsini na iwe, tsha ḓa tsha nya tshithu. Vha tshi ṱanganedza, vha tshi ṱanganedza hezwila zwithu zwane zwa khou bva kha thumbu ya tshinoni. Tshi khou nyela nga ngomu tshitembani.

‘Tshithu tshingafha tshifanela, uri tshi ḓale, ndi ḽe.’

Houḽani a ri, ‘Ndi wane vhulungu ha u lunzhedza ndi ambare.’

Havha tshi khou raha dzithavha tshi khou ya. Havha vha tshi khou swika kha dziṅwe dzithavha dzine vha si dziḓivhe.

---

[i] Lit. ‘there was good cooperation/understanding between them.’

[ii] It is making sure the girls keep it in sight.

‘Hey, we are lost man. How will we find our way?’

One said, ‘Hah, let us just walk.’

It was then that they arrived at a place where there was a house, man. Those children and the bird entered the courtyard, and then the bird disappeared.[i]

The girls greeted, ‘Aa!’

Those inside answered, ‘Aa!’

They asked, ‘Hey, girls, where do you come from?’

They replied, ‘We will not tell you where we come from.’

‘Now, girls, what are you carrying?’

One said, ‘I am carrying milk.’

The other one said, ‘I am carrying loose beads.’

‘OK, that is good.’

So, the girls said, ‘We are hungry.’

The others answered, ‘No problem. Wait, we will give you flour.’

They took flour and gave it to one of them.

‘You, wait, I will give you peanuts.’

They took those peanuts and gave them to her. They took out those peanuts and the mortar and stamper. Those children pounded.

That elder one started cooking. That one cooked and cooked and cooked! That one pounded, pounded, pounded!

A big frog came there. This frog is the one that will speak for them.[ii]

The frog wanted to eat the grounded peanuts. It wanted to teach them the law. It said, ‘Tsk![iii] Give me grounded peanuts and I will teach you the law.’

They said, ‘Hey, this porridge is lumpy man!’

The frog just sat there with its legs apart, phavhalaa! Then it went

‘Hei, ro xela mani. Afha fhethu ri ḓo tou tshimbilisa hani?’

Muṅwe a ri, ‘Haa, kha ri sokou tshimbila mani.’

Ndi hone vha tshi vho swika vha tshi vho pfa u pfi hafha fhethu ndi muḓini, mani. Vhaḽa vhana na he tshiḽa tshinoni tsha dzhena avha tsha tshivhona na hafha he tsha ya hone.

Vha ri, ‘Aa!’

Vhaḽa vha ri, ‘Aa!’

Vha ri, ‘Hee, vhasidzana, na ni khou bva gai?’

Vha ri, ‘A ri nga vhavhudzi uri ri khou bva gai.’

‘Vhasidzana, zwino, zwe na fara ndi mini?’

Muṅwe a ri, ‘Nṋe ndo fara mafhi.’

Muṅwe a ri, ‘Nṋe ndo fara vhulungu.’

‘Hei, zwo naka, mani.’

Hai, vhasidzana vha ri, ‘Ri na nḓala.’

Vha ri, ‘Hai, zwo luga. Imani iwe, ndi u ṱusele vhukhopfu.’

Vha ṱusa vhukhopfu havho vha mufha.

‘Iwe, imai, ndi u ṱusele thanga.’

Vha ṱusa dziḽa thanga dza nḓuhu vha mufha.

Vha bvisa thanga dziḽa dza nḓuhu, na musi na mutuli. Vhaḽa vhana ndi u sinḓa.

Houḽa muṅwe u ḓo vha a khou bika muhulwane. Uḽa u khou bika, u khou bika, u khou bika! Uḽa u khou ḓi sinḓa, u khou ḓi sinḓa, u khou ḓi sinḓa!

Ḓula ḽa sendela tsini. Ndi ḽone ḽine ḽa ḓo vha sengela zwithu hezwiḽa heḽo ḓula. Ḽi pfana na u ḽa thanga. Ḽi khou toḓa u vha funzedza mulayo.

Ḽa ri, ‘Tsk! Ḓompha thanga ndi shenge ndi ni funze mulayo.’

Vha ri, ‘Hei, vhuswa ndi mbodza hovhu, vhu na mapundu, mani!’

Ḽa ri, phavhalaa! Ḽa ya u dzula hangei kule.

Haa, ḽa pfa ḽi songo pfelela zwine ḽa khou vhudzwa zwone nga vhasidzana. ‘A vha khou mmbudza uri ndi diwe? Nṋe ndi a bvelela hu pfi ndi ni vhudze. Hanga ḓo ḓivha uri u ya gai. Hanga ḓo ḓivha zwauri

[i] Having delivered the girls to the sacred site, its role as guide ends here.

[ii] I.e. ancestral spirits.

[iii] A click sound.

and sat far away.

Hah, it was not satisfied by what the girls had said. ‘Are you telling me this because you want to punish me? I am going back there because I must tell you, you will not know where to go. You will not know the things you see.’

It returned to where it had come from, man, hopping: Tshokoto, tshokoto, tshokoto, tshokoto! Phuu!

It crossed far away. It returned, man! It said (to the younger girl), ‘Tsk, teketsi! Give me your hand, I want to teach you. Do you know that I can punish you properly? I will punish you hard, man. You see, I ignored the first lie.’

Her elder friend came closer and said to the frog, ‘No man, stop your threats of punishment. You, sister, give him what he wants. This is not our home to do as we please.’

The girl took many beads and came there and gave them to that frog.

The frog said, ‘You know what, do you see that row of frogs over there?’

That one answered, ‘Yes.’

It said, ‘There are ten frogs, not so? Do not accept this one, or this one, or this one. You will see what will come out. A child will come out. The child will go with you, together with cattle, everything, and goats, and all your clothes that will be given by those ancestors,[i] those u ḓo vhona mini.’

Ḽa vhuya, mani, tshokoṱo, tshokoṱo, tshokoṱo, tshokoṱo! Phuu!

Ḽa wela hangei kule. Ḽa vhuya mani! Ḽa ri, ‘Tsk, ṱeketsi! Mphe tshanḓa hetshino ndi u funze mulayo. Iwe u a ḓivha uri ndi ḓo u dia nga maanḓa? Ndi ḓo u dia badi nne. U vhona hezwi ndi khou tou litsha.’

Mukomana houḽani wawe we a ḓa nae, a ri, ‘Hai, mani, litsha hezwo zwau dia mani. Iwe, ṱusa u mufhe. Thi a si hayani hashu hafha.’

Uḽa ndi u ṱusa dzinnzhi, ndi u swika ndi u shela hafhaḽa kha ḓula heḽia.

Ḽa ri, ‘Ni khou vhona ndi mini, ni khou a vhona maḓula aḽa, o temba hafhaḽa?’

Uḽa a ri, ‘Ee.’

Ḽa ri, ‘Ndi maḓula a thene, a thi ri? Heḽi u songo tenda, u tende heḽi, u tende heḽi, u tende heḽi. U ḓo vhona zwi re nga ngomu zwi tshi bva. Hu ḓo bva ṅwana. Ane a ḓo u fhelekedza na kholomo, zwoṱhe na dzimbudzi, zwoṱhe zwiambaro zwau zwine wa ḓo tou fhiwa nga vhadzimu havhaḽa vhane vha khou dzula hangei. Ee, kholomo heyo ni songo tenda i tshi viiwa. Ni songo i viya, ni songo i vhulaha. Ni ḓo vhona i tshi lala no fara hetshi tshithu tshi nonga sa hetshi. Ni khou tshivhona hetshi tshithu?’

Vha ri, ‘Ee.’

Vha ri,

[i] Lit. ‘you will have clothes with the blessing of the ancestors.’ This points to *zwitungulo*, ancestral objects that objectify moral law.

The girls and the frog / Vhasidzana na ḓula (continued)

who stay over there.[i] Yes, do not allow that ox to be slaughtered. Do not slaughter it, do not kill it. You will see this ox lying down when you see something like this. Do you see this thing?'

They answered, 'Yes.'

Then they sang,

(Narrator)
One-who-eats-oxen[ii] overcomes all.
(Chorus)
O ketembu-dzho!
(An onomatopoeia of flinging evil away with the horns.)

The frog said, 'This thing, come and put it here near the ox. You will find it being calm. It will seem dead. You will cut everything. The meat will exposed. Do not come and cut the sinews, do not cut them, do not cut a thing. Everything: You start from here, take off the skin in this direction. The meat will be exposed, and you will cut it. The meat will appear and you will cut it. The meat will appear and the bones will remain, and those sinews. Now, when you are finished here, do these things as before. Close up the skin. Close it, close it! That skin must be placed over there. Everything must be prepared. Take this club, do you see it?'

(Musimi)
U murunge Mudaṅombe.
(Vhabvumeli)
O ketembu-dzho!

Ḽa ri, 'Hetshi tshithu, u sokou swika wa vhea henefhaḽa tsini nayo. U ḓo wana i tshi lala. I tshi nga yo fa. Wa tou via zwithu zwoṯhe. Ṋama wa bvisa. U songo vhuya wa tshea dzitsinga: U songo tshea mini, tshiṅwe na tshiṅwe u songo tshea. Zwoṯhe, iwe u thoma hafha, u khou sokou via mukumba u tshi isa hangei. U tshi bvisa ṋama u tshi vhea, u tshi bvisa ṋama u tshi vhea. U tshi bvisa ṋama ha sala marambo na dzitsinga hedziḽani. Zwino, hezwo wo no fhedza hafho, u dzhie u ite sa zwezwiḽa zwe wa thomisa zwone. U fukedze, u fukedze, u fukedze! Mukumba houḽani u swike nga henefhaḽa. Zwoṯhe u dzudzanye. U dzhie hei mbaḓa hei, u khou i vhona?'

A ri, 'Ee.'

Vha ri, 'U murunge Mudaṅombe …'

La ri, 'Hei mbaḓa hei, u ḓo ri musi wono kuvhanganya mukumba hoyu, u swike u u diye, wo vhea mufaro hoyu. Heiḽa mbaḓa u tshi tou dia so, luthihi. U ḓo wana, u i pose, u tshi i posa u ḓo wana i tshi ṱuwa ya ya hangei hune ya khou dzula hone. Hafha hayani hayo, u ḓo tou vhona hu tshinga hu khou bva mulilo. A si mulilo, ndi zwithu zwa hone

[i] The ancestral spirits
[ii] The honourific name of the ox-spirit.

They answered, ‘Yes.’

Then they sang, ‘One-who-eats-oxen overcomes all …’

The frog said, ‘This club, this one, when you have closed up the skin, come and beat it, and put this basket nearby. You must beat it like this, once. As you throw, you will find, as you throw, you will find the ox going to where it lives. Here at home you will see something like a fire. But it is not a fire. It is these things of the ancestral shrines. It is One-who-eats-oxen because One-who-eats-oxen does not die. It is the ox of the shrines. It can enter the pool,[i] nothing can kill it. Crocodiles cannot kill it, lions, no one. None of these dangerous animals can kill it. But it can kill everything. So, I have given you the law.’

That frog started to leave.

And so it was. She walked with her basket and her walking stick. She ended up at the place she was supposed to stay.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 13 June 2011

[i] The spirit world.

zwa zwifho zwa hone. Ndi Mudaṅombe, ngauri Mudaṅombe a i fi, ndi kholomo ya zwifho. Tivhani i a dzhena: A i ḽiwi nga tshithu. Ngwena i a vhulaya, ndau, mini, zwenezwi zwithu zwi̓nonga zwa zwivhulai. I a vhulaha zwo̓the. Ndi khou ndo laya.’

Ḽia ḓula ḽa mbo ḓi vha ḽi khou ṱuwa.

Zwa mbo ḓi tshimbila nga u tou ralo na mufaro wawe na mbaḓa yawe. A namba̓ o fhelela henefho hune a khou ya u dzula hone.

Ndi u fa ha salungano.

This *ngano* portrays spiritual awakening and instruction about ancestral authority in complex, profoundly metaphorical form. Put simply, 'children learn that their ancestors will help them but also punish those who transgress their laws.'[549] A Shona myth explains that Mwari, the creator deity, 'gives people rules *(mutemo)* to follow: "All shall uphold my laws and those of the elders."'[550]

'Let us go to the place of birds' is an ambiguous statement. It suggests firstly that the girls want to hunt birds. However, the pursuit of the bird in fact is metaphoric of a demanding journey to social integration and spirituality: 'Hey, we are lost man. How will we find our way?' The narrator explained that the girls' destination is *zwifho*, the sacred site of their family. That the journey is fraught with difficulty is evident in the protagonists' struggle through untamed wilderness.

Ngano dealing with spirituality commonly feature certain people and animals who mediate between human and spiritual realms. Crocodiles and hippopotami often feature in this capacity (see the next story). Frogs are also notable, although less common.[i] What is significant about these animals is that they frequent pools. These are sacred places located on the threshold between human and spirit worlds. This explains the frog's statement in Ndou's story that the ox-spirit 'can enter the pool.'

Another kind of animal that mediates between human and spiritual worlds is the bird. Birds, because of their ability to fly, commonly are messengers, guides and guardians in *ngano*.[551] As creatures of land and sky, they can soar elusively beyond the confines of human existence. They also offer access to the spirit world, and cannot be captured: 'They were trying to catch the bird. But this bird did not want to be caught (…) and then the bird disappeared.'

The frog too, as a creature not only of the water, but also of the underground, is a member of *vhafhasi* ('those below'), inhabitants of the ancestral realm.[ii] The row of frogs accordingly signifies the totality of a person's ancestral spirits. All these spirits may feature in an individual's life, but in practice people tend to relate to a particular spirit, hence the instruction to the girls to select one frog only. Once this choice has been made, 'the child will come out.' In other words, she will have integrated her spirit, and acquired all the *zwitungulo* sacred objects needed for ancestral sacrifice (clothing and other inherited possessions).

The sacred site also is a place of instruction. The 'things' *('hezwiḽa zwithu')* that drop from the stomach of the bird are milk and beads. The milk sustains the girls during their journey, but it, together with the beads, also is meant for sacrificial purposes. In addition, filling the calabash, stringing loose beads, cooking (a female chore) and eating are metaphors for maturing and achieving wisdom *(vhuṱali)*.

The girls initially refuse to accept instruction, and fail obtain the required knowledge, hence the lumpy porridge and the lying the frog accuses them of. This explains why the frog is dissatisfied and warns the girls that they will not know where to go or understand what they see. It then exercises its authority and threatens the girls with punishment. The elder girl is reprimanded by the younger one ('This is not our home to do as we please'), and she comes to her senses. She takes a food basket and walking stick and leaves the sacred site. She arrives 'at the place she was supposed to stay.' In other words, she has successfully achieved spiritual maturity and social integration.

Stayt[552] explains that one of the forms ancestral spirits take is that of cattle and goats. 'Many important lineages possess a sacred black bull which is called *makhulu* (grandfather) and is regarded as the embodiment of all the ancestral spirits.'

The lengthy description of the ox being dissected and resurrected signifies spiritual communication, typically triggered by adversity. Dissecting the ox is the process of reflecting on a personal crisis ('The meat will be uncovered'). 'We will not tell you where we come from' means that spirituality involves a confidential relationship between individual and spirit. The successful outcome of this experience is that the person may 'close up the skin' and 'beat' the ox so that it goes 'to where it lives.' In other words, the individual has reached a condition of resolution or spiritual equilibrium, and is able to lead a fulfilling, secure life in the supportive presence of the spirit. This is evident in the name of the sacred ox which depicts fending off adversity. The power of the spirit is also like a fire. It is more powerful than malevolent forces such as wild animals.

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[i] Kriel (1971:71) notes similarly that 'the personified frog is a rare character in Shona folktales.'

[ii] The Karanga observe that 'we receive our fertility from the ancestors who are buried in the earth' (Aschwanden, 1989:14).

2.2.2 Good and evil / Zwavhuḓi na zwivhi

Here comes a story!

There was a girl. This girl was very beautiful. She stayed on one side of a big river. It was difficult to cross. There were big trees on the banks. The branches of these trees were big.[i] So, that girl said to her suitor, 'Well, if you love me, come, cross over to this side.'

That young man replied, 'No, *you* cross over to me.'

That other one asked, 'How will I step across?'

That other one answered, 'Just try.'

That girl started to cross carefully.

He said, 'Walk across on that branch.[ii] You will find a way over here, because I love you.'

That other one replied, 'Right.'

That girl stepped carefully[iii] over the middle of the pool. It was a very big pool! Hippopotamus and Crocodile lived there. These people were her ancestral spirits.[iv] She did not understand what these two people were saying.[v]

These two people were arguing, 'I will not forsake my grandchild.'

That other one said, 'And I, I will also not abandon my grandchild. I will take her home where I want her to be.'

Truly, those children! That girl was crossing.

They said, 'See, you managed to cross.'

She arrived and went home. She arrived and cooked porridge, and

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na musidzana. Musidzana hoyo o vha o nakesa nga maanḓa. A tshi dzula seli ha mulambo muhulu. U sa welei. U na miri mihulu. Hune havha uri miri ya hone a i konyowi matavhi.

Haiwa, musidzana uḽa a ri, 'Hai, arali u khou mpfuna, i ḓa.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Wela nga hafha.'

Houḽa wa muṱhannga a ri, 'Wela nga *hafha*.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Ndi ḓo kanda hani afha, thi nga ḓo wela?'

Uḽa a ri, 'Hai!'

Uḽa a mbo ḓi kanda.

A ri, 'Tshimbila nga lutanda lwonolwu. U ḓo wana u tshi khou swika hafha hune nda vha hone ngauri ndi khou funesa.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Ndi zwone.'

Uḽa musidzana ndi u tshimbila, ndi u tshimbila nga ngomu vhukati ha maḓi. Tivha ḽi hulusa nga maanḓa! Hu dzula Mvuvhu na Ngwena. Havha vhathu ndi vho-makhulu wawe. Ene ha zwiḓivhi zwauri havha vhathu vhavhili havha vha khou amba mini.

Vhathu havha vhavhili vha na mupikisano wa uri, 'Nṋe ndi nga si litshe wanga muḓuhulu.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Na nṋe wanga muḓuhulu, ndi nga si mulitshe. Ndi ḓo muisa hune nda funa hone hayani.'

Ngoho, vhaḽa vhana: Uḽa musidzana ndi u wela.

Vha ri,'A si zwezwo anongo wela?'

Ndi u swika ndi u ya hayani. Ndi u swika ndi u mubikela vhuswa, na ṋama na vhuswa, na ṋama na mafhi.

Haa, uḽa ṅwana a ri, 'Nṋe a thi ḽi.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Haa, ndi ḓo sedza arali zwi hone zwiḽiwa zwine a ḓo ḽa.'

Haa, a mbo ḓi ṱuwa nga matsheloni. Ndi u swika, ndi u ya henengei zwifhoni zwa hawe. Ene ha ḓivhi u ri ndi zwifho. U sokou vhona zwauri ndi tivha fhedzi.

---

[i] Lit. 'you could not easily break the branches of these trees.'

[ii] The implication is that the branches of trees on both banks of the river touch in the middle, allowing people to cross. Deep, narrow streams in the Soutpansberg sometimes are traversed in this way.

[iii] Lit. 'walked and walked.'

[iv] These animals feature similarly in 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile' (2.5.1). Also see Kruger & Le Roux (2007:84-92).

[v] Because she did not observe ancestral morality.

meat and porridge, and meat and milk.

So, the husband said, 'I do not eat that.'

That other one answered, 'Well, I will see what other food there is.'

So, she departed early in the morning. She arrived. She had gone over there to her ancestral shrine. She did not know that it was a shrine. She merely saw a pool. She started to sing,

(Narrator)
They said, 'I do not eat an ox.'[i]
They said, 'I do not eat porridge.'[ii]
Singing.
(Chorus)
It is father who sings.

The spirit said, 'Ah, I am suffering because of the two children.'

People picked up the enclosed basket with the chicks of those big birds.

The spirit arrived and said, 'You will take.'

The young couple took leaves. They were clever, they were clever! They covered the heads of the chicks with those leaves. Because they fly, but not far away. They fly around here, because they feed on locusts brought by those big mothers,[iii] because there are big monsters that bite.[iv]

Hah, people are carrying those things home. They arrive and cook. They eat, they eat and become full. Now, they are sleeping.

In the morning they asked, 'Can't we go back?'

Others said, 'Yes, let us return.'

A mbo ḓi imba,

(Musimi)
Vha ri, 'A ndi ḽi ṅombe.'
Vha ri, 'A ndi ḽi sadza.'
Shi kana kulende.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ṱaṱa wa kulende, wee.

A ri, 'Aa, nne ndi ṱolwa ndi tshi khou shengelwa vhana vhashu lini.'

Vhathu vho namedza vhualo hu aḓedza vhuthatha nga mafhondo haaḽa a manoni haaḽa.

A ri a tshi swika, a ri, 'Ndi u dzhie!'

U dzhie maṱari. O thanya, o thanya! A fukedza ṱhoho nga maṱari haaḽani. A thi ri a sokou fhufha, ha tou fhufha a ya kule. A fhufhela tsini henefhaḽa, a tshi khou fhiwa ndodo nga havhaḽa vho-mme vhahulwane ngauri ndi maḓithu mahulu a no luma.

Haa, xee, haa, vhathu vha hwalela vha khou isa muḓini. Vha swika vha bika. Ha ḽiwa, ha ḽiwa ha furiwa. Zwino-ha, vhathaḓa dza lala.

Nga matshelo ha pfi, 'A ri vhuyeleli?'

Ha pfi, 'Haa, ri a vhuyelela.'

Henefhaḽa o tou ḓala ngaurali.

'Ri ḓo a laṱisa. A ri ye.'

Vhathu vho hwala mithatha ndi u ya henengei. Haa, ndi u swika ndi u namela uḽa. 'Vha ri, A ndi ḽi ṅombe ...'

Aa, aḽa manoni, a thi ri a a imba na one. A khou ri, 'Kulende- kulende-kulende-kulende-kulende!'

Haa, aḽa manoni o thivha o vala na ḓuvha! A khou ḓa, mani!

Aa, ha khou ya u vha lema. Kani ndi u hwale, a fara nga hafha a ḓi thithiedza na milenzhe, aa, na zwanḓa!

A khou luma a tshi nongola. U khou kondelela!

---

[i] This could refer to an ancestral spirit or perhaps the fickle husband.
[ii] *Sadza* is a Chikaranga word. This alludes to the antiquity of the story.
[iii] The adult birds.
[iv] Referring to the adult birds catching the locusts.

They returned to the same place because there were many birds there.

'We will get them. Let us go.'

People carried their lidded baskets and went over there. Hah, they arrived and climbed into that tree. They sang, 'They said, "I do not eat an ox" …'

Ah, I say, those birds also sang. They were saying, 'Kulende- kulende-kulende-kulende-kulende!'

Hah, there were so many birds in the air that they blocked out the sun! They are coming, man! Ah, they are not going to spoil them.[i] They tried to carry them, but they were so many that they covered them, even their legs and feet. The birds are biting the people and gorging themselves.[ii] They are relentless!

They are now going down the tree.

They are saying. 'You can go down.'

That other one said, 'Let us go!'

They arrived home. They arrived and again cooked those chicks.

They ate. They were happy. They ate.

A certain parent asked, 'No, and where did you get the chicks?'

'Over there at that pool.'

'We told you that place is forbidden. It is an ancestral shrine. Do not go there. You will die inside.'

Those people did not know that their ancestral spirits were inside, those who belong to the family.[iii] Even that girl, her own ancestral spirits lived there.

That other spirit said, 'I will not abandon mine.'[iv]

That other spirit said, 'And I will not abandon mine. There are two

Vha khou tsela fhasi zwino.

Vha ri, 'U nga tsela fhasi.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Kha ri ṱuwe!'

Vha swika hayani. Vha tshi swika hu khou bikiwa habe nga haaḽani mafhondwana. Ha ḽiwa, ha takaliwa, ha ḽiwa.

Muṅwe a ri, 'No, na vhoiwe mafhondwana ane a' nga havha mubebi ni a wana gai?'

'Hanefhaḽa tivhani ḽeneḽia.'

'Ndi khou ni vhudza u ri a hu yiwi hafhaḽa fhethu. Hu na zwifho. Ni songo ya ni ḓo fela nga ngomu.'

Havha a vha ḓivhi tshithu zwauri hu na makhulukuku wawe nga ngomu, hune havha u ri ndi lushaka lwonolwo. Houḽa-vho wa. musidzana, hu na makhulukuku wawe wa mbvumbo o no dzula henefho

Uḽa a ri, 'Nne, wanga ndi nga simulitshe.'

Uḽa na ene a ri, 'Na nne, wanga ndi nga simulitshe. Ndi vhathu vhavhili.'

Hai, ha pfi, 'Kha ri vhuyelele mani. Ri a vhuyelela hafhaḽani.'

Zwino, hafha fhethu, ndi fhethu ha wrong.

Vha khou ya kha muri. Ndi musi wo tou rali. Thiri, ndi mutuli. A wo ngo aṱama.

Zwino, u na muṅwe muri nga ntha hafhaḽani. So, vha khou vhona. Ndi ludzekedzeke lu nga sa hafha. A lu kandei.

Vha ri, 'Vha a namela.'

Vha khou ya zwifhoni. Vha khou zwi pfa? Vha khou ya zwifhoni hafhaḽa fhethu ngauri vhone vho ratha vha kanda hafha fhethu.

Vha ri, 'Ri ya ntha hafha, malegelegeni.'

'Tavhi heḽia a ḽi kandiwi!'

'Haa, ndi u swika! Haa, rine ri toḓa mafhondo a ṋama!'

Uḽa a ri, 'Naa muri uyu u khou tou dzinginyiswa nga muya?'

Uḽa a ri, 'Ii hu fanela hu muya! Rine a ri fule, fule manoni haya! Ri ḓo tsa nga hafha.'

---

[i] I.e. be lenient with them.

[ii] Expressive of the conflicting nature of evil.

[iii] *Lushaka*: 'patrilineal kinship group' (Van Warmelo, 1989:152).

[iv] I.e. descendants.

people.'

So, the young couple said, 'Let us return, man. We are returning there to the pool.'

Now, that place, it was forbidden. They are going to the tree. The tree is sturdy like a mortar. I say, like a mortar. But not really that big.

Now, there is a certain branch[i] there on top. So, you see, there is a narrow branch like this ... It was too narrow to step on.

Even so, they said, 'We are climbing up.'

They are going to the ancestral shrine. They were taking a risk.[ii] They are going to that ancestral shrine because they choose to enter that place.

They say, 'We are going up there, high up there.'

'Do not step on that narrow branch!'

'Hah, we have arrived! Hah, we want bird meat!'

That other one asked, 'What wind is shaking the tree?'

That other one answered, 'I think it is the wind! Let us grab, grab these birds! We will go down this side of the tree!'

Ah, the tree sang, 'They said, "I do not eat an ox"…'

The tree said, 'We are not taking such nonsense.[iii] I do not want to be groped.'

Yes, that is when that branch went ... (sound of tree branch breaking) and they fell into the deep water! (sound of bodies falling into deep water).

One spirit grabbed its descendant! The other spirit grabbed its descendant! They put them in their mouth! They took them to where they belong. That other certain person was taken home.

Folovhodwe, 1 October 2012

Aa, muri wa ri, 'Vha ri, A ndi ḽi ṅombe ...'

Muri wa ri, 'Riṋe ri khou hana tshika, mani. A thi nyagi u fariwa.'

Ee, ndi hezwiḽa davhi heḽiani pozho nga ngomu maḓini! Muṅwe a ri khaṱha wawe, muṅwe a ri khaṱha wawe! A dzhenisa mulomoni!

O bvela nae a tshi muisa ha hawe. Uḽa muṅwe nae a tshi muisa ha hawe hangei.

Ha mbo ḓi vha u fa ha salungano.

[i] Lit. 'tree.'
[ii] Lit. 'did you hear that?'
[iii] Lit. 'rubbish.'

The motif of crossing a river is expanded by means of two metaphors. The first refers to marrying. The difficult crossing is indicative of lengthy marriage negotiations, the usual prejudices of in-laws, and the determination of the young man to marry a beautiful wife. He is ultimately successful because his bride crosses the river to live at his home in accordance with patrilocal practice.

Pools are the mythical origins of certain family groups.[553] This belief may originate in Karanga mythology where water is synonymous with creation, life and spirituality.[554] The metaphor of crossing a river is harnessed with that of pools as sacred sites, as the abode of spiritual authority. Crossing a river usually signifies moral transgression. The spirits remark in this regard that they will care for their grandchildren and take them 'home.' Home is a condition of benign spirituality and moral compliance.

The young couple's behaviour is therefore not real, but representative of moral 'homelessness.' This is why the young wife initially fails to understand what the spirits are saying and that the pool is a sacred place. In *ngano*, as in many narratives of world, the beauty of the bride usually triggers perseverance and courage in the suitor who is pursuing the wife of his dreams. However, in her extraordinary metaphorical thinking, Ndou represents the beauty of the young wife as the overwhelming allure and power of evil. As the bride remarks to the groom, 'You will find a way across, because I love you.' Having done this, the couple enjoy a period of happiness ('They ate, they were happy, they ate').

Moral transgression is symbolised by the husband's refusal to eat normal food. This is a common motif in *ngano*, and it triggers narrative development. The husband prefers the meat of wild birds instead of beef. A well-known children's song correspondingly asks:[555]

Hey you, Mathora!
What have you eaten?
You have eaten porridge with milk.
What was your side dish?
The side dish was meat.
What kind of meat?
The meat of a big eagle.
Do not cross the river.
There are two crocodiles.

Here, too, the meat of the eagle, as well as the crossing of a river, signifies moral transgression. Although crocodiles are still to be found in certain local rivers, the reference to them is symbolic since they represent ancestral morality.

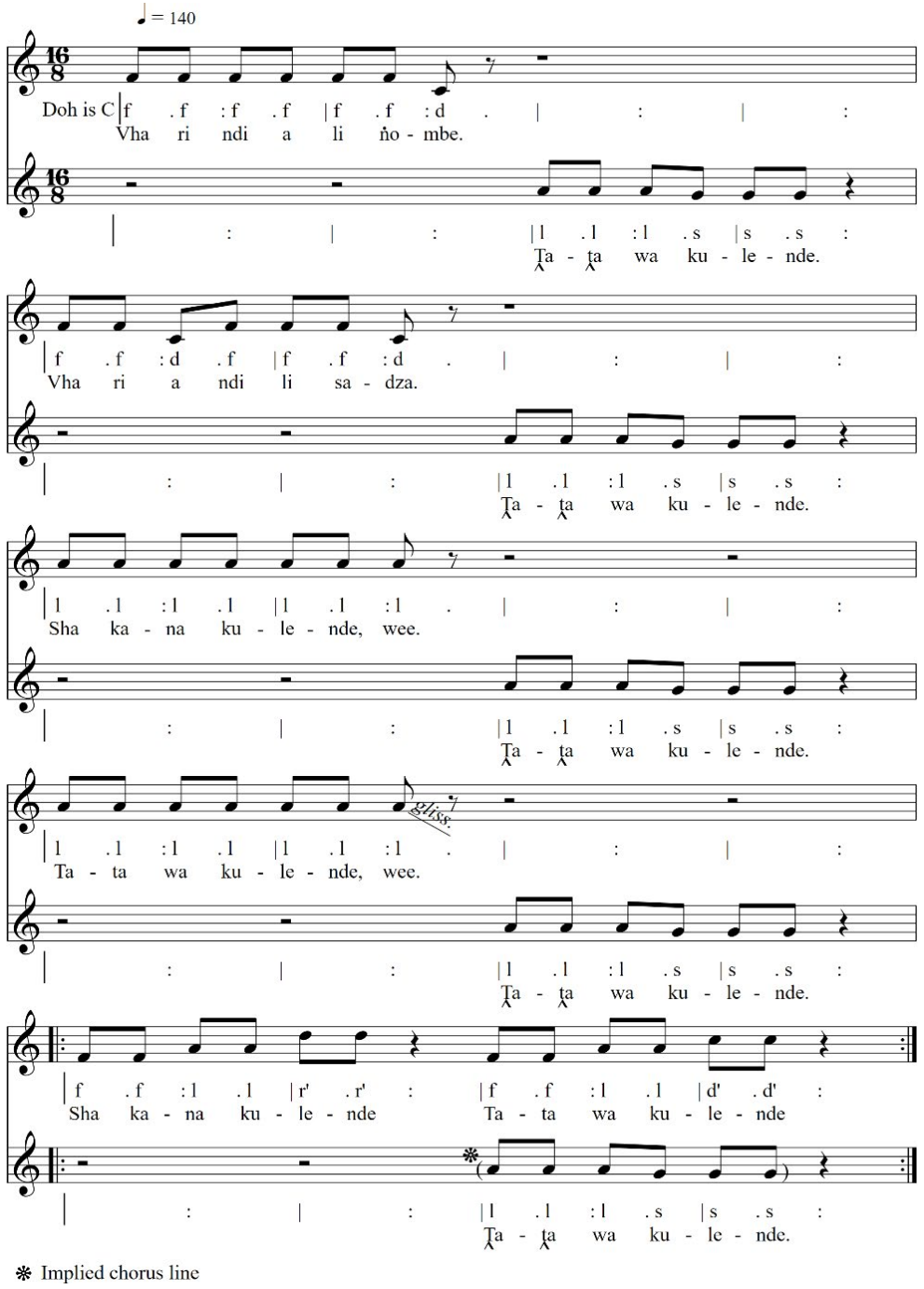
The omnipresence and attraction of evil is portrayed by the abundance of wild meat, and the couple concealing the birds inside their food baskets. In other words, they make a special effort to embrace evil ('They were clever'). The swarming birds feed ferociously on locusts and become hyperbolic, rapacious monsters.

The ancestors, also represented by the wind and big trees, eventually take offense and cause the couple to fall into the pool of morality.[i] And so good triumphs since the couple, like the girls in the previous story, are taken 'home' where they belong. The lesson is clear: Ancestral authority aims at preventing people from becoming 'spoilt' *(lema)* or abandoned *(litsha)*.

The term *kulende* (possibly of Chikaranga origin) in the song is a reference to singing as a form of religious communication. *'Tata wa kulende'* accordingly translates as 'It is father *(ntate)* who sings,' and it refers to the belief that spiritual communication takes musical form *(kulende* also describes the singing of the evil birds). The phrases *'gama kulende'* and *'sha kana kulende'* not only signify singing, but also the refusal by the couple to accept ancestral authority, represented by the image of a stern father.

[i] Transgressors falling into the pool of ancestral morality is a common motif. See 'Mrs. Devhele goes down' and 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl' (Kruger, 2014).

Fig. 70. At the home of narrator Anna Matlari Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2011



2.2.3 The musician and the girl / Tshilombe na musidzana

Here comes a story!

The girls who are accompanying that girl are many.[i]

That girl is loved by her husband, her young man, over there.

He says, 'Come, let us go. Let us go to where I stay.'[ii]

Hah, truly, that girl loves her young man.

This Tshangalume,[iii] this monster looks like a big wild animal.

Do you know a big animal with nails like a person? Yes, it loves girls. It is walking around with its *mbila*.[iv] It says, 'I will take her because I can sing with my *mbila*.'

That girl says, 'I do not love you at all.' That girl turned him down. She ran away with her husband.[v] Her husband loved her. They live in peace there where they want to stay.

Now, that man and the girls have a plan. The plan is to trap the monster. Those ones[vi] say, 'We are digging a hole. We will make a large

Salungano! Salungano!

Vhasidzana ndi vhanzhi vha khou fhelekedza musidzana houla.

Houla musidzana u khou funwa nga munna wawe, muthannga wawe hangei.

U khou ri, 'Idani ri tuwe ri ye hune na dzula hone.'

Haa, ngoho, musidzana ula u khou funa muthannga wawe.

Heli Tshangalume, heli dithu line la tounga sa buka. Vha a divha buka musi, line lavha na manala anonga sa a muthu? Ee, li funesa vhasidzana. Lovha li tshi tshimbila lo fara mbila. Lo ambara dzithuzwu milenzheni.

La ri, 'Nahone nne ndi do mudzhia ngauri nne ndi kona u lidza mbila.'

Houla musidzana a ri, 'Nne a thi u funi lini.'

Ula musidzana a hana. A shavha na munna wawe. Munna wawe a mufuna. Vha dzula zwavhudi hangei hune a a khou nyaga u dzula hone.

Zwino, enewa munna houlani a na vhasidzana havhala vha na pulani. I ya uri u do mu wanisa hani.

Vhala vha ri, 'Ri gwa mulindini. Ri ite sa nando. Ine ra ri hezwi ro dzhena nga ngomu ra sa kone u bva hafhala fhethu.'

Muṅwe a ri, 'Ri gwa mini?'

Muṅwe a ri, 'Kha ri gwe madi.'

Vha gwa madi. Vha gwa! Vha gwa! Vha gwa! Vha gwa! Vha ri, 'Iyani u vula madi haalani a re manzhi.'

Zwino-ha lone li tshi da.

Haa, a thi ri lone li khou tshimbila li khou lidza,

---

[i] This is a reference to courtship and marriage. The bride and groom are usually accompanied by friends and family when traveling between their respective parental homes.

[ii] The couple are settling with the groom's family, following patrilocal practice. Marriage proceedings have now been concluded.

[iii] The name possibly translates as 'One-who-bites' (from *luma*, to bite).

[iv] The Venda lamellophone (fig. 71). Some performers pluck the metal keys of the instrument with their finger nails. This links with the common portrayal of male monsters as having long nails like a predator.

[v] A narrative from *domba* initiation notes: 'Now when you are married: you go to your husband's home: and 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. Your husband will say, "You are my wife, for whom I gave cattle; why are you sleeping with another man?" (…) 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."' (Blacking, 1969:96.)

[vi] Apparently the friends of the bride.

The musician and the girl / Tshilombe na musidzana (continued)

hole.[i] When you are inside, you will not be able to get out again.'

One person asks, 'What will we dig?' Another person says, 'Let us dig a well.'[ii]

They are digging a well. They are digging! They are digging! They are digging! They are digging! They are digging!

They are saying, 'Make the hole large so that the water can be deep.'

Now, it is coming there. Hah, you know, it is singing as it is walking,

(Narrator)
Artistry,[iii] fire.[iv]
(Spoken) It is angry.[v]
(Chorus)
Tshangalume the monster!

It arrives and falls into the water, pfuuu!

It says, 'Hey, I am wet!'

It wades to the side and gets out.

It says, 'I cannot stay away from her! I will follow her.'

So, those people had already walked some distance.

(Musimi)
Vhulombe, nando.
Ḽi na mbiti.
(Vhabvumeli)
Dada Tshangalume!

Ḽa swika ḽari nga ngomu maḓini, pfuuu!

Ḽa ri, 'Hai, ndo nukadzwa!'

Ḽa tala ḽa bvela nnḓa.

Ḽa ri, 'Zwia leṅwa. Ndi a vha tevhela.'

Hai, havhaḽa vhathu vha khou ṱuwesa.

Vha ri, 'A ri gwe mulindi. Ri dzhenise dzikhuni nnzhi. Ri vhase mulilo. Ḽi nga si pfuke hafhaḽa. Hafhu a hu bvei: A hu na hu no bvea hafha fhethu. Bulege ya hone yo vhifha.'

Vha ri, 'Haa, honoyu une wa u tou duga ngaurali, ḽa bva ri ḓo ḽi vhona.'

Haa, ḽavha ḽi tshi khou ḓa, mani. Ḽa ri, 'Vhulombe, nando …'

Ḽavha ḽi tshi swika nga ngomu muliloni henefhaḽa. Ḽi khou ri lifhufhele hangei, vhaḽa vhasidzana vhotemba, vho dzula vho ḽavhelesa. Ndi u dzhena nga ngomu muliloni ḽa thuthuba!

Ndi u fa ha lungano.

---

[i] Lit. 'a large fire-pit.'
[ii] Lit. 'let us dig water.'
[iii] *Vhulombe* (artistry) identifies the monster as a *tshilombe* musician.
[iv] A reference to the purifying fire that eventually consumes the monster.
[v] Because the girl refuses his advances.

The musician and the girl / Tshilombe na musidzana (continued)

They say, ‘Let us dig a hole. We are putting lots of firewood inside. We are lighting a fire. The monster will not be able to pass here except along the footpath. There is no way round, the area is impassable.’

They are digging that hole. They are lighting a very big fire!

They are saying, ‘Hah, it is so big, let us see whether the monster can escape.’

Hah, here it is coming, man. It is singing, ‘Artistry, fire ...’

The monster is arriving and falling into the fire there. He tries to jump over the hole while those girls are watching him from the other side. He falls into the fire and explodes!

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 1 October 2012

The monster in this story is a *tshilombe* musician (figs. 64, 66, 111),[556] who also features in 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4). The narrator and Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that his personality *(mbilu:* heart) is as tough as sinew *(tsinga).* He is noted for his eccentricity, which is evident in his long finger nails (required to perform the *mbila* lamellophone). He is notorious for disregarding certain social norms, in particular to marry. Instead, he prefers to 'make people happy' by singing and performing on instruments like the *mbila* and harmonica. He is so preoccupied with 'many words of singing' that he may forget to do domestic chores. When his mother asks him to bring food to her where she is working in the fields, he simply never arrives.

The *tshilombe*'s fixation with performance is explained by the belief that artistry *(vhulombe*, in the song) is a divinely inspired impulse. This is evident in the root *(lomba)* of the term *tshilombe*, which refers here to artistic as well as moral inspiration.[557] The *tshilombe* is a spirit medium who mediates between ancestors and their descendants. This status allows him to act as social critic with relative impunity.

Ironically, the *tshilombe* is as much a transgressor of morality as its proponent. He does not hesitate to ask for rewards in return for performing. This includes drink, food and women ('I will take her because I can sing with my *mbila').* In this regard he is 'a big animal with nails like a person' who is symbolic of uncontrolled impulse ('I cannot stay away from her!'). He operates on the margin where animal-monster, ordinary human and spiritually-inspired musician intersect. He is revered and repulsed at the same time, and his status implicates the troublesome compulsions of humanity as well as its ideals. The enchanting effect of his musical performance accordingly does not exempt him from moral obligations, and he must be punished. Drowning is ineffective because he wades from the water by using his long fingernails. He is therefore destroyed by means of burning. Such drastic treatment is usually reserved for supreme evil-doers, such as witches. Here his punishment is hyperbolised to impress young participants.

Fig. 71. *Mbila* lamellophone made by James Munyai Tshaulu, 1987

2.2.4 The python-lover / Nyamutwa-wo-lala

Here comes a story!

(Narrator chants)
All of you: One-who-always-sleeps.
I am sliding[i] with my striped patterns.[ii]
The third stripe is the tail.
Hey-hey, is this food?
Tsilingwane[iii] walks with the snake.
(Chorus chants)
Hee-ya!

It is going outside. It is leaving now. It is going inside its hole. It is arriving over there to enter its hole.

It fell asleep again. Hah, that girl is still coming with food.

'All of you: One-who-always-sleeps …'

It woke up, stretched itself and came out of the hole.

It ate[iv] porridge. It ate, it ate. It became full.

'Hey, fetch firewood for me.'[v]

So, up there in the tree, on a certain day, the snake arrives[vi] with a panga[vii]

[i] Lit. 'stepping.' A reference to the python that moves in a straight line.
[ii] Patterns on the snake's body (Chikaranga: *mapindi*; Tshivenda: *mafindi*), described by Von Sicard as *'der dunkle Streifen am Schlangenkörper'* ('the dark stripes on the snake's body'; 1965:3-5). The python in his story remarks to a girl: *'Ich werde vier Ringe meines Leibes herauskommen lassen, der fünfte, da würdet ihr fallen and euch weh tun.'* (Apparently: 'I will make four rings of my body come out; the fifth will make you fall and be hurt.')
[iii] The girl's name, which is of Tsonga origin.
[iv] Lit. 'pounded.'
[v] The mother is speaking to her daughter.
[vi] Lit. 'it arrives, the day of choosing, up there.'
[vii] The panga is symbolic of the python's body that is able to crush objects.

Salungano! Salungano!

(Musimi)
Nandi: Nyamutwa-wo-lala.
Ndi kanda nga mafindi mana.
Lavhuraru la vha gonywa.
He-he, ndi tshiliwa naa?
Tsilingwane tsha mifambiso.
(Vhabvumeli)
Hee-ya!

Li khou bvela nnda. Li khou tuwa zwino. Li khou ya u dzula bvavhoni. La swika la dzula hanengei. La farwa nga khofhe la habe. Ha, u la musidzana u kha di da na zwiliwa.

'Nandi: Nyamutwa-wo-lala …'

Lavha li tshi onyolowa, li tshi bvela nnda. La vhu sinda vhuswa, la vhu sinda, la vhu sinda, la fura.

'Ha, ntsedzele khuni.'

Ha swika la u nangela la khalala hangei ntha, la swika na lufhanga.

Khuni dza vhuya dza vha nnzhi.

Na mme vha ri, 'Ha, ndi do dodela. Hoyu ṅwana a nga di tuwa o fara vhuswa, ndi do dodela ... Au, ṅwana wanga! Yo kwata! I khoula vhuswa. I tou penya! I tou rali!' Ha pfala, a tshi ri, 'Heee!'

'Ha, nne ndi ya tuwa zwino.'

U pfa, 'Hai, tshimbila mungani. Ee, u dovhe u nndisele na khulane.'

Ee, a tuwa a ya hayani.

Ha, mme a tshi swika, a ri, 'Inwi ṅwana wanga, inwi ni tshi tou vhuya na khuni dzi nnzhi? Inwi ni khou dzi wana gai? Ndi amba ngauri inwi a ni koni na u namela na muri, ṅwana!'

'Hai, nne nda ndi na mungana wanga. Hoyu mungana wanga u ada.'

'Ha, zwino, ni nga si de nae, nda tou muvhona?'

to chop wood.

Later she was ready to return with a big load of firewood.

‘So, I am leaving now.’

The snake answered, ‘Yes, go my friend. Come again for a bundle of firewood.’

Yes, she is going home.

Hah, when the mother sees her,[i] she asks, ‘You my child, you have returned with so much firewood. Where did you get it? I ask because you cannot climb a tree.’[ii] ‘No, I was with my friend. That friend of mine always eats.’

‘Hah, now, won’t you bring him so that I can see him?’

‘No, you, my mother, you won’t know this person. You are not used to him.’[iii]

‘I tell you, I want to see him, man!’

‘I say, hey, my mother, he is a stranger. I got to know him when I was out walking while looking for firewood. Now, I flirted[iv] with him.’

Ah, that child, she fell silent.

Then she said, ‘Oh dear, you, when you see him, you …’[v]

The mother said, ‘Hah, I won’t be surprised[vi] when I see him, I.’ She added, ‘Hah, everything will be fine.’[vii]

All of you (sing): ‘One-who-always-sleeps ...’

That one is leaving. The snake is coming out!

‘Hai, vhone mme anga, hoyu muthu vha nga si mu ḓivhe. A vho ngo tou mu ḓowela.’

‘Nda ri, ha, ndi ḓo muvhona, mani!’

‘Nda ri, hei mme anga, hango ḓowela. O ḓowelwa nga nṋe ngauri ndo vha ndi tshi khou tshimbila ndi tshi khou nyagela khuni. Zwino, nṋe nda sokou ṱangana ngae.’

Aa, uḽa ṅwana, ha, a ḓi fhumulela.

A ri, ‘Ee, vhone, vha muvhona, vhone ...’

Nda ri, ‘Haa! Nṋe thi ngasi tshuwe nṋe. Ndi nga muvhona nṋe.’ Vha ri, ‘Ha, vho luga.’

Uḽa ndi u ṱuwa, ndi uya muḓini hanengei bakoni ḽa hone.

‘Nandi: Nyamuṱwa-wo-lala …’

Gonolo ḽa bvela nnḓa.

A vho ḓo wa a vuwa. Ha ngo tsha dovha a vuwa.

‘Ndi khou funa u vhona hezwo zwithu ngauri heḽi ḽinowa … ḽeneḽi ḽinowa ḽihulu ḽi fhasi … kheḽi. Mutumbu waḽo khoyu. Ḽi nga uḽa! A ḽi koni u tshimbila, kheḽo.’

Ḽi tou kokovhana mulambo wa paḓukanya khuni. Ḽa kona uḽa fhedzi!

Ha, hee, uḽa mukegulu, ndi u noka. O nokiswa nga mini?

‘U vhona uri ndi tshipuka ḓe he tshi tshithu, hetshi tshine tsha ri tsho tshena, tsha reḓela khuni ṅwana wanga.’

Ndi u fa ha lungano.

---

[i] Lit. ‘arrives.’

[ii] The girl is very short.

[iii] The girl is aware that her relationship is illicit, and wants to prevent her mother from meeting her suitor

[iv] Lit. ‘swank.’

[v] She is uncertain, having revealed her secret, and becomes silent because she fears her mother’s inevitable disapproval.

[vi] Lit. ‘afraid.’

[vii] Lit. ‘that one is fine’ (perhaps referring to the snake).

The python-lover / Nyamuṱwa-wo-lala (continued)

The mother says, 'I will stalk him! This child will go and fetch that porridge while I stalk him[i]… Hey, my child. He is angry! He is eating the porridge. He is shining! Like this!' She screamed, 'Heee!'

She keeps on stumbling! She did not even think of turning back!

'I wanted to see those things because this big snake … this big snake is down there … This is his skin. He can eat you! He cannot even walk. Here he is!'

It is breaking branches as it is sliding into the river! It was able to eat only!

Hah, hey, that old woman is breathless. Why is she breathless?

'My child, I wanted to see what kind of wild animal is so white and always looking for firewood.'

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 23 September 2013

[i] She is following the girl who is taking food to the snake.

Stories about the personified snake are common in southern and central Africa.[558] The snake is generally portrayed as young lover, spouse or healer in Venda and Karanga *ngano*. *Ngano* about the snake as rain deity were once common,[559] but are now mostly dim folk recollection (see 'The young man and the snake'; 2.15.1).

While the gender identity of the snake-healer is not specified, the snake as lover, spouse and deity is always male, an image that invokes power and sexuality. The python-lover exudes youthful virility, the snake-husband heads a polyganous family, and the snake-deity controls fertility.

Kriel,[560] in his study of Karanga narratives, notes that 'men change into snakes … (who) are especially fond of women, both for company and food.' Aschwanden[561] explains that this symbolism is obvious for, as Karanga people say, 'The snake has no legs and reminds us of the penis.' It therefore 'always symbolises the ever-present instinctive urge in a man to want intercourse with any woman he likes.'[i] The python similarly is a familiar phallic symbol in *domba* initiation.[ii]

Venda *ngano* about the snake as spouse most commonly portray the early married life of a junior wife, and the repercussions this has for her new family. The snake-husband is called *Nyamuṱwa-wo-lala* (One-who-always-sleeps), a name that invokes his status as head of the family, and hints at his mystical nature ('The snake-husband'; 2.5.2, 2.13.1). Stories about the snake-husband have also been documented in Chikaranga[562] and Sesotho.[563]

This story by Ndou in turn portrays the snake as secret, illicit lover. Frobenius also documented a Karanga story of a girl who takes food to a snake in the veld.[564] The story firstly invokes arranged marriage as social foundation. Such marriage not only formalises new networks by joining families. It also involves the transfer of bride-wealth to the wife's family, who in turn may use it to settle their debts and allow the marriage of a son. Unapproved liaisons and marriages may also undermine the principle of matrilineal descent that requires cross-cousin marriage (marriage with the mother's brother's daughter).[iii]

As such, marriage was not an affair of individuals, but of families, who participated in selecting spouses.[iv] Because of this, a proscription was placed

[i] Kriel (1971:70) qualifies this notion, remarking that the snake 'is often a symbol of the role of the male life-giving principle, but in such a case it is probably the mysterious nature of this power that is emphasised, rather than inordinate sexual desire, for which the hyena would be a better symbol.'

[ii] Blacking (1969:216). An aphorism from *domba* indicates, *'Luvhiḓi lwo dzhena tsimuni'* ('The snake is entering the field, i.e. a girl is being penetrated by a man') (Blacking, 1969:94).

[iii] 'In olden times the Venda did not like to intermarry with people with whom they were not related, for fear of getting mixed up with wanderers from afar.' (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:27.)

[iv] The abduction of a young woman sometimes aimed at forcing her parents to conclude marriage proceedings (Cloete, 1980). It usually occurred when parents refused to let their daughter join her in-laws because only part of the bridewealth had been transferred. The abduction in effect put pressure on both families to fulfil their obligations.

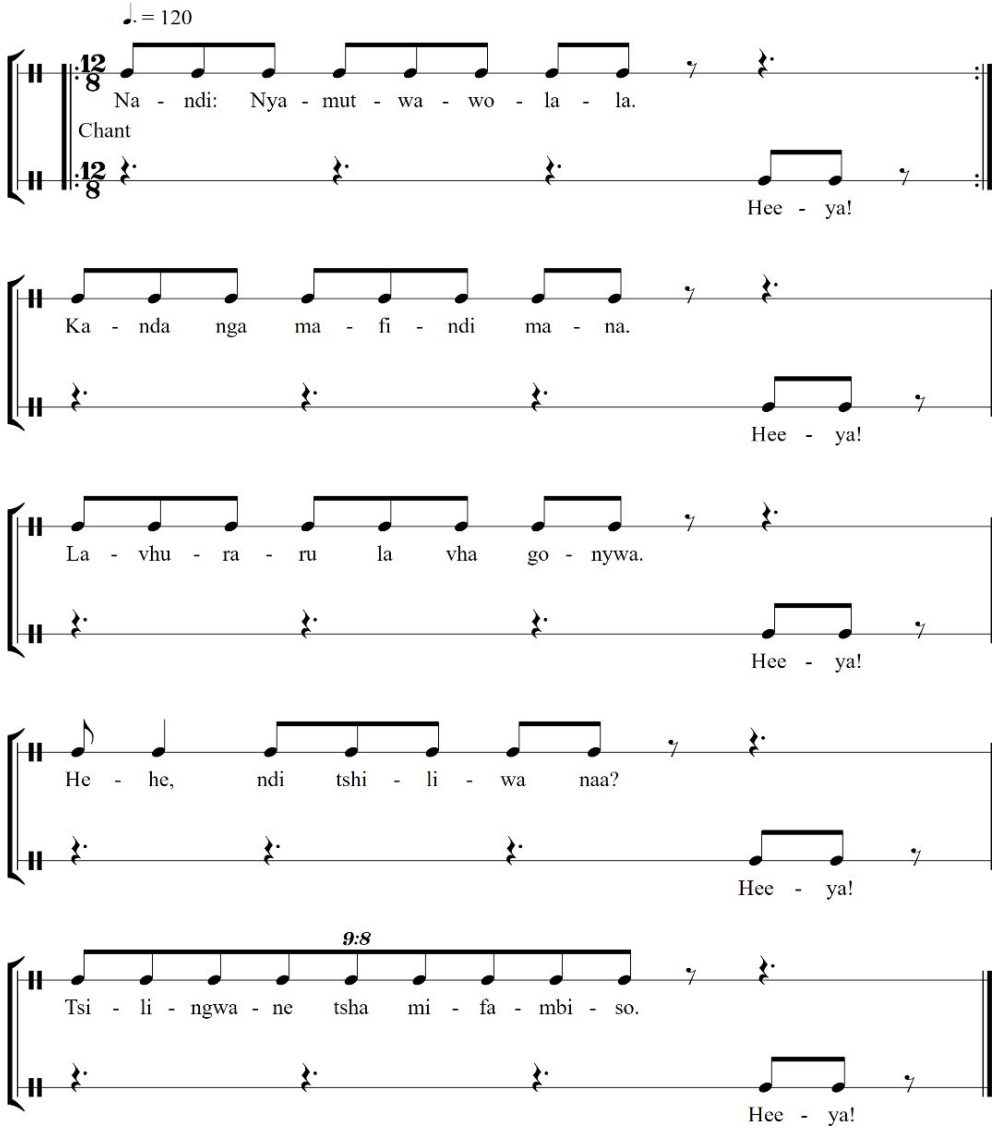
on secret romantic liaisons. Families had to be aware of, and even consulted in love relationships. Narrator Sophia Nefolovhodwe of Folovhodwe remarked that young people often informed their parents that they loved someone and wished to marry. However, if this person did not meet parental approval, there was nothing they could do but obey. This was 'very painful.'[i]

Stories about the snake-lover also aim to frighten young girls so that they will be wary of sexual assault, and avoid befriending strange men.[565] The *vhusha* puberty rite for girls requires initiates to identify their 'boyfriend' and convince instructors that they have not 'played'[ii] with him since the onset of puberty.

Lovers and unacceptable suitors are represented by wild animals, often the snake, but also the zebra, crocodile, hyena, lion, porcupine and eagle.[566] The song in Ndou's story correspondingly indicates, 'Tsilingwane walks with the snake,' while the lyrics from another story note, 'Siwela spurns men. She loves wild zebras.'[567]

Some stories about illicit affairs with wild animals involve love, reciprocity and respect.[iii] The girl in Ndou's story is very short, and she struggles to collect dead branches from trees. Accordingly, she brings her suitor food, and he in turn gives her firewood. A young woman is described elsewhere as kneeling deferentially before her zebra-suitor.[568] Ndou also indicated that there is no physical intimacy between the girl and the snake in her story. However, a similar narrative documented by Frobenius describes girls 'playing' and 'stroking' their crocodile-suitor.[569]

Because marriage arrangements must be conducted openly, and according to custom, secret affairs are doomed to fail. This is even more so in the case of Tsilingwane, the girl in this story, who is a member of a royal family. Conflict with animal suitors therefore often ends violently, in the typical hyperbolic fashion of *ngano*. They are usually beaten, shot with an arrow or hacked to pieces by a family member.



[i] Kruger & Le Roux (2007:31). Mathuvhelo Mavhetha similarly explained how his parents rejected a young woman he was in love with. He became so depressed that he started roaming the countryside aimlessly.

[ii] A reference to penetration. Girls are allowed to engage in *ḓavhula* or intercrural (non-penetrative) intercourse (Blacking, 1969:11).

[iii] For a remarkably evocative story about young love, see 'Tséane and the horse' (Postma, 1950:140-151).

Fig. 72. The lovers
Azwimpheleli Magoro (1966-2021), 1998. 590 mm. Editor’s collection.

2.3 Elelwani Singo

My name is Elewani[i] Martha Singo. I was born over there at Tshirundu in 1969 (see 1.8.2). My father was Phineas Mbulaheni[ii] Singo. He worked for Water Affairs in Tzaneen.

My mother's name was Susanna Thidziambi[iii] Kwinda. I have only one sister, called Livhuwani.[iv] She works as a domestic in Polokwane. My parents deliberately gave us names that are similar and that sound like someone singing happily: Elelwani and Livhuwani! And our English names, Martha and Meltha!

My mother worked on the farm of Mugoba Fourie, there at Tshirundu, near Doreen (box 37). Mugoba farmed with dairy cows, oranges, mangos and sweet potatoes. My mother made tea, and washed and cleaned for his family.

When Mugoba's children came back from school in Musina over weekends, I played with them. They were Joubert, Franciska, Tobias and Ronald. We played *bune* touch and *midzumbano* hide-and-seek with them.

We were very fond of making toys from clay, especially dolls, but ones that were large enough to be carried on our back. I also liked to skip rope, swim and catch fish in the Nzhelele river. We took large plastic bags with a loose weave and stitched them together to be our net. Then we waded into the water. Holding our net, we would drag it towards the shore. If we were lucky, we had scooped up fish!

The mother of my grandmother lived with us. She was aunty Mudau. She was very, very old, so old that she no longer could walk, only crawl.

She was just skin and bones, and she frightened us children! I heard *ngano* from her. She would call us together after supper: 'Come and sit around the fire. Keep these stories in your head! Respond properly!'

Here is my daughter Vilas. I passed some of those *ngano* on to her. Children nowadays do not hear these stories at school.

Many people who live here at Folovhodwe went to school there on

Mugoba's farm called Nzhelele Drievoet.[v] To get there, we had to cross the Nzhelele river. When the water was low, we could just walk across, but if it rained, we had trouble!

Mugoba was the one who built the school (box 37). It had just one very large room. Different classes were separated by lines on the ground. Our teacher was Julia Dzumba, a Sotho woman. She liked children, but was not afraid of using her cane when they did not listen to her. Then she would lay into them: on their hands, buttocks and even head![vi]

We often sang and danced there at our school. Soldiers from the Venda Defence Force even came from their base close by to listen to us. Then we sang,

[i] 'Remembrance.'

[ii] 'Kill me.' The Singo are a ruling family, and the name Mbulaheni expresses conflict attendant on ruling status.

[iii] 'I won't speak for myself.'

[iv] 'Gratitude.'

[v] Lit. 'Threefoot.' This is the name by which labourers referred to Fourie's farm, Nzhelele-Drif. The word is derived from 'drift.'

[vi] Despite her reported strictness, Dzumba's name was recalled with fondness in many conversations. She retired to Vleifontein in the Makhado district.

Riṋe ri vhana vha tshikolo tsha Nzhelele.
We are children of the school at Nzhelele.
Riṋe vhana ri bvumisa Jehova wa Makoleni.
We children, we loudly praise Jehova-of-the-Clouds.
Abo-kaḽa-ngedzhe!
(Onomatopoeia of clapping tins.)

The school closed down when the farm was sold. I had left school before then because my mother was so poor. I was still in grade seven. I often speak to my children about this. I tell them that they will end up struggling like me if they do not work hard at their studies.

The only initiation school I went to was *musevhetho*. I was already a teenager. The school took place over four weekends. I became married after this. I was about sixteen years old.

My husband is Phineas Simathla. I met him when we were still living on Mugoba's farm. He was working for a hunter in the Nzhelele district. The hunter had a large game farm. He shot animals for their skins. Then he got married and sold the farm.

Phineas started working at Limpopo Dairies, on the other side of Makhado. He operates machines that milk cows. So things that seem to pass come back to us, because it was Mugoba Fourie who founded this dairy.

Our lives were better when I worked at a nursery in Makhado. This was from about 1993-1997. The owner was Ben. He sold pot plants to supermarkets. Phineas and I lived on Ben's small farm. Then the nursery closed down, and I had to come back to Folovhodwe.

I have seven children. There are four girls and three boys. My eldest is Khangweleni.[i] She was born in 1989. She used to be a shop assistant at Tshilamba. Then she studied for her certificate in financial management at a college in Thohoyandou. She lived with a cousin in Pretoria while looking for work. She decided to return home and now lives with me. She has two small children. Look, this is her youngest boy. He is called Washu.[ii]

My eldest son is Future Ndivhuwo (fig. 78).[iii] He was born in 1993. My daughter Vilas was born in 1996. Yes, she has an unusual name, but I like it.

* Use two small tins. Beat 1: The left thigh is lifted horizontally. The knee is bent and the lower leg is vertical. Strike the tins against each other below the thigh. Beat 2: Strike the tins together above the thigh. Beat 3: Strike the tins together at chest hight. Repeat with right leg.

[i] 'Forgive me.'
[ii] 'Ours.'
[iii] 'Gratitude.'

My father once worked at a game farm near Musina. The owner was from Cape Town, and he suggested the name.

Vilas likes science and wants to become a nurse. Many of our daughters want to do this (box 24).

Her younger brother is called Thama.[i] He was born in 1998, and is now in grade six. That is him playing with his cell phone over there. Then there is my boy Ashley, born in 2004, and my daughter Beyoncé, who was born in 2009.

Vilas and Beyoncé have no Tshivenda first names. This is no problem for me. Even my elders like these names! Beyoncé was born in Makhado hospital, and the nurses decided on her name. But my youngest child has a Tshivenda name. It is Orineya.[ii] She was born on 7 March 2014.

I get four child grants. This helps me to feed and educate my children. I once sold fish I bought from the Indian shopkeeper down there, next to the main road. Then I made the mistake of giving people credit. They failed to pay and my business collapsed.

We do not have a field in the irrigation project down there by the river. If you do not inherit a field, it is very difficult to get one.

We may be poor, but we remain proud. Our yard and houses must be tidy.

What really makes me angry is that we have do not have water close to our home.[iii] Look at the tap down there at the bottom of the hill: There are old women and young girls with large water containers, and some of them are old (figs. 18, 19). They have to walk uphill over stones with those containers on their head, or push them in wheelbarrows.

Even if you manage to scrape together the R800 needed for a water connection to your yard, there still is too little water in the main line. Many connections are leaking. The contractors disappear as soon as they are paid.

---

[i] 'Friend.'

[ii] 'God's gift.'

[iii] The water supply was interrupted for a long period during the summer of 2018-2019, and again during 2020. People resented having to buy water in containers.

2.3.1 Cannibals / Madyavhathu

Here comes a story!

Now, there was a woman who had five daughters. They lived with their grandmother. Now, they used to collect water from a nearby river. There was a river close by. They went to fetch water there.

Now, one morning they woke up. They went to fetch water.

When they returned, their grandmother called them and said, 'My grandchildren, there are cannibals there at the river. Watch out!'

Hah, when those girls went out, they were always five. They went to fetch water. When they arrived there one day, they heard singing. They listened! The girls heard singing.

They said, 'Hey, let us listen, there are people who are singing.'

They listened. They heard a song.

They heard,

(Narrator)
Girls are not wise!
They follow a monster!
A monster who eats people.
Pacify him!
And Mr. Ṱikiṱiki and Mr. Phalaphala.[i]
(Chorus)
Ha vhuya masiri dende.
(Precise meaning unclear.)

Those girls were listening!

They said, 'There are people singing there in the reeds!'

Those girls: Only one girl was still fetching water. That one was fetching water. They heard the cannibals wading through the river,

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu na vhafumakadzi na vhasidzana vhaṱanu. Vha tshi dzula na makhulu wavho. Zwino, vha tshi ḓi ya vha tshi yo ka mulamboni tsini. Ho vha hu na mulambo tsini henefho. Vha tshi ya vha tshi yo ka maḓi hone.

Zwino, liṅwe ḓuvha nga matsheloni vha vuwa. Vha ḓi yo ka maḓi.

Vha tshi yo vhuya, makhulu wavho vha vha vhudza, vha ri, 'Vhaḓuhulu vhanga, habe hangei mulamboni hu na madyavhathu. Ni vhone!'

Haa, vhaḽa vhasidzana vha tshi ṱuwa vha vhaṱanu, vha tshi ya u ka maḓi. Vha tshi swika liṅwe ḓuvha vha pfa hu khou imbeleliwa. Vha a thetshelesa! Vhasidzana vha pfa hu khou imbiwa luimbo.

Vha ri, 'Hei, kha ri thetshelese, hu na vhathu vhane vha khou imbelela.'

Vha tshi thetshelesa. Vha pfa ndi luimbo lwo ṱanganedzana.

Vha pfa,

(Musimi)
Vhasidzana a vha na maaṋo!
Vha tevhela magonyambe.
Magonyambe no dya vhathu.
Kurindidza-kurindidza!
Na Vho-Ṱikiṱiki na Vho-Phalaphala.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ha vhuya masiri dende.

Vhasidzana havhaḽa vha thetshelesa.

Vha ri, 'Hu na vhathu vhane vha khou imbelela hafho dziṱhangani.'

Havhaḽa vhasidzana, havha uri ho sala muthihi uri a ke maḓi. Houḽani ndi u ka maḓi. Vha pfa washa-washa! Vha thoma u shavha, havhaḽa

[i] The implication seems that others have already fallen prey to the cannibals.

Cannibals / Madyavhathu (continued)

washa-washa! They started to run, those girls! They arrived home.

They said, 'Hey, gran, we arrived there to collect water when we heard people singing.'

She asked, 'Now, do you know that song my grandchildren?'

They answered, 'Yes, we know it.'

She said, 'Come and sit here on the reed mat and sing that song.'

They sat down. They started. They sang, 'Girls are not wise …'

Now, that grandmother said, '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. Now, when you hear those cannibals singing like that, they are saying, "You are following us to where we are hiding here." Did you not hear them? They were saying, "Those girls are not wise, they are following the monster." Magonyambe was the name of cannibals long ago. They used to be called cannibals. Now, my grandchildren, starting today you will go about with dogs[i] and a vhasidzana! Vha tshi swika mudini.

Vha ri, 'Kuku, wee, ro swika hangei ri tshi ka madi ra pfa hu na vhathu vhane vha khou imbelela.'

Vha ri, 'Zwino, ni a ludivhanaa luimbo lwa hone vhaduhulu vhanga?'

Vha ri, 'Ee, ri a ludivha.'

Vha ri, 'Idani, ni dzule hafha thovhoni ni nnyimbele lwone holwu luimbo.'

Vha vha vha tshi dzula. Vha vha vha tshi thoma. Vha ri hu pfi, 'Vhasidzana a vha na maano ...!'

Zwino, havhala makhulu vha ri, 'Vhaduhulu vhanga, ndi madyavhathu, ndi lwone luimbo lwa madyavhathu. Vhakegulu vhakale na vhone vho vha vha tshi ri vhudza vha tshi ri hu na madyavhathu a imba nga hoyu mukhwa. Zwino, haya madyavhathu ni tshi pfa vha tshiralo, vha khou ri, "Ni khou ri tevhela hune ravha hone hune ra dzumbama hone." A ni pfi? Vha tshi ri, "Avha vhasidzana a vha na maano, vha tevhela magonyambe." Magonyambe ndi dzina la madyavhathu haya a kale. Ovha a tshi pfi madyavhathu. Zwino, vhaduhulu vhanga u thoma namusi vheiwe, ni tshimbila na dzimmbwa na vhura, zwa u ri musi a tshi

[i] Like birds and certain other animals, the dog is a collaborator in *ngano*. It often performs an attacking and defensive role, and is symbolic of loyalty.

Cannibals / Madyavhathu (continued)

bow so that when you see those cannibals, they will not come near you because you have an old bow[i] and a dog. The cannibals are afraid. They are afraid of a dog and a bow. They will no longer chase and catch you.'

So, those girls really agreed, 'We will do that.'

The next day those girls and their boys took the bow and the dogs. They arrived at the river. They heard people, they heard the song again, 'Girls are not wise …'

When these dogs heard things there in the reeds, they started to bark. They barked there.

Those cannibals shouted, 'Hell! Watch out! Those things we fear are here!'

They fled, they crossed back over the Limpopo river. It was said that they crossed back to Zimbabwe.

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 17 June 2011

ni vhona haya madyavhathu hanga sendeli tsini ngauri ni ḓovha no fara vhura hone ha kale na nngwa.

Hai, Madyavhathu a a ofha. A ofha nngwa na vhura. Ha nga tsha dovha ani fara kana a ni gidimedza.'

Vhaḽa vhasidzana ngoho vha ri, 'Ndi zwone.'

Nga matshelo vhasidzana vhaḽa na vhatukana vhavho vha vha vha tshi fara vhura na dzinngwa. Vha tshi tou swika mulamboni. A tshi pfa vhathu, a thoma luimbo futhi, 'Vhasidzana a vha na maaṋo! …'

Hedziḽa mmbwa dzi tshi thoma u pfa zwauri hu na zwithu hafho thangani dza thoma u huvha. Dzi tshi huvha hafhaḽani.

Haaḽa madyavhathu a ri, 'Heḽe! Vhathu khevho! Zwithu zwiḽa zwine ra zwi ofha khezwo!'

Avha a tshi shavha, a vha o wela seli. Seli vha vha vha tshi amba uri o wela seli ha Zimbabwe.

Ha vha u fhela ha lungano.

[i] This may be a reference to the antiquity of the bow in Venda culture.

The cannibal motif is common in *ngano*. It features in a popular story about a young boy who defends his cattle against raiders.[570] These raiders are from a neighbouring district, yet the song (as in this story) identifies them as '*Malema-maḽa-vhathu*' ('Malemas-who-eat-people').

Van Warmelo[571] notes that Malema were 'a cannibal tribe from the south which once invaded Venda; according to some they were baPedi, according to others the amaNdzundza Transvaal Ndebele.' The name Malema similarly appears in the chants of the *domba* initiation ritual, where it refers to locusts and cockroaches that invade fields and homes.[572]

Blacking,[573] however, doubts that the Pedi ever were cannibals. Their reputation may stem from the 'great impression (they made) on the Venda when they massacred many people at (Thohoyandou) during the 19th century.' Kirkaldy[574] similarly remarks about accounts of cannibalism among the Pedi that they were 'restricted to relatively few groups who were principally distinguished by the fact that they secured their subsistence almost exclusively through raiding, and were thus seen as living on their fellows.'

Kirkaldy[575] explains that no historical reports about cannibalism are based on eyewitness statements. Instead, they are 'an unsavoury emblem' of social pathology, parasitism, disintegration and group contact.'[576] They 'can be traced back to demonising images that a people have created in order to bring disgrace upon their enemy (…) The imaginary cannibal is not only a bogey but a perfect model for how not to behave – a prototype of barbarism and wickedness. Humans need such negative identification models.'[577]This story, therefore, is a narrativised historical account in the category *ngano dza ndivho* (1.5.1). It draws on actual historical conflict and the common conceptualisation of invaders as cannibals to impart moral authority and values.

Cannibals crossing a river are hyperbolic of moral transgression rather than physical invasion. Their image serves to induce fear of non-conformity in the young, and to promote their submission to older, experienced people who can guide them. The grandmother's knowledge of cannibalism, transmitted from her forebears, is what legitimises her authority. ('Old women long ago used to tell us that there are cannibals who sing like that.')

Unlike other *ngano* in this collection ('The girls and the frog,' 2.2.1; 'The pot of trouble,' 2.6.3), the story offers an idealistic portrayal of instruction and obedience. The grandmother is wise and experienced ('My grandchildren, there are cannibals there at the river. Watch out!') while her grandchildren are naïve ('Girls are not wise! They follow a monster!') and receptive to instruction ('So, those girls really agreed, "We will do that."').

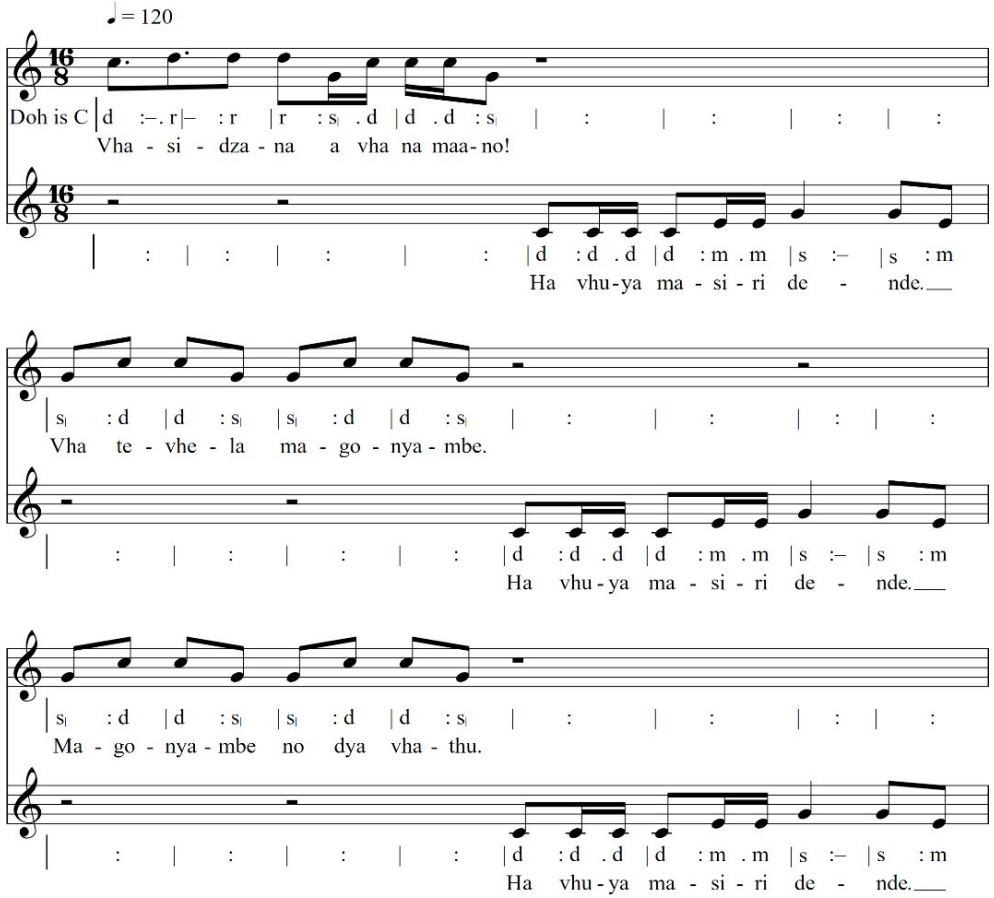
That the cannibals in this story are of Zimbabwean origin, is not surprising. Zimbabweans in *ngano* are almost always antagonists. Regional history was marked by shifting local alliances as well as immigration.[578] So, during the 19th century, 'Venda chiefs not only defended themselves again Nguni and Sotho raiders, but also fought each other.'[579] Domination involved the acquisition of labour and goods by means of raiding and invasion.[580]

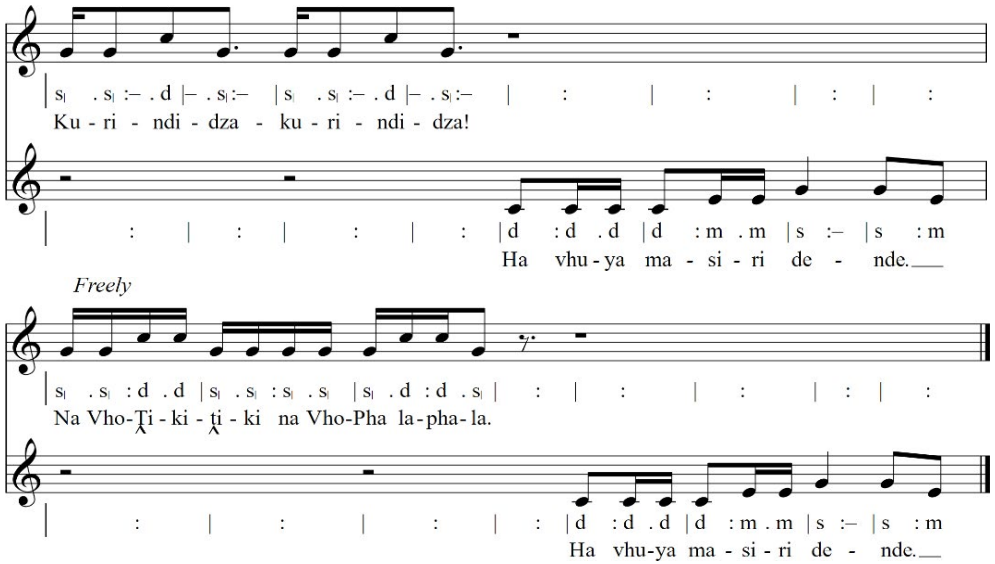
The most prominent immigrants were Singo groups who relocated from southern Zimbabwe to the Soutpansberg during the late seventeenth century. They subjugated local populations,[581] and the conflict that accompanied this may explain the use of the military bow in Singo's story.

Not surprisingly, inhabitants of the Soutpansberg in the past had a 'generally negative opinion' of their Shona neighbours,[582] an attitude that finds contemporary expression in periodic xenophobic attacks on Zimbabwean nationals in South Africa. Many Zimbabweans are economic refugees who eke out a precarious existence as temporary farm labourers in Niani. They may often be observed wandering in destitution along local roads. As in *ngano*, they are shadowy figures on the social periphery.

Singo and Mavhetha explained that *kurindidza* (in the song) indicates an act of pacification, 'like cuddling a frightened chick.' It refers to resisting evil, whether physical or moral. The pacifying action of the word is expressed in the elongated and emphatic pronunciation of the 'r' sound.

The song is more than a narrative component. It is also metaphoric of authority expressed by the role of the narrator (as lead singer) and the transmission of moral law. This metaphor appears to be expanded in the chorus line. Singo did not know its meaning, but the phrase is commonly used to indicate that girls are being lured into danger by a young stranger (often a Zimbabwean) who 'eats' his young female victims.[583] He is a singer who accompanies himself on the *dende* musical bow (figs. 64, 66), and the girls follow him because they cannot resist his artistry. As such it appears that singing to instrumental accompaniment is metaphoric of the musical transmission of moral values.


♩ = 120
Doh is C | d :–. r |– :r | r :s| .d | d .d :s| | : | : | : | :
Vha - si - dza - na a vha na maa - no!
| : | : | : | : |d :d .d |d :m .m |s :– |s :m
Ha vhu - ya ma - si - ri de - nde.
| s| :d |d :s| |s| :d |d :s| | : | : | : | :
Vha te - vhe - la ma - go - nya - mbe.
| : | : | : | : |d :d .d |d :m .m |s :– |s :m
Ha vhu - ya ma - si - ri de - nde.
| s| :d |d :s| |s| :d |d :s| | : | : | : | :
Ma - go - nya - mbe no dya vha - thu.
| : | : | : | : |d :d .d |d :m .m |s :– |s :m
Ha vhu - ya ma - si - ri de - nde.


| s| .s| :– .d |– .s| :– | s| .s| :– .d |– .s| :– | : | : | : | :
Ku - ri - ndi - dza - ku - ri - ndi - dza!
| : | : | : | : |d :d .d |d :m .m |s :– |s :m
Ha vhu - ya ma - si - ri de - nde.

Freely
| s| .s| :d .d |s| .s| :s| .s| |s| .d :d .s| | : | : | : | : | :
Na Vho-Ti - ki - ti - ki na Vho-Pha la - pha - la.
| : | : | : | : |d :d .d |d :m .m |s :– |s :m
Ha vhu - ya ma - si - ri de - nde.

2.3.2 The old woman with long teeth / Lukegulu lwa mano malapfu

Here comes a story!

Now, long ago this boy lived with his grandmother in the middle of a large forest. It was only the two of them. It was a time of drought.

Now, that boy made a plan. He would go around in the time of drought with his dogs[i] to go and dig up the roots of the shepherd's tree, those roots we eat.

That boy said, 'Today I am going out to find something small to eat with my grandmother.'

Now, that boy: In the morning, in the morning he went out. When he arrived in the forest, when he arrived there in the big forest, he found a bush pig. When he arrived and found the bush pig, it fought the dog! Truly, that pig was caught, it was caught! And its throat was cut with a piece of corrugated iron. He cut it with the iron that was old.

When he had finished, he started to look for something to cook it in because he was hungry.[ii]

He said, 'Look at this!'

He had found two clay pots. They were in a ruin. As he arrived there, he took something and knocked on a pot. He found a thin old woman inside![iii]

She said, 'Why are you knocking on my pot? Because you found me here inside the pot. Now, why are you knocking here on the pot? Where shall I go when I leave my pot?'

The boy replied, 'Greetings, my grandmother! I did not know you were inside the pot!'

She asked, 'No, why should I come out of the pot?'

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu tshifhinga tsha kale, hoyu mutukana a tshi dzula na makhulu wawe vhukati ha ḓaka lihulu. Vha tshi tou vha vhavhili. Ndi tshifhinga tsha ndala.

Zwino, ula mutukana a zama pulani. Sa izwi ndi na nngwa dzanga, tshe ndi tshi ita ndi tshi dzhiga-dzhiga ngauri ndi tshifhinga tsha ndala he havha hu tshi gwiwa mithobi, hu tshi liwa yone.

Ula mutukana a ri, 'Namusi ndi ya bva uri ndi yo wana-vho zwituku-tuku zwine nda ḓo la na makhulu wanga.'

Zwino, havha ula mutukana nga matsheloni, a vha a tshi bva nga matsheloni. A vha a tshi tuwa ḓakani, a tshi swika ḓakani henengei lihulu u wana phukha nguluvhe-ḓaka. A tshi swika a tshi wana nguluvhe-ḓaka, haa-nngwa zwa dzhiisana. Ngoho, ila nguluvhe ndi u fariwa, i tshi yo fariwa. Ene ndi u via nga eneo madzennge. Ndi u via nga madzennge enea a kale.

U fhedza u vho toda-vho tshithu tsha u bika ngauri ndala thumbuni.

A tshi tou ri 'Ii!'

U wana khali mbili khedzi. Ndi madumbani enea a kale. A tshi swika fhala u a dzhia tshithu u a khokhonya. U wana ndi lukegulu nga ngomu!

Lwa ri, 'Wa nkhokhonyela mini ndo dzula khalini yanga? Ngauri wo nngwana ndo dzula hafha khalini. Zwino, iwe wono nkhokhovhola hafha khalini? Nne ndi ya gai hafha khalini yanga?'

Mutukana a ri, 'Ndaa, makhulu wanga! Ndovha ndi sa ḓivhi uri vhone vha nga ngomu khalini.'

Lwa ri, 'Hai, wo bvisela mini khalini yanga?'

Mutukana ula a thoma u shavha. A tshi shavha lukegulu lwa ri nga murahu! Zwa gidimedzana!

A tshi swika u wana munii khoyu wo ima. Munii u na maramba. A vha a tshi gonya mutukana.

A ri, 'Makhulu wanga, kha vha ri ndi tou vha fulela maramba khea

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[i] Lit. 'as he was having his dogs.'

[ii] Lit. 'he had hunger in the stomach.'

[iii] I.e. her spirit. This motif also appears in 'The adventures of Papaju' (Marolen, 1990).

That boy started to run away! As he ran away, the old woman followed him! They ran! The boy found a tree grape there. The tree grape had fruit. The boy climbed up.

He said, 'My granny, let me pick fruit for you to eat.'

The boy picked the fruit and threw them down. The old woman picked them up, she picked them up and ate. That boy picked them and threw them down. She picked them up and ate. She looked up at the tree. As he was throwing the fruit, something hit her in the eye.

She shouted, 'Ow! Why are you throwing me in the eye? Why are you throwing me in the eye? I was just sitting there in my clay pot, minding my own business! Now, why are you throwing me in the eye? I was just sitting there in my clay pot. Now where will I go? I am going to chase you!'

That boy cried out, 'Oh dear! My granny! You are the one who looked up as I was picking food! Now, my granny, I am begging you!'

The old woman had two long teeth! She started to cut down that tree grape. She chanted,

(Narrator)
Kekedzhulu!
(Onomatopoeia of cutting.)
(Chorus)
I am cutting with my big tooth!

vha le.'

Mutukana u khou di fula maramba a tshi posela fhasi. Ha lwone lu khou di dobela. Lwone lu khou doba lu tshi la. Ula u khou fula a tshi posela fhasi. Lwone lu khou doba lu tshi la. Lwone u fhedzisela ndi u sedza henengei ntha. Ula a tshi ndi yo wisa, tshilavhi ndi u dzhena litoni.

Lwa ri, 'Yowee! Wo nkombodzela mini? Wo nkombodzela mini? Ndo gara kha khali yanga. Zwino, wo nkombodza? Zwino, ndo gara kha khali. Nne ndi ya ngai zwino? Ndi tevhela iwe!'

Ula a ri, 'Yowee! Makhulu wanga! A vho ngo tou sedza-vho ntha, nne ndi tshi khou vhafulela maliwa! Zwino, makhulu wanga, ndi khou tou humbela!'

Ho vha hu na mano mavhili malapfu-lapfu! Lwa thoma u kera munii ula nga fhasi.

Lwa ri,

(Musimi)
Kekedzhulu!
(Vhabvumeli)
Nda lukekedzhula nga lu si na gwanda!

Lu khou gera muri houlani uri u wele fhasi lu kone u wana houla muthannga lu mu le! Mutukana ula a mbo di fhufha. Zwavha zwi tshi gidimedzana, zwavha zwi tshi gidimedzana! Ula ndi u wana muvhuyu. Ndi u namela muvhuyu. A tshi namela lwone lwa da fhasi ha muvhuyu. A lu posela mbuyu nthihi! Lwa devha lwa thoma u la.

A ri, 'Vha songo sedza ntha makhulu wanga. Ndi do vha posela dzi nnzhi vha sala vha tshi la. Kha vha sedze fhasi vha tshi dobela makhulu wanga.'

Lwone teli lu tshi fhedza u la ila mbuyu lu khou sokou mila na thambo lu sa shengi. Lwone lu khou dovha lu khou sedza henengei. Ula a tshi yo posa, ndi tshiṅwe tshilavhi futhi kha lito.

She was cutting down that tree so that she could eat that young man!

That boy started to jump down. She chased him, she chased him! That boy found a baobab. He climbed into the tree. As he climbed up, she arrived there under that baobab. He threw down a baobab fruit! She cracked it open and started to eat.

The boy said, 'Do not look up, my granny. I will thrown down many, and you will eat them. Look down when you are picking them up, my granny.'

The old woman ate the fruit and swallowed the seeds. She was doing that over there. As that boy was throwing fruit down, something again landed in her eye.

She shouted, 'Why are you throwing me in the eye?'

He replied, 'Oh dear! I did not know, my gran! You looked up, my gran!'

She started to cut down that baobab! She was cutting down that baobab, 'I am cutting with my big tooth! …'

That boy shouted, 'Oh dear! What will I do today? And it is sunset. My grandmother is alone at home. Now, what will I do here in the middle of the forest? I say, it is better to get down. I will run away.'

He jumped[i] down and ran away. He arrived at a river. That boy crossed that river. When the old woman arrived, he was already standing and watching her from the opposite bank. She threw herself into the water.

(Narrator)
Titimbulu!
(The sound of wading in the water.)
(Chorus)
I am wading through the water with my big tooth!

Lwa ri, 'Ndiri wa nkombodzela mini?'

A ri, 'Yowee! Makhulu wanga, ndo vha ndi sa ḓivhi, hufha vhone vha khou tou sedza nṱha makhulu wanga?'

Lwa vha lu tshi thoma u kekedzhula uḽa muvhuyu futhi. Lu tshi kekedzhula uḽa muvhuyu! 'Kekedzhulu …'

Uḽa mutukana a ri, 'Yowee! Nṋe namusi ndi ḓo tou ita hani?

Ende ḓuvha ḽi khou kovhela. Makhulu wanga vho sala vha nthihi muḓini. Zwino, nṋe ndi ḓo ita hani vhukati ha ḓaka ḽingafha-ngafha? A ri, khwine ndi tshi tou ḓiposa. Ndi gidime.'

A ḓiposa, a gidima. A tshi tou swika u wana hu na mulambo. Uḽa ndi u wela uḽa mulambo. Lwone lu tshi ḓa, eṋe onovha seli na luya, uḽa ndi u ima, ndi u sedza. Lwone lwavha lu tshi ḓiposa.

Lwa ri,

(Musimi)
Titimbulu!
(Vhabvumeli)
Nda lutitimbula nga lu si na gwanḓa!

Lu khou ralo lu khou wela mulambo houḽani. Lu khou tevhela mutukana houḽani. Mutukana uḽa a ima.

A ri, 'Ndi khwine ndi vhidzelele nngwa dzanga. Ho fana ndi tshi dovha ndi tshi wela mulambo, ndi dovhe ndi yo namela houḽani muvhuyu ngauri ndi hone ndi tshi ḓo kona u vhidzelelela nngwa dzanga ndi nṱha. Ngauri nga ngeno seli na luno a hu na miri mihulwane. Ndi miri miṱuku fhedzi. A hu na miri mihulwane. Muri muhulwane ndi wonouḽa we nda u shavha nda u sia hangei.'

Lwone lu tshi ri, 'Titimbulu ...'

Lu tshi ri ndi a wela!

Uḽa a dovha a ḓiposela maḓini. A vhuyelela seli holuyani futhi. A vha

[i] Lit. 'threw himself down.'

She was crossing the river while chanting. She was chasing that young boy!

That boy was standing there. He said, 'It is better that I call my dogs. I need to cross the river again so that I can climb back into that baobab to call my dogs. Because there are no tall trees on this side. There are only small trees. Because there are big trees that side. There are small ones on this side. There are not big ones. The only big tree is the one over there where I ran from.'

'I am wading through the water with my big tooth! …'

The old woman crossed! The boy threw himself back into the water. He went to the other side again. As he arrived, he climbed into the baobab and sat at the top.

'I am wading through the water with my big tooth! …'

Hah, that boy climbed higher!

He said, 'It is better that I call these dogs of mine. Because this person is coming back to kill me.'

He started to call, 'My dog Tshamato![i] What must I do when you are over there?'

That dog heard him because he had remained behind to guard the meat. It ran towards the boy. It got to where that old woman was.

a tshi swika a tshi nambatela muvhuyu ula a namela a ya ntha.

Na lwone lwa titimbula madi! 'Titimbulu …'

Haa, houla mutukana a namela.

A ri, 'Ndi khwine ndi vhidzelele nngwa dzanga hedzi. Ngauri hoyu muthu u do vhuya a mmbulaya.'

A vha a tshi thoma u vhidzelela, a ri, 'Nngwa yanga Tshamato! Naa ndi a fa naa, iwe u hone naa?'

Nngwa ila yavha i tshi zwi pfa ngauri yo sala yo linda nama. Yavha i tshi gidima. I tshi tou ri i a swika tsini hafhalani kha holuya lukegulu.

Lwa ri, Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande! Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande!

Ila mmbwa ndi u fa!

'Ai, nngwa yanga! Vhathu vha Mudzimu, yo fa!'

E! Ndi vhidze ila inwe, khamusi i do da.

A vha a tshi ri, 'Muthukhapfe, Muthukhapfe wee! Idai nngwa yanga, ndi khou fa!'

Haa, Muthukhapfe ya vha i tshi da, i tshi da.

Vha ri, 'Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande!'

Lu khou teteleka lu tshi ya ngei na ngei. Ila nngwa na yone ndi u fa!

A ri, 'Yowee! Zwino, ngauri ho sala nngwa yanga nthihi ine ya khou lwala! Ende heila nngwa yo onda! Ndo vha ndi tshi ri-vho khamusi i do di ondolowa! Zwino, ngauri yo onda ndi hone yo fa! Zwino, heilani yo ondaho, ngauri ho fa edzi dzo khwathaho, ila yo ondaho i do tou ita hani? Mudzimu, ndi kho i vhidza. Mudzimu u do nndamukisa.'

A vha a tshi vhidzelela. Hei nngwa yovha i tshi pfi Matelwa.

A vha tshi vhidzelela a tshi ri, 'Matelwa, idai mmbwa yanga, ndi khou fa!'

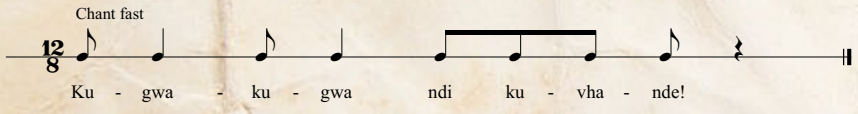
Heila nngwa yavha i tshi da i khou pepeleka, heila mmbwa i tshi khou pepeleka! I tshi tou da.

Holuya lukegulu lu tshi ri, 'Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande! Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande!'

Ila ya mbo di fara nga gulokulo! I tshi fara nga gulokulo, ya diisa na

[i] The name Tshamato/Tshamatho refers to a vigilant dog. See 1.9.2.

She chanted, *Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande! Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande!* [i]



That dog died!

'Oh, my dog! Dear God, it has died!'

That boy thought he should call the other dog, perhaps it would come.

He started to call, 'Muthukhapfe, Muthukhapfe![ii] Hey, come my dog, I am dying!'

Hah, Muthukhapfe came there, he came there!

The old woman chanted, *'Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande! …'*

She was shaking that dog. It died!

The boy cried, 'Oh no! Now, only one dog remains and it is ill! And it is weak![iii] I thought it would recover, but it is ailing! Now, because it is ailing, I am going to die! Now, it is so thin! If the fat dogs could not kill the old woman, what could he do? 'God! I will call it. God will save me.'

He started to call. That dog was called Matelwa.

He shouted, 'Matelwa! Come, my dog. I am dying!'

That dog came there, unsteady on its legs. That dog was very unsteady! It came there.

That old woman chanted, *'Kugwa-kugwa ndi kuvhande! ...'*

That dog grabbed her throat! He grabbed her throat! He brought her fhasi! Lukegulu tyaka-tyaka ndi u fa!

Muṱhannga uḽa ndi u tsa nṱha ha muvhuyu. Ndi u ḓa ndi u takula mmbwa yawe Maṱelwa. A vha a tshi i fhufhisela nṱha, a tshi i khisa, a tshi ri, 'Nngwa yanga! Iwe wo nthusa! Ndovha ndi si tsha ḓivha tshine tsha ḓo nthusa. Zwino, nne ndi khou livhuwa iwe nngwa yanga. U thoma namusi iwe u ḓo bebiwa nga muṱana wanga! Wa ḽa zwine nda ḓo phanda nga zwanḓa zwanga!

Lungano lwavha lwo fhela.

[i] A command used to control a dog.

[ii] Lit. 'you must listen.'

[iii] The familiar theme of the smallest and weakest who succeeds.

The old woman with long teeth / Lukegulu lwa mano malapfu (continued)

down! The old woman kicked tyaka-tyaka and died![i]

That young man climbed down the baobab. When he was on the ground, he picked up his Matelwa. He threw him into the air! He kissed him and said, 'My dog! You helped me! I did not know how I would escape. Now, I am thanking you, my dog. Starting today I will always carry you on my back! I will look after you for the rest of your life!

This story has ended.

Folovhodwe, 17 June 2011

[i] Compare the role of dogs in 'Cannibals' (2.3.1). The dog is 'man's faithful servant, which saves him at crucial moments' (Kriel, 1971:76).

Venda and Tsonga people believe that, although ancestral spirits enjoy divine status, they retain the personality they had as human beings.[584] Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that most people have a neutral attitude towards their ancestral spirits. They are loved and revered, but also feared for their capriciousness. Succinctly put, 'they are not better than they were as men. Their character is that of suspicious old people.'[585] In particular, they 'resent any want of respect (…) on the part of their descendants,' and therefore 'lurk' around their grave, waiting for an opportunity to bring trouble to their descendants.[586] Mavhetha noted that people will not desecrate graves *(mavhiḓa)* because of the kind of retribution described in this story. There is a belief that culprits will be pursued by spirits, and experience illness and accidents at home.

This story links with those by Ndou ('The girls and the frog,' 2.2.1; 'Good and evil,' 2.2.2) in the sense that, as a 'small law,' it entrenches the status of ancestral spirits within the moral universe. As in 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4), authority is affirmed by inducing fear in the young listener. This is achieved by means of the hyperbolic portrayal of the spirit as a cannibalistic creature with long teeth. Singo's presentation of the old woman's spirit is fear-inspiring as well as dramatic, lighthearted and entertaining, perhaps in keeping with her cheerful, enthusiastic personality.

2.3.3 The man who refused to marry / Munna we a hana u mala mufumakadzi

Here comes a story!

Now, there is a certain young man who lives with his sister. It is only the two of them. He does not want to marry a woman.

His sister says, 'Marry a woman so that she can bear children and we can be many.'

He answers, 'I do not want to marry a woman. My wife is farming. We hoe, we eat, we are satisfied.'

Now, his sister persists, 'No, my brother, do not live without a wife. Now, it is better that I look for a wife for you.'

Truly, the sister is leaving because she wants a wife for him.

Indeed, a wife is found.

The wife is arriving.

Now, the brother exclaims, 'You found a wife! What will I do with her?'

She replies, 'No, I will fetch the brother of my mother. The uncle will tell you what to do when a wife arrives at her new home.'

So, truly, that sister left and went to the uncle because they did not have a mother.[i]

She arrives and informs the uncle. The uncle comes there and finds a beautiful woman. She was *very* beautiful.

The uncle is lusting after the wife of his sister's child. He says to himself, 'This woman is beautiful. My sister's child does not deserve her.'

Now, that young man woke up in the morning and went to the fields. He arrived at the fields with his wife. He finds the uncle sitting there.

The uncle comes closer and says, 'My child, take the container and fetch water from the fountain.'

[i] The implication is that the man's mother is deceased. See the opening, 'It is only the two of them.'

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, hovha hu muṅwe muṱhannga a tshi dzula na khaladzi awe. Vha vhavhili. O vha a sa ṱoḓi u mala mufumakadzi.

Khaladzi awe a ri, 'Mala mufumakadzi u ri u ḓo beba vhana ra vha vhanzhi.'

A ri, 'Nne a thi ṱoḓi u mala mufumakadzi. Mufumakadzi wanga u ḓovha tsimu. Uri ri lime, ri ḽe ri fure.

Zwino, khaladzi awe a ri, 'Hai, khaladzi anga u songo vhuya wa dzula u si na mufumakadzi. Zwino, ndi khwine nne ndi tshi tou ṱoḓela mufumakadzi.'

Nangoho, khaladzi ndi u ṱuwa ndi u yo nyaga mufumakadzi.

Mufumakadzi ngoho ndi u wanala.

Mufumakadzi a vhuya.

Zwino, ula a ri, 'Wo ntoḓela mufumakadzi! Ndi ḓo ita mini ngae?'

A ri, 'Hai, nne ndi ḓo ṱuwa nda yo dzhia vho-malume.Vho-malume vha ḓo u vhudza uri mufumakadzi o ḓa muḓini u ita zwifhio.'

Hai, nangoho ula wa khaladzi a ṱuwa a ya ha malume ngauri vho vha vha si na mme.

A swika a vhudza malume. Malume vha tshi ḓa vha wana musadzi o naka luṅwe. Ndi ṱhase ya musadzi.

Malume vha vho tama musadzi wa muḓuhulu.

Uri, 'Hei musadzi o naka luṅwe hoyu. Hango fanela muḓuhulu ṅwana wa khaladzi.'

Zwino, ula u vuwa a tshi ya masimuni nga matsheloni. A tshi swika na musadzi wawe masimuni. U wana malume vho no dzula masimuni.

Vha tshi swika vha ri, 'Muḓuhulu wanga, dzhia tshigubu u yo ka maḓi tshisimani.'

Ula a tshi dzhia tshigubu a tshi yo ka maḓi tshisimani. Ee, vhone vha vho sala vha tshi nyaga musadzi wa muḓuhulu.

'Musadzi wa muḓuhulu, ndi a u funa!'

That one takes the container and goes to fetch water from the fountain. Yes, the uncle remains behind, wanting the wife of his sister's child.

'Wife of my sister's child, I love you!'

That one answers, 'How can I love you? Because I love your sister's child.'

He says, 'No, that does not matter. That one works, he only works in the fields.[i] I work and I have money.'

That one replies, 'No, man, this will not work.'

They are returning home during late afternoon. The uncle is leaving too. The next morning they came back again. They found the uncle in the fields.

Hah, when they arrive, the uncle says, 'Take the water container and go to the fountain.'

That one replies, 'Today I do not want to go to the fountain. I do not want to go to the fountain!'

He starts to pick up the water container. He arrives at a small copse next to the field. He is hiding. He sees the uncle holding hands with his wife. The uncle is holding hands with the wife!

That young husband is surprised! He says, 'It is better that I come out of hiding.'

That one is coming out!

The uncle exclaims, 'Hell, child!'

As he runs, that woman follows him. She is following him because her husband has discovered what she is doing.

The husband remains behind, squatting on a log. His sister is coming from home. She is bringing food to the fields. She finds the brother squatting on a log, singing a song.

He starts to sing. (You must be quiet!)[ii]

Uḽa a ri, 'Ndi ḓo vha funisa hani? Ngauri nṋe ndo funa muḓuhulu wavho.'

Vha ri, 'Hai, hezwo a zwi ambi. Houḽani ha shumi. U shuma zwa masimuni. Nṋe ndi a shuma ndi na tshelede.'

Uḽa a ri, 'Hai, ii, zwi si nga itee.'

Nga madekwana ngoho vhaḽa vha khou ṱuwa. Vhone na vhone vha khou ṱuwa. Nga matsheloni futhi a tshi dovha a tshi vhuya nga matsheloni. U wana malume vha masimuni.

Haa, a tshi swika, 'Doba tshigubu u ṱuwe u ye tshisimani.'

Uḽa a mbo ḓi ri, 'Namusi a thi nyagi u ṱuwa tshisimani. Thi nga yi tshisimani!'

A mbo ḓi doba tshigubu. A mbo ḓi swika a dzumbama. A tshi tou dzumbama. U vhona malume vho farana na musadzi. Malume vha tshi vho farana na musadzi.

Uḽa a mangala! Uḽa a ri, 'Ndi khwine ndi bvelele.'

Uḽa a tshi yo bvelela!

Malume vha sa ri, 'Maḽo, muḓuhulu!'

Vha vha vha tshi shavha uḽa musadzi na eṋe nga murahu. U vho tevhelela na uḽa ngauri o waniwa uri vhovha vha tshi khou ita zwifhio.

Uḽa a tshi sala ndi u tumba ntha ha danda. Khaladzi awe a tshi bva hayani. U khou ḓisa zwiḽiwa masimuni. U wana khaladzi o tumba ntha ha danda, u khou imbelela luimbo.

Avha a tshi thoma. (Vhoiwe fhumulani!),

(Musimi fhedzi)
Khaladzi yanga, no mmbonisa luṅwe.
Nangwe na nndamba, ndi nga si vhilele.
Ndi nga ndo langwa nga mavhele masimuni.
Sibongile, mbilu u vhavha.

[i] In other words, the young man is not interested in marriage, only farming.

[ii] The narrator is telling her co-participants not to sing with her.

(Narrator only)
My sister, you showed me so much.
Even though you wronged me, I am not upset.
All I do is tend maize in the fields.
Sibongile,[i] one whose heart aches.

Hey, the heart of that sister of his was aching.

She sits down and says, 'My brother is singing!'

That one starts to put down the food containers with porridge. She starts to listen.

She hears the brother singing, 'My sister, you showed me so much ...'

Hey, that sister is coming closer. Now, she arrives and finds the brother crying.

She arrives and asks, 'What is the matter, my brother?'

He says, 'My sister, I told you! I said, "I do not want to marry. My wife is the fields." I hoe, I find food, I eat with you, my sister. Look, you brought a wife but she made my uncle come here. About uncle: When I arrive at the field, he sends me to the fountain for water. He remains behind with my wife. He has run away with her!'

That one says, 'Oh, dear God, my brother! I did not know! I just thought you should have a wife. A wife would make us many by having children.'

He answers, 'My sister, you failed me! I told you, my wife is the fields. Forever.'

Amen. This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 1 October 2012

Hai, ula khaladzi awe apfa mbilu yawe i tshi vhavha.

A dzula a ri, 'Musi khaladzi anga u khou imbelela!'

Ula a thoma a vhea zwikhafuthini fhasi zwa vhuswa. A thoma u thetshelesa.

U pfa khaladzi u khou imbelela, 'Khaladzi yanga, no mmbonisa luṅwe …'

Hai, ula wa khaladzi u a bvelela. Zwino, a tshi swika u wana khaladzi u khou lila.

A tshi swika u ri, 'Khaladzi anga mulandu?'

A ri, 'Khaladzi anga, ndo ni vhudza! Nda ri, "A thi ṱodi u mala. Nṋe, mufumakadzi wanga ndi masimu." Ane nda ḓo lima, nda wana zwiliwa, nda ḽa na iwe khaladzi anga. Namusi vhona wo nndisela mufumakadzi matsiko mufumakadzi u khou ḓisela malume. Malume: Nṋe ndi tshi swika masimuni vha ya nthumanda ya tshisimani nda ya u ka maḓi. Vhone vha sala na mufumakadzi. Vho namba vho shavha nae mufumakadzi!'

Ula a ri, 'Vhannani, khaladzi anga, vhathu vha Mudzimu! Tho ngo ḓivha! Ndo vha ndi tshi ri u wane mufumakadzi. Mufumakadzi u ḓo ri andisa a ḓa a beba vhana na iwe ravha vhanzhi.'

Ari, 'Khaladzi yanga, no mpheṱa! Nṋe ndo ni vhudza uri mufumakadzi wanga ndi masimu. U swika nga hu sa fheli.'

Amen. Ndi u fhela ha lungano.

[i] The sister, who is upset about her brother's failing marriage. Sibongile is a Nguni name also found among Tsonga neighbours.

The narrator explained that this story warns young men against behaviour that may result in a sexually transmitted disease. The protagonist's fear of disease is expressed by his refusal to marry, and his all-consuming engagement with farming is offered as excuse.

While marriage is an ideal, not all people marry. Those who refuse matrimony must expect to be treated with ridicule and suspicion, and accorded inferior status. The young man's outsidership is evident in the fact that he performs alone, in contrast with the cohesive nature of responsorial singing.[i]

Translator Pfananani Masase suggested that there is an aspect of the protagonist's personality or personal circumstances which is not in view. Johanna Muleba of Folovhodwe similarly tells a story[587] in which a man is pressurised into marriage. He is somehow unable or unwilling to adhere to a particular, unstated norm, represented by his refusal to participate in communal dance.

Aschwanden[588] notes that the Karanga avoid direct description when discussing sexual behaviour. This is also evident in Venda *ngano* in which adultery and sexual assault is concealed by metaphors that depict the behaviour of rapacious wild animals.[589] The image of a brother and sister living in virtual isolation in a horticultural setting may harbour ancient meanings that have slipped from memory since Singo heard this story from her great-grandmother. Aschwanden[590] documented Karanga oral narratives in which sowing, planting, harvesting, farmland, mountains and valleys are symbols of human sexuality and the body. Similarly, some chants of *domba* initiation anthropomorphise nature.[591] They take the form of sexual metaphors such as 'the snake has entered the gardens' and others that depict the female body.

This raises the intriguing possibility that the young man's refusal to marry and his compulsion for farming may be a metaphor for incestuous relations. Incest is a prominent theme in Karanga oral narratives. Aschwanden documents a story[592] that features three actants only, namely a brother, his sister and her secret lover. The brother is jealous of his sister and 'wants to keep her to himself.' In another story,[593] incest occurs among 'mountain-people who lived in great isolation.' In yet another story,[594] prohibition on 'making use of one's own soil refers to the taboo forbidding incest and marriage with a sister.' Among the Venda, incest was historically punished by death.[595]

There are fundamental motivations for injunctions against incest and other forms of sexual impropriety. Aschwanden[596] notes that 'the problem of incest leads to the problem of marriage.' Blacking[597] emphasises the importance of 'legitimate procreation and institutionalised motherhood (…) Marriage and subsequent child-birth are legitimised by the exchange of gifts between contracting families, and in particular by the payment of *thakha* (bride-price) to the girl's family.' In other words, sexual transgression may undermine socio-economic reproduction.

Pfananani Masase explained that the ideal of a large family, commonly expressed in *ngano*, is being transformed by current economic circumstances. Not only is there an increasing desire for smaller families, but also for financial independence before marriage. He quoted a person speaking on a radio programme who remarked that 'the bird does not lay eggs before building a nest.'

Postma documented a Sotho story with a related theme.[598] Here the narrator contrasts the wealth of social life with the poverty of bachelorhood, portrayed by the life of a man whose only companions are mice. The story's bleak ending is particularly moving. It deliberately evokes a mood of frightening isolation: 'Now he lives alone once more. Just him and the mice (…) Old people tell about Seetetelane. They say he became old – he, with the mice.' Aschwanden[599] similarly offers a narrative in which a blind man remarks, 'I have no-one to talk to. I have no field (wife) and no relatives. I am tortured by an ever-lasting grief: When I am dead nobody will remember me.'

[i] See e.g. 'The dancing lions' (2.1.1) and 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4) by Thinawanga Phungo.

2.3.4 The lion-hunter / Muzwimi wa ndau

Here comes a story!

Now, there is a certain man and his father.

When his father passes away, he leaves him those things with which to care for his family and his children.

He has two wives and eight children.

Now, he remains with these things.

He used to go to the veld. He would arrive and sing so that he could change.

Now, he sings.

When he changes there, he becomes a lion. When he becomes a lion, he hunts a kudu. When he hunts, he catches the antelope. He kills it and drinks the blood as a lion does.

He drags the carcass over there where his clothes are.

He arrives over there and starts a song. He turns into a man again and puts on his clothes.

He goes home and tells his wives that he killed a kudu in the veld.

'Let us go and carry it. We will eat it with the children.'

Now, one day the younger wife says to herself, she says, 'My husband, why does he always go to the veld for five days and return with a kudu? Other men of some villages, they also go to hunt, but do not find this kind of meat. Only my husbands finds it. Now, one day I want to follow him.'

She tells that elder wife.

That elder wife warns her, 'Do not follow him even for a single day, my younger sister. One day you will see things you are not supposed to see. Do not follow him, stay just here. Stop this! All that matters is that he comes back with venison and we become satisfied with our children.'

The younger wife says to herself, 'One day I *will* follow him.'

Ah, that man, truly, he returns with venison.

One day he says, 'My wives, I am going out. I am leaving to go and

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, hovha hu muṅwe munna o vha a na khotsi awe.

Khotsi awe vha ri vha tshi dzama, vhu mu siela zwe vha vha vha tshi zwi shumisa. U ri u ḓo sala a tshi basoba ngazwo muḓi wawe na vhana vhawe. O vha e na vhafumakadzi vhavhili, a na vhana vha eiti.

Zwino, ngoho a sala na hezwiḽa zwithu.

A tshi ḓi ṱuwa a tshi swika ḓakani. A swika a imbelela uri a kone u tshintsha.

Zwino, a imbelela. O no tshintsha hafhaḽani u fhedza a ita ndau. O no vha ndau, a ṱuwa a gidimedza tholo. A tshi i gidimedza, a i fara. A i vhulaha, a nwa malofha sa zwenezwiḽa zwine ha ita ndau.

A kokodza, a i swikisa hafhaḽani he a sia hone zwiambaro zwawe. A tshi swika henefhaḽa u ḓo thoma luimbo. A dovha a vhuyelela futhi a dovha a ambara thundu yawe.

A konou ṱuwa a ya muḓini a yo vhidza vhafumakadzi vhawe uri ndo vhulaya tholo ḓakani.

'Kha ri ye, ri yo hwala. Ni ḽe na vhana.'

Zwino, liṅwe ḓuvha hoyu mufumakadzi muṱuku: A ri, 'Munna wanga, why ḓuvha na ḓuvha a tshi ṱuwa a tshi tou ri u khou ya ḓakani nga maḓuvha maṱanu, a vhuya na tholo? Avha vhaṅwe vhanna vha miḓini miṅwe, vha tshi ri u ṱuwa vha si wane heyo ṋama. Mara ya waniwa nga hoyu munna wanga. Zwino, liṅwe ḓuvha nṋe ndi nyaga u mu tevhela.'

U khou vhudza havhaḽani mufumakadzi muhulwane.

Havhaḽa mufumakadzi muhulwane vha ri, 'U songo tevhela na ḽinwe ḓuvha murathu wanga. U ḓo vhona liṅwe ḓuvha zwithu zwi sa vhoniwi. Iwe u songo tevhela, u nambe u tou dzula. Kha ri litshe vha tshi vhuya na tshisevho riṋe ri tshi ḽa ri tshi fura na vhana.'

Ene a ri, 'Nṋe liṅwe ḓuvha ndi nyaga u tevhela.'

Aa!, vhaḽa munna, ngoho, vha vhuya na tshisevho.

Liṅwe ḓuvha vha tshi to uri, 'Vhafumakadzi vhanga, nṋe ndi khou

hunt.'

That younger wife says to herself, 'Today I want to follow him. I want to see with all my heart.'

Truly, that man is leaving.

The younger wife follows him quietly. When she arrives, she finds the husband not yet singing his song for killing. She arrives and hides inside a copse.

When she hides in the copse, he starts to take off his clothes.

Now, he starts to dance. He remained naked. He was wearing no clothes.

He is singing,

(Narrator only)
Truly, it comes to those who do not have.[i]
Yowee,-yowee, they do not really like it.[ii]
Mother, it comes to those who do not have.
Yuwi-yuwi, they are entering.[iii]
Yowee, they kill you.[iv]

He is finishing there.

Now, he starts to change. He starts to become a lion!

She sees that man changing into a lion!

She is running away! She is running away and arrives home.

She asks herself whether to tell what she saw, because the elder wife warned her not to follow their husband: 'You will see what you must not see.'

[i] Lit. 'he remained with money.' This is a reference to innate skill.
[ii] I.e. people are jealous when others have ability they lack.
[iii] An apparent reference to spiritual forces believed to be the source of exceptional skills.
[iv] Jealous people.

bva, di khou ṱuwa ndi yo zwima.'

Houḽani mufumakadzi muṱuku a ri, 'Namusi ndi nyaga u tevhela, di nyaga u vhona nga mbilu yawe a nthihi.'

Nangoho, vhaḽa vha a ṱuwa.

Ene a sala a dodoma. A tshi swika, u wana munna a vhaathu u imbelela luimbo lwavho lwauri vha vhulaye. A tshi swika ene ndi u banda na tshiṱaka.

A tshi banda na tshiṱaka, vhaḽa vha thoma u bvula zwiambaro zwavho. Vha a thoma zwino u tshina. Vho sala vha sheleni. A vho ngo ambara tshithu.

Vha vha vha tshi imbelela,

(Musimi fhedzi)
Zwiḓela vha si na zwavho, ngoho.
Yowee-yowee, vha ya zwifuna naa-naa.
Zwiḓela vha si na zwavho, mmawe.
Yuwi-yuwi, vha vhavho dzhena.
Yowee, vha vho vhulaha iwe.

Vha tshi tou fhedza henefhaḽa. Zwino, vha mbo ḓi tshintsha. Vha mbo ḓi vha ḽindau!

Ene a tshi vhona uri munna o tshintsha o ita ndau, a vha a tshi shavha!

A tshi shavha, a tshi swika muḓini uri a vhudze vhathu, ngauri mukomana wawe vho vha vho mu vhudza, zwauri a songo tevhela. 'U ḓo vhona zwi sa vhoṅwi.'

A swika a gwadama nga zwivhindi.

Aa, vhaḽa vha ṱuwa vha gidimedza phukha. Vha swika vha i fara. Vha tshi fara vha i kokodzela hafhaḽa zwiambaroni.

Vha tshi ri vha a dovha u imba luimbo. Luimbo a lu tsha tenda ngauri zwo vha zwi zwithu zwi sa vhoniwi. Zwo vha zwi tshi ṱoḓa honouḽa muṋe wazwo we a sieliwa nga khotsi awe zwauri a sale a tshi sapota

The lion-hunter / Muzwimi wa ndau (continued)

She arrives and collapses.[i]

Ah, that man is hunting a wild animal!

He finds and catches it. He catches it and drags the carcass over there to his clothes.

He tries to sing the song again.[ii] The song can not be sung because of things that are not supposed to be seen! They are only for the owner who received them from the father so that he can remain behind and support his family.

He tries harder, but finds he no longer has any power! He no longer has even a little bit left.

He finds it very difficult to put on his clothes. He is struggling to dress.

That man is leaving. He is stumbling.

He says, 'I am going home.'

He is arriving there at home.

He arrives and says, 'My wives, you must come here.'

Now, both arrive there. The younger wife is very afraid.

mudi wawe ngazwo.

Vha tshi ri kani-kani maanḓa, maanḓa a vha tshe na. A vha tshe na na maanḓa na ḽithihi. Vha tshi ri kani-kani vha ambara zwiambaro ṱeli vha vho tou ambara nga u tou kombetshedza uri vha konou ambara zwiambaro.

Havhaḽani vha ṱuwaha dedengedza.

Vha ri,'Ndi a ṱuwa ndi ya hayani.'

Vha tshi tou swika hayani ngei, vha swika vha ri, 'Vhafumakadzi vhanga, iḓani ngeno nothe.'

Zwino, vha tshi tou swika hafhaḽani vhothe. Ene iṱeli o tshuwa o fhelela.

Vha ri, 'Vhafumakadzi vhanga, no mmbona lwau fhedzisela, ngauri huna muṅwe o nndingaho hangei hune nda ya hone. Fhedzi ni ḓivhe zwauri ni ḓo sala ni tshi lovha na vhana. Ngauri nne ndi khou ṱuwa, ende ndi ṱuwa na zwithu zwanga ngauri ndi zwa khotsi anga.'

Vhasadzi vha thoma u sedzana uri naa o itaho hezwo zwithu ndi nnyi.

Vha ri, 'Nne ḓuvha ḽine nda ḓo ṱuwa, na o mmbonelaho hafho he a mmbonela hone na ene u ḓo ṱuwa.'

---

[i] Lit. 'she falls on her liver.'

[ii] In order to change back into a person.

The lion-hunter / Muzwimi wa ndau (continued)

The husband says, ‘My wives, you are seeing me for the last time, because someone made me undergo an ordeal[i] by following me. You must know that you will remain and die with the children.[ii] Because I am going, and I am going with my things because they belonged to my father.’

The women looked at each other, asking themselves who the culprit is.

He says, ‘The day I pass away, the one who saw what she was not allowed to see, will also pass away.’

Indeed, after saying this, that man went to sleep, and he passed away.[iii]

As things go, when he passes on, they are digging a grave in which to bury him.

That woman also starts to die!

They came to understand that the one who saw forbidden things was the woman who said she wanted to follow her husband. She was forbidden to see, but she refused to obey.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 1 October 2012

Ngoho, u tou amba ngauralo vhaḽa munna u tou eḓela, vha vuwa vho tshinyala. Ri kha ḓi vha ho tou ralo, vha tshi kha ḓi vha vho tshinyala, hu tshi pfi hu a bwiwa mulindi vha a dzheniswa. Uḽa vho na ene ambo ḓi ya u tshinyala wa mufumakadzi. Ndi hezwi vhana na havhaḽa muṅwe mufumakadzi vha tshi zwi vhona uri muthu o silingaho ndi hoyu we a thoma u ya ari ndi nyaga u sala nga murahu. A dzivhisiwa, a sa tende.

Lwa vha lwo fa lungano.

---

[i] Lit. ‘someone tested me.’

[ii] I.e. your transgression will cause your own death and turn your children into orphans.

[iii] Lit. ‘he woke up in a rotten state.’

This story must be read in conjunction with 'Respect' (2.23.2) which tells of a farmer whose singing enables him to collect honey from a hive. The children of a neighbour overhear his song, perform it to chase the bees away, and then ransack the hive.

The farmer, as well the hunter in Singo's story, are among various intermediaries between the domains of humanity, spirituality and nature. Healers are the most prominent members of this social category, but it also includes initiation school instructors, members of trance groups,[i] musicians, potters, woodcarvers and ironmongers. Their role and status is explained by the songline *'Vha vhavho dzhena,'* which indicates that they are 'entered' by spiritual forces during certain events.[ii] The state of spirituality generated in this way empowers the recipient to regulate the moral universe, and, in this story, specifically to 'care for his family and his children.'

Musicians inspired in this way often state that their artistry is 'inborn' *('Zwa vhuṋambi zwi a bebelwa').* Not surprisingly, special skills are usually transmitted within social institutions such as the family, and musicians habitually claim to have inherited them from ancestors. But they receive much more. 'Those things' *('hezwiḽa zwithu')* the narrator refers to (line two) may include ancestral relics *(zwitungulo)*, but they essentially pertain to moral authority that is conferred upon recipients during a dream. This story, as well as 'Respect,' therefore upholds integrated spiritual and worldly authority.

Kriel[600] explains that

> a special kind of knowledge which conferred great power and wealth on its possessor, was knowledge of magic (…) This knowledge was not the ideal of everyone, for the magicians formed a class on their own (and withheld) their own knowledge from others (…) Of all the power of the human being, magic is the one which enables him to pass the bounds of his human existence and have dealings either with 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.

Not all qualify as spirit mediums, nor can required skills be acquired by usurpation. As Singo explains in her story, 'they are only for the owner who received them from the father.' Blacking[601] notes 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 such a gift and cannot prove it (…) his apparently good intentions are doubted and he is suspected of arrogance and self-deception, which are not qualities of humanity.

This is portrayed compellingly in a related story by Johanna Muleba of Folovhodwe.[602] A man aspires to spiritual potency *(madambi:* 'magic') which is represented by a marauding elephant. The man, like the hunter's younger wife in this story, and the children in 'Respect,' lacks the capacity to control spiritual power. He consequently breaks his legs when fleeing the elephant, while the younger wife is destined to die[iii] and the children are merely reprimanded in accordance with their youth. All three stories portray the culprits as naïve, younger persons who lack the requisite experience and understanding of the world.

The hunter's potency is expressed by means of two integrated metaphors. The first is that of the lion, which symbolises skill, power and authority. Hunters and artisans perform ritual practices to promote the successful outcome of their endeavours, and this story implies that the hunter must become a lion to care for his family. Secondly, it is singing that transforms the hunter into a predator.

The three stories mentioned above show that access to magical worlds is achieved by means of singing. In 'The magic song,' narrated by Sophia Magoro,[603] a healer similarly transforms himself into a dangerous animal in order to catch his prey. Magoro explained that fellow villagers overhear his song, and understand 'that he killed his prey like an animal and not like a person.'

[i] *Ngoma dza Midzimu*, 'Rituals of the Spirits' (3.3).

[ii] Communal rituals like *Ngoma dza Midzimu* are most obvious in this regard, but individuals also have private spiritual experiences (box 39).

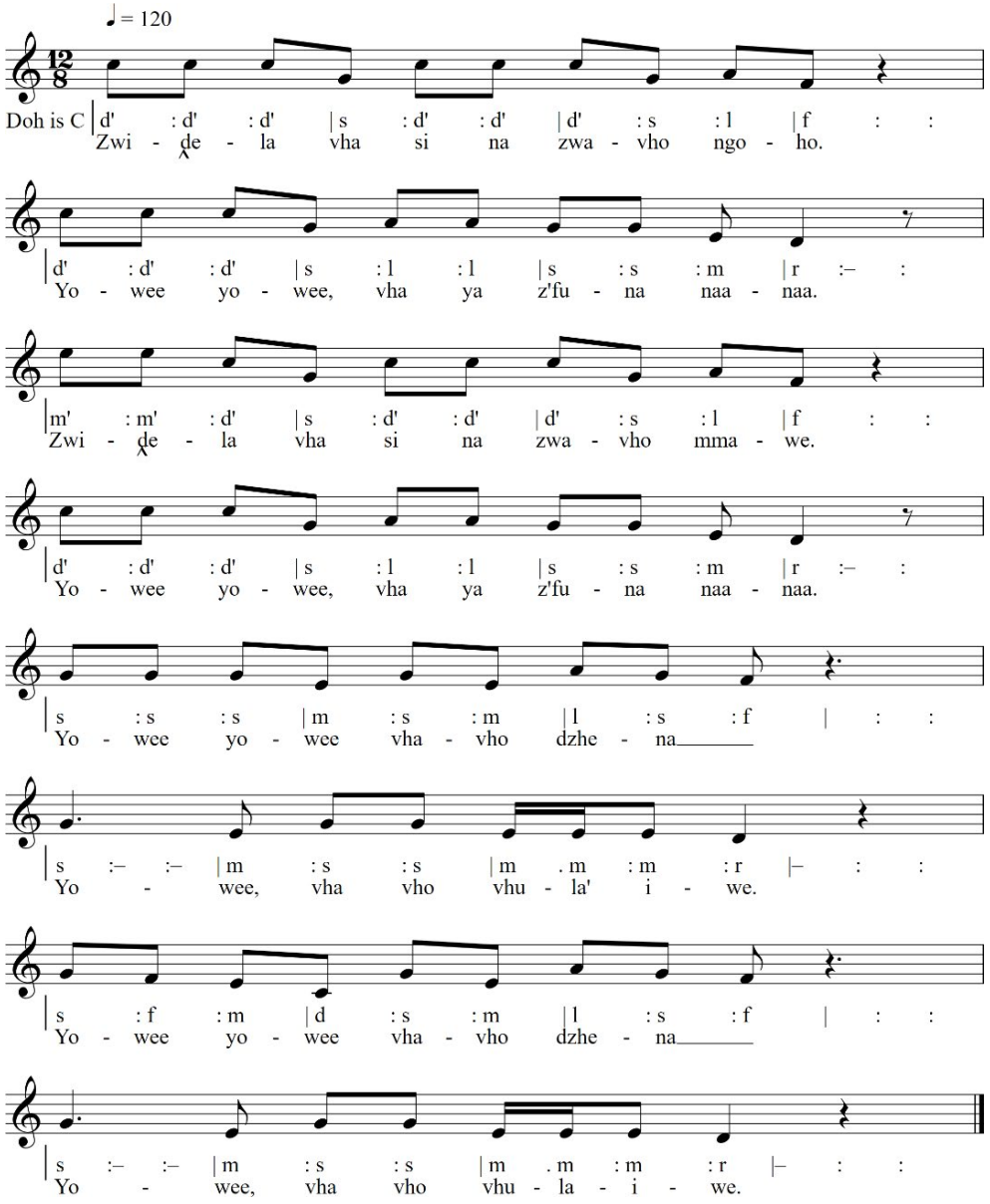
[iii] It is significant that she is the younger wife. The submerged theme is that of the younger, inexperienced yet stubborn wife who disobeys the instructions of her husband and older co-wives. She is not animated by bad intent but by compulsion, and remarks, 'I want to see with all my heart.'

As made repeatedly evident in this book, singing is a fundamental means of spiritual expression. The healer's special role and status in this regard is therefore acknowledged and affirmed:

> Then the time came for the song to be heard and known by all. People sang it when the diviner was at home. When they sang the song, he became afraid of changing into that wild animal. But the song spread, and people accepted him for being able to call animals.'

The singing that expresses spiritual power in Singo's story and 'The magic song,' features the protagonist only. This affirms his status, and adds to the mystery of his power, in contrast with the integrative, egalitarian ideals of responsorial singing. Although the song in 'Respect' is in responsorial form, vocal interaction is between the farmer and the bees, who are connected within the cosmos. To the farmer, the hive (perhaps as a limited resource) requires respect and care. The children, in turn, exhibit incipient moral values, and lack insight into the fragile web of life. They raid the nest, leaving the bees in disarray. When confronted, they admit their misdemeanour, and their elders take no further action. This has been yet another episode in their moral upbringing.

Fig. 73. The vegetable garden of narrator Mashudu Mathala



2.3.5 Tortoise and Duiker / Khamba na Ntsa

Here comes a story!

Now, all the animals are here. They are gathering.

There is Baboon, Tortoise, Duiker, Impala, Kudu and Mr. Lion. They have come from all over to gather here.

They are announcing that a race will take place. They are asking who will participate.

They are saying that Mrs. Duiker and Mr. Tortoise will run to see who wins.

Who will the referee be who blows the whistle?[i] They are saying it is Mr. Baboon!

Now, they are getting ready. Hah, they are getting their things ready.

Mr. Baboon is blowing the whistle. Hah, they are off!

Tortoise is falling behind.

He says,

(Narrator)
Goli,[ii] you left me behind.
Sweetie,[iii] you left me behind.
Bala/Bali,[iv] you left me behind.

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, hovha hu phukha dzothe. Dzo kuvhangana dzothe.

Hu tshi ri Pfene, he Khamba, he Ntsa, ra ri Phala, re Tholo, re Vho-Ndau, re ri na Ntsa. Dzothe dzo kuvhangana dza shango.

Ha pfi ri khou ya u ita mutatisano wa u gidima. Ha pfi afha fhethu hu nyaga u thoma vho nnyi?

Ha pfi hu fanela u thoma Vho-Ntsa na Vho-Khamba, ri vhone uri naa hu do siiwa nnyi naa?

Refiri ane a do lidza tshipiriri ndi nnyi? Ha pfi ndi Vho-Pfene.

Zwino, ya vha i tshi thomiwa. Haa, vha vha vha tshi ita zwithu zwa hone.

Vho-Pfene vha tshi tou ri phiriri! Haa, dza vha dzi tshi tuwisana!

Tshikhamba tshi murahu.

Tshi sokou ri,

(Musimi)
Goli, wa ntsia kolovhia.
Sweety, wa ntsia kolovhia.
Bala/Bali, wa ntsia kolovhia
(Vhabvumeli)
Wa ntsia!

---

[i] *Tshipwiriri* or *tshitiriri*. The repeated 'r' sound in the name imitates the sound of a whistle with an oscillating ball.

[ii] Goli refers to Johannesburg. This indicates that, for Tortoise, the winning post seems as far away as this city.

[iii] Tortoise is making a pass at Duiker so that he may catch up.

[iv] Singo did not know the significance of the name, and simply pointed to the ancient origin of the story (her great-great grandmother).

Tortoise and Duiker / Khamba na Ntsa (continued)

(Chorus)
Left me behind!

Now, Tortoise is falling behind.[i]

Duiker is jumping lightly! She arrives over there where the elephants are.

Tortoise is still trailing behind. He is sweating because his legs are short!

When he arrives, he finds that Mrs. Duiker is already there.

He says, 'No, you never left me behind! You did not see me because I was underground. I can hide underground. When I arrived here, I went underground. You did not see me arriving here.'

The others say, 'No! Now, you are trying to deceive us, saying all these things. You must race again. Mr. Elephant will blow the whistle. Run back to Mr. Baboon over there.'

So, Tortoise says, 'Right, let us start over!'

Impala says, 'See, I will run along to check on you. Because I say, now, you are lying. I will be running next to you to see how you arrive

[i] Lit. 'running at the back.'

Zwino, tshi khou ḓi gidima nga murahu.

Ntsa iṱali i khou sokou ri levhu-levhu! Ntsa ndi u swika hangei hu re na dziṋḓou.

Tshone tshi kha ḓivha murahu. Na biko, ṱeli vhudenzhe ndi vhuṱuku!

Tshi tshi sala tshi tshi swika ngei, tsha wana Vho-Ntsa vho no swika.

Tsha ri, 'Hai, vhone a vho ngo vhuya vha dzula vho mphirela na luthihi lini!'

'Vhoiwe no vha ni sa mmboni nṋe ndo vha ndi fhasi ha mavu. Nṋe hafhu ndi a ḓifukedza.'

'Ndo ri u swika hafha, nda ḓifukedza. Vhoiwe a no ngo mmbona zwavhuḓi na luthihi.'

Ha pfi, 'Hai! Zwino, vhone vha tshi khou ralo ngauri vhone vha khou ri ṱaṱisa, vhone kha vha dovhe vha vhuyelele. Vha ḓo dielwa phiriri nga Vho-Nḓou. Vha vhuyelela hangei hune ha vha na Vho-Pfeṋe.'

Hai, tsha ri, 'Hai, kha ndi dovhiwe!'

Phala ya ri, 'Hai, nṋe ndi ḓo vha ndi tshi khou gidima nga thungo. Ngauri thi ri, zwino, vhone vha khou zwifha. Nṋe ndi ḓo vha ndi tshi khou gidima nga thungo nda vhona uri na vhone vha ḓo swika naa?'

Hai, tsha ri, 'Hai, kha ri dovhiwe on your mark.'

Ya vha i tshi lila phiriri! Zwa vha zwi tshi gidima futhi!

at the finish line.'

So, Tortoise says, 'OK, let us run again.'[i]

The whistle blows! They are running again!

'Goḽi, you left me behind ….'

Now, Tortoise is running as hard as he can, man!

Mrs. Duiker is jumping lightly. She arrives there where Mr. Baboon is waiting. Impala is running along so that he can see who will arrive first.

When they arrive there, they find Mrs. Duiker. Mr. Tortoise is lagging behind.

Mr. Baboon says, 'Hey, this one likes to tell lies. Now, I will not waste time with him. I will grab him, take off his shell and eat meat!'

Tortoise[ii] protests, 'No, wait, so that I can explain myself well! I say, I do not know what to do because I do not know how to run. You can see that I am very small. And I also must carry my own shade[iii] that protects me from the sun!'

Mr. Baboon says, 'You are arrogant.[iv] We keep on saying, "Leave our things to us!" You are arrogant. We are taking off your shell!'

'Kwatu!'

That is the sound of the shell coming off!

Mr. Baboon is starting to enjoy himself.[v]

The story ends here.

Folovhodwe, 1 October 2012

'Goḽi, wa ntsia kolovhia ...'
Tsha vha tshi tshi gidima, mani!
Ntsa ya mbo ḓi ri tsere-tsere ya vhai tshi swika kha Vho-Pfeṋe.

Fig. 74. Donkey tack
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2008

[i] Lit. 'be on your mark.'
[ii] *Vhaḽa* (those), a respectful form of address, used ironically here to refer to Tortoise.
[iii] Referring to his shell
[iv] Lit. 'spoilt.'
[v] I.e. he is eating Tortoise.

Sometime during the early 1980s a large antelope appeared on the grounds of a school at Folovhodwe.[604] 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 wild animals left in the immediate vicinity are to be found in the adjoining Nwanedi Provincial Park, where they are protected by fences and roving patrols.

However, the veld surrounding villages in Niani as well as the Soutpansberg remains home to a diversity of smaller animals. Villagers domesticate guinea fowl whose eggs they harvest. They also set traps for animals and birds, and fish in the Nwanedi river. Certain rivers in Vhembe district (especially the Limpopo and Luvhuvhu) are home to crocodiles.

Narrator Thinawanga Phungo explained that animals in *ngano* serve the transmission of *milayo*. Children are entertained and fascinated by wild animals which, in familiar terms, are 'good to think with.'[605] Systems of classification underlying social worlds incorporate nature which comes to 'symbolise certain abstract concepts through perceived resemblances and differences that are deemed to appropriately figure the idea to be expressed.'[606] Put differently, 'while the metaphoric signifier is animal behaviour, the signified is the human condition.'[607] This is evident in the personal prefixes Mr. and Mrs. that are commonly given to animals in *ngano*.

Mafela and Raselekoane[608] offer the most comprehensive treatment of *ngano* until the 1990s.[i] Adopting the themes in Schwellnus's school readers some sixty years before, they distinguish between stories about people *(ngano dza vhathu)* and animals *(ngano dza phukha),* while noting that both forms offer moral instruction.[609] This categorisation does not account for many narratives in which people and animals interact (e.g. 'The wisdom of Hare'; 2.3.7), and it is viewed by Scheub[610] as artificial since the behaviour of its animal actants is metaphoric of human qualities.

Such metaphorical operation has bearing on 'the division of personhood into higher and lower selves. The higher self is sublimated, cultivated and controlled,' while the lower self is the culturally undefined source of instinct, particularly 'libidinal and animal-like desires.'[611] As such, 'rapists, womanisers and promiscuous women who succumb to their desires and violate the properties of marriages are described as inhuman (…) They and others who behave unacceptably may be called animals (…) They do not merely succumb to their desires at times, but are totally dominated by their cravings for food, sex, money and revenge.'

Describing marital infidelity, Patrick Ranwashi (fig. 24) accordingly sang, 'What is the use of a dog? If you give it porridge cooked with milk, it eats rubbish outside.'[ii] Similarly, a *ngano* entitled 'Crow-woman' compares an unfaithful wife to a crow who feeds off any scraps of food it can find.[iii] Such vivid portrayal is a common strategy to warn young girls against sexual assault.[iv]

However, given the youth of *ngano* participants, a significant number of stories self-evidently take form as comic satire.[v] They underscore the gravity of status differences humorously, while playfully reminding those in authority of their responsibilities. Mr. Elephant is reprimanded by his peers for bullying little Tortoise: 'So, the men said, "For an adult, what you are doing is not right. Don't do that."'[vi]

However, not all stories with animal actants are comic. Amphibious animals like Hippopotamus, Crocodile, Python and Frog wield spiritual power since they are inhabitants of pools, which are sacred sites.[vii] When animals are cast as protagonists, they are therefore 'endowed with intentional states for the purpose.'[612] Large animals like Hippopotamus and Elephant may abuse their power,[viii] while small animals like Tortoise[ix] and Mongoose[x] must rely on

[i] They discuss actants, structure, style, time, place and function (Mafela & Raselekoane, 1990).

[ii] *'Tshi vhuya tsha mmbwa ndi tshani? Hu tou u nga wo ifha munamba, ya bva nnḓa i ḽa dzitshika.'* (Kruger, 1993:440-441.)

[iii] 'Crow-woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iv] 'The lion who hunted his daughter' and 'Things are falling apart' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[v] 'Jackal and Cat' (2.3.6), 'Hare and Tortoise' (2.4.3) and 'The wisdom of Hare' (2.3.7).

[vi] 'Mr. Elephant learns a lesson too' (Kruger, 2014).

[vii] 'To be human again' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'The pool of shrines' (Kruger, 2014).

[viii] 'Mr. Hippopotamus throws his weight around' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Mr Elephant learns a lesson too' (Kruger, 2014).

[ix] 'Mr. Tortoise takes a bath' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[x] 'A smart bird' (Kruger, 2014).

their ingenuity (even magical power) to assert themselves.

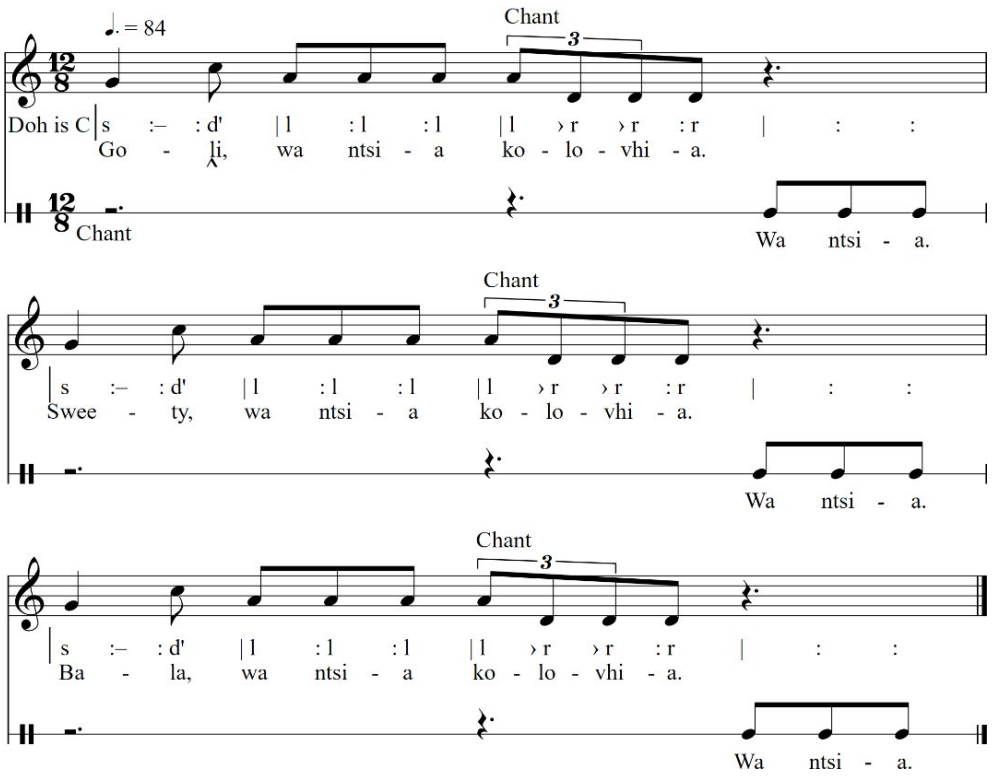
Given the socio-economic function of cattle in precolonial life, it is not surprising that Bull is exceptional. He is the leader of the herd who symbolises power, fertility and resurrection.[i] Birds like roosters and doves are messengers,[ii] guides and redeemers,[iii] while Lourie hides his sexual aggression behind his colourful appearance.[iv] Duiker, Rock-Rabbit and arch-trickster Hare are furtive and deceitful.[v] Zebra, Lion and Porcupine in turn are male lovers,[vi] while Baboon is a foolish spouse.[vii] Snake is always male. He is a diviner as well as husband and lover.[viii]

In keeping with the allegorical nature of *ngano*, Elelwani Singo's entertaining, seemingly naïve story about Tortoise in fact entrenches a fundamental *mulayo*, namely seniority. It describes in an entertaining though not gentle manner what happens to children who fail to respect adults.

The story fittingly evokes a highlight of the school year, namely the in-house athletics meeting. This organised event, with its officials, participants, spectators and rules, constitutes the world of competition and power relations. Mighty Mr. Elephant, the referee, is supported by agile Mr. Impala. Mrs. Duiker is Tortoise's formidable competitor, and vicious Mr. Baboon enforces the rules.

Tortoise is on the lowest rung of the social hierarchy. He dislikes his low status, symbolised by his short legs, slow walking pace and load (shade: *murunzi)* fixed to his back. He complains repeatedly (in the chorus line) about being 'left behind,' and expresses frustration and helplessness by remarking, 'I do not know what to do because I do not know how to run.'

Tortoise resorts to unacceptable strategies to rise above his prescribed status. He lies, makes a pass at Mrs. Duiker and is argumentative. Mr. Baboon, symbol of law and order, tells him, 'Leave our things to us!' Because he refuses, his shell is plucked off, and he is eaten by Mr. Baboon the cannibal – typical hyperbolic punishment meant to frighten young listeners out of their wits!



[i] 'The bull-husband' (2.22.1), 'Mighty Rooster' (Kruger, 2014) and 'Ramali the bull' (Postma, 1950).

[ii] 'The flamboyant rooster' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014).

[iii] 'The girls and the dove' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'A smart bird' (Kruger, 2014).

[iv] 'The lourie who was not a bird' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[v] 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1) and 'A thief,' 'Mrs. Rock-Rabbit' and 'Mr Hare scrubs his heels' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[vi] 'The young woman and the zebra' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Eating with wild animals' (Kruger, 2014).

[vii] 'What a woman!' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'The man in the fur coat' (Kruger 2014).

[viii] 'The python-lover' (2.2.4),'The snake husband' (2.5.2) and 'The python-healer' (2.1.2). Also see Kriel (1971:67-69).

2.3.6 Jackal and Cat / Jakalasi na Tshimange

Here comes a story!

Now, this story is about Jackal and Cat.[i]

They said, 'We must sit down. We must discuss the matter of Dog, because Dog hates us very much.'

When they sat down, they said, 'Dog hates us very much when he sees us. We want to find out why he hates us.'

Jackal asked, 'You, Cat, when you find Dog, where will you run to?'

Cat answered, 'No, when I see Dog, I will rush up a tree, phufhe! I will fly to the top! I will laugh at it when it barks, when it barks, hu- hu!, and I am up the tree. Now, you my friend, Jackal, when you see Dog, where will you run to?'

Jackal replied, 'I will dive, duck and dive, duck and dive, duck!'

Cat asked, 'And for how long will you keep this up? You can duck and dive, but Dog will catch you in the end.'

Jackal replied, 'No! I will duck, duck and dive!' Jackal was arrogant.[ii]

Now, a hunter suddenly appeared! There he was, all of a sudden! He had two dogs! Here was trouble!

'Those dogs that hate us!'

There was trouble! Cat just dashed up the tree. It climbed up!

Cat called that one. It called, 'My friend, there they are! Duck, duck and dive!'

Jackal ducked and dived, ducked and dived! The dogs cornered him! They caught Jackal! They mauled him, mauled him!

When the hunter arrived there, he thought Jackal was dead. But Jackal was only pretending, so that hunter went away.

Jackal started to get up. He was staggering, he was staggering!

That Cat comes down the tree.

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ho vha hu Jakalasi na Tshimange.

Zwa pfi, 'Ri funa u dzula fhasi. Ri ambe nga fhungo ḽa Nngwa, ngauri Nngwa i ri vhenga nga maanḓa.'

Hezwi ro dzula, 'Nngwa yo ri vhona, i ri vhenga nga maanḓa. Uri ri vhone zwauri i ri vhengela mini.'

Ha pfi, 'Hone iwe, Tshimange, wa wana Nngwa u ḓo shavhela gai?'

Tsha ri, 'Hayi, nne nda vhona Nngwa ndi mbo ḓi ri kha muri, phufhe! Nda fhufha ndi nṱha! Nda sokou i sea musi i tshi huvha i tshi, hu-hu ndi nṱha ha muri. Zwino, iwe mungana wanga Jakalasi, iwe u ḓo ri u tshi vhona Nngwa, u ḓo shavhela gai?'

Ha pfi, 'Nne ndi ḓo vha ndi tshi khou sokou diya khona, thu khona, thu khona, thu!'

Tsha ri, 'U ḓo diya khona u swika lini? U tshi khona, khona, i ḓo vhuya ya u fara.'

Tsha ri, 'Hai, nne ndi ḓo diya khona thu khona!' Ndi Jakalasi heḽo.

Zwino, munna wa muzwimi a mbo ḓi ri bvelele! A tshi ri bvelele! A vha a tshi khou bvelela na nngwa mbili! Zwi sa ri maḽo!

'Dziḽa nngwa dzi ne dza ri vhenga!'

Kheyo yo thululu! Tshimange tsha mbo ḓi khapa nṱha ha muri, tsha namela!

Tshimange tsha vhidzelela iḽa. Tsha ri, 'Mungani wanga, khezwo! Diya khona, thu khona!

Ya ri, khona, thu khona, khona, thu khona! Nngwa dza vha dzi tshi khou swika! Dza mbo ḓi fara! Dzi tshi ya u fara hafhaḽani dza lumekanya, dza lumekanya!

Munna wa muzwimi a tshi swika, a vhona u nga ri khamusi tsho fa. Wa diyelela matsina tshone tsho dzi fisa khole. Uḽa munna wa muzwimi a tshi fhira.

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[i] Describing her youth, Singo explained that young wild animals like jackals were sometimes captured in the veld and suckled by domestic cats and dogs.

[ii] Lit. 'it is that Jackal' (*'Ndi Jakalasi heḽo'*).

Jackal and Cat / Jakalasi na Tshimange (continued)

It says, ‘My friend, I asked you for how long you could duck and dive. I told you Dog would catch you.’

Jackal answered, ‘Oh dear, my friend Cat, you said it. Truly, they hurt me. Now, where will I find medicine so that I can be heal myself?’

Cat said, ‘No, do not worry my friend, I will look for some. You will treat yourself until you are well. Do not worry, we will meet again on another day. We will find a way to teach you to climb a tree so that when Dog attacks one day, we can run away together.’

And so it came about, now, that they went away. One left, the other one left.

Hah, now, this story has ended.

Folovhodwe, 1 July 2014

Tsha thoma u vuwa tshi tshi pepeleka, tshi tshi pepeleka!

Tshila tsha tsa ntha ha muri. Tsha ri, ‘Mungana wanga, ndo u vhudza uri u do pepeleka u swikela lini. I do vha ya u fara Nngwa.’

Ya ri, ‘Yuwi, mungani wanga Tshimange, wo amba. Ngoho, dzo mmbaisekanya. Zwino, mushonga ndi do u wana gai uri ndi di fhodze?’

Ha pfi, ‘Hai, u songo vha na thaidzo mungana wanga, ndi do u nyagela. U do ita u pepeleka u tshi fhola. A hu na thaidzo, ri do dovha ra dzula nga liṅwe duvha.’ Hai! Ya amba uri na izwi zwithu ri to zwi itisa hani uri na iwe nga liṅwe duvha u komanyela muri uri-vho ri kone u shavha Nngwa.

Ha mbo di vha, zwino-ha zwauri u phadalala. Tshiṅwe tshi khou tuwa, tshi khou tuwa!

Ha, zwino, lungano la vha lo fhela.

The intent here is similar to that of the preceding story: Those with limited experience and knowledge must listen to the wise. Jackal’s playful evasive tactics are meant to show off. They lead to capture and harm, and so Jackal pays dearly for his arrogance. However, he realises his foolishness. He shows that he has learnt his lesson, and his repentance is rewarded with salvation. Cat is sympathetic and does not take him to task for his arrogance. He helps Jackal find the medicine of moral ‘healing,’ and offers to teach him effective strategies to escape dangerous situations in future.

2.3.7 The wisdom of Hare / Vhuṱali ha Luvhuḓa

Here comes a story!

Now, this story is about the wisdom of Hare.

This man lived in the veld with his three children. He was a good farmer. He used to plant a lot of peanuts.

But this Hare, he liked peanuts! When that man left the fields and went home, Hare remained behind and pulled out peanuts! When the man came there the next morning, he found that his peanuts had been pulled out.

He called his neighbour. 'Hey, my field over there: Every day I arrive at the field and find my plants uprooted and scattered.'

That man said, 'No! My friend, it is Hare. You must set a wire trap. You will catch this creature that always eats your peanuts. It is this Hare.'

That man, truly, he made a trap and went to the field.

When the man returned there the next morning, he found Hare trapped. The man beat him, beat him until he perished!

But Hare is a wise person. He played dead!

That man said, 'Hare is dead!'

Those children brought food, they brought food there. They gave it to the father.[i]

The father said, 'My children, I found meat, here it is! Here is the meat! Now, when you arrive, when you arrive, arrive back at home, skin and roast this thing. When I return, I will find it cooked, my children. I will come and enjoy it.'

Those children, they picked up the carcass they had to roast, and put it on their head to carry.

While they were walking over there on the footpath, Hare said, 'Hey, my grandchildren, did you not hear what your father said?'

They said, 'Ahh! No! You can talk?'

Hare said, 'Yes! I can talk! Perhaps you did not hear your instructions

[i] Food brought from home during mid-morning to those working in the fields.

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ndi vhuṱali ha Luvhuḓa.

Hoyo munna o vha a tshi dzula ḓakani na vhana vhawe vhararu. A tshi limesa. A tshi lima nga maanḓa dzinḓuhu.

Mathina Luvhuḓa ulu, lu a pfana na nḓuhu! Houḽa munna a tshi ṱuwa a tshi ya muḓini, u wana Luvhuḓa lu tshi sala lu tshi dzhena tsimuni. Lwa tupula dzinḓuhu! Munna a tshi ḓa nga matsheloni, u wana nḓuhu dzo tupuliwa.

U ya vhidzelela mu naiba wawe. 'Hei, tsimu yanga hangei, duvha na ḓuvha ndi tshi swika tsimuni, ndi wana nḓuhu dzo vhumbuliwa.'

Uḽa mungana a ri, 'Hayi! Iwe mungani wanga, ndi Luvhuḓa. Iwe itayi daraṱa u ḓo tshi fasha tshenetshi tshine tsha khou ḽa nḓuhu dzau. Mara ndi Luvhuḓa holu.'

Uḽa munna, ngoho ndi u ita tshikeke tshawe, ndi u vhuya tsimuni.

A tshi yo ḓa uḽa munna nga matsheloni u wana ḽo fashwa. Munna ndi u diyedzela, ndi u diyedzela! Ngauri Luvhuḓa ndi muthu wa vhuṱali, vha ḓi fisa khole!

Uḽa munna a ri, 'Luvhuḓa lwo fa!'

Vhana vha vha vha tshi ḓisa zwiḽiwa, vha tshi ḓisa zwiḽiwa fhaḽa, vha ḓisela khotsi.

Khotsi a ri, 'Vhana vhanga, ndo wana ṋama, kheyi! Tshisevho khetshi! Vheiwe ni tshi swika zwino hangei muḓini, ni swike ni swike ni tshi sutula hetshi tshithu na tshi thatha. Ndi tshi vhuya, ndi ḓo vhuya nda wana tsho vhibva vhana vhanga, Nda ḓa nda ḓi phina.'

Havhaḽa vhana, ndi u hwala nga tshithatha, ndi u isa ṱhohoni.

Lu tshi swika hangei ndilani lwa ri, 'He, vhaḓulu vhanga, no zwi pfa zwo uri khotsi yanu vho ri mini?'

Vha ri, 'Aa! Ayi! Mathina iwe u ya amba?'

Ya ri, 'Ee! Nne ndi ya amba: Ngauri vheiwe ni nga vha ni songo pfa zwavhuḓi mafhungo-ni!'

The wisdom of Hare / Vhuṱali ha Luvhuḓa (continued)

well?'

Those children replied, 'We were told to skin you when we arrive there at home. We must roast you! When our father arrives from the field, he must find you cooked so that he can sit down and eat you!'

Hare replied, 'No, man, my grandchildren! He said you must cook porridge for me when you arrive there at home. You will catch a young fowl. You will kill it. You will fry it. You will give it to me to eat.'

Those children said, 'OK! We did not hear properly what our father said.'

The children caught the fowl! They killed it! They served Hare! Hare is eating there. Then the father arrived home.

Father, 'Hello!'

Children, 'Hello!'

He asked, 'Where is Hare, my children?'

Those children answered, 'Which hare, father? You said we must catch a young fowl, cook it with stiff porridge, and give it to that granny, our granny.'

'No, my children, it is meat! I said you must skin it, my children. You must roast it. I came back to eat it. Where is he, my children?'

The children said, 'He is here in the house.' They had covered it with

Havhaḽa vhana vha ri, 'Hu pfi ri swike ri u ṱule hangei muḓini. Ri u ṱhaṱhe! Khotsi ashu vha tshi vhuya masimuni, vha wane iwe wo vhibva, vha kone u dzula fhasi vhaḽe.'

Tsha ri, 'Hayi mani, vhaḓulu vhanga, hu pfi vheiwe ni tshi swika hangei muḓini, ni mmbikele vhuswa. Ni fare khuhu ya tshikekeya, ni i vhulaye, ni mfraisele, ni mphe ndi ḽe.'

Havhaḽa vhana vha ri, 'OK, ro vha ri songo pfa zwavhuḓi zwe khotsi ashu vha amba.

Vhana vha fara tshikekeya! Vha vhulaya! Vha ya thakha Luvhuḓa! Luvhuḓa lu ya ḽa fhaḽa.

Vha vha vha tshi swika muḓini khotsi: 'Ndaa!'

Vhana: 'Aa!'

Vha ri, 'Zwiḽa zwithu zwi gai, vhana vhanga?'

Vhaḽa vhana vha ri, 'Zwithu zwifhio baba? A thi ri vhone vhori ri fare khuhu ya tshikekeya, ri bike na vhuswa ha munamba, ri fhe a vhaḽa makhulu, ndi makhulu washu.'

Nda ri, 'Hai, vhana vhanga, ndi ṋama. Ndo ri ni ṱhuvhule vhana vhanga, ni ṱhathe, ndi ḓo vhuya ndi tshi ḽa.' Vha ri, 'Lu gai vhana vhanga?'

Vhana vha ri, 'Lu hone hafho nḓuni.'

The wisdom of Hare / Vhuṱali ha Luvhuḓa (continued)

a blanket.

When the father heard that, he started to reach for the pot!

Hare took the blanket, pulled it over the top of the pot, and escaped unseen through the top.

That one was stalking the pot with a stick!

He says, ‘Indeed, I will find it, it is just Hare.’

When he got there, he found the pot covered with a blanket. He beat it with the stick, vhuu!

He shouted, ‘When I am beating granny’s calabash, I am beating Hare!’

Hare mocked him from over there, ‘hee-hee!’

The old man broke granny’s calabash! Hare had escaped! The old man uncovered the pot and found it broken.

The old man started to collapse! He started to die there in a fit of anger!

The story ends here.

Folovhodwe, 1 July 2014

Vhone vha tshi zwi pfa, vha mbo ḓi dzhia tshidudu!

Lwone lwa dzhia nguvho, lwa isa nga ntha, lone la mbo ḓi bva nga buli. Havhala vha dodela na thanda.

Vha ri, ‘Ngoho ndi ḓo lu wana, ndi Luvhuḓa.’

Vha tshi swika vha tshi wana tshitemba tsho tivhedziwa vha vha vha tshiri nga thanda vhuu!

Vha ri, ‘Ndi khou diya Luvhuḓa, mathina vha khou diya tshitemba tsha makhulu!’

Tsha vha tshi tshiri, ‘hee-hee!’ lu nga nnḓa.

Mukalaha vho kwasha tshitemba tsha makhulu! Lwa vha lo ṱuwa! Mukalaha vha tshi tibula vha wana ndi khali yo kwashea.

Mukalaha vha ṋamba vha mbo ḓi wa! Vha mbo ḓi ṋamba vha lovhela henefho!

Lungano lwa vha lo fhela.

Relatively few *ngano* may be classified as trickster tales.[i] Those that do, usually feature Sankambe the Hare (fig. 9), Tortoise, Mongoose or Rock-Rabbit.[ii] Although animals commonly interact with humans in *ngano*, those featuring animals only are less common, even though they are allegorical.

There are various reasons for the relatively small number of *ngano* trickster tales. Dederen[613] notes that

> animal trickster tales distinguish themselves, firstly, in that their protagonists are primarily, if not almost exclusively, male. Secondly and more importantly, they do not dwell on marital relations, jealousy of co-wives, the fate of orphans and other social issues which often constitute the plot in human narratives. Finally, the trickster tales are somewhat opaque in terms of their moral lessons.

Dederen[614] explains furthermore that the trickster is commonly typified as 'being clever and naughty,' a quality

> strongly associated with young males, and, rather ambiguously, frowned upon and admired at the same time. 'Boys will be boys' is a general commentary used for the (mis)behaviour of male youths. Furthermore, in the not so distant past, boys were separated from their sisters at an early age. They had their own sleeping place in the household, and were expected to spend the evenings at their own fire. In short: they formed a separate stratum in the social hierarchy. Also, stealth was perceived as an important component in the survival skills training of pubescent youth at the initiation lodge. It seems therefore not unreasonable to suggest that, at least formerly, trickster tales were designed for and consumed by boys and young men, and that the general spirit of the stories prepared boys for initiation into manhood.[iii]

Hare is regarded 'as a creature wise above all other animals.'[615] He also features in Shona *ngano* as Tsuro. Kriel[616] remarks that his wisdom *(mazano)* is

> based on comprehension and insight, and resulting in a favourable arrangement of circumstances with which the others' powers are defeated. He is clever, sure enough, but his power seems to have corrupted him, and his insight does not include anything more ultimate, or any wider context, than the excitement of his own exercise of power. It is left to Tortoise to integrate this power with the demands of society as a whole.

Hare's corruption is evident in Singo's story, a version of which has been documented and discussed by Dederen.[617] Hare too operates on the margin of order. At the same time, the mocking, hyperbolic portrayal of the conflict between him and the farmer makes it clear that entertainment, not realistic representation, is intended here.

Amusing as such fantasy is, it allows young listeners momentary insight into the actual vulnerability of parental wisdom and authority, and to envisage their own rise to power in the world. But while the insecurity of seniority is briefly exposed, its hyperbolic treatment means it is not really threatened. Although the father is fooled, he knows who the culprit is ('I will find it, it is just Hare'), and that he must be allowed to escape so that he may continue to perform his fictional role. Also, the wisdom of Hare is transferred in an instant to granny *(makhulu washu)*, the elderly female narrator who subtly inculcates core values in her young audience. She is furthermore accorded clear respect, since her grandchildren are made to offer her a meal of chicken and porridge!

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[i] See Canonici (1995b) for an extended discussion of the trickster figure in Zulu narratives.

[ii] See e.g. 'A smart bird' (Kruger, 2014), 'Mr. Hare scrubs his heels,' 'Tortoise takes a bath' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), Le Roux (1996:381-399, 805-902) and Stayt (1968/1931:351-359).

[iii] As such, it may not be coincidental that the only *ngano* about Hare documented by Le Roux (1996:805-902) were told by Rev. Piet Mavhetha of Folovhodwe. Similarly, Mashau Teisi heard the story of Hare and Tortoise (2.4.3) from her paternal grandfather.

While trickster tales are constructed around images that define the male as shrewd hunter and warrior, they may still be underpinned by shared moral values. In 'Hare scrubs his heels' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), lazy, scheming Hare is subjected to ancestral spiritual authority, represented by Crocodile and Hippopotamus.

2.4 Mashau Tseisi

I was born on a farm in 1949. It belonged to Wessel, there at Mopane, near Madombidzha. My parents worked for Wessel. I do not know what his surname was, or the name of his wife and daughter. I just called them *baas*, *miesies* and *nonnie*. I stayed on the farm until I was a young woman.

My father was Johannes Bereda and my mother Nyamasakona Nematandani. My father worked at a small stone mine on the farm. I do not know what kind of mine it was. All I remember is that the stones were white, and that they were taken somewhere by train. My mother helped Wessel to plant and pick pumpkins.

My parents had two sons and three daughters. My brothers and sisters all live at Nzhelele. I see them during church visits. We all belong to the Dzumbululo Revelation Apostolic Church (fig. 3). My father was a minister of this church. He was called to serve the Lord while we were living on Wessel's farm. A spirit he did not know came to him in a dream, and told him to become a pastor.

I did not go to school. My father prevented me, saying that school make girls mad. I can only write my first names: Mashau Emma. I taught myself to read the Bible.

When I was a young girl, I swept the farmyard and fed the pigs. My fondest memory is of us children fishing in Wessel's dam. Wessel did not like this, and he always scolded at us. But he was not really angry.

I also rode bicycle with *nonnie*. Her bicycle was blue with dots. I remember once falling into a water furrow. This memory still makes me laugh!

My special treat as a child was *tshikambeleni*. This is sugared water, which is still a favourite drink of those who cannot afford sodas.

We children pinched tobacco from Wessel's fields. After drying the leaves, we put one behind our bottom lip. Then we became 'drunk' and staggered around in a fit of laughter!

We also hid around the farm house, and snooped on Wessel and his family. We sometimes watched them giving scraps of food to their pets, wishing they would give us some too. When they saw us, we ran away laughing.

It was during this time that I heard *ngano* from my father's grandmother. We always visited her at Mangoni. This is north of Makhado. She was called

Nyamainganya.

When I became older, I worked in the kitchen as dish washer and cook. I was in my late teens, and not yet married. I prepared meat, rice and pumpkin.

Miesies was good to me. She defended me when Wessel reprimanded me for not bringing his coffee fast enough.

I stayed on the farm until I met my husband at Musekwa in the Nzhelele district. He was Piet Mashavha. After our marriage, we moved to Musina where Piet first worked for NTK[i] and later at a crushing plant.

I worked in doctor Saaiman's house from Tuesday to Thursday. He took me to the hostel at Eric Louw Secondary School on Mondays and Fridays. Here I washed and ironed the children's clothes. I worked like this for so long that I gave birth to two children.

I liked my work. On Saturdays I cared for my home, and on Sundays our family went to church. I often received left-overs from the hostel kitchen. I even learnt to speak some Afrikaans, but only remember a few words now, like *'Hoe gaan dit? Goed, dankie!* [ii]

Later in his life Piet went to Johannesburg to find work. But his congregation wanted him to come back. He was a popular preacher who could pray for people. So, we all moved to the vicinity of Cross Farm, and Piet became a full-time minister in Musina. His salary was paid with membership fees and donations.

I am continuing Piet's ministry. I have a separate rondavel here in my yard where we heal through prayer. When someone is ill, she sits on a chair, while the others stand in a circle and loudly offer prayers together. We also sing, play the drums and shake rattles. Not so long ago we healed a man who suffered from dizziness. He is now a loyal church member.

During the time of Piet's ministry I worked on the farm Travenna that belonged to Stoffel. I tended his tomato fields. When the farm was sold, we moved here to Muswodi-Tshisimani. This is where Piet died of illness in 2005. I do not know the name of his disease, only that it was something like gangrene. It affected his legs and lower torso.

So, I am now a widow. I live with my son's family. My son was a taxi driver on the Musina-Johannesburg route. He was hijacked and killed by a gang of criminals in Diepsloot in 2013.

I thank God that my other children are still alive. They are five daughters! I was blessed by giving birth to two sets of twins. Are they not beautiful? You know Mpho (2.20) who lives near me, and who also told you a *ngano*. Her twin is Livhuwani and she lives at Shakadza.

Livhuwani's husband is out of work. This means she must raise her children on three welfare grants. I sometimes meet her along the road during the day. She has joined a group of volunteers who pick up litter. They wear overalls and boots. God cares for her because she is so generous.

My other twins are Khakhu and Tshilidzi. They live in Musina. They work as cleaners at a school and a hospital. You also know my other daughter, Tshamano (2.29). She used to be a security guard in Johannesburg.

I should have received my pension in 2009, but my ID gives the wrong date of birth. And so I struggled until 2012 when I received my first payment. Pension keeps me from starving.

My son supported me while he was alive, but now I often suffer. I have a field outside the village, but there is not enough rain for planting. Rain gives us life.

This means I must try to make ends meet by selling brooms. I ask R10 for one *luswielo*. I saw Zimbabweans making and selling them. I can sell as many as fifty brooms a month.

The brooms are not made from grass, but from *mulala* palm leaf. There is a fountain in the mountains where these palms grow. It takes me two hours to walk there. I put my provisions in a rucksack. When I return, I carry the leaves on my head. I always go alone.

No, I am not scared being alone in the mountain. I am a *musiwana*, a poor person. I have nothing people can take from me, except knowing where those palms grow. This is why I do not want others to go with me.

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[i] Noord-Transvaal Koöperasie, an agricultural cooperative.

[ii] 'How are you? Well, thanks!'

Fig. 75. *Luswielo* broom
Folovhodwe, 2012

2.4.1 I am a rooster / Ndi mukukulume

Here comes a story!

There once was a certain man and his three wives. Now, he had married them.[i] When they arrived at his home[ii] he loved them, he loved them.

Then he no longer loved the eldest wife.[iii] He chased her away and she left with her children.[iv]

Now, she left with them, and crossed over to Rhodesia.[v]

When they arrived over there, they saw that people were living well. They were living in flats! They were eating a lot! They were eating cakes and other good things while she was suffering with her children. They were eating weeds. They were eating poorly, and had only water

[i] Lit. 'he had called them to gather at his home.' Implicit in this statement is that proper marriage procedures had been followed, and that his wives had legal standing.

[ii] Lit. 'when he gathered them.'

[iii] This is a common theme, and it suggests that a man tends to favour his younger, stronger and more beautiful wives.

[iv] Such abrupt separation resonates with contemporary experiences (Le Roux, 1996). However, it more often is the husband who abandons his wife and children, often in the context of migrant labour and urbanisation.

[v] This is not merely a reference to moving away. 'Crossing over' is an image typically associated with rivers and mountains. These are borders between known and foreign worlds.

Tseisi offered two explanations for Zimbabwe as the woman's destination. The first is that she herself once visited this country with her husband who conducted church services there. The second is that the woman is of Zimbabwean origin, and had returned to her parental home. Unlike the clearly negative meaning of Zimbabwe in Elewani Singo's 'Cannibals' (2.3.1), the country is therefore treated ambiguously here, signifying conflict as well as refuge and alliance.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṅwe munna a na vhafumakadzi vhararu. Zwino, a mbo ḓi vha dzhia a vha kuvhanganya muḓini. Hezwi o vha kuvhanganya muḓini, a tshi khou ḓi funana navho, a khou ḓi funana navho.

Havha uri hoyu muhulwane ha tsha mu funa. A mbo ḓi mu thatha a ṱuwa na vhana vhawe.

Zwino, a tshi ṱuwa navho a mbo ḓi wela Rhodesia.

A tshi yo swika henengei, a lavhelesa a vhona vhaḽa vho no dzula zwavhuḓi, vho no dzula na kha dzinnḓu dza dzifulete. Vha vho ḽa zwithu zwavhuḓi, vha vho ḽa dzikhekhe na zwithu zwoṱhe. Ene, u khou tambula na vhana. Vha vho tou ḽa tsetho. Vha vho sokou ḽa zwithu zwi sa ḓivhalei huṅwe vha sokou ṱwa vhi tshi sokou nwa maḓi fhedzi.

A ruma ṅwana wawe, a ḓa na ṅwana wawe, a dzumbama nga hafha seli ha mulambo.

A ri houḽa ṅwana, 'Khaḓe, a ḓa na mushonga.' A ri, 'A swike hangei, hezwi vha tshi tou thoma u ḽa, vha ḽa fhethu huthihi vho tou ṱangana na vhana vhavho.' A ri, 'A swike a shele mushonga henefhaḽa kha zwiḽiwa.'

Ṅwana wawe a ḓa a dzumbama kha muṅwe muḓi. Hezwi vha tshi thoma urali vha tshi ṱoḓa u ḽa, a mbo ḓi ruma wa nga hafho muḓini a swika a shela. Hezwi vha tshi kuvhangana vha tshi ri vha a ḽa.

Khuhu ya mbo ḓi takuwa, ya ri, pha-pha-pha-pha-pha! Ya ima nṱha ha muri.

Ya ri, 'Ndi mukukulume, thi vhulawi! Ke mokokolome, a ke boloawi! Basadi ba thaka matshaka ba djile mori mogolo mpepe! Vha shwile, ba fedile!'

A mbo ḓi thoma u imba,

(Musimi)
Vhahashu vho fa vho fhela!
Bahwile ba fedile!

to drink.

She sent her child. She came with her to the Limpopo river. The child hid on the other side.

She said to that child, 'Come, bring poison. When you arrive there, you will find them eating together with their children. When you get there, poison their food.'

Her child hid near a certain homestead. When they wanted to eat, she sent the child of a neighbour to poison the food. These people came together to eat.

The rooster stood up and flapped his wings, pha-pha-pha-pha-pha! It was perching on top of a tree.

It cried, 'I am a rooster. You can't kill me! I am a rooster. You can't kill me! The young[i] women have been poisoned! They have died! They are finished!'

The rooster started to sing,

(Narrator)
Our people have died, they are finished![ii]
Our people are finished!
(Chorus)
My children will inherit my possessions.

The husband said, 'Keep quiet!'

That old man chased that rooster. He threw stones.

He said, 'Do not talk nonsense!'[iii]

Vhahashu ba fedile!
(Vhabvumeli)
Thaka majaya.

A ri, 'Tshete!'

Havhaḽa mukalaha vha gidimisa iḽa khuhu. Vha i posa nga matombo.

Vha ri, 'Ri nga si litshe uḽa-ni?'

I ri, hu pfi, 'Ro fa! Ri ḓo fa ra ḽa hezwi zwithu!'

A ri, 'I pose! ri ḽe.'

Hezwi vha tshi i posa, i tshi fhufha i tshi ya hangei.

Vha tshi dzhia vhuswa.

Vhana vha tshi ri hezwi vha a ḽa. Hai, ya fhufha, vha i dia, ya ṱuwa.

Vha ri, 'Vhuswa hovhu, a ri tevhule.'

Vha dzhia vhuswa vhuḽa vha laṱela kule.

Hezwi vha tshi laṱela kule, vha ri, 'A hu bikwe vhuṅwe, vha bika vhuṅwe, vhana vha vho tou fa nga ndala.'

Vha bika, vha bika, vha dovha vha vhea.

Vha ri, 'Hezwi ri tshi bika ri tshi fhedza ri ḓo fha khuhu heiḽa ya ḽa.'

Vha tshi fhedza vha dzhia vhuriwe vhafha khuhu. Ya sokou dzula henefhaḽa nṱha ha muri ya fhumula i sa ḽe, ya fhumula. Ya vhu litsha honovhuḽa vhuswa, i sa tse ya ḽa.

Vha ri, 'Haa, yo tenda, kha ri dzhie, ri ḽe.'

Vha dzhia na vhana, vha vhea fhasi.

Vha ri, 'Kha ri ḽe zwino.'

Hezwi vha sa athu u ḽa houḽa ṅwana a mbo dzi ḓa. Uḽa wa vhaḽa a ḓa a ṋuṋedza. Thi yone yo sokou dzula yo lavhelesa fhaḽa fhasi.

Ya vha i a vhea mukosi, ya ri, 'Ndi mukukulume! Nṋe ndi mosadi wa thaka matshaka ke ri baheshu ba hwile ba fedile! Vha hashu vho fa vho fhela! …'

Vha i posa!

Uḽa wa munna i tshi ṱuwa, a ri, 'Riṋe ri a ḽa.'

---

[i] Lit. 'women of the same age.' This is a reference to the two younger wives.

[ii] This story was told to Tseisi by her grandmother, who is a Sesotho-speaker, as well as her mother, who is Tshivenda-speaking. This explains why the song is in both these languages.

[iii] Lit. 'we will not stop eating.'

I am a rooster / Ndi mukukulume (continued)

The rooster called, ‘We are dead! We will die from poisoning!’

The man answered, ‘Throw! We will eat.’

When they threw stones at it, it flew away and went over there.

They took porridge.

When the children wanted to eat, the rooster sang again, ‘Our people are finished! …’

Hey, it flew! They beat it. It left.

The husband said, ‘This porridge, let us throw it out.’ They took that porridge and threw it far away. This porridge was thrown far away.

The husband said, ‘Cook more porridge, cook more porridge, the children are very hungry.’

They cooked and cooked and served the porridge again.

They said, ‘When we have finished cooking, we will give some to that rooster to eat.’

When they had finished, they took the leftovers to the rooster. But it just sat quietly, very quietly there on top of the tree. It left that porridge alone. It did not go down to eat.

They said, ‘Yes, we agree. Let us take the porridge and eat.’

They served the food to the children too. They said, ‘Let us eat now.’

But before they started to eat, that child had been there again, the child of that woman.

That rooster was just watching what was happening down there. It raised the alarm, shouting, ‘I am a rooster! I am a young woman and we are dying. We are perishing!’

Then it sang again, ‘Our people are finished! ...’

They threw stones at the rooster!

That man came back and said, ‘We are eating.’

That man used his fingers and ate. When he ate, they saw that man falling. As he fell, those women all ate too. Those children ran away, they ran away and were gone!

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 1 October 2009

Uḽa wa munna a mbo ḓi ṅwata, a mbo ḓi ḽa. Hezwi a tshi tou ḽa vha vhona uḽa wa munna u khou wa. A tshi wa, vhaḽa vhasadzi vhoṱhe na vhone ndi u ḽa. Havhaḽa vhana ndi u shavha, ndi u shavha vha mbo ḓi namba vho ya!

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

Niehaus *et al.*[618] note that witchcraft mostly occurs in social settings where relationships are 'close, competitive and marked by social inequality.' This includes marriage where conflict may arise between in-laws, husbands and wives, and co-wives. A story documented by Le Roux[619] notes correspondingly that 'there were two women and their husband. The wife who was married first buried the second wife. She buried her like a grinding stone. She put her at the bottom of a hole. She ground maize on her.'

Rank and status are important factors in the narrative portrayal of marital conflict. Husbands may abuse their physical power and judicial authority, and it is common for rejected wives to be chased away *(thatha)*. In Tseisi's story, this act initiates an inexorable chain of events that ends in tragedy.

A husband typically favours a particular wife. He may, for example, continue residing with a senior wife after subsequent marriages, causing his younger wives to feel hurt and neglected. The reverse of this, more commonly depicted, occurs when a younger, more beautiful wife is her husband's favourite.

To Tseisi, this is inexcusable, and she remarked about her story that the woman's husband and younger co-wives were justly punished by their ancestors for not heeding the warnings their messenger the rooster had issued. Because the rooster shares living space with humans, he, like other birds, performs a prominent role as lofty observer of their blind obstinacy.[i] As mediator between humanity and the spirit world, he is an untouchable visionary, a symbol of ancestral conscience and justice.

Marital conflict may also result from unequal material support for co-wives. A narrative documented by Le Roux[ii] describes how a wife falls into disfavour with her husband who consequently refuses to provide her with a hoe. She overcomes her predicament triumphantly and in turn emphatically rejects her husband.[iii]

Poisoning as an act of witchcraft is a common motif in *ngano*. Best known is the story of a young man whose stepmother attempts to poison him[iv] In another story,[v] a young man is hated by his in-laws 'because he had taken their daughter.' They are identified as witches, and the story describes how they poison their son-in-law's food.

Poisoning is typically associated with kitchens and cooking where women hold sway. Biographies of narrators by Le Roux[620] mention several instances of actual poisoning. This vengeful strategy is ultimately rooted in irrepressible feelings of threat and humiliation.

Young children in *ngano* almost always are naïve and therefore manipulated by adults. Since they are not directly implicated in the cause of conflict in this story, they escape retribution.

[i] Also see 'The flamboyant rooster' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[ii] 'The wooden hoe' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iii] By telling him to *'voetsek'* (Afrikaans: 'bugger off').

[iv] See 'Poison' as well as 'Spears eat those who make them' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[v] 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014).

Fig. 76. New extension at Folovhodwe
2013

2.4.2 The head is rotten / Vho ṱhoho vho tshinyala

Here comes a story!

Boys were hunting. They found a snake. They killed it. They squashed the head. When they squashed this head, that body started to slither away fast. When the boys looked for that body, they could not see it.

The body went to a certain village. When it arrived there at the chief's home, arrived, it asked for a hat.

It said, 'Give me a hat, please. I want to wear it. My head is burning in the sun.'[i]

They gave him a hat and he put it on.

When he arrived there where the elders were, he said, 'I am the chief. It is me, the chief.'

They took a chair and offered it to him. He sat there on the chair. They greeted him with respect.

They said, 'We greet you, we greet you respectfully.'

(Can I sing? You must respond when I sing.)[ii]

(Narrator)
Cry-cry.
Alas, cry-cry.
The head is dead.[iii]
The body is alive.[iv]
It is made chief.
(Chorus)
Cry-cry, hack the snake's head off!

[i] Lit. 'my head burns in the veld.'
[ii] The narrator is speaking to her co-performers.
[iii] Also, spoilt or rotten.
[iv] Lit. 'the body is sitting' (on the chair).

Salungano! Salungano!

Ha mbo ri hu vhatukana vha khou zwima. Vha wana ṋowa. Vha i vhulaha. Vha i ṱhukhula ṱhoho. Hezwi vha khou tshakanyedza heiḽa ṱhoho, houḽa mutumbu wa mbo ḓi shavha. Vha tshi lavhelesa uḽa mutumbu, vha si tsha u vhona.

Mathina mutumbu wo ṱuwa wo ya muḓini muṅwe. U tshi yo swika hangei musanda, wa swika wa humbela muṅadzi.

Wa ri, 'Kha vha mphe muṅadzi ndi ambare. Ṱhoho yanga i khou swa ḓakani.'

Vha mu fha muṅadzi, a ambara.

A tshi yo swika hafhaḽa kha vhathu vhahulwane, a ri, 'Ndi khosi. Ndi nne vhamusanda.'

Vha dzhia vha mu fha tshidulo. A dzula henefhaḽa tshiduloni. Vha tshi vho mu vhombela.

Hezwi vha tshi swika henefhaḽa, vha tshi ri, 'Mboloma, mboloma.'

(Ndi thomise u imba? Vha bvumele habe musi ndi tshi ri.)

(Musimi)
Lile-lile.
Lile-lila, wee!
Vho ṱhoho vho tshinyala.
Vho mutumbu vho dzula.
Vha vho itwa vhamusanda.
(Vhabvumeli)
Lile-lile, samuninga-muninga.

Hai, vha fhumula havhaḽa vhathu vhoṱhe! Ha rengwa mahalwa. Vha ri, 'Ri rengela vhamusanda.'

Vha ri, 'Vhamusanda, vha na luimbo lwa u naka.'

Vha ramba vhathu vha ḓala.

Hey, all those people were quiet![i] They bought beer. They bought the chief beer.

They said, 'Chief, your song is beautiful.'

They invited many people.

They said, 'Let us start. You will see how the chief dances.'

He danced without taking that hat off. He started, 'Cry-cry…!'

People came out. Here they are, running closer. They saw the chief swaying his body like a snake!

Now, the chief is thinking of leaving.

He said, 'Now, today I have to go.'

But then he saw many chiefs arriving. He said, 'Hey, I am no longer going because the chiefs are coming with everything and bottled beer.'

When they arrived there, they drank, they drank! He was not drinking much because he was afraid that the hat would fall off when he danced. Then they would see he has no head, they would see he has no head!

Now, he started to drink a little. He started to sing and dance. People were sitting according to custom.[ii] Hey, they took alto drums and clapped hands! 'Cry-cry …!'

Hey, they said, 'We will come with more beer, we will come with more beer!'

Now, the dancing and singing was about to end.

'We will come with more beer, we will come with more beer!'

The chief knew he must run away because they will see! People will see that he is really a headless snake!

Today he says, 'I will add a few days to my stay.'

He drank while sitting there on the chair. He drank and became drunk! This one became drunk from that marula beer.

He started the song,

Vha ri, 'A i ṱangane. Vhamusanda ni ḓo vhona vha tshina hani.'

Vha sokou tshina na onoula muṅadzi vha sa bvuli. Vha thoma, 'Lile-lile …!'

Vhathu vha bva. Asivhaḽaa, vha khou gidima. Vha vhona vhamusanda iṱeli vha tou dia vha tshi phukhula!

Zwino, vhamusanda vha vho humbula u ṱuwa.

U ri, 'Zwino nahasi ndi fanela uri ndi ṱuwe.'

Vha vho vhona mahosi manzhi o no swika. Vha ri, 'Haa, a thi tsha ṱuwa ngauri mahosi vha ḓa na zwithu zwoṱhe na mahalwa a tshikhuwa.'

Vha tshi ḓa henefha, iṱeli vha khou nwa, vha khou nwa! Vhone a vha nwesi vha shavha uri hezwi vha tshi tshina muṅadzi u ḓo wa. Vha vhona uri a hu na ṱhoho, vha vhona uri a hu na ṱhoho!

Zwino, vha mbo ḓi tou nwa nyana. Vha vha vha a thoma. Vhathu vho temba. Hei, vho fara na mirumba vha khou dia zwanda! 'Lile-lile.' Hai, vha ri, 'Hai, ri ḓo ḓa na halwa vhunzhi, ri ḓo ḓa na halwa vhunzhi! Zwino, ndi hone zwi tshi khou ya u fhelela. 'Ri ḓo ḓa na halwa vhunzhi, ri ḓo ḓa na halwa vhunzhi!'

Vha ḓa vhamusanda ngauri vha khou humbula uri nahasi vha shavhe ngauri vha a zwi vhona uri vhathu vha ḓo zwi vhona uri nga ngoho ndi nowa thina ṱhoho!

Nahasi vha ri, 'Ri dia vhuduvha.'

Vha mbo ḓi nwa vha henefhala ntha ha tshidulo. Vha nwa vha kambiwa! Hezwi vho no kambiwa houla mukumbi.

Vha vha vha a lu thoma luimbo,

(Musimi)
Lile-lile.
Lile-lila, wee!
Vho ṱhoho vho tshinyala.
Vho mutumbu vho dzula.
Vha vho itwa vhamusanda.

[i] It is not clear whether their silence indicates respect or fear.

[ii] Lit. 'orderly' or 'in rows.' A reference to sitting according to social status.

The head is rotten / Vho ṱhoho vho tshinyala (continued)

(Narrator)
Cry-cry.
Alas, cry-cry.
The head is dead.
The body is alive.
It is made chief.
It was mixed with beer.[i]
(Spoken) It was eaten by ants.
(Chorus)
Cry-cry, hack the snake's head off!

He went to dance. He danced, he danced!
The hat started to fall off! When it fell off, they saw it was a snake!
It slithered, it started to slither away fast!

This is the death of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 5 October 2012

Zwo ṱangana na halwa.
Vho ḽiwa nga masunzi.
(Vhabvumeli)
Lile-lile, samuninga-muninga.

Vha tshi yo tshina. Vho tshina, vho tshina!
Muṅadzi wa mbo ḓi wa! U tshi yo wa, vha vhona ndi ṋowa!
I khou bidigama a si zwiḽa ya mbo ḓi namba yo shavha!

Ha mbo ḓi vha hu u fa ha lungano

[i] The implication is that alcohol (*thothotho*) was added to the beer.

Loubser[621] explains that 'class stratification developed in the Limpopo basin approximately a millennium ago when the production and distribution of external trade goods replaced cattle as the main source of wealth. Cattle byres, once enclosed within settlements, moved to their periphery, while rulers' residences moved to high ground behind stone walls.'

Forms of precolonial class stratification remain evident in contemporary life, but have been shaped rapidly since the onset of colonisation. Dederen[622] therefore warns against stereotyping its leadership roles. He notes that their actual ambivalence is rooted in the notion of power as simultaneously benign and destructive. This is evident in the fact that *milayo* and *ndayo* are not aimed merely at young participants of *ngano* and teenage initiates. Khorommbi[623] explains that the practice of respect culminates in the relationship between rulers, as representatives of ancestral authority, and their subjects.[i]

Good leadership is therefore characterised by 'tolerance, democracy and a spirit of conciliation.'[624] Those who lead must do so with 'a pure heart, wisdom and generosity,'[625] 'attend faithfully to (their) official duties and not give priority to (their) private affairs. (They) should deal promptly with the cases of the people and should always consult counsellors and seek advice from men of recognized standing.'[626]

Upon his confirmation as head of Ngudza village,[ii] Abraham Ramugondo was instructed[iii] by headman Mikosi of Gondeni to reject bribes, avoid drinking, be friendly, obey his chief and listen to the requests of his people.

Ndayo instruction similarly was an item on the programme for an installation at the village of Tshixwadza.[iv] A church minister first cited Proverbs 16:10, which states that a king must be a fair judge and ruler. Chief J.R. Rambuda subsequently gave a list of instructions to the new ruler:

1. A ruler must serve the interests of his people well. *(Khosi i fanela u fara vhathu vhayo zwavhuḓi.)*
2. A ruler has no power to ban (political) organisations.[v] *(Vhamusanda a vha na maanda a u hanela madzangano.)*
3. A ruler must cooperate with (political) organisations. *(Vhamusanda vha fanela u shumisana na madzangano.)*
4. Do not engage in corruption.[vi] *(Vha songo tenda zwa tshanda-nguvhoni.)*
5. Do not commit adultery. *(Vha songo vha na vhafarekano.)*
6. When undertaking a journey, inform your councillors and wives. *(Vha tshi fara lwendo, vha a vhudza vhakoma na vhafumakadzi vhavho.)*
7. Do not interfere in the affairs of schools. *(Vha songo dzhenelela mafhungo a zwikoloni.)*

Dederen[627] explains that, 'if there is any protest, it is directed against unacceptable forms authority (lousy fathers, irresponsible husbands, corrupt rulers etc.) not against authority *(vhuhulwane)* per se.' Underlying *ndayo* are experiences of leaders 'as human as anybody else,' as persons capable of hatred and jealousy as well as love.[628] A ruler may become an oppressive 'Goliath' who 'swallows' his subjects.[vii] He is 'the most powerful and the richest person in his country,' one who 'has all the means at his disposal' to subjugate the weak.[629] He is 'not known for tolerating competition,' and those challenging his power must be prepared to fight 'the mother of all battles.'[viii]

The hero in 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1) becomes involved in a confrontation like this, from which he is forced to flee. However, the story also shows some of the pressures leaders may experience in promoting the wellbeing of communities, and the personal transgressions this may lead to.

The image of a snake (often the python) as traditional leader is common in Karanga and Venda *ngano*, although it is applied diversely. As explained, the python-healer symbolises power and sacred authority.

The metaphor of the snake in this story by Tseisi could draw on the image of the body of a beheaded snake that appears to continue living, as evident in its

[i] Van Warmelo explains that 'it was the Venda chief, or his senior sister, the *makhadzi*, who sacrificed to the patrilineal ancestors, both for the patrilineage of the chief and for the members of the chiefdom as a whole. It was also the chief, who, with some help from ritual specialists, harnessed the power of his ancestors to combat witchcraft and who interceded with his ancestors or with Raluvhimba, the sky deity, in times of drought, flood, famine or plague.' (Van Warmelo, 1971:356-357.) Also see Nettleton (1989:71).

[ii] 28 June 1986.

[iii] *Ndayo nga vhahulisei:* Instructions by an honoured person.

[iv] 29 September 1990.

[v] The installation took place just a few months after the unbanning of the ANC and the bloodless coup in the Venda enclave.

[vi] Lit. 'to operate with the hands under a blanket.'

[vii] See 'A thin old woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[viii] This rather severe view is also evident in Van Warmelo (1971).

dance-like, post-mortem convulsions ('They saw the chief swaying his body like a snake!'). If so, this is a remarkably evocative portrayal of a 'mindless' leader. The headless snake self-evidently cannot reason and therefore lead wisely ('The head is dead'). It merely functions biologically ('The body is alive'), and succumbs to physical temptation (drinking).

The chief is initially treated with deference: He is given a hat, which is symbolic of political power.[i] He is greeted respectfully and offered a chair. In this way the formalities of structural relations are observed.

The initial encounter between leader and subject generates naivety and trust: His song is beautiful. However, disillusionment grows as he becomes drunk. He literally loses his hat and is revealed for what he really is. Such deception is reprehensible,[ii] and as in this story, he may be portrayed as a 'bumbling fool.'[630]

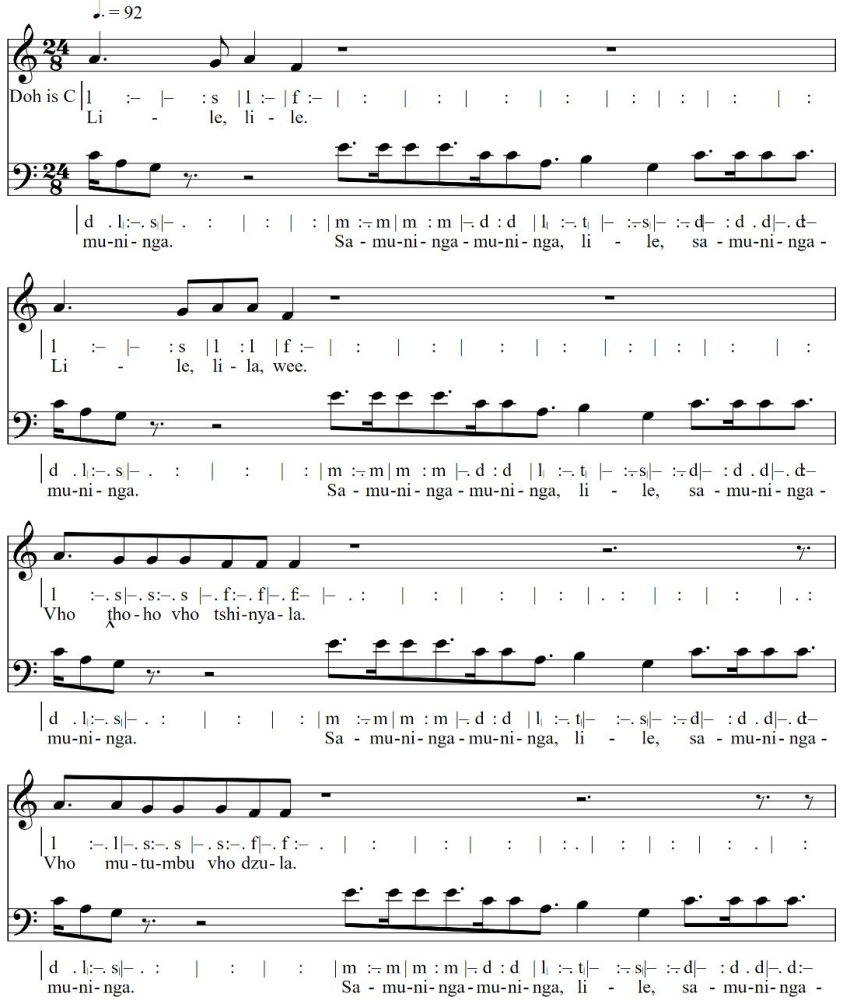
Tseisi's story offers a humorous if resigned view of political power. Deception is exposed but the outcome of the encounter is inconclusive. Although the headless body is nibbled at by tiny ants, it slithers away for a repeat performance.

The narrator pointed out that the dance event in the story is required to expose the ruler's true nature. A mythical variation of this motif describes how the head *(Thoho)* and tail *(Tshamutshila)* of a python separates.[631] Each part then founds a polity. The head's kingdom suffers from severe drought, and he becomes a wandering musician *(tshilombe)*. He arrives in Tshamutshila's kingdom where the tail is reluctant to receive him. His dancing stirs up 'a cloud of dust that rose into the sky and hung there over the town.' In this way the dance event reunites the polities of body and mind.

Frobenius's variation similarly describes how the head becomes a village leader, and the tail a singer.[632] The head tries to hide from the tail, but he is, as required by the antiphonal form of the music, obliged to respond to the tail's singing, and so they are reunited.

Choral dance-song performances thus are core domains of social reproduction and adaptation involving reflection on values (see 'The disabled boy'; 2.10.1). In particular, they explore relationships amongst equals and within hierarchies.[633] Leaders often participate in *tshikona*, the bamboo-pipe dance, and the remarks in the story that the chief's song is beautiful and 'You will see how the chief dances,' point to ideal leadership.

The function of choral dance-songs as platforms of protest and negotiation is evident in the repeated appeal in the chorus to remove the snake's head. In turn, repeated references to crying underscores the ongoing turmoil of the political process.



[i] The hat is probably a homburg, traditionally a symbol of power and wealth. Chief Patrick Mphephu (first head of the Venda enclave) seldom appeared in public without this kind of hat.

[ii] Owl is crowned king on account the 'horns' (tufts of feather) on his head. His deception is exposed when his feathers become ruffled in the wind. He flees and now only comes out at night to hunt (Marolen, 1990:49-51).

2.4.3 Hare and Tortoise / Luvhuḓa na Khamba

Here comes a story!

There is a tortoise (a tortoise is called *lukhamba* here) and a hare. Tortoise wants to compete with Hare.

It says, 'Me, Hare, you cannot beat me!'

Hare replies, 'You, Tortoise, you cannot even walk properly, the way you are.[i] Whereas I can run. You cannot beat *me!'*

Tortoise says, 'All right, we will meet at the chief's place tomorrow.'[ii]

Tortoise leaves. He arrives at the chief's place the next day. He has invited his three friends. He is the fourth one. He will remain there at the chief's homestead.[iii] After telling Hare, 'We will race to the school,' he will remain just there!

He says, 'You,[iv] I will put you there at the starting line.[v] The second one will wait at Gara.'[vi] The third one is sent over there to the school. And so he placed them all.

Hare comes there in the morning. When he comes there, he says, 'Now, we are starting. The chief must come and see. Now, we will start to run!'

The chief is watching. He says, 'Ready!'

They are starting! Hare is running, running!

That first tortoise remains sitting there at the chief's homestead. Hare really is running fast!

As Hare is racing away from the start, he looks back and says, 'Hey!

---

[i] I.e. with your short legs.

[ii] The race starts at the chief's homestead because he officiates. It ends at the school because this is the furthest point in the village.

[iii] In others words, Tortoise does not participate in the race. He waits for Hare at the finish line.

[iv] Speaking to the first tortoise.

[v] Lit. 'at the be ready!'

[vi] A ward in the village.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ha mbo ri hu tshibode. Tshibode ndi khamba. Tshi na luvhuḓa. Tsha tatisana na luvhuḓa.

Tsha ri, 'Nṋe, luvhuḓa, nṋe u nga si ntsie.'

Luvhuḓa lwa ri, 'Iwe khamba, u sa koni u tshimbila, wo no tou rali. Nṋe u nga si ntsie!'

Holuya luvhuḓa lwa ri, 'Nṋe ndi a gidima.'

Khamba ya ri, 'All right, ri ṱangane matshelo musanda.'

Khamba i tshi yo ṱuwa. I tshi swika ya yo kunga vhangana vhayo vhararu. Ene a vha wa vhuna. Heilani khamba ene muṋe wazwo a sala musanda hafha. A tshi vhudza luvhuḓa uri, 'Ri ḓo gidima ra swika tshikoloni,' ene a sala hafha!

A ri, 'Iwe, ndi yo u vheya hafha kha be ready! Hoyu muṅwe nda mu vhea Garani.' Hoyu muṅwe nda mu isa henengei tshikoloni. A swika a vha vhea.

O vha vhea, luvhuḓa lwa mbo ḓi ḓa nga matsheloni. Lu tshi yo ḓa, a ri, 'Zwino, ri a thomisa. Vhamusanda kha vha bve vha vhone. Zwino, ri khou thoma u gidima!'

Vhamusanda vha lavhelesa. Vha ri, 'Ready!'

Vha vha vho thomisa! Luvhuḓa lu khou gidima, lu khou gidima!

Yone khamba yo sala yo dzula henefho musanda. Luvhuḓa lwe u gidima!

Lu tshi yo swika kha be ready lu tshi ee murahu, lu ri, 'Aa! Iwe!'

Ila ya thunyuluwa.

Ya ri, 'Hai, a ri ye! Ndi nṋe. A ri ṱuwe!'

Ho no thunyuluwa heilani yo vhewaho kha 'Be ready!' 'Ha ri ye!'

Lwa vha lwo thomisa luvhuḓa. Lwa gidima! Lwa gidima! Lwa gidima! Lwa gidima! Lu tshi yo swika Garani. Lwa dovha lu a lavhelesa murahu.

'Na iwe, a ri ṱuwe!'

Hare and Tortoise / Luvhuḓa na Khamba (continued)

You!'

That one comes out of the starting blocks!

It says, 'Let us go. It is me. Let us go!'

That one comes out from the 'Be ready!' Hare has started. It is running! It is running! It is running! It is running! It is arriving at Gara. It again looks back.

'And you, let's go!'

The third tortoise comes out and says, 'It's me! Let's go!'

This hare says, 'Yes!'

But that other one remains sitting.

Now, Hare is running to the school. It is running and arriving at the school. When it arrives at the school, it finds Tortoise already there.

Tortoise says, 'Hey, you are here! Are you arriving only now? I arrived here long ago! I ran and passed the finish line. Now, I have won!'

This is the death of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 5 October 2012

Ya bvela khamba nnḓa, ya ri, 'Ndi nṋe! Kha ri ṱuwe!'

Hezwi luvhuḓa lu tshi ri, 'Ee!'

Yone i sala yo dzula.

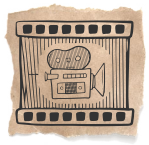
Zwino, i ya tshikoloni. Lwa gidima lu tshi yo swika tshikoloni. Lu tshi tou phalakasha tshikoloni lu wana iḽa ire tshikoloni i henefhaḽa.

Ya ri, 'Ai, iwe ndi hone! U tshi swika zwino? Nṋe ndi kaḽe ndo swika! Nṋe ndo gidima ndo u fhirela. Zwino, ndo wina!'

Ndi u fa ha lungano.

Tseisi heard this well-known story from her paternal grandfather. She indicated that it contains a song, but that it had slipped from her memory. Singer-guitarist Nnditsheni Ramukhuvhathi of Thohoyandou recalled the story as well as its particular song from a primary school reader.[i] These readers do not contain notated songs, and the teacher must have taught the song to her learners. The song is performed by Hare. He is still in a state of exhaustion the day after the race, and complains about his humiliating defeat by Tortoise:

(Narrator)
He, kuḽa kuṅwe kwo mbvungekanya khundu mulovha.
Hey, something small broke my hip yesterday.
He, kuḽa kuṅwe kwo nthovhekanya khundu mulovha.
Hey, something small smashed my hip yesterday.
(Chorus)
Tshibode tshiḽa tshiṅwe.
The other tortoise.[ii]



The role Tortoise performs in this story is more conventional than that in 'Tortoise and Duiker' (2.3.5), where he is the moral transgressor. Tortoise, because of his small size and slow speed, is a generic symbol of subordination. His transgression in 'Tortoise and Duiker' involves his doomed effort to transcend his position at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

This story by Tseisi expands this theme, and shows Tortoise successfully challenging those with higher status.[iii] It portrays the familiar 'struggle for upward mobility and power,'[634] in which the weak may be envisaged as rising above the strong.[635]

Madadzhe notes in this regard that, 'by winning the race, the tortoise signifies the fact that even those who are presumed to be incapable of achieving success in life, can also achieve it.'[636] But this is dependent on various strategies and personal characteristics. Tortoise clearly can only succeed with the help of his fellows as well as his wisdom.

Kriel 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 (sic) but bear the vicissitudes of life stoically.'[637] Furthermore, it 'will seldom harm a creature except in self-defence. When it takes the initiative in tricking others, the aim is not to destroy or harm them, but rather to teach them a lesson in humility.'[638] He is the small but hardy symbol of 'righteousness, justice, equity, perseverance and all those qualities that will ultimately ensure the wellbeing of society.'

As in 'Tortoise and Duiker,' the school athletics meeting has become a contemporary setting for the portrayal of rivalry. Lerisa Mavhodze notes in her biographical sketch (2.13), 'My favourite school subjects were Afrikaans, geography and needlework. I really liked sport, especially playing netball against other local schools. I also loved athletics events like shotput, javelin and high jump!'

[i] 11 July 1990. See Kruger (1993:488).
[ii] Referring to the fact that Hare was fooled by Tortoise and his mates.
[iii] Also see 'Mr. Tortoise takes a bath' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

2.5 Rosina Mulovhedzi

Mavhode is over there in the Tshivhase district. This is where I was born in 1956 as Rosina Luambo.

My father was a healer. His name was Jack Khorommbi Sikhovhokhovho. He is the one who told me *ngano*. I still remember many stories, *manzhi!*

When we were children, we used to play *mahundwane* (fig. 107; 3.3). We built houses that look like those small ones we store our harvests in. We learnt to plant our own maize by sowing two seeds together. When the plants sprout, you *talana*, which means to remove the smaller one. We also weeded. Later we picked our cobs and cooked porridge. We also skipped rope and played hide-and-seek.

What I remember well from being a child is eating veld-food like *thombe* stem-fruit. And so I learnt the names of many plants in the veld, and what to use them for. This helps me as healer.

We also liked to pick peanuts. Other food I liked was *thophi* pumpkin stew and *tshidzimba*, a maize and bean dish.

Like my father, I am a healer. I live here at Folovhodwe. People who become healers are called by the spirits. I was called in a dream by the spirit of my father's mother. I had never even met her, but she spoke to me! She told me who she was. I was seventeen and did not know what to do. At first I refused to listen to her, and remained faithful to the ZCC. Then I became ill with a distended stomach. So I had little choice, and went to train as healer.

Because I already knew who my spirit was, my training lasted for one month only. If you do not know who your spirit is, you must dance before it speaks to you. I was in my twenties and already married. I went to Giyani, to a Shangaan spirit medium from Mozambique. She was called Nwasemende. She taught me how to dance for the spirits. Look, there you see the trance drums in my house. I still use them.

After I became a healer, I moved to Tshamutumbu, here in Niani. After this I moved here to Folovhodwe to live with my husband, Alfred Makani. I am his third wife. He worked for the roads department, and then for Water Affairs. Later he worked as a security guard at a limestone mine in the district.

I did not go to school. This is not a problem for me because I am a healer. People come to me when they are ill. I make my own medicines from plants

and roots. See here inside my consultation room: There are many medicines in boxes, bottles and plastic containers. And there against the wall you see skins of a python and antelopes. They are also used for healing.

The only disease I do not like to treat is HIV/Aids. I tell people to go to the clinic. Healers have joined people at the Department of Health. They call us to attend meetings there at our municipality, at Tshilamba.

Because many people do not have jobs, they come to me. They ask for a lucky. Then I give them magic things to help them find a job. Some ask for a magic stick. Then I treat a stick with special medicine. Before they go to ask for a job, they must chew the end of the stick. So, I lead a good life. The only problem with me not going to school is that I could not help my children with reading and writing.

(Rosina Mulovhedzi suffered a stroke in 2015. She lost her voice and was paralysed. She passed away later that year, before a detailed discussion of her stories could be conducted with her.)

2.5.1 Hippopotamus and Crocodile / Mvuvhu na Ngwena

There was a certain man and his wife. The man said he wanted a son. Now, that woman did not give birth to a son. She had a girl.

The husband said, 'I do not want a girl, I want a boy! Go and kill this child over there.'

That woman was heartbroken.

She said, 'My God, must I really kill my child? It is better that I take this child. I am going with her to the river.'

That woman started to walk. She left and went down to the river. She arrived and stood there, there at the river. She arrived and spoke to Hippopotamus and Crocodile.

She said, 'I am asking you to care for the child.'

Mr. Hippopotamus answered her.

He said, 'Will the child be able to live in the water?'

She said, 'Yes, she will live in the water.'

Now, she would live there in the water.

They said to the mother, 'You will sing when you arrive here. You will tell us by singing so that we should come out and bring your child.'

It is this woman who is leaving.

She returned the next morning, carrying a calabash with soft porridge.[i] She came there and gave her child the soft porridge.

She arrived and stood there by the pool. She started to sing her song,

(Narrator)
Come, I want to see.
And your ancestral spirits.
Hippopotamus and Crocodile.
(Chorus)
Ḽavhengwa, Ḽavhengwa, alas, Ḽavhengwa.[ii]
Salungano! Salungano!

O vha e muṅwe munna a na musadzi wawe. A ri ene u khou nyaga ṅwana wa mutukana. Zwino, hoyo mufumakadzi a si bebe ṅwana wa mutukana. A beba ṅwana wa musidzana.

Munna wawe a mbo ḓi ri, 'Nne a thi khou toda ṅwana wa musidzana, ndi khou toda ṅwana wa mutukana! Tuwa u yo vhulaha ṅwana hoyo hafha.'

Mufumakadzi houla a pfa mbilu u vhavha vhukuma-kuma. A ri, 'Ndi tou vhulaha ṅwananga? Vhathu vha Mudzimu, ngoho! Ndi khwine ndi tshi dzhia hoyu ṅwananga. Ndi tuwe nae ndi ye mulamboni.'

Houla musadzi a mbo ḓi tshimbila. A tuwa a tshi khou tsa mulamboni. A swika a ima hafha, hafhala mulamboni-ii.

A swika a amba na Mvuvhu na Ngwena.

A ri, 'Nne ndo vha ndi khou humbela uri ni ntanganedzele-vho ṅwana.'

Vho-Mvuvhu vha ri vha tshi mu fhindula vha ri, 'Ṅwana u ḓo kona u dzula madini naa?'

A ri, 'Ee, u ḓo dzula madini.'

Zwino, hezwi o no dzula hafhala madini.

Ha pfi u khou tea u vha na luimbo, lune wa ḓo ri u tshi swika hafha.

Vha ri, 'U ḓo ri vhudza ngalwo, rine ra kona u bva ra u fha ṅwana wau.'

Ndi hezwi houla musadzi a tshi tuwa.

A vhuya nga matshelo o no fara tshitemba na mukapu. A tshi khou da u fha ṅwana wawe mukapu. A swika a ima hafhala tivhani-ii.

A mbo ḓi thoma luimbo lwawe,

(Musimi)
Idani, ndi u vhone.
Na makhulu wau.

---

[i] *Mukapu:* Soft porridge for feeding infants.

[ii] Lit. 'one who hates.' From *vhenga*, to hate.

Hippopotamus said, 'Mmmmm!'[i]

This is when that Hippopotamus and Crocodile came out. They came out! They came out and gave the child to her mother. That mother took her child and breastfed her. Afterwards Crocodile received her child again.

They said, 'We are going, we are going back into the water.'

The woman, she started to return. She left for home.

When that woman arrived there at home, she sat down. Her husband was very glad. He was happy because he thought his wife had abandoned the child. But the wife had not done so.

The child was there in the water.

One day she left and went back to the river. She went to nurse her child.

Her husband started to follow her. He arrived and hid among river reeds. He was hiding there in the reeds, peering at what the woman was doing.

She started to sing, 'Come, I want to see …'

Hippopotamus said, 'Mmmmm!'

The father of the child started to see his child. She was coming out from the pool with Hippopotamus and Crocodile.

The man raised the alarm. He shouted, 'Hey, my child!

The woman refused to give him the child. Crocodile and Hippopotamus started to move back into the water with the child.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012

Vha Mvuvhu na Ngwena.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ḽavhengwa, Ḽavhengwa, wee, Ḽavhengwa.

Ya mbo ḓi ri, 'Mmmmm!'

Ndi zwa musi i tshi khou bva heiḽani Mvuvhu na Ngwena. Zwa bvela nnḓa! Zwa ḓa zwafha ṅwana mme awe. Houḽa mme a ṅwana a dzhia ṅwana wawe a mu mamisa. Hezwiḽa a tshi mu mamisa hafhaḽani, Ngwena dza ṱanganedza ṅwana wadzo.

Dza ri, 'Riṋe ri a ṱuwa, ri humela nga ngomu maḓini.'

Mufumakadzi ene a mbo ḓi rembuluwa. A ṱuwa a ya hayani.

Hezwi a tshi swika hafhaḽa hayani, a swika a dzula. Munna wawe a takala vhukuma-kuma. A tshi khou pfa uri mufumakadzi eṋe o laṱa ṅwana. Mathina mufumakadzi ene ha ngo laṱa ṅwana. Ṅwana u hone nga ngomu maḓini.

Ḽiṅwe ḓuvha a mbo ḓi ṱuwa a khou humela mulamboni. A tshi khou yo dzhia ṅwana wawe uri a mu ḽise.

Munna wawe a mbo ḓi tevhela. A swika a banda dziṱhangani. Hezwi o no banda hafhaḽani dziṱhangani-haa, a ṱolela zwine zwa khou itiwa mufumakadzi.

A mbo ḓi imba, 'Iḓani, ndi u vhone ...'

Ya ri, 'Mmmmm!'

Khotsi a ṅwana a mbo ḓi vhona ṅwana wawe. A tshi khou bva tivhani hafhaḽani. A na Mvuvhu na Ngwena.

Munna a mbo ḓi vhea mukosi. A mbo ḓi ri, 'Yowee, ṅwananga, wee!'

Mufumakadzi ene a mbo ḓi hana. Ngwena na Mvuvhu zwa mbo ḓi shavha na ṅwana zwa humela maḓini.

Ha mbo ḓi vha u fa ha lungano.

[i] Pronounced with a deep, gruff voice.

Mulovhedzi explained that sons are often preferred because patrilocal marriage involves expanding *(fhaṱa:* build) the homestead as well as the family.[i] Responding to the question whether sons are therefore loved more than daughters, she replied that parents care for all their children, but that shared gender experiences create exclusive bonds. Solomon Mathase of Thohoyandou remarks in a song entitled *'Mutukana ha huṱi khotsi'* ('The son does not scrub the father')[639] that the special relationship between mothers and daughters is expressed in their habit of washing one another's back:[ii]

Nṋe, mmeanga vho nngwanafhi?
I, where did my mother get me?
Vha ri, ndi tshi vha vhudzisa, vha ri ndi a semana.
They say, when I ask her, she says I swear.
Vha ri, ṅwana wa musidzana u huṱa mmawe.
They say, the daughter scrubs the mother.
Vha ri, ṅwana wa mutukana ha huṱi khotsi.
They say, the son does not scrub the father.
Vha ri, hoyu ṅwana o fhunguwa a tshi tou vhudzisa zwithu zworaliho.
They say, this child is a fool to ask these things.

Mathase's song also alludes to the conflicting relationship between parents and their growing children. Strife is portrayed in stories involving the 'murder' (or intention to 'murder') of a young girl by her mother or father. So Nyamukamadi Ndou[640] tells a story about

> 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! It was as if she was pounded inside a mortar.

This is a story in which parent-child conflict is taken to an extreme outcome, featuring parents as supremely evil cannibals.[641] However, this in fact is a hyperbolic portrayal of the often acrimonious, highly emotional nature of family life. Its origin is what Blacking[642] describes as young people's 'dismay' at and 'resistance' to their induction into the demanding adult world. Conflict arises as they pass through puberty, reflected in Ndou's remark that young Devhula was disliked (rejected)[iii] by her family.

Mulovhedzi's portrayal of gender as the trigger of conflict is exceptional. Rivalry between sisters is more common in this kind of story, and disagreement always involves parents and daughters, never sons. Tension typically develops between sisters about doing chores, with the younger, weaker sister unable or unwilling to carry out her allocated responsibilities (usually fetching water in heavy clay pots).[iv]

Other versions of the story anchor conflict in a daughter's desire to marry an unsuitable man.[v] A Sotho version of the story in turn portrays strife between a mother and her married daughter. The daughter interferes in the mother's handling of her household, expressed by an argument about who 'stirs the pot.'[vi]

Oral narratives featuring Crocodile, Hippopotamus, Water-snake and other amphibious animals are common in regional cultures.[643] These animals are liminal creatures because they live on land and in water. They are co-inhabitants of the world of people as well as their ancestors, whose abode are pools, and therefore serve as intermediaries.

Pools are metaphoric of life, death, resurrection and spirituality.[vii] Water is

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[i] Singer Solomon Mathase entitles one of his songs, *'Muḓi wo fhatiwa'* ('The house was built'). The song complains about a beautiful wife who abuses alcohol even though she is well cared for at home (Kruger, 1993:134).

[ii] A common motif in *ngano* is that of an ugly old woman who asks a girl to scrub her back, usually to test her moral values. See 'Spirit' by Nyamukamadi Ndou (Kruger, 2014).

[iii] *'A tshi nyalea kha vhathu vhoṱhe.'*

[iv] See 'Da-too-oo-ra' (Savory, 1966) and 'Sister of bones' (Smith, 2004).

[v] See 'To be human again' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Child of my mother' (Kruger, 2014).

[vi] See *'Mosimoli le Mosimotsane'* ('Mosimoli and Mosimotsane') (Jacottet, 1908) and *'Koeena die krokodil'* ('Koeena the Crocodile') (Postma, 1957).

[vii] *'Vhutshilo ha vhathu';* lit. 'the life of people,' as explained by Mathuvhelo Mavhetha.

'the portal to the other world, through which human beings may pass into and from this life.'[644] However, portrayals of death in water are usually indicative of transformation. This image is also common in initiation, where immersion in pools washes off youth, allowing initiates to emerge as young adults.[645] Therefore, when children in *ngano* are cast into pools, 'it does not necessarily mean that they will drown.'[646] They are usually resurrected by Hippopotamus and Crocodile who care for them and ensure that they grow up according to ancestral norms.[i]

The pool in this story by Mulovhedzi is therefore the metaphorical setting of the young girl's moral transformation. The narrator explained that, because she is not actually killed, the girl does not enter the water. Instead, she lives in a hole in the river bank. This is born out by the remark in a version of the story by healer Masindi Maliyehe[647] that 'she had been in the water. But her clothes and beads were not wet, as if she had been outside the river.'

Ndou[648] describes how young Devhula eventually 'came out from that pool. She came out formed as a child (…) She came out shining and white. She had been recreated perfectly, with her legs and her feet and her head and her hair!' Maliyehe similarly indicates that the young girl becomes 'human again' during her transformation: 'Mr. Hippopotamus and Mr. Crocodile: 'They shaped me to be human again.'[ii]

The girl's emergence from the pool is therefore not a portrayal of physical resurrection. Narrator and healer Miriam Vhengani of Tshiungani confirmed the common belief that people who emerge from water and fire are characterised by spirituality, purity, power and cleanliness: this is what 'whiteness' represents.[649] It is this ego-transcending nature of humanity which lives forever; not the individual, but society as an eternally integrated, morally functioning unit.[650]

Images of murder and cannibalism, intended to frighten the young, may be interpreted literally by them, but there is always the assurance of parental care under spiritual guidance. As Ndou indicates in 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1) and 'Good and evil' (2.2.2), misbehaviour will be punished, but there will always be love. Similarly, in a Sotho version of the story, Crocodile returns the girl to her father, and tells him, '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.'[651] This assurance accompanies girls as they leave the water. Their newly-acquired maturity is put to the test when they join their in-laws. Here, in ironical, even cynical fashion, a new cycle of family conflict is triggered.[iii]

[i] In contrast, pools were viewed differently by the Berlin Mission Society who informed their parishioners that 'God does not stay in a forest or in a river, but His home is in heaven.' Kirkaldy (2005:136-137, 173.)

[ii] '*Vho-Mvuvhu na Vho-Ngwena. Vha mmaga-mmaga. Nda vhuya nda vha muthu.*'

[iii] See '*Lavhengwa na Mvuvhu*' ('Lavhengwa and Hippopotamus'; Gavhi, 1990) and 'To be human again' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

2.5.2 The snake-husband / Munna wa ṋowa

Here comes a story!

There was a certain girl.
She loved a man who was a snake.
Her father did not like this snake.
Now, her father found him with her inside the house.
He said, 'Who is in the house?'
'It is my husband.'
'Are you with a man who is a snake?'
'Yes, I am with my snake-husband.'
Her father started to hack that snake into four pieces!
That child started to cry while calling out to that snake.
After that snake was hacked into pieces, it went to the veld and those four pieces came together again.
When the girl started to sing there, that snake answered her from the veld.

Salungano! Salungano!

O vha e muṅwe musidzana. A tshi pfana na munna wa ṋowa. Khotsi awe vha sa i funi heyo ṋowa. Zwino, khotsi awe vha mu wana e nayo nga ngomu nḓuni. Vha ri,'Ndi tshini tshi re nga ngomu nḓuni?'
A ri, 'Ndi munna wanga.'
Vha ri, 'Iwe u tou vha na munna wa ṋowa?'
A ri, 'Ee, ndi na munna wa ṋowa.'
Havhaḽani khotsi awe vha mbo ḓi dzhia heiḽani ṋowa vha i khaula zwipiḓa zwiṋa! Houḽani ṅwana a thoma u lila a tshi khou vhidzelela heiḽa ṋowa.
Heiḽa ṋowa musi yo no khaukanyiwa, ngauri yone yo vha yo no ṱuwa yo ya ḓakanani, ya swika ya ṱumekanya haaḽa mapiḓa ayo maṋa.
Hezwo ene a tshi thoma u imba hafhaḽa-ni, zwi amba zwa uri heiḽa ṋowa yo mu fhindula a ḓakani.

He sang,

(Narrator)
Why are you calling me?
Your father does not like me.
He arrived and hacked me into four pieces.[i]
He started to hack me into four pieces.
Why did you not bite him?
Will you laugh when your father hacks me?
Why can't I laugh?
Now, Nyangalambuya,[ii] I fall![iii]
(Chorus)
Nyangalambuya, I fall!

Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012

A ri,

(Musimi)
Inwi ni mmbidzelani?
Khotsi aṋu vha sa mpfuni.
Vha swika mabirimani.
Vha mbo ḓi ita mabirimani.
Khezwi ni songo khoo?
Ndee khoo ni nga sea naa?
Ndi sa sei ndi na ni?
Nandi Nyangalambuya, ndo wa, wee.
(Vhabvumeli)
Nyangalambuya, hee, ndo wa.

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[i] *Mabirimani*. Also, *mabidimane, mapirimane, mapindi maṋa, mafindi maṋa.* It is not clear why the snake is chopped into four pieces (this number appears in virtually all stories). It is possible that the number may relate to the banded patterns on a python's body.

Blacking (1969:231) cites the following line from domba initiation: '*Ndi ṱharu ya mabidigame,*' which translates as 'it is the python writhing.' This image refers to 'the chain of dancers (…) and to an erection.' Given the sexual motif in the story of the snake-husband, it is therefore possible that *mabirimani* and its variations once had different meaning.

[ii] This is the name of the python-healer (see 'The python-healer'; 2.1.2), and it symbolises respectful fear, not revulsion as with One-who-likes-to-sleep, the actual snake-husband. The name appears to be used here in error.

[iii] Falling refers to being hacked.

The often concise nature of *ngano* is usually premised on two factors, namely schemata and dramatic production. Those participating in performances of 'The snake-husband' comprise a textual community[652] organised around a certain script or 'default' knowledge'[653] of early married life, which is recalled during performance to expand meaning.[654] Finnegan[655] furthermore explains in response to the familiar view of oral prose as 'crude,' that 'a good narrator can present it much more economically and subtly in performance.'

Mulovhedzi's presentation places her story in that category of *ngano* in which the song is the dominant, or even only, narrative element.[i] It portrays the father's dislike of the snake, and his daughter's love for him. Her singing rouses the snake's ancestral spirits, and it is they who heal him in the safety of his natural habitat, the veld. The latter is located on the opposite pole of human settlement, and it is in the interconnecting space that the snake (particularly in its form as the python) mediates between humanity and nature. As the preceding story shows, family relations, particularly of a conflicting nature, are at the centre of *ngano*. Quarrelling and disputes usually involve spouses, in-laws, co-wives, siblings, parents (or step-parents) and children, grandmothers and grandchildren, and fathers and daughters (often involving incest).

Stories about marital strife may identify either or both spouses as lacking in some essential respect. Husbands are often portrayed as poor providers. Wives in turn are usually presented as industrious: They collect water and firewood, and feed their husband. However, they can be fickle and demanding,[ii] and receive most blame for adultery.[iii]

As a narrative technique, changes from human to animal form enable reflection on values and norms.[656] For example, the popular image of Baboon suggests uncouth behaviour.[iv] Mr. Baboon is accused of incompetence, cowardice and laziness, while Mrs. Baboon is susceptible to gullibility and vanity. Dishonesty, theft and greed know no gender, nor does stupidity!

The story of the snake-husband (*Munna wa ṋowa* or *Nyamuṱwa-wo-lala*, One-who-always-sleeps) is so popular that mere mention of the snake's name or a line from its song is sufficient to conjure up its composite images. A variation of the song is even sung at school.[657]

The discussion of Nyamukamadi Ndou's 'The python-lover' (2.2.4) points out that the story of the snake-husband portrays events that unfold after the marriage of a junior wife. This perspective is evident in versions of 'The snake-husband'[v] documented and analysed by Le Roux, especially in collaboration with healer Masindi Maliyehe of Sanari. When viewed in conjunction with Karanga and Sotho variations of the story,[658] it reveals profound symbolic portrayals of marital relations.

Maliyehe's version of the story is particularly useful for purposes of interpretation. It describes the snake-husband marrying a second wife. She enters his household whose rules are explained to her by the first wife.[vi] Obediently and silently[vii] she cooks her husband's meals and leaves them in his house.[viii] She does not understand why she does not see him,[ix] even at night when she only 'feels' *(pfa)*[x] him under the blankets.[xi] She hatches a plan and returns home unexpectedly from the family's field. She encounters her husband, and the spouses are shocked to see each other. The snake pursues

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[i] See e.g. 'The man in the fur coat' (Kruger, 2014).

[ii] A nagging wife typically 'does many stories' *('ita zwiṱori')*.

[iii] This view is also common in older choral dance-songs, especially *malende*, as well as contemporary popular music.

[iv] See e.g. 'The man in the fur coat' (Kruger. 2014), 'The baboon in the orange tree' (Kruger, 2014) and 'What a woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007). Kriel (1971:54-55). 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.'

[v] Le Roux (1996:329-61), translated as 'The pumpkin that could speak' (Kruger & Le Roux (2007).

[vi] *'A vhudzwa mulayo.'*

[vii] *'Uḽa musidzana a fhumula.'*

[viii] Stayt (1931:154-155) explains that '(t)he husband always eats alone in his hut, his food being prepared by his youngest wife and brought to him on a wooden platter.'

[ix] *'Uyu munna ane ndi si mu vhona?'*

[x] *'U ḓi pfa e na munna nḓuni, mara ḽi tshi tsha ha nga mu vhoni'* (Le Roux, 1996:338). *Pfa* means to 'perceive through any of the senses other than of sight,' such as touch and smell (Van Warmelo, 1989:296).

[xi] In a Sotho version of the story, the snake 'strikes' his bride with his tail, and says, 'I am going to take snuff, I am going to creep' (Jacottet, 1908:130. Also see Postma, 1957:133). Taking snuff is a common metaphor for sexual intercourse (see 'Singa-Luvhale'; 2.18.1). In some versions of the story, the young wife returns home from working in the field on the pretext of collecting a snuff box or *thahu* (a tassel attached to a girl's girdle) she had forgotten. This may also allude to sexuality.

his fleeing wife to her parental home in a fit of panic and anger.[i] His mother-in-law ostensibly beats him to death, buries him and plants pumpkin seeds on his grave. The seeds sprout and a pumpkin appears miraculously overnight. The mother cooks the pumpkin and gives it to her daughter.

The conclusion of the story is enigmatic. The narrator explains that the snake did not die, and that he in fact still lives with his young wife. However, their home is now destroyed and deserted.[ii]

This perplexing ending hints at the story's actual, deep metaphoric operations. The focaliser is the young wife whose experiences essentially depict the transformation of the polyganous family she marries into.

The snake-husband is not viewed favourably, as is evident in the conflict with his wives and in-laws. Some *ngano* about courtship and marriage imply that the actual personality of the groom only becomes apparent after the wedding.[iii] Narrator Matamela Rasivhetshele[659] remarked that the in-laws do not initially know whether their daughter's husband is a snake. Should they find this to be the case, they tell their daughter that snakes are not tolerated in people's homes.[660] The song in Rasivhetshele's story notes in this regard that the snake had stolen eggs,[iv] while Maliyehe[661] described him as a rogue that wanders around at night, perhaps implying that he is an adulterer. Narrator Solomon Nyathi[662] describes him as a monster *(ḓithu)*, while Mulovhedzi equated him with the predatorial lion-husband.[v] Mathuvhelo Mavhetha in turn explained that people's view of him is also shaped by snakes' diet of maggots and worms *(mbungu)*. More pertinent, however, is narrator Lerisa Mavhodze's use of the Afrikaans term *'skelm'* (scoundrel) to describe the snake-husband's furtive behaviour (see 2.13.1).

The proverb 'A father has many off-spring' implies that those in positions of power are also subject to certain *milayo*. The husband may head a large family, and cannot therefore pay personal attention to the needs of all. Familiarity also undermines his need for impartiality, and he therefore 'is most careful not to show any favouritism. Even if he has his predilection he does not allow the others to notice it.'[663] Le Roux[vi] describes him as an enigmatic outsider for whom concealment is a strategy of self-preservation[vii] that also enables him to maintain order in his household.

Referring cynically to patriarchy, women observe that, 'when a man falls away, an ancestral spirit dies.'[viii] The snake-husband laments in song, *'Ṅwali* sees me, I will no longer live.'[ix] This refers to the belief that death follows the sighting of the creator spirit, and it is invoked in the story to forecast the dire consequences of the husband's exposure.

However, the young wife does not understand why her husband 'hides' from her.[x] She is bored by her incessant daily chores, and requires the intimate warmth of her husband's company:

> 'Let us go to bed,' they said. And so each woman went to her own house. At night that young wife could feel a man, but during the day she did not see him. Well, so she said to herself, 'Ah! Who is this man I am sleeping with? I bring water in the morning and find later that somebody has washed with soap. I bring porridge and it is eaten. But I only feel him under the blankets. What kind of man is this?'[xi]

Maliyehe explains that the young wife desires 'to see (her husband) with her eyes and chat to him,' like spouses are supposed to do during supper.[664] Her quest arguably is for a condition of 'being' actualised by social integration – by her role as wife, co-wife and future mother. Just 'feeling' her husband at night satisfies the need for 'having,' but does not embody 'being,' that mysticism of 'sexual communion, conception, the growth of the foetus, and child-birth.'[665]

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[i] *'Ṋteli, ḽila ḽiṉowa ḽo dinalea vhukumakuma'* ('Really, that snake was extremely angry') (Le Roux, 1996:667).

[ii] *'Muḓi wo pwashea. A hu tshee na muthu.'*

[iii] 'That man was a different kind of person. He changed into a snake.' *('Munna hoyo ndi munna muṅwe-vho. Ndi munna ane a shanduka a vha ṉowa.')* ('A girl marries a snake'; Le Roux, 1996:662). Also see 'A man refuses to dance' (Kruger, 2014).

[iv] *'Ḽavhuṱanu nda tswa makumba.'* (Le Roux, 1996:723.)

[v] See e.g. 'The lion who hunter his daughter' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[vi] *'Enigmatiese randfiguur'* (Le Roux, 1996:331).

[vii] *'Selfverberging is selfbeskerming'* (Le Roux, 1996:330).

[viii] *'Arali munna asiho, mudzimu a vho fa.'* (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:11.)

[ix] *'Ndo vhonwa nga Ṅwali, thi lalami.'* (Le Roux, 1996:667.)

[x] Sotho versions of the story typically show him hiding in the roof of his house. In a Venda variant he goes to bask in a sunny courtyard when he feels 'the coldness of shadow' *('A tshi pfa u rothola ha murunzi.')* (Le Roux, 1996:663).

[xi] From 'The pumpkin that could speak' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

Three lines at the conclusion of Maliyehe's narrative are crucial to the interpretation of the snake-husband: 'That snake did not die. He still loves that young woman. That young woman is now used to him.'[i]

This means that the snake's demise is symbolic,[ii] that death typically initiates transformation and that most violent action in *ngano* is depicted hyperbolically to emphasise a particular value.

While the story focuses on the wife's experience, her snake-husband is also transformed. Maliyehe[666] explained that the mother hacks her son-in-law's 'shyness' to pieces. Put differently, she reveals his nature, which is a prerequisite for his transformation.

Venda versions of the story do not elaborate on his transformation. In contrast, their Sotho counterparts often do so in rich detail. In them, the snake is killed and his body burnt. His ashes are thrown into a pool, that eternal symbol of life, from which he is reborn as a 'beautiful' human being, like a man who has passed through initiation school.[667] As such he has come to value spousal interdepencence and love.[668] This is portrayed skilfully in the fascinating story of Lehe (Egg-husband) who is born as the egg of a large bird.[669] His family is ashamed of his embryonic state and hides him inside their home. He becomes married and his wife discovers his character. She washes him with magic medicine, smears him with fat and wraps him in a blanket. He grows limbs and becomes human. His wife gives him clothes, a walking stick and weapons, after which he goes to a council meeting. And so his wife has made a man out of him.[iii]

However, his transformation is not yet complete. He takes a second wife and rejects the first. The latter hides the broken shell of the egg in the second wife's house, and Lehe becomes an egg again. This causes scandal and embarrassment. His first wife transforms him back into a man, and the couple become reconciled.

In Maliyehe's story, reconciliation is symbolised by the wife eating the cooked pumpkin. This is also made poignantly evident in a private, healing performance of the song by husband and wife, from which even the mother as confidante is excluded.[670] Maliyehe also portrays the impact of events on the first wife, and it now becomes clear why she describes the household as destroyed and deserted. Conflict between co-wives is commonly depicted in *ngano*[iv] and certain categories of choral dance-song. In most cases the first wife feels threatened by a younger, more beautiful wife. She asks, 'What must I now rely on? He gave me food and everything I needed (…) Where shall I go now?'[v] She is even blamed for having arranged the marriage with the snake, and is chastised. Maliyehe simply shows her taking her possessions and moving away.[671]

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[i] *'Ila nowa a yo ngo lovha. I kha di pfana na ula musidzana. Ula musidzana o no i dowela.'* (Le Roux, 1996:358.)

[ii] Aschwanden (1989:117-118) explains that the death of the snake-husband symbolises divorce following discovery of his sterility.

[iii] The egg is a common symbol of human growth and potential in Karanga *ngano* (see Von Sicard, 1965:188-205). It also features as such in a Venda *ngano* documented by Stayt (1931:348-349).

[iv] 'Also a woman' and 'The tree with red flowers' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[v] *'Nne zwino ndi do yafhi?'* (Le Roux, 1996:672.)

♩= 136
Doh is C
Nya - nga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo - wa. I - nwi ni i - mbi - dze - la - ni?
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - nga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo wa. Kho - tsi a - nu vha sa mpfu - ni.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo - wa, wee. Vha mb'i 'ta ma - bi - ri - ma - ni.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo - wa. Khe - zwi ni so - ngo khoo?
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo - wa. Nde - a khoo ni nga se - a naa?
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo - wa. Ndi sa se - i ndi na ni?
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hee, ndo - wa, wee.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.

2.5.3 The child of the rat and the snake / Ṅwana wa mbevha na n̰owa

Here comes a story!

There was a certain man and his wives, his two wives.

Now, this man did not love the children of people. He only loved rat-children and snake-children.

One of his wives gave birth to a human child. The other wife gave birth to a rat and a snake. But they were born at the same time. This was surprising!

The husband said, 'I do not want a real child. I want this rat and snake.'

This woman, this one took her child away.

It is she who started to sing her song,

(Narrator)
Thethe, Tshakombo.
They do not love Tshakombo![i]
They love snakes.
Snakes, rats.
(Chorus)
Thaa!
(To swallow)

Salungano! Salungano!

O vha e muṅwe munna a na vhafumakadzi vhawe. A na vhasadzi vhavhili.

Zwino, hoyu munna o vha a sa funi ṅwana wa muthu. O vha a tshi funa ṅwana wa mbevha na n̰owa.

Hoyu muṅwe mufumakadzi a beba ṅwana wawe ane a vha wa ṅwana. Hoyu muṅwe mufumakadzi a beba mbevha na n̰owa. Mara o zwi beba kathihi. Zwa sia zwi tshi thoma u mangadza!

Munna a ri, 'Nn̰e ṅwana wa muthu thi mu t̰od̰i. Ndi t̰od̰a hoyu mbevha na n̰owa.'

Houl̰ani mufumakadzi, houl̰ani muṅwe a dzhia ṅwana wawe a mu t̰uwisa.

Ndi hezwi a tshi thoma u imba luimbo lwawe,

(Musimi)
Thethe, Tshakombo.
Tshakombo a vha mu funi!
Vha funa Manyokani.
Manyokani, mabevha.
(Vhabvumeli)
Thaa!

[i] The name of a snake.

The child of the rat and the snake / Ṅwana wa mbevha na ṇowa (continued)

After taking her child away and singing,[i] that woman became heart-broken.

'Now, why does he not love my child? This man only loves the rat and the snake.'

The woman was surprised. She was really hurt. She went to her in-laws.

She said, 'I need help. Why is my child not wanted?'

They replied, 'No, it is because this husband of yours was born from a snake. That is why he grew up eating rats. He was eating these rats over there because he is a snake. That is why you are surprised.'

That woman started her song, 'They do not love Tshakombo …'

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 October 2012.

A ri hezwiḽa o no thoma u ita hezwiḽa zwithu-ha, houḽa mufumakadzi a thoma u pfa mbilu yawe i tshi vhavha.

'Zwino, ndi nga mini ṅwananga a sa funiwi? Hoyu munna a tshi funa mbevha na ṇowa.'

A sala u thoma ri tshi thoma u mangala. Musadzi a tou vhilaela vhukuma-kuma. A ya ha vho-mazwale.

A ri, 'Nṇe nda khou humbela vha nthuse. Ndi nga mini ṅwananga a sa ṭodiwi?'

Vha ri, 'Hai, ndi uri hoyu munna waṇu, o bebiwa nga ṇowa, that is why ni khou vhona o tou ralo. O aluwa a tshi ḽa mbevha. Hezwiḽa a tshi khou ḽa hedziḽa mbevha hafhaḽani, ngauri o vha e ṇowa. Ndi hezwi zwine ni tshi khou thoma u mangala.'

Uḽa mufumakadzi a thoma luimbo lwawe, 'Thethe, Tshakombo ...'

Ha mbo ḓi vha u fa ha lungano.

[i] Lit. 'after doing those things.'

As in the previous story, this brief narrative yields complex symbolic content.[672] Like other *ngano*, it warns against immorality, expressed by the distinction between benign human and malignant animal existence, between the child of a human *(ṅwana wa muthu)* and the child of a rat and a snake *(ṅwana wa mbevha na ṇowa)*.

The human child is represented by the image of the pubescent girl who emerges from the pool of ancestral morality (see the narrator's rendition of 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile'; 2.5.1). This mature, socially integrated person is the moral antithesis of the child of the rat and the snake. The latter is unequivocally evil, and the name given to it is Tshakombo, one who is dangerous and causes conflict.

The images of the snake and rat are combined in the chorus line into a new, even more powerful figure, namely that of a snake swallowing a rat *(thaa)*. The warning against such supreme evil is drummed into young *ngano* participants by means of the repetition of the chorus line.

The notion that morals are defined by conflict in polygamous marriage is also submerged in the story. The husband may favour a certain wife and her children, and neglect and even abuse his other wives and children. Co-wives with children therefore may be rivals for their husband's attention. They are often portrayed as hating one another's children, and even murdering them.[i] The rival's children accordingly are maligned as badly behaved rats and snakes, a quality inherited from their father via his ancestors. Kriel[673] explains in this regard that

> procreation is not merely a mystical and emotional bond which ties parents to children, but is also reflected in the fact that various qualities are inherited, so that the child is actually in a certain way a replica of the parent. There is undoubtedly a strong feeling among the maShona that the child is the 'property' of its actual father. His life-essence is in it.

The ancient, negative meaning attributed to rats in this and other stories may have impacted on the transmission of the English children's song 'Three blind mice' into its popular Tshivenda form, sung by local school children:[ii]

Mbevha hedzi tharu dzi gidimani hani.
These three mice/rats are running very fast.
Dza vhona musadzi wa mulimi.
They saw a farmer's wife.
A dzi rema mutshila nga dzembe.
She is chopping the tail with a hoe.

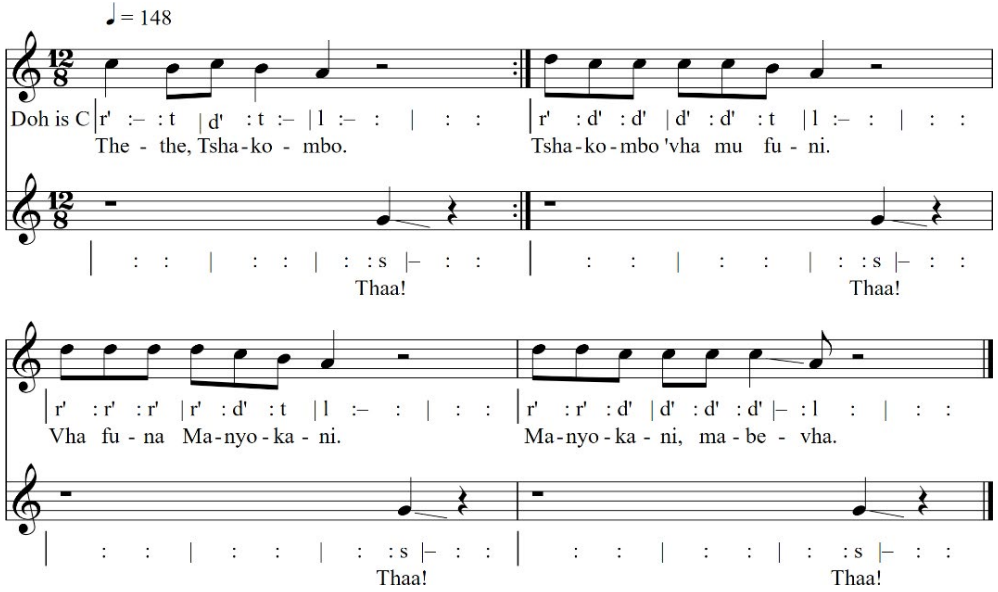

Fig. 77. At work in the Nwanedi irrigation scheme 2008

[i] See 'Goodbye' (Kruger, 2014).
[ii] As performed by children from the village of Tsianda, under the guidance of Ronald Netshifhefhe, 27 October, 1988.

2.6 Salfina Mashiliye

My Tshivenda name is Mafanedza. It describes something we hang on a wall to enjoy, like a picture. My granny gave me this name because I was such a beautiful baby!

I was born in 1966 on the farm Drievoet.[i] It belonged to Tobie Fourie, there at Tshirundu. He could speak Tshivenda, and people called him Mugoba, Snake-of-the-Mountain. He cared for his workers.

My father is Andries Phulisani Mashiliye. He worked at the copper mine in Musina until it closed during the 1990s.[ii] He then went to work for Water Affairs, after which he retired to Folovhodwe, where he still lives.

Here you see me sitting next to my mother, Megi Kwinda (2.22). She worked for Mugoba. She helped to weed and pick tomatoes, oranges, mangos.

She has four children, me and three brothers. We built our own houses in the old manner there on the farm. We planted poles, *basha* (fig. 33), for walls and smeared them with mud. We had three houses. Two were for sleeping and one was the kitchen.

Many people worked on the farm. I remember that *tsimbi* very well. This was a piece of iron that was struck at twelve o' clock to tell people to come to lunch. Children especially liked its sound and came running from all over! They also ate lunch, but after the adults.

The cooks were two men. They always made porridge with milk, or even meat. Mugoba also gave his workers venison, especially *phala* (kudu). After work, people made their own supper at home. We liked to eat wild vegetables that we picked in the orange orchards: *shashe*,[iii] *vowa*[iv] and *mushidzi*.[v]

I remember playing with Mugoba's children around my mother's home on the farm. We made dolls from clay and fired them to make them hard. Then we made clothes for them, and played a game which was like *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3). We built a simple small house without a roof, one that had walls made from stone and clay. This was our special place, and we played in it with our dolls.

Mugoba's children and we knew a little of each other's languages – words, short sentences and instructions. The Afrikaans words I remember best are *'Kom eet!'* ('Come and eat!').

When we naughty, we were all punished together, especially when we went inside Mugoba's house and made a mess!

We often played a game called *khubwe*. This is what we did: Two or three children sit in a circle. They extend their arms and stack their fists. Another child takes a stone and inserts it through the top fist. The stone then passes down the fists, while all chant:

[i] Nzhelele-Drif (see box 37).

[ii] 'Communities in the dry northern and eastern lowveld lived near metal and mineral deposits, enabling them to exchange copper, iron ore and salt for wives and grains (…) Copper mines date back to the fifth century and salt works to roughly the same period.' (Loubser, 1988:287, citing Evers.)

[iii] Sow thistle, *Sonchus oleraseus*.

[iv] Pigweed, *Amaranthus thunbergi*.

[v] Blackjack, *Bidens pilosa*.

Sia lubuli, vhananga vhafhasi, vhaḽevho! Hammm!
Leave the hole open for my children down there so that they may also eat!

When the players chant 'hammm!,' their fists fly apart! Bystanders must then guess whose fist 'ate' the stone; in other words, where the stone ended up. This game is great fun!

We used to travel to Nzhelele when there was little work on the farm, especially after harvest. It took us three days to walk there. We asked others for shelter along the way. We always took our own food, but when that ran out, people gave us something to eat.

Our closest shop was on Doreen Farm. Because we prepared our own coarse maize flour, we only bought cake flour from the shop, as well as clothing, bread and sweets. My favourite was called Toffee Milk Sweet. It had a picture of a cow on the wrapper. When peering through the glass front of the sweet tray, you saw many cows looking back at you!

My mother's mother was called Athikhatali.[i] She lived near us on the farm. She told us *ngano* around a fire in her courtyard. When you became sleepy, you just shuffled off to bed. Many, many children listened to her stories. The kind of story I liked best was one about good people overcoming bad people. I will tell you a story about an elder brother who traps his younger brother in a cave.

There was an old house on Mugoba's farm. It was deserted and then became our school. Each class had a separate room in the house, with its own chalkboard. There was one teacher for all of us. Her name was Julia Dzumba. Many adults who live in our area today were once taught by her. We remember her well. She was very fond of children, which explains why so many still think of her.

I really loved recitations and praises, *zwirendo*. Julia wrote them on the board, and we copied them in our books. I completed grade 1, but then the farm was sold. We moved to Folovhodwe where I went to another school. I left this school in grade six. I was a bit mad *(penga)*, and had problems with boys. My parents warned me against leaving school, but I did not listen to them.

Soon after this I started working here at Folovhodwe, in the irrigation scheme, where I still do piece jobs like weeding, planting, watering and harvesting. This earns me about R600 a month (2015), but only in the middle of summer when there is a lot of work. I almost starve during winter ... Look at my skirt: I made it, and it is now coming apart at the seam. I do not know where to turn to for food and money.

I have four children. My eldest son was born in 1990. He used to work in a spaza shop in Tembisa, but then lost his job. We do not see him often. The last time was in December 2013.

My other children are still at school. I am scared that none of them will matriculate.

I belong to the Tasululo Ministry Church. This is a church that fights against sin and bad things in life. I go there because I believe in the power of prayer. Look at my swollen finger: It was much worse before, but our minister prayed for me. I believe in the laws of God. Of these, the most important is being faithful to your spouse.

[i] 'I do not tolerate trouble.'

2.6.1 Brothers / Murathu na mukomana

Here comes a story!

There was a certain person. This man was with his younger brother.

His younger brother, it was he who had two wives. That elder brother was without a wife.

Now, that man always used to say, he said, 'You, brother, give me one wife!'[i]

That younger brother answered, 'Ah! Is a woman just given to another man? I cannot give you a wife.'

Now, the elder brother started to plan.[ii] He said to himself, 'I will invite this brother of mine. We will go over there. I will say, "Let us go and hunt rock-rabbits."'

That younger brother was told, 'Let us go and hunt rock-rabbits.'

The younger brother took his dog. 'Let us go with the dog.'

They arrived there at the mountain. There was a forest there on top of the mountain. They arrived, they found a rock-rabbit. That rock-rabbit ran away. It ran away into a cave!

And that elder brother said, 'There the rock-rabbit is! It went inside. Go inside with your dog and catch that rock-rabbit.'

That younger brother entered the cave and went quickly down there!

That brother who was outside, he piled up stones! He picked up stones! He piled, piled, piled, piled, piled them! He piled them until the opening was blocked. He closed it with large stones so that that one inside could not open it.

When he had finished closing the cave with those stones, he started to run away!

After leaving, he went home.

When he arrived home, someone asked, 'Ah! Where is the younger

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṅwe munna. Hoyu munna o vha a na murathu wawe.

Hoyu murathu wawe, ndi ene we a vha e na vhafumakadzi vhavhili. Houḽani mukomana o vha a si na mufumakadzi.

Zwino, houḽani munna o vha a tshi ḓi dzulela u amba, u ri, 'Iwe, murathu, ḓo mphavho muṅwe mufumakadzi.'

Houḽa muṅwe murathu a ri, 'Aa! Musadzi u ya fhiwa muṅwe naa? Nṋe ndi nga si kone u u fha musadzi.'

Zwino, ene a vhamba maṋo. A u ri, 'Ndi to mu kunga hoyu murathu wanga. Ri ṱuwe ri ye hangei. Nṋe ri, "Kha ri ye u zwima mbila."'

Uḽa murathu a vhudziwa uri, 'Kha ri ye u yo zwima mbila.'

Murathu a dzhia nngwa yawe. A ri, 'Kha ri ṱuwe na nngwa.'

Vha tshi swika hangei thavhani. Ndi ḓaka na hangei nṱha ha thavha hangei. Vha tshi swika-ii, ha wanala mbila. Mbila heiḽani i tshi shavha, i tshi shavhela nga ngomu bakoni!

Ene houḽani mukomana a ri, 'Mbila kheiḽa! Yo dzhena. Dzhenani na nngwa yau u yi fare heiḽani mbila.'

Houḽani murathu, a tshi dzhena a tshi gidima a tshi ya hangei phanḓa bakoni!

Houḽani mukoma nga hangeno nnḓa, a vha a tshi ṱhopha matombo, a tshi dobela matombo, a tshi ṱhopha, a tshi ṱhopha, a tshi ṱhopha, a tshi ṱhopha, a tshi ṱhopha! A tshi ṱhopha a vala a tshi kungulusa a tshi tiba. A tiba nga matombo mahulu ane houḽa are nga ngomu a nga si kone na u a tibula.

Hezwi ene o no fhedza u valela matombo haaḽani, a mbo ḓi vha a tshi shavha.

A tshi ṱuwa a tshi ya hayani.

A tshi swika hayani, a ri, ' Aa! Murathu u gai? Inwi ni so ngo vhuya na murathu?'

Ene a ri, 'Haa … nṋe ... murathu o bva nga dziṅwe ndila. A vha a tshi

[i] *Ḓo mpha*: A jocular, even disrespectful expression that hides malicious intent.
[ii] Lit. 'to grab with the teeth.'

brother? You did not return with the younger brother.'

He said, 'Hmm … I … the younger brother left on a different path. He rushed away, saying he was going to look for another rock-rabbit. I did not see where went.'

He went to bed. He woke up early the next morning and returned there to the mountain to have a look.

When he arrived, he heard knocking coming from inside the cave, kho! kho! kho! He heard that.

'Hey! This person is still alive. He has not died yet!'

The younger brother started to sing. (He was still knocking, kho! kho! kho!)

He sang,

(Verse 1)
(Narrator)
You, elder brother, do not care for me![i]
When you said we must go out,[ii]
you just wanted to keep me inside
the cave with my dog Mmandilingwana.[iii]

(Chorus)
She[iv] came back, lundee-lundee, salundee![v]

The elder brother sang,

[i] Lit. 'you do not feel my pain.'
[ii] Lit. 'on the road,' i.e. to hunt.
[iii] You-have-caught-me.
[iv] Lit. 'it.' Referring to the man's younger wife.
[v] *Salundee* (Chikaranga, *sarunde*) is a common lament. See 1.9.3.1, fig. 58 and Von Sicard (1965:384).

khou gidima a tshi ṱuwa a tshi ri ndi kho ḓi ya nga huṅwe ndi yo sedza mbila. Nne a tho ngo vhona zwa uri o fhelela gai.'

Ene a eḓela. Li tshi tsha nga matsheloni, ene a vuwa, a vhuyelela hangei thavhani, u kho ṱolela.

A tshi swika a tshi ri kho! kho! kho! nga ngomu bakoni.

U pfa zwo uri. 'Ai! Houla muthu u hone u kha ḓi tshila, haathu u fa-nii.'

A ri, a thomisa u imbelela. (Houlani a tshi pfa kho! kho! kho!)

Ula a ri,

(Ndimana 1)
(Musimi)
Inwi, mukomana, a ni na vhuṱungu!
Ndi tshini tshi ri nga ri ye ndilani,
na mbvalela nga ngomu bakoni na
mmbwa yanga Mmandilingwana.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ha vhuya, lundee-lundee, salundee!

Ene a ri,

(Ndimana 2)
(Musimi)
Na inwi, murathu, a ni na vhuṱungu!
Ndi tshi ri, mpheni musadzi na hana naye!
Zwino, ni ḓo fela nga ngomu bakoni. / Zwino, u ḓo ḓi fela nga ngomu bakoni.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ha vhuya, lundee-lundee salundee!

(Verse 2)
(Narrator sings in a crying voice.)
You, younger brother, do not care for me!
I said, ‘Give me a wife, but you refused!’
Now, you will die inside the cave!
(Chorus)
She came back, lundee-lundee salundee!

That one started to leave. He started to return home.

When he got home, someone asked, ‘Ah, you! You got up this morning and were gone for a whole day?’

He said, ‘No! It is nothing. I just got up and went around to tend to my things. Now I have come back again.’

That younger wife started to say, ‘No, no! I want to see what this man is up to. Day after day he gets up and goes out. Where does he go to?’ She followed him, followed him, followed him![i] And so she found herself arriving there at the cave.

Kho-kho-kho!

Then she heard,

(Verse 1)
(Narrator sings in a high, thin voice.)
You, younger brother, do not care for me! ...

Now, the younger brother was unable to sing properly! Now, his voice was finished. It was without strength. Now, he wanted to faint with hunger. There was no water, there was nothing!

His wife said, ‘Now, he will die inside the cave!’

[i] Lit. ‘she cared for him.’

Houlani a mbo di tuwa. A mbo di humela hayani.

A tshi swika hayani: ‘Aa! Iwe, ula munna, iwe wo ya duvhani wa dovha u tshi vuwa u tshi tuwa?’

A ri, ‘Haa! A hu na. Nne ndi to vha ndi tshi kho di vuwa ndi kho sokou mona-mona, ndi tshi bva-vho ndi tshi tuwa zwanga, ndi tshi di dovha ndi tshi vhuya.’

Houlani musadzi mutuku a mbo di thomisa. A ri, ‘Hmm-hmm! Nne hoyu munna ndi nyaga u mu vhona. Duvha na duvha u vuwa a tshi bva. U khou ya gai?’

A mu londa, a mu londa, a mu londa! A wana a tshi swika hanengei bakoni.

Kho-kho-kho!

U pfa u ri,

(Ndimana 1)
(Musimi u imba nga ipfi li tuku.)
Inwi, mukomana, a ni na vhutungu! ...

Ha tsha kona, zwino, ipfi lo no fhelela zwino, na maanda ha tsheena.

Thi ri, u vho nyaga u noka nga ndala. A hu na madi, a hu na mini!

A ri, ‘Zwino, u do di fela nga ngomu bakoni!’

(Ndimana 1)
(Musimi u imba nga ipfi li tuku.)
Inwi, mukomana, a ni na vhutungu! ...

A mbo di bva a mbo di tuwa. Hezwi a tshi bva, a tshi vhuyelela mudini, houla musadzi o vha a kho thetshelesa, a zwi vhona zwa uri, ‘Ohoo! Mathina ndi munna wawe. O valeliwa nga ngomu bakoni.’

Houla musadzi a mbo di vha a tshi gidima. A ri a tshi vhuya hayani nga tshipiti. A tshi da a tshi rinda, a tshi rinda a tshi ita mikapu yawe. A

(Verse 1)
(Narrator sings in a high, thin voice.)
You, younger brother, do not care for me! ...

She started to leave. As she started leaving for home, she was listening to the song.

She said, 'Hey! But it is my husband! He is trapped inside the cave!'

That woman started to rush. She returned home in a hurry.[i]

She came there and started stirring, stirring. She was making soft porridge, making porridge, making porridge! She was carrying that porridge.

Now, she left and went over there to tell everyone.

She said, 'Hey, I found that man!'

When she arrived over there in the mountain, she was carrying soft porridge, carrying soft porridge, carrying water.

When she arrived, she knocked down the stones, she knocked them down, knocked them down!

She found the husband exhausted.[ii] He was tired! Even that dog was lying there. He was panting and unable to do anything.

And the husband's voice sounded distant. When he tried to talk down there, his voice could not be heard clearly at the top.

The wife took that soft porridge. She gave it to him. She nursed him, nursed him, nursed him! He was given water, and he drank. She took some porridge and gave it to him. That dog was still alive. He got water.

That man was now feeling better, he was now feeling better! He was able to stumble home. That man started to return. He went into hiding. After going into hiding, he collapsed!

Clothes were bought for him. When clothes were bought, it was said he had to dress smartly, as for a feast. Yes! Like a small feast that is like tshi ita mikapu, a tshi ita mikapu, a tshi hwala heiḽani mikapu.

Zwino-ii, a vha a tshi ṱuwa a tshi ya henengei a tshi vhudza vhathu.

A ri, 'Hei, houḽani munna ndo mu wana!'

A tshi swika hanengei a hwala mukapu, a hwala mukapu, a hwala na maḓi.

A tshi swika, a khokholola matombo, a khokholola, a khokholola!

A wana munna ha tsha vhuya a kona. Ndi uri o neta, na nngwa heiḽa yo no sokou khuvhutu, ndi uri a hu tsheena tsha kha ḓi kona.

Na ḽipfi ḽo no to vha hangei-ngei. Ndi uri ene nangwe a tshi amba u vho to ambela fhasi ha tsha kona na ipfi a ḽi tsha kona raha ntha.

A vha a tshi dzhia heiḽa mikapu. A fha houḽa mukapu. A tshi mu nusa, a tshi mu nusa, a tshi mu nusa! A tshi mu fha na maḓi, a tshi nwa. A tshi dzhia, o ḓa na vhuswa-nyana a tshi fha zwiḽiwa heiḽani nngwa i tshiḽa. A tshi fha na maḓi.

Houḽani munna a vhuya zwino, a vhuya zwino. A tshi vho kona u dedengela. Houḽa munna a mbo ḓi vhuya a ya a dzumbiwa. A tshi ya u yo dzumbiwa-ii, a mbo ḓi waa!

A rengeliwa zwiambaro. Hezwi o rengelwa zwiambaro, ha pfi, hu khou nyaga u tou itwa sa u to nga khamusi hu na munyanya. Ee! Sa munyanya-nyana samusi zwi to nga phathi zwezwo zwithu zwa hone.

Hezwi hu tshi itiwa houḽani munyanya, houḽani munna a vha o dzumbiwa nḓuni a tshi iselwa zwiḽiwa a tshi ḽa hangei. A tshi fhiwa na maḓi a ṱamba. A sa vhoniwi nga vhathu, na houḽa mukomana a sa vhudziwi tshithu. Ha mbo ḓi pfi hu na munyanya. Ni ḓo vha vhona vhathu vha hone vha khou nyaga u ḓa.

Houḽani mukomana, zwino, a vha a tshi ṱuwa a tshi yo vuliwa hangei ho no bikwa na zwiḽiwa na mini. Ho lugisiwa zwavhuḓi, ho naka.

Havhaḽani vhathu zwino-ii, vha ri, 'Kha ri ye ri yo dzhia houḽa muthu.' A vha a tshi bvela nnḓa!

Houḽani mukomana o dzula. Ndi uri mukomana ha ḓivhi tshithu.

Ndi uri mukomana, hu tshi yo dzhiwa houḽani muthu a tshi ḓa a

[i] Lit. 'with speed,' '*nga tshipiti.*'
[ii] Lit. 'unable to return.'

a party, like that.

When the feast was being prepared, that man, while hiding inside the house, was served food over there so that he could recover. He was given water to wash. He was not seen by people. That elder brother was not told anything.

The feast was announced. You could see that people wanted to come!

That elder brother, now, he started to go over there where food was being cooked and everything was being prepared. Everything had been prepared well. It was beautiful.

Those people, now, said, 'Let us go and fetch that person.'

The younger brother was coming out!

That elder brother was seated. It was this elder brother who knew nothing.

When they went to fetch that person and came to the place where he had to be presented, when the elder brother saw that, he said, 'Hey! That is my brother!'

He had gone to look over there at the cave without finding anyone ... Perhaps he had died? He might have died over there, because he could not be seen.

But they had taken him inside the house so that he could not be seen. When they took the blanket off, he could see, indeed, that it was his brother! Hey! The elder brother, now …[i]

The younger brother asked, 'Ah, why did you trap me in the cave?'

But the elder brother did not event want to listen! The elder brother started to run away! And that younger wife also started to chase him away because that wife, that elder wife was in love with that elder brother.

Yes, they started to run away!

Folovhodwe, 4 July 2014

tshi dzudziwa hafhaḽani a tshi tibuliwa, a tshi zwi vhona, zwouri, Ai! Mathina ndi murathu wanga!

Ene uri a tshi yo ṱolela hangei bakoni a wanala na uri a hu tsheena, khamusi o fa. A nga vha o fela hanengei, thi ri ene ha mu vhoni. Mathina havhaḽani vho mu vheya nga ngomu nḓuni uri ene a songo mu vhona. Hezwo vha tshi fhedza, hezwo a tshi tou khurumuliwa nguvho a tshi tou vhonala uri ngoho ndi ene murathu wanga! Hei! Mukomana, zwino …

Vha ri, 'Aa! Mulandu ni tshi mbvalela bakoni?'

Mukomana ha ngo tsha dovha a nyaga u dovha u pfesesa! Mukomana a mbo ḓi vha a tshi shavha! Na houḽani musadzi a mbo ḓi thathiwa, ngauri houḽa musadzi, houḽani muhulwane o vha o no funa houḽani mukomana.

Ee, vha mbo ḓi shavha!

Ha mbo ḓi vha uri lungano lwo mbo ḓi vha uri lwo fhela.

[i] He is speechless with surprise.

Venda and Sotho variations of this story have been documented by Phophi and Makgamatha.[i]

The story, like others in this book,[ii] essentially offers a description of good and bad behaviour in the family, specifically marriage. It is critical of jealousy among siblings, and underscores marriage as social contract.

The story features adults only. It may appeal to younger participants because it invokes the popular theme of sibling rivalry.[iii] In typical narrative fashion, younger spouses rise above their elder relations as conflict is resolved. However, the story also depicts marital conflict that may be more meaningful to older participants. Spouses are not simply 'given' or 'taken.' What is required, is formal marriage negotiations. Spousal infidelity is disapproved, and jealousy, whether in marriage or between siblings, is reprehensible.

The elder brother is the main antagonist (his lover is only implicated at the end of the story). He is the personification of ultimate evil. Not only does he trap his younger brother in a cave, he also waits for him to die while mocking him in song. He is deceitful and cowardly, and disrespects his brother's wives. His malevolence is so intense that not even the familiar helping dog with his telling name (You-have-caught-me) is able rescue his owner.

The antagonist is accused of witchcraft in Phophi's version of the story. Witches may pay for their crimes with their life, but Mashiliye allows the culprit and his lover to escape without apparent retribution. She skilfully creates suspense by indicating that the younger brother's escape from the cave is not immediately revealed. Listeners would anticipate the final confrontation between the brothers and enjoy the elder sibling's humiliation.

The malignance of the antagonist contrasts with the ideal spousal relationship portrayed in the story. The husband is a hunter who provides for his family. His wife performs the conventional role of domestic caretaker when feeding and nurturing her weakened husband.

However, she is not merely a supportive figure. Her actions point to the ideal spousal relationship as one of complete interdependence. She transcends her role as cook and frees her husband from his rocky prison. She is a heroine, the intellectual and moral counterpart of the antagonists.

When E. S. Madima, author of what is regarded as the first Tshivenda novel (*'A si ene,'* 1954), was asked why he portrayed one principal female actant as submissive and another as assertive, he replied, 'Even during those old times there were women who refused to be oppressed by men, because of their intelligence.'[674] Neethling[675] similarly describes women in certain Xhosa *ntsomi* oral narratives 'as individual, independent heroines who overcome obstacles, i.e. liquidate lacks, and in general prove victorious in their circumstances. Success is achieved always without the help of males.'

As explained (1.4), the singing voice is a fundamental means for the construction of supportive social networks, and as such is a metaphor of life. Mashiliye's indication that the entrapped brother is unable to sing properly, and that his voice is 'thin' and faint, is expressive of his weakening condition.[iv] The elder brother's voice is 'thick,' in keeping with his seniority. This is evident in the gruff, deep voice quality the narrator imitates in the chorus response.

The elder brother adds insult to injury by mockingly imitating his suffering brother's feeble voice. The shocking effect of this action is the virtual sacreligious undermining of the conventional spiritual nature of musical communication.

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[i] Phophi (1992:20-22) and Makgamatha (1991:202-206). Phophi's version shares the same setting (hunting rock-rabbits in the mountain). In the Sotho variation, brothers alternately hold each other's legs in order to drink from a deep well. The protagonist pulls up his brother, but in turn is left stranded in the well.

[ii] See e.g. 'Good and evil' (2.2.2), 'Cannibals' (2.3.1),'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3) and 'Child of the law' (2.17.2).

[iii] For an example of female sibling rivalry, see 'A fat girl' (Kruger, 2014). Male rivalry is usually portrayed in the popular narrative about the python-healer (see the next story).

[iv] This is also portrayed in 'The wife in the baobab' (2.11.2).

♩ = 120 Verse 1
Doh is C
In-wi mu-ko-ma-na, 'ni na vhu-tu - ngu!
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa-lu-ndee!
Ndi tshi ni tshi ri nga ri ye ndi-la - ni,
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa-lu-ndee!
na mbva-le - la 'ngo-mu ba-ko - ni
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa - lu-ndee!
na mmbwa ya - nga Mma-ndi - li-ngwa - na.
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa - lu-ndee!

Verse 2
Na i-nwi mu-ra-thu 'ni na vhu-tu - ngu!
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa - lu-ndee!
Ndi tshi ri, mphe-ni mu-sa-dzi na ha-na na-ye!
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa-lu-ndee!
Zwi-no, ni do fhe-la ngo-mu ba-ko - ni.
Ha vhu-ya, lu-ndee-lu-ndee, sa - lu-ndee!

2.6.2 The python-healer / Nyangalambuya

Here comes a story!

There was a certain old man. He had his three children.

That old man was ill. That old man walked to consult a healer.[i] He went to divination to find out what the matter was so that he could be cured.

That healer told him, 'You, if you want to be cured, that is when you must look for Nyangalambuya. It is this big snake who lives over there in caves in the mountains.'

That old man said, 'Ah! Now, you, my children … I went to the healer. I was told I must go and look for Nyangalambuya. When he comes here and licks me, I will become healed.'

Those children agreed.

That old man spoke to the eldest, the one who came first. He said, 'Walk, go and fetch Nyangalambuya.'

That child rushed away. He left and went to hunt over there in the mountain. When he arrived, he found this Nyangalambuya over there in his cave. When he arrived, he started to sing.

This one sang. He said,

(Narrator)
I say, my father is seriously ill.
He said I must find Nyangalambuya.
That one said, 'If I come out, will you not run away?'
(Chorus)
Nyangalambuya, hae-hae.

This big snake started … he started to uncoil!

Now, when you see it uncoiling and coming out, you scream in fright,

[i] Lit. 'he went to the divining dice.'

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na vhaṅwe mukalaha. Vho vha vhe na vhana vhavho vhararu. Havha mukalaha vho vha vha tshi lwala. Havha mukalaha vha tshimbila vha ya dziṱhanguni. Vha ya u ṱungula uri vha pfe uri vhone vha khou ḽiwa nga mini uri vha kone u fhola.

Heiḽa ṅanga ya vha vhudza zwauri, vhone uri vhone vha fhole, ndi ha musi vhone vho ṱoḓa Nyangalambuya. Ndi heḽia ḽinowa ḽihulwane ḽo no dzula henengei mabakoni a dzithavha.

Havhaḽani mukalaha vha ri, 'Aa! Zwino, vheiwe vhana vhanga, nne ndo ya ṅangani. Hu pfi ndo tea u ya ndi yo ṱoḓa Nyangalambuya. Arali ya ḓa hafha ya nnanzwa-ii, nne ndi hone ndi tshi ḓo fhola.'

Havhaḽa vhana vha tenda.

Vha amba na hoyu muhulwane wa first born wa u thoma. Vha ri, 'Tshimbila u ye u yo ndzhiela-vho Nyangalambuya.'

Houḽa ṅwana a gidima. A ṱuwa a ya u zwima hanengei thavhani. A swika a tshi ḽi wana heḽia ḽi Nyangalambuya hanengei mapakoni aḽo hanengei. A tshi swika, a thoma u imbelela.

Hezwi a tshi imbelela. A ri,

(Musimi)
Nda ri, tate wanga vha no kwala zwikulu.
Vha ri ndi ḓe ndi wane Nyangalambuya.
Iḽa ya ri, 'Izwi nda bva, a u nga shavhi?'
(Vhabvumeli)
Nyangalambuya, hae-hae.

Heḽia ḽinowa ḽa mbo ḓi thoma, ḽa vha ḽi tshi thoma ... ḽi tshi onyolowa!

Zwino, hezwi ḽi tshi tou bva, a tshi to vhona ḽi tshi ri, 'Eeh!'

Munna a vha a tshi ri tshupu!

'Hezwo ndi ngasi tsha dovha nda zwi imela!' A wa a tshi shavha.

‘Eeh!’

The man scrambled to a safe distance!

‘I cannot handle this!’ Then he ran away.

When he arrived back home, he said, ‘My father, you will just have to die! Hah! I cannot handle this! No, no!’ He went and stood far away.

The father asked, ‘You, second son, is it not better that you go over there and fetch this big snake?’

This child, when he arrives, he sings and sings, ‘I say, my father is seriously ill …’

This big snake says, ‘Ah, you! Your elder brother ran away from here. Are you the one who will succeed?’

The brother replied, ‘Yes! I will manage. Let this big snake come out. I say, let it come!’

When this snake uncoiled, he also ran away! When he arrived home, he said, ‘Ah! I have failed my father! You will just have to die! No, I failed. There is nothing else I can do.’

The last son came there, the youngest. That youngest came and sang, ‘I say, my father is seriously ill ...’

The snake started to come out now. When it came out, the youngest child persevered! He started to sit down over there. He turned around and faced the snake. This big snake coiled around him. He coiled, coiled and coiled! He put his head here … (on the boy’s shoulder). The son persevered! When he arrived there at home, he arrived and entered the house of his father. He sat down and crossed his legs.

This snake uncoiled, it uncoiled! It slid down and came here to his father. It started with the legs. It licked, licked, licked, licked, licked! It finished.

The son sat down again, he sat.

It coiled around him, coiled, coiled! It put its head here … (on the boy’s shoulder). That child again persevered.

He started to leave.

A tshi swika, u vho to ri, ‘Khotsi anga, kha vha fe! Ha! Nne hezwi a thi tsha zwi imela, hmm-hmm!’ A vha a tshi fhira a tshi ima hangei kule.

Vha ri, ‘Iwe-vho wa namba two, a si khwine u ye-vho hangei, u ye u yo ndzhiela heli linowa?’

Houlani ṅwana a tshi swika-ii, a imbelela, a imbelela, ‘Nda ri, tate wanga vha no kwala zwikulu ...’

Helia linowa la ri, ‘Aa! Iwe, mukomana wau o da a shavha fhano. Ndi iwe une wa do zwi kona naa?’

Ene a ri, ‘Ee! Nne ndi do kona. Kha li bve heli linowa! Ndi ri, kha li bve!’

Helia li tshi onyolowa, na ene u khou shavha ndi zwezwo! A tshi swika a ri, ‘Aa! Nne zwo mmbalela khotsi anga! Kha vha di fele vhone! Hai, nne ndo baleliwa. A hu tsheena tshithu tshine nda do dovha nda kona.’

Ha vha hu tshi da wa lupedzi, wa u fhedzisela mutuku. Houlani mutuku a da a imbelela.

A ri, ‘Nda ri, tate wanga vha no kwala zwikulu …’

La mbo di vha uri li khou bva zwino. Ndi uri li tshi to bva, ṅwana mutuku a kondelela! A mbo di dzula, a rembuluwa a sedza hangei. Helia linowa la mu pomba, la mu pomba, la mu pomba, la mu pomba! La vheya thoho yalo hafha … (Mutalutshedzi u sumbedza shada). A vha a tshi kondelela! Ndi uri a tshi swika hangei nduni, a swika a dzhena nduni hune ha vha na khotsi awe. A dzula fhasi, a pfuna tshisenga.

Helia linowa la pombolowa, la pombolowa! La tsa la da hafha kha khotsi awe. La thoma nga hafha milenzheni. La vha nanzwa, li tshi vha nanzwa, li tshi vha nanzwa, li tshi vha nanzwa, li tshi vha nanzwa! La vha fhedza.

A dovha a dzula fhasi.

A dzula la mu pomba, la mu pomba, la mu pomba! La vheya thoho yalo nga hafha ... (Mutalutshedzi u sumbedza shada). Houla ṅwana a dovha a kondelela.

When those other brothers saw that child returning and carrying the big snake, they did not even hesitate!

They just shouted, ‘Hey! That one brought the monster we ran away from!’

They scattered in confusion!

That young boy started to go back with that big snake.

He arrived and sat down there at the entrance.

It uncoiled, it uncoiled. It returned to its home over there. It disappeared.

That child started to stand up. He started to return. When he arrived, the father called those elder brothers.

He said, ‘Come here, you!’

They came there and he said, ‘You, when I die all my belongings will go to this youngest child because this youngest child of mine, it is he who helped me, because if he had not, I would have been dead. Because I said you must go and fetch Nyangalambuya. You ran back and said I should just die. This child of mine helped me. Everything, cattle, goats, they are for this young one. You will not find a thing because if you had left me, I would have died.’

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 July 2014

See Thinawanga Phungo’s version of this story (2.1.2) for a discussion.

A mbo ḓi tuwa.

Havhaḽani vho ri vha tshi to vhona uḽa ṅwana a tshi vhuya a hwala ḽinowa, a vho ngo tsha dovha vha ima-ii!

Vha to ri, ‘Eeh! Uḽa o ri ḓisela ḽia ḓithu ḽe ra i shavha.’

Vho vha vha tshi shavha vha tshi fhiruludza!

Houḽani mutukana a mbo ḓi huma na ḽia ḽinowa.

A swika a dzula hanefhaḽa munangoni.

Ḽa pombolowa, ḽa pombolowa. Ḽa vhuyelela vhudzuloni haḽo hanengei. Ḽa sunguvhela.

Uḽa ṅwana a mbo ḓi takuwa. A mbo ḓi vhuya. A tshi vhuya, khotsi vha vhidza havhaḽa vhahulwane.

Vha ri, ‘Iḓani, vheiwe!’

Vha tshi ḓa, vha ri, ‘Vheiwe, nṅe ndi khou ri ndi tshi fa, thundu yanga yoṱhe, i ḓo sala na hoyu ṅwana muṱuku ngauri hoyu ṅwana wanga muṱuku, ndi ene we a nthusa, ngauri arali a vha a si ene, nṅe zwi amba zwauri nṅe ndo vha ndi tshi ḓo vha ndo fa. Ngauri vheiwe ndo ri iyana ni yo dzhia Nyangalambuya. Vheiwe na shavha na vhuya na ri kha ndi fe zwanga. Nṅe, ṅwana wanga hoyu o nthusa. Tshiṅwe na tshiṅwe: Ndi kholomo, ndi mbudzi, ndi dza hoyu muṱuku. Vheiwe a ni nga wani tshithu ngauri arali no nnditsha ndi tshi fa?’

Ha vha hu u fhela ha lungano.

♩ = 130
Doh is C
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu'. Nda ri nta - te
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.
wa-nga vha-no kwa-la zwi-ku-lu. Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la- mbu-ya.
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la- mbu-ya.
Vha ri ndi de ndi wa - ne. Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya. I - la 'ri,
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya.
'I - zwi nda bva. Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya. A wu-nga sha- vhi?
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya.
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya. A ri ndi (tshi tsha ni tshi tsha tshi ni)
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya.
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya. I - zwi nda bva. Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya.
Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la - mbu-ya. Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya.
ri nta - te wa-nga vha-no kwa-la zwi-ku-lu. Nya - ga - la-mbu - ya, hae - hae, Nya - ga - la- mbu
(Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya.)

2.6.3 The pot of trouble / Khali ya khakhathi

Here comes a story!

There was a certain old woman.

This old woman stayed with the wife of her child. She had her own house. It was a thatch-roof house.

Here, inside her house, there was a clay pot. Her things were in this pot, her scary creatures, her things for her ancestors.

She told this wife of her child. She said, 'You, daughter-in-law: Can you see this pot that is here? When you are sweeping the house, or smearing the house, do not touch it! And do not open it! This pot is always closed. Do not try to open this pot even once.[i]

This woman of her child agreed. She said, 'Yes.'

That mother-in-law woke up the next morning. She said to that woman, 'Hah, I am leaving and going to the field. I am going to hoe. When you remain behind, this pot I told you about, sweep around it, but do not touch it at all. Leave it just like that.'

That woman remained behind and said, 'Hah, I, this pot! I want to see it. This pot that is always closed, what is inside it?'

She started to do what? To open the pot! Immediately when she opened that pot, those scary things and everything else came out!

That one shouted, 'Hey!'

(Narrator)
Going inside, coming out.[ii]
I have seen inside![iii]
Leaping about while I am squatting here improperly!
Watch me well!

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṅwe mukegulu. Hoyu mukegulu o vha a na musadzi wa ṅwana wawe. O vha a na nnḓu yawe. Ndi nnḓu dzedzi dza mahatsi. Hafho nḓuni yawe-i, ho vha hu na khali. Heyi khali yo vha i na zwithu zwawe, zwikhokhonono zwawe, zwithu zwawe zwezwi zwo no ita zwa midzimu yawe.

A vhudza houḽa musadzi wa ṅwana wawe. A ri, 'Iwe, mazwale, heyi khali u khou i vhona i re hafha? Naho arali u khou swiela nnḓu, kana u tshi shula nnḓu, yone u songo i fara ni! Ende u songo i tibula! Yo dzula yo tibiwa heiḽa khali – u songo vhuya wa vuwa wo i tibula na luthihi heyi khali.'

Houḽa musadzi wa ṅwana a tenda. A ri, 'Ee.'

Hezwiḽani vha tshi fhedza hafhaḽani, houḽani mazwale vha vuwa.

Vha ri, 'Haa, nne ndi khou ḓi tuwa ndi khou ya masimuni. Ndi yo lima. Iwe u tshi sala, heyi khali ye nda u vhudza yone, u ḓi swiela nga thungo, mara yone u songo vhuya wa dzula wo i fara. U i litshe yo tou ralo.'

Ene a tshi sala, a ri, 'Haa, nnehei khali ndi khou nyaga u i vhona. Nne, hei khali yo no dzula yo tibiwa: I na mini nga ngomu hafha?'

A mbo ḓi vha a tshi thoma u ita mini? U i tibula! A tshi tou ri a i tibu, heiḽa khali, ha vha hu tshi bva zwikhokhonono na zwimini na zwimini!

Uḽa a vho sokou, 'Hii!'

(Musimi)
Dzhenani, huma.
Kalinga matiṱi/watiṱi vhone!
Thamu ndo tumba pano/bea!
U ndi vhonesese!
(Vhabvumeli)
Kalinga!

---

[i] This motif also appears in 'The adventures of Papaju' (Marolen, 1990).
[ii] The spirits are swirling in and out of the pot.
[iii] *Kalinga* or *galinga*: a hole, referring to the inside of the pot.

(Chorus)
Kalinga!

She is squatting improperly now!

Those creatures said, ‘Now, watch us well! You wanted to see us, not so? She told you not to open, not so? You opened! Now, you wanted to see!’

That woman started to sing while crying,[i] ‘Going inside, coming out...’

No! The mother-in-law returned and found that person. Those things had come out! She was crying, ‘Yowee!’

The mother-in-law said, ‘I told you! I said, “Never once open this pot! It is not to be opened!” Now, what made you open it? What?’

‘No! I just wanted to see what was inside this pot!’

The mother-in-law replied, ‘Hey! When a person has been instructed not to do or touch something here, she must not do it because one day she will get into what? Trouble!’

That woman cried even more! These creatures![ii] When she wanted them to return to the pot, they refused! While she was asking herself, ‘Should I sweep or what should I do?’, those things were still leaping about! One started to fly around! Then it stood over there.

It said, ‘We want you to see us well because you said you wanted to see us!

‘Going inside, coming out...’

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 July 2014

Tshi khou tumba bea zwino!

‘Zwino, ri vhonesese! A thi ri, wo vha u tshi khou nyaga u ri vhona! Thi ri, vho u vhudza zwauri u songo tibula! Iwe wa tibula! Zwino, u khou nyaga u ri vhona!’

U vho sokou ri. U khou ita a tshi lila, ‘Dzhenani, huma ...’

Hai! Vho-mazwale vha tshi vhuya vha wana uḽa muthu zwiḽa zwithu zwo no bvela nnḓa! U khou lila u vho sokou ri, ‘Yowee!’

Vha ri, ‘Ndo ni vhudza! Nda ri, “Hei khali a i tibuliwi na ḓuvha na ḽithihi, a i tibuliwi!” Zwino, tshe tsha ita u ri inwi ni i tibule, ndi mini?’

‘Hai! Nda ndi khou ri ndi vhone-vho zwa uri heyi khali i nga vha i na mini!’

Vha ri, ‘Hei! Muthu hezwi o laiwa, ha pfi hafhaḽa fhethu a songo ita kana songo fara, ene a songo ita ngauri liṅwe ḓuvha zwi ḓo mu dzhenisa gai? Khomboni!’ Houḽa musadzi o ri u lila-i!

Hezwiḽani zwithu, a tshi zwi vhuyedzedza nga ngomu, a zwi tsha tenda! A tshi ri, ‘Kani ndi swiela ndi tou ita hani?’, nga hafha zwiḽa … Tshiṅwe tshi sokou thoma tshi tshi fhufha nga ngei. Tshi tshi ima nga hangei.

Tsha ri, ‘Ri khou nyaga u ri vhonesese ngauri iwe ṱeli wo ri u khou nyaga u ri vhonesesa!’

Ha mbo ḓi vha u ri ndi u fhela ha lungano.

[i] Sung semi-hysterically in a thin, high voice.
[ii] Narrated very fast.

As in Mashiliye's preceding story ('Brothers'), narrative portrayals of adult relationships arguably are meaningful to children as well as their parents, who may constantly be reminded of their social roles.

The pot at the centre of conflict is metaphoric of a married woman's status and power. A Sotho story depicting conflict between a mother and her married daughter likewise invokes the image of an individual's right to 'stir the pot.'[676] The motif of a forbidden pot also appears in a Tsonga story.[677]

A Venda bride stays at her in-laws for a 'probation period' of one to three months during which her behaviour is carefully scrutinised.[678] Customary law[679] requires that she 'works under the direction of the mother-in-law. She teaches her what has to be done and the rules of the household *(milayo ya muṱani)*. She shows her the cooking pot, the platters, the little vegetable pot, the earthenware dishes, and the stores of flour and meal.'[i]

This is portrayed in a story[680] of a girl who is invited by a woman to become her co-wife:

> 'Come and be my husband's second wife,' that woman said. The girl agreed. She became married and joined her in-laws. When she arrived at their place, they sat down. The house rules were explained to her. 'The porridge must be cooked and put on a plate. Put the plate and water in that house.' Well, the girl cooked and took the plate to the (husband's) house. She also took water there. After a while she was told, 'Go and fetch the plate, the meal is over.'

In this way the young wife is tested for her industry as well as honesty, since theft of food and domestic items is 'greatly feared.'[681] Only when she has passed various tests do the in-laws say they have found a 'real wife' *('Ro wana musadzi-sadzi!')*.[682]

Younger, present-day women indicate that mothers-in-law still retain significant control over their daughters-in-law. Narrator Masindi Maliyehe explained[683] that 'I stay here (at Sanari) with my children. They are obedient and we live together in peace. We do not have a stormy life. My sisters and brothers visit me and we are friends. My daughters-in-law are obedient and we live happily together.'

Conflict involving the power of in-laws over a newly-married woman is exemplified by a popular story that involves the legality of marital agreements.[ii] Its core image is that of a young wife who is forced to pound maize, contrary to pre-marital negotiation.

Such authority is hyperbolised in a story about a woman who is disrespected by her son and his wife.[684] Customary law notes in this regard that 'the husband's mother often (…) takes jealous action against her daughter-in-law because she fears she will not get as much from her son as heretofore.'[685] In the story, the mother retaliates against her son and daughter-in-law by refusing to help them during a cattle raid. The young wife says to her mother-in-law, 'I should kill you too. Why didn't you open the cave[iii] for him?' 'You ate meat with your husband,' the old woman replied. 'You gave me the entrails only. I paid him back by letting him be killed.'

The fact that the pot in Mashiliye's story is a sacred, very private heirloom *(tshitungulo)* that houses ancestral spirits, makes the young woman's transgression particularly serious.[iv] The implied fearful appearance and actions of the spirits may vicariously frighten young participants into submission.

The punishment of the culprit is depicted by the image of her falling onto her backside with her legs open *(bea)*, which is an improper way for a woman to sit. Blacking[686] cites a *vhusha* initiation song that teaches a girl 'to sit with her legs together.' The implication is that the woman has been overwhelmed, and is sitting in humiliating disarray.

The setting of the story in a thatch-roof house may be significant. Narrator Sara Munyai remarked (1.7; fig. 26) that ancestral spirits do not know modern houses, only older thatch-roof adobe homes. The song contains traces of Chikaranga, which points to the antiquity of the story.

Maliyehe's presentation is exceptionally dramatic. This quality may be rooted in her highly emotional, even volatile personality that seems to be evoked by her abject material conditions. Her imitation of the young woman crying while singing uncannily expresses her own distressing life.

The introduction starts softly and hesitantly, and gradually builds in

[i] Junod (1927, I:128) notes similarly 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.'

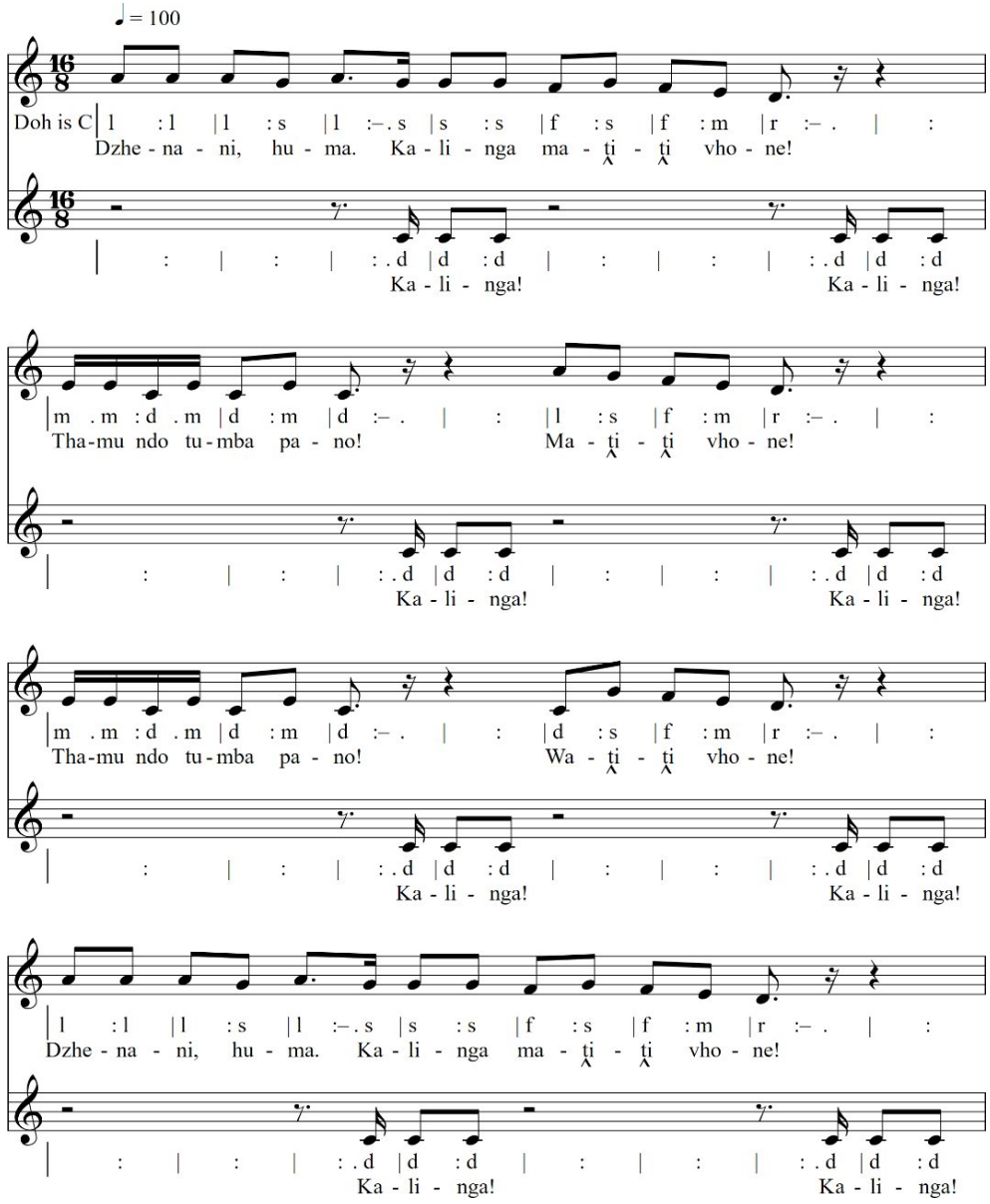
[ii] See 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1) and 'The princess who slept late (Kruger, 2014).

[iii] The family's hideout.

[iv] It rather obviously evokes the Greek myth about Pandora's 'box' which is popularly interpreted as the origin of evil.

tempo, volume and intensity until it reaches fever pitch, only to subside and emotionally rise again. Mashiliye's head and arm movements become bigger as she depicts the woman covering her head with her arms as the creatures are flying around her.

Fig. 78. Future Ndivhuwo Singo
Folovhodwe, 2012



2.7 Thizwilondi Kwinda

My name is Thizwilondi[i] Lucie Kwinda. I live with my husband here at Folovhodwe. His name is Tito Mbofheni[ii] Ndwamato.[iii] He is not at home today. He has gone down to the river with his fishing net.

We are old and poor, and our lives are hard. Just look at our yard and small home. We were going to move into that brick house over there that my son started to build. He died before it was completed. That is why you only see its floor and walls. We cannot afford to complete the house.

I was born on the farm of Lallie Fourie in 1937. Many workers lived here.

My father was Alusi Kwinda. He was Lallie's security guard. He also helped to move the cattle between fields. My mother was Athikhatali[iv] Munyai.

[i] 'I do not take care.'

[ii] 'Tie me up.' This name is usually born from family conflict during the time of a birth.

[iii] 'One who argues.'

[iv] 'I do not tolerate trouble.'

She helped others to pick oranges.

My parents had five children, all girls. Two are deceased and the remaining three live here at Folovhodwe.

My mother was a *Malombo* trance dancer (3.3). She allowed me to play the tenor drum, *thungwa*. Although I came to know trance music well, I never became a spirit medium.

I am a member of the United African Apostolic Church. I am happy there. God's Word speaks especially to our children and their future.

My mother's mother, Lavhengwa,[v] used to live with us when I was a young girl. It is from her that I heard *ngano* and *thai*, riddles. I will tell you some of her stories, but first some riddles:

Dzo ya u nwa dza vhuya dzo tshena?
What goes to have a drink and comes back white?
Khavho!
A ladle!

As you know, *khavho* is a beer ladle made from a small calabash. Here it is like a person who has a white ring around her mouth from drinking maize beer!

Now guess this riddle:[vi]

Vhana vha mme anga, dzhenani nduni ri tshina marungudane.
Children of my mother, go inside the house and let us dance excitedly.
Khali i tshi xaxara!
The cooking pot is bubbling!

The house is a cooking pot! The children are all those things we put inside, like beans, maize and peanuts we make *tshidzimba* stew from. When we say *'tshina'* (dance) and *'marungudane,'* we mean that bubbles are rising from the bottom of the pot and exploding on the surface!

Young girls know a pot that bubbles, because they are expected to help their mother cook and wash the dishes. I also fetched water, collected wood

[v] 'One who is hated.'

[vi] This riddle is cited by Blacking (1961:9-10, 28).

and pounded maize.

We had such good times in our *mahundwane* play-villages! (fig. 107; 3.3). We first built our home from clay. Then we decided whom to marry. Then we cooked food and made clay-children. We baked them in a fire and dressed them. They were beautiful!

We swam and fished in the Nzhelele river. We used hand-lines with a hook and sinker. A hook can easily be made from a safety-pin. We even had floaters to tell us when a fish was hooked. For bait we simply took hard porridge, like people still do today.

My parents planted their own crops on Lallies's farm. We grew sweet melon, gem squash and millet. We also collected fruit in the veld, like those red berries of *mahuhuma*.[i] We always joked that the baboons did not eat them because they appeared to have been dipped in blood!

Our closest shop was at Doreen, where the railway bus stopped. This is where we bought things like flour and clothes. I am happy when I think of this shop.

You see me smiling because I have memories of eating bread and jam during Christmas. This is when our family travelled to Musina to buy food items we could not always get at Doreen, like toffees, barley sugar and long buns.

This does not mean we did not eat well at other times. Lallie always gave venison to his workers. During Christmas he slaughtered two oxen for us. He also gave bottled beer to adults, and porridge to all of us. Then we danced *malende* (fig. 108; 3.3) because we were so happy. Lallie would sit and watch us.

I went to all the girls' initiation schools. They took place at Tshirundu village (1.8.2), which still existed at that time.[ii]

We sometimes travelled to the farm of Joubert Fourie.[iii] It was a few hours' walk away. My father's sister lived there. She was always glad to see us, and gave us food and drink.

I met both my husbands on Lallie's farm. This is where we married and had our children. My first husband worked in Johannesburg where he was knifed to death.

My second husband, Nndwamato, and I were Lallie's employees our entire working lives. After many years, Lallie sold the farm to Americans who started to farm with game. All of us had to leave, and we retired to Folovhodwe.

I had nine children. Five of them died from illness. This is so hard. I do not know what to say. I try to forget these things.

I have a son who lives at Muswodi-Dipeni. He used to work at the copper mine at Musina, but he has been unemployed for long.

My remaining children all live at Folovhodwe. The yard where we live was owned by another son. His legs started swelling in 2013 and then he died.

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[i] Shakama plum, *Hexalobus monopetalus*.

[ii] During the 1930s.

[iii] The father of Tobie Fourie (box 37).

2.7.1 Bird watchers / Mutukana a re na vhuholefhali

Here comes a story!

Now, a boy is at his mother's home.

His granny says to his mother, 'This child of yours, as he is also my child, I am asking for him.'

The mother asks, 'This child of mine who is disabled, what do you want him for?'

'I am saying he must remain behind and guard my fields while I go to pick marula fruit.'

The granny takes that child. She leaves, she leaves with him.

'When I leave with him, I arrive there. I arrive and fit his legs. I put legs on that child. I say, "Stay here and walk around. Guard my field against birds."'

That child remains behind and starts to roam the field while singing this song:

(Narrator)
Granny gave me legs.
I must remain watching out for birds.
Yes, watchers, watchers of birds.
(Chorus)
Bird watchers.

The granny says, 'That child is walking with the legs I gave him. When I come back from gathering marula fruit, I come back, take off those legs and put them in the grainbin.'

When that mother comes to fetch him, he no longer has legs. Yes, she does that time and again!

Now, again, when he is singing, he says, 'Granny gave me legs...'

One day the granny says, 'He is again roaming and watching those birds after I fitted the legs.'

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, ene u havho mme awe.

Hoyu ṅwana wawe o rali sa ṅwana wanga, a ri 'Ndi khou humbela ṅwana wawe.'

Nda ri, 'Ṅwana wanga uno wa tshihole, ni ḓo tou mu ita hani?'

A ri, 'Ndi khou ri a sale a tshi linda hafhaḽa masimuni anga, nne ndi tshi ya u yo doba mafula.'

A dzhia habe uḽa ṅwana, a ṱuwa naye, vha ṱuwa naye.

'Ndi tshi yo ṱuwa habe, ndi tshi swika hangei, ndi swika nda mu ṱuma milenzhe. Ndi tshi ya hafhaḽa ḓuluni. Ndo ṱuma uḽa ṅwana. Nda ri, "U sale u tshi mona u tshi linda zwinoni hafha tsimuni yanga."'

Uḽa ṅwana habe a tshi sala u khou ḓi mona na tsimu a tshi ḓi imbelela lonolu luimbo,

(Musimi)
Makhulu vho mpha milenzhe.
Ndi sale ndi linde zwinoni.
Ee, sa vha linda, vhalinda zwinoni.
(Vhabvumeli)
Susavhalinda.

'U khou tshimbila uḽa ṅwana nga milenzhe habe e nda mu fha. Ndi tshi vhuya mafulani, ndo ḓa nda ṱumulula ili milenzhe, nda vhea ḓuluni.'

Uḽa mme awe a tshi ḓa, u khou ḓi mu dzhia a si tshena milenzhe. Ee, a tshi ḓi rali habe!

Zwino, habe a tshi ḓi imbelela a tshi ḓi ri, 'Makhulu vho mpha milenzhe ...'

'U khou linda habe zwiḽa zwinoni habe a tshi tshimbila, nne ndo mu ṱuma habe milenzhe.'

Mme awe vha tshi vhuya vha tshi mu dzhia, vha wana o ṱhafha!

Bird watchers / Mutukana a re na vhuholefhali (continued)

When his mother returns to fetch him, she finds him standing!

That was when she came there and asked him, ‘You, now, I can see you guarding granny’s fields. How do you do it?’

That one replies, ‘My granny, she gives me legs. I stay there and walk around. Stay and watch! You will see me walking and guarding the fields. I walk around with a bow.’

Now, the mother indeed is staying and watching. She finds that child walking with legs. That is when she fetches her child. Yes, she is taking her child.

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 July 2014

Ndi hone habe mme awe vha tshi vhuya vha tou vhudzisa vhaḽa. Vha ri, ‘Iwe, zwino thi u khou linda ngei masimuni a makhulu. U tou lindisa hani-hani?’

Uḽa a ri, ‘Makhulu wanga, nṋe vha khou mpha milenzhe. Nda sala ndi tshi khou tshimbila khole, vha-lalele. Vha ḓi vhona ndi tshi khou tshimbila ndi tshi khou linda masimuni. Ndi khou tshimbila ndi tshi mona na luhura.’

Zwino, habe nangoho mme wa hone vha lalela. Vha wana uḽa ṅwana u khou tshimbila nga milenzhe. Ndi hone vha tshi vho dzhia ṅwana wavho. Ee, vha tshi vho dzhia ṅwana wavho.

Havha hu u fhela ha lungano.

Several biographical sketches in this collection show that grandmothers are lynchpins in family networks. Nyamukamadi Ndou explains that, in the past, '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 looked after us.' Thinawanga Phungo and Nthuseni Mudau more recently cared for grandchildren whose parents were unable to raise them. Life-stories also describe how narrators lived with or visited their grandmothers when they were children. Grandfathers very seldom feature in these stories or descriptions of *ngano* practice. Narrator Lucia Nelutshindwi explained that the roles of grandmothers as child-minders and narrators cannot be separated.

Grandmothers in this collection are represented as experienced and caring ('Cannibals'; 2.3.1). Their shrewdness is even zoomorphised in 'The wisdom of Hare' (2.3.7) in which the wily animal is addressed as granny.[i] However, the actual ambiguity of their narrative identity is evident in 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2) where the elderly female features as provider as well as evil spirit.

The female *ngano* narrator is an inheritor of an ancient narrative practice that regulates social organisation. She is also a keen observer of the nuances and contradictions of human nature. Scheub[687] describes her as an intellectual who expresses 'special qualities and patterns of thought,' and for whom 'the concept of good has as many expressions as that of evil.' As such she sympathises but also interrogates and caricatures without favour.

The grandmother is the antagonist in the two versions of 'Bird watchers' in this collection, the variant presented by Mavhina,[688] as well as a Sotho equivalent retold by Postma.[689] In the latter, a grandmother murders her grandsons. Her baby granddaughter initially escapes her malevolence because she is expected to bring bridewealth into the family. However, the grandmother subsequently cuts off the baby's hands and feet. She secretly re-attaches them when her granddaughter has grown up, and forces the child to cook for her.

Some *ngano* thus reverse the otherwise supportive grandmother-grandchild relationship. They portray old women as uncaring and even cruel. They may be greedy and exploit others, even members of their own family. Mavhina's story suggests that the grandmother's dislike of her daughter-in-law transforms into her treatment of her grandchild.[ii] Similarly, a grandmother forces her orphaned grandson to herd her cattle in 'We do not pound' (2.17.1). In 'Smelly blankets,'[690] she steals meat belonging to wild animals, even though she owns a field.

Stories about the greedy grandmother are implicitly critical of her exploitation of youthful naivety. The boy in Kwinda's story does not perceive his granny's malevolence. This story, as well as 'The dancing mice' (2.1.3) even hints at witchcraft, as witches are popularly believed to put their victims (zombies) to work in their house and fields. This is supported by the narrator's explanation that the fitting and removal of the boy's legs involves *madambi* or evil magic.

The outcome of the wicked grandmother's actions is death, although such punishment may be hyperbolic. She is found guilty in court and executed in the Sotho story, while Mavhina shows her dying from shock when her evil is revealed.[691]

However, she is not treated without understanding. The elderly may be experienced and wise, but they are also vulnerable. Their occasional perverse behaviour may be rooted in deep fear of aging, illness and dependence. The old woman in the Sotho story initially controls her granddaughter (symbolised by magic dismemberment) because she needs her to care for her.[692] In 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2), the young hero says, 'Today I am going out to find something small to eat with my grandmother.' 'The magic tree' (2.14.1) similarly explains how a 'granddaughter came there when she saw her granny becoming old and frail.'

In 'Smelly blankets,' a grandmother jumps into a large pot of beer to hide from her revengeful animal pursuers.[693] Her malodorous body and clothes are symbolic of her inevitable passing, while her grandson's heroic act of killing the elephant that swallowed her, is indicative of his rise to adulthood.

The grandmother in the Sotho story initially returns her granddaughter's hands and feet so that she can cook for her, only to take them away afterwards. However, the granddaughter subsequently refuses to return her limbs. Whereas her grandmother previously controlled her, she now starts exercising her independence.[694]

[i] The gender of wild animals in *ngano* is often indicated. However, Hare's identity is ambiguous. As trickster he appears to be male, but this is never made explicit.

[ii] *'Mme a hoyu munna vho vha sa funi hoyu musadzi.'* (Mavhina *et al.*, 1977:7.)

The role of the elderly female as care-giver also may force her into untenable situations. Drought forces a grandmother to look for food in the wild to feed her grandchildren. She raids the nest of an ostrich while the children guard its approach. She does not hear their warning. 'When the ostrich went inside the (nest), it found that old woman there. It caught her and killed her and left her there.'[695]

Narrator Thinawanga Phungo explains that she must care for twelve grandchildren on a old age pension and three child grants. 'After spending our money on food, there is nothing left for school. This means the children are not completing their education.' However, she will not succumb to dishonourable solutions. For her there is only response, namely 'to ask God for mercy.'

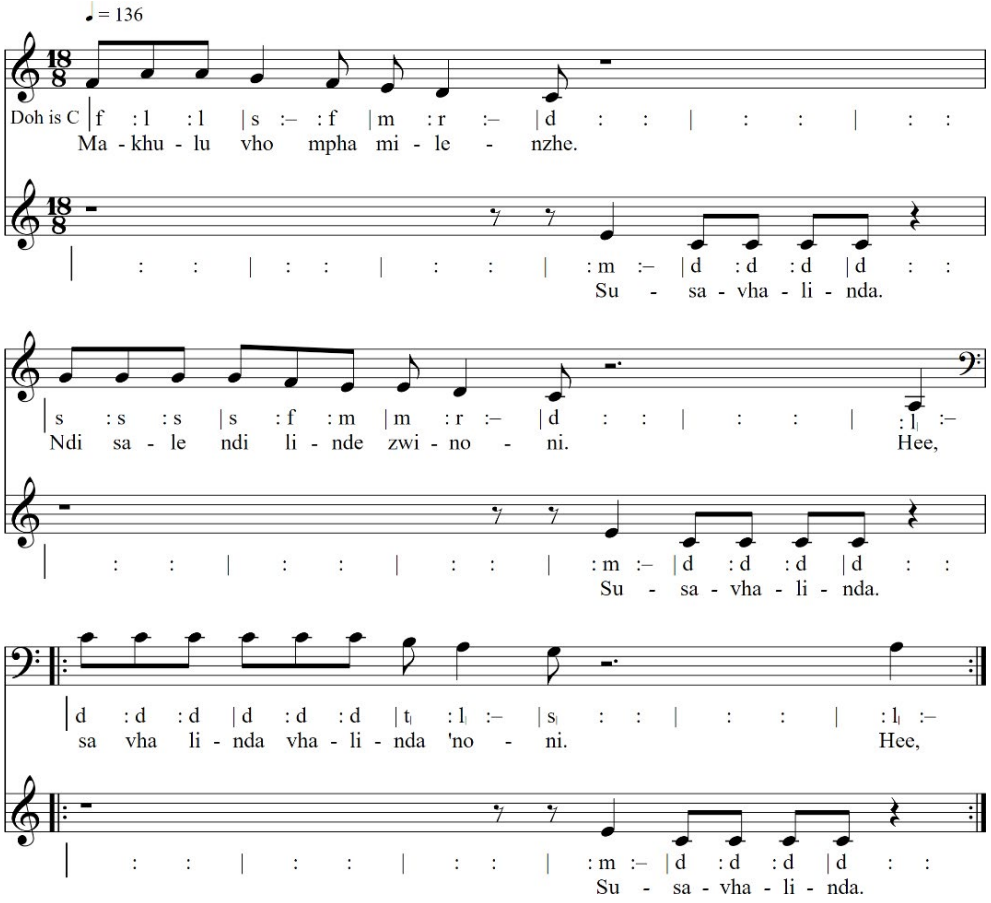

Fig. 79. At the home of narrator Leah Madzhie Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2009

2.7.2 The python-healer / Nyangalambuya

(Rehearsal)

Now, this old man was ill.

When he falls ill, they say, ‘We are going for healing.’

When they are going for healing (they say), ‘This person who is going to heal you, he is a person who shakes the leather pouch with divining dice. He speaks with his eyes closed when casting the dice. He starts to speak. He says, “This illness that you have, it can be cured by the snake. This snake, for it to heal you, it must be fetched by your children. When the children arrive with it, it will lick you. When it licks you, that is when you will become healed.”’

Now, those children are going one by one, by one, by one, by one.

They are running (back) one by one, they are running, they are running!

This last-born, that is when he (goes). When he arrives, (the snake) speaks with closed eyes when he is like that.

It comes out and coils around the boy, this python. It coils, it coils!

He returns and comes with it to that house.

It comes and licks that father of theirs. When that father of theirs is licked, hah, that is when he starts to get up and become healed.

This snake is doing it again, it is again coiling around that child!

It is returning again. When it is going there to its hole, hah, it arrives, it uncoils and it goes inside its hole.

That child returns to that house.

When he returns, that father says, he speaks, he says, ‘The year I die, my axe will be taken by this child of mine. Everything will be left with my child who is last-born, because if it were not for him, I would have died.’

(Manweledzo a nganea na ndowe-ndowe i rangelaho u tambiwa ha nganea.)

Zwino, hoyu mukalaha o vha a khou lwala.

A tshi khou lwala, vha ya vha ri, ‘Ri khou ya u yo tungula.’

Hezwi vha tshi ya u yo tungula, havha vhane vha khou ya u tungula khavho, ndi muthu a ne a pfunga tshitimba. A ri, a tshi tungula a tshi kumedza ndi hone, a tshi vho amba. A ri, ‘Vhone u vhu lwadze vhune vha vha naho, vhu a lafhiwa nga tharu. Heyi tharu, hezwi i tshi vha lafha yo tea u dzhiiwa nga vhana vhavho. Havha vhana vha tshi da nayo i do kona u vha nanzwa-ha. Hezwi i tshi vha nanzwa, ndi hone vhone vha tshi do fhola.

Zwino-vho, vhala vhana habe vha khou di ya nga muthihi nga muthihi, nga muthihi, nga muthihi, nga muthihi.

Vha tshi shavha nga muthihi, vha tshi shavha, vha tshi shavha!

Uyu wa lupedzi, ndi hone a tshi vhuya. A tshi vho swika a tshi vho amba o bonya na mato o tou rali.

La bva la mutanda heliani li tharu. La mu tanda, la mu tanda!

A vhuya, a vhuya, a tou vhuya na lo hafhala mudini.

Ya da ya nanzwa havhala khotsi wa hone. Havhala khotsi wa hone vha tshi nanzwiwa haa, ndi hezwi vha tshi vho takuwa vha tshi vho fhola-haa.

I tshi vho dovha heila tharu, i tshi khou dovha i tshi vho pomba kha houla ṅwana!

I tshi vho dovha i tshi khou huma. I tshi vho ya hangei mulindini wayo, haa, ya swika ya pombolowa ya dzhena mulindini wayo.

Houla ṅwana a vhuya hafhala mudini.

A tshi ya u vhuya, havhala khotsi awe vha ri, vha tshi amba, vha ri, ‘Na ṅwaha une nda fa, mbado yanga i do fariwa nga onoyu ṅwana wanga. Tshiṅwe na tshiṅwe tshi sala na ṅwana wanga onoyu wa lupedzi, ngauri ngavhe a si ene ngavhe ndo fa.’

(Performance)

Now, this child, this eldest one, he comes there.
When he comes while singing, he says,

(Narrator)
Nyangalambuya.
Father is ill.
Nyangalambuya, come and cure him.
If I arrive.
When you do not come.
Others run away from here.
(Chorus)
Nyangalambuya.

As the python comes out, that one runs away!
Then the second one comes there. This second one also tries.
When he starts to sing, he says, 'Nyangalambuya ...'
That python comes out, and the other one runs!
This third one comes there.
He comes there and says, 'Nyangalambuya ...'
It comes out and that one runs!
That is when the fourth one comes.
The fourth one also comes and starts to sing, saying,
'Nyangalambuya ...'
As it comes out, that one runs!
This is when the fifth and last-born leaves home.
When he arrives, this last-born, when he arrives, he kneels, sits and crosses his legs. As he sits with his legs crossed, he starts that song.
When he sings, he says, 'Nyangalambuya ...'
That one (the snake) starts to close its eyes!

(Vhuimbileli)

Zwino, hoyu ṅwana, hoyu wa tanzhe, a ḓa habe.
A tshi ḓa a tshi khou imbelele a tshi ḓi ri,

(Musimi)
Nyangalambuya.
Tate vha no gwala-gwala.
Gala, vha no tingani danikwe.
Izwi nda swika.
O siya u ngaṱi.[i] / Hezwi u ngaṱi.[ii]
Vhaṅwe vha no dzisa pano.
(Vhabvumeli)
Nyangalambuya.

Iḽa i tshi ri ndi ya bva, uḽa ndi u shavha!
Ha vha hu tshi khou ḓa-vho wa vhuvhili. Uyu wa vhuvhili na ene-vho a ḓa a thovholola.
A khou ḓi imba a tshi khou ḓi ri, 'Nyangalambuya ...'
Uḽa ndi u bva, houḽa u khou shavha!
Ha ḓa hoyu wa vhuraru habe, a tshi ḓa u ri, 'Nyangalambuya ...'
Ya vha i tshi bva, uḽa a vha a tshi khou shavha!
Ndi hone hu tshi khou ḓa wa vhuna habe.
Wa vhuna na ene-vho u khou ḓa-vho u khou ḓi imbelela a tshi ḓi ri, 'Nyangalambuya ...'
I tshi tou ri ndi ya bva, uḽa a vha a tshi shavha!
Ndi hone hu tshi vho ṱuwa hoyu wa lupedzi wa vhuṱanu.
A tshi swika habe, hoyu wa lupedzi, a swika a tou gwadama. A dzula

[i] Chikaranga.
[ii] Tshivenda.

The python-healer / Nyangalambuya (continued)

When the boy sings, he says, ‘Nyangalambuya ...’

This is when it comes out, comes out and coils around that child. It coils, it coils, it coils, it coils! It closes its eyes!

This is when the boy leaves and returns with the snake.

When he goes with it to the house over there, it uncoils.

It licks that old man. When that old man is licked, that old man is being healed.

This is when that child is carrying that python. It again returns over there to its hole. That python is crawling into its hole.

When that child returns, the father says, ‘Hey, my axe will go to this last-born child of mine. All my possessions will go to my last-born child.’

This is where the story dies.

Folovhodwe, 4 July 2014

See Thinawanga Phungo’s version of this story (2.1.2) for a discussion.

fhasi a pfuna a tshisenga zwino. A tshi pfuna tshisenga tshawe a tshi thomisa ulu luimbo.

A tshi imbelela, a tshi ḓi ri, ‘Nyangalambuya ...’

Uḽa a mbo ḓi bonya maṱo!

A khou imbelela a tshi ḓi ri ‘Nyangalambuya, tate vha no gwala-gwala.’

Ndi hezwi i tshi vhuya, ya vhuya ya mu pomba houḽa ṅwana. Ya mu pomba, ya mu pomba, ya mu pomba, ya mu pomba! O bonya maṱo!

Ndi hezwi a tshi vhuya a tshi ṱuwa nayo.

A tshi ya nayo muḓini hangei, i tshi swika i tshi pombolowa.

I tshi ṋanzwa havho mukalaha. Havhaḽa mukalaha vha tshi ṋanzwiwa, havhaḽa mukalaha ndi hone vha tshi fhola.

Ndi hone uḽa ṅwana a tshi hwala iḽa tharu. A ḓovha a i humisa hanengei mulindini wayo. Iḽa tharu i tshi vho fhelela mulindini wayo.

Uḽa ṅwana a tshi vhuya, vha ri, ‘Nṋe, mbaḓo yanga i ḓo fariwa nga uno ṅwana wanga wa lupedzi. Zwoṯhe na thundu yanga i fariwe nga ṅwana wanga wa lupedzi.’

Havha hone hu u fa ha salungano.

As explained (1.2), *ngano* culture involves varying degrees of memory retention. Certain narrators were able to recall one or two stories immediately, while others had to delve deep into their memory for core images. Many simply said they could not remember anything at all.

Those willing to attempt a narrative performance, yet impeded by memory lapse, often requested a rehearsal ('practice') prior to recording. For some, the event was unexpected and discomforting. The presence of a video camera sometimes induced a state of mild nervousness, but it usually dissipated as self-confidence and trust developed.

Kwinda indicated that she wanted to rehearse 'The python-healer,' and agreed to be recorded. A comparison of her rehearsal and performance offers privileged if basic insight into how form in *ngano* is generated.[i] Regional oral narratives generally share this form, which is discussed extensively by Scheub[696] in relation to Xhosa *ntsomi*.

In essence, the rehearsal contains a descriptive core only, namely that of an encounter with the feared python-healer. It indicates that the children are 'going one by one' to fetch him, preceded by a short description of the divination ritual which is excluded from the performance.

In contrast, the core image in the performance expands with every repetition of the song. While Kwinda's rehearsal merely delineates 'the shape of the narrative alone,'[697] her song performances dramatise the core image. Eschewing the usual 'contrasting three' (two similar initial images contrasted by a concluding third),[ii] Kwinda expands the number of journeys (and accompanying song performance) to five.[iii] The final and only successful journey brings about the change of state essential to narrative,[698] and articulates motifs involving power relations, growing up and ideal human qualities (see Thinawanga Phungo's version of the story; 2.1.2).

That Kwinda excluded the song from her rehearsal indicates that it had endured in her memory. Scheub notes in this regard that core-images are recalled by 'mental cues,' of which songs are most memorable and therefore relatively stable.[699]

This is often the case in current *ngano* practice in which *ngano* songs are performed independently of their original story.[700] However, there not only is a category of *ngano* without songs, but certain narrators tell stories without their original song because they cannot remember it.[iv]

The song that initiates the narrative refocuses attention on its particular form, which also structures Lucia Nelutshindwi's version of the same story in this collection, as well as 'One-who-always-sleeps' by Nyamukamadi Ndou. The performance, initiated by the song, omits the (arguably digressive) description of the divination ritual, and instead immediately engages participants. Scheub[701] notes that plots are widely known, and therefore not participants' first concern. 'It is the performance that counts,' and to this end the narrator's fundamental objective is rapport with them. This she achieves by immersing them dramatically in narrative actions and emotions.

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[i] Also see Kruger (2014:67-68).

[ii] See Booker (2004:194) who describes three as the 'number of growth and transformation (…) fundamental to the way the human imagination works.'

[iii] Salfina Mashiliye's version of this story (2.6.2) features three repetitions. Also see 'Magic' (Kruger, 2014).

[iv] See 'Hare and Tortoise' (2.4.3) by Mashau Tseisi.

♩ = 136
Doh is C
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - aa, Nya - ga - la - bu - ya, ha - ee - aa.
Nya - ga - la - bu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - aa. 'Ga - la, ta - te vha no gwa - la - gwa - la.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - bu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - aa. 'Ga - la, vha no ti - nga - ni da - ni - kwe.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - bu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - aa. Nya - ga - la - bu - ya. I - zwi nda swi - ka.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - bu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. O si'a u nga - ti. 'Ga - la', vha-ñwe vha no dzi - sa pa - no.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - bu - ya.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya, hae - aa, Nya - ga - la - bu - ya, ha - ee - aa.
Nya - ga - la - mbu - ya. Nya - ga - la - bu - ya.

2.8 Nthuseni Mudau

So, you have followed the tracks of storytelling here to Mabvete village (fig. 90). Yes, I used to tell *ngano* to my daughter Mashudu Mathala, whom you know.[i]

I was born at the mine hospital in Musina in 1937. My names are Nthuseni[ii] Elina. Like so many others, my father worked at the copper mine. He was Phaswana Tshirundu. My mother's name was Swetani Mulea.

My father died when I was still very young. My mother told me that he was killed in a mine rock-fall. After this, my mother left Musina with us children. We were three girls and a boy. We joined her relations at Ha-Mutete, near the Nzhelele river. We started to farm there.

Only my brother went to school. We girls were not allowed to go. My father said school would make us mad.

We had to herd and dip our family's cattle. They were more than twenty! We also ploughed with them. Let me show you, this is how I handled the plough while driving the oxen with a whip …

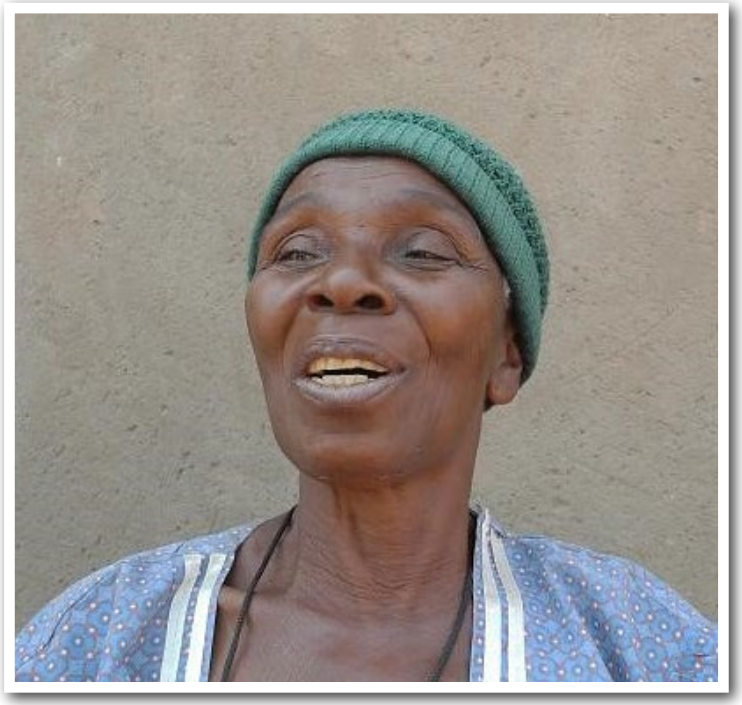
We picked our maize, stamped and winnowed it, and then made porridge. We also fished in the Nzhelele river, using reeds and hooks baited with porridge. After doing our chores at home, we played *ndode* stone games (3.3) and *mufuvha*, that board-game of our forefathers.

During this time my mother's mother told us *ngano*. Her name was Mandilaya. This is a Tsonga name.

The women first cooked our supper. Then we ate. Only then did we hear stories, right there where the cooking fire was dying. This was the TV of our youth.

When I became an adult, I moved to Tshirundu. I joined my father's sister on the farm of Lallie Fourie. I stayed there for five years. I picked tomatoes, carrots, potatoes and oranges.

Tshikale was the district along the Nzhelele river. The area to the east was Tshirundu, near the Nwanedi river. We lost these districts to white farmers. This is why I still remember the praise of Tshirundu, of my father's people:[iii]



Ri tshi vho rendiwa, hu pfi ndi vho-riṋe
When we are praised, it is said that we
vha ha Tshirundu-mafhundumuka.
are the powerful people from Tshirundu.
Tsharandau uyo vuwa gandwani, hafha e a vha o lala hone.
That praise poet wakes up at the fountain, there where he slept.
Arali ya takuwa heiḽa ndau, gandwa ḽi ya fhela maḓi haḽa.
When that lion gets up, there will no longer be water in that fountain.

My husband was a miner from Musina. We lived in the Doreen area. My marriage fell apart after my husband took a second wife. We argued about the children, since some got more food than others. My husband then moved to Johannesburg. I never saw him again. I just heard later that he had died.

To survive, I started working at Hope Bricks at Doreen. My mother used to work there. This was during the 1980s. They still make bricks at that place.

This was a bad time for me. I felt rejected and hurt, and started drinking.

[i] Narrator Zachary Tshamano's mother. See Kruger (2014).
[ii] 'Share with others.'
[iii] See section 1.8.2 for a discussion of the praise.

I used to spend my wage freely on beer until only ten rand remained. Once I went to my sister in Musina to ask for money. She became angry, and asked me how much food I thought could be bought with the amount spent on two crates of beer. And when a child became ill, where would the money come from? I was ashamed and decided to turn my life around. I joined the ZCC at Hope Farm. First I had to confess my drinking. Then I was baptised. I was dunked three times in the Nzhelele river. And so I became reborn. I never touched beer again.

We knew the manager at the brickyard as Kuodo.[i] His son Billy later came in his place.

Women did the same work as men. I had to load pallets with bricks before firing. This work was hard on my hands, and I made myself gloves from the inner tube of a lorry tire.

Our day started with roll call, followed by a break at eleven o'clock. We were given *mageu*,[ii] maize flour, vegetables and even meat. We prepared our food at home and brought it to work.

I was paid by the pallet, but I cannot remember how much. The work was very hard for me, and I suffered ... When I look into the distance, it is because I do not want to remember that time. After this I moved here to Mabvete where I now live with my grandchildren.

I have four children. My daughter Mashudu Mathala is the eldest. Then there is my son. He has serious problems with both legs, and is unemployed. My daughter Rosina is the youngest. Her son Aluwani is sitting next to me.

My last-born is Joyce. She works in Johannesburg. She is a widow. I am staying here in her house. I care for her two young daughters. They are Vhuthu who is ten years old and Mashudu who is eight. They stay with me because there are no school fees here at Mabvete.

Look, this is Mashudu sitting here with me, writing in her school book (fig. 16). She is in grade three. She is quiet and always dresses neatly. Joyce comes home two or three times a year, and then gives me cash to care for the girls.

When I left the brickyard I was given pension. It did not last and now I must survive on my welfare grant. This is very difficult. There is no water here. I am too old to fetch and carry water. So I must pay someone five rand to bring me water in a twenty-five litre container.

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[i] Claude Cawood.

[ii] A non-alcoholic maize beverage.

2.8.1 Death and evil / Lufu na vhuvhi

Here comes a story!

It is Tsieni[i] and his wife. The wife dies. She is buried.

Her children say, 'We are going to collect firewood.'

They arrive. They are shown a dead tree. They are cutting this tree. They are splitting it.

There is the sound of splitting, khoo![ii]

But this trunk is hollow![iii]

When the trunk sounds *khoo!* for the first time, there is silence. The second time there is silence. The third time there is a person singing,

(Narrator)
Makwarela!
My wife!
I am crying with my children.
(Chorus)
Thee!

The children are running and returning home over there.

They say, 'Father, we saw our mother today!'

The father asks, 'Where did you see her, my children?'

They answer, 'Our mother was put inside a hollow trunk of a wild olive.'

The father says, 'Let us go my children.'

The father wants to remove the ax so that his wife should live again.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ndi Ntsieni u na mufumakadzi wawe. Mufumakadzi a lovha, a di vhulungiwa.

Vhana vhawe vha ri, 'Ri ya khunini.'

Vha swika. Vha sumbedzwa le lo danda. Hoyo muri vha u wisa. Vha u fhandukanya.

Hezwi vha tshi ri khoo!

Mathina danda helia li na bako nga ngomu.

Hezwi vha tshi ri khoo! lwa u thoma, vha pfa tshete. Lwa vhuvhili, vha pfa tshete. Lwa vhuraru vha pfa, hu na muthu a no imba.

U ri,

(Musimi)
Makwarela!
Musadzi wanga!
Ndi khou lila na vhananga.
(Vhabvumeli)
Thee!

Vhana vha shavha vha humela hangei hayani.

Vha ri, 'Baba, rine ro vhona mme ashu nahasi!'

Baba vha ri, 'No vha vhona gai vhananga?'

Vha ri, 'Mme ashu vho longowa bakoni la muri wa mutwari.'

Baba vha vha vha tshi ri, 'Ri a tuwa vhananga.'

Baba, nga mbiti dza u toda mufumakadzi wavho, hu tshi pfi o vhonala nga vhana, vha tsekisa mbado.

Hei mbado a i tende!

Honoula nwana o no di sumbedzwa u pfi a ite ngauralo. A tshi rali mbado, ndi u tenda.

A ri, 'Kha vha litshe ndi reme, baba.'

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[i] As in the case of narrator Johanna Muleba taking Mathuvhelo Mavhetha's name for an actant (Kruger 2014:134), this name is borrowed from a boy participating in performance.

[ii] *Khoo!* and *Thee!* (chorus) are onomatopoeia of the axe blade striking the very hard wood of a wild olive.

[iii] Lit. 'it has a cave inside.'

This ax refuses to budge![i]

That other child is shown how to do it. When she tries, the axe becomes free.

She says, 'Let me chop, father.'

The trunk sounds 'khoo!'

And then, 'dzii!'[ii]

'Khoo!' for the second time.

When she chops for the third time, there is singing:

(Narrator)
Who are you chopping with the axe?
(Chorus)
Khoo!
(Narrator)
Makwarela!
(Chorus)
Thee!
(Narrator)
My wife!
(Chorus)
Khoo!
(Narrator)
I am crying
(Chorus)
Thee!
(Narrator)
with my children!

Vha ri, 'khoo!'

Vha pfa, 'dzii!'

'Khoo!' ndi lwa vhuvhili.

Hezwi vha tshi rema lwa vhararu, vha pfa u pfi,

(Musimi)
Ndi nnyi o rema mbaḓo?
(Vhabvumeli)
Khoo!
(Musimi)
Makwarela!
(Vhabvumeli)
Thee!
(Musimi)
Musadzi wanga!
(Vhabvumeli)
Khoo!
(Musimi)
Ndi khou lila
(Vhabvumeli)
Thee!
(Musimi)
na vhananga!
(Vhabvumeli)
Thee!

Ndi hafha havhaḽa munna vha tshi huma vha tshi yo nyaga maine.

[i] Lit. 'refuses to agree.'
[ii] A term indicating silence

(Chorus)
Thee!

Then that man returns home to find a diviner.[i]

The diviner comes and casts his dice.

He says, ‘Really, it is your wife! People placed her here.[ii] Now, as you know, your wife is dead and buried. Do not take her back home. You will take her elsewhere, to a place far away where nobody knows her.’

Truly, that man is carrying his wife. He is going very far!

He is coming back and taking his children away one by one.[iii] They are leaving for that place.

This is the end of the story.

Mabvete, 3 October 2012

Maine a tshi ḓa a tshi tungula hafhala.

Aa ri, ‘Ngoho̓, ndi musadzi wavho̓! Ndi hone he a vhewa henefha nga vhavhei. Zwino, ngauri musadzi wau u khou ḓivhea uri o no lovha, ro mu vhulunga. U songo tsha mu hwala wa mu isa hayani. Iwe hwala u tu̓we nalo̓ shango. Uyo dzula kha mashango a kule hune vha sa u ḓivhe.’

Ngoho̓, houla̓ munna a hwala musadzi wawe. A tu̓wesa!

A ḓa̓ a tshi vho̓ tou tswa vhana vhawe nga muthihi nga muthihi. Vha tshi tu̓wa kha helo̓ shango.

Havha ndi u fhela ha lungano.

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[i] The diviner (referred to by translator Pfananani Masase as a ‘coroner’) is called to investigate the case because it involves witchcraft. Masase also indicated that some diviners have the power to resurrect the deceased.

[ii] Lit. ‘she was put here by those who placed her.’

[iii] So as not to cause suspicion.

This story integrates two themes. The most obvious is that of witchcraft. The narrator describes the aftermath of the death of a woman believed to have become a zombie *(tukwana)* who is controlled by a witch.

Zombies are also referred to as home-wanderers or revenants.[702] They feature in religious belief that conceptualises relationships between the living and the deceased. They generally function to 'establish grounds for human ethical expectations and the appropriate behaviour and social roles of community members.'

Witchcraft culture in precolonial times most frequently involved

> personal relationships that were close, competitive and marked by social inequality (…) Parents often made witchcraft accusations against their daughters-in-law, husbands against their wives and the senior houses in polygynous marriages against junior houses. Yet most witchcraft accusations occurred between neighbours, because disparities in wealth was most apparent in the case of neighbours (…) Through time narratives of witchcraft increasingly present(ed) a complex discourse on social, inequality, deprivation and envy. Witchcraft accusations clustered in personal relations that were marked by the existence of various forms of inequality. In the vast majority of cases relatively privileged villagers accused those who were relatively disadvantaged of witchcraft. [703]

This evolving pattern was entangled with late colonial politics. The military coup (6 April 1990) that terminated the legal status of the Venda enclave (1979-1989) was preceded by a spate of vigilante executions of individuals accused of supporting oppressive political rule. They included the so-called Folovhodwe nine, a group comprising five men and four women. A hearing by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[704] on their execution determined that

> (all) the counts relate to the persons whom the Applicants[i] regarded as those indulging in witchcraft and thereby countering the progress to political advancement of the people (…) The Applicants were part of a large group of persons whose expressed intention, on the 10th day of March 1990, was to deal with those indulging in witchcraft (…) The Applicants both described how the group of people went from home to home of those whom they intended to attack. (…) In each event the victim died as a result of being burnt and the homes were almost always burnt.

The belief in the purifying effect of burning is deeply rooted in local cosmologies. It is portrayed in a story by Nyamukamadi Ndou[705] who describes how a fire is lit and kept burning to ward off evil. Kriel[706] cites several instances of African magical-religious practices that involve a constantly burning fire. Such fires also feature in Venda initiation rituals.

The Commission noted furthermore that

> there was a genuine belief amongst many of the residents of the area that witchcraft was a phenomenon from which unusual powers could be derived. (W)hat looked like human bodies, were seen to be off-loaded at (a) deceased's farm. The high level of his productivity at the farm with so few farm labourers, led to the belief that he used what was termed 'zombies' to work his orchards.

The Commission rejected various applications 'on the basis that they were not committed with any political motive but were related to jealousy and malice on the part of the Applicants.'[ii]

Those accused of witchcraft often are older people.[iii] Following a long life of work and accumulation, they may come to own an orchard, irrigated field or herd of cattle. Narrator Mukondeleli Mathunya remarks correspondingly that

[i] The accused applied for amnesty in respect of their crimes. One person was jailed for over twenty years. He was released in 2013, and returned to his home at Folovhodwe. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that he managed to avoid attention because very few people remembered him.

[ii] Discussing witchcraft accusations in Green Valley (Limpopo Province), Niehaus *et al.* (2001:84) note that 'most witchcraft accusations occurred between neighbours, because disparities in wealth was most apparent in the case of neighbours, and perceptions of these inequalities generated intense fears that envious neighbours would resort to witchcraft.'

[iii] Niehaus *et al.* (2001:93) similarly note that 'elders were often suspected of witchcraft (…) Elders are powerful, owing to increased wisdom and the control of certain types of knowledge.'

> my fence is strong, and my garden is big. I am old now, but I am still strong. This because I eat vegetables and porridge. I add chicken and goat manure to my soil. This is why everything grows so well: Avocado, mango, *munii*,[i] lemon, orange, paw-paw, beans, lettuce, sugar cane and marula.

Pensioners more recently have been at the centre of conflicts as old-age pensioners. Meagre as their welfare grant is, it may ward off virtual starvation. Consequently, it is believed that the elderly may be witches who enrich themselves by means of zombies – resurrected corpses that work secretly for them.

Zombies can be divided into two groups, namely

> the guilty and the innocent. The former includes those dead people whose lingering is understood to be the punishment imposed on them for an offense committed during their lifetimes (…) Among the innocent dead (…) we may count all those whose lingering is not explained as being a punishment for offenses committed during their lives. (They include) people who were maltreated, bewitched, or murdered (and) those dissatisfied with the manner of their burial. (They) might be described as the 'unprovided.'[707]

The status of zombie is sometimes attributed to a person who has died an unusual, often premature death, such as that resulting from a car accident or crime.[708] The zombie is believed to blame her family for her death, or not being remembered. She may consequently return home and cause domestic items like clothes and food to disappear.

Some say she can be seen by family members only, and cannot be communicated with. Others indicate that she is visible only after consulting a diviner, who provides them with a magic substance that is rubbed on their face. Only now can the zombie can be communicated with. Those who touch a zombie without magical protection are likely to die.

Accusations of witchcraft often surface at funerals, and close family members are usually identified as culprits. They consequently may relocate (a decision not taken lightly) to avoid being implicated in the matter, and to escape conflict with the zombie.

Translator Pfananani Masase suggested that the zombie theme is unusual for a *ngano*. This is true in the sense that *ngano* usually involve the typical small conflicts of daily family life. However, *ngano* also excavate deep layers of human consciousness, and witchcraft adds tension to a family's response to the death of a spouse and parent. The grieving husband 'wants to remove the axe so that his wife will live again.' However, the actual protagonist is his young daughter who requires his guidance during her initial encounter with death. She must develop a personal understanding of mortality, and is therefore the only person able to dislodge the axe.

An autobiographical *ngano* entitled 'Sorrow' expresses Florence Mphoshomali's emotional response to the death of her father.[ii] This was her first experience of mortality, and it came as a severe shock to her. Her sorrow *(vhutungu)*, she explained, was profound and enduring, and this is what her story conveys. It harbours dark anxiety and contemplates suicide as the only effective escape from emotional turmoil. However, the protagonist (a boy) is accompanied through his mourning by an older family member. She tells him that life is precious and must be cherished.

The motif of collecting firewood usually triggers narrative development. Here it serves a unique purpose, namely as a symbolic device that links a basic female chore with a naïve child's nascent awareness of mortality.

The hollow trunk in fact is the mother's coffin. Chopping the trunk symbolises opening the coffin to ensure that it still contains the deceased. If it is empty, it means she has become a roaming zombie.[iii] This, however, is not the case in this story, as the mother's spirit speaks from within.

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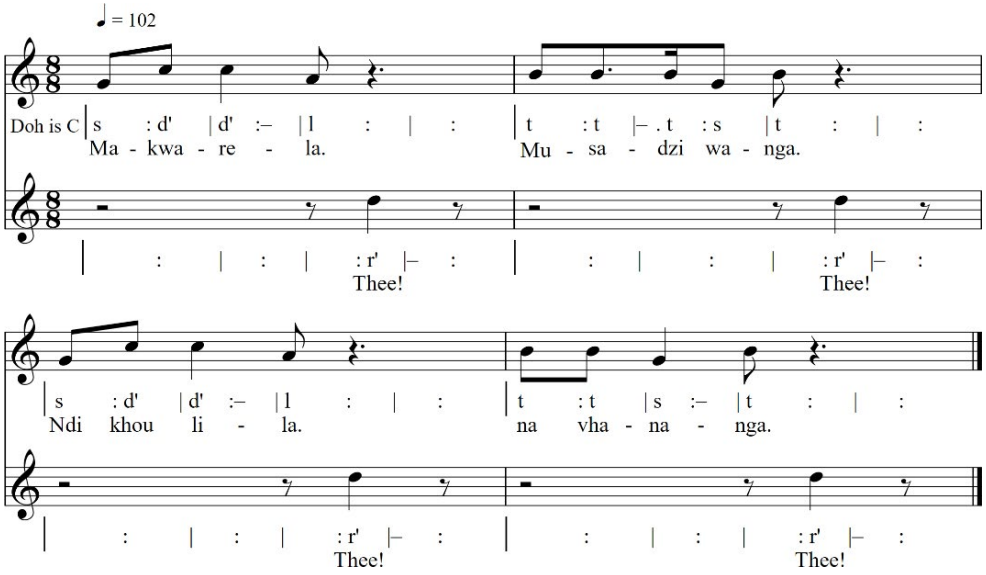
[i] The fruit of the dikbas or long-live, *Lannea discolor*, from which the name Niani is derived.

[ii] Kruger (2014). This is one of only two original *ngano* in the series. See 'My father and mother' (2.24.1) by Munyadziwa Matamela.

[iii] Mavhetha reported an incident involving a zombie at Madimbo in the Limpopo valley. The family of a deceased dug a grave and returned early the next morning for the burial. When they got there, a zombie was lying in the grave. She was a naked old woman who said she had been carried and deposited there by a butterfly *(tshisusu)*. People were very scared of her and wanted to attack her with axes. However, the police were summoned. They covered her with a blanket and took her home.


♩ = 102
Doh is C
s : d' | d' :– | l : | :
Ma - kwa - re - la.
t : t |– . t : s | t : | :
Mu - sa - dzi wa - nga.
: | : | : r' |– :
Thee!
: | : | : r' |– :
Thee!
s : d' | d' :– | l : | :
Ndi khou li - la.
t : t | s :– | t : | :
na vha - na - nga.
: | : | : r' |– :
Thee!
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Thee!

♩ = 102
Doh is C
s' :– | m' | r' : r' | r' :– | t : | :
Ndi nny'o re - ma ba - do?
: | : | : | : r' |– :
Khoo!
s : t | d' :– | l : | :
Ma - kwa - re - la.
t : t |– . t : s | t : | :
Mu - sa - dzi wa - nga.
: | : | : r' |– :
Thee!
: | : | : r' |– :
Khoo!
s : t | d' :– | l : | :
Ndi khou li - la
t : t | s :– | t : | :
na vha - na - nga.
: | : | : r' |– :
Thee!
: | : | : r' |– :
Thee!

2.8.2 Marriage / Vhuhadzi

Here comes a story!

There is a man called Prince.[i]

A certain wife of his wants a leopard-hide apron.[ii]

Prince gets up one morning. He takes his axe and leaves home without telling anyone.

He is waiting for this leopard!

The leopard is hunting. When it comes back from hunting, it is ambushed by Prince.[iii] Prince kills that leopard. He cuts up the carcass. He spends the whole day preparing that apron.

Towards late afternoon Prince returns with that apron.

He arrives there at his parents' home and says, 'That apron that was wanted, here it is. I have returned with it. Now, what remains is my love for this woman. I do not want to drink water in which a frog is calling.'[iv]

The woman wakes up and does those things: She picks up her water calabash, she roams around looking for water. As she is looking, she comes to water and calls.

She sings,

(Narrator only)
My husband is a Lemba.[v]
'I am a Lemba: I do not drink polluted water.'[vi]

She hears a frog calling, 'huu ... huu!'

She passes.

[i] Lit. 'it is Prince.'
[ii] *Tshirivha:* 'goatskin back apron of married women' (Van Warmelo, 1989:421).
[iii] Lit. 'it finds a monster hiding.'
[iv] Lit. 'water from which the sound of a frog is heard.'
[v] There are traces of Sesotho in the lyrics.
[vi] Lit. 'water in which there is crying' (croaking).

Salungano! Salungano!

Ndi Prince.

Muṅwe musadzi wawe uri ndi nyaga tshirivhe tsha nngwe.

Prince a vuwa, a doba mbaḓo yawe a songo vhudza muthu a ṱuwa.

A ṱwa o lalela heyo nngwe.

Nngwe yo vha yo yo zwima. I tshi bva hangei mazwimoni ya wana ḽivhanda ḽo lalela.

Prince a vhulaha nngwe heiḽa. A viekanya zwoṯhe. A ṱwa a tshi khou suka tshirivha hetshiḽa.

Ḽi tshi kovhela nga madekwana Prince a vhuya na tshirivha hetshiḽa.

A ḓa phanḓa ha vhabebi vhawe a ri, 'Iḽa nguvho ye ya vha i tshi khou todiwa, khei. Nṋe ndo vhuya nayo. Zwino, zwanga-vho ndi lufuno na hoyu musadzi. Nṋe a thi nwi maḓi a no lila ḓula.'

Musadzi vha a vuwa vha ita zwezwiḽa. A doba khali yawe. U khou ya u nyaga maḓi. A tshi nyaga maḓi houḽa musadzi, u ḓa hu na maḓi a vhidzelela.

A ri, 'Munna wanga,' u ri,

(Musimi fhedzi)
Munna wa ka uri ke Mushavhi.
'Ke Mushavhi: Ka ke nwi metsi a ḽiḽaho, wee!'

A pfa ḓula ḽi tshi khou ri, 'huu … huu!'

A fhira.

A ya kha liṅwe gaka. A ḓi gwadama sa zwezwo.

A vhidzelela, a ri, 'Munna wa ka uri ke Mushavhi ...'

A ḓi pfa 'huu!' A fhira.

U khou ḓa kha ḽa vhuraru zwino. Ndi heḽo ḽa Vho-Zhou.

Ḽa Vho-Zhou a vhidzelela a ri, 'Munna wa ka uri ke Mushavhi ...'

A pfa niks.

She goes to a certain pool. She is kneeling like that.
She calls by singing, 'My husband is a Lemba …'
She hears 'huu!' She passes.
It comes to the third turn now, that of Mr. Elephant.
She calls at Mr. Elephant's pool, 'My husband is a Lemba ...'
She hears nothing.[i]
She sings again, 'My husband is a Lemba ...'
She says, 'This is the right one.'
Now, she dips her calabash until it is full.
Now, she says, 'Let me drink, the water is sweet as honey.'
She is drinking!
They are singing that song,

(Narrator)
Tshovhelele, ii-ee-ee-ee.
When I am dead,[ii] you must rejoice.
(Chorus)
Elephant!

It is Mr. Elephant who is bringing his big things.

When he comes, he finds that woman unable to get up. She cannot get up and is afraid!

When he arrives, that elephant grabs the woman, *moo!* The woman is swallowed whole, without being hurt.[iii] She is inside the stomach of the elephant!

Her husband and parents exclaim, 'The poor child! Where is she now?'

A dovha lwa vhuvhili, 'Munna wa ka uri ke Mushavhi ...'
A ri, 'A ya ndi one haya.'
Zwino, a kelela khali yawe ya ḓala maḓi.
Zwino, o vho ri ndi nwe-vho. U pfa maḓi a ḓifha zwiṅwe-vho haya, anga notshi.
U khou ḓi nwa!
Hu khou imbiwa yeneyo,

(Musimi)
Tshovhelele, ii-ee-ee-ee.
Kana nda kafa/kapa, mutakatiwa leka-leka.
(Vhabvumeli)
Zhou!

Ndi Vho-Ndou vha khou ḓisa maḓithu avho.

Vha tshi ḓa vha wana uri uḽa musadzi ha tsha kona uri anga takuwa. U vho balelwa na u ofha!

A kha ḓi ri i khou swika, ndou uḽa musadzi, moo! Musadzi ndi u miliwa o sokou ralo. Ha ngo kwashekanyiwa. Ndi u ya dzula thumbuni ya ndou!

Munna, vhabebi vha ri, 'Vhonani ṅwana wa vhathu! U gai zwino?'

Houḽa nga mbiti, ḽi tshi tsha ndi u dzhena tshiporoni tsha teki ḽa musadzi. U khou fhira magakha mavhili haya. Heḽi ndi ho fhelelaho teki ḽa musadzi wawe ... Na khali i henefha! A tshi sedza u wana ndou yo tou, vhii!

Houḽa u khou lidza tshidzholo tshawe.
Ndou ya mu vhidza.
Ha pfi, kudi-kwede, kudi-kwede!
Houḽa Prince u khou sendela a tshi ofha. A ri tsetsetse!
Ene u khou tshi dia muthannga.
'Ha pfi tsho naka badi!'

[i] Lit. 'she hears *niks*' (Afrikaans, *nothing*).
[ii] *Kafa*, varied with *kapa* (Chikaranga).
[iii] Lit. 'without being broken.'

That furious husband is following the tracks[i] made by the woman's tackies. He is passing those first two pools. Here the tracks made by his wife's tackies end … And there is the water calabash! When he looks he finds the elephant, vhii![ii]

Prince is playing his zither.[iii]

The elephant calls him.

The zither goes kudi-kwede, kudi-kwede![iv]

Prince is coming closer, but he is scared. He approaches carefully!

He is really playing well, the young man.

Mr. Elephant says, 'It sounds very beautiful!'

Kudi-kwede! is heard there, kudi-kwede!

Mr. Elephant says, 'Give it to me!'

Prince gives it to him!

You see him playing it like this: He is lying on his back! His lordship is lying on his back and he is really performing well!

That husband stabs padzhu! and his wife falls out over there!

He looks and finds that his wife has gone mad!

He drags her to another pool where they wash, wash each other. They spend the whole day there ... They are smearing each other with fat.

They arrive back home at sunset. They have come from the pool of the elephant.

This is the end of the story.

Mabvete, 3 October 2012

Kudi-kwede hafha, kudi-kwede!

Ha pfi mphei-vho.

Prince ndi u fha.

Ha pfi vha tou tshilidza so: A vha tou ganama! Ṱali muhali vho ganama vha khou ḓi tshidia tshidzholo!

Houḽa ndi musi a tshi padzhu, musadzi wawe a tshi kapata hangei!

A tshi sedza a wana uri musadzi wawe ndi mpengo!

Ndi hafha a tshi kokodza vha tshi ya kha liṅwe gakha vha tshi ṱambisana, vha tshi ṱambisana. Vho ṱwa henengei. Vho ḓodzana na mapfura avho.

Li tshi rali ndi hafha vha tshi khou swika muḓini. Vha tshi bva gakhani ḽavho zhou.

Lwa vha lungano lwo fhela.

---

[i] *Tshiporo*, Afrikaans *spoor*.

[ii] Indicating the impressive size of the animal.

[iii] *Tshidzolo*, a bowed half-tube zither with a single string (fig. 111).

[iv] An imitation of the sound produced by the short bow of the instrument.

This story portrays marital conflict, a theme self-evidently common in regional oral narratives.[i] It is varied in 'The man who scratched a lion' (2.21.1) and 'The woman who ate python eggs' (2.20.1).

Thematic variations portray divergent outcomes of spousal strife. Some stories arrive at no clear conclusion, perhaps implying that marital conflict is inevitable, and should be mediated. 'The man who scratched a lion' simply ends: 'That girl started to come out of the stomach. She came out, and what happened then? The story ends when she came out from the stomach of the wild animal.'

Some narrators, like Mudau, show conflict to be resolved. This is exemplified in a story documented by Lestrade[709] in which a husband and wife hide food from each other during famine. They discover their mutual subterfuge, and the story ends with the man remarking, 'My wife, but indeed our hearts are alike. I intended to hide from you, and you intended to hide from me. Let us come out there outside, my wife, so that we may eat properly seated. Right, then those people (…) began a new life. They no longer troubled each other.'

Other variations depict the (sometimes violent) termination of a marriage, either by means of divorce or when a spouse is killed. Their plot is usually structured around images of wild animals. Certain of these animals are situated in a moral wilderness since all they do is to eat one another.[ii] Others in turn inhabit the spirit world with its magical attributes.

In a Tsonga variation,[710] the wife drinks the fountain dry and the king of the animals (Lion) sends his chief councillor (Rhinoceros) to investigate. Rhinoceros becomes enraged and gores the woman to death.

A wife may ask her husband for the hide of a lion or leopard. Interpretations of this image require further investigation. However, a similar Sotho story describes a woman telling her husband to prove his fidelity by killing a wild animal. He must then take out its liver and give it to her to eat: 'Then I will know that you love me with a love that is red.'[iii]

In other versions a wife asks her husband to bring her special food. 'The woman who ate python eggs' (2.20.1) projects the image of a wife who 'did not eat the food that was cooked there at home.' The python is sometimes portrayed as lover (2.2.4), and her desire for its eggs could allude to infidelity.

As is the case in *ngano* and certain categories of vocal music,[iv] the fidelity of the wife is habitually called into question. Venda customary law[711] points out that, while a wife is required to be faithful to her husband so that her children may be his, 'it is not common for a husband to be faithful to his wife, and limit his attentions to her.' Stayt[712] notes that 'in the old days if a man discovered his wife with a lover he killed him on the spot.' The husband therefore wants his wife's assurance that she will remain faithful to him, even though the reverse may not be the case.

The image of the wife's infidelity is polluted water. Canonici[713] explains that 'the search for water from a frogless river is a well-known image in African folktales.' It conjures up 'a peaceful, uncontaminated place' whose sweet water symbolises moral transformation.

Certain pools and river banks are locations for swimming, washing and collecting water. In stories, this is where illicit relationships typically germinate. The husband accordingly requires his wife to socialise without becoming adulterous; in other words, to drink water that is not inhabited by a frog. One version of the story portrays the wife as a crow who voraciously pecks and swallows her frog lovers, 'T̰a-t̰apu, t̰a-t̰apu! Dzho-dzhombi! Mili-mili!'[714]

The notion of fidelity is expanded in the lyrics.[v] The Lemba are believed to be descendants of Arabian coastal traders who merged with local populations. They historically observed exclusive ritual and marital practices, and Blacking[715] notes that they consequently 'are supposed to have earned praise for maintaining their "racial purity."' The husband is therefore not actually of Lemba extraction. This image expresses his demand that his wife remains faithful to him.

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[i] See 'Hearts which are alike' (Lestrade, 1949), 'The woman at the fountain (Kruger 2014), 'The liver of a wild animal' (Postma, 1957) and 'The woman who could not be satisfied' (Marolen, 1990). Also see Canonici (1996:199-223), Makgamatha (1991:159-163) and Von Sicard (1967:344-348, 354).

[ii] This is portrayed evocatively in 'Eating with wild animals' (Kruger, 2014).

[iii] Postma (1950:81-94). As explained in the discussion of 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4), African folklore 'attaches a widely-spread symbolism to the liver. Together with blood and heart, the liver is considered the repository of the life principle.' (Canonici, 1996:215.)

[iv] Especially *malende* choral dance-songs (3.3), as well as certain genres of contemporary popular music. See Kruger (1993).

[v] Gavhi (1990:19-20) offers a variation of this story with similar lyrics.

The wife avoids two pools inhabited by frogs. The third pool is silent and she is fooled into believing that it is not polluted. In fact, it is the pool of Mr. Elephant who seduces her. The water she drinks so abundantly is 'sweet as honey,' and makes her stomach swell. One version[716] of the story describes her giving birth to two baby boys. Most, however, indicate that her stomach bursts, and imply that her (hyperbolic) demise is just punishment for her infidelity: 'When I am dead, you must rejoice.'

The woman's 'madness'[i] is not to be interpreted literally. It indicates any condition of immorality, although it is commonly invoked to pass judgement on adultery. The injunction against the woman's immorality is evident in the fact that she sings alone. Solo singing in *ngano* is generally indicative of the moral isolation of a performer. In addition, she is moving about in the veld among wild animals, beyond the limit of regulated human existence.

Given the woman's arrogance, she may be attracted by the power of Mr. Elephant who is described as *muhali*, which is 'a laudatory epithet for, and term of address, to a chief.'[717] The narrator expands the image of sweet water, and makes Mr. Elephant's power evident in 'his big things,' which refers to the large quantity of honey he crumbles in the water (also expressed in the song line *'Tshovhelele, ii-ee-ee-ee')*.

Mr. Elephant could also be a traditional ruler.[ii] The story correlates with a well-known *ngano* in which a ruler abducts the wife of a poor man.[iii] The man is a *tshilombe* musician (see 2.1.4). His artistic expertise magically transforms his abducted wife into a pole. The ruler is shamed publically and so, as in many other *ngano*, the mighty are cut down to size by the power of the morally-sanctioned musical voice. Here, in 'Marriage,' the sound of the man's bowed zither enchants Mr. Elephant who lies on his back in ecstasy. This exposes his stomach, from which the musician frees his wife.

The spousal reconciliation portrayed in the above-mentioned story documented by Lestrade is echoed in the conclusion of 'Marriage.' Mudau explained that washing and smearing bodies indicates healing. Water is a recurring narrative image symbolising a condition of purity. Kriel[718] in turn links the symbolic meanings of fat with magic, medicine and various rituals. He cites Laubscher on Xhosa ritual in which the bodily application of fat is an ancient archetype symbolising 'a new skin (…) as a silent reminder of a future life.' Although the wife is viewed critically, she is therefore also treated with sympathy, and given the opportunity for moral regeneration. As such she is swallowed whole by Mr. Elephant, and not 'broken' *('Ha ngo kwashekanyiwa')*.

[i] *'A tshi sedza a wana uri musadzi wawe ndi mpengo!'*

[ii] The narrative abduction of women by rulers may have actual roots. Jean-Marie Dederen (correspondence, 3 April 2019) notes that this would have involved widows, destitute women and the wives of the poorest of subjects (narratively portrayed as orphans). This would have been regarded as abuse of power, and may have been associated more commonly with the sons of rulers 'more tempted to misbehave' (see 'The thin old woman' in Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iii] 'The veranda pole which changed and became a woman' (Lestrade, 1949) and 'The king and the musician' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

2.9 Mukondeleli Mathunya

I see you outside my gate again! I have no more stories for you! … Well, all right, I am always happy just to chat.[i] Let me take out my kitchen chairs for you and Mr. Mavhetha.

There is a place in the Mutale district called Muzila. I was born there in 1927. My father was Nyaledzani Mathunya. He had four wives.

My mother was Tshavhungwe Kwinda. She ploughed. She had five children. Only my sister and I remain.

My father's other name was Charley. He worked in Johannesburg. This was very long ago! There were no trains or taxis. He walked there without shoes. When he came back years later, he walked again.[ii]

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 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.

You know, we used to eat a lot of leafy vegetables. But my father! He hated them. He said they are nothing but leaves under which snakes like to crawl. His favourite food was meat. He had many cattle, goats, donkeys and also fields.

Our family was never 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.

What I remember as a child is riding a see-saw. It was made from a wooden 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.

We also played *mahundwane*, the family game (fig. 107; 3.3). We were husband, wife and children, and we cooked food. Our children were dolls we 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. We went to *domba* initiation (fig. 17; 3.3). That was the time we cut river reeds from which to make the *lugube* musical bow (fig. 67).

Muzila was also the place I met my husband. Like my father, he worked in Johannesburg. This was at those stone crushers in Springs, and also in Delmond.

I went to live with him at Benoni for two years. This is what a wife must do if she wants children. We had to move from Benoni to Pennyville because my husband had no work permit. I kept house and looked after my children.

Later we left town and came back to Niani. We settled at Mopane. My husband became foreman on the farm of Opperman Fourie. He herded cattle and goats. He also helped to catch game. We were given some land to plant maize, water melons and sorghum. Opperman often gave us meat. For us, those were good times.

Then my marriage broke up. I moved here to Folovhodwe while my husband remained at the farm. He was later gored by a *khongoni* wildebeest.

[i] This biographical sketch is based on that which appears in Kruger (2014). It has been integrated with information gathered during a subsequent conversation.

[ii] Mashudu Mulaudzi (fig. 21) describes in song how a man returns home from work in an urban area after many years of continued absence. He is walking, and is dirty and tired. He is as thin and desiccated as a strip of biltong. Only his mother recognises him, and he suffers the humiliation of having to present his identity document to others to prove who he is (Kruger, 1993:247-249).

His intestines protruded from his body, but he managed to push them back! He was rushed to Musina hospital, but his wounds did not heal properly. So he returned to me at Folovhodwe where he passed away. Yes, this is a woman's life ...

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.

One of my daughters is in a wheelchair and sells fruit and vegetables next to the main road. She is there every day, when it is cold, when it is hot. And there is a lot of dust from lorries and cars that rush past.

She became ill when she was a young girl. We were still living in Johannesburg. We took her to hospital where they gave her a walking stick. But things became worse. Later she used two crutches, and then a wheelchair.

One of her children has become very ill. She is an epileptic. My daughter must sometimes stop selling fruit and vegetables to care for her. Then she has to survive on child grants.

My son works in Johannesburg as a telephone technician. He rents a house in town, and visits us about five times a year.

This stand, where we are sitting, belongs to him. It just so happens that my house was built first. As you can see, he is now building his own house next to mine. It is nice and big!

My son's wife died. She became ill after visiting him in Johannesburg. She passed away when her son was only a baby. He is now three years old. See, here he is, hiding behind me ...

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.

My vegetable garden is big, and its fence is strong. I am old now, but I am still strong. This because I eat vegetables and porridge. I add chicken and goat manure to my soil. This is why everything grows so well: avocado, mango, *nii*,[i] lemon, orange, paw-paw, beans, lettuce, sugar cane and marula. But this only happens when I can connect my garden hose to a tap there in the road. I have to share it, and the tap often runs dry. And my hose must cross the yard of my neighbour.

Then there are times when I cannot afford fertiliser, and my harvest is small. I want my own connection from the main water pipe, but it costs R910. How am I supposed to afford this?

I am not a person who cares very much for religion. I do not belong to any church or have much need for ancestral spirits.[ii] But I do care about my own death and my family. This is something I learnt from my father.

I belong to the Humbulani[iii] Burial Association. When I die, a sum will be paid to my family so that they can bury me. We meet once a month and then have a meal. I become happy when I receive chicken and bread.

(Mukondeleli Mathunya passed away during December 2017.)

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[i] The fruit of the dikbas or long-live, *Lannea discolor*, from which the name Niani derives.

[ii] Stayt (1931:241) notes in this regard: 'The BaVenda are not very curious about the spirit world. Some think that the spirits live a very similar life to that lived on earth, marrying, keeping cattle, and growing mealies in a prosperous and untroubled world; others think there is no spirit world but that each individual spirit lurks around its grave or former home waiting for an opportunity to bring trouble to its descendants.'

[iii] To care for (lit. 'think of') each other.

2.9.1 The magic hide / Tshikumba tsha madambi

Here comes a story!

You see, it is you who died and left a herd.

The inheritance was divided between the children. The first son got cattle, the second son got calves and the last-born was only given the hide of an ox.

That one who was given the hide came there with those cattle that were given to the one who became the new chief.

He spent his day there in the veld, looking after the cattle.

As he was kneading the hide, he sang,

(Narrator)
Lululu-lusili!
Some are given chieftainship.
I am given a hide.
(Chorus)
I will see what tomorrow brings.

He walked around, looking for a good place on the ground to stretch the hide. After he returned home, after returning, that hide was eaten by termites.When he returned the next morning, he found an anthill where the hide had been!

He sang, 'Lululu-lusili!…'

That anthill exploded, phaa!

Two wives came out!

He went home with his calves and his wives.

Folovhodwe, 27 September 2010

Salungano! Salungano!

Ndi vhone vho rali thiri, vho fa-i, vha sia danga ḽavho.

Vhana vha sala vha tshi kovhana. Muṅwe a dzhia kholomo, muṅwe a dzhia namana, muṅwe a fhiwa tshikumba.

Houḽa o fhiwa tshikumba a ḓa na dzi kholomo hezwiḽa zwa houḽa o fhiwaho vhuhosi.

A tshi ṱwa hangei ḓakani a tshi khou lisa.

A tshi suka tshikumba hetshiḽa, a tshi ri,

(Musimi)
Lululu-lusili!
Vhaṅwe vho no fhiwa vhuhosi.
Nne ndo no fhiwa tshikumba.
(Vhabvumeli)
Tshadzha mutshavhonde.

A tshi swika a mona-mona hafhaḽa a sia o tsika tshikumba tshawe.

A vhuya hayani. A tshi vhuyaha, tshiḽa tshikumba tsha sala tsha muniwa.

A tshi vhuya nga matshelo a tshi ya, a wana tsho no vha tshiulu!

A thoma u imbelela, 'Lululu-lusili! ...'

Tshiḽa tshiulu tsha mbo ḓi ri, phaa!

Ha bva vhafumakadzi!

A vha a tshi khou ṱuwa u ya hayani na dzikholomo dzawe na vhafumakadzi vhawe.

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

Mathunya explained that she could hardly remember any stories, and this seemed a logical explanation for the brevity of her performances. Even so, I initially responded to her stories with a sense of disappointment. Missing the abundance of symbolic meanings in the stories of certain other narrators, I assumed hers to lack certain indispensable meanings. In fact, their core images are saturated with implied meanings activated by particular cultural scripts. Her stories are anthills (1.3) that conceal creative potential and give rise to unexpected outcomes.

This story involves several interrelated themes, the core of which is coming of age. A boy encounters the power and privileges that accrue to seniority. Initially dissatisfied with, and discouraged by the limitations of his youthful status, he comes to understand that he too will grow up and reap the benefits of adulthood: He will 'see tomorrow' *('Tshadzha mutshavhonde')*.

As in the story of the python-healer, the benefits of growing up are explicitly described as material, usually involving the ownership of animals. However, most narratives portraying coming of age in fact draw attention to interrelated material, spiritual and social wealth, the accumulation of which is dependent on self-realisation in an integrated world.[719] This is made clear in a story by Nyamukamadi Ndou entitled 'Fortune lies ahead.'[720] As explained (1.5), the term for fortune is *'zwivhuya*,' which may be interpreted broadly as virtue or moral integrity. The story repeatedly implies that the maturing young person should not forsake *zwivhuya* for material wealth.

Anthills and eggs are symbols of *zwivhuya*, fertility and growth in Karanga and Venda *ngano*. Nenzhelele[721] presents a story in which a bride emerges from an egg. Her husband beats her in a fit of drunkenness and she returns to the egg. The husband eventually meets a hare who cracks the egg with a club. When the woman re-emerges, the hare lays claim to her. The woman is then offered a choice between her husband and the hare, and she chooses the latter.

The egg is a more common symbol in Karanga *ngano*.[722] Here a younger brother usually inherits an egg only, in other words, the potential for self-realisation. It is he who must grow up and hatch the egg. For this to happen, the egg must be cared for, involving the dedicated inculcation of values and norms. The egg is therefore described as 'the heart of the house'[723] that constitutes material as well as social wealth. Material reward takes form as villages and animals, while the latter involves family and friends. Importantly, the boy has become a young man. He may now marry, and the egg therefore

provides him with wives 'as beautiful as the sun.'[724]

The anthill similarly is a symbol of fertility and development in Venda *ngano*. It features prominently in stories about childless women.[i] In these stories, the anthill is metaphoric of pregnancy, and its clay is used to shape imaginary children.

The symbolism of the anthill and egg extends to the ox hide. The hide also harbours potential, but it must be kneaded before it can transform. Dedicated labour is required for material wealth as well as social well-being.

The hide also signifies interdependence within the cosmos, especially between people and nature. This value is commonly expressed in coming-of-age stories. The hide nourishes the ants that produce calves for the boy; it has been reanimated and transformed into cattle required for the young man's marriage. However, he is still a young adult, and his cattle are calves: They will age with him.

The hide is more than a symbol of biological growth. It is also an image that generates the narrative. Young listeners may share the protagonist's initial disappointment at his inferior inheritance, but they may experience satisfaction when his dilemma is resolved. They can envisage the young protagonist's adventure as part of their future life.

[i] 'The clay child' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'A little story' (Kruger, 2014).

2.9.2 The broken water pot / Nkho yo kwasheaho

Here comes a story!

A child left home and went to the river to collect water.
She broke her water pot!
She went home but they did not want her back. She too said she would not stay.
She left and went to Mr. Tshipako for help. Mr. Tshipako refused. Because he refused, that child turned back.
She went around asking all the chiefs.
As she went about, she sang,

(Narrator)
I broke the water pot of my mother.
I went around to all the councillors.
And Mr. Tshipako refused.
And Mr. Ramarumo refused.
And Mr. Matsheketsheke refused.
And Mr. Rambuda refused.
(Chorus)
See, it is better for me to leave.

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 27 September 2010.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ṅwana o ṱuwa a tshi ya mulamboni.
A kwasha khali!
A tshi ya muḓini, vha muḓini vha sa mu tendele. Ene ari ndi nga si dzhene-vho.
A ṱuwa a ya ha Vho-Tshipako a ri ndi yo pfumelwa. Vho-Tshipako vha hana. Hezwi vho no hana, houla ṅwana u khou vhuya.
O gidima na mahosi oṱhe haya.
A tshi vho vhuya, a kona u enda, a tshi ri,

(Musimi)
Nṋe ndo kwasha khali ya mme.
Nṋe ndo mona na magoṱa oṱhe.
Na Vho-Tshipako vho nndandula.
Na Vho-Ramarumo vho nndandula.
Na Vho-Matsheketsheke vho nndandula.
Na Vho-Rambuda vho nndandula.
(Vhabvumeli)
Levha-levha ṱavhatiende.

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

Although not intraculturally recognised as a subcategory of *ngano*, stories in which singing dominate are not uncommon. The discussion of 'The python-healer' (2.7.2) by Thizwilondi Kwinda explains that, because plots are well-known, it may be necessary for narrators to prioritise and involve participants in their dramatic performance. Songs may therefore become extended through repetition as well as the variation of verbal and musical motifs.

The initial, spoken narration in this story accordingly offers a short description of events: A girl is guilty of some moral transgression, and her appeal for clemency is turned down. The song in turn is more extensive. It briefly restates the transgression, and then expands the refusal for clemency. This repetition reinforces its power and finality.

The girl ultimately realises (in the chorus response) that moral law may be intransigent. Her actions have alienated those around her, and there is an indication of resentment and rejection. This, perhaps the most feared of all non-violent punishment, is arguably overstated, but narrators rely on hyperbole to inculcate values.

Breaking a clay pot is a metaphor for moral transgression. Solomon Mathase (fig. 10) used to sing, '*Vho-Ravele o kwasha hkhali*' ('Mr. Ravele broke the clay pot').[i] Frank Ravele succeeded Patrick Mphephu as leader of the Venda enclave. He was unpopular and accused of corruption.[ii] His government was deposed during a bloodless coup (6 April 1990), only a few weeks before the song was documented.

The nature of the transgression is not made explicit, but the motif of fetching water gives a clue to its probable nature. As explained in the discussion of 'Marriage' (2.8.2), pools and river banks are locations for swimming, washing and fetching water, and this is where forbidden relationships often originate in *ngano*. They usually are either adulterous or involve clandestine meetings between young unmarried girls and their lovers. Breaking a pot almost certainly is metaphoric of the latter.

Such illicit relationships may be terminated violently, even ending in the murder of the girl or her lover.[iii] Such hyperbolic punishment relates to marriage as a core social institution subject to agreements and formalities.

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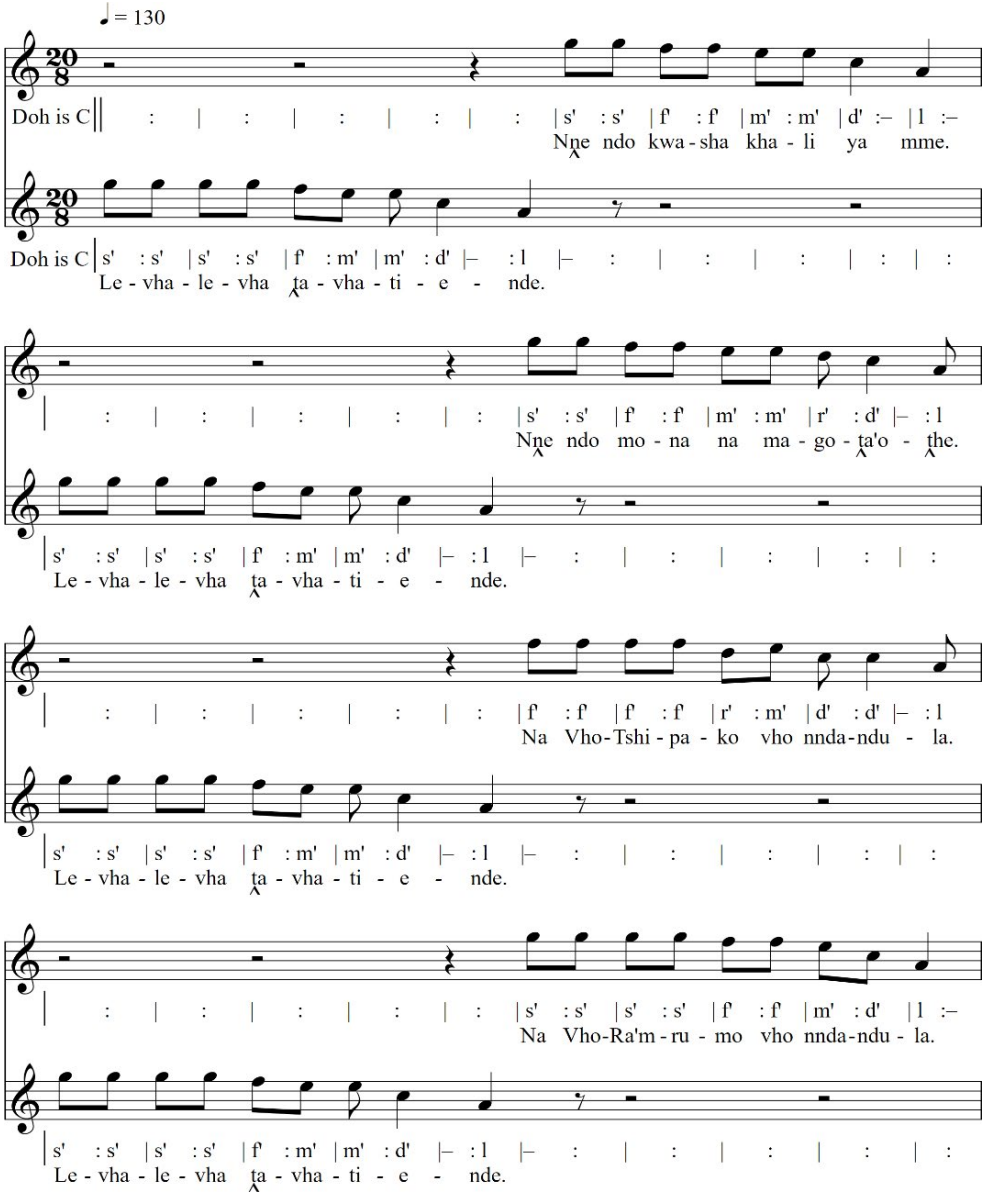
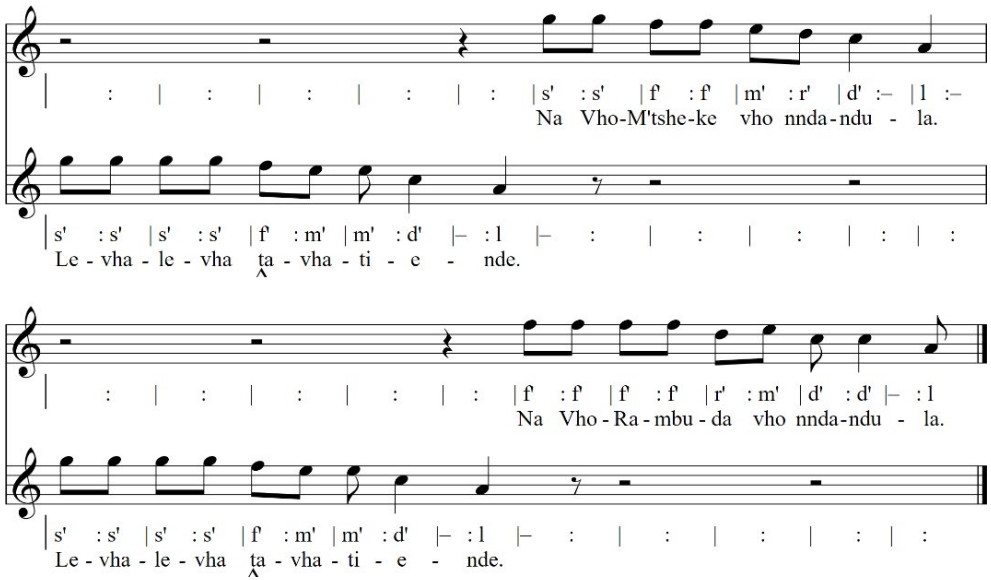
[i] Song extract (Murangoni, May 1990; Kruger, 1993:96).

[ii] '*Vho roba hoṱhe, na Taiwan*' ('He cheated everywhere, in Taiwan too'). Song extract (Madamalala, 28 July 1990; Kruger 1993:97-100). Ravele officially visited Taiwan just prior to the coup, and it was assumed that this was part of a wider campaign of financial corruption

[iii] 'To be human again' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'The young woman and the zebra' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).


♩ = 130
Doh is C
Nne ndo kwa - sha kha - li ya mme.
Le - vha - le - vha ṱa - vha - ti - e - nde.
Nne ndo mo - na na ma - go - ṱa'o - the.
Na Vho-Tshi - pa - ko vho nnda-ndu - la.
Na Vho-Ra'm - ru - mo vho nnda-ndu - la.


Na Vho-M'tshe-ke vho nnda-ndu - la.
Na Vho - Ra - mbu - da vho nnda-ndu - la.
Le - vha - le - vha ṱa - vha - ti - e - nde.

2.10 Aluwani Kwinda

I am young but I have moved around quite a lot. I was born at Folovhodwe, and then came to live at Mabvete (figs. 2, 90) and Matshena.

There are many baobabs here. They love the heat and deep, sandy soil we have here. This also means we can plant crops, provided we have rain or boreholes. But you have to be a good driver! Avoid soft sand and be prepared to pick up speed!

One of our problems is that we are far from towns, and our roads are not good. Our municipality is at Tshitale, which is across the mountains. Thohoyandou is the biggest town in our district, and it is even further away. Polokwane is the capital of our province. We have to travel two hundred and fifty kilometres to get there.

Things are difficult for young people who want to be part of the modern world. Our schools are poor, and we do not have internet access. This makes me feel frustrated.

I was born at Folovhodwe in 1993, so I am now nineteen years old. My father is Itani Obed Kwinda and my mother is Azwinndini Rose Tshamano.

I attended preschool at Folovhodwe, and it was during this time that I heard *ngano* from my father's mother.

My family moved to Cosmo City in Johannesburg where my father is a builder. My three younger siblings are still at school there.

I started my school education in Johannesburg. After primary school my father said, 'I am sending you back to Niani because I do not want you to forget that you are a member of the Kwinda family. Johannesburg will make you forget your family history. I want you to have a rural education.' This means that I am constantly thinking of who I am and where I belong. Identity to me means having freedom to decide who you are. Being a Kwinda who is Tshivenda-speaking is important to me.

I wrote a drama about identity in 2011, and it was awarded with a prize. I had to write in English because it was a national competition. This forced to me to think again about myself and others, and how language helps us to relate to one another.

Some of our people experience problems with their Venda identity. The number of Tshivenda-speakers in South Africa is quite small, and others sometimes think we are Zimbabweans. But there are important Tshivenda-speakers in our country, like Cyril Ramaphosa, so I am not worried about discrimination.

What is a problem for me is that Venda people no longer live like they did in the past. We do not respect each other like our ancestors did. Young people often are insolent towards their elders, and girls wear dresses that are too short. Women should wear a *ṅwenda* skirt (fig. 22) or wrap a blanket around their waist.

In any case, I started my rural education in 2006. This was at Mopane Intermediate School, there towards the west. I was a boarder doing grade eight and nine. I liked going to school there because they taught me to play cricket. I was wicket keeper, but I could also bat. I even received certificates of excellence. There is no opportunity for cricket at Matshena were I am schooling now. It is too dry here for a cricket field. Also, the other boys want to play soccer.

My father started to have financial difficulties, and so I had to move from Mopane to my granny's place at Matavhela in the Thengwe district. This is

Fig. 80. A splash of colour
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2010

where I completed grade ten. I then moved to my other granny's place at Mabvete. She is Nthuseni Mudau (2.8).

I am now in matric at Ratshisase Secondary School, which is at Matshena. Because my granny's house is far from school, I had to find private accommodation close by. As you can see, my shack is made from corrugated tin. It is very, very hot in summer, and I have to study outside.

I am now preparing for my final exams. My subjects are life sciences, history, geography, Tshivenda, English and life orientation. I also take mathematics, but I struggle.

I have put my drama writing on hold until I pass matric. I hope to do an arts degree at university, but I also dream of studying law or events management. My biggest fear is not finding financing for university studies. My father's building contracts are not regular, and my granny struggles to support me on her small pension.

2.10.1 The disabled boy / Mutukana wa muholefhali

Here comes a story!

Long ago there was a traditional leader at Tshirundu[i] called Mr. Thomoli. Mr. Thomoli had two wives.

Now, children were born at that homestead. Among the children of that younger wife there was a certain boy[ii] whose head was confused.[iii]

Now, this child, they hid him inside that homestead. He had been hidden since birth because things were not in good order inside his head.

Now, one day, in the morning, those women from the chief's homestead said, 'We are going out. Where are we going? To collect firewood.'

So, those people were leaving to collect firewood. They took their ropes.[iv] Here they were, they were going to collect firewood.

When they were half-way up Dondwe hill,[v] they heard something!

That child was following them! He wanted his mother![vi]

He was following them. They had not seen him following.

They heard him singing. That child started to sing,

(Narrator chants)
My mother, alas, my mother, alas!
My mother, alas, I need her.[vii]

[i] The area between the Nzhelele and Nwanedi river. See section 1.8.2.
[ii] His age is uncertain, but given that he receives beer, he could be a young man.
[iii] I.e. he was mentally disabled.
[iv] *Nndzi*, ropes braided from plant matter, used to tie firewood.
[v] A hill behind Tshipise hot springs, currently a popular resort.
[vi] Lit. 'he was thinking of his mother.'
[vii] *'Ndi no vhadza'* (Chikaranga): 'I love you.' The narrator pronounced *vhadza* as *vhada*, and interpreted it as need. Compare the line from the second song (*'Mme-anga wee, kha vha mpfune'*: 'My mother, alas, love me').

Salungano! Salungano!

Kale-kale hangei shangoni ḽa Ha-Tshirundu ho vha hu na musanda Vho-Ṱhomoli. Vho-Ṱhomoli vho vha vhe na vhasadzi vhavhili.

Zwino, hafha muḓini ho vha ho bebiwa vhana. Kha havho vhana vha houḽa musadzi muṱuku, ho vha hu na muṅwe ṅwana wa mutukana we a vha a songo dzudzanyea zwavhuḓi hafha ṱhohoni.

Zwino, hoyo ṅwana hafho muḓini a tshi dzumbiwa. Vho aluwa vha tshi mu dzumba u bva kale na kale, ngauri o vha a songo dzudzanyea zwavhuḓi ṱhohoni.

Zwino, ha ri liṅwe ḓuvha-i, hu nga matsheloni havhaḽa vhafu-makadzi vha henefho musanda vha ri, 'Ri khou bva, ri khou ya gai? Khunini.'

Sa hezwo hu tshi khou iwa khunini. Hai, vhaḽa vhathu ndi u ṱuwa ndi u ya khunini. Ndi u dzhia nnzi dzavho. Asizwi-ḽa hu kho i wa khunini.

Hezwi vho no vha henengei vhukati ha thavha ino pfi Ḓondwe, vha pfa mukosi!

Uḽa ṅwana matsiko o tovhela! O humbula mme-awe! A tevhela. A tshi tevhela-i, vho vha vha sa mu vhoni. Vho tou pfa nga u imba. Houḽa ṅwana a thoma u imba,

(Musimi)
Mai wangu, wee, mai wangu, wee!
Mai wangu, wee, ndi no vhada.
Mai wangu, ndi kale u ni sia ndi linoga.
Mai wangu, ndi no kuda.
(Vhabvumeli)
Hee-hee.

Vhaḽa musadzi muṱuku vha mbo ḓi ri tshukhwi!

'Uyu a si ṅwananga-naa?'

Vha vha vha tshi ri! Vha wana ndi eṋe.

My mother, you have been neglecting me for long.
My mother, I need you.
(Chorus chants)
Hee-hee.

That younger wife was surprised!

'Is that my child?'

So they asked and found that it was him.

That child was taken back. They left and took a long detour[i] around the hill. They went around Dondwe hill and arrived at the chief's homestead.

They arrived at that chiefly homestead. They arrived and hid that child. They had returned with him after collecting firewood.

After they returned from collecting firewood, they started an event planned for that day. They had made millet beer, traditional Venda beer as well as sorghum beer.

So, now, that child was hidden inside a house.

People were performing the dance of the spirits.[ii]

That old woman who had made millet beer and was drinking it, also put some in a calabash for him. She drank and put some in the calabash!

That child became happy and drunk!

When that child heard that, no, this drum being played was ancient, he stood up, that child. He stepped onto the dance ground.

He started singing now, introducing[iii] himself to people,

(Narrator chants)
My mother, alas, my mother, alas.

Ula ṅwana a dzhiiwa. Vha bva nae nga dza kule dzau mona thavha. Vha tshi mona na thavha ya Dondwe vha swika vha dzhena musanda.

Vha tshi swika musanda hafhala. Ha swika ha dzumbiwa houla ṅwana-i. Itali khuni vho vhuya nadzo.

Hezwi vha tshi vhuya nadzo-i, ha thoma mutambo une wa khou todwa u itwa lelo duvha. Hafha ho tombiwa mahafhe – mahalwa a Tshivenda enea na mivanya.

Zwino-i, ho no vha so, houla ṅwana ha vha hu uri o dzumbiwa hafhalani.

Hu khou lila Malombo.

Avha mukegulu vha khou ita vha tshi ṅwa mahafhe vha tshi mu pangela-vho khavho. Vha tshi ṅwa vha tshi mu pangela-vho khavho.

Ula ṅwana-i sa izwo o vha o takala, ngeno o no pfa o kambiwa!

Ula ṅwana a pfa uri hai, ngoma hedzi dzine dza khou dia ndi dza tshikale, a takutshedza ula mutukana.

Asi u dzhena henefhala vhukati ha vanda.

Asi u thoma u imba zwino, a khou di divhadza kha vhathu,

(Musimi)
Mme anga wee, mme anga wee.
Na nne-vho ndi ṅwana wavho.
Ndi kale vhone vha tshi nndzumba.
Ndi tea u divhiwa na nga mashaka.
Mme anga wee, kha vha mpfune.
(Vhabvumeli)
Hee-hee.

Musanda Vho-Thomoli vha tshi ri, 'Malo-wee! Ula ṅwana wa tshipiri matsiko o bvelela phanda vandani!'

A si u rumela vhala madzhinda avho. Madzhinda a si u dzhia ula

[i] So that the child should not be seen.
[ii] *Malombo* or *Ngoma dza Midzimu* trance ritual (3.3).
[iii] Lit. 'making himself known.'

The disabled boy / Mutukana wa muholefhali (continued)

And I too am your child.
You have been hiding me for long.
Even our relations must know me.
My mother, love me.
(Chorus chants)
Hee-hee.

Mr. Thomoli, the chief, said, 'Hell! That child who was hidden has come outside!'

He sent those officials[i] from the ruling family. The boys took that child and that old woman. They took them to a certain kitchen that was far away.[ii] Long ago they used to keep mentally disabled people[iii] there.

Now, when they arrived over there with that child, they took that boy. They hid him over there in the kitchen. They were hiding him over there in the kitchen to conceal him from the villagers.

This is the death of the story.

Mabvete, 3 October 2012

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[i] *Vhaḓinḓa:* messengers.
[ii] A derelict, deserted cooking structure. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that the mentally disabled were usually kept at the homestead of a diviner.
[iii] *Vhalwadze.*

ṅwana na uḽa mukegulu. Vha muisa kha tshiṅwe tshiṱanga tshe tsha vha tsho itelwa thungo hangei. He tsha vha kale tsho vha tshi tshi vhea vhalwadze hone.

Zwino, a si u swika na uḽa ṅwana nga henengei, a si u mu dzhia uḽa mutukana. Vha khou ya u mu dzumba henengei tshiṱangani. Vha tshi mu dzumba henengei tshiṱangani vhaḽa vhathu vha lushaka vha tshi vho vhudzisa vha dzumbedzeliwa vhuṱala.

Havha hu u fa ha lungano.

Aluwani Kwinda moved to Johannesburg after completing his matric, and contact was lost with him. The interpretation of his stories is therefore tentative.

Medical staff at St. Joseph's Mission (Tsianda) explained[725] that lack of optimum mental capacity may be triggered or exacerbated by hunger and poverty. This was evident during the severe drought of the early 1980s, to which Operation Hunger was a response.[i]

A contemporaneous case study[726] of a musician noted the abject living conditions of his widowed mother and her nine children, of whom he was the eldest. He was in his late teens, 'a tragic figure in a landscape of rural poverty.' He struggled to concentrate, and even lacked short-term memory. He started experiencing mental breakdowns, and attacked his mother and wife during one of its occurrences.

His lyrics consequently focus on his personal experiences. They are characterised by simplicity, brevity and understatement. They express no joy or humour, 'only terse statement, criticism and lament.'

The young musician was locked up at his headman's homestead after assaulting his family. Responding to his incarceration, he sang,

Ndo vhidzwa musanda.
I was summoned to the headman's place.
A thi na mulandu khotsimunene.
You are not guilty young man.
Ha na mulandu ṅwana wavho.
Your child is not guilty.
(Extract)

Kwinda was a member of a younger, politically-conscious generation, and articulated awareness of the wider social conditions and injustices related to this kind of case. Musician Mmbangiseni Mphaga (1.7.2) correspondingly notes in one of his songs:[ii]

Equal rights, love and peace
Everybody wants an equal rights.[iii]
Everybody wants a peace.
Nobody wants an apartheid.
Why are you failing to love your neighbour?l
Why are you failing to love your enemy?
Why are you failing to love your relatives?
Why are you failing to love your friend?
Why are you killing and robbing other people?
Do you think that you will get equal rights?
Do you think that you will get peace?

It is not clear whether this kind of contemporary outlook shapes Kwinda's story, or whether it may be informed by older views on mental disability.[iv] As mentioned in his biographical sketch, his stories originate from his paternal grandmother. This suggests that they are of ancient origin. As explained, certain narrators insist that they retell stories without change.

Those who lack particular human capacities and qualities may be referred to by a number of entrenched, derogative names, the most common of which are *tshihole* (physically disabled), *mpengo* (mentally disabled) and *li̯xweṯe* (albino). The *tshi-* and *li̯-* pronouns categorise people with objects (compare *mu-* as in *muthu*, person), and they consequently dehumanise and marginalise them. There is no other common term for *tshihole*,[v] which indicates a 'stunted tree or thing,'[727] and is related to *shenga*, to 'upbraid with reproaches and invective.'[728]

Physically disabled actants are common in *ngano*, where they too are identified as *tshihole*. This is the case in Thizwilondi Kwinda's 'Bird watchers' (2.7.1) as well as a *ngano* in a school reader[729] in which a traditional leader

[i] This national feeding programme was founded in 1980. It ultimately came to care for two million needy South Africans.

[ii] Kruger (1993:289). Mphaga remarked in conversation that many people deny others the liberty and compassion they themselves seek. This song specifically refers to the gunning down of forty people at a funeral wake at Sebokeng during the night of 12 January 1991.

[iii] Original English lyrics.

[iv] Makaudze (2016:55) explains in this regard that 'Shona tradition treated the disadvantaged (including the disabled) in the same way as other members of the community; all were respected and treated as human. In Shona *ngano* these disadvantaged were referred to as *vanhu vaMwari* (God's people).'

[v] Translator Tshifhiwa Mashau attempted to resolve this dilemma by adopting the root *mu- (muhole)* in the Tshivenda title of the story.

marries a woman whose brother is physically disabled. He indicates that he is ashamed of his brother-in-law[i] and decides to kill him.

A mentally disabled person is commonly referred to as *penga*, or mad. This description also applies to those who engage in perverse behaviour, especially of a sexual nature. Mashudu Mulaudzi of Tsianda notes in one of his epic songs,[730] 'We tell these people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But they do not! Some use abusive language. They say, "We are mad."'[ii]

Kwinda in turn describes his protagonist as 'lacking order there in his head.'[iii] Van Warmelo[731] defines *dzudzana* as sitting or living 'together in harmony,' and *dzudzanya* as putting 'a number of things in order.' This description expresses a more respectful attitude towards the mentally disabled. However, Kwinda also remarked that derogative terms for them still enjoy currency, 'especially among those who believe in witchcraft.'

This contradiction is also evident in the story. People find the presence of the young man embarrassing, perhaps even offensive. He is initially concealed in his village, and subsequently forcibly removed with the old woman. She is a representative of the elderly, another grouping also sometimes portrayed negatively in *ngano*.

The protagonist is simultaneously viewed sympathetically. It is not explicitly clear why he reveals himself at a trance ritual *(Ngoma dza Midzimu* or *Malombo*; 3.3). However, this choral dance-song event is a loud, colourful spectacle that attract crowds. It is here where the young man 'started singing now, introducing himself to people.'

Trance rituals more particularly manifest 'the spiritual nature of the universe and of the role of ancestor-spirits as guardians of the earth and of the health and welfare of their descendants.'[732] As the narrator notes appropriately, 'this drum being played was ancient.'

The young man correspondingly insists on his membership of a shared humanity: 'I too am your child.' Like all humans, he desires recognition, love and care ('Even our relations must know me. My mother, love me.'). In trance ritual, individual selfhood can 'only be realised through others' who are its 'witnesses.'[733] Put differently, *'Muthu ndi muthu nga vhaṅwe vhathu.*' ('A person becomes human in the presence of others.')

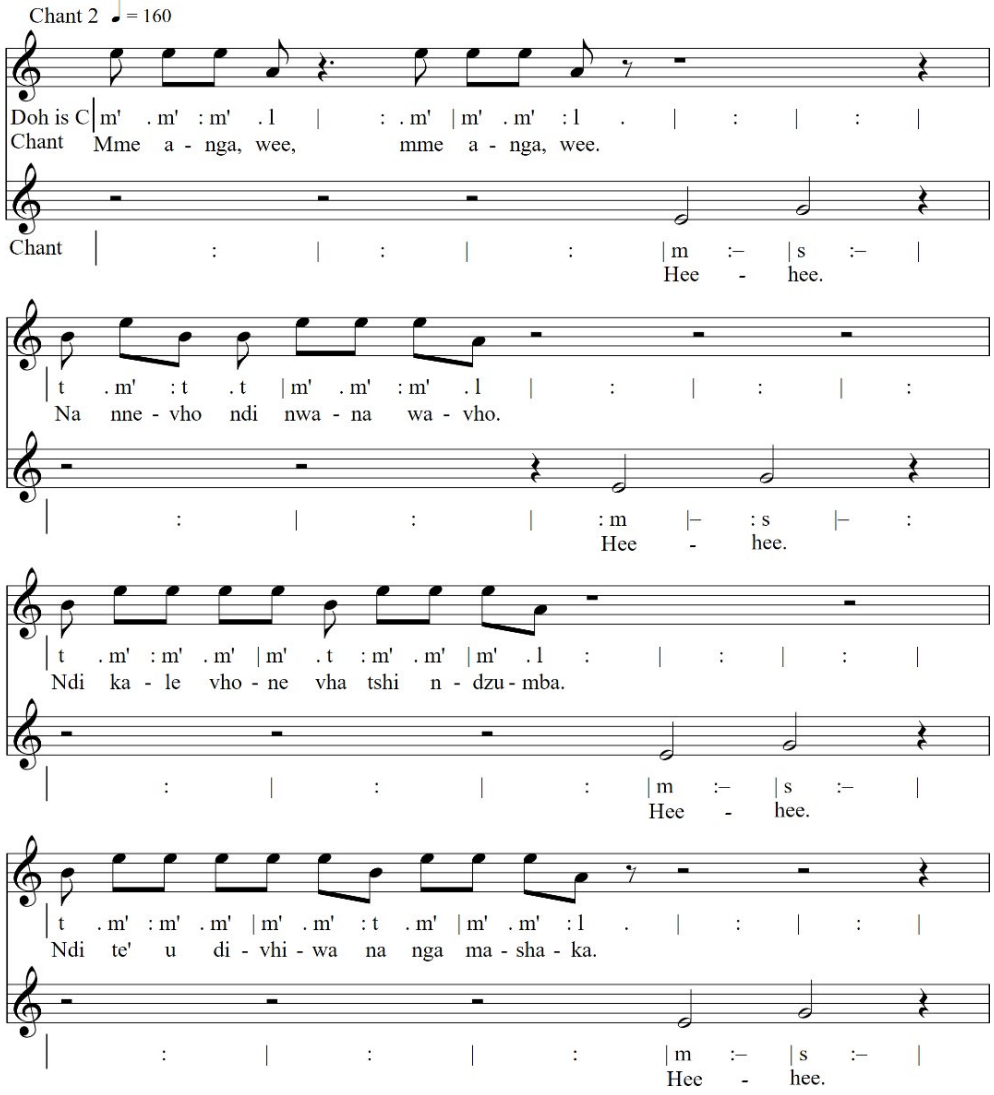
---

[i] *'Malume wa tshihole u a shonisa.'*

[ii] *'Havha vhathu ri a vha vhudza uri vha tende kha Murena Yesu Kristo. A vha tendi! Vhaṅwe vha a ri sema. Vha ri, "Ri khou penga."'*

[iii] *'A songo dzudzanyea zwavhuḓi hafha ṱhohoni.'*

Chant 1 ♩= 160
Doh is C
Chant Mai - i wa - ngu, wee. mai - i wa - ngu, wee.
Chant
Hee - hee.
Ma - i wa - ngu, wee, ndi no vha - dza.
Hee - hee.
Ma - i wa - ngu, ndi ka - le u ndi si - a ndi li - no - ga.
Hee - hee.
Ma - i wa - ngu ndi no ku - dza.
Hee - hee.


Chant 2 ♩= 160
Doh is C
Chant Mme a - nga, wee, mme a - nga, wee.
Chant
Hee - hee.
Na nne - vho ndi nwa - na wa - vho.
Hee - hee.
Ndi ka - le vho - ne vha tshi n - dzu - mba.
Hee - hee.
Ndi te' u di - vhi - wa na nga ma - sha - ka.
Hee - hee.

2.10.2 Chieftainship / Vhuhosi

Here comes a story!

Long, long ago there was a district.

This district, it was for Venda people. It was called Tshinyamulela.

About this district, those people of Tshinyamulela worshipped a goat spirit.

About this goat, there were many goats. They selected one goat. They said it was an ancestral spirit. They worshipped it so that rain would fall and they could plant their crops.

Now, a certain son-in-law came there, a son-in-law of the chief's younger brother. Now, he was told to go to the byre over there and choose a goat to slaughter.[i]

He carried a knife on a tray. The young man went there. When he arrived there, he selected the wrong goat! He selected the ancestral goat! Now, he selected the ancestral goat! He slaughtered the spirit! He left it there.

The chief said, 'Oh hell!'

He came there. He found the ancestral goat had been killed!

Now, the ancestral goat had been killed during summer. People were tending their maize. Now, the chief said, 'What shall we do? Because there is no rain. The rain is not falling at all.'

People asked, 'Now, what shall we do? We must go, we must go to another place. We will ask to stay there.'

They arrived at a certain place. They asked to stay there. They were captured! They became slaves![ii]

The child of the chief of Tshikosi and that child from that chief,[iii]

Salungano! Salungano!

Kale-kale ho vha hu na shango.

Heḽo shango-i, ho vha hu ḽa Vhavenda. Li tshi pfi Tshinyamulela.

Kha heḽo shango-i, havha vhathu vha Ha-Tshinyamulela vha vha tshi luvha mbudzi. Ha vha hu uri kha hedzo mbudzi, hu na mbudzi nnzhi. Vha nanga mbudzi nthihi. Vha ri ndi yone makhulu. I yone ine vha luvha khayo mvula hezwi vho lima.

Zwino, ha vha uri ha ḓa muṅwe mutukana wa vhuhadzi. A no bva vhuhadzi ha khotsimunene wa musanda. Zwino, houḽa mutukana-i, ha pfi kha ye dangani hangei. A yo nanga mbudzi ine a khou nyaga u i ṱhavha. Mutukana o no fara lufhanga nga ṱhirei. A ya houḽa mutukana. A tshi swika hangei, a nanga wrong. A nanga makhulu! Zwino, o nanga makhulu-i! A vha via makhulu! A vha sia hafhaḽa.

Musanda vha tshi ri, 'Maḽo-wee!' Vha tshi bvelela. Vha wana uri o vhulaha makhulu. Zwino, o vhulaha makhulu-i, tsho vha tsho no ḓi limuwa hu zwone zwifhinga zwezwi. Ho limiwa mavhele. Zwino, musanda vha ri, 'Ri ḓo ita mini? Ngauri ho vha hu si tshena mvula. Mvula yo vha i si tshana na luthihi.'

Ha pfi,'Zwino, ndi khwine vha tou ita mini? Ri tou ṱuwa, ri ye kha liṅwe shango. Ri yo humbela vhudzulo.'

Vha swika hangei kha liṅwe shango. Vha humbela vhudzulo. Vha fariwa! Mara, vha fariwa sa dziphuli vha tshi swika hafhaḽani.

Ṅwana wa musanda hafho Ha-Tshikosi na houḽani ṅwana wa hangei musanda uḽa, vha emulana! Vha tshi emulana-i, vha malana.

Vha tshi malana so: Ha vha uri hafha musanda a hu na ṅwana wa mutukana. Ende vhamusanda vho dzama. Zwino, vha musanda vho dzama nga heyo ndila-i. Ha pfi, zwino, hu khou ṱoḓiwa u vhewa khosi. Nga Tshivenda a hu na khosi ya musadzi. Zwino, heiḽa khosi: Havha uri hu khou itwa mini zwino?

Vhahulwane vha dzula. Ha pfi musadzi wa khotsimunene,

[i] In order to prepare a welcoming meal for the son-in-law.

[ii] *Dziphuli.*

[iii] In other words, the young woman's father is Tshikosi, the local traditional leader, while her suitor belongs to the immigrant family.

they desired each other! Because they desired each other, they became married. After becoming married in this way, (this is what happened): In (Tshikosi's) family there was no son. And then the chief passed away. Now, the chief had passed away.

It was said that a new chief should be appointed. Among Venda people a woman cannot be chief. So, about this chief, how will he be appointed?

The elders gathered. It was said about the wife of the chief's younger brother that she had no children. Then it was said that this child[i] also was a child from the chief's family, those who came from another place because of killing an ancestral goat.

'Let him be chief because he married the child of the deceased chief.'

Now, it happened like this: People of that place did not want the chieftainship to go to those who came there. But they lost the chieftainship!

That evening they gathered around the fire. People were gathered, they were just sitting there. Now, those uncles and aunts, they did not want to confront those others about the chieftainship. So they sang mockingly. They sang a song. This is what they sang,

(Narrator)[ii]
Alas, you, Nyawasedza, what have you done?

[i] The bridegroom.

[ii] The narrator was asked to repeat the song after narration for transcription purposes. The song was performed twice, the second time with handclaps. The lyrics of the second performance are: *'Inwi Nyawasedza, wee, na ḓa na ri ita mini ngoho? Na ṱuwisa vhuhosi hashu, ngoho. Vhu khou ṱuwa na vha bva nnḓa, wee! Vhe vha ḓa fhano vha tshi lila nge vha vhulaya makhulu.'* ('You, Nyawasedza, what have you done? Truly, you have caused our chieftainship to be lost. It left with those who came from elsewhere! Those who came here crying because of killing the ancestor.')

khotsimunene a vha na vhana. Ha pfi, zwino-hii, sa izwi hoyu ṅwana e ṅwana wa musanda. Vho ḓi tou ḓa-vho hangei shangoni ḽa havho nga u vhulaha makhulu-hii. Khavhe musanda wa fhano ngauri o malana na ṅwana wa musanda.

Zwino, nga heyo ndila: Havha uri, zwino, vhathu vha shango hafhanoni vha khou thoma u nyala uri vhuhosi ho ṱuwa. Zwino, vhuhosi ho ṱuwa so.

Nga madekwana hu tshi dzuliwa ha itwa mulilo. Vhathu vha dzula so: Hu khou dzedziwa. Zwino, havhaḽani makhotsimunene na vho makhadzi, vha sa nyagi uya khavho vha amba uri, hovhu vhuhosi ha vhoiwe a ri vhuṱoḓi. Vha tshi tou imba vha tshi khou goḓa.

Vha tshi imba luimbo. Dzi tshi ri so,

(Musimi)
Iṅwi Nyawasedza wee na ḓa na ri ita mini naa?
Vhuhosi khovhu vhu khou ṱuwa.
Vhu khou ṱuwa na vha bva nnḓa, wee!
Vhe vha ḓa fhano vha tshi lila, ngoho.
Iṅwi na emulana navho, wee.
(Vhabvumeli)
Haa-hee-haa.

Zwino, musanda vha ri, 'Ṅwananga. Hoyu o itiwaho vhamusanda.) Sa izwo u khou pfa ri khou goḓiwa. A huna zwine ringa ita lini. Nṋe na iwe musadzi wanga, kha ri tou shavha. Ri ye shangoni ḽiṅwe ḽa kule. Hu sa luvhiwi mvula kha mbudzi. Hu no tou luvhiwa Ṅwali.'

Vha ya shangoni ḽa kule. Vha swika vha ṱanganedziwa nga zwanḓa zwitshena. Vha tshi swika hafhalani. Vha vha vho ṱanganedziwa. Vha thoma u lima, ha limiwa.

Ha ya ha luvhiwa. Ha isiwa mitshelo hangei musanda-i. Mvula ya na ho luvhiwa Ṅwali. Ha vha uri hu khou thoma u ḽiwa. Vhana vha bebiwa. Ha takaliwa. Ḽa vha ḽa maladze.

Chieftainship / Vhuhosi (continued)

The chieftainship has been lost.
It left with those who came from elsewhere!
Those who came here crying.
Alas, you desired them.
(Chorus)
Haa-hee-haa.

Now, the one who was made chief, said, 'My child,[i] as you can hear, they are mocking us. There is nothing we can do. You and I, my wife, let us flee. We will go far away where they do not worship a goat for rain. Where they worship Ṅwali.'

They went to a distant place. They arrived and were welcomed with open arms. They arrived there. They were welcomed.

They started to hoe, they farmed. They went for worship. They took fruit over there to the chief's place.[ii] The rain fell because they worshipped Ṅwali. They started to eat. Children were born. There was happiness. There was peace.

This is the end of the story.

Mabvete, 3 October 2012

[i] A term of endearment for his young wife.
[ii] *Thevhula*, the annual harvest ritual.

Stayt[734] notes that ancestral spirits comprise 'those of the father's lineage and those of the mother's group.' They are 'represented collectively either by cattle or river pebbles or goats.' The goat that represents matrilineal lineage is a black female called *'makhulu'* ('grandparent'). She is cared for by a grandchild who is appointed by a diviner. This person 'performs all religious ceremonies concerning these matrilineal spirits. At the time of the harvest festival *(thevhula)* all the group assembles at the kraal where the goat lives, and a ceremony is performed there.'

Choral dance-songs used to be performed on the xylophone[735] at the harvest festival. The instrument's side panels often incorporated stylised carved goat's heads (fig. 49), believed to symbolise matrilineal lineage.[i]

Stayt notes furthermore that, in contrast with their patrilineal counterpart, matrilineal spirits 'are much more personally and intimately connected with their descendants (…) They cause far more trouble and are consequently more feared and respected (…) The explanation for this intimacy appears to be the closer emotional and physiological tie between the mother and her children.'

Ṅwali in turn refers to the Shona supreme deity Ṅwari that is 'completely identified' with its Venda counterpart, Raluvhimba.[736] Its power is manifested by destructive natural phenomena like floods and drought which may express anger at transgressions by a chief. Stayt[737] also remarks that the deity 'is somewhat elusive, especially to the ordinary man, who is more prone to associate his benefits and misfortune with his ancestors.'

The narrator explained that the migrants abandoned their ancestral spirits because they had responded to a simple human error with drought and forced migration. Although ancestral spirits mediate between humanity and Ṅwali, they may be circumvented, and the supreme deity approached directly.

This religious experience is cast in a historical and political mold. As indicated in the discussion of the previous story, Kwinda's awareness of contemporary social issues finds expression in his narratives. His notions about local history and its identities are contained in passing references to settlements and districts forcibly abandoned during the consolidation of 'homeland' borders (see 1.8.2). This includes Dondwe, a hill at Tshipise (in the

[i] Nkhumeleni Ralushai (personal communication, University of Venda, 1984). A valid, contradictory opinion points out that the head of a bull (symbolic of patrilineal lineage) is absent from these side panels, and suggests that the goat's head is merely decorative (Kruger, 1986:192).

preceding story), and Tshinyamulela (in this story), a settlement presumably located in the region of the Nzhelele and Nwanedi rivers.

Kwinda explained that the conflict between the two family groups is rooted in their different origins, described by him as 'separate development.' Elelwani Singo's identification of Zimbabwean raiders as 'cannibals' (2.3.1) reveals some of the fear attendant on contact between regional populations. The migrants in Kwinda's story are initially viewed with trepidation and suspicion. They are consequently treated as prisoners of war and branded *(kandisa)* as slaves *(dzipuli)*. However, the story continues by portraying their social integration as culminating in intergroup marriage and consequent political empowerment.

It may be more than coincidence that narratives documented from the youngest narrators (Aluwani Kwinda and Zachary Tshamano) integrate themes of romance and coming-of-age. These stories show in typical fashion how love overcomes obstacles and leads to ideal social life. For Kwinda, as for certain other narrators, such life involves land ownership and cultivation, rain and fertility, religious worship, children and peace.

Inter-ethnic marriage remains of some concern. *'Tshitiriri tsho lila'* ('The whistle is blowing') is a *kwela* song from the mid-20th century that celebrates this kind of union while sounding a cautionary note. Because of cultural differences, the marriage agreement is in written form, requiring the signature ('It is a sign mama/papa') of all concerned.

A women's *tshigombela* choral dance-song (fig. 20; 3.3) dating from the mid-1980s addressed a member of parliament, noting, *'Ro neta nga u shumela a duxwani ḽine ḽa si vhuya ḽa hoṱola nga u tshuwa.'* ('We are tired of working for a zombie who is afraid of coughing.)[i] Dance-songs praise but often also are critical. They are a form of *milayo* moral law geared towards maintaining values.[738]

Kwinda's two stories similarly treat choral dance-song performance as a domain for social construction and political engagement.[739] The delicate nature of family relations and traditional leadership in 'Chieftainship' is not discussed openly but addressed 'mockingly'[ii] in song.

[i] Lit. 'clearing his throat in parliament'; in other words, to represent his constituents properly (Kruger, 1999:136).

[ii] *Goḓa:* 'jeer at, mock, gibe; use irony or sarcasm (…); insult people indirectly' (Van Warmelo, 1989:68).

The bride's sexual desire *(emula)* is blamed for her family's loss of political power. The accusation is viewed so seriously that the young couple decide to emigrate, thus repeating history.

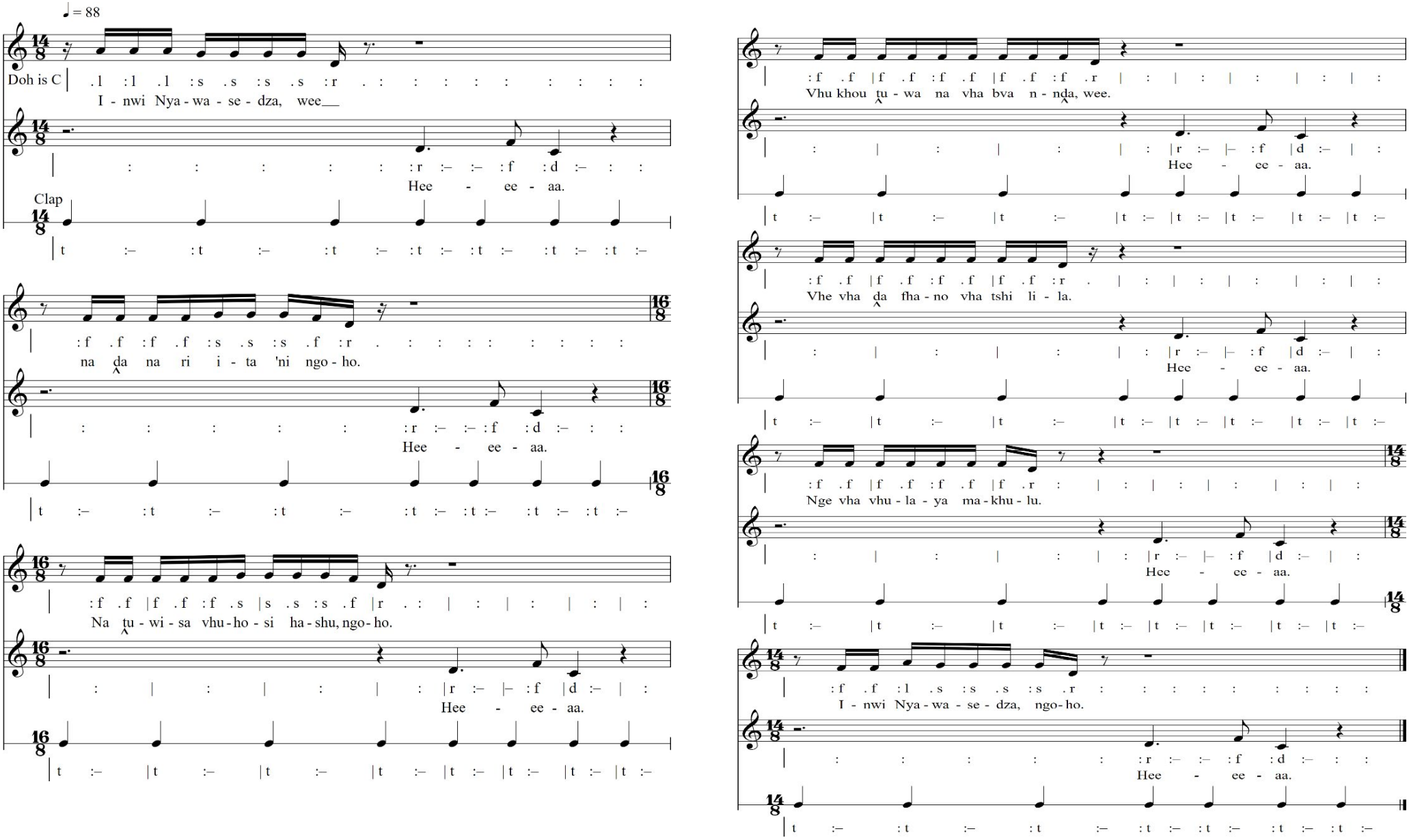
The whistle is blowing / Tshitiriri tsho lila

Solomon Mathase[740]

The whistle is blowing.	Tshitiriri tsho lila.
It is blowing for Selinah.	Tsho lilela Selinah.
It is a sign mama/papa	Ho saina mama/papa.
A sign, a sign, a sign.	Saina, saina, saina.
What are dried vegetables?	Mukusule ndi mini?
They are the Venda	Ndi nama ya Vhavenda.
favourite food.[i]	Tshidimela ndi mini?
What is a train?[ii]	Ndi tsimbi dza makhuwa.
It is the iron of whites.	

[i] The bride is being informed about the dietary customs of her in-laws.

[ii] The bride and her Venda bridegroom met in an ethnically diverse urban area, and are now travelling by train to the latter's family.


♩ = 88
Doh is C
I - nwi Nya - wa - se - dza, wee___
Hee - ee - aa.
Clap
na da na ri i - ta 'ni ngo - ho.
Hee - ee - aa.
Na tu - wi - sa vhu - ho - si ha - shu, ngo - ho.
Hee - ee - aa.
Vhu khou tu - wa na vha bva n - nda, wee.
Hee - ee - aa.
Vhe vha da fha - no vha tshi li - la.
Hee - ee - aa.
Nge vha vhu - la - ya ma - khu - lu.
Hee - ee - aa.
I - nwi Nya - wa - se - dza, ngo - ho.
Hee - ee - aa.

2.11 Lucia Nelutshindwi

I was born on 10 March 1946 at Gondoza. This is near Lutshindwi village, just north of Folovhodwe.

My father's name was Matshona April Nelutshindwi. He worked in Johannesburg before I was born. I am not sure exactly where he worked. It was either on the railways or for the municipality. He went to night school where he learnt to read and write.

My mother was Nthangeni Elina. She had one son and five girls. One of my sisters died when she was an adult.

My mother's mother was called Masale. She lived near us, and she is the one who told me *ngano*.

The reason grandmothers used to tell *ngano* is because they are our baby-sitters. But *ngano* storytelling is disappearing. Young children come to me to complete their school arts projects. They ask me, 'Granny, what are *ngano?*'

When I came into the world, my parents were farmers at Gondoza, here in Niani. They also owned many cattle and goats. It used to rain a lot, and there was always grazing for them. We let their milk become sour in calabash containers, and skimmed the *luvhomba* cream off for cooking.

Our family planted millet, sorghum, water melon, pumpkin, bitter melons and beans.[i] We girls had to fetch water, make cooking fires and prepare food.

We swam and fished in the Nwanedi river. We did not have swimming costumes. We simply swam in our loincloths.

For fishing we used a trap called *sunzwo*. It was made from long twigs woven in a square. Two of us pushed it along the bed of the river towards the bank so that the fish ended up thrashing on dry ground! When we were hungry, we cleaned and roasted the fish next to the river. At other times we took the fish home and stewed them with salt and cream.

I have many good memories of hunting birds. For this we used a *legere tsha zwinoni* catapult or *gato* sling. The best time for shooting birds was when people were threshing millet and other crops, and birds descended on them in big flocks!

We used two kinds of traps for birds. To make *tshidendeledzi* you take hair from the tail of an ox. Then you tie them to short stakes in the ground, so that a pattern of squares is formed. Now bait the trap with seed. When birds come to eat the seed, they get entangled in the hair.

Mulavho is used to catch guinea-fowls. It is placed on a trail and when a bird steps in it, it releases a wire. The bird then hangs screeching in the air!

There were very few farm shops in our area. From them we bought soap, sugar and the material used to make *miɲwenda*, the decorated, wrap-around skirts of women (fig. 22). People also sometimes bought a five kilogram bag of flour when the land did not provide for them.

The interesting thing is that we never used candles! Instead, we used dry branches of the *musimbiri* iron wood tree. The wood is very hard and it burns for a long time. As time went by, we started travelling to Musina to buy paraffin lamps.

[i] *Luvhele, makhaha, mabvani, madzunga, magwadi* and *nawa.*

Some years later my parents moved to Muswodi-Tshisimani where they carried on with farming. I went to Folovhodwe Primary School. Maths was my favourite subject, because I liked to subtract, add, divide and multiply.

I had a book with pictures of lions, elephants, kudus, duikers and hares. I also remember a book with a picture of Jan van Riebeeck. Venda history was not something we learnt about.

I enjoyed netball but not athletics, because I always came last!

Because there was no high school at Muswodi at the time, I went to the Thengwe district to live with my grandmother, Elisa Mbadi. Here I enrolled at Lukau Secondary School.

Shortly afterwards my father forced me to leave school. He did not want his unmarried daughter to befriend boys. Also, I had to look after our family's cattle and goats.

We were members of the Watch Tower Church. This is the reason we children did not go to initiation school.

We attended a church conference at Musina in 1967. Here I met a man who worked there at the copper mine. He came from Zambia. We liked each other and so he proposed to me. People do not usually allow their daughter to marry a foreigner, but my parents approved of him because we all attended the same church.

After our marriage, my husband and I travelled to Lusaka where he worked at Checkers Supermarket.

At first I also stayed in Lusaka, but later I moved to the village of my in-laws where I lived with my husband's sister. Then I had a son. I love him very much.

My troubles with my marriage and my in-laws started during this time. My sister-in-law did not like me. She was jealous of me and wanted me to fail as a newly-married wife. Her intention was to spread the rumour that I could not pound, and that I was not a good wife because I was from another country. And so I was given an eighty kilogram bag of maize to pound!

I started pounding, 'dia-dia-dia …!'

I worked into the night, 'dia-dia-dia …!'

Then I winnowed. And so I carried on until all the work had been done.

The grandmother of the family saw that I had done all the work. She danced with joy, saying I was a wife worthy of her son. You know, this was a cruel test, because the family always had their maize milled ...

My husband decided that my son and I should return to the home of my parents for a visit. He said he would write me a letter to arrange my return. But he never did.

And so my son grew up and became a teacher. In 1998 he asked me, 'Who is my father?'

When I explained everything to him, he said, 'I want to meet him.'

So we prepared for our journey and drove for many, many hours by pickup to Zambia.

When we arrived at my husband's village, we met his uncle by the side of the road with his walking stick. When we asked for my husband, he answered, 'Are you terrorists? Where are you from?'

'We are from Musina.'

'South Africa?'

'Yes.'

When we arrived at my husband's home, we found that he was not there. Instead, we discovered another wife!

When she saw us, she asked, 'Who are you?'

'We are your husband's family. His wife and son.'

'Where is his son?'

'Here he is.'

By that time my husband had stopped going to church. He had turned to a life of drinking. On that day he came back from where he had been drinking. We were still sitting in the car.

He asked us, 'Who are you?'

'I am your wife.'

I showed him my passport.

'Where have you been all this time?'

'At home, waiting for you to fetch me, or send for me.'

We eventually got out of the car and entered the house. The second wife was scared and jealous, but she brought chairs for the men and a mat for the women. Then she cooked food for everyone. We all ate together, and for a while things seemed better.

My husband's changed way of life had turned him into a poor man. His house had six rooms, but only three were roofed over. The place was neglected.

When it was time to go to bed, I said, 'It's OK, I will sleep in the kitchen.'

'But there are rats.'

‘Don’t worry, they won’t bite me.’

They were so poor they could not give me a blanket. When we were travelling north from Musina, we gave a policeman a lift on the back of the pickup. When he got off, he stole my blanket. And so, all I had was an old, threadbare blanket.

We got up the next morning. My son and his father went to the fields to collect sweet-potatoes.

My son asked his father, ‘Where were you when my mother raised me?’

My husband tried to dodge the question. ‘There was no South African embassy in Zambia, so I could not get a passport.’

But I knew he was lying because he had worked in Musina before.

We stayed in Zambia for a few days only. Then we went home. How can we stay where we are not welcome?

I have been separated ever since, and I have not remarried. I am lonely at times because no-one lives with me. I see my children from time to time, but this is little consolation.

My youngest son works in Johannesburg as a manager of something, I do not know what. My other son works in environmental management in Pretoria.

So my spirit suffers. And life has been hard on my body too since my husband deserted me. I sell beer, and I farm, but my harvest is small. I plant chillies, beans, peas, maize, mangos and oranges. I sell my harvest to a man who collects it with his pickup. He in turn sells it to roadside vendors in Thohoyandou.

I mostly work alone. I prefer to employ others to hoe for me, because the work is hard. They usually charge two hundred rand for a section of a field. This takes about one week to complete. A tractor owner charges one hundred rand to plough a section, ninety rand to harrow, and another ninety rand to make furrows.

I switched from the Watch Tower to Folovhodwe Tshandululo[i] Reformed Church in Africa because it is close to my home (fig. 31). We are a big congregation. It was founded by Reverend Dreyer. Our minister is Piet Mudau. I go to church because this is where I get to know God.

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[i] From *shanduka*, to change.

2.11.1 The python-healer / Nyangalambuya

Here comes a story!

(Narrator)
I, they have an eye disease.
Someone said, ‘Let Nyangalambuya be called for me.’
I am here now.[i]
(Chorus)
Nyangalambuya.

That snake, when it comes out, that young man[ii] runs away!

That is when he arrives and says, ‘No, I am unable to handle the things I saw over there!’

He[iii] says, ‘This number two must go.’

The second one goes. He arrives and sings like the first one, ‘I, they have an eye disease …’

No! When that one sees this snake, it is coming out, coming out, coming out!

He runs away!

When he arrives home, he says, ‘No! I could not persevere.’

That old man replies, ‘My child!’

That small one[iv] says, ‘Send me.’

He asks, ‘My child, will you persevere?’

He answers, ‘I will persevere.’

He sends that last-born, the final one.

Salungano! Salungano!

(Musimi)
Nṋe, vha khou lwala maṱo.
Vho ri, ‘Kha ndi vhidzelwe Nyangalambuya.’
Nṋe ndo wa.
(Vhabvumeli)
Nyangalambuya.

Nowa heiḽa i tshi bva, houḽa muṱhannga a shavha!

Ndi hezwi a tshi swika a ri, ‘Hai, nṋe ndi nga si zwi kone hezwiḽa zwe nda zwi vhona hangei.’

Vha ri, ‘Kha hu ye hoyu wa namba two.’

Wa vhuvhili a tshi ya. U khoḓi swika a imba sa zwezwiḽa, ‘Nṋe, vha khou lwala maṱo ...’

Hai! Uḽa a tshi vhona kheyo nowa, i khou bva, i khou bva, i khou bva!

A shavha!

A tshi swika hayani, a ri, ‘Hai! Zwe nda ṱangana nazwo hangei, hai, a zwi konḓelei.’

Vhaḽa mukegulu vha ri, ‘Ṅwana wanga!’

Houḽa mutuku a ri, ‘Kha vha rume nṋe.’

Vha ri, ‘Ṅwana wanga, u ḓo konḓelela?’

A ri, ‘Ndi ḓo konḓelela.’

Vha ruma uḽa last-born wa lupedzi.

Vha ri, ‘U tshi swika, u imbe nga u ralo.’

A ri, ‘Ee! Nṋe, vha khou lwala maṱo …’

Hai! Ya vha i tshi bva ṋowa, i tshi bva, i tshi bva!

Kuḽa ku kutukana ka sokou ima, ya thoma u ku ṋamela. Ya pomba nako, ya pomba nako! Ka ṱuwa ko yi pakata, so …!

A vha a tshi swika hanengei hayani, a tshi swika hayani, houḽa

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[i] It is not clear whether this remark must be attributed to the youngest son or the python.
[ii] The eldest son.
[iii] The father speaking. Although he is not specified, this story is so well-known that his identity is clear.
[iv] The youngest son.

The python-healer / Nyangalambuya (continued)

He says, ‘When you arrive, sing just like the others did before.’

He answers, ‘Yes!’ and sings, ‘I, they have an eye disease ...’

Hey! Then the snake came out, came out, came out!

That small one is standing there, and it is climbing on him. It is coiling around his body, coiling around his body!

He is leaving with it coiled around him, like this …!

When he arrives there at home, when he arrives home, that child arrives and puts the snake down. The snake licks the eyes of that old man, licks the eyes of that old man. That old man gives him snuff. Nyangalambuya goes back to his home.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 27 September 2013

ṅwana a tshi swika a yo vheya, ya nanzwa maṱo a havhaḽa mukegulu, ya nanzwa maṱo a havhaḽa mukegulu. Vhaḽa mukegulu vha mbo ḓi fhola. Nyangalambuya ya humela hayani hayo.

Ndi hone u fa ha lungano.

See the discussion of this story by Thinawanga Phungo (2.1.2) and Thizwilondi Kwinda (2.7.2), and compare the version by Salfina Mashiliye (2.6.2).

Fig. 81. Playing at dawn in summer
Zwigodini, 2013

2.11.2 The wife in the baobab / Musadzi nṱha ha tshivhuyu

Here comes a story!

There is a certain man and his wife.

It is a hot day.[i] They go out to chop poles to build a house.[ii]

That man says, 'Hey, we are thirsty, man! There is a baobab with water over there. Now, let us go and drink water!'

That man arrives there and climbs up. He is climbing up there to the top of the tree. He gets there and drinks water.

That wife says, 'Hey! Will you give me some to drink?'

The husband replies, 'Hah! How can I give you water? I am up here! Climb up and fetch water for yourself.'

That woman climbs up. When she is drinking water, that man climbs down and starts to pull out those pegs they had climbed up with. He pulls them out one by one, he pulls them out until the last one!

Now, when that other one wants to climb down, she finds there no longer is anything to step on.

She again calls that man,

(Verse 1)
(Narrator)
Please husband, take me down now! Please!
(Chorus)
Take me down, please!

That man replies,

[i] Lit. 'there comes a hot day.'
ii *Basha* (fig. 33).

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṅwe munna na mufumakadzi wawe.

Ho vha hu na ḓuvha li khou fhisa. Vha bva vha tshi yo rema basha.

Houḽa munna a ri, 'Hee! Ro no vha na ḓora, mani! Hu na mavhuyu hafho na maḓi. Zwino, kha riye ri yo nwa maḓi!'

Houḽa munna a tshi swika u khou namela, a tshi namela hangei nṱha ha muvhuyu. U khou swika u khou nwa maḓi.

Vhaḽa vhomufumakadzi vha ri, 'Aa! A vha nkeli vho nda nwa?'

Munna a ri, 'Haa! Ndi ḓo nikela hani? Nne ndi ngeno nṱha! Gonyani ngeno ni ḓe ni ḓi kele.'

Houḽa mufumakadzi a gonya. A tshi kha ḓi nwa maḓi, houḽa wa munna a vha a tshi khou tsa, u khou tsa a tshi ṱomola mbambo hedziḽa dze vha gonya ngadzo. A tshi ṱomola nga nthihi-nthihi, a ṱomola u swika dzi tshi fhelela!

Zwino, uḽa a! U wana hu vho ri a tshi vho ri ndi ya tsa u wana a hu tshena fhethu huene a nga tsa ngaho.

U vho vhidzelela habe hoyu, houḽa wa munna,

(Musimi)
Wa ndi tsitsa lume wa ngu hu hunḓule, haa-hee-hae!
(Vhabvumeli)
Hunḓule hae!

Uḽa wa munna a ri,

(Musimi)
Mabunḓu tshinzi! Ma-hunḓule, haa-hee-haa!
U ḓo sala u tshi zwivhona. Hunḓule, haa-hee-haa!
(Vhabvumeli)
Hunḓule hae!

The wife in the baobab / Musadzi nṱha ha tshivhuyu (continued)

(Verse 2)
(Narrator)
You were stingy with beer!
Take me down please!
You will remain behind and see.
Take me down, please!
(Chorus)
Take me down, please!

That woman carries on singing until her voice dies away, until she dies there, because she is unable to climb down.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 27 September 2013

Houḽa wa musadzi a ḓi sokou isa phanda a tshi khou imba u swikela lipfi ḽawe ḽi tshi fa, u swikela a tshi vhuya a tou lovha a hanefhaḽa nṱha ha muri ngauri ho vha hu sina fhethu huṋe a ngatsha ngaho.

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

Certain areas of the Limpopo valley comprise virtual forests of baobab *(muvhuyu),* including some of the biggest specimens in South Africa.[i]

The baobab has been described as Africa's 'weirdest' tree,[741] 'a carrot planted upside down.'[742] It not only maintains an ecosystem that provides shelter, water and food for humans and animals, but also is the 'tree of adventure,'[743] of romance, history, art and narrative.

The tree is relied upon for its bark, leaves and fruit *(mbuyu)* by many local villagers.[744] They comb the countryside for fruit in their donkey carts during winter, and return home with mountains of them.

Here 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 (fig. 82). The oil from the seeds is utilised for the local production of cosmetics.[745]

The fruit provides a nutritious 'supermarket of useful products.'[746] Its pulp is usually pounded into flour for the making of *kwangwali* porridge. Because the flour tends to harden, it is ideally mixed with maize flour.

The baobab serves as a specific setting for action in *ngano*. Not surprisingly, this relates to its special characteristics. It functions as viewpoint, shelter, and source of water and bark-rope.[ii] These functions are invoked in the portrayal of social conflict.

Several stories involve the tree as a source of drinking water. Green[747] notes that '(i)n dry areas the top of the baobab trunk acts as a reservoir, catching rainwater and dew. When you see pegs driven into the trunk you may be sure there is a natural reservoir above. Early travellers recorded their gratitude for this wise custom, saying that the water saved their lives.'

'The girls in the baobab'[748] describes how a lonely, elderly cattle herd invites a group of thirsty girls to climb up a baobab by means of pegs. They quench their thirst at the top, and then reject his amorous advances. He consequently removes the pegs, and they have no option but to agree to his proposal. However, once on the ground, they mockingly reject him again.

The Chikaranga song line *'Wa ndi tsitsa lume wa ngu hu hundule'* ('Please husband, take me down now!') points to the story's ancient origin. It underscores the enduring nature of marital conflict, portrayed here in tragicomic fashion not unrelated to the narrator's own experiences.

The story involves the small laws of domestic relations, specifically spousal statuses and obligations, and the consequences that may result when they are not observed. The narrator explained that the husband vented his anger at his wife because she rationed his intake of beer, and therefore undermined his status as head of the family. According to her, the husband is driven by *tshituhu*, defined as cruelty or 'strongmindedness, as of (…) one who can inflict pain on others (…) without turning a hair.'[749] The phrase *haa-hee-hae!* that concludes the solo line portrays the woman's pleading,[iii] which falls on deaf ears. Here, as in many other *ngano*, it is also understood that her 'punishment' is hyperbolic.

Although the portrayal of the wife's slow demise is very brief, it does focus attention on the centrality of the voice (especially in song) in social construction (see 1.4).[iv] The fading voice heralds the termination of storied lives. This is illustrated powerfully in the silencing by strokes of the voices of narrators Lydia Matshusa (1.11) and Rosina Muovhedzi (2.5).

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[i] Such as the famous baobab at Zwigodini.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sagole_Baobab

[ii] See 'The girls in the baobab' (Kruger, 2014), 'A thief' (Kruger, 2014), 'A smart bird' (Kruger, 2014), 'The lion who hunted his daughter' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), 'Mr Hare scrub's his heels' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'A thin old woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iii] Described by the narrator as *'soebat'* (Afrikaans 'plead').

[iv] This is portrayed more extensively and dramatically in 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1).

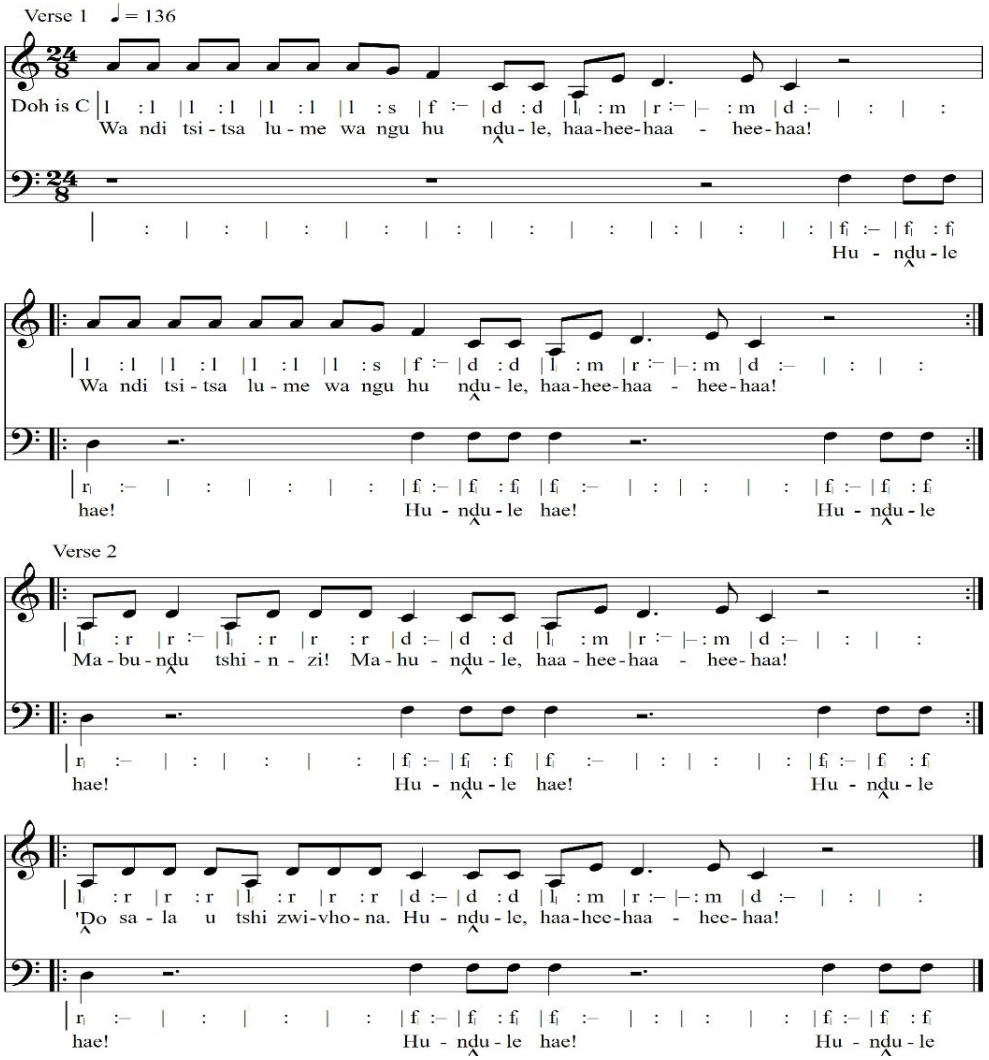

Fig. 82. Preparing baobab fruit husks for incineration
The ash is used for digestive purposes.
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2009

2.12 Nyawasedza Mudau

My names are Nyawasedza Polina. I do not know why my first name does not appear in my ID.[i] I am scared to use it. I do not want the government to come and arrest me.

I was born in 1959 on the farm of Lallie Fourie, there in the Tshirundu district (1.8.2). My parents worked for Lallie. Their job was to weed around mango trees. My father was William Thanyani[ii] Mudau, and my mother was Anna Ndanduleni.[iii] They had four boys and three girls.

I am the eldest. I lost one sister. She passed away as an adult. My father is also deceased, but my mother lives at Nzhelele. A brother and sister live here at Folovhodwe. I have a brother who has a spaza shop in Johannesburg. We children often get together at my mother's house during Christmas.

When we were young, we liked to play in our *mahundwane* villages (3.3; fig. 107). We cooked food and made our own leather loin-cloths, *tshedo* for the girls and *tsindi* for the boys.

My father's mother also lived on the farm. Her name was Mrs. Tshifhumulo. She is the one who told us stories.

Many people worked on farms at Tshirundu. This is why I could attend *musevhetho* initiation. We danced in a circle and clapped our hands. You know, I was scolded at initiation and warned to stay away from boys. We older people believe that young girls nowadays become pregnant because they do not go to initiation. Even fourteen-year olds have children! Many boys simply go to clinics for circumcision. This means that they do not learn the laws of our ancestors taught at *murundu* initiation.

My best friends were Lallie's young sons, Tommie and Boetie. Those boys could speak Tshivenda. Yes, we had good times together. We used to play in *miedzi* water furrows in the orchards. Tommie once wanted me to ride one of their horses, but I was too afraid and ran away! When we became hungry from playing, we cooked our own porridge and vegetables outside the kitchen.

I did not learn to read and write because there were no schools near us at that time. What could I do? I had to work on the farm as a young person. I first helped to look after water melons and tomatoes.

There was no foreman. Our instructions came from Lallie. We clocked in at about 07:00. There was a piece of iron hanging in a tree. When it was struck at noon, we stopped for lunch. We brought our own food, usually porridge and vegetables. Our working day ended at sunset, and the work week on Friday.

Later I worked in the farm house where I cleaned the kitchen for Lallie's wife. I did not know her name. We just called her *miesies*. She taught me how to cook rice, pumpkin, beans and meat. I already could make porridge the Venda way, but now *miesies* taught me to cook porridge that was more runny and salty.

She often gave me food from the kitchen. Lallie also brought us venison, especially the intestines of kudu. There were many kudus in Niani at that time, and we often ate its meat.

We got on well with Lallie, *miesies* and their children. They all had *vhulenda*, kind hearts. They rarely argued or scolded others. If you were on

[i] Administrative errors in identity documents are not unusual. The most common is incorrectly entered dates of birth that result in a person not becoming eligible for pension in the appointed year.

[ii] 'The clever one.'

[iii] A polite way of telling someone to get lost.

kitchen duty on a particular day, you joined them around the dining table for meals. We all held hands during prayer.

The closest farm shop was at Dolina.[i] Here we bought flour, sugar, bread and milk. Our favourite sweets were toffees! There was a picture of a cow on their wrapping.

We especially liked jam, but could not always afford it. I will never forget how much we liked it!

I met my husband on the farm. He also worked in the fields. We have one daughter and five sons. I had a sixth son, but he passed away.

My parents and I lived on Lallie's farm for many, many years. Then the government came.[ii] Lallie called us together and explained that he was forced to let us go. He went to live in Musina soon afterwards.

My parents moved to Nzhelele where they farmed for themselves. Some years later they went on pension.

My husband and I moved to Folovhodwe. I already had two children. From working for Lallie, we now started working for those who have fields here in the Nwanedi project (box 41). I would like my own field but there is none to be had.

Poverty causes many problems. My husband deserted me ... I hear what Mr. Mavhetha is saying: Some husbands are like a fowl that lays an egg and then abandons it.

I am not against marrying again, but worry about what may happen to my children from my first marriage.

I am too young for pension, so I must work in the irrigation project here at Folovhodwe. But there is not always work. And when I get it, it does not pay well. I only get twenty rand a day to spread fertiliser. I am paid two rand fifty (2015) to pick a crate of tomatoes. A normal harvest of ten to fifteen crates earns me very little.

Winter is especially hard. Then there is even less work in the fields, and we often go hungry. My biggest worry is feeding myself and everyone who depends on me. You know, poor people feel ashamed in shops when others have lots of cash, while they can only buy a few small things.

My children cannot support me. My youngest son passed matric in 2014. He joined his older brother in Musina where they have a fruit and vegetable stall along the main road to Zimbabwe.

My other son is a part-time builder in Polokwane. He owns a house that he rents out. He once had a part-time job at Concor, where they make roof tiles. He is also poor, but he helps me when our food runs out. My other two elder sons work in Johannesburg. One drives a delivery truck while the other does piece jobs.

The only child still living with me is my daughter. Look, here she is, frying fish for us. We buy the fish from our local shop. It is the only meat we can afford. We sometimes catch fish in the Nwanedi river, but not in winter when the water level is low and they are too small to eat.

It is especially because of my poverty that I become so frustrated at not having water at my house. Those hired to install and repair water pipes take their payment and then disappear.

Here in the hilly part of Folovhodwe we now receive water only a few times a week, from 04:00 to about 12:00. When the water enters the pipes, those who are awake phone their friends, and then all meet at the tap. We fetch water there at the bottom of the hill in twenty-five litre plastic containers. They are heavy, and this is why my neck always aches.

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[i] Doreen.

[ii] Referring to forced removal and the consolidation of ethnic enclaves during the 1970s (1.8.2).

Box 41. The Nwanedi irrigation scheme.

Farming has been taking place along the Nwanedi river since precolonial times. Riverine agriculture received huge impetus with the damming of the Nwanedi and Luphephe river. The dams were constructed from 1960-1964, and an irrigation scheme was established at Folovhodwe in 1965 after the area was cleared of vegetation. Water is channelled from a barrage in Nwanedi Provincial 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.

Various 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 crops 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. 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 is the beginning of summer. Temperatures already hover in the high thirties 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. Drinkers huddle in the dark shade of trees. They are seldom employed and their spending is at the centre of much domestic conflict.

2.12.1 The young men in the cave / Vhaṱhannga e bakoni

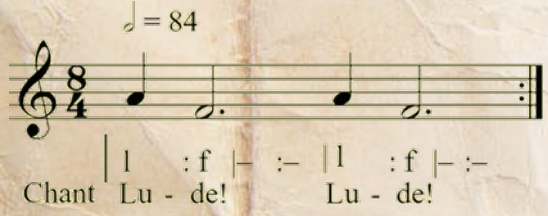
Here comes a story!

We walked. When I say we walked, I mean we walked to the rivers over there. We were carrying water containers.

When we fetched water, we were dressed in loincloths. Those loincloths we wore were beautiful! We girls wore those loincloths, and the young men wore their own loincloths.

When we are wearing those loincloths, we are walking, we are walking with those young men. We are walking with those young men. They are wearing their loincloths.

When they are carrying their water buckets and wearing their loincloths, those young men are calling, ‘Lude! Lude! Lude! Lude!’



Those young men are walking. They are wearing male loincloths from long ago. The male loincloths are those from long ago. They are walking and calling, ‘Lude!’ because that young man is crying.

We are walking. When we walked, we ended up at a cave.[i] The cave goes down. We are going down, we are going down, we are going there!

A young man is asking, ‘You, young man who is trapped, how will you come out?’[ii]

He answers, ‘I do not know. I just entered this cave. I said to myself

Salungano! Salungano!

Ra tshimbila. Ri khou tshimbila, ri ya milamboni hanefhaḽa. Ro hwala na magokoko.

Ri khou ri ri yo ka maḓi ho ambarwa mashedo. Mashedo haaḽani o ambarwa thovhela. A tshi ambarwa haaḽa mashedo, vhaṱhannga vho ambara na dzitsindi.

Vha tshi ambara na dzitsindi dziḽa, ri ya tshimbila, ri khou tshimbila navho havhaḽa vhaṱhannga. Ri tshi tshimbila navho havhaḽa vhaṱhannga. Vho ambara na dzitsindi dzavho.

Hezwi vho hwala vho ambara na dzitsindi dzavho, vhavhaḽa vhaṱhannga vha sokouri ri, ‘Lude! Lude! Lude! Lude!’

Vhaḽa vhaṱhannga vha khou tshimbila. Vho ambara na mashedo, vho ambara na dzitsindi dza kale. Dzitsindi ndi dziḽa dza kale. Vha khou ḓi tshimbila vha sokou ri, ‘Lude!’ Uḽa muṱhannga u khou lila.

Riṋe ri khou tshimbila. Ri tshi tshimbila ri khou fhelela hunwe ho no pfi bakoni. Li tshi tsela fhasi. Ri khou tsa, ri khou tsa, ri khou ya henengei!

Uḽa muṱhannga u khou sokou ri, ‘Iwe, muṱhannga, u ḓo bva nga gai?’

A ri, ‘A thi ḓivhi. Ndo sokou dzhena hafha bakoni. Ndi tshi ri ndi ḓo dovha nda bva, a thi ḓivhi uri ndi ḓo bva nga gai.’

Vha tshi ri, ‘Kha dzhene!’

Uḽa muṱhannga a sokou ri, ‘Lude!’

U khou lila nga hanengei.

Nga huṋwe u sokou ri, ‘Lude!’

‘Nṋe a thi nga koni u bva, mani! Vheinwi vhathu! Nnkokodzeni!’

Ri khou mukodza nga zwanḓa. Ha koni u bva houḽa muthu bakoni. Ri khou itela uri a iteni? U ri a bve.

Ha, riṋe ri tshi vhuya fhaḽa, mme awe vha tshi ri, ‘Zwino, ndi mini zwezwo?’

Riṋe ra ri, ‘A ri ḓivhi. Muṱhannga ha tsha vhonala. Uḽa muṱhannga u

[i] Lit. ‘a place called a cave.’

[ii] It is possible to reach the bottom of the cave, but not to climb up again.

that I will get out, but I do not know how.'

They say, 'Let us enter!'

Those young men are calling, 'Lude!'

He is crying inside there.

And those young men are calling, 'Lude!'

'I am unable to get out, man! Help, you people! Pull me out!'

We are trying to pull him by the hands. That person was unable to come out from the cave. We are doing this so that he can do what? So that he can come out.

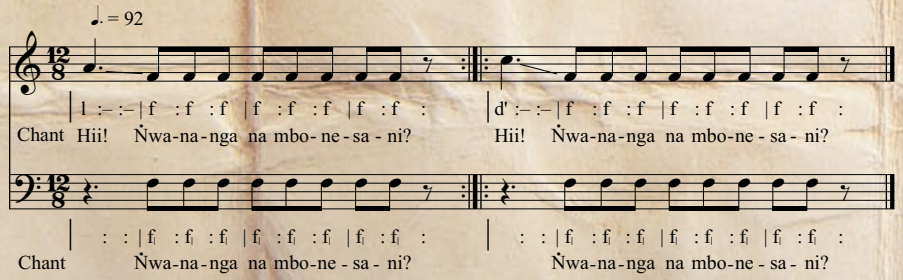
When we returned home from there, his mother asked, 'Now, what is going on?'

We answered, 'We do not know. The young man cannot be seen. That young man has disappeared. He cannot be seen.'

That young man, his mother is crying there.

She is crying,

(Narrator chants six times)
Hiii!
(Crying)
(Chorus chants)
My child, what have you done?



khou phinyela, ha tsha vhonala.'

Uḽa muthannga: mme awe vha khou lila fhaḽa.

Vha sokou,

(Musimi)
Hiii!
(Vhabvumeli)
Ṅwananga, na mbonisa-ni?

Ṅwana uḽa u khou lila nga ngomu bakoni! Ṅwana uḽa ha tsha bva, Ha tsha kona u bva na luthihi uḽa ṅwana nga ngomu bakoni.

Zwino, a tshi fhedza fhaḽa, uḽa ṅwana u khou sokou lila hafhaḽa bakoni.

Vha ri, 'Zwino, uḽa ṅwana u ḓo bva hani?'

Vha ri, 'Riṋe a ri ḓivhi uri u ḓo bva hani ngauri u ngomu ḽibakoni heḽiani.'

'A vhaye vha yo mu kokodza!'

Vha ri, 'Haa! Nṋe ndi khou ofha. Hu nga vha hu na ḓithu nga ngomu hangei.'

Nda ri, 'A vha ṱuwe vha tou yo u mu kokodza!'

Vha ri, 'U khou ri u ḓo bva ngani?'

Uḽa ṅwana u khou sokou lila.

'Hiii! Na ḓa na mbonela vho ṅwananga?'

A namba o ya! Ṅwana u khou ṋuvhela. Uḽa ṅwana u khou tuwa nga ngomu. Uḽa ṅwana a mbo di namba a suvheḽa na nowa ila.

The young men in the cave / Vhaṱhannga e bakoni (continued)

That child is crying inside the cave! The child is not coming out. He is unable to come out because he is trapped inside the cave.

Now, after they[i] had failed there, that child carried on crying there inside the cave.

The mother asks, 'Now, how will that child come out?'

They answer, 'We do not know how he will come out, because he is inside this cave.'

'Go and pull him out!'

They answer, 'Hah! We are afraid. There may be a monster there inside the cave.'

I said, 'Just go and pull him out!'

Lude asks, 'How will you help me get out?'

That child carries on crying.

'Hiii! My child, what have you done?'

He becomes scared! The child is sinking lower. That child is going inside. That child starts to disappear with that snake.

Folovhodwe, 26 September 2013

[i] Referring to the rescuers.

This is another example of narrativised history, *ngano dza ndivho* (1.5.1). As explained, this narrative form integrates historical and poetic elements.

The event described by Mudau dates back to precolonial times, and its antiquity is evident in her nostalgic reference to leather clothing. It involved violent conflict that forced certain local populations to flee their villages. The exact location and cause of the conflict is unknown. However, the cave is situated somewhere in the Nwanedi district. The narrator also noted that Lude was the actual name of a refugee.

As narrative, the historical account takes call-and-response form, and expresses a mother's highly emotional reaction to the impending demise of her son. This is evident in her crying and her repeated question 'My child, what have you done?' The question becomes the chant, and its recitation by co-performers arguably enables them to engage with her state of mind.

The story, as an instance of storied law, also affirms authority. So desperate were some villagers to escape attack that they sought refuge in a cave, knowing that it was a restricted, sacred ancestral site *(tshifho)*. Mudau harnesses the fearsome actuality of history with law, and affirms the timeless power of ancestors and their sacred imperatives.[i]

In typical hyperbolic fashion she shows how the refugees are trapped by fearsome spiritual forces *(ḓithu*, monster; *nowa*, snake) and subsequently die from starvation.

Fig. 83. Folovhodwe 2012

[i] 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2) also shows what happens when a sacred site is disturbed, but its theme is not merged with history.

2.12.2 The children inside the tree / Vhana nga ngomu murini

Here comes a story!

So, something happened once.[i]

We are going to our homes. We arrive with our children.

They ask, 'Why are those children crying?'

Let me explain first that children are carried on the back. They are carried in slings, they are carried in slings from the past.[ii] The baby-slings are those that are walking.[iii]

Those children are walking.[iv]

They arrive at a certain place where they think there are hollow trees.

They arrive and find a hollow tree, so![v] A large hollow tree![vi]

They ask, 'Now, will those children fit inside?'

Others answer, 'They will fit.'

'If they all go in, will they be able to get out? How will they come out?'

You, ants!

They say, 'Go on, enter!'

We are saying that these children will fit. These children enter and they all fit.

They are emerging one by one.

That one is trying to get out and cries, 'Hii!' He is crying!

A woman asks, 'Now, why is that child crying?'

They answer, 'No, he is crying because he cannot get out.'

Now, what a calamity!

That mother comes there and cries, 'hii-hii!'

Salungano! Salungano!

A, ra vha ri ya dzula.

Ri khou ya mahayani. Ri tshi swika ri na vhana.

Vhana vhaḽa vha khou thoma. Vha ri, 'Vhana avha vha lila mini?'

Vha ri, 'Hai, vhana mmbebeni muṱanani.' Vha bebwa nga dzi-ngozwi, vha tshi bebiwa nga dzingozwi ndi dziḽa dza kale. Dzingozwi ndi zwiḽa vha khou tshimbila.

Vhaḽa vhana vha khou tshimbila.

Vha tshi swika vha wana huṅwe hu no nga hu na matanda.

Vha tshi swika ḽi ita sa ḽibako, so! Ḽi ita ḽihulu!

Vha ri, 'Zwino, vhaḽa vhana vha ḓo fhelela?'

Vha ri, 'Vha ḓo fhelela.'

'Ra ri tshi nga dovha ra vha ntsha havhaḽa vhana?'

'Vha ḓo dovha vha bvisa hani-hani?'

Iwe, mutshenzhe!

Vha ri, 'Hai, kha vha dzhene!'

Ri khou ri vhana havha kha vha fhelele. Vha dzhena havhaḽa vhana, vha fhelela vhoṱhe.

Vha tshi bva nga muthihi-muthihi.

Uḽa muṅwe a tshi bva u sokou, 'Hii!' U khou ḓi lilela.

A ri, 'Zwino, u lila mini uḽa ṅwana?'

Vha ri, 'Hai, u khou lilela uri ha tsha kona u bva.

Zwino, mulandu!' Vhaḽa mme awe vha ḓa vha tshi vho lila, 'hii-hii!'

Vha vho lila ṅwana wavho. Ṅwana wa havhaḽa vha vho phinyela, a vha tsha vhonala! Kha ḽia ḽidithu ḽe vha dzhena khaḽo ḽipako ḽia!

Vha ri, 'Zwino, uyu ṅwana a sa tsha bva?'

Vha ri, 'Riṋe a ri tsha ḓivha ngauri a ri tsha vhona uri hu khou bvelela mini.'

Ḽipako ḽia ḽo fheledza vhaḽa vhana vhoṱhe! Vhaḽa vhana vho fhelela

---

[i] Lit. 'that was when we were living or sitting.'

[ii] Slings made from goat-skin.

[iii] The slings are personified.

[iv] Older children who accompany their mother when travelling.

[v] Lit. 'a cave.'

[vi] Lit. 'it does big.'

She is crying for her child. Her child has disappeared. He no longer can be seen! He is inside that hollow monster they went into!

She asks, 'Now, why is that child not coming out?'

They answer, 'We do not know because we can no longer see what is going on.'

All the children are inside the hollow tree! Those children are all finished! They are trying to come out one by one.

The mother of that child comes there, crying!

'Give me my child! Come and give me my child! Hii-hii! I am crying for my child! Come and give me my child! Hii-hii!'

She is crying for the child to escape from the hollow tree.

Those children are no longer trying to escape from the tree. Hah! These children are not getting out. You are saying this person is crying for her children? What are we going to do?

She exclaims, 'Ah! What can we do? Because this monster is keeping them prisoner! It is not allowing them to come out!

Those children are crying inside. They are crying, 'hii!'

That mother is crying, 'Me, my children! I am crying! My children! Hii-hii! I am crying for my children! I will never be able to find them! Hii-hii! Those children of mine will not come out! They are inside! They are disappearing!'

They ask, 'Have those children died inside?'

She answers, 'There the children are, they are disappearing inside!'

That is when those children are dying.

That mother of the child is crying for her children, 'You! Can't you come out one by one?'

Those children cannot escape!

'Now, how will the children escape?'

'And we do not know. Something is holding them inside there. There are monsters there that are holding them in that hollow tree, that one there!'

vhothe. Vha khou bva nga muthihi-muthihi.

Mme wa ula ṅwana u khou da a tshi khou u lila!

'Na mpha vho ṅwananga! Na da na mpha vho ṅwananga! Hii-hii! Nne ndi khou lilela ṅwana wanga! Na da na mpha vho ṅwananga! Hii-hii!'

U khou lilela uri ula ṅwana a bve bakoni.

Vhala vhana a vha tsha bva kha lia dithu li sisi lia line a vha hone. Ha! Havha vhana a vha bvi. Ni khou ri uyu muthu u khou lilela vhana vhawe? Ri do tou vha ita hani?

Vha ri, 'Aa! Rine vhana ri ite mini? Ngauri heli dithu lo vha valela! A li tsha vha bvisa!'

Vhala vhana vha khou lila vha nga ngomu. Vha tshi sokou, 'hii!'

Ula u sokou, 'Nne, vhana vhanga! Ndi lilela! Vhana vhanga! Hii-hii! Nne ndi khou lilela vhana vhanga! A thi tsha do dovha nda vha wana! Hii-hii! Vhana vhanga vhala a vha tsha bva! Vha nga ngomu! Vha khou ngwandamela!'

Vha ri, 'Na vhala vhana vha fhelela nga ngomu?'

Vha ri, 'Vhana khevhala, vha khou tuwa nga ngomu!'

Ha vha huuri vhana vhala vha khou fhelela.

Ula mme wa ṅwana u khou lila vhana vhawe. 'Iwe! A u bvi nga muthihi-muthihi?'

Vhala vhana a vha tsha bva, tsaa!

'Zwino, vhana vha do bvisa hani?'

'Na rine a ri tsha divha. Zwi hone zwo vha honela henengei nga ngomu. U honelwa henengei madithuni haneala mapakoni, haneala!'

Vhala vhana vhavho, mme vha khou lila! Vha nnda vha tshi mona vha tshi lila kha lia dithu!

Vha tshi khokhonya!

The children inside the tree / Vhana nga ngomu murini (continued)

Those children of theirs, the mother is crying! They are walking up and down outside, crying about that monster!

They are hammering on the hollow tree!

Those children must come out! The children are not coming out! This hollow tree is holding those children captive! They cannot escape!

‘You, monster, my children are starting to cry. Hii-hii! I, I want my children!’

Those children cannot escape!

They are inside, they are crying! Those children are crying. They have died!

Folovhodwe, 26 September 2013

Vhari vhana havhaḽa kha vhabve! Vhana a vha tsha bva! Ndi ḽibako kheḽi ḽo valela vhaḽa vhana. A vha tsha bva!

‘Iwe, vhana vhanga vha vho thoma u lila. Hii-hii! Nṋe, vhana vhanga ndi khou vha nyaga!’

Vhana vhaḽa a vha tsha bva!

Vha nga ngomu, vha khou lila. Vhaḽa vhana vha khou lila. Vho fhelela.

This story essentially warns children against natural dangers they may encounter in the veld, especially when collecting firewood and water, and herding animals.

A group of young children explores a hollow tree containing an ants' nest. In usual exaggerated fashion, the tree is portrayed as a monster *(ḍithu)* that holds them captive while they are devoured by the ants.

This story poses a special interpretative challenge. It initially appears that only the youngest child is able to escape. However, all the children ultimately die inside the tree. In addition, the identity of actants at particular moments is unclear, while seemingly impulsive bursts of repetition complicate the unfolding of the plot.

Despite modernity's unravelling of 'sacred master plots' that organise and explain the world,[750] any baffling sense of inchoacy the plot and its presentation may invoke, could still be rooted in an enduring view of artistic structures as models of a fully integrated universe[751] conceived to provide timeless answers to the contingencies of existence. Indeed, Aristotle's[752] notion of literature as an expression of harmony is supported by the function of *ngano* as a form of law which stipulates social values and roles.

However, as explained (1.5.3), very few *ngano* in fact comprise a seamless structure, or achieve Aristotelian closure.[753] They show that conventional older notions of plot unity and teleology are illusory and unable to account for irreconcilable conflicts and contradictions.[754] The threads of many stories 'remain untied, projecting into a future unknown,'[755] as the lives of their narrators do.

Narrator Elisa Madzanga of Folovhodwe[756] portrays a husband who conceals food from his starving family. His reprehensible action is eventually revealed, but he remains unrepentant and rehabilitated, and the outcome of the story is left to the imagination of listeners.

Such incomplete, 'genuinely processual' presentations require 'a special aesthetics' that account for 'life in its agglomerations and dissipations, structurings and unstructurings, with their ever-evolving energies tending to no goal.'[757] This links with the priority Scheub accords to performance over well-known plots, and emphasises the involvement of participants in narrative actions and emotions.[758] Discourse at times may override expectations of particular sequences of events, and become 'pure process.'[759]

Put simply, Mudau's kind of performance is arguably primarily geared towards imprinting obedience on her young listeners. Her delivery in both stories is confident and flowing. She starts softly and sedately, gradually raises her tempo and volume, and becomes demonstrative up to a point of virtual breathlessness. Her repetitions, questions, exclamations and emotional crying are also intended to generate vicarious fear and despair among impressionable young listeners.

Fig. 84. Folovhodwe
2011

2.13 Lerisa Mavhodze

Welcome here to my home. Let us sit in the shade under this tree, men on my kitchen chairs, and us women on our blankets here on the ground.

I am Lerisa Josephine Mavhodze. I have been living in Niani all my life, first in the west, and later here at Folovhodwe.

I was born in 1963 on the farm Venterblou,[i] there on the other side of Musina. The owner was David van Rensburg. Both my parents worked for him.

My father was Jackson Mavhodze. He was the foreman. He was in charge of others who planted and picked potatoes and onions.

My mother was Mamaila Mulungwane. She worked in the farm kitchen. She cleaned, and cooked porridge, meat and rice.

My mother had two sons and three daughters. My brothers are deceased, and one sister lives at Mokopane. The other one is also here at Folovhodwe.

I learnt quite a bit of Afrikaans when living on farms when I was young. I will tell you a story about a husband who is a snake. He is called a *skelm*[ii] in Afrikaans, because he is lazy and likes to sleep.

When growing up at Venterblou, we played *khadi* rope-skipping and *ndode* stone games, and built *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3).

We ate many different kinds of traditional food. *Mukonde* are strips of firm, cold porridge made from fine flour. *Tshidzimba* stew is made from beans, maize and peanuts. Then there is *ndovhi*. This stew contains dried meat, the ground kernels of marula pips, and flour. The meat is cooked while the marula and flour mix is added slowly.

We also ate a maize and peanut mix called *mugumo*. *Mpale* are sun-dried tomatoes, and roasted pumpkin pips are called *masheleni*.[iii]

A big rooster is called *gukulume*. This is also the name of cold porridge dipped in salted water and eaten by hand. *Gukulume* means one is very hungry and wants to eat a lot!

We were also fond of buying toffees and ginger buns at the farm shop. Christmas was the time for buying tea, bread and red fruit jam.

My granny was called Mrs. Tsatsawane. She lived with us at Venterblou. Even though she was Xitsonga-speaking, she told us *ngano* stories in Tshivenda. Her storytelling often led to us playing games like '*Hamatutu banga*.'[iv]

After some years our family moved to a farm south of Musina. It was called Hamore. The owner was Freddy. My parents did the same work there as at Venterblou.

During this time I started to go to school, to St. Martin Deporris Primary School in Musina. I was eight years old.

My favourite teacher was Mrs. Ramabulana. She lived on the school grounds. I boarded with her because she did not want me to travel to school from the farm.

My favourite subjects were Afrikaans, geography and sowing. I really liked sport, especially playing *bola* (netball) against other local schools. I also

[i] Fontainebleau.

[ii] Rogue or trickster.

[iii] Lit. 'shillings,' perhaps because some pumpkin pips resemble coins.

[iv] A game in which young children sit with their legs extended. All chant a recitation while a person touches their legs on the beat. At the end of the chant a leg is 'counted out.' The owner of the last remaining leg is the victor. See Blacking (1967:pl. 14) and Kruger (2004:51-52).

loved athletics events like shotput, javelin and *fhufha*[i] (high-jump).

My parents left Hamore in 1979 when I was sixteen. We came here to Folovhodwe where the rest of our family lives. We managed to get a field in the irrigation project. The project was still quite new. Even so, the fields had all been taken not long afterwards.

I attended Ratshibvumo Secondary School where I passed matric in 1988. I continued with Afrikaans. I can speak this language quite well. My other subjects were English, geography, history, sowing, biology and Tshivenda.

During 1989 to 1991 I worked as a private teacher at Bale Primary School where I taught grade seven. My family was too poor to send me to college.

I was thirty-five years old when I started working as a supervisor at Venmag.[ii] My job was to oversee the washing of limestone. I worked there for six years.

Following this, I worked at Diamcor Mining near Venetia. I worked for eight days and then had four days off. I resigned my job in 2015 because they wanted to transfer me to Kimberley in the Northern Cape. This is too far from Folovhodwe.

My husband is a clerk who works in Johannesburg. He is also from Folovhodwe. He works for a company called Vulcan. They make stainless steel products like electric fryers for big kitchens. We see each other once every two months.

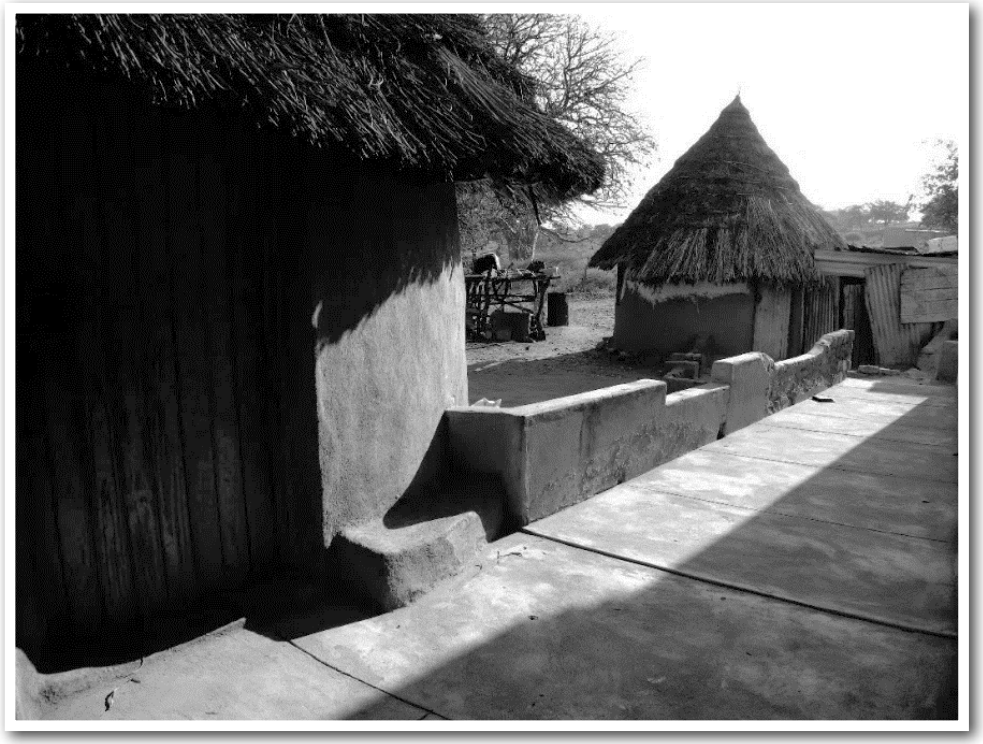


Fig. 85. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha's homestead
Folovhodwe, 2014

[i] Lit. 'fly.'

[ii] A local magnesite mine.

2.13.1 The snake-husband / Nyamutwa-wo-lala

Here comes a story!

There was a certain man. This man was a snake. He married a woman.

They left home and said they were going over there to the in-laws.

They arrived there at the in-laws. They arrived during the evening. They arrived and entered the house with the son-in-law.

The next morning that woman took a water calabash and went to the river. When she had fetched water, she returned and stood in the doorway, singing to her husband.

When she sang a song to her husband, she said,

(Narrator)
You, One-who-always-sleeps.
Why are you still calling me?[i]
Your father does not like me.
(Chorus)
Ndi-ndee, ndi-ndee!

That snake-husband started to come out immediately.

When he was outside, he was given food by his wife. The woman served him, that man.

He finished and returned inside the house.

When he returned to the house, that woman went to collect firewood.

Now, the mother-in-law, she arrived there and stood in the doorway.

She called, she sang in a thin voice, like that of her daughter.

She sang, 'You, One-who-always-sleeps! …'

That snake came out!

When he came out, that person picked up stones and threw them at him!

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na munwe munna. Hoyu munna o vha a ṋowa. O mala musadzi.

Vha ṱuwa vha tshi ri vha khou ya hangei ha vho-makhulu. Vha swika hangeini ha vho-makhulu. Vho swika hu nga madekwana. Vha swika vha dzhena na mukwasha nḓuni.

Nga matsheloni houḽani mufumakadzi a dzhia tshigubu a ya mulamboni. Hezwi a hangei mulamboni, a vhuya a ḓa a imba muṋangoni, a khou imbelela munna wawe.

A tshi imbelela munna wawe luimbo, a ri,

(Musimi)
Nandi, Nyamutwa-wo-lala.
Inwi ni ḓi mbidzelani?
Khotsi aṋu vha sa mpfuni.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ndi-ndee, ndi-ndee!

Houḽa munna wa ṋowa a mbo ḓi namba a bvela nnḓa.

Hezwi o no bvela nnḓa, a fhiwa zwiḽiwa nga mufumakadzi wawe. Wa mufumakadzi vha avha houḽa wa munna aḽa.

A fhedza a humela nḓuni.

Hezwi o no humela nḓuni, houḽa musadzi u khou u ya khunini.

Zwino, vho-makhulu vha tshi swika hafhalani vha ima hafhaḽa muṋangoni. Vha vhidzelela. Ha, vha imba nga luipfi lusekene.

Ha pfi, 'Nandi, Nyamutwa-wo-lala ...'

Heiḽani ṋowa ya bvela nnḓa!

Hezwi yo no bvela nnḓa, havhaḽani muthu vha dzhia matombo vha kanḓa heiḽa ṋowa!

[i] The snake is responding to his wife.

The snake-husband / Nyamutwa-wo-lala (continued)

That snake rushed back into the house again!

The daughter came back from collecting firewood. That woman returned from collecting firewood and sang the song,

(Narrator)
You, One-who-always-sleeps.
Why are you still calling me?
Your father does not like me.
He chopped me into four pieces.
Why did you not bite them?
Will you laugh?
Why should I not laugh?
(Chorus)
Ndi-ndee, ndi-ndee!

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 5 July 2014

Heila nowa yo dovha ya shavha ya humela nduni!

Musadzi a vhuya khunini. Hezwila mufumakadzi o vhuya khunini a imba luimbo,

(Musimi)
Nandi Nyamutwa-wo-lala.
Inwi ni di mbidzelani?
Khotsi anu vha sa mpfuni.
Vho ntsiga mabidimane.
Khe ni songo kho?
Nde kho ni nga sea naa?
Ndi sa sei ndi nani?
(Vhabvumeli)
Ndi-ndee, ndi-ndee!

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

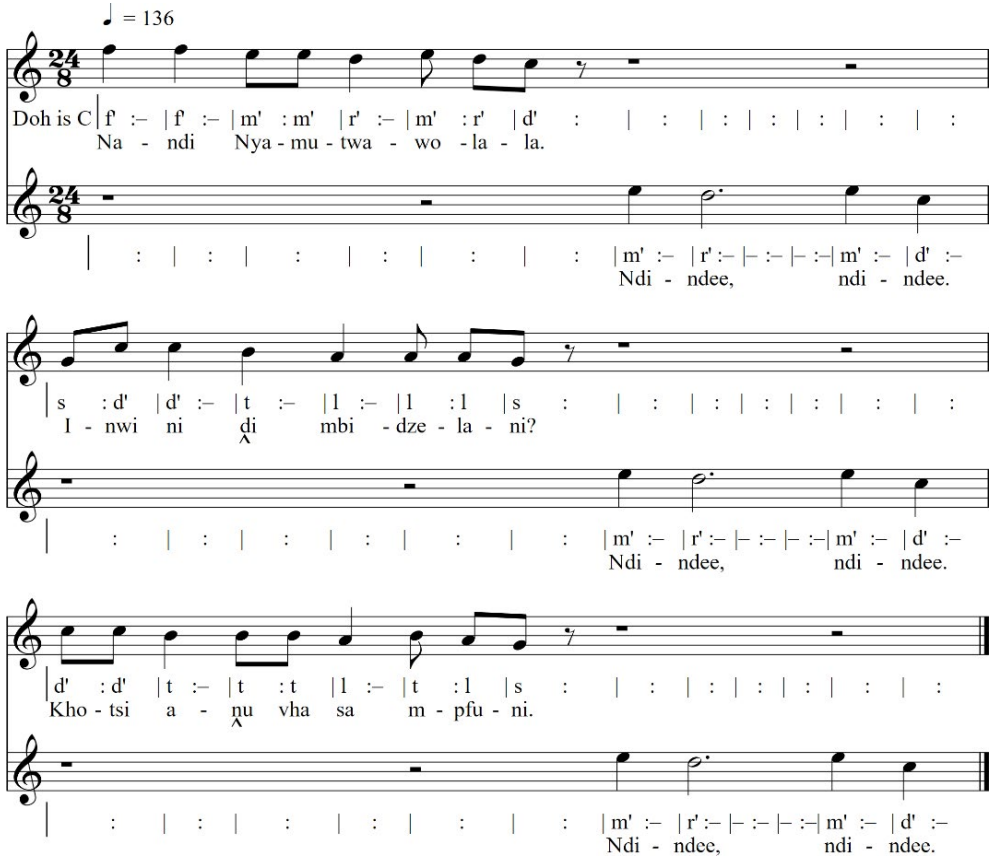
See the discussion of Rosina Mulovhedzi's version of this story (2.5.2) for a complete interpretation.

As explained, the snake-husband is mysterious and distant during early married life. Mavhodze's depiction of the couple's nocturnal arrival at the wife's parental home indicates the duration of their journey. However, darkness also hints at concealment and unsettling discovery.

It has also been pointed out that the metaphoric death of the snake is a prerequisite for his transformation into an ideal husband. Similarly, the reference in the song to biting expresses the intensity of the verbal dispute among the actants. The husband asks his wife, 'Why are you still calling me?' In other words, he questions her loyalty to him. The song suggests that his wounds are not physical but emotional. He has been hurt by his in-laws' rebuke and his wife's mocking attitude. However, her laughter is not intended disrespectfully. Bantering is a strategy geared towards maintaining married life despite its vicissitudes.

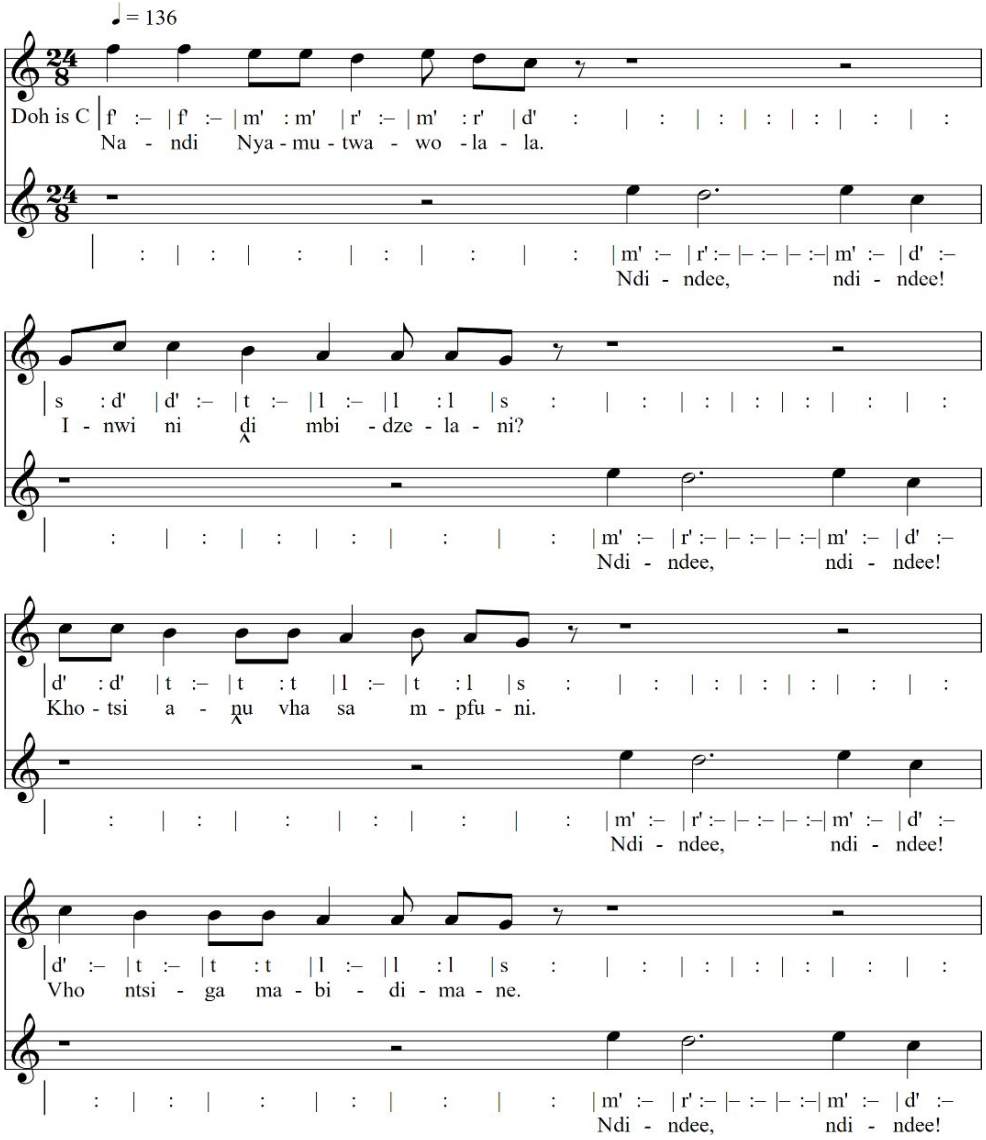
The wife also fights with words, for she addresses her husband mockingly as 'One-who-always-sleeps.' The narrator explained that he is lazy, and likes to curl up and bask in the sun. However, he can become deadly when disturbed. And so his mother-in-law adds her voice by repeating the song. She imitates her daughter, and speaks on her behalf.[i]

The enduring nature of social conflict and transformation could be hinted at in the chorus response, *'ndi-ndee!'* This term also features in Karanga stories, including that of the snake-husband.[760] Its essential meanings are those of 'never-ending operation, process, work, sickness.'[761] Musical expression in this way is again foregrounded as a strategy for conflict resolution.[ii] Singing is a sanctioned form of communication across different statuses. The husband's actions as head of the family are critically scrutinised, but his position is not undermined by his wife and in-laws.



[i] The narrator utilises a well-known motif common to monster tales. In them monsters attempt to lure young girls from safety by imitating the voice of a family member. See e.g. 'The cannibal's tooth' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[ii] See e.g. 'The disabled boy' (2.10.1).



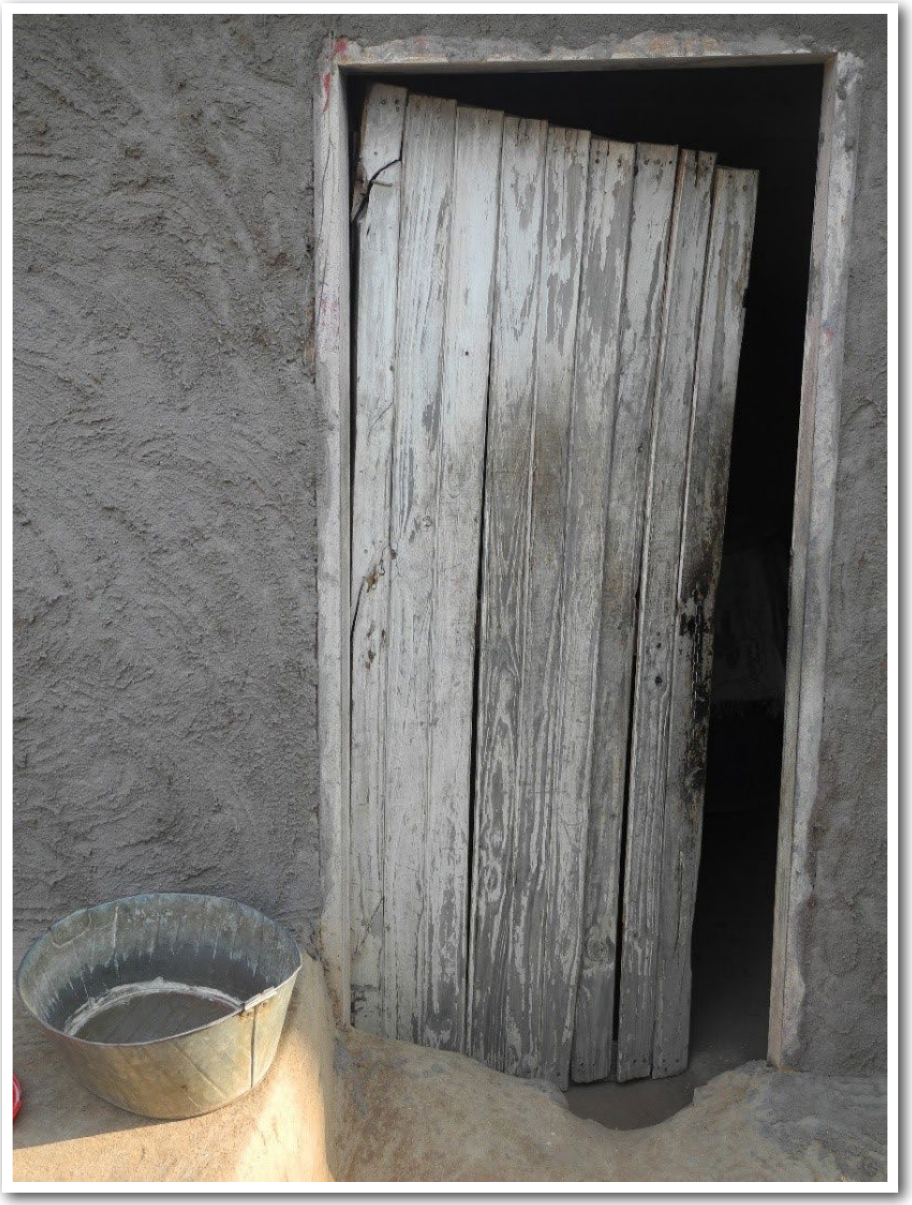


Fig. 86. At Folovhodwe
2013

2.13.2 Mutshavhona

There was a certain man with two wives. One had three children, one had two children.

This elder wife poisoned the food of that younger wife. That younger wife started to eat and died immediately!

Now, that elder wife wanted to kill the children of that younger wife. She again took poison.

Some of those children are not there. They had gone to school. One young child had remained at home. When she looked, she saw that wife putting the poison in the food.

That other child returned from school. When that one had returned from school, he went to wash his hands. Now, when he wanted to eat that food, that other young child started to speak to him.

She says,

(Narrator)
My brother, watch out for danger!
The porridge has been poisoned!
Poison has been poured into it.
Red poison.
(Chorus)
Watch out!

That other young one answered,

(Narrator)
I hear you.
(Chorus)
Watch out!

That child ended up not eating that food.

Folovhodwe, 5 July 2014

Ho vha hu na munwe munna a na vhafumakadzi vhavhili. Hoyu munwe a na vhana vhararu, munwe a na vhana vhavhili.

Hoyu mufumakadzi muhulwane a shelela mushonga houḽa mufumakadzi muṱuku. A mbo ḓi namba a ḽa, a lovha!

Zwino, houḽani mufumakadzi u khou nyaga u vhulaya havhaḽa vhana vha houḽani musadzi. A dovha a dzhia mushonga.

Havhaḽani vhanwe vha vha si ho vho ya tshikoloni. Ha vha ho sala ṅwana muthihi muṱuku. A tshi khou zwi vhona, a vhona vha tshi khou shela mushonga kha zwiḽiwa.

Houḽa ṅwana a vhuya tshikoloni. Uḽa a tshi vhuya tshikoloni u khou ya u ṱamba zwanḓa. Zwino, a tshi khou nyaga u thoma uḽa zwiḽiwa, houḽa munwe ṅwana muṱuku a thoma a amba naye.

A ri,

(Musimi)
Khaladzi yanga, mutshavhona dada!
Vhuswa u si ḽe!
Ho shelwa muri.
Muri mutswuku.
(Vhabvumeli)
Mutshavhona!

Hokuḽani kunwe kwa fhindula,

(Musimi)
Izwo ndo zwipfa.
(Vhabvumeli)
Mutshavhona!

Houḽani ṅwana a fhedzisela a songo tsha ḽa hezwiḽa zwiḽiwa.

Whereas the preceding story of the snake-husband is a portrayal of non-violent conflict, the story popularly known as 'Mutshavhona' alludes to poisoning as a lethal strategy of witches. This evil phenomenon is represented by the image of the ogre, commonly known as *tshidada*, hence the song phrase *'mutshavhona dada!'* ('beware of the ogre!'). The image of *tshidada* is commonly used to frighten children into obedience. *Tshidada* is believed to resemble a headless hyena which carries out its heinous deeds at night.

Knowledge of poison is a formidable factor in social relations. It is usually associated with kitchens and cooking, and women are consequently feared in situations of conflict.[762] An elderly female narrator whose stories appear in this collection, 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.

Narrator Masindi Maliyehe[763] in turn described how her

> husband and his good friend went to clear a field of trees one day. When they rested, they drank beer in the shade of a tree. Later they said, 'Our work is almost done.' My husband started burning branches, while that other man remained drinking. When my husband returned, his friend said, 'Finish the rest of the beer, I have had enough.' My husband drank, not knowing that his friend had poisoned the remaining beer. We got a message at home to rush to him. There he lay. He died before we could take him to the doctor.

'Mutshavhona' is popular among Venda as well as Karanga narrators.[764] It has entered the choral repertoire and has even migrated to an urban area (3.1.6). Mavhodze portrays its young actants as schoolgoing, and not involved in older subsistence activities as in other versions.[i] Its song is one of a number of popular story songs that have been adapted to other styles, such as *malende* choral dance-songs[ii] and school songs.

As explained in the discussion of 'Death and evil' (2.8.1), witchcraft is essentially rooted in relationships that are 'close, competitive and marked by social inequality.'[765] As such, it usually occurs within family and neighbourhood settings. It often shapes relationships between co-wives, in particular in regard to 'prescribed inequalities in their rank and status' and the unequal provision they may receive from their husband.[766]

'Mutshavhona' commonly features two separate sets of actants. The first is that of orphaned brother and sister who are tormented by their step-family. This common narrative pairing of siblings may be explained by the fact that 'the relationship between a brother and sister is intimate and marked by reciprocal obligations. A brother is indebted to his sister whose marriage brings cattle into the family, thus allowing him to marry in turn.'[767]

The second set of actants involves a man and his in-laws. A story[768] notes that '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 (and poisoned) porridge and vegetables, and put the dishes there in the house where their son-in-law was to be received.'

The motivations commonly offered for witchcraft are greed, jealousy and hatred. A story opens by noting that 'there was a certain child, an orphan called Devhula. He lived with his stepmother and his younger sister. Well, Devhula's father had had many cattle. So, at sunset his other wives poisoned the boy's supper. They wanted to kill him for those cattle that were now his.' Their hate was 'like pouring rain' *('mvula mutshotsho mutsholi').*[769]

Another version describes how a traditional ruler marries the orphaned sister.[770] 'Certain of the chief's relatives were prejudiced against (her brother's) disability. They referred to him as *tshihole*, that "cripple thing." And so they decided to kill him. They prepared a bowl of maize porridge in the kitchen and added lethal poison to it.'

Mavhodze's rendition of 'Mutshavhona' is incomplete. The story has more than one outcome, but most extended forms continue by showing how the culprits unsuccessfully try to murder the young man in other ways, and become victims of their own hatred. The narrator explained that she was aware of the incompleteness of her narrative, but that she was merely intent on emphasising that evil does not triumph.

Mavhodze's story is also unusual in a different sense. The young male victims in 'Mutshavhona' overcome their adversaries with the help of a

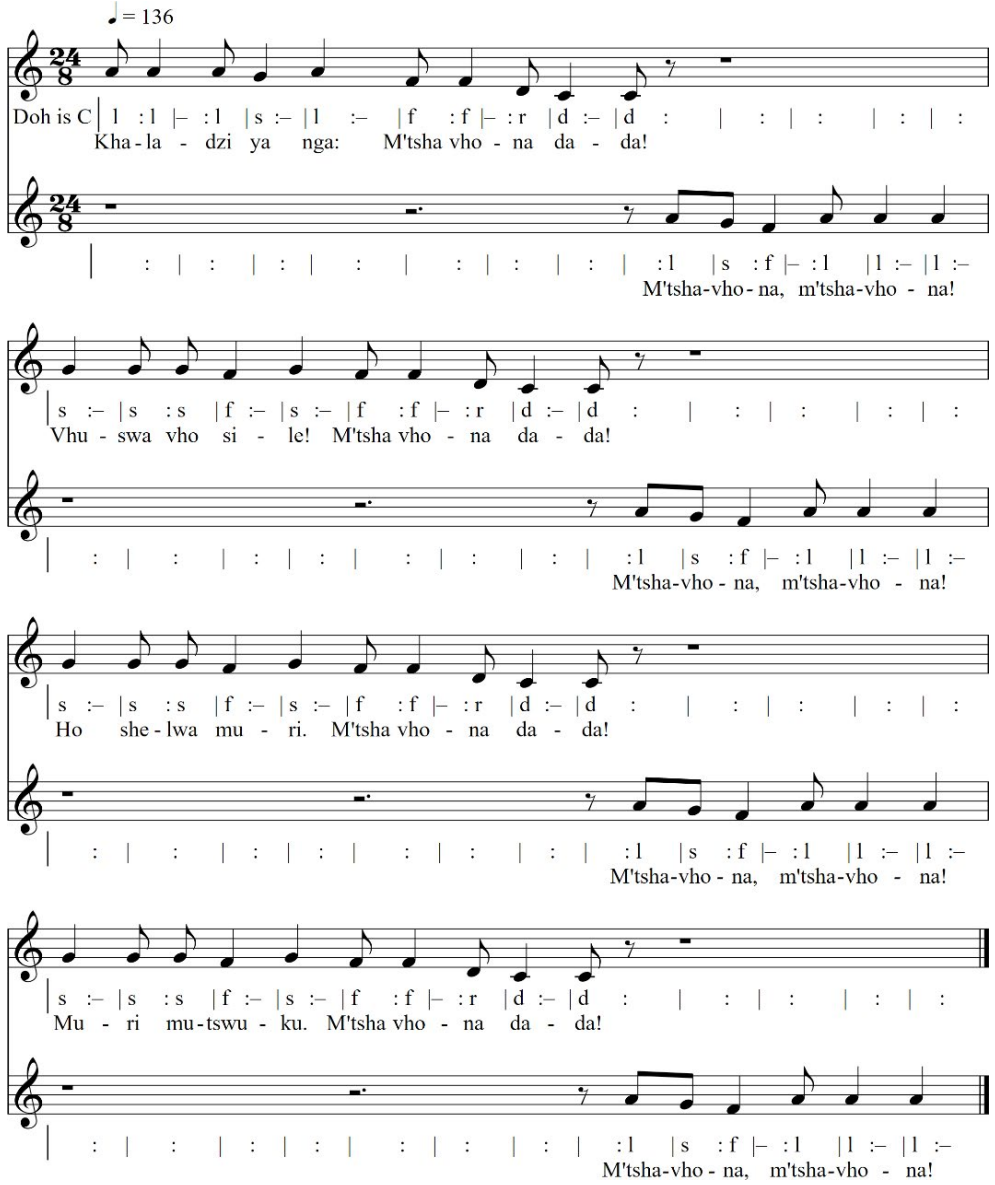
[i] Compare 'Tortoise and Duiker' (2.3.5), in which the race between the two animals is presented in the context of school athletics.

[ii] As performed by Nyadzanga Tseheli (75) at Murangoni (5 May 1990).

sibling, usually a sister.[i] This motif affirms the interdependence of lives, and the importance of mutual support. Mavhodze thus depicts the victim escaping his predicament by rational, human means.

However, this portrayal is exceptional. All other documented versions of the story show how the supernatural intervenes. As explained,[ii] birds serve as messengers because of their ability to observe humanity from above, fly and sing. The sister who warns her brother that his food has been poisoned, therefore does so by turning into a bird. The man who confronts his in-laws lacks a human ally, and so he is helped by his pet bird, who lives in his pocket.[iii] An unusual form of magical intervention is effected by means of a magic club or stick.[iv]

When powerful adversaries overwhelm the vulnerable and desperate, it may be necessary to invoke belief in the supernatural, in magic and spiritual power. And so the child learns that no situation is ever totally hopeless.



[i] If sometimes only until their own greed claims their life. See 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014).

[ii] See e.g. 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1) and 'I am a rooster' (2.4.1).

[iii] 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014).

[iv] 'The magic knobkerrie' (Stayt, 1968/1931). This is presumably linked to the use of 'magic sticks' by healers. See in this regard the biographical sketch of Rosina Mulovhedzi (2.5). A magic stick or staff is a common motif in oral narrative (see Thompson, 1955:D956; 'Magic stick of wood').

2.14 Mashudu Kwinda

So, you say I am spirited like a whirlwind? Well, I am after all only thirty-seven years old!

I was born in Musina hospital in 1979. My parents gave me the names Mashudu Gloria. You know my mother, Marubini Kale (2.17), who also told you some stories.

My father died in 2012. He did not like apartheid, and was looking for a better life. Because Zimbabwe had become independent just after my birth, we moved to Lutumba on the other side of the Limpopo river, where he joined the Zimbabwean Defence Force. Our family stayed there for three years. We then returned to Musina where my father worked in a shop.

My parents separated in 1985. My mother and I came to Muswodi where I attended Muswodi Junior Primary. It was during this time that I heard *ngano* from my mother's mother, Sara Pandelani Mulaudzi, who lived here at Muswodi.

I met my first husband when I was still at Ratshibvumo Secondary. I left school after grade ten and married him. I was nineteen and he twenty-one.

We divorced in 2004. He took a second wife without speaking to me first. He was not interested in asking my permission anyway. He did not want two wives, and rejected me. To make matters worse, I was pregnant at the time. I really suffered.

I then met another man. He was a driver at Venetia Mine.[i] I started living with him in 2009. He died from a stroke in 2011. Our time together was so short.

I married again in 2014. My husband is a builder who works in our area. I see him over weekends.

I have two girls and a boy. My elder daughter is in matric and lives with her granny so that my burdens are shared. My son was born in 2009. He is in grade two.

I get my determination from my mother, Marubini. She sells sweets and buns from her home. She told me to try selling *magwinya*. This is what Afrikaans people call *vetkoek*.[ii]

I buy flour and cooking oil from a local shop. I cannot afford electricity, so I make my *magwinya* over a wood fire.

I sell them for one rand each. When I started my small business, I walked around with them on my head. I am now known as someone who makes good *magwinya*, and so people come to my house to buy them. *Magwinya* are best with atchar or avocado.

I also sell vegetables and fruit. My tomatoes come from our irrigation project, and my avocados and bananas from Levubu. I travel to Thohoyandou to collect a large box. It takes me a whole day to do this.

I try to be cheerful, but I struggle. My biggest challenges have been divorce and death. I battle to raise my kids. I wish life could be a happy story. I will tell you a *ngano* about a man who fights for his wife. Then they are happy.

I regret not completing my school education. To survive I now have to do whatever I can. In 2014 I was working as a daga boy[iii] on a building job at Muswodi Primary School. I was standing on a scaffold when a wall collapsed! I did not know what was happening. I just saw two others running away. I jumped off quickly but the wall landed on my right shoulder. I was taken to Donald Fraser clinic. Fortunately I was not seriously injured.

When a person suffers, she should go to church. I am happiest when I am working, but even more so when I attend church there at Mashau Tseisi's home (fig. 3). I like worshiping and singing. One of my favourite songs goes, *'Moria, kondelela Zioni. Ri yo fhela Mudzimuni.'* ('Moria, where Zionists persevere. We are going to die with God.')

I am one of those with whom the spirits speak. They tell me things when I sleep. I dreamt I would be injured at work and that my grandmother was going to die. This also means that I receive the spirit of God during church meetings. This happens to people who are troubled.

[i] This is South Africa's largest diamond mine, situated near the town of Alldays. https://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de_beers/

[ii] Lit. 'fat-cakes,' dollops of dough sautéed in oil.

[iii] A labourer who mixes cement.

2.14.1 The magic tree / Muri wa madambi

Here comes a story!

Long ago there was an old woman who had three children. They were girls. One died without giving birth. Those other two also died. Each had one child. They too were girls.

Now, that old woman lived with one of her granddaughters. When she gave her instructions, that girl did not listen to what her granny told her. She sulked. Then she left and went to live with other family members.

The other granddaughter came there when she saw her granny becoming old and weak. She stayed with her. They stayed together.

That granny asked her, 'My grandchild, do you always want to live here with me instead of marrying?[i]

That grandchild heard, she heard those words.

Now, it happened that young men started to like her as she grew up. Now, they wanted to marry her.

A certain man came there to the house. He was the first one.

He said, 'I like this granddaughter of yours.'

That old woman agreed.

She said, 'Now, because you like her, you do not have to take out money.[ii] Go outside. I will show you what to do.'

Now, that suitor went outside. He was shown a mopane tree.

It was said, 'You must chop down the whole tree. If this tree is dead and does not rise again, this girl will be yours.[iii]

That young man says, 'Give me the axe.'

He takes that axe and starts to chop that tree. It falls!

He enters that house and says, 'Granny, I have felled the tree!'

[i] Lit. 'do you want to live like this?'
[ii] Referring to bridewealth.
[iii] Lit. 'you will have won this girl.'

Salungano! Salungano!

Tshifhingani tsha kale ho vha hu na mukegulu we avha a na vhana vhawe vhararu. Vha vhasidzana fhedzi. Hoyu muthihi o lovha a si na ṅwana. Havha vhavhili vho lovha vha na vhana muthihi-muthihi. Vha vhasidzana fhedzi.

Zwino, havhala mukegulu vho vha vha tshi dzula na houla muṅwe muthihi. Vha tshi mu laya, a sa thetshelesi zwine makhulu wawe vha amba zwone. A tuwa a ṅala a ya u dzula na mashaka awe.

Hoyu muṅwe muthihi a da a nga u vhona makhulu awe vho no aluwesa. Vha tshi vho dzula vha vhothe, a dzula navho.

Havhala makhulu vho vha vha tshi mu vhudza uri, 'Muduhulu wanga, u toda u tshi do tshila nga ndila hei?'

Houla muduhulu a tshi tevhedzela, vha tshi tevhedzela.

A swikela he a aluwa, a vha a tshi vho thoma u tamiwa. Zwino, a tshi vho toda u maliwa.

Ha da muṅwe munna muthihi hanefho mudini. Wo u thoma.

A ri, 'Ndi khou tama hoyunoni musidzana muduhulu wavho.'

Havhala mukegulu vha tenda.

Vha ri, 'Zwino, ngauri u khou mu tama, iwe a u nga mbviseli masheleni. U tou bvela nnda nda u sumbedza mushumo une wa teya ntshumela wone.'

Zwino, houla mukwasha a bvela nnda a sumbedzwa muri wa mupani.

Ha pfi, 'Iwe u rema hoyu muri wothe wa u tshakekanya. Arali hoyu muri wa sa vuwa wa vha wo fa, iwe wo wina hoyunoni musidzana.'

Houla muthannga a ri, 'Kha vha mphe mbado.'

A dzhia mbado heilani, a thoma u rema houla muri, wa wa!

A dzhena hafhala mudini, a ri, 'Makhulu, muri ndo u wisa wo fhelela!'

Makhulu vha ri, 'Ndi zwone, naa?'

A ri, 'Ee!'

Granny says, ‘Is that so?’

He replies, ‘Yes!’

Granny goes outside. That granny starts to sing her small song she used to like.

She sings,

(Narrator chants)
Kundindili!
(Chorus chants)
Tsha mopani, tshi no gara ndi soso!
The mopani is just like before!

When that suitor looks, he finds that tree standing. Ah! He is now surprised! That tree that was felled is standing again!

That suitor starts running away.

The second suitor arrives. He came there and was shown that tree.

She again starts to sing that song, ‘Kundindili …’

Ah! That suitor is surprised. Ah! When he came back with the old woman, he found that tree standing.

The third suitor arrives.

When he arrives, that suitor says, ‘Hah! Granny, I will be able to fell this tree, man! You must give me an axe that slides through the wood, tutula!’

He goes straight to the tree.

He chops! He chops! He even breaks those branches! He takes matches and sets that tree on fire!

He sees that, now, the tree is burnt out. He pours water onto it. That fire is extinguished! He gathers those ashes. He goes to the nearest river and throws them in the water!

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 3 July 2015

Makhulu vha bvela nnḓa. Havhaḽa makhulu vha thoma u imbelela kuimbo kwavho kwe vha vha vha tshi ku funa.

(Musimi)
Kundindili!
(Vhabvumeli)
Tsha mopani, tshi no gara ndi soso!

Houḽa mukwasha a tshi ṱolela, a wana houḽa muri wo ima. A! A mangala uri zwino, a fha fhethu ngauri ndo u rema uḽa muri wo fhelela, wo dovha wa ima!

Houḽa mukwasha a mbo ḓi shavha.

Ha ḓa muṅwe wa vhuvhili. A tshi ḓa a sumbedzwa houḽa muri.

Vha mbo ḓi dovha vha imba luimbo luḽa, ‘Kundindi-ndindili-kundindili …’

A! Mukwasha uḽa o mangala. A! A tshi bvela nnḓa na vho-makhulu, a wana uḽa muri wo ima.

Ha ḓa mukwasha wa vhuraru.

A tshi swika houḽa mukwasha na ene a ri, ‘Haa! Hoyu muri nne ndi ḓo u kona makhulu, mani! Vhone vha tou mpha mbaḓo yo no fhira ine ya tutula!’

A dzhenela fhasi houḽa muri.

A rema! A rema! A ṱhukula na matavha haaḽani. A dzhia na metshisi a vhasa hafhaḽa kha uḽa muri.

A vhona zwauri, zwino, uḽa muri wo swa. A shasha maḓi. Houḽa mulilo wa oma! A kumba miora heiḽani. A mbo ḓi ya a posa mulamboni wa tsini!

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

The theme in world literature of suitors competing for a young woman of moral integrity needs no introduction. It also features in *ngano*,[771] some of which are structured around the image of a magic tree.[i] They too invoke ideal male and female qualities in the quest for love and the perfect partner. This is the kernel of social reproduction. Although the story ends abruptly, the narrator explained that the couple become married and enjoy a happy life. As in the case of other narrators,[ii] this story resonates with Kwinda's personal experience.

The old woman's indication that no bridewealth is owing is clearly improbable. Its purpose is to trigger action, and to anticipate an entertaining adventure.

The narrator explained that the motivation for the challenge is that a young man who is serious about marriage, and a worthy future husband, must show ingenuity, perseverance and physical power, a theme that is common to *ngano*.[772] Any failure in this regard suggests that a man is merely interested in having an affair.

The young woman too must display moral integrity. Here she cares for her grandmother and obeys her ('She heard those words'), unlike her sister.

Narrator Masindi Maliyehe[773] explained that this kind of story also has contemporary meaning because young men nowadays tend to negotiate personally with their future in-laws. This is in contrast to the older convention that requires family members to act as go-betweens.

The motif of the worthy suitor merges with another, namely the relationship between a mother and daughter (or grandmother and granddaughter). Narrator Mutshekwa Mudau (2.16) remarks that 'parents were not always pleased to hear songs on (musical) bows. They showed that children were now growing up and that they would leave home soon to get married. People wanted their children to stay with them forever.'

As explained in the discussion of 'Hippopotamus and Crocodile' (2.5.1), shared gender experiences create exclusive, intimate bonds, and a mother may consequently be reluctant to part with her daughter.

Some stories imply that the mother and daughter are the only members of the family, and that the mother fears loneliness. She may also be living in destitution and therefore worry about survival ('She saw her granny becoming old and weak').

Each resurrection of the magic tree renews the tie between mother and daughter. However, separation is inevitable, and must be accepted. This is why the young man not only fells the tree, but reduces it to ashes which are born away by a flowing river.

That separation is unavoidable does not alleviate the mother's distress. Her emotional turmoil is expressed symbolically by her death. As the tree finally falls, a mother cries out, 'You have killed me today!'[774]

Elsewhere the mother's response is expressed in her subsequent wandering quest for her daughter,[iii] accompanied by her continuous singing during which her daughter's name (Salundee) becomes a melodious lament. The story similarly concludes, 'The thin old woman fell down next to her drum, kwavhalalaa! She died there. The girl remained at the king's homestead, where she cooked.'

The old woman in this story describes her song as *'kuimbo kwanga*,' 'my small song.' *Ngano* as well as their songs are sometimes described as 'small.'[775] This is a reference to their intimate, domestic settings that contrast with public choral dance-song performances. But smallness is also meant ironically, because stories and their songs harbour states of profound awareness.

The mother who is about to be separated from her daughter understands that she performs a social role, and an appeal for human intervention cannot be honoured. In a case like hers, recourse is therefore to be sought in the world of spirits and magic.

Magical transformation in *ngano* is often effected by chanted or sung formulas. This is the case in a story in which an adulterous woman is transformed into a crow by means of the chant, *'mvingi-mvingi!'*[776] It is the sung formula *'kundindili!'* in Kwinda's story that causes the tree to be 'just

[i] A Xhosa *ntsomi* entitled 'Two girls encounter a murderer' also features this image (Scheub, 1975). A murder cuts down a tree in which two sisters hide, but a bird sings and the tree instantly regrows.

[ii] See 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1). Also compare 'Dzwee's journey' and 'Olosi lives happily ever after' by Zachary Tshamano (3.1.4), as well as 'Sorrow' by Florence Mphoshomali (Kruger, 2014).

[iii] 'A thin old woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007). The daughter is abducted. Abduction is aimed at forcing her parents to conclude marriage proceedings (Cloete, 1980). It usually occurs when parents refuse to let their daughter go because only part of the bridewealth has been transferred. The abduction in effect puts pressure on both families to fulfil their obligations.

like before.'

Chanted and sung portrayals of the tree being felled and regrowing are particularly poetic. They utilise onomatopoeia of the axe blade here ('tutula!' and elsewhere 'tema-tema') and wood chips flying back into the trunk ('Kwa! Kwa! Fly small wood chip!'), as well as their casting in rhythmic and melodic molds. It is by means of such poetic enchantment that a narrative community is able to share and mediate emotional turmoil.

2.14.2 The bees in the millet / Notshi kha luvhele

Here comes a story!

A long time ago there was an old man and his old woman.

They farmed. Their field was far away.

They woke up in the morning, day after day.

They went to farm, to farm.

There was a good place for watermelons, and a place for millet, and a place for bitter melons. Yes! When they were hoeing one part of their field, crops were ripening elsewhere.

When they arrived at the millet field one day, they found bees sitting on their crop.

They started to worry about what was happening in their field, because they used to eat the food from that field.

When they started to go closer, those bees started to attack and sting that old man!

That old man ran ever faster! He ran to his house because it was far!

He started to sing.

He sang,

Salungano! Salungano!

Tshifhingani tsha kale ho vha hu na mukalaha na mukegulu wawe.

Vha tshi ita zwa u lima. Tsimu ya hone i kule.

Vha tshi vuwa nga matsheloni ḓuvha na ḓuvha vha tshi ya vha tshi lima, vha tshi lima.

Hu na fhethu hune ha tenda mabvani, na fhethu hune ha tenda luvhele, na fhethu hune ha tenda magwaḓi. Ee! Vha ri musi vha tshi khou ḓi lima ngauralo, heiḽa tsimu ya ḓi vha i khou vhibvisa hezwiḽa zwithu.

Ha ri musi liṅwe ḓuvha vha tshi ya, vha tshi swika kha khula ya luvhele, vha wana hu na notshi dzo nambatelaho.

Vha thoma u mangala uri hu khou itea mini tsimuni yavho, ngauri vho ḓowela uri vha ḽe izwi zwiḽiwa zwa hanefha tsimuni.

Vha tshi tou thoma u sendela tsini, hedziḽa notshi dza thoma u momela havhaḽa mukalaha, dza vha lumekanya!

Havhaḽa mukalaha vha vha vha khou gidima nga luvhilo luhulwane! Vha tshi khou shavhela muḓini wavho ngauri ho vha hu kule!

Vha vha vha tshi khou thoma u imbelela.

U ri,

The bees in the millet / Notshi kha luvhele (continued)

(Narrator)
I was just living well.[i]
(Chorus)
I was enjoying life.[ii]

Now, that old man came out of his home after those bees went back. He did not return there to the field on that day.

When he went there the next day, he found those bees again, clinging to the millet.

He started to sing. He sang, 'I was just living well …'

Those bees did not fly away.

The old man again returned to the field. Two days later they still found those bees in that field, refusing to leave.

That made that old man not want to return to that field. He started to stay at home for a few days.

Yes! When he arrived back at the field he did not find those bees there.

This is the end of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 3 July 2015

(Musimi)
Ndo vha ndo dzula nde/ndo mbahaa/mbataha.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ndo na vha na milenzhe.

Zwino, havhaḽa mukalaha vha bva nga murahu musi hedziḽa notshi dzo no humela murahu. A vho ngo dovha vha vhuyelela hangei tsimuni nga heḽo ḓuvha.

Vha ya nga matshelo wa hone vha ḓi wana hedziḽa notshi futhi, dzo nambatela kha dziḽa khula dza luvhele.

Vha dovha vha imbelela. Vha ri, 'Ndo vha ndo dzula …'

Hedziḽa notshi dza dovha dza shavha.

Vha dovha vha vhuyelela tsimu futhi. Nga mbamatshelo ha hone vho ḓi wana hafhaḽa tsimuni ya hone hedziḽa notshi dzi sa tendi u ṱuwa.

Zwa itisa uri havhaḽa mukalaha vha si tsha ya hangei tsimuni heiḽani. Vha thoma vha dzula nyana maḓuvha a tshivhalo vha hayani.

Ee! Vha tshi swika vha wana hedziḽa notshi hu si tsheena.

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano.

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[i] Lit. 'sitting comfortably.'
[ii] Lit. 'I was sitting with my legs stretched out.'

The brevity of this story is deceptive. As in other short *ngano,* it harbours a wealth of complex meanings requiring activation by a particular script. It takes form as narrativised history (1.5.1) involving experiences and memories of theft and raids of crops and cattle.

Given that farming was the basis of a subsistence economy, 'all produce was rigorously kept apart from that belonging to others,'[777] and fields and animals herds were carefully guarded. As the narrator indicates, 'They started to worry about what was happening in their field, because they used to eat the food from that field.' Stayt[778] notes that

> in many parts of the country wild animals and birds play havoc in the lands; the only means of preserving the crops is to watch them day and night, scaring away intruders by shouting and singing (…) Sometimes the dangers to the crops are so great that whole families migrate into temporary houses *(dzithumba)* in the lands, living there altogether throughout the planting and reaping season.

Marcus Vhengani (3.1.1) describes his actual experiences of raiding baboons, while 'Bird watchers' (2.7.1; 2.16.1) is constructed around the image of a boy guarding a grain field against flocks of birds.

Wild animals remain a problem for farmers, who may also have to fend off monkeys, porcupines, antelope, bush pigs, warthogs, guinea fowl and other birds.

Smallscale theft of grain crops by fellow villagers also is an enduring problem. The narrator explained that vigilance is a priority. If thieves are not caught red-handed, they pound the grain, and in so doing conceal evidence of their crime.

Stealing and hiding food is a common theme in *ngano*.[i] Stories offer the general view that theft is a crime and that guilty parties must be called to justice.[ii] Theft was historically punished by compensation, return of goods and a fine. Some culprits also were required to offer an ox or goat to be consumed during a ritual of reconciliation.[779]

Some contemporary views on theft are informed by religious belief. The first book of Corinthians (6:9-10) is commonly cited,[iii] and guitarist Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila of Tshakuma asks in song, 'Why, after drinking beer, do you like to steal?' He urges people to 'truly leave witchcraft (…) Indeed, these things and stealing must not be done.'[780]

Raiding of cattle and crops was historically carried out by inhabitants of neighbouring districts.[781] Jacob Rambuda explained that people of Ha-Rambuda in the past 'played on the *mbila* (xylophone), became excited, took their spears, and went off to take (neighbouring) chief Tshivhase's cattle.'[iv] Narrator Anna Matlari of Muswodi[v] describes a group of raiders as originating from the neighbouring district of Tshikundamalema.

The most feared raiders originated from distant populations, in particular the Pedi, Swazi and Zulu. Xylophone maker Wilson Ravele of Makonde described how his father fought Swazi raiders during the second half of the 19th century, and how he was once forced to hide in a large warthog hole.[782] One of the most famous *ngano* songs is the core image of a story about Pedi raiders.[783] This song was sung with gusto on a daily basis by Lewis Tshinavhe on Radio Thohoyandou during the early 1990s (3.1.5).

Van Warmelo and Phophi[784] explain that

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[i] See e.g. 'A man steals milk during famine' (Le Roux, 1996), *'Muṅwe munna na musadzi wawe ṅwaha wa nd̠ala'* (Nenzhelele, 1961) and 'Pumpkin seeds' (Kruger, 2014).

[ii] 'The angry ostrich' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iii] 'Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.'

[iv] Interview at Ha-Rambuda, 20 June, 1984 (Kruger, 1986:213). Performances on the xylophone usually took place at the homesteads of rulers.

[v] 'Mighty rooster' (Kruger, 2014). Also see 'A man without proper legs' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

> the Venda people never hoed large lands (because of) their fear of raids. All the countryside was continually on tiptoe in expectation of attack, and so it was not uncommon for folk to work hard in their gardens and then, when their grain was getting ripe, to have to flee and abandon all (... Cattle raiders timed) their raids with the ripening of the maize (…) Wherever these armies had passed, the maize was all stripped (…) the cobs tied together in bundles to take home (...) In the days when the Zulu raided Venda (…) people fled to the mountains, the cattle were seized, all the grain was taken, and disaster followed.

Kwinda's narrative describes a raid by outsiders, represented by a swarm of viciously stinging bees. The farmer attempts to defend his field, but is defeated by them. He becomes discouraged and capitulates. When he returns some days later, he finds the raiders gone and his crop decimated.

As an instance of narrativised history, this story not only describes events, but also evokes the farmer's memories and emotions. The song describes his life prior to the raid. It portrays the image of a person sitting comfortably with his legs stretched out. This posture of repose is typical of women doing domestic chores like shelling marula pips and peanuts, and weaving baskets.

The story comprises conventional ternary form, structured by the farmer's return to his field. The second return sets up tension and momentary ambiguity that offers the possibility of amelioration or degradation.

The contrast that characterises the plot of 'The python-healer' (2.1.2) is absent here. Scheub[785] notes about Xhosa *ntsomi* that, 'as often happens in productions in which the central character dies, there is no change in the plot-development, i.e. there is no shift. The conflict persists until the end.' Similarly, the third phase in Kwinda's story offers no divergence or hope, only bleakness.

This kind of outcome is not uncommon in *ngano* (see 1.5.3). In one of its most powerful portrayals, Elisa Madzanga of Folovhodwe[i] describes a man hiding food during famine. His reprehensible action is discovered, and the expectation is that he will repent. However he remains untransformed, and finally steals his baby's porridge at night. The story simply ends, 'That porridge was gone the next day.'

'The bees in the millet' could have offered clear, life-affirming resolution. After all, 'as long as only a few individuals have had the misfortune of crop failure, they are easily carried by neighbours, relatives and friends. Grain is borrowed and repaid later.'[786] However, the objective of this story is not so much to describe a crisis as to express the despondency it induces. Consequently, the song is not performed a third time. In 'The python-healer,' the third performance of the song signifies triumph. Here, however, the singing voice at the centre of life becomes silent; there is just numbness, a void. Its ceasing may generate in the listener and reader a similar sense of abandonment.

[i] 'Pumpkin seeds' (Kruger, 2014). Also see 'The aeroplane in the water' (Kruger, 2014).

2.15 Zachary Tshamano

Yes, it is sad that my granny Matamela Makapile (fig. 87) is no longer with us to tell *ngano*.[i] She had a stroke and then passed away, there at Nzhelele with her family. Because she helped to raise us children, I grew up with her stories. And my mother Mashudu Mathala also knows them.[ii]

When reflecting on how we lived 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 rondavels, those with thatch roofs. 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 warning that your hair will fall out when you tell *ngano* during the day, I do not believe it! There is a good reason why stories are told at night. During the day people move all over, working, running errands, doing chores and visiting. Then 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 was born in 1997. My Tshivenda name is Vhukhudo. It means refuge. I am happy to say that I feel cared for at home. My mother is the one who looks after her children and husband. She works long hours in her garden at the river to feed us.

And because she cannot read or write, she made sure that I go to school. But not any school. The secondary school here at our place, I always see learners walking around and not studying. So, we decided that I should attend school at Tshilamba.[iii]

But it is not only my mother who had to sacrifice so that I could get a good education. Because I had to take the bus to school, I got up at 04:30. I caught the bus at 05:30, and arrived at school by 06:50. Classes started at 07:20 and ended at 2:30 in the afternoon. I only got back home at 5:20.

Although I became used to such long days, I still got tired. When I prepared for a test, I got up at 03:00 to study. Then I became sleepy during mid-morning. My schedule also meant I could not do sport. But it did not matter. I spent all my time studying because I wanted to make something of my life.

I went to a big school. We had teachers from India and Zimbabwe. History was my favourite subject. I liked learning about King Louis the Fourteenth.

At first I liked my school very much. But it became an unhappy place. First the history teacher left. So, my favourite subject became geography. I also took life sciences, English, Tshivenda and life orientation.

Then some staff became angry. Zimbabwean teachers said they were exploited because they were desperate for work. Venda staff were also angry. They said they were not treated professionally.

Five boys wrote an anonymous letter of complaint to the principal about certain teachers. She discovered who they were by tracing their handwriting to their school work. She made life so difficult for them that they stopped attending school.

[i] This sketch is based on biographical detail in Kruger (2014). It has been expanded following interviews conducted during 2015 and 2016.

[ii] See Kruger (2014).

[iii] The seat of the district municipality, some 40 km by road south-east of Folovhodwe.

During this time I started thinking about my future. I first wanted to become a boilermaker at Tshikondeni coal mine. The problem was that the mine closed down.

I also thought of becoming a teacher. However, perhaps life would be better as a diesel mechanic. So I started to take maths and physical science. And I struggled! Because my teachers were from Zimbabwe and India, they rushed through the syllabus so that they could return home for visits. We even worked on Saturdays.

I started to worry because I wanted to enrol for a technical diploma. Folovhodwe is so far from big towns. There are many things I do not know. So I attended several extra classes. During weekends I travelled across the mountains to Matangari for tuition.

I persevered and passed my matric in 2015. I then started attending Capricorn College in Polokwane, doing the technical diploma I needed to become a diesel mechanic.

Education is so expensive. I do not know what I would have done without my mother. She supports me by trading at pension payout points. She buys clothes from Indian wholesalers in Durban, Makhado and Musina; she sells tomatoes, potatoes and mangos; she sells Mayo flavoured milk.

Even though I was serious about my school work, I also got bored. So I joined our church band on Saturdays and Sundays. That is in the Church of the Nazarene. There were about ten members in the band. Our instruments were a drum kit, bass guitar and three keyboards. I started learning the keyboard and drums. We were often invited to play at weddings. This earned us pocket money.

It is important to have instruments in your church because people who live a modern life like them. I just became frustrated because there was not really anyone to teach us properly.

My very long school days and extra classes on Saturdays was the reason I stopped performing regularly in the band. My dream of playing the keyboard came to nothing. All I could do was sing.

Our church youth group once 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 and drink. They also smoke weed that others grow along the river and in the mountains. I believe poor education is responsible for bad behaviour. Local boys want to be hip-hop stars because they like their glamorous clothing. But they forget that their heroes also use drugs.

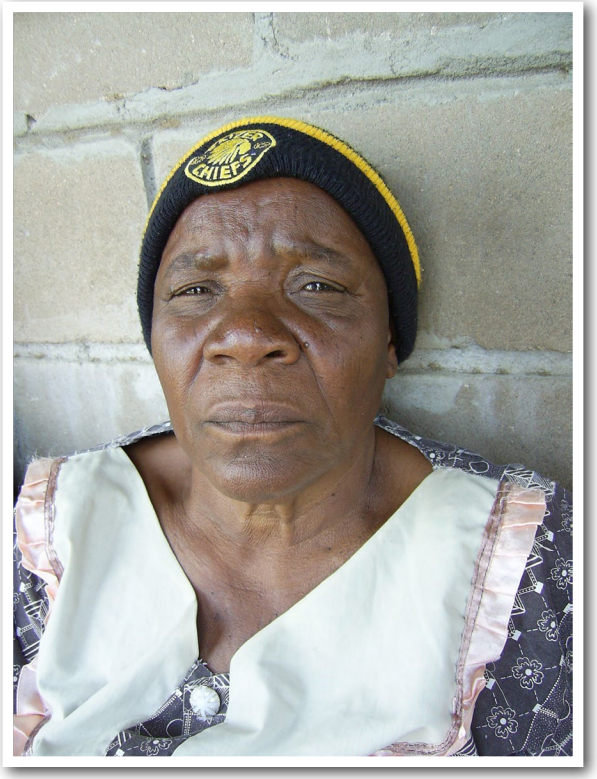

Fig. 87. Narrator Matamela Makapile
Folovhodwe, 2008

2.15.1 The young man and the snake / Mutḥannga na ṇowa

Here comes a story!

There once was a certain woman who had two children.

Late one afternoon this woman is sitting with her children. She says, ‘My children, if you do not fight, you will not get married. Your father had to fight very hard to get me, because my family was stubborn. Now, I can see that it will be the same for you.’

Those young men say, ‘We understand, mother.’

It so happens that that old woman has two children. The younger is called Mutshutshu. The elder is called Nemathukhwi.

This Nemathukhwi is already grown up. He is old enough[i] to be married.

This old woman knows that there will be a challenge, so she explains everything to him. Otherwise her child will not marry. She tells him to be prepared to fight for a wife.

Now, at this place where they stay, people sacrifice[ii] to their ancestral spirit, which is a powerful snake.[iii] A diviner selects a person for this snake at the end of every year. They must also give beer and tobacco, and meat that the snake eats. The rain then falls so that the country will be at peace and the chief will always have power for war.

Now, there comes a time when a girl must be sacrificed.

She had fallen in love with this Nemathukhwi.

The girl who must be sacrificed is usually a poor orphan. Those who are rich are not sacrificed. A poor orphan is not important.

Nemathukhwi starts to leave.

That girl tells him, ‘I am going to be given to the snake. I am going

[i] Lit. ‘the way he was, he could marry.’

[ii] *Phasela*, ritual acts including the chanting of formulas, the squirting of water and offerings of beer and tobacco.

[iii] Lit. ‘a snake who is chief of the country.’

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vhuya ha vha na muṅwe mufumakadzi e na vhana vhavhili.

Havha mufumakadzi vha dzula na vhana vhavho nga madekwana. Vha ri, ‘Vhananga, ni sa thoma na lwa, ni nga si ḓo vhuya na mala. Nṋe khotsi aṋu vha tshi nngwana, vho vha vho thoma vha lwa zwihulu. Ngauri vhathu vha hashu vho vha vha tshi kondisa. Zwino, ndi khou vhona uri na kha vhoiwe zwi ḓo ralo.’

Havhaḽa vhaṯhanga vha ri, ‘Ndi zwone, mme anga.’

Havha hu uri havha mukegulu vho vha vhe na vhana vhavhili. Muṯuku o vha e Mutshutshu. Muhulwane ene e Nemathukhwi. Havha uri hoyu Nemathukhwi o vha o no aluwa, nga ndila ye a vha a khou fanela u mala.

Houḽa mukegulu a vha ṯalutshedza ngauri o zwi vhona zwauri arali a sa thoma u amba hezwi zwithu. Ṅwana wawe a nga si ḓo mala. A mu ṯalutshedza uri ni tea u thoma u lwa.

Zwino, hafho kha heḽo shango ḽe vha vha tshi dzula khaḽo ho vha hu tshi itiwa zwau phasela vhadzimu. Hovha hu na ṇowa ye ya vha i yone khosi ya heḽo shango. Ṅwaha muṅwe na muṅwe u tshi fhela heyo ṇowa yo vha i tshi iseliwa muthu. Hu na halwa na mafola na dziṇama dzedzi ya muḽa. Ho vha hu tshi na mvula. Hu u itela uri shango ḽi vhe na mulalo. Khosi i dzule i na maanḓa a u ya nndwani.

Zwino, ha swika tshifhinga hu khou tea u iswa muṅwe musidzana, we a vha a khou funana na hoyu Nemathukhwi. Ende hoyu musidzana o vha a khou fanela u isiwa ngauri tshifhinga tshinzhi ho vha hu tshi isiwa tshisiwana. Hovha hu sa isiwi vhathu vha re na zwavho. Tshisiwana tsho vha tshi tshi dzhiiwa sa muthu a si na mushumo.

Nemathukhwi a mbo ḓi ṯuwa. Houḽa musidzana a mu vhudza u ri, ‘Nṋe ndi khou ya u fhiwa ṇowa. Nṋe ndi khou ya u lovha.’

Nemathukhwi zwa mu vhavha! A swika a dzula fhasi na mme awe a vha vhudza zwauri, uḽa musidzana we nda vha ndi khou ṯoḓa u mu

to die!'

Nemathukhwi is very upset!

He arrives and sits down with his mother. He tells her that the girl he is about to marry will be given to the snake.

His mother tells him, 'My child, I told you that if you do not accept challenges, you will not marry.'

Nemathukhwi leaves.

The day comes when that child must be eaten.

Many people are invited to the chief's meeting.

The chief knows that Nemathukhwi loves this girl. He knows Nemathukhwi can fight[i] and run away with her.

The chief wants to poison him. He plans to kill Nemathukhwi. He poisons the beer![ii]

Nemathukhwi always lets his horse and dog Tshituka eat with him.

He has this horse he loves so much. The horse carries a calabash. In this gourd is a hack knife and a smaller knife.

And there is his dog with its short legs.[iii] It is called Tshituka. He loves these animals so much. He always hunts with them. Now, Nemathukhwi goes everywhere with his dog and horse.

The time comes for him to go to the chief's meeting.[iv] He arrives there at the meeting.

Hah, he is given beer!

He gives some to his dog. The dog does not want to drink!

His horse drinks. When he wants the horse to stand, it cannot! The horse starts to die!

When he sees that those people want to kill him, Nemathukhwi goes mala, u khou ya u fhiwa nowa.

Mme awe vha mu vhudza uri, 'Ṅwananga, ndo u vhudza uri, wa sa thoma wa lwa u nga si male.'

Nemathukhwi a tuwa.

Ha swika duvha he ha vha hu khou isiwa houla ṅwana uri a yo liwa. Ha rambiwa davha lihulu. Khosi yo zwi divha zwauri Nemathukhwi u khou funana na houla musidzana. Uri a nga ita zwiṅwe zwithu, kana a shavha nae.

Khosi ya dzhia poison. Ya vha i tshi khou toda u vhulaha Nemathukhwi. Yo shela kha halwa!

Nemathukhwi o vha e muthu, tshiṅwe na tshiṅwe tshe a vha a tshi tshi la, bere na mmbwa yawe Tshituka zwo vha zwi tshi la.

O vha e na iṅwe bere ye a vha a tshi i funa nga maanda. Ye ya vha yo hungelwa tshitemba. Tsho vha tshi tshi dzula banga na lufhanga lutuku.

Na tshibwanana tshawe tshipfufhi tshe tsha vha tshi tshi pfi Tshituka.

Hezwo zwithu o vha a tshi zwi funa nga iṅwe ndila khulu heyo ye avha a tshi yo zwima nazwo. Zwino, Nemathukhwi o vha a sa sii mmbwa na bere yawe a tshi tshimbila.

Ha swika tshifhinga tshe a vha a tshi khou ya davhani. A tshi swika davhani henengei.

Haa, a fhiwa halwa, a fha mmbwa yawe. Mmbwa yawe i sa ṅwe!

Bere yawe ya ṅwa. A tshi ri i takuwe, bere ya vha i sa takuwi. Bere ya mbo di fa!

A zwi vhona uri havha vhathu vho vha vha khou toda u mu vhulaha, Nemathukhwi a tuwa a ya hayani. Ngauri ho vha hu na dzibere ha hawe.

A swika a dzhia nṅwe bere. A bva na murathu wawe Mutshutshu.

Ha swika tshifhinga tshe ha vha hu khou fhelekedziwa houla musidzana uri a yo liwa. Houla musidzana a tshi tuwa hangei, a siiwa henengei e ethe.

Nowa yavha i tshi khou tea uri i de zwino! Vhathu vhothe vho no tuwa, Nemathukhwi a tevhela.

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[i] Lit. 'the chief knows he can do certain things.'

[ii] I.e. the beer served to the young man when he attends the chief's meeting.

[iii] Lit. 'his short puppy.'

[iv] *'Davha lihulu,'* a big work party.

home because there are more horses there.

He arrives there and takes another horse. He leaves with his younger brother Mutshutshu.

The time comes when people take the girl to the snake. That girl is taken there and left alone.

That snake comes there!

People are leaving, but Nemathukhwi stays[i] with the girl.

His younger brother Mutshutshu is with him. Because Mutshutshu is still a child, he is afraid. He is a coward and turns back.

Tshituka and the horse and Nemathukhwi are going to war! They arrive over there.

This girl is standing in front of the snake's cave. She is holding baskets with maize and millet beer and strong alcohol[ii] and porridge.

Nemathukhwi goes closer.[iii] That girl sees him. That girl is crying bitterly. She says, 'Nemathukhwi, go home! The snake will kill you!' But Nemathukhwi refuses.

This snake pokes its head out of the cave!

Nemathukhwi comes closer!

This young man, when his knife flashes, it has magic power to hack. Nemathukhwi does not hack, it is the knife that hacks!

This snake has six heads. Nemathukhwi flashes that knife! The first head is hacked off!

That head grows back again!

Nemathukhwi returns and flashes the knife. The head is hacked off again! Then it grows back!

Tshituka the dog sees this.

Murathu wawe Mutshutshu a mu fhelekedza. Ngauri Mutshutshu o vha e ṅwana, ende a tshi ofha. A goswi, a huma ndilani.

Tshituka na bere na Nemathukhwi zwa ya nndwani!

Vha swika henengei. Hoyu musidzana o vha o ima phanda ha bako. O fara na mifaro i na halwa na mahafhe na thothotho na vhuswa.

Nemathukhwi a fhira. Houla musidzana a mu vhona. Houla musidzana a lila tshililo.

A ri, 'Nemathukhwi, humela hayani! Ṋowa i ḓo u vhulaha!'

Nemathukhwi a hana.

Heila, ṋowa ya bvelela yo ntsha ṱhoho!

Nemathukhwi a fhira!

Hoyu muṱhannga, lufhanga lwawe o vha a tshi ri o lu penyisa lwo vha lu tshi ṱhukhula tshithu. O vha a sa tou tshea ngalwo lini. Lwo vha lu tshi tou ṱhukhula tshithu.

Heyo ṋowa yo vha ina ṱhoho dza six. Nemathukhwi a penyisa lufhanga holuya. Ṱhoho nthihi yawa!

Heila ṱhoho ya dovha ya ḓi ṱuma!

Nemathukhwi a fhira. Nemathukhwi a tshi dovha a vhuya a penyisa lufhanga. Ṱhoho ya dovha ya wa, a dovha ya ḓi ṱuma!

Mmbwa yawe Tshituka ya zwi vhona.

Hezwi Nemathukhwi a tshi vhuya hangei. A tshi penyisa, ṱhoho i tshi wa!

Tshituka i khou dzhia ṱhoho heila ya fukedza fhasi! Ya fhira.

Nemathukhwi a tshi vhuya a tshi dovha a tshi penyisa lufhanga. Ṱhoho nthihi ya wa!

Havha ho sala ṱhoho nna. Tshituka ya dzhia ya fukedza.

Nemathukhwi a fhirela hangei. Ṋowa ya zwivhona uri ho vhifha! Ṋowa i tshi ri i ya shavha, Nemathukhwi a dia iṅwe ṱhoho futhi. Tshituka ya dzhia ya fukedza ṱhoho.

Ha vha ho sala ṱhoho tharu! Nemathukhwi a tshi ya hangei futhi. Hezwi zwithu o vha a tshi khou zwi ita ngauri o vha a tshi khou fhira

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[i] Lit. 'follows.'

[ii] *Thothotho*: 'Native-distilled alcohol, made from wild fruits, prickly pear, beer, etc. (so called from the way the liquid falls in drops from the end of the condenser tube)' (Van Warmelo, 1989:377).

[iii] Lit. 'passes by.'

Nemathukhwi arrives back there. He flashes the knife and the head is hacked off!

Tshituka grabs the head and buries it! He comes back.

Nemathukhwi returns too and again flashes the knife. Another head is hacked off!

Four heads remain. Tshituka takes a head and buries it.

Nemathukhwi approaches over there.

The snake sees danger! As the snake is sliding away, Nemathukhwi hacks another head off. Tshituka takes the head and buries it.

Three heads remain. Nemathukhwi comes back again over there. He is able to overcome the snake because he keeps on coming back to the cave.[i]

The snake is peering from the cave, and pulling its head back again. It is peering. When its head comes out, it is hacked off!

Nemathukhwi returns over there. He hacks another head off. Tshituka buries it.Two heads remain!

Nemathukhwi is back again. Another head is hacked off. One head remains!

This snakes sees it is about to die. Now, it knows it must retreat. As it retreats, Nemathukhwi calls Tshituka. Tshituka starts to block the opening of the cave with a rock!

This snake is trying to kill that girl. Nemathukhwi flashes the knife again. He flashes and the head is gone! Tshituka grabs and buries it. Tshituka the dog grabs and buries that head.

That snake is dead!

Nemathukhwi takes the girl and leaves with her.

The chief hears the commotion. He is furious![ii]

The chief comes there, grabs Nemathukhwi's mother and kills her!

bako.

Ṋowa i tshi ṱolela, i tshi dovha i tshi humisa ṱhoho. I tshi ṱolela. I tshi humisa ṱhoho, i khou ṱhukhuliwa!

Nemathukhwi a tshi fhirela hangei a ṱhukhula iṅwe. Tshituka i tshi fukedza.

Hezwi ho sala ṱhoho mbili! Nemathukhwi a fhirela hangei. A tshi fhirela hangei, a ṱhukhula iṅwe. Havha ho sala ṱhoho nthihi!

Heila ṋowa ya zwi vhona uri yo fa. Zwino, i khou tea u huma. I tshi humela murahu, Nemathukhwi a mbo ḓi vhidza Tshituka. Tshituka ya khurumedza tombo ḽa vala bako!

Heila ṋowa i tshi ri i vhulaye houḽa musidzana. Nemathukhwi a penyisa. A tshi penyisa ṱhoho ya wa. Tshituka ya dzhia ya fukedza. Mmbwa yawe Tshituka ya dzhia ya fukedza heila iṅwe ṱhoho.

Heila ṋowa ya fa!

Nemathukhwi a dzhia musidzana houḽa a ṱuwa nae. Khosi ya zwi pfa. Ya kwata zwihulu! Khosi ya swika ya dzhia mme a Nemathukhwi ya vha vhulaha!

Nemathukhwi a dzhia a ṱuwa na mufumakadzi wawe na mme a mufumakadzi wawe. Vha pfuluwa kha heḽo shango. Havha u mala ha Nemathukhwi.

Hezwo zwi khou tou sumbedza zwauri Nemathukhwi o mala nga nndwa sa zwe mme awe vha mu vhudzisa zwone.

Havha u fhela ha lungano.

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[i] Lit. 'he is able to do these things because he is passing in front of the cave.'

[ii] *'Ya kwata zwihulu'* (from Afrikaans *kwaad*).

The young man and the snake / Muthannga na nowa (continued)

Nemathukhwi leaves with his wife and her mother. They flee that place.

That is how Nemathukhwi became married.

This shows that Nemathukhwi became married by overcoming challenges, just like his mother told him.

This is the end of the story.

Folovhodwe, 2 October 2012

A reference to human ritual sacrifice provides the setting of this story, but does not constitute its core image or theme. As the narrator explains, the story shows how the challenges of life should be overcome, exemplified by the victory of a young hero over a monstrous snake.

This theme also characterises other stories by Tshamano (3.1.4). They were told to him and his siblings by his grandmother as directives for their transformation into responsible adults. The circumstances of their narration evoke an older world with thatch-roof rondavels, cooking fires and a grandmother transmitting moral values to her attentive grandchildren. Similarly, the mother of Mutshutshu and Nemathukhwi explains life to her obedient sons. The unfolding of this theme is discussed below, but the motif of sacrifice, and its link with the snake-husband, needs prior explanation.

Stayt and Eberhardt[787] both documented a story in which the identities of the snake-husband (2.5.2) and snake-deity (2.1.2) are integrated. The story comprises two distinct sections whose relationship is ambiguous. The first is a highly condensed version of the story of the snake-husband. It tells of a python who has two wives. Following the conventional plot, the younger wife is initially unaware that her husband is a python, but, against instruction, eventually discovers what he really is. Here the story takes a different course. Responding angrily to his wife's disobedience, the python disappears into Lake Fundudzi, and drought and famine ensue. The wife is told that it will only rain again if she 'joins' him.[788] Carrying a ritual offering of beer, 'she flung herself into the depths of the lake, and immediately the water in the streams and water-holes and rivulets began to rise, and the people, animals, and cattle drank joyfully.'[789] Tshamano similarly explains in his story that 'the rain then falls so that the country will be at peace and the chief will always have power for war.'

Eberhardt[790] remarks that, while this story is not part of *domba* initiation, an instructor explained that it 'goes with the *Domba:* the *Domba* is the Dance of the Python – it is the python uncoiling.' The instructor also noted that it required no telling to young people at the time (the 1950s), since it was 'already known by all those who come to the *domba*.'

Nettleton[791] notes that 'many symbolic references to the python are found in the teachings of the *domba*, in Venda folktales and in traditional practices associated with the construction of the chiefs' capitals.' As explained (1.6), *ngano* and *domba* performance are interrelated domains of enculturation, and they share symbols like that of the python. Blacking[792] cites another instance of the relationship between *domba* and *ngano*, involving a shared theme and song related to sexuality.

Stayt[793] explains that

> the python dance of the *domba*, which has been described as a probable fertility rite, is made clearer when the beliefs concerning drought are understood (…) There is a very close association between the python and rain (…) Rain may be induced to fall by religious or magical means. A year of insufficient rain is always followed by the dispatch of an emissary to Mwari (the supreme deity).

The story of the python-deity correlates in certain respects to a description by Stayt[794] of the annual harvest ritual of the Netshiavha family of Lake Fundudzi. The person who enters the water is described as 'a member of the lineage' who offers beer to the family's ancestral spirits. 'If the spirits accept his offering the beer disappears immediately under the lake, but if they are angry with their living descendants they may refuse it (… and) make an effort

to pull the suppliant underneath.'

Archaeological studies date ritual homage to snake-deities in southern Africa to at least the 12th century, involving 'a relationship between hill tops, water pools, caves and rain control.'[795] Oral narratives feature amphibious beings, including the multi-headed snake that must be pacified with animal and human sacrifice at the pools it inhabits:[796] 'Every year the *Mamlambo* demands blood and sacrifice. It needs your next of kin. If you don't feed it with a sacrifice, it will kill you.'[797]

Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained cynically that local people nowadays prefer to 'sit in bar-lounges,' and that few are familiar with the story of the snake-deity. Even tourist guides at Lake Fundudzi either 'didn't know much' or had never heard of it. One explained that 'of course some of these traditions are falling away, and we have people who don't believe in these stories about the lake – because of Christianity.'[798] However, they have been disseminated widely on the internet,[i] and the sensational image of maiden or virgin sacrifice has been harnessed and 'thoroughly messed with' by the local tourism industry since the 1980s.[ii]

The merger of the identity of the snake as husband and deity involves ambiguities that defy facile resolution, not least because stories about snake-deities generally 'remain open to question, challenge, and debate.'[799]

Van der Post[800] remarks that, for hunter-gatherers, nature '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.'

Evolutionary cognitive science interprets such personification as a survival strategy. 'It is better to see spirit beings in nature with easily recognizable emotions, thoughts, and drives than to miss a diverse set of unconnected dangers.'[801]

The so-called divine cosmic serpent is conceptualised within 'a regional naturalistic religion' as 'the essential life-giving essence' of nature (especially in the form of water) that must be ensured with human sacrifice.[802] 'Serpent Beings became associated with human sacrifice at rivers and ponds because these sites are potentially dangerous (…) and people drown at them. Human sacrifice was an attempt to establish a reciprocal bond with the unseen power causing the death.'[803] Blacking remarks correspondingly that Venda people 'try to control their social and physical environment not by technology, but by ritual.'[804]

The divine serpent has human qualities, and the psychoanalytical interpretation of him is that of primordial father and phallic symbol, and of his 'watery domain' as the mother with her uterus.[805] He expresses human passion, and 'is given to jealousy and rage when mistreated.' He not only wields spiritual power but also worldly authority, and is 'identified with kings.' These core features of serpent lore relate essentially to the Venda story of the snake-deity.

Most Venda ruling families belong to the Singo clan that settled in the Soutpansberg around the beginning of the 18th century. Commoners *(vhalanda)* are descendants of *vho-ngwanipo*[iii] or aboriginal clans like the Tavhatsindi and Ngona. Lake Fundudzi remains a sacred Tavhatsindi site, and their descendants 'still sacrifice to their ancestors and the autochthonous spirits, the *zwiḓuḓwane*, at the lake. While these sacrifices are considered essential to the well-being of the Venda nation, the lake is nevertheless also considered to be especially sacred to the Singo.'[806]

Ralushai[807] notes that the Singo not only were numerically and militarily 'insecure' when they embarked 'on a scramble for (occupied) land' but also feared that any disregard of aboriginal spiritual power could cause 'chaos' and drought. 'It appears that the invaders, having subjugated the (aboriginal) BaNgona, still feared the power of the ancestor spirits who had once lived and sown and reaped in the land.'[808] 'The young man and the snake' could therefore be a narrativised account of ancient conflict about land, while the involvement of a young woman of commoner origin in fertility ritual may hint at efforts to harness aboriginal spiritual potency.

Tshamano's narrative articulates no clear moral stance in relation to alleged ritual homicide. Instead, it focuses critically, albeit briefly, on the historical distinction between ruling and aboriginal clans. Tshamano explained that the

[i] See e.g. 'The fairy tale of the virgin who caused the drought.' http://www.luonde.co.za/ngano.html

[ii] Dederen, correspondence (2013). The search terms 'Fundudzi' and 'sacrifice' give access to several tourism websites that cite the narrative.

[iii] 'They do not know (…) any other place that is historically associated with them other than the Northern Transvaal' (Vhembe district) (Ralushai, 1977:81).

status of poor commoner is accorded to the bride as well as the hero and his family, which is also portrayed as lacking a father. Tshamano articulated a critical contemporary consciousness of precolonial class differentiation. However, he denied that such distinction still plays any significant role, arguing that status now is mainly determined by wealth.[i]

Eberhardt[809] describes the story of the snake-deity as 'a little myth' that 'was yearly actualised by the sacrifice of the maiden,' an event that was 'common knowledge.' Kirkaldy[810] cites several claims of ritual homicide, but treats them with scepticism. However, he does observe that

> (a)s agro-pastoralist communities, the Vhavenda were dependent on an adequate supply of rainfall for grazing-lands and fields (…) As the central guardian of the community, it was the khosi's (traditional leader) task to ensure that (all practical and ritual) requirements were met (…) All the community would bring seeds to the khosi's capital. In great secrecy, these seeds would then reportedly be mixed with others which had been treated with medicines containing a mixture of herbs and human body parts (…) This ensures a good harvest.[ii]

Stayt[811] notes similarly that 'sometimes human flesh is used to aid fertility; in cases of urgent necessity a man may obtain flesh from the corpse of a powerful person who has died recently.' However he adds that 'there is no evidence of human sacrifice in the generally understood sense in connection with fertility.'

Conflicting claims, secrecy and limited data preclude any conclusive interpretation of references to ritual homicide in 'The young man and the snake.' The notion of 'sacrifice' is particularly problematic, as it popularly conjures up images of human execution. The Tshivenda term closest to describing this is *via*. This verb refers to dismembering a corpse for personal enrichment as part of the practice of magical medicine *(muti)* murder.

Neither Stayt nor Eberhardt presents the story of the snake-deity in its original Tshivenda form, and it is therefore not precisely clear how narrators described the ritual practices it alludes to. Stayt simply notes that the wife was required to 'go into Fundudzi with the pot of beer,' after which she 'flung' herself into the lake. Eberhardt refers repeatedly to 'maiden sacrifice' in her discussion, but not in the story itself, in which divination requires the python's 'young bride (to) join him in the lake.' Tshamano similarly uses the verb *ḽiwa,* which refers to identifying the source of conflict during divination.[812] He also invokes the concept of *phasa,* the very common term that refers to squirting water from the mouth to pacify or 'cool down' ancestral spirits believed to be the source of misfortune. This ritual may also involve offerings of beer and tobacco.

The symbolic bedrock of *ngano* is a reminder that narrative is not a simple reflection of actual experience, but an attempt to obtain a comprehensible, explanatory grip on it by means of particular techniques of representation.[813] A metaphoric rather than literal interpretation of the identities of the snake as husband and deity may therefore help to clarify some of the ambiguities surrounding it narrative representation.

Ngano commonly portray conflict, transformation and reconciliation in marriage. Attempts to resolve quarrels often lead to consultation with a diviner.[iii] A common motif is that of a diviner stretching a thong across a pool, and then requiring a family to walk on it. The guilty party (usually a wife) then falls into the pool.[iv] This portrayal is supported by the common regional symbolism of water as a domain of spiritual authority and moral transformation. A popular story about early married life similarly shows a young wife becoming submerged in water or disappearing underground during conflict with her in-laws.[v] Both pools and the underground are locations of *vhafhasi* ('the ones below') or ancestral spirits.

The young wife of the snake-husband may therefore not be the actual sacrificial victim of a python or crocodile living in a lake.[vi] Instead, the

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[i] In this regard, see 'Olosi lives happily ever after' (3.4.1).

[ii] Krige & Krige (1980:273-274) note that the chief ingredient of the 'rain-pot' of the Lobedu people 'is the skin of the deceased chief and of important councillors who are her closest relatives.' The power of queen Modjadji's rain medicine 'is said to derive from a human skull in the rain-pot.' While the authors mention animal and not human sacrifice, they also indicate that 'rain-pots are great secrets.'

[iii] See 'The tree with red flowers' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iv] As in 'The curious case of the guinea-fowl (Kruger, 2014) and 'Mrs. Devhele goes down' (Kruger, 2014).

[v] 'The girl who was forbidden to pound maize' (Kruger, 2004) and 'The princess who slept late' (Kruger, 2014).

[vi] Versions of the story reported on tourist websites often refer to a white python

python and its watery abode may be symbolic of virility, fertility, power and mysticism. When the young wife 'flings' herself into the lake, she becomes 'joined' physically, spiritually and socially with her husband and his family. She has been transformed into a person now used to her husband and loved by him.[i]

This interpretation does not negate the value of the story as 'wonder tale, mythic history, and cosmology all entangled.'[814] It is also a story of social transformation accompanying colonialism. Once common knowledge, it has slipped largely from communal memory, yet is kept alive by the tourist industry. In this regard it continues to shape contemporary worldviews and identities, and serves the life of a young man. It is a remarkably tenacious residue of an ancient belief system perhaps dating back a thousand years.

As explained above, ritual homicide is not the theme of this story from the narrator's perspective. The story integrates 'two themes widespread in African cosmic serpent lore: a shape-shifting Serpent Being with dragon-like features who is master controller of the waters and a related myth of a superboy who saves the world by slaying a dragon monster,' and in so doing establishes 'authority over nature, physical forces, and human life.'[815]

The story is similar to a Karanga *ngano* collected by Frobenius.[816] Entitled 'The dragon-slayer,' it features an elder brother who 'came into the world with a dog and a bow.' He wants to marry a girl destined for a four-headed snake that lives in lakeside cave. Assisted by his dog, he engages in a furious fight with the snake. He uses a long knife to decapitate the creature, and subsequently marries his beloved.

Tshamano similarly depicts Nemathukhwi as a young, swashbuckling hero assisted by his small but tenacious dog. He denied that this portrayal is influenced by current popular culture, explaining that the image of a flashing knife is retained faithfully from his grandmother's narrative. Clearly, the representation of the action hero in contemporary popular fiction may lay claim to technological innovation, but not plot. That ancient, universal 'hero with a thousand faces' is eternal.[817]

As explained, the story was meant as a template for Tshamano during his boyhood years. Not surprisingly, it consequently knots narrative and actual lives. The young heroes in Tshamano's stories pursue their objectives with ingenuity, diligence and courage – qualities that also enabled the narrator to matriculate and enrol for tertiary training. His grandmother served as his moral mentor, while his mother dedicated much of her adult life to his care. Both women, as well as the mother in 'The young man and the snake,' share a fundamental role as primary caretakers of their children.

The image of the young hero as hunter and warrior serves the male role allocation of provider and defender. A multi-headed snake can only be defeated by a hero who displays physical power, courage and perseverance. However, defeating the monster is fundamentally a 'character test' for adulthood and marriage.

Courage and integrity also characterises Nemathukhwi's bride who is willing to exchange her life for that of the hero. She is the direct opposite of the bride in 'Olosi lives happily ever after' (3.4.1) who is spoilt, manipulative and emotionally immature.[ii]

The story also invokes the common dyad of older and younger brother. While the surpassing of elder siblings by the youngest in 'The python-healer' (2.1.2) is symbolic, and serves to instil particular values, the actual distinction between age-sets is portrayed here: 'Because Mutshutshu is still a child, he is afraid. He is a coward and turns back.' Unlike the stereotype of the courageous younger sibling, this story portrays him as immature and frightened.

Interdependence is also a fundamental value transmitted in coming-of-age stories. Young heroes learn about the interconnectivity of human lives by means of the familiar 'animal helper.'[iii] Karanga and Venda *ngano* depict Dog as 'man's faithful servant which saves him at crucial moments.'[818] As the hero in 'The old woman with long teeth' (2.3.2) remarks, 'My dog! You helped me! I did not know how I would escape. Now, I am thanking you, my dog. Starting today I will always carry you on my back! I will look after you for the rest of your life!'

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or crocodile in Lake Fundudzi. https://www.sa-venues.com/attractionslm/lake-fundudzi.php

[i] 'He still loved the girl. He lived there in the house. The girl was now used to him.' From 'The pumpkin that could speak' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[ii] 'Shortly afterwards the girl said, "My father, I want a big white wedding." Her father asked, "Whom do you want to marry?" She answered, "Olosi." Mr. Baulo shouted, "I will kill Olosi! You will never marry him!' That child cried and cried and cried! (...) And so they started to plan the wedding.'

[iii] From a psychological perspective, animal helpers are inner resources a young hero 'has not yet fully integrated into himself' (Bettelheim, 2010:76; Booker, 2004:307).

Wild and domestic animals similarly are indispensable in Tshamano's plots: 'Nemathukhwi always lets his horse and dog Tshituka eat with him.' It is this habitual act of kindness that saves the hero from poisoning, and his horse instead becomes the first of two unexpected sacrifices in the story.

The young hero not only battles the snake, but also the chief who is the deity's powerful human ally. 'This relates to the common African notion that sacred leaders are mystical regulators of natural forces, particularly rain. The serpent myths and associated ritual traditions also reveal the layered history of social transformation from a less hierarchically organized society to sacred kinship.'[819]

The chief seems to commit murder in a fit of panic, perhaps motivated by deep fear of the mystical forces of nature, the power of shared belief and the survival of his community. The hero's magic knife and dog are defenceless against him, and 'Nemathukhwi leaves with his wife and her mother. They flee that place.' The political hierarchy grinds on, and this matter seems to require no further comment.

Tshamano notes that 'the chief knows that Nemathukhwi loves this girl.' It is as if he is challenged and insulted by his ruler, and so it is primarily libidinal energy that seems to activate him. However, the price of the love that drives him is cruelly ironic since he gets a bride but loses a mother. Perhaps he will pass through life with contradictory feelings of victory and loss, optimism and cynicism.

None of the stories narrated by Tshamano feature any chants or songs. Although there is a category of *ngano* without songs, this absence of singing and chanting is unusual, especially given that they characterise stories documented directly from Tshamano's grandmother. As explained (1.9.3), while core images from stories are often retained in individual memory, songs and chants tend to be more elusive, and cannot always be recalled. The repeated hacking of the snake's heads once may have been accompanied by a chant, complete with rhythmic structure and ideophones.

Fig. 88. Muswodi-Dipeni
2012

2.16 Mutshekwa Mudau

My name is Mutshekwa Mudau. I do not know how old I am. The problem is my bad memory! My friends laugh at me when I struggle to remember the names of my children. But I could be about eighty.

I was born in the east, at Tshaulu. This is where I lived for most of my life. Both my parents were healers. My father was Njara Tshinoni. My mother's name was Nditsheni Tshisolo. They had ten children, one boy and nine girls. Only I and one sister remain.

I did not go to school to learn reading and writing. When I was young, we girls went to initiation school.

We loved to make *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3). We swept the floor of our house and then smeared it. We used to pinch food and cook for ourselves: maize, beans and peanuts.

We made clay oxen. Clay dolls were called *vhana vha mvumba* (children of clay), and we liked to dress them. We put all our toys in our play-home. Sometimes we sang our dolls a song called *Tshinoni tsha musenge.* This song is sung by a grandmother to her grandchildren. There is a bird that likes to graze in millet fields. It wakes sleeping children up to warn them of a thunderstorm.

(Solo)
Tshinoni tsha musenge.
The bird in the tall grass.
Tsho lala tsho, ri, 'huli.'
They slept like this, 'huli.'[i]
Mvula yo bvuma nga ṱhoho.
The rain thunders overhead.
(Chorus)
Tshinoni tsha musenge.
The bird in the tall grass

My most important chore was to fetch water in a small calabash from the Tshinnane river. The veld was dangerous. We girls always went to collect wood and water in a group. We sometimes argued about something, and then started fighting!

We also liked to play near that *musununu* bamboo grove from which the pipes of the *tshikona* dance are made. We were warned that if we went too close, spirits would catch and blind us. There is a fountain near the grove, *tshisimani tsha musununu.* Below it is a small pool in which we liked to play and swim.

I played musical bows. The *lugube* was made from a river reed (fig. 67) or iron.[ii] I still remember *lugube* songs.[iii] I also played *tshihwana* (fig. 68).

Parents were not always pleased to hear songs on these bows. They showed that children were now growing up and that they would leave home soon to get married. People wanted their children to stay with them forever. We played *ndode* stone games and danced *tshigombela* and *tshifasi* (3.3). *Tshifasi* songs are meant for your beloved. But when we went on *bepha* journeys (3.3), girls and boys were separated quite strictly.

[i] To be fast asleep.

[ii] The mouth-harp.

[iii] See the biographical sketch of Nyamukamadi Ndou (2.2).

My parents did not farm because they were healers. Their customers often paid them with food. They also had cattle and goats.

The first shop at Tshaulu was owned by an Indian trader. We bought maize flour from him; also clothes and bread that cost a tickey. We really liked those flats sweets, and lollipops and chocolate. But we also gathered wild fruit, especially *nombelo, mahaṱu,* and *mazwilu.*[i] We planted our own sweet potatoes. We used to cook them in water.

The first Venda person to own a shop at Tshaulu was called Bohwana. I remember buying tinned food from him, and also soap and beads. That soap was long! It was called *makonde.* This is name for slabs of stiff porridge. Some called it *ṱamba-vhakegulu* or soap for old people to wash with. The shop also sold those old kinds of beads that people used to make girdles and necklaces from.

Can you believe that I saw an aeroplane before a car? And so far away in the mountains! People ran away because they thought white people were coming to bomb them! I saw my first car only later. I really did not like it because it smoked and smelled bad!

You know, during the 1970s Tsonga people were moved away from the Soutpansberg to the south, to the area people came to call Gazankulu, with towns like Giyani and Malamulele.[ii] Before that we lived with those people.

My husband is Xitsonga-speaking. He is Samson Hlongwane. He came from Moçambique. You can still hear this in the way he speaks Tshivenda. He was a farmer.

We had six children. They were two girls and four boys. Only one daughter and three sons remain. My daughter is married and lives at Thengwe. One son works at Venetia mine[iii] and the second at a mine at Phalaborwa. The third one works in Johannesburg, but we do not know what he does. We are fortunate because we see them often.

When I became an adult, I went to work there at Doreen, on the farm of Kay Knott. This is where I met Samson. He also worked on the farm. We helped to plant tomatoes and cabbage, but we mostly tended oranges.

The foreman's nickname was Tshimolo! This is our word for a truncheon.[iv] Tshimolo carried a hipflask that reminded us of one. He liked to take small nips from his flask while working.

Samson and I went to work for Kasper Wessels in 1969.[v] He farmed with cattle and goats. He died in 1988, and the farm was then run by his son Jan.

Samson became a pensioner in 1997. We retired to Folovhodwe where we live in a RDP house. We are not wealthy, but we are happy. When we receive our pension, we know we can buy maize flour and meat.

(Mutshekwa Mudau had become frail by 2014, and passed away from an unidentified illness during that year.)

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[i] Stem fruit *(Tabernaemontana elegans Stapf.),* the toad tree *(Tabernaemontana elegans Stapf.)* and the wild medlar *(Vangueria infausta Burch).*

[ii] This related to the establishment of ethnic enclaves. *Dende* bow-player Elias Ndou from Mangaya sang during the early 1980s: *'Ndi a thoma zwino kha Matshangana a tshi ya Giyani: Matshangana famba! Ntsanwisi famba! Mphaya tsama laha.'* ('Now I begin with the departure of Shangaans to Giyani: Shove off, Shangaans! Shove off chief Ntsanwisi! Chief Tshivhase remains behind.') (Kruger, 1986:131.)

[iii] https://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de_beers/

[iv] According to Van Warmelo (1989:412), the term refers to riding breeches.

[v] Kasper and Jan Wessels farmed on Senator (Tobie Fourie, personal communication).

2.16.1 Bird watchers / Makhulu vho mpha mulenzhe

Here comes a story!

There is a granny and her grandson.
He goes to the veld to herd the cattle. This grandson returns with a broken leg.[i] He has one leg only. He sings (You must sing, *'Savhalinda'*),[ii]

(Narrator)
You who chase the birds away!
I suffer because of granny.[iii]
(Chorus)
Savhalinda.

This grandson returns, saying, 'Swe! Swe! Swe! Swe!'[iv] He says, 'Swe, swe, leg!'
That granny asks, 'What happened to your leg?'[v]
He answers, 'You, my granny, I was injured when herding.'

I have finished.[vi]

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 5 October 2012

See the version of this story by Thizwilondi Kwinda (2.7.1) for an interpretation.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ndi makhulu na muḓuhulu wavho.
A ya dzikholomoni a yo lisa dzikholomo. Houḽa muḓuhulu a vhuya a si na mulenzhe. O no sala nga muthihi. Vha ri Hu pfi lila, 'Savhalinda'),

(Musimi)
Savhalinda wa linda ṋoni, wee.
Makhulu vho mpha mulenzhe.
(Vhabvumeli)
Savhalinda.

A vhuya houḽa muḓuhulu, a tshi ri, 'Swe! Swe! Swe! Swe!' A tshi ri, 'Swe, swe, mulenzhe!'
Vhaḽa makhulu vha ri, 'Mulenzhe wo ḽiwa nga mini?'
A ri, 'Ndo huvhala kholomoni, vhone, makhulu wanga.'

Ndi ḓo ri ndo fhedza.

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[i] Lit. 'he returns without a leg.'
[ii] The narrator is addressing her co-performers.
[iii] Lit. 'granny gave me a leg.'
[iv] A description of his limping gait.
[v] Lit. 'what ate your leg?'
[vi] The narrator speaking.

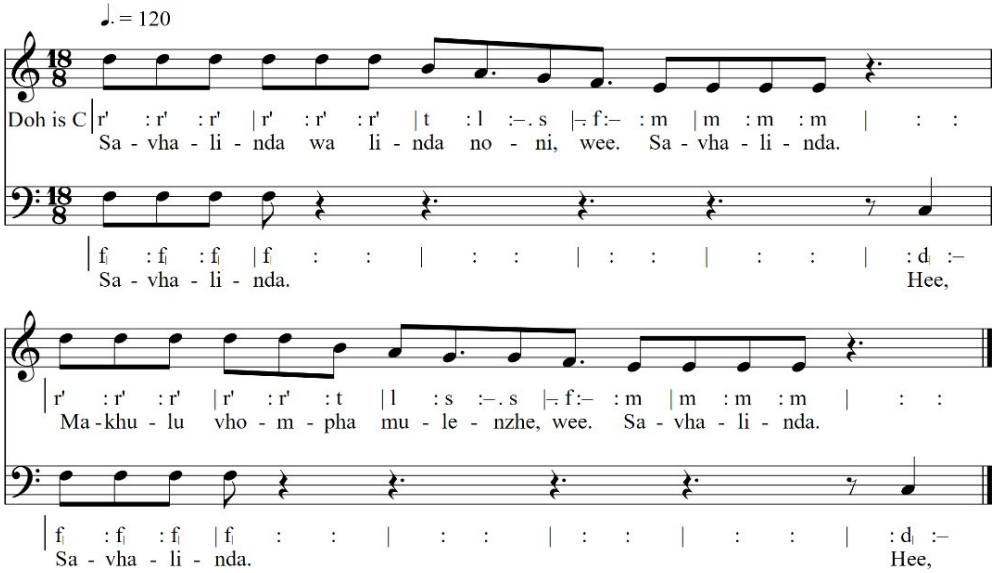

Fig. 89. The Nwanedi river
Folovhodwe, 2011

2.17 Marubini Kale

My name is Marubini Emily Kale. I was born in 1955 at Zwaboli. This small village was near the Nzhelele river, in the Tshirundu area (1.8.2). Only older people still remember the name of this place. It was once controlled by chief Mphephu. Many people who live at Muswodi today were born there.

Zwaboli was on a pocket of state land. The nearest farm was called Dolina,[i] and most adults worked there. Others worked in town, in Musina and Louis Trichardt (Makhado).

My father was Paulos Mulaudzi. He had three wives. The family's homestead was at Zwaboli. Each wife had her own house. My mother was the senior wife. She was Sara Phandelani and she had seven children.

My father was a security policeman at the copper mine in Musina.[ii] This is the reason our family later moved there, and why I was given the name Marubini. It means to move in the year of a birth.

I was amazed when I first saw the mine. I did not know how the rocks came out of the ground and ended up in such a large heap!

My mother and we children lived at the mine compound. The other wives each had their own house in Nancefield township. Living in town allowed my mother to take on domestic work.

Zwaboli was not near any shops or schools. The farm school at Dolina was too far for us children to walk to every day. And so we did not learn to read and write. I only started my schooling once we moved to Musina. I entered Makusha Primary when I was thirteen. I left there in grade seven to marry. I was twenty at the time.

I learnt to play *bola* (netball) at school. I was the goal keeper. *Bola* practices made me strong because I had to do many push-ups! We played games against Campbell and Harper mine schools.

My teacher was Mr. Mashavhataga. It was important to him that children never missed a class. If they did so without good excuse, he caned them immediately.

What I liked best at school was reciting *zwirendo* praises. I still remember

one about chief Ramaremisa Tshivhase[iii] that Mashavhataga taught us (box 42).

Our house at Musina had a corrugated iron roof and four rooms: two bedrooms, a kitchen and a lounge.

I will never forget how strict my parents were. We were not allowed to go to the centre of town. My parents were afraid that cars would run us over on the busy highway to Zimbabwe. We were also not allowed to go outside during the evening. We had to do chores in and around the house. They were very much the same as those we had at Zwaboli, such as sweeping, washing and cooking porridge and vegetables.

If you neglected your duties, you were beaten! I was an unruly child and my nickname was Matshaya![iv] I liked to raid the nests of our family's fowls and to cook the eggs secretly. I also often pinched flour from my mother's kitchen. I still remember the many hours we played on *swinki* (swings).

[i] Doreen.

[ii] The Messina Transvaal Development Company, founded in 1905 and closed down during the 1990s.

[iii] Traditional leader from 1902-1930 (Nemudzivhadi, 1985:25, 27).

[iv] From *tshaya*, to beat a person.

The mother of my mother also lived close to us, and it is she who told *ngano* to us children. She was called Lavhengwa. She told stories around the kitchen fire in winter time. The stories I told you come from her. Yes, those times were good. When you become older, things start to change. My mother died in 1990 and my father in 2014.

I became married after leaving primary school. My husband worked at the copper mine at Musina until it closed down.

I gave birth to six children, two boys and four girls. One of my sons has died. My other son lives in my father's house in Musina. He used to do piece jobs. He now works for Fauna and Flora as patrol officer. He does not want to visit me because Muswodi is too primitive for him! He wants to take a shower, not wash himself in a plastic basin.

One of my daughters works as a domestic in Thohoyandou. She lost a child during birth recently, and now recuperates with me. My youngest daughter has finished matric, but there is no job for her. Another daughter was deserted by her husband. He worked as a labourer in the irrigation project, and later died.

I am struggling. I have no work and I am too young for pension. To survive, I trade from my home. I pay thirty-seven rand for the taxi to Thohoyandou. There I go to Choice Supermarket where I buy things. Back at home I sell packets of chips for fifty cents. I make up a small bag of round buns and sell it for one rand. I sell five rand and twelve rand airtime vouchers for six rand and thirteen rand. As you can see, my profit is very small. But what can I do? Everyone around me is poor.

From my small income I must pay one hundred rand to my burial society. This makes me very anxious. My children try to help me but they are also poor. I am trying to join Tambani.[i] Perhaps they will accept me.

Going to church helps me to remain standing. It keeps life on track. It stops you from drinking too much. If you drink, your body becomes stiff and arched.

The most important command is to respect God. I attend the Revelation Apostolic Church at the house of my friend Mashau Tseisi (fig. 3). Her father was a minister of this church. There is a big rondavel for meetings. As many as thirty-five people can gather there. We sing, beat the drum and shake rattles. For the rattles we take small tins and fill them with gravel. Our minister is John Nengovhela.

[i] Tambani community project. www.tambani.co.za (Figs. 104-106.)

Box 42. Tshivase's praise / Tshirendo tsha Tshivhase

Hooray, Ramaremisa!
Cut a bamboo pipe and perform
the *tshikona* of Thononda.
Ramaremisa enters
the thornbush.[i]
Cock the gun! Cock the gun!
It is the gun of the
mine of Gondeni.[ii]
Fight until you overcome.
When you overcome,
you have peace.[iii]
Do not become discouraged.
Work for rewards.
Cock the gun! Cock the gun!
Ramaremisa is a
soldier of war.
Ramaremisa fought in the
war against the Germans.[iv]
The best fighter of all.
Shoot! Shoot! The country will
be at peace and
cries of joy will sound.
There will be much laughing.
Ramaremisa, the biggest
fighter of all.

Ahee, Ramaremisa!
Nga vha ntshetele nanga ndi
yo lidza tshikona Thononda.
Ramaremisa u yo
dzhena luanakha.
Koka! Koka! Ndi tshigidi
migodini ya Gondeni.
Ilwa u swika u tshi yo kunda.
Hezwi wo no kunda,
u ḓo dzula zwavhuḓi.
U songo laṱa fhulufhelo.
Zwavhuḓi zwi tou shumeliwa.
Koka! Koka! Ramaremisa
ndi ḽiswole ḽa nndwa.
Ramaremisa o lwa
nndwa yo Dzheremane.
Ndi muhali
vhukati ha vhuhai.
Ngindi! Ngindi! Shango ḽi ḓo lala
ha pfala mifhululu.
Ha vuwa maseo na
makwakwalala.
Ramaremisa a khodiwa
nga shango ḽothe.

[i] I.e. war.
[ii] Comparing the power of Ramaremisa to that of a rock-fall or mine explosion.
[iii] Lit. 'live well.'
[iv] World War Two.

Fig. 90. Mabvete
2011

2.17.1 We do not pound / A thi sinḓi

Here comes a story!

There was a certain granny and her two grandchildren. These grandchildren of hers, their mother had died.

She treated them badly. She said, 'Leave! Go and herd the cattle!'[i] The brother herded the cattle over there. That granny remained with her daughter in-law. This daughter-in-law was cooking. She poisoned the food.[ii]

This sister returned. She was the younger one. She always stood and called her brother when he returned.

When he returned, she sang,

(Narrator)
My brother!
(Chorus)
Dimile!
(Narrator)
They poured poison!
(Chorus)
Dimile!
(Narrator)
Do not eat the porridge!
(Chorus)
Dimile!

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na vhaṅwe mukegulu vha na vhaḓuhulu vhavho vhavhili. Havha vhaḓuhulu vhavho, vho lovhelwa nga mme.

Vha tshi vha tambudza. Vha tshi ri, 'Kha vha ṱuwe! Vha yo lisa kholomo!' Hezwi vha tshi khou lisa kholomo hangei. Ha vha uri havha mukegulu vho vha vhe na musadzi wa ṅwana. Hoyu musadzi wa ṅwana a tshi bika zwiliwa. A tshi vha shelela mushonga.

Hoyu ṅwana, uyu muṱuku wa khaladzi murathu wa hone a tshi vhuya. O vha a tshi ima a vhidzelela khaladzi ya hone a tshi khou vhuya. Hezwi a tshi khou vhuya, a ri,

(Musimi)
Khaladzi yanga!
(Vhabvumeli)
Dimile!
(Musimi)
Vho shela mushonga!
(Vhabvumeli)
Dimile!
(Musimi)
Vhuswa ni songo ḽa!
(Vhabvumeli)
Dimile!

[i] The implication is that the cattle belonged to the boy's father, and that he has inherited them.

[ii] Lit. 'she poured poison,' i.e. to add a poisonous substance to food. Her act is motivated by her refusal to care for the orphans and also her desire to appropriate the boy's cattle.

(Narrator)
Red poison.[i] / White poison.[ii]
(Chorus)
Dimile!
(Narrator)
I heard that![iii]
(Chorus)
Be quiet![iv]

He arrived home. He was given porridge. When he was given porridge, that child did not eat the porridge.

They came there and asked, 'What is the matter? Why don't you eat the porridge?'

He replied, 'I ate bees.[v] I am full.'

He entered the house and went to bed. This one woke up the next morning. He did the same: He left, he left and went to the veld to herd the cattle.

When he went over there to herd, he arrived and met a certain girl. This girl, he proposed to her because he was in love. He fell in love with that girl and said, 'Hey, me and you, we must move away now.'[vi]

It was then that they moved away. When they moved away, that girl arrived at her new home. They built a house and lived there. They went out to tend their maize. These people were tending their maize. That

(Musimi)
Mushonga mutswuku / mutshena.
(Vhabvumeli)
Dimile!
(Musimi)
Izwi ndo zwi pfa!
(Vhabvumeli)
Fhumula!

A mbo ḓi swika muḓini. A ya a dzhia vhuswa. A fhiwa vhuswa. Hezwi o no fhiwa vhuswa, houḽa ṅwana a si tsha ḽa vhuswa hovhuḽani.

Vha ḓa, vha ri, 'Ndi nga mini? Iwe u songo tsha ḽa vhuswa?'

A ri, 'Nṅe ndo ḽa bvani hangei ḓakani. Ndo fura.'

A dzhena nḓuni a eḓela. Hezwi a tshi vuwa. A ita zwenezwo, a ṱuwa, a ya kholomoni u lisa.

Hezwo o ya u lisa hangei, a swika hangei a mbo ḓi ṱangana na muṅwe musidzana. Hoyo musidzana vha mbo ḓi ambisana vha funana. Hezwi vho no funana houḽa musidzana, a ri, 'Hai, nṅe na iwe, ri tou pfuluwa zwa zwino.'

Ndi hezwi vha tshi swika hune vha pfuluwa. Hezwi vho no pfuluwa-i, houḽa musidzana vha swika vha fhaṱa muḓi vha dzula. Vha ṱuwa, ha vho limiwa mavhele. Hezwi hu khou limiwa mavhele, houḽa muṱhannga u khou ita zwenezwi zwa u lisa kholomo.

O no lima mavhele, havha hu no uri zwino u khou nyaga u ri zwino houḽani musadzi wawe a a sinḓe. Houḽa musadzi wawe ha mbo ḓi ri musadzi wa hone ndi vhenevha vhana vha u lemiwa. Hezwi a tshi sinḓa, a tshi ri ndi khou sinḓa mavhele u sokou ri,

[i] Verse 1.
[ii] Verse 2.
[iii] The brother answering.
[iv] I.e. say nothing about the attempted murder.
[v] *Mbani:* 'species of small stingless bee, size of but slenderer than *monga* (stingless honey bee), and making nest 10-15 cm diameter in cavities in trees and rocks' (Van Warmelo, 1989:189).
[vi] To escape his evil family.

young man also herded the cattle.

After tending the maize, he wanted that wife of his to pound. That wife of his was one of those spoilt women. When she pounded, when she was pounding maize, she sang,

(Narrator)
We do not pound at my home.
(Chorus)
Do not pound!
(Narrator)
I eat porridge made with milled maize.
(Chorus)
Milled maize!
(Narrator)
When I pound, I faint![i]
(Chorus)
I faint!

That young man started to sulk. He left, he left for the veld. He got there and herded the cattle. After herding, he returned home. He returned during late afternoon. He left the house again because of his unhappiness.

This is the end of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 5 October 2012

(Musimi)
Hayani hanga thi sin̓di.
(Vhabvumeli)
Thi sin̓di!
(Musimi)
Nn̓e ndi l̓a vhuswa ha tshigayo.
(Vhabvumeli)
Tshigayo!
(Musimi)
Nn̓e nda sin̓da ndi a n̓oka!
(Vhabvumeli)
Nda n̓oka!

Ul̓a mu̓thannga a mbo d̓i ṅala. A t̓uwa, a ya kholomoni. A swika, a li̓sa. A tshi lisa a tshi vhuya fha̓l̓a hayani. A mbo d̓i kovhelelwa nga madekwana. A tshi mbo d̓i t̓uwa a ṅala a sia mud̓i.

Ha mbo d̓i vha u fa ha lungano.

[i] *N̓oka*, also to melt.

This story features the unusual integration of two popular themes in *ngano.* Kale denied that she assimilated them, explaining that her grandmother told the story in this form. It involves the common themes of poisoning in a family and a broken marriage agreement.

The first theme conventionally portrays the typical fate of orphans. An orphaned brother and sister are left in the care of family members who attempt to poison the boy in order to appropriate the cattle he has inherited from his father.[i] While he is herding his cattle, his sister observes their relatives poisoning his food. She warns him in song of their murderous intent. He avoids the poisoned food, undermines his relatives in various ways, and escapes with his sister. This is not only a portrayal of avarice and the suffering of orphans,[ii] but also a coming-of-age story that illustrates the importance of perseverance and courage.

The second theme usually serves to underscore the importance of marriage agreements.[iii] A family allows a daughter to become married on condition that she is not required to pound maize. When this agreement is broken, images of ancestral spiritual intervention (the young wife is submerged in water or underground) invoke customary law. The marriage is then dissolved and punitive action is taken.

Kale's combination of these two themes is not unusual, given the prevalence of migrating images or thematic reconfiguration in *ngano.*[820] However, her narration lacks seamless transition between the themes. Her actual description of the couple's departure (edited in translation) reads as follows:

> He arrived there. He was herding the cattle. They are returning home. When he returned home with those cattle, that younger sister started to sing: (song). He returned home, entered the house and went to bed. During the night he discussed the matter with his wife. They started to move away. After settling elsewhere they arrived there at the fields and cultivated their maize.

Whereas the young man and his bride become settled at their new home, these lines suggest that they are still at his family homestead, and that a further attempt is made to murder him (the story usually describes several attempts at poisoning). Toolan[821] remarks in this regard that

> difficulties of reader-processing caused by achronological narration, or under-explained shifts in setting or character, even when extreme, do not invariably amount to incoherence, either (… In addition) narrative coherence can vary considerably from one society or culture to the next; these expectations are also dependent on period and genre.

While Kale's thematic integration is marked by a degree of disjunction, it is not illogical. The entire reconstituted story not only portrays family conflict, but also maturing and gradual loss of innocence.

The poison theme usually portrays a youthful encounter with death and evil. Siblings suffer the loss of their parents, and are shocked by the avarice of their relatives. However, they are shown to possess incipient qualities needed to overcome adversity. They cooperate with each other,[iv] shed their innocence and emerge as heroes. This is usually where the story ends. In contrast, the conventional treatment of the transgression of marital agreements falls away in Kale's story in favour of novel variation. The refusal of the girl to

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[i] See 'Mutshavhona (2.13.2; Kruger, 2004) and 'Spears eat those that make them' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[ii] See 'Hippopotamus throws his weight around' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iii] 'The young wife who was forbidden to pound maize' (Kruger, 2004), 'To be human again' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'The princess who slept late (Kruger, 2014). Also see 'A girl is made to work in the daytime' (Scheub, 1975) as well as *'Die Schlange mit dem Schurzfell'* and several similar stories (Von Sicard, 1965:56-58, 385-395).

[iv] Such cooperation is underpinned by the fact that a brother may need the dowry received from the marriage of his sister to enable his own marriage.

The sister often receives no further mention after warning her brother. The young man is usually treated as the hero, even though he is clearly dependent on his sister. However, in other versions both siblings escape with the herd of cattle and find a safe haven with other relatives.

pound refers to her 'laziness' (a common male complaint),[i] and thus invokes unexpected, ironical treatment of the theme of the victorious young hero who appears to live happily ever after. While he triumphs over his evil family, he tumbles off his heroic pedestal as a newly-married man unable to deal with a wife who does not perform her expected role. Put succinctly, the romance of heroism is undermined by the realities of marriage. The young man is no longer in control of his life. He is just another person who must constantly reinvent himself to deal with social relationships.

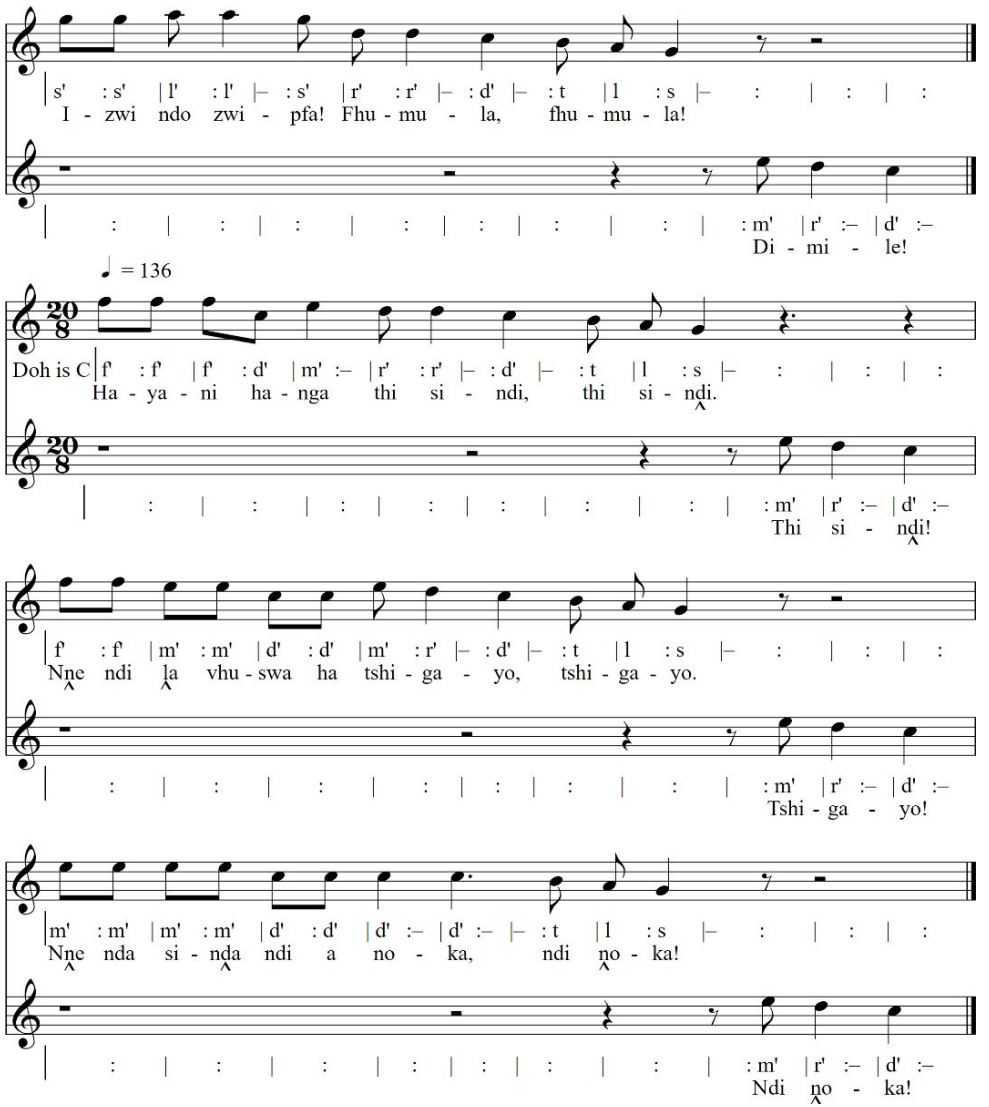
Although this story has ancient roots, references to poison and milled maize place it firmly in contemporary social experience. Kale and Mathuvhelo Mavhetha remarked that many people still have knowledge of poisonous plants. Also, women tend to use poison more than men, not only because they habitually prepare food, but also because it is more effective and less obvious than physical violence. Mavhetha in particular scoffed at the suggestion that autopsies can reveal poisoning, claiming that there are many indigenous poisons that science yet has to discover.

Milled maize, *tshigayo*, is obviously a marker of the colonial period, symbolising new patterns of economic as well as social production. Songs in older versions of this story describe the young woman as coming from a wealthy (often ruling) family, and being used to a comfortable life (hence the sarcastic reference in the song to fainting). However, from a contemporary perspective, many women desire to transcend the older female domestic role. This is the theme of 'Mr. Jim' (3.1.3) as well as a song entitled 'Modern girls' by Mashudu Mulaudzi (box 1).

[i] Blacking (1969:23) cites a *vhusha* initiation song, and explains that it reminds 'a girl that when she first marries she is expected to work hard at her husband's home. A young wife may have only a little sleep, and then she must get up and pound maize.'

Fig. 91. Pounding maize
Tshidzini, 1984

♩ = 134
Doh is C | m' : m' | m' : d' | m' :– | r' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Kha - la - dzi ya - nga! Di - mi - le, di - mi - le.
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Di - mi - le!
m' : m' | m' : r' | r' : d' | r' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Vhu - swa ni so - ngo la! Di - mi - le, di - mi - le.
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Di - mi - le!
f' : f' | f' : d' | d' : d' | r' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Vho she - la mu - sho - nga! Di - mi - le, di - mi - le.
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Di - mi - le!
l : l | l : l | l : l | r' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Mu - sho - nga mu - tshe - na. Di - mi - le, di - mi - le.
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Di - mi - le!


s' : s' | l' : l' |– : s' | r' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
I - zwi ndo zwi - pfa! Fhu - mu - la, fhu - mu - la!
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Di - mi - le!
♩ = 136
Doh is C | f' : f' | f' : d' | m' :– | r' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Ha - ya - ni ha - nga thi si - ndi, thi si - ndi.
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Thi si - ndi!
f' : f' | m' : m' | d' : d' | m' : r' |– : d' |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Nne ndi la vhu - swa ha tshi - ga - yo, tshi - ga - yo.
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Tshi - ga - yo!
m' : m' | m' : m' | d' : d' | d' :– | d' :– |– : t | l : s |– : | : | :
Nne nda si - nda ndi a no - ka, ndi no - ka!
: | : | : | : | : | : | : | : m' | r' :– | d' :–
Ndi no - ka!

2.17.2 Child of the law / Ṅwana wa milayo

Here comes a story!

There was a certain woman and her two children. These two children were passing the age of marriage. They saw other, younger people having children.

They started speaking to their ancestral spirits, telling them that their mother had now died. They said, 'We want children.'

Those spirits replied, 'Children are to be found at a hot and dangerous place! But when you go there, there are wild animals, there are different wild animals that kill. When you go there, you must be a child of the law.'

Truly, that girl started to walk.

(Narrator chants)
I am going to a hot and dangerous place!
(Chorus chants)
A hot and dangerous place.

She met Tortoise. 'Where are you going, girl?'

She said, 'I am going to a hot and dangerous place!'

She went further. She started to chant, 'I am going to a hot and dangerous place! …'

She met Hare. Hare asked, 'Where are you going, girl?'

'I am going to a hot and dangerous place!'

That Hare said, 'Go!'

She left and chanted, 'I am going to a hot and dangerous place! …'

She met Duiker. Duiker asked, 'Where are you going, girl?'

'I am going to a hot and dangerous place!'

That Duiker said, 'Go!'

She left and chanted, 'I am going to a hot and dangerous place! …'

She met Kudu. Kudu asked, 'Where are you going, girl?'

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na muṅwe mufumakadzi na vhana vhavho vhavhili.

Havha vhana vhavho vhavhili vha vha dzikhomba-mutshelukwa, vha sa khou maliwa. Vha vhona zwa uri vhaṅwe vhana vhaṱuku vho no vha na vhana.

Vha ri kha havha mme awe, mme awe vho vha vho no lovha vha tshi khou amba na makhulu.

Vha ri, 'Riṋe ri khou nyaga vhana.'

Havhaḽa makhulu vha ri, 'Fhethu hune ha wanala vhana ndi hangei mpilivhili! Fhedzi mpilivhili ni tshi ya, hu na zwipuka, hu na zwipuka zwo fhambananaho zwi ya vhulaya. U funa u tshi khou ya hangei u tshi tou vha ṅwana, ṅwana wa milayo, wa mikhwa.'

Nga ngoho, houḽa musidzana a mbo ḓi dzhena nḓilani.

(Musimi)
Nde nda mpilivhili.
Nda ya nda mpilivhili!
(Vhabvumeli)
Mpilivhili!

A ṱangana na Khamba.

'Nda ya nde nda mpundumisikani ...'

A ri, 'Nde nda mpilivhili.'

A fhira.

A vha a khou imba luimbo, 'Nde nda mpilivhili …'

A ṱangana na Muvhuḓa.

'Nda ya nde nda mpundumisikani ...'

Muvhuḓa wa ri, 'Nde nda mpilivhili.'

Uḽa Muvhuḓa wa ri, 'Tuwai!'

A ri, 'Nde nda mpilivhili …'

‘I am going to a hot and dangerous place!’
Kudu said, ‘Go!’
She started to chant, ‘I am going to a hot and dangerous place! ...’
She met Lion. Lion asked, ‘Where are you going, girl?’
‘I am going to a hot and dangerous place!’
Lion told her to go further.
She chanted, ‘I am going to a hot and dangerous place! …’
She met Buffalo. Buffalo asked, ‘Where are you going, girl?’
‘I am going to a hot and dangerous place!’
That Buffalo said, ‘Go!’
She left and chanted, ‘I am going to a hot and dangerous place! …’
Truly, that one arrived over there at that hot and dangerous place.
When she arrived over there, she found an old woman. That old woman gave her pumpkin pips.
She said, ‘Pound!’
She went round the back of the courtyard to pound those pips.
A frog came there.
The frog said, ‘Give me some pips to eat. I will teach you wisdom.’
That girl took some pips from the mortar. She spread them there and the frog ate.
It said, ‘You, the children of that old woman are lions.’
It asked, ‘Who are you sleeping with?’
She answered, ‘I am sleeping with my granny.’
‘Who eats with you?’
‘I eat with my granny.’
‘Who do you wash with?’
‘I wash with my granny.’
Truly, that child answered like that!
The lions returned at sunset. ‘Hey! We smell meat! We smell meat!’
The granny said, ‘Go far away! There is nothing to smell here! There is no meat to eat! Go far away! There is no meat to eat!’

A ṱangana na Ntsa.
‘Nda ya nde nda mpundumisikani ...’
A ri, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili.’
Nntsa iḽa ya ri, ‘Ṱuwai!’
A ṱuwa, a ri, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili …’
A ṱangana na Tholo.
‘Nda ya nde nda mpundumisikani ...’
A ri, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili.’
Tholo ya ri, ‘Ṱuwai!’
A vha a tshi khou imba, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili ...’
A ṱangana na Ndau.
‘Nda ya nde nda mpundumisikani ...’
A ri, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili.’
Ndau ya ri fhirai!’
A ri, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili …’
A ṱangana na Ṋari.
Ṋari ya ri, ‘Nda ya nde nda mpundumisikani.’
A ri, ‘Nde nda mpilivhili ...’
Houḽani nga ngoho a mbo ḓivha o no swika hangei mpilivhili.
Hezwi a tshi swika hangei mpilivhili, a wana mukegulu. Houḽa mukegulu vha mu fha thanga.
Vha ri, ‘Kha koḓe!’
A mona murahu ha guvha a tshi khou ya u sinḓa thanga hedziḽani.
Ha ḓa tshiḓula.
Tshiḓula tsha ri, ‘Mphe vhupfu ndi u vhudze maano.’
Houḽa musidzana a dzhia a ṱusa mutulini. A shela hafhaḽani, tsha ḽa.
Tsha ri, ‘Iwe, vhana vha havha mukegulu ndi dzindau.’
Hezwiḽa hu pfi, ‘U khou eḓela na nnyi?’
U ri, ‘Ndi khou eḓela na makhulu wanga.’
‘Ni ḽa na nnyi?’

So they fried their venison and ate it. They finished and went inside the house to sleep. This child slept with the old woman.

The old woman woke up the next morning. She gave the girl a calabash.

'The water calabash is the head of a person. The beer ladle is the hand of a person.'

That old woman says to that girl, 'Take them there to the river. You will find an old woman.' She is the one who will do good things over there.'

When she arrives over there, she finds an old woman kneeling in the water.

The old woman says, 'Come and scrub my back!'

That girl comes closer and says, 'What must I scrub with?'

She answers, 'With your tongue!'

That girl kneels and scrubs the back of the old woman with her tongue! Like this ... while pouring water!

When she had finished, the old woman then started to explain[i] about the child!

This child: The small container[ii] with children's porridge was taken. 'Here it is. Here is the baby sling! Here is the blanket! Here is the sweet root!'[iii] Go back there and show granny.'

As she goes back there, granny says, 'Yes! Go!' That girl left.

When the girl arrived home, her younger sister wanted the same! That younger sister wanted the same! That granny had remained looking after her. She said, 'You will do the same as your elder sister because there are wild beasts in the road.'

The girl starts to walk on the footpath, 'I am going to a hot and

'Ndi ḽa na makhulu wanga.'

'Ni tumba na nnyi?'

'Ndi tumba na makhulu wanga.'

Nga ngoho, uḽa ṅwana a mbo ḓi ita ngauraḽa!

Ḽi tshi khovhela dza vha dzi tshi khou vhuya ndau.

'Hee! Muno ho mutshwa! Muno ho mutshwa!'

Vhaḽa vha ri, 'Bvelani hangei kule! Muṅwe vho mutswa ha mini?'

Vha ri, 'Mupfu muṅwe mutshwa! Ṱuwelani kule hangei! A hu na muṅwe wo mutshwa!'

Dza gotsha ṋama dzadzo dza ḽa dza fhedza dza dzhena nḓuni dza lala. Houḽa ṅwana a eḓela na mukegulu.

Vho vuwa nga matsheloni. Vha mu fha tshitemba.

'Tshitemba ndi ṱhoho ya muthu. Khavho ndi tshanḓa tsha muthu.'

Vhaḽa mukegulu vha ri kha uḽa musidzana, 'Godimisela hangei mulamboni. U ḓo wana hu na mukegulu. Ndi vhone vha ne vha ḓo u itela zwivhuya hanengei.'

A tshi swika hangei, a wana mukegulu vho gwadama mulamboni.

Mukegulu a ri, 'Iḓayi u nkhuṱe!'

Houḽa musidzana a swika a ri, 'Ndi vha huṱa nga mini?'

Vha ri, 'Nga lulimi!'

Uḽa musidzana a gwadama a huṱa muṱaṋa wa mukegulu nga lulimi! A tshi khou sokou nanzwa nga lulimi a tshi shela na maḓi!

Vha tshi fhedza, mukegulu vha mbo ḓi dzhia ṅwana!

'Ṅwana khoyu: Tshikalo tsho faraho vhuswa ha ṅwana, khetshi! Ngozwi khei! Mbongolo khei! Tshiundza tsha ṅwana khetshi! Humela hangei uye u sumbedza makhulu.'

A tshi humela hangei, makhulu vha ri, 'Hai! Ṱuwai!'

Houḽa musidzana a ṱuwa.

A tshi swika hayani, houḽa murathu wa hone a tama! Uḽa murathu wa hone a tshi tama! Havha makhulu vho salaho navho vha tshi vha lela.

Vha ri, 'U tevhedzele zwo itwaho nga mukomana ngauri hafha

[i] Lit. 'take.'

[ii] *Tshikalo*, from Eng. scale, a small container like a tin cup.

[iii] The root of some shrub or tree for the baby to suck.

dangerous place!'

She meets Tortoise. 'Where are you going, girl?'

'I will push trouble away wherever it is! I will push it away!'

That Tortoise says, 'Good day!'

She goes further, 'I am going to a hot and dangerous place!'

She meets Hare. 'Where are you going, girl?'

'I pushed trouble away! I am pushing it away!'

Hare says, 'Carry on!'

She carried on like that, meeting different kinds of wild animals. She defeated them, defeated them!

When she arrived there at the house, that old woman gave her pumpkin pips.

She said, 'Pound!'

She went round the back of the courtyard. She pounded and pounded!

A frog came there. The frog came there and said. 'Girl, give me some pips to eat! I will teach you wisdom!'

That child picked up that frog! She grabbed the frog and kicked it far away!

That frog came back again! 'Dear God! This child will die here! Give me some pips to eat! I will teach you wisdom!'

She again picked it up and threw it into the hedge over there!

That frog started to sulk. It said. 'No! I am leaving her alone! She will get her just reward!'

It became sunset and that old woman returned. The girl gave her pumpkin pips. She pounded, she cooked, she ate.

That old woman asks, she says, 'Ah! Whom do you sleep with there where you stay?'

She replied, 'I sleep with young men.'

'Ah! Do you not sleep with granny?'

She answered, 'No! I do not sleep with granny. I play with young men. We play hide and seek. I do everything over there.'

ndilani hu na mavhanḓa.'

A vha a tshi dzhena nḓilani musidzana, 'Nde nda mpilivhili …'

A ṱangana na Khamba.

'Hune nda mpundumisikani. Hune nda khou vonya! Ndi khou vonya!'

Iḽa ya ri, 'Hee ndaa!'

A fhira, 'Nde nda mpilivhili.'

A ṱangana na Muvhuḓa.

'Hune nda mpundumisikani. Nde nda vonya! Ndi khou vonya!'

Muvhuḓa vha ri, 'Fhirai!'

A ṱuwa ngauraḽo a tshi ṱangana na dziphukha hedziḽa dzoṱhe.

A tshi swika hangei muḓini, havhaḽa mukegulu vha mu fha thanga.

Vha ri, 'Kha sinḓe!'

A mona murahu ha guvha. A tshi khou sinḓa, a khou sinḓa!

Ha ḓa tshiḓula.

Tshiḓula tshi tshi ḓa, tsha ri, 'Musidzana, mphe vhupfu. Ndi u vhudze maano!'

Houḽa ṅwana a doba hetshiḽa tshiḓula! A tshi raha nga mulenzhe tsha wela kule hangei! shiḽa tshiḓula tsha dovha tsha vhuya!

'Vhathu vha Mudzimu! Hoyu ṅwana u ḓo fa fhano! Mphe vhupfu! Ndi u vhudze maano!'

A dovha a tshi doba a tshi posa matanzuni hangei!

Tshiḽa tshiḓula tsha mbo ḓi ṅala. Tsha ri, 'Hai! Ndi ya mulitsha. U ḓo ṱangana nazwo.'

Ḽi tshi kovhela nga madekwana, ha vha hu khou vhuya mukegulu vhaḽa. A vha fha thanga. Vha koḓa, vha bika vhuswa, vha ḽa.

Havhaḽa mukegulu vha mu vhudzisa. Vha ri, 'A! Ngei ha hanu ni eḓela na nnyi?'

A ri, 'Nne ndi eḓela na vhaṱhannga.'

'A! A ni eḓeli na makhulu?'

A ri, 'Hai! Nne a thi eḓeli na makhulu. Ndi tamba na vhaṱhannga. Ri tshi ita midzumbamo. Ndi tshi ita mini na mini hanengei.'

Child of the law / Ṅwana wa milayo (continued)

Hah! Truly, that old woman saw that she was just a child who refuses instruction! She left her alone!

The children of that old woman returned. The children of that old woman are lions! They returned, carrying meat on strips of bark. They came there and cut the meat! Trouble!

She squatted there among those boys who are lions!

One lion was just saying this, saying that![i] 'Hey! This girl is beautiful!'

It is devouring meat! One is grabbing the shoulder! He is devouring the hand! That girl!

Those lions started to tear her apart, tear her apart!

This is the end of the story. This is what happens to you if you do not listen![ii] A person must listen to the law!

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 3 July 2015

Haa! Nga ngoho, vhaḽa mukegulu vha ḓi vhonela uri hei ndi khundavhalai a yo ngo laiwa! Vha mu litsha!

Vha vha vha tshi vhuya vhana vha vhaḽa mukegulu. Vhana vha vhaḽa mukegulu ndi dzindau! Vho vhuya vho hwala migwato wa dziṅama. Vha tshi ḓa fhaḽa, vhu tshi khou khaṱha dziṅama! Eṅe na eṅe!

O no tumba henengei vhukati ha vhatukana henevhaḽa vha dzindau!

Nteḽi inwe i sokouri, nga hafha i sokouri! 'Hee! Musidzana ndi wavhuḓi hoyu!'

I khou tswamula ṋama! Muṅwe nga hafha u khou banda nga hafha kha shaḓa! U khou tshwamula tshanḓa! Houḽa musidzana!

Dziḽa ndau dza mbo ḓi mu pandekanya dza mu pandekanya!

Ha vha hu u fhela ha lungano. Nga u kundwa hedzi! Muthu u ya laiwa a pfa!

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[i] I.e. speaking rudely.

[ii] The narrator touches her ears to demonstrate.

This story about values and norms is well-known in southern Africa. Its German form is the familiar 'Mother Holle,' which was documented by the Grimm brothers.[i]

The dyads at the centre of this theme occasionally involve platonic or romantic relationships.[ii] However, they usually take form as sibling combinations. In brother-sister relationships, the protagonist is usually male, although he is seldom able to live up to his potential without his sister's help (see the preceding story).[iii]

In dyads of the same gender, an age distinction is usually made, and the younger sibling is shown to surpass the elder. In some cases,[iv] as in Kale's story, the younger sibling is realistically presented as more naïve, and displaying incipient values. Scheub[822] notes in this regard that sets of patterned images are generated by the contrasting values sibling dyads express.

Kale's story affirms the role expectation of the woman as wife and mother. The relationship between the elder sister and her grandmother ('I am sleeping with my granny') alludes to the ideal place of the young unmarried woman, namely at home where she is protected and guided by her experienced elders.

Narrative action is triggered by the sisters' desire to bear children. Motherhood should be characterised by 'coolness,' that ubiquitous 'state of health, prosperity and social euphoria.'[823] Its binary opposite is the familiar 'heat-complex'[v] or condition of 'sacred pollution' which pertains to social marginality, sexual relationships with their 'highly-charged affective content,' and threats to 'the fertility of man or beast.'

Coolness involves an awareness of the difference between sexual intercourse as an act of having and as an act of being. Blacking explains in terms of girls' initiation that

> sex is not simply as a gratification of animal passions, nor even as a means to the end of biological reproduction: it is regarded also as a way of uniting man with the cosmic forces which animate both his own body and the world in which he finds himself. The *domba* dance is not meant to be sexy: it is intended to symbolize both the mystical act of sexual communion, conception, and the growth of the foetus, and child-birth.[824]

An initiation song[825] accordingly notes that

> 'sexual union changes things. You will see that it gives you something beautiful' (...) This refers not to the joys of sexual union itself, but to the results of it, and it reminds girls and boys that when they sleep together they will have children. The Venda say *madzanga a nnyo ndi ṅwana* – the best thing about the sex organs is that child that comes from them.

Initiation therefore aims to make young people more 'conscious of their bodies and their new roles in society.' It 'stresses the value of institutionalised motherhood, with all the checks and balances necessary to maintain the stability of the social system.'[826]

Teenage girls in particular are considered to be in a state of sacred pollution which is conceptually 'expressed in terms of ancestral wrath'[827] (here represented by the frog that eventually forsakes the stubborn younger sister). The narrator described *mpilivhili* as 'a hot and dangerous place' inhabited by wild animals. The presence of the latter in *ngano* commonly relates to adolescent sexual naivety and vulnerability,[vi] as well as the brutish carnality of adultery.[vii]

In a Karanga *ngano,* an old woman encounters a starving brother and sister, and asks them, 'We are you going to?' They respond, 'We are just wandering around aimlessly.'[viii] Voyages through threatening landscapes thus are common metaphors for adolescence which may culminate in the jaws of raptors or a

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[i] Grimm & Grimm (1993). Compare (Dederen 2008b:223), Gavhi (1990:3-4), Khuba (1988:65-68), Postma (1964:1-7, 19-23), Scheub (1975:366-373), Stayt (1931:349-351) and Von Sicard (1965:70-73).

[ii] See 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1) and 'Olosi lives happily ever after' (3.1.4).

[iii] Also see 'Fortune lies ahead' (Kruger, 2014).

[iv] See 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1).

[v] Referred to by Hammond-Tooke (1981:130) as the '*fisa*-complex' (Tshivenda: *fhisa*, burn or be hot).

[vi] See 'The lion who hunted his daughter' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Things are falling apart' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[vii] See 'Eating with wild animals' (Kruger, 2014).

[viii] '*Wohin des Wegs? Wir wander nur so ziellos hier im Lande umher.*' (Von Sicard, 1965:104.)

safe return 'home' in a condition of moral transformation.[i]

This is portrayed explicitly in another version of 'Child of the law'[ii] in which an old woman goes on a journey *(lwendo)* with her grandson. The two arrive at a crossroads *(mafhande)* and argue about which road to take. The boy is described as naïve yet obstinate.[iii] The grandmother yields to his stubbornness, but warns him as they travel the road of disobedience, 'I am telling you, but you do not listen: This is the way of wild animals, not people.'[iv]

They arrive at the home of the animals where the boy performs for them on his *dende* gourd-bow (figs. 64, 66), thus identifying himself with evil. A choral dance-song performance starts from which conflict *(bonyongo)* develops. The old woman scratches the boy, perhaps in frustration or to punish him, and they run away.

Similarly, the two sisters in Kale's story go on a journey of discovery. The wise sister is obedient ('When you go there, you must be a child of the law'), and her journey to motherhood is completed successfully. The foolish sister in contrast ignores the danger of her condition ('She was just a child who refuses instruction!'). Her journey along the road of animals[v] leads from small temptations and transgressions (Tortoise, Hare and Duiker) to increasing misbehaviour (Kudu and Buffalo) and the rejection of ancestral morality ('She grabbed the frog and kicked it far away!'). It culminates in encounters with Lion, that ultimate embodiment of peril. As the frog explains, girls who refuse instruction will be 'left alone' to suffer the consequence of their actions,[vi] which is to be ripped apart by wild animals.

In a similar story documented by Von Sicard,[828] girls following a lion come to a river where an old woman asks them to wash her back. The repulsive old woman is a familiar actant in Karanga and Venda *ngano*,[829] and she performs a similar role in European narratives.[830] She has large, ugly teeth which symbolise the authority of moral instruction. She evaluates the girls for compassion (especially for the elderly) and diligence ('Scrub my back'),[vii] obedience ('With your tongue!') and humility ('That girl kneels').[viii]

As a wise figure encountered along 'the way of people,' the old woman serves to inculcate wisdom *(maano)* in the young ('She is the one who will do good things over there'). The narrator explained that *maano* enables humanity to distinguish between reality and deception. Consequently, 'the water calabash is the head of a person' while 'the beer ladle is the hand of a person.'[ix] Teenage girls in particular should not be fooled by 'lions' who are only interested in eating meat. Their youthful naivety and fertility places them a state of vulnerability, and they must therefore learn to avoid premarital sex. If they follow instructions about sexual relations, pregnancy and child-birth ('Here is the baby sling! Here is the blanket!'), they will become responsible wives and mothers.

In a similar *ngano*,[831] the wise girl returns with experience and wisdom that enables her to accumulate and control different forms of wealth, namely clothing, beads, a cow and its calf, as well as a baby. Dederen, discussing a variation of this story,[832] emphasises in this regard the symbolism of *tshirivha*, a leather apron that marks 'social maturity and readiness for marriage' upon completion of initiation. *Ngano* that offer a template for growing up thus prioritise spiritual and social wealth.[x] A Karanga *ngano* urges that, of all forms of available wealth, young people must not accept jewels or gold, clothes

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[i] See Booker (2004:87-106). This is portrayed particularly evocatively in 'Dzwee's journey' (3.1.4) and 'Fortune lies ahead' (Kruger, 2014). Also see Von Sicard (1965:104, 159, 192, 208).

[ii] *'Si temilo'* (Gavhi, 1990:3-4).

[iii] *'Uyu ṅwana ha na maano (…) Mutukana a si tende.'*

[iv] *'Ndo ni vhudza ni sa nthetshelese. Heino nd̰ila ndi ya phukha, a si ya vhathu.'*

[v] *'Nd̰ilani hu na mavhand̰a.'*

[vi] The disobedient sister is covered in pitch in 'Mother Holle' (Grimm & Grimm, 1993:136).

[vii] See Postma (1964:21). Similarly, the step-sister who does domestic chores for the old woman in 'Mother Holle' is described as industrious (Grimm & Grimm, 1993:135).

[viii] Blacking (1969:9) notes in his discussion of *vhusha* girls' initiation that the novices 'are taken from their homes and secluded, stripped naked and thrashed, pinched, forced to cry and feel humble, soaked in water, deprived of food and the warmth of a fire (…) All this is designed to show that "a child is growing up"; and indeed the novices are the centre of attention, although they are completely passive and deprived of personality.'

[ix] Blacking (1969:73) explains about initiation that rhetorical questions enable 'the novice's adventure into a new world, in which objects are familiar and yet not known, because they are given new names that relate to the symbolism and instruction of the initiation schools.'

[x] See e.g. Kruger & Verhoef (2015).

or any material possessions.[i] Instead, they should strive to achieve 'all-encompassing psychological integration and maturity' in their lives.[833]

The old woman is the representative of ancestral moral authority, symbolised by the frog.[ii] The girls encounter the frog in a moral space, symbolised by the back of the home, where they are instructed to pound. Similarly, the encounter with the old woman takes place at a river, which is a common symbol of spirituality. The frog accordingly informs the girls that it will guide them.[iii] The narrator explained that the frog wants to give the girls a 'plan' to control *mpilivhili.*

Von Sicard's story continues by showing that all the girls except one refuse to wash the old woman. The girl receives the gift of a frog and a 'capungu' bird, both of which are symbols of life and spirituality. When the girls reach a river in flood, the frog swallows them. The bird in turn swallows the frog and carries all across. Those who refused to wash the old woman are devoured by the lion. The remaining girl returns home to fulfil her prescribed role.

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[i] *'Von all den Reichtümern, die dir angeboten werden, darst du nichts annehmen, kein Perlen, kein Gold, Keine Kleider, keine Stoffe! Lass dir aber ein kleines Kästchen geben, in welchem in Ei enthalten ist.*' (Von Sicard, 1965:192-193.)

[ii] Also see 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1).

[iii] *'Ndi u vhudze maano!'* Lit. 'I will tell you wisdom!'

2.18 Hangwani Ramano

My mother's mother was Musumuvhi Anna Nekhumbe. She is the one who told me *ngano*. This was long, long ago. I have forgotten almost all those stories. But I remember one of them well because it reminds me of the troubles of my son ...

I was born in 1953 on the farm of J. W. Emmerich. You can see its fields along the Nwanedi river, just before it leaves Nwanedi game reserve. Yes, it is unusual that a farm should be allowed in a game park. But it is small. J. W.'s youngest son, Cedric, lives there with his wife Johanna Mukumela. She comes from Folovhodwe.

My parents gave me the names Hangwani[i] Rosina. My father was a Shangaan from Mozambique. He was called David Mandomu Sishlangu. My mother's name was Mususumeli Selina Nekhumbe. She grew up here at Folovhodwe.

My parents met and married on the Emmerich farm. They planted and harvested tomatoes, cotton and vegetables. They had five sons and three daughters. One of my brothers has passed away. Two others live far away, in Thohoyandou and Johannesburg. The rest live here around Folovhodwe.

Emmeridge's farm was known to us as Hakwatani, the place of Kwati. Kwati was Emmerich's nickname, but we mostly just called him J. W. Kwati means to hold firmly onto something. We gave J. W. this name because he always told his workers to pick up their farm implements and put their back into their work!

J. W. had three sons. They are Mervin, Kevin and Cedric. I cannot remember his wife's real name. We just called her Mrs. Nyatshavhungwa. This is the name we usually give to a person who shapes clay objects very nicely. Nyatshavhungwa was very fussy about fruit and vegetables for the market. They were washed, dried, dusted and polished, *phumula!*

The railway lorry came on Fridays to collect them. It often left with a big load.

J. W. gave us venison as well as vegetables that we called 'failed.' They were not perfect or had not reached the market in time. So, we always had enough to eat. But nowadays we are often hungry. Food is expensive, and not all of us have farm land along the Nwanedi river.

We used to plant our own maize on J.W.'s farm. We used a hand-grinder called *tshigayo*, but we did not really like the very course flour it gave us. Later we travelled to Musina to buy fine flour in the shop.

We also exchanged things. My mother traded *mukusule* dried vegetables for maize. Maize beer was sold for much needed cash. People also collected insects like locusts in the veld.

Most of us fished in the Nwanedi river. We cut open large bags and used them to scoop up fish.

I went to Folovhodwe Primary School up to grade six. The school was very far! It took me about ninety minutes to walk there from Hakwatani. Also,

[i] 'Forget it.'

my parents could not afford to educate eight children.

But I did attend *vhusha* and *musevhetho* initiation there at Khomele, which is in the Nzhelele district. We women and girls from the farm walked across the mountains. It took us about seven hours to get there!

Musevheto lasted two months, and took place only on a Saturday. We left on Friday afternoon and returned on Sunday. When we passed settlements, we sang a song[i] to warn off people who were curious: 'The young ones are being initiated. You must never go and tell.'[ii]

What work could a person do who left school in grade six? I had to pack tomatoes in the farm store. At least I was able to do this until I became an adult. Then I moved here to Folovhodwe.

I met my husband in 1973. He is Avhapfani Solomon Ramano. He worked as a clerk at that big diamond mine near Cullinan. This was from 1968 to 1981. After this he became a clerk in the roads department.

Solomon also was the driver of a lorry that carried limestone from Ziska mine (fig. 92). He used to pick up people who hiked between Hakwatani and Folovhodwe. This is how I met him! After marrying, we lived at Tshikwarakwara, which is close to Folovhodwe. We are now both pensioners.

We have a field in the irrigation project. Although we are retired, we farm there with chillies and okra.

Look, there is Solomon's pet ox. He is black all over. His name is Dambuwo, which means bridge. He got this name after his mother drowned in the Nwanedi river. He was only two months old. Solomon loves him like a child. He always spoils him with bits of food. Dambuwo is shy and hides in his *danga* byre when visitors arrive.

We have a daughter and a son. My daughter was born in 1974. She is married and lives in Thohoyandou. Her husband works for a factory that makes ball bearings. She is sick, and I worry about her. She has lost a lot of weight. I think she has TB.

I have been worrying about my son since he was very young. He was born in 1976. The reason I remember one *ngano* well is because it tells the story of young people who are unable to love each other. When I tell the story of my child, the tears fall from my eyes.

My son stopped moving properly when he was not even three years old. Something went wrong with his legs and spine. We took him to Siloam hospital where Dr. Maritz did tests on him. They pricked him with pins, like this ... But he became worse, and the doctor told us he could not be cured. He has been limping ever since, and must use a walking stick.

You know, he was promised a government job because he is disabled. But he is still waiting. In the mean time he earned his a university diploma. He now works as a part-time lecturer.

He is now thirty years old but not yet married. Yes, it is because of my son that I remember that *ngano* about young people whose marriage fails.

Fig. 92. The remnants of Ziska mine

[i] '*Vho-mmavhasali vha wela. Zwezwi ni swike ni tshi amba.*'

[ii] I.e. reveal the laws of the school.

2.18.1 Singa-Luvhale

Here comes a story!

Now, it was a long time ago. There was a certain old woman. This woman had her two children only. One of them was a boy. One of them was a girl.

Now, the girl grew up, grew up. Now, she was liked by a certain young man. That young man says, ‘I want to marry that girl.’

That old woman speaks. She says, ‘This girl, the one you like, this girl does not cook, does not pound. The only work this girl does is sowing.’

That young man says, ‘Now, the only work she will do is sowing.’

That one replies, ‘Hah! Good.’

The young man leaves and goes home. When he leaves and goes home, he says, ‘I am loved by a certain girl.’

Those at home, they left for the girl’s home and proposed marriage. When they asked, those other ones agreed.

One day they say to that young man, ‘Come and take this girl.’

That young man leaves. He goes and takes this girl. He arrives there. He asks for this girl, he asks for this girl.

So, the mother gives him this girl.

She says, ‘Remember those things I told you about. This girl does not cook, does not pound. Her only work is sowing.’

That young man says, ‘OK, her work will be sowing.’

So, they are leaving, the young man and girl are leaving. They are walking, they are walking, they are walking, they are walking! This young man is walking ahead of her.

They arrive at a certain place.

This girl starts to sing, she starts to sing,

Salungano! Salungano!

Zwino, huri kale-kale. Ho vhu hu na muṅwe mukegulu. O vha e na vhana vhawe vhavhili fhedzi. Muṅwe o vha e mutukana, muṅwe o vha e musidzana.

Zwino, musidzana a aluwa, a aluwa. Zwino, a tamiwa nga muṅwe muṱhannga. Houḽa muṱhannga a ri, ‘Nne ndi khou nyaga u mala houḽa musidzana.’

Havhaḽani mukegulu vha ri vha tshi amba. Vha ri, ‘Hoyu musidzana, ane a mu tama. Hoyu musidzana ha biki, ha sinḓi. U tou shuma u runga fhedzi, hoyu musidzana.’

Houḽani muṱhannga a ri, ‘Nazwino, u ḓo shuma u tou runga fhedzi.’

Vhaḽa vha ri, ‘Ha! Ndi zwavhuḓi.’

Muṱhannga a ṱuwa a ya hayani. Musi o ṱuwa o ya hayani, a ri, ‘Ndo funiwa nga muṅwe musidzana.’

Havhaḽani vha hayani, vha ḓa vha humbela. Hari musi vho humbela, musi vho tendeliwa.

Ha swika ḓuvha, vha ri kha houḽa muṱhannga, ‘Kha ye a yo dzhia houḽani musidzana.’

Houḽani muṱhannga a ṱuwa. A ya u dzhia houḽani musidzana. A swika hangei. A sela houḽani musidzana, a sela houḽani musidzana.

Hai, vha mu fha houḽani musidzana. Vha ri, ‘Zwezwo zwe nda ni vhudza zwone: Hoyo musidzana ha biki, ha sinḓisiwi. U tou shuma u tou runga fhedzi.’

Houḽa muṱhannga a ri, ‘Ndi zwone. U ḓo shuma u tou runga fhedzi.’

Hai, vha ṱakuwa, vha ṱuwa na muṱhannga na musidzana. Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila! Houḽa muṱhannga u phanḓa.

Vha tshi swika phanḓa. Houḽani musidzana a thoma u imba luimbo, a thoma u imba luimbo,

(Narrator)
You, young man, it is Devhula here, asking for snuff!
You must give me snuff.
(Chorus)
Devhula! Asking for snuff!

This boy starts to take a pouch from his pocket. He takes a pinch of snuff, he gives it to the girl. The girl starts to sniff.

The young man starts to walk. He thinks the girl is behind him.

Further along the way he looks around. He finds that he cannot see the girl. The young man carries on home.

When he arrives home, those at home ask him, they ask, 'Where is the girl?'

He answers, 'The girl, when she arrived there at a certain place, we were near the river. She sang a song. She said, "Give me snuff, I want to sniff it." I took a pinch. I gave it to her. When I started to look behind me, I found that the girl could not be seen.'

So! Those at home say, 'OK, now, you must go, you will go with uncle. You must go to fetch that girl.'

And truly, he leaves with the uncle. They arrive there at the in-laws.

They say, 'We came to take our wife.'

Those people say, 'Hah! Your wife is here. Start on the footpath with your girl.'

They walk, they walk. They arrive near a mountain.

That girl sings, 'You, young man …'

That young man is so quiet!

They are walking, they are walking they are crossing the mountain.

When he starts to arrive at the field, he now starts to be near to the houses.

The girl, now, she sees that, now, she has arrived at the house.

She starts to sing, 'You, young man …'

(Musimi)
Inwi muṱhannga, ndi fhano Devhula! Dende khaya ndili!
Ndi-di ntovhola nda-da.
(Vhabvumeli)
Devhula! Dende khaya!

Houḽani mutukana a mbo ḓi thoma u bvisa khambana tshikwamani. A tota fola, a fha musidzana. Musidzana a thoma u daha.

Muṱhannga a thoma u tshimbila. U khou ḓi ri musidzana u murahu.

A tshi swika hafhaḽani, a tshi thoma u lavhelesa murahu. U wana uri musidzana ha tsha mu vhona. Muṱhannga a isa phanḓa na u ṱuwa hayani.

A tshi swika hayani, vha hayani vha mu vhudzisa. Vha ri, 'Musidzana u gai?'

A ri, 'Musidzana: Nṋe, o ri a tshi swika hangei phanḓa riṋe ro novha tsini na mulambo. A imba luimbo. A ri, "Ndi mufhe fola, a dahe." Nṋe nda tota fola nda mu fha. A daha. Musi ndi tshi thoma u lavhelesa murahu, nda wana musidzana ndi si tsha mu vhona.'

Hai! Vha hayani vha ri, 'Hai, zwino, ni tshi ṱuwa, ni ḓo ṱuwa na khotsimunene. Ni ye uyo dzhia musidzana houḽa.'

Na nga ngoho, vha ṱuwa na khotsimunene. Vha tshi swika hangei ha vho makhulu.

Vha ri, 'Riṋe ro ḓa u dzhia musadzi washu.'

Vhaḽa vha ri, 'Haa! Musadzi wanu ndi honoyu. Vha thoma u dzhena ndilani na musidzana wavho.'

Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila. Vha ri vha tshi swika tsini na thavha.

Houḽa musidzana a thoma, 'Inwi muṱhannga …'

Houḽa muṱhannga a soko tshete!

Vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila, vha godima thavha. A tshi thoma u swika mudavhini, a thoma, zwino, midi i tou vho nga sa hafhaḽa.

Musidzana, zwino, o vho tou zwi vhona uri, zwino, ndi hone ndi tshi

That young man is so quiet!

The uncle says, ‘Let us keep quiet.’

Ah! The girl, now, she starts to sing while crying, ‘You, young man …’

Those ones say, ‘We must keep quiet.’

Those people are keeping quiet.

They arrive at the field. They end up arriving at the house.

When they arrive there at the house, no, they give her sowing. The girl starts to sow. She is sowing, she is sowing.

A very old woman arrives, the cousin of their cousin.

She says, ‘Hey, what do we call this woman? One who came here into the house? The woman who does not cook, pound or grind? No! I, the woman who came into the house, I want to eat porridge. I want her to pound! No sweeping?[i] I, the woman who came into the house, I want her to sweep, to smear the floor. Now, I hear the woman does not smear, cook, pound, grind. What does the woman then do? No! Give her pots tomorrow! She will cook porridge!’

So! When it becomes morning, they show her the pots. They give her flour. They give her stirrers and spoons. The girl starts to cook. She cooks, she cooks for those people, people, there where they eat.

The cousin of that very old woman says, ‘Now, not like that.’

Now, those things, they say, ‘Now, she does not pound. Hey! Did she not do that? Now, not like that. Did she not cook? When will we eat?’[ii]

They are coming back from the fields the following day. She is pounding! They make her pound, this woman.

So, it is sunrise, and she is coming from the fields. She goes into the grinding hut. Grinding huts were built long ago. There were mortars inside. There was grinding inside. There were mortars, there were fhedza ndo swika muḓini.

A thoma u imba, ‘Inwi muṱhannga …’ Houḽa muṱhannga a soko hwii!

Vho-khotsimunene vha ri, ‘A ri fhumule.’

Aa! Musidzana, zwino, a vha a tshi thoma tshililo zwino, ‘Inwi muṱhannga …’

Havhaḽa vha ri, ‘Ri fhumule.’ Havhaḽa vhathu vha fhumula.

Vha fhedza vho swika mudavhini. Vha fhedza vha tshi khou swika muḓini.

Vha tshi swika muḓini hafhalani, hai, vha mu fha zwa u runga. Musidzana a thoma u runga. A tshi runga, a tshi runga.

Ha takuwa mukegulu muhulwane, mazwale wa mazwale wawe.

Vha ri, ‘Huno-ha, hu pfi u ḓo pfi ndi musadzi de? O ḓaho hafha muḓini. Musadzi o no pfi ha biki, ha sinḓi, ha kuyi. Hai! Nne, musadzi o ḓa muḓini: ndi toḓa uḽa vhuswa. Ndi toḓa u sinḓeliwa. Ha swieli? Nne, musadzi o ḓa muḓini, ndi nyaga a tshi ri swielela, a tshi ri shulela. Zwino, musadzi o no pfi ha shuli, ha swieli, ha biki, ha sinḓi, ha kuyi. Ndi musadzi wa u itani? Hai! Matshelo kha fhiwe bodo! A bike vhuswa!’

Hai! Li tshi yo tsha fhala vha mu sumbedza dzibodo. Vha mu fha vhukhopfu. Vha mu fha na dziphe ṱo na dzimpfo. Musidzana a thoma u bika. A bika, a bika afha vhathu vhaḽa, vhathu, hevhaḽa hone fhaḽa.

Mazwale vhaḽa mukegulu muhulwane vha ri, ‘Zwino, a si zwezwi.’

Zwino, izwi zwi no pfi, ‘Zwino pfi ha sinḓi. Hei! Ha iti hani? Zwino, a si zwezwi. Ha ngo bika? A ro ngo ḽa?’

Matshelo u bva mavheleni. U ya sinḓa, u ya sinḓiswa hoyu musidzana!

Hai, ndi fhaḽani li tshi tsha, a tshi bva mavheleni. A dzheniswa gohani. Gohani madzhadzha a kale o vha a tshi fhaṱiwa. Hu tshi dzula mituli nga ngomu. Maguyo a u kuya nga ngomu. Hu na mituli, hu na misi, yo u sinḓa.

Vha mu fha mavhele. Vha ri, ‘Mavhele kheyo.’ Musidzana a thoma u shela mavhele mutulini. Musidzana a thoma u sinḓa, u khou sinḓa, u khou sinḓa, u khou sinḓa! Vha ḓa vha ṱolela.

[i] Said in disgust.

[ii] Lit. ‘did we not eat?’

pestles, there was pounding.

They give her maize. They say, ‘Here is the maize.’

The girl starts to tip the maize into the mortar. The girl starts to pound, pound, pound, pound! They come there and look.

They ask, ‘Is it not like this? Now, is she not pounding?’

They leave and go to sit down over there.

They hear the sound of pounding in the mortar stopping.

They ask, ‘Why is she not pounding? What is she doing?’ Perhaps we should look.’

They find the girl sinking into the ground. She is going down! She is down to her waist!

They start to say, ‘Hell! Bring back the poor child! We must forget that she does not sweep, smear the floor, cook, pound, that she does anything, grinding. No!’

The uncle starts to run, he starts to run! He ran to those over there, to the in-laws. It was as far as Muswodi from here!

He starts to arrive and says, ‘Hey! Back home, your child, we left her going down there. Now, as we speak she is down to her waist.’

Those ones say, ‘Did we not tell you that this girl your son wants does not sweep, smear, cook, pound? You said she would sow only. Now, this means you made her pound.’

Hey! Those ones admitted, ‘We did that.’

Those ones start to rush away, the uncle and his mother.

They arrive and find that she is down to her neck now. She is going down, going down! That is when the mother arrives and kneels next to her daughter.

She starts to sing,

Vha ri, ‘A si zwezwi? Zwino, ha khou sinḓa?’

Vha ṱuwa vha ya u ḓi dzulela hangei.

Vha tshi thoma u pfa mutuli u sa tsha pfala u sinḓa.

Vha ri, ‘A sa tsha sinḓa? U khou tou ita hani?’ Vha ri, ‘Musi vha tshi ḓo ṱolela.’

Vha wana musidzana u khou tsa fhasi, u khou tsa fhasi. O no guma nga khunḓu. Vho ri vha tshi thoma uri ‘Maḽo! Vhuisani ṅwana wa vhathu! Ro zwi hangwa, ndi zwone zwo u pfi ha swielisiwi, ha shuli, ha biki, ha sinḓi, ha iti tshiṅwe tshithu, ha kuyi. Hai!’

Vha thoma u gidima khotsimunene. Vha thoma u gidima. Vha gidima vha ya hangei-ni. Ho vhu hu tshi to nga sa Muswodi hangei!

Vha tshi thoma u swika vha tshi amba uri, ‘Hei! Hangei-ni, ṅwana wa vheiwe, riṋe ro sia a tshi khou dzhena fhasi. Nazwino, ri tshi khou amba u khou guma nga khundu.’

Vhaḽa vhari, ‘A ro ngo ni vhudza naa? Zwa uri hoyu musidzana ane a mu ṱoḓa ha swielisiwi, ha shulisiwi, ha bikisiwi, ha sinḓisiwi! Vheiwe na ri nazwino, u ḓo shuma u runga fhedzi. Zwino, zwi amba zwa uri no mu sinḓisa.’

Hei! Vha ri, ‘Ro sokou ita.’

Havhaḽa vha hawe vha vha vha tshi thoma u gidima, khotsimunene na mme awe. Vha tshi swika vha wana uri o no tou guma nga mukulo zwino. U khou tsa fhasi, u khou tsa fhasi! Ndi hezwi mme awe vha tshi swika vha tshi gwadama.

Vha tshi thoma u rerela u imbelela,

Singa-Luvhale (continued)

(Narrator)
Did not listen, Singa-Luvhale.[i]
Singa-Luvhale must come up.
(Chorus)
She was bitten by ants.

She started to rise to the top now, she started to rise to the top.

As she rose to the top, her mother carried on singing, 'Did not listen, Singa-Luvhale …'

This is when the girl comes out, she comes out completely.

Her mother starts to speak.

She says, 'We told you about this girl: No house work! Sowing only! Now, this means we are leaving with her. She will not remain here, because her head will be bitten by ants because you did not listen to what I told you.'

They leave with her. They arrive home. They wash her, they smear her with fat.[ii]

They take her to the chief. They arrive and tell the chief.

They say, 'This child: We have returned with her. Those people made her pound. We found her going down. And we have come back with her. She no longer will return.'

This is when the marriage died.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 24 September 2013

(Musimi)
U sa pfa, Singa-Luvhale.
Vhuyani Singa-Luvhale.
(Vhabvumeli)
O ḽiwa nga mutshenzhe.

A vho ri u khou thoma u takutshela ntha zwino. U khou thoma u takutshela ntha. A tshi takutshela ntha, mme awe vha sokou isa phanda na u imba, 'U sa pfa, Singa-Luvhale ...'

Ndi hezwi a tshi bva. A tshi mbo di bva tshothe.

Mme awe vha thoma u amba. U ri, 'Ro vha ro ni vhudza uri hoyu musidzana: Ha shumisiwi! U shuma u runga fhedzi! Zwino, zwi khou amba zwa uri nahasi ri ya ṱuwa naye. A nga si tsha sala fhano ngauri thoho yawe i do vha ya ḽiwa nga mutshenzhe ngauri a no nga pfa zwe nda ni vhudza zwone.'

Vha mbo di ṱuwa naye. Vha swika hayani. Vha mu ṱambisa, vha mu dodza mapfura. Vha mu isa musanda. Vha swika vha amba musanda.

Vha ri, 'Houḽani ṅwana: Ro vhuya naye. Havhaḽani vhathu vho mu sindisa. Ro wana a tshi khou dzhena fhasi. Nazwino ro vhuya nae. Ha tsha dovha a vhuelela.'

Hovhuḽa vhuhadzi ho fa.

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[i] Lit. 'I will not forget you.'
[ii] I.e. to care for.

This story portrays various events leading to divorce ('She was bitten by ants'). It is well-known in the *ngano* repertoire and regional narrative cultures.[i]

Blacking[834] remarks that, 'in their preparation for marriage, Venda girls must learn how they can assist the tribal economy by working for their family economies (…) and how they can help to maintain a stable labour force by marrying and producing more workers.' He also notes that 'marriage and subsequent child-birth are legitimised by the exchange of gifts between contracting families, and in particular by the payment of *thakha* (bride-price) to the girl's family.'[835]

That these practices are sanctioned by ancestral authority is evident in the young wife's disappearance underground (in other stories, underwater), which is the abode of ancestral spirits.[ii] Family conflict is resolved by the ritual appeasing of offended spirits. In Sotho and Xhosa versions of the story, this involves divination and animal sacrifice.[836] In Ramano's story, the young wife's mother intercedes and addresses the family's ancestral spirits by singing, which is a conventional mode of spiritual communication.

Such ritual may not resolve conflict, and while divorce is avoided, a marriage may be dissolved.[837] Some *ngano* show transgressors suffering the confiscation of live-stock and other property.

The story situates power in the older female in-law ('A very old woman arrives […] I want her to sweep'), and occasionally also the young husband.[838] The latter does not feature as such in Ramano's story since, as she explained, he leaves for work immediately after taking his bride home.

The responsibility of the wife as provider is explained in detail in customary law[839] as well as initiation songs.[iii] Therefore, the image of pounding as 'forbidden' activity is arguably invoked strategically to affirm female role allocation. This is supported by the humorous if sarcastic view of the young woman's trials and tribulations.

There is conventional suspicion that a newly-married wife may hide laziness behind claims of physical weakness or illness. Her behaviour is therefore monitored, and any shortcomings are mocked. Stories usually indicate that the labour of women in her family only involve 'light' activities like sowing and stringing beads. They are used to sleeping late, and feign faintness when required to pound.[iv] This is met with sardonic response by their in-laws, as narrator Miriam Vhengani[840] describes in her version of the story:

> '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.' Now, the girl took the stamper and started to pound that maize (…) She started to cry, man. She cried and cried and cried!

Ramano's rendition of the story introduces a novel image, namely that of taking 'snuff.' This is a common metaphor for sex. The young wife can not restrain her sexual desire, and she accosts her husband while they are walking to his home. She is aware of her impropriety, and runs away in shame. However, after she is fetched once more, she again demands sex, even though her husband's uncle is present. The men's silence expresses their surprise and disapproval. Her response is to start crying, just like the young woman in Vhengani's story: She has not yet learnt to control her desires and emotions.

Sexuality is commonly portrayed in *ngano*. Given the function of these stories as moral templates, its alignment with the 'heat-complex' (see the previous story) is not surprising. Male desire is consequently portrayed in descriptions of adulterous and incestuous relationships, violent conflict between suitors, as well as the antics of the *tshilombe* musician and other lecherous male 'monsters' that desire young girls.[v] Female libido is also described in stories involving adulterous relationships, as well as those that

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[i] See 'We do not pound' (2.17.1) and 'The young wife who was forbidden to pound maize' (Kruger, 2004), 'To be human again' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), 'The princess who slept late' (Kruger, 2014), 'A girl is made to work in the daytime' (Scheub, 1975) and 'Seilatsatsi' (Postma, 1950).

[ii] See 'The girls and the frog' (2.2.1) and 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1).

[iii] *Vhusha* initiation songs remind a girl 'that when she first marries she is expected to work hard at her husband's home. A young wife may have only a little sleep, and then she must get up and pound maize (…] She must not allow her husband's mother to cook for her: it is her duty to cook for the old lady.' (Blacking (1969:23-24.)

[iv] See 'We do not pound' (2.17.1).

[v] 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4), 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3), 'The girls in the baobab' (Kruger 2014), 'Father on the footpath' (Kruger, 2014), 'Eating with wild animals' (Kruger, 2014), 'Foolish girls' (Kruger 2014), 'The lourie who was not a bird' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'The lion who hunted his daughter' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

depict the emerging sexuality of young, unmarried women.[i]

The structure of certain *ngano* emulates 'the movement of narrative discourse which specifies and even produces the masculine position as that of mythical subject, and the feminine position as mythical obstacle or, simply, the space in which that movement occurs.' Put differently, the woman is the conventional object of the male hero's quest, particularly in patriarchal spaces.[841]

This is evident in two *ngano* by young Zachary Tshamano, one of which is included in this collection ('The young man and the snake'; 2.15.1).[ii] Even *ngano* 'quest stories' featuring interdependent brothers and sisters portray the hero as male.[iii] As such the narrative role of young women tends to be passive rather than heroic.[842] This is also evident in the expression 'a man marries while a woman becomes married.'[iv]

This does not mean that women in *ngano* are somehow reduced to otherness, or that they do not express and invoke desire.[843] Although patriarchy imposes constraints on women, 'they in fact act out roles of power and independence within certain contexts. The forms of situational identity selected by them and other subordinates usually affirm social distance and status.'[844] While a woman's physical beauty may objectify her, it may also enable her to manipulate male desire, and thus exercise power and negotiate strategic advantages.[v]

A story about adultery thus involves 'a girl, a beautiful girl. Young men passed by and saw her. Hah! They all fell in love because she was so beautiful. They asked her to marry them but she always turned them down.'[vi] In another story, a baboon 'became a beautiful girl and entered the royal homestead. "Wow!" the king said, "what a woman!" He bought her a decorated dress and other things to wear. She was beautiful and worked for him.'[vii]

Expert narrator Nyamukamadi Ndou[viii] in turn offers an evocative portrayal of the seduction by an adulterous woman of a powerful man, and the torrid physical affair she conducts with him:

Truly, that woman roamed. She roamed and then met a lion.
The lion asked, 'Where are you going, princess?'
'I am looking for a lover, man!'
'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.'
She cried out, 'Oh, my man! Let us kiss! Yuwi-yuwi-yuwi! 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!

She simultaneously takes Mr. Porcupine as lover, and therefore causes the two rivals to engage in a vicious fight:

Mr. Porcupine scratched Mr. Lion on his paws and released his quills!
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 lion 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.

[i] 'The python lover' (2.2.4), 'The man who scratched a lion' (2.21.1), 'The bull-husband' (2.22.1), 'Eating with wild animals' and 'The woman at the fountain' (Kruger, 2014), and 'Crow-woman,' 'The young woman and the zebra' and 'Things are falling apart' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[ii] Also see 'Olosi lives happily ever after' (3.1.4).

[iii] 'Mutshavhona' (2.13.2), 'We do not pound' (2.17.1), 'The magic tree' (2.14.1), 'The king and the musician' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Fortune lies ahead' (Kruger, 2014).

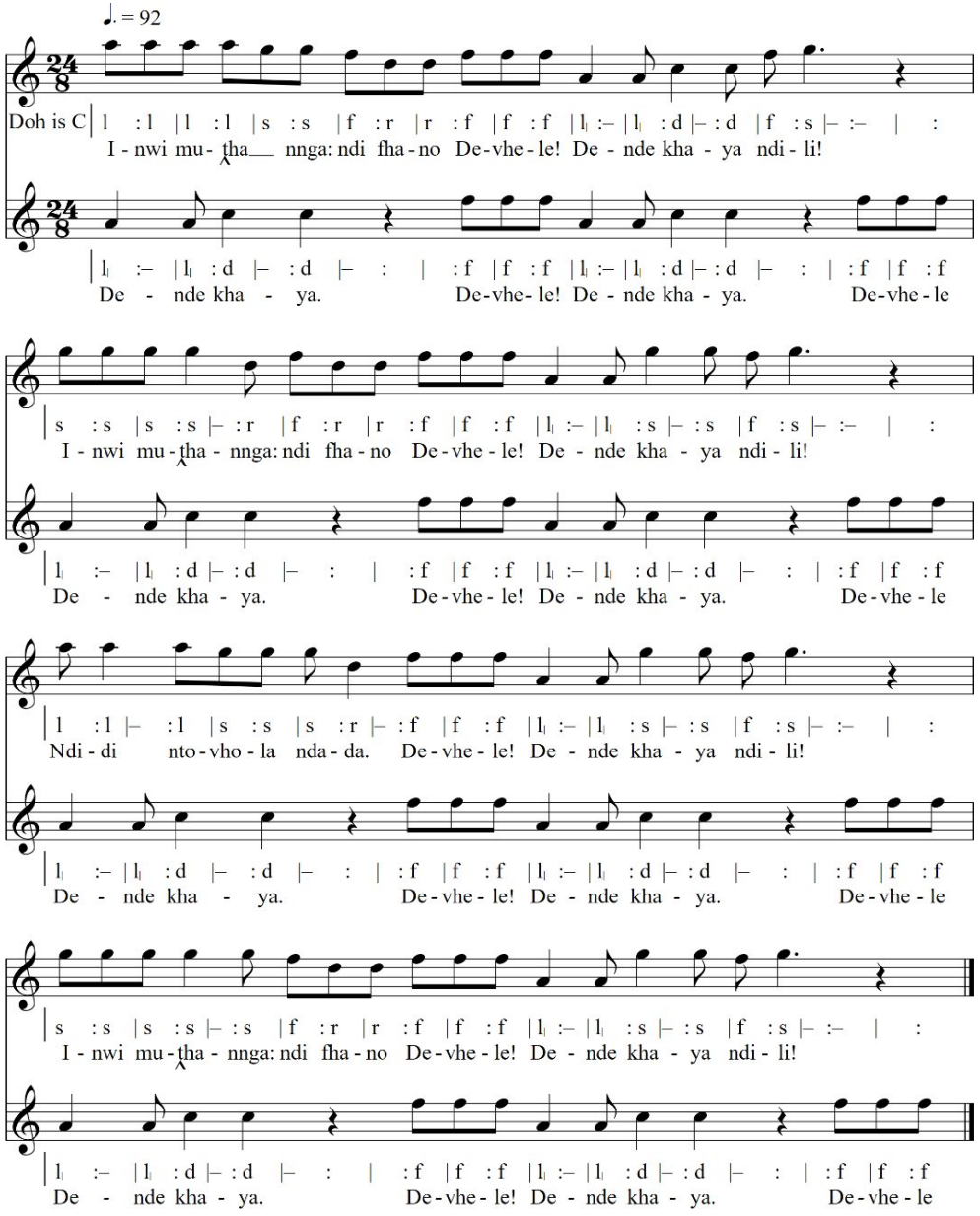
[iv] '*Hu maliwa musadzi, munna ha maliwi.*'

[v] See 'The girls in the baobab' (Kruger, 2014).

[vi] 'Crow-woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[vii] 'What a woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[viii] 'Eating with wild animals' (Kruger, 2014).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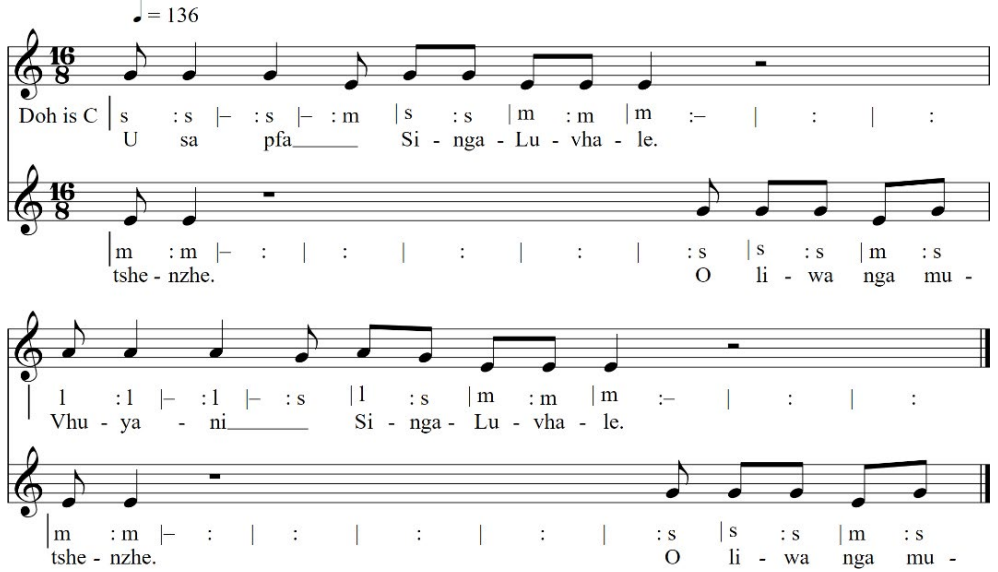
I - nwi mu - tha nnga: ndi fha - no De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya ndi - li!
De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le
I - nwi mu - tha - nnga: ndi fha - no De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya ndi - li!
De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le
Ndi - di nto - vho - la nda - da. De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya ndi - li!
De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le
I - nwi mu - tha - nnga: ndi fha - no De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya ndi - li!
De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le! De - nde kha - ya. De - vhe - le


♩ = 136
Doh is C
U sa pfa Si - nga - Lu - vha - le.
tshe - nzhe. O li - wa nga mu -
Vhu - ya - ni Si - nga - Lu - vha - le.
tshe - nzhe. O li - wa nga mu -

2.19 Tshamano Mashavha

My name is Tshamano Lina Masvhavha. I am from a family of storytellers. You know my mother Mashau Tseisi (2.4) and my elder sister Mpho Mashavha (2.20), who also live here at Muswodi-Tshisimani.

I was born in 1981 at Folovhodwe clinic. Those nurses look well after their patients. If no trouble is expected, they handle births. When there is an emergency or a serious case, an ambulance is sent from Donald Fraser hospital.

We children all liked the same things: *Ndode* stone games, *khadi* rope-skipping and building *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3) which we made under a large tree in our neighbourhood. Here we cooked, smeared the floor and played as if we were married with children.

My favourite food as a child was porridge made from *mbuyu*, the fruit of the baobab tree. I also liked vegetables. Mayonnaise is a special treat for me, but who can afford it?

Mbuyu nowadays usually are only eaten by children and those who are very poor. I still like vegetables, especially *delele* okra which I eat with porridge. We do not often eat meat because it is so expensive.

I miss my youth. It was so carefree. When you become an adult, you have many worries and responsibilities. When I am really struggling, I ask my mother to help me.

The worst feeling in life is *vhuleme*, the weight in your heart when there is no money for food. What I desire is *vhuḓifho*, the sweet pleasure of being able to afford what I really need.

The problem is that I had to leave school in grade ten. This was in 1999, when I was eighteen. Our family did not have enough money for transport and books.

My favourite subjects were maths, accounting and English, but I did not like biology.

After leaving school, I went to work as a security guard for a trader in Musina. He paid me four hundred rand a month. I was not happy with my wage. I left and attended a course in security in Thohoyandou for three weeks. Mr. Gopana was our instructor. He taught us security work and how to catch criminals.

After receiving my certificate, I went to work for Gauteng Security in Honeydew. This was from 2004 to 2007. My pay was much better because they gave me R3500 per month. I used R250 of this amount to pay rent for my room.

Female security guards only worked during the day. We looked after places like the town hall. Most of those who worked with me became my friends. The biggest problem in our job was not catching criminals, but staying awake. If you fell asleep when on duty, you were in big trouble!

My husband works in Johannesburg for people who build stages for concerts and other events. I knew him from Muswodi-Tshisimani, but it was only when we met again in town that we decided to get married. I see him only once a month. This is a problem for both of us, but at least he has a job and supports his family at home. This means he is not building a home with another woman in town.

I have four children. The youngest was born in in 2010. My three elder children all attend Muswodi Primary School.

I am a member of the Revelation Apostolic Church, there at my mother's house (fig. 3). I like going to church because I have good experiences there. I like singing hymns.

2.19.1 The baby-sitter / Muleli wa ṅwana

Here comes a story!

There was a certain woman. This woman had her fields.

One day she left for the fields, carrying her child on her back.

When she arrived there at the fields, she arrived and weeded. While she weeded, her child started crying.

That woman, it then happened that Mrs. Duiker pitied her. She saw she was struggling with that child.

Mrs. Duiker started to come there. She said, 'My mother, the child … Let me look after your child.'

That woman started to take that child, she started to give it to Mrs. Duiker. When she went to give the child to Mrs. Duiker, Mrs. Duiker started to leave with the child.

When she wanted to leave with the child in the evening, Mrs. Duiker started to return the child. When she returned the child, that woman started to leave with her child.

That woman woke up the next morning and made soft porridge for her child.

She remembered to go and give that child to Mrs. Duiker.

When she arrived, that woman had her own song she always sang.

She sang to Mrs. Duiker, she sang,

(Narrator sings)
Alas, you Mrs. Duiker.
Come and take your child.
(Chorus)
Kulenge-kulenge, ḓangali-kulenge-kulenge.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu vhaṅwe mufumakadzi. Havho mufumakadzi vho vha vhe na masimu avho.

Vha swikela hune vhone vha ṱuwa vha ya masimuni vho ḓi bebela ṅwana wavho.

Vha tshi swika hangei masimuni, vha swika vha vha vha tshi khou ḓi ṱahulela.

Vha tshi khou ṱhahula, ṅwana wavho a tshi khou lila.
Havhaḽa mufumakadzi, vha swikelela hune Vho-Ntsa vha vha pfela vhuṱungu. Vha vhona uri vha khou tambula na ṅwana uḽa.

Vho-Ntsa vha mbo ḓi ḓa. Vha ri, 'Mme anga, ṅwana … A vha rindi vha lelele ṅwana wavho.'

Havhaḽa mufumakadzi vha mbo ḓi dzhia houḽa ṅwana. Vha mbo ḓi fha Vho-Ntsa. Vha tshi ya u yo fha Vho-Ntsa-ii, Vho-Ntsa vha mbo ḓi ṱuwa na ṅwana.

Vha tshi ya u ṱuwa na ṅwana nga madekwana, Vho-Ntsa vha mbo ḓi vhuisa ṅwana. Vha tshi ya u vhuisa ṅwana, vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha mbo ḓi ṱuwa na ṅwana wavho.

Nga matshelo ha hone vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ya vuwa vha itela ṅwana wavho mukapu.

Vha humbula uri vha ṱuwe vha ye u fha Vho-Ntsa ṅwana uḽa.

Vha tshi ya u swika vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha vha vha na luimbo lwavho lune vha imbelela.

Vha tshi imbelela Vho-Ntsa, vha ri,

(Musimi)
Iwe Ntsa, wee!
Ḓa u dzhie ṅwana wau.
(Vhabvumeli)
Kulende-kulende, ḓangali-kulende-kulende.

The baby-sitter / Muleli wa ṅwana (continued)

That Mrs. Duiker came and took that child. When she took that child, that woman weeded, weeded.

When she weeded, weeded until the evening, she sang that song, she sang,

(Narrator sings)
Alas, you Mrs. Duiker.
Bring my child, I am leaving!
(Chorus)
Kulenge-kulenge, ḓangali-kulenge-kulenge.

Vhaḽa Vho-Ntsa vha ḓa vha dzhia uḽa ṅwana. Vha tshi ya u dzhia ṅwana uḽa, vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ṱahula, vha ṱahula.

Vha tshi ya u ṱahula-ṱahula nga madekwana, vha imbelela luḽa luimbo, vha ri,

(Musimi)
Iwe Ntsa, wee!
Vhuisa ṅwana wanga, ndi ṱuwe!
(Vhabvumeli)
Kulenge-kulenge, ḓangali-kulenge-kulenge.

Vhaḽa Vho-Ntsa vha vhuya na uḽa ṅwana. Vha ṱuwa vha fha vhaḽa mufumakadzi.

Vha tshi ya u fha vhaḽa mufumakadzi, vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ḓi ṱuwela vho takala. Vho wana muleli wa ṅwana! Vha ṱuwa vha vhudza vhathu. Vha swika, vha ri, ‘Hai, ndo wana muleli wa ṅwana.’

Vho-Ntsa vha ya ṱuwa vha yo tangana na Vho-Muzhou. Vha tshi ya u swika hangei vha vhudza vhaḽa.

Vha ri, ‘ Hai, uḽa ṅwana ri ita mini ngae?’

Vhaḽa vha ri, ‘Hai, ṅwana hoyu, matshelo ri tou mu ḽa!’

Vhaḽa Vho-Ntsa ndi hezwi vha tshi ṱuwa. Vha tshi yo swika vha tshi ya u langana na vhaḽa mufumakadzi.

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ḓi vuwela vha vha vha tshi khou ya tsimuni.

Vha tshi swika vhaḽa mufumakadzi, vhaḽa Vho-Ntsa vha ya gidima vha ya vha dzhia uḽa ṅwana.

Vha tshi ya u dzhia uḽa ṅwana, vha ṱahula, vha ṱahula.

Vha tshi ya u ṱahula vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha dovha vha imbelela, vha ri, ‘Iwe Ntsa, wee! Vhuisa ṅwana wanga, ndi ṱuwe!...’

Vhaḽa vha ri vha tshi ya u fhinḓula, vha mbo ḓi ri,

The baby-sitter / Muleli wa ṅwana (continued)

That Mrs. Duiker returned with that child. She left and gave the child to that woman.

When she left and gave the child to that woman, that woman left happily. She had found a baby-sitter! She left and told people. She arrived home and said, ‘Hey, I found a baby-sitter.’

Mrs. Duiker left and met Mrs. Elephant. When she went and arrived there, she told that one.

She said, ‘Hey, what do we do with this child?’

That one answered, ‘Hey, this child, tomorrow we eat her!’

That was when Mrs. Duiker left. She was on her way to meet that woman.

That woman, when she woke up the next morning, she went on her way to the field.

As she was arriving, that woman, Mrs. Duiker rushed up to her and took that child.

After she took that child, the woman weeded and weeded.

(Musimi)
Ṅwana wavho ro mu ḽa!
(Vhabvumeli)
Kulenge-kulenge, ḓangali-kulenge-kulenge.

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha vha vha songo pfesesa zwavhuḓi u ri vhaḽa vhathu zwine vha khou amba zwone vha khou zwi ambisa hani.

Vha ri, ‘Hai, nṋe zwi amba uri, hai, nṋe ndi dovholole ndi imbelele.’

Vha ri, ‘Iwe Ntsa, wee! Vhuisa ṅwana wanga, ndi ṱuwe!...’

Vhaḽa vha mbo ḓi ri vha tshi ya u fhindula hafho, vha ri, ‘Ṅwana wavho ro mu ḽa!..’

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi, vha amba zwino, vha thoma u imbelela zwino, vha tshi vho thoma u nyaga u lila.

Zwino, vha tshi ri vha ya u lila, vhaḽa vha ri, ‘Zwino, ro tou dzhia uḽa ṅwana. Zwino, ri ya imbelela ro mu takulela nṱha ri tshi ya u mu ṱongisela vhone!’

Vhaḽa vhathu vha thoma u takula uḽa ṅwana! Vha ya vha mu fara vha tshi mu takula, vha tshi rali, vha tshi rali!

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ri, ‘I rini ndi ye ndi yo imbelela ndi tshi ya u yo sedza fhaḽa he vha vha vha tshi dzula hone.’

Vha tshi ya u yo swika, vha wana vhaḽa Vho-Ntsa na Vho-Muzhou vha vho imbelela vha tshi vho shavha! Vha mu takulela uḽa ṅwana nṱha.

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ya thoma u imbelela, ‘Iwe Ntsa, wee! Vhuisa ṅwana wanga, ndi ṱuwe!...’

Vhaḽa Vho-Ntsa vha ri, ‘Ṅwana wavho ri khou ya u mu ḽa!’

Vha mu fara vho mutakulela nṱha vha tshi vha ṱongisela ene.

Havhaḽa mufumakadzi ndi hezwi vha tshi ṱuwa vha tshi ya hayani.

Vha tshi ṱuwa vha tshi ya hayani. Vha ṱuwa vha vhudza vhathu.

Vhaḽa vhathu vha ya vha vhudzisa uri, ‘Uḽa ṅwana wavho u gai?’

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ṱalutshedza vhathu.

Vha ri, ‘Hai, nṋe, ṅwana … vhaḽa muthu vhe nda vha ndi tshi vha

When she was weeding, that woman again sang, ‘Alas, you Mrs. Duiker. Bring my child, I am leaving! …’

Those ones, when they answered, they said,

(Narrator chants slower and plaintively)
We ate your child!
(Chorus chants slower and plaintively)
Kulenge-kulenge, ḓangali-kulenge-kulenge.

That woman did not really understand what those people were saying, and the way they were speaking.

She said, ‘No, this means, no, that I must repeat my singing.’

She sang, ‘Alas, you Duiker! Bring my child, I am leaving! ...’

Those ones started to answer there and sang, ‘We ate your child! ...’

That woman, when she spoke, now, she started to sing, now, she wanted to start crying.

Now, when she was about to cry, those ones said, ‘Now, we just took that child. Now, we are singing while carrying the baby on our backs and mocking you!’

Those people started to lift that child! They grabbed and lifted her, like this, like this …

That woman said, ‘Let me sing while I go to look there where we used to be in the veld.’

When she was about to arrive, she found those ones!

fha ṅwana …’

Vha ri, ‘Ṅwana wanga vho mu ḽa.’

Vha ya vuwa nga matshelo.

Vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha ri, ‘Hai, ndi ḓo vuwa nga matshelo nda ṱuwa nda ya u ṱolela.’

Vha tshi ya u vuwa nga matshelo vhaḽa mufumakadzi vha tshi ya u yo swika hangei.

Vha ri, ‘Haa, hu teya uri ndi ye u ṱolela fhaḽa murini, hafhaḽa hune nda ḓivha uri havhaḽa Vho-Ntsa vho vha vha tshi sala na ṅwana wanga hanefhaḽa.’

Vha tshi ya u yo swika fhaḽa murini, vha tshiri vha yo ṱolela, vha swika vha ri, ‘Irani ndi thome ndi dovhe ndi imbelele luḽa luimbo.’

Vha tshi ri,

(Musimi)
Iwe Ntsa, wee!
(Vhabvumeli)
Kulenge-kulenge, ḓangali-kulenge-kulenge.

Vha pfa ṅwau … Vha dovha, ‘Iwe Ntsa, wee!...’

Vha pfa ṅwau …

Havha ha u fa ha lungano.

The baby-sitter / Muleli wa ṅwana (continued)

Mrs. Duiker and Mrs. Elephant were singing as they were running away! They lifted the child on their back.

That woman started to sing, 'Alas, you Duiker! Bring my child, I am leaving! ...'

That Mrs. Duiker sang, 'We are going to eat your child! ...'

When they grabbed the baby, they lifted her up and mocked her mother!

That is when that woman started to leave for home.

When she left, she went home. She left and told people.

Those people asked her, 'Where is your child?'

That woman explained to people. She said, 'No, I, the child … That person I always gave the child to …'

She said, 'They ate my child.'

She woke up in the morning.

That woman said, 'No, I will get up, leave and go to search.'

That woman left and arrived over there.

She said, 'Hey, I have to search there at the tree, over there where I know Mrs. Duiker always remained with my child.'

When she went and arrived at the tree, when she wanted to search, she arrived and said, 'Let me start singing that song again.'

She sang, 'Alas, you Duiker! ...'

There was silence …

She sang again, 'Alas, you Duiker! ...'

There was silence ...

This is the end of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 3 July 2014

This well-known *ngano*[i] is also popular in regional repertoires.[ii] It serves as a stern warning against child neglect, as well as gullibility. Its core image is that of a baby fatally entrusted by her naïve mother to a savage baby-sitter. The mother's trusting nature is already evident in the first performance of the song, in which she tells Duiker to 'Come and take your child,' as if the antelope is the mother. The statement is also a portent of the tragic outcome of events.

As the discussion of the preceding story indicates, marriage, motherhood and children are central to socio-economic organisation. This story accordingly underscores the responsibility of mothers as caretakers by showing that there is 'no mercy for an erring woman, even if her actions are driven by ordinary foolishness. Society does not take kindly to women who overstep the boundaries of their carefully circumscribed roles.'[845] However, this portrayal is not simplistic. 'As so often happens, the woman has many burdens to bear (…) and the woman in this story struggles to combine (childcare) with having to work in her field.'[846]

Kidnapping and murder is an obviously overstated depiction of what may happen to neglected babies. Even so, its portrayal here is mild compared to hyperbolic representations in other versions. Most stories describe the baby being killed (*via*, to cut the throat), cooked and given to the mother to eat. These violent actions are implied in the chorus of the song (kulenge-kulenge!).

The baby-sitter is also described as making a small drum from the skull of the baby, and using it in a macabre dance-song performance. The mother is sometimes chased away by her husband. Some stories even show her being beaten by him, or getting the death penalty.[iii]

In *ngano*, the baby-sitter is either a duiker *(ntsa)* or rock-rabbit *(mbila)*, while a baboon or mongoose performs this role in regional narratives.[iv]

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[i] See Gavhi (1990:1-2), Phophi (1990:31-32), Kruger (2014:225-226, 229-232, 233-234), Krüger (1933/34:7-8), Lestrade (1949:14), Maumela, B. (1990:13-14, 46-47), Schwellnus (1938:37-38) and Stayt (1931:343-344).

[ii] Kriel (1971:40), Makgamatha (1991:183-188), Jacottet (1908:232-238, 276-280), Junod (1927, II:262-264) and Scheepers (2013:65-71).

[iii] 'Mrs. Rock Rabbit' (Kruger, 2014) and 'The child that was carried off by a baboon' (Junod, 1927, II).

[iv] 'The child that was carried off by a baboon' (Junod, 1927, II) and 'Triplets' (Scheepers, 2013).

This role allocation (as with Hare, the arch-trickster) is informed by their furtive behaviour, their habit of raiding crops, and the belief that they spy on people through tall grass or from rocky hill-tops. Narrator Lydia Matshusa of Folovhodwe explained that Duiker has a 'bad heart.' She is a neighbour who has possessions and children, but steals and kidnaps anyway, since this is her way of life.[847]

What sets this performance of the story apart is its evocative portrayal of the mother's troubled thoughts. 'That woman, when she spoke, now, she started to sing, now, she wanted to start crying.' *Lila* and its causative, *lidza*, signify 'wailing' as well as performing a musical instrument.[848] It also refers to singing as a form of heightened emotional expression.

Some published versions of the story contain only a single, pared-down variation of the song performed by the mother, or omit it altogether. In Tshamano's story, by contrast, the musical conversation between the mother and the kidnappers is not only essential to the unfolding of the plot. It also involves musical aesthetics that express contrasting moral positions.

Although chanting is common in *ngano*, its performance by the kidnappers not merely serves to differentiate between their voices and that of the woman. While people and animals often converse in *ngano*, singing and chanting here also contrasts human integrity (if tainted with naivety) with animal cunning. The narrator notes that the 'woman did not really understand what those people (the animals) were saying, and the way they were speaking.' This is not be interpreted literally. It differentiates between those who follow the law and those who do not. Obeying the law is self-evident and non-negotiable, and therefore 'this means, no, that I must repeat my singing.'

Singing not only is a mode of spiritual communication and moral affirmation. As in 'The wife in the baobab' (2.11.2), the voice is at the centre of life. Tshamano leaves the image of the woman's night of terror to the imagination of listeners ('She said, "They ate my child." She woke up in the morning.'), and makes her remark, 'No, I will get up, leave and go to search.' As she searches, she slowly realises that her baby is gone forever. The narrator's voice accordingly decreases notably in intensity and dynamics. She speaks slower and softer to express the woman's growing sense of hopelessness. Finally, there is only silence. The fading and ultimately mute voice becomes a profound metaphor of decline and passing.

Fig. 93. Mother and baby
Ronald Nemathaga, Khubvi, 1989.
Zebrawood, 180 mm. Editor's collection.

2.20 Mpho Mashavha

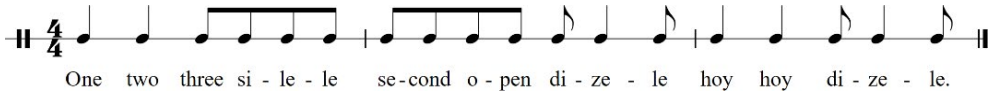
My name is Mpho Caroline Mashavha. I live here at Muswodi-Tshisimani with my family. I was born in 1975. You have heard stories from my mother Mashau Tseisi (2.4) and my sister Tshamano Mashavha (2.19).

I have another sister who is my twin. She is called Livhuwani, which means gratitude. Because my mother was afraid of giving birth to twins, she did not go to the clinic there at Folovhodwe, but to Musina hospital.

We children heard *ngano* from my father's elder sister, Tshinakaho, here at Muswodi. We built *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3). We also played *ndode* stone games, *khadi* rope-skipping and *tseretsere* hop-scotch.

Tseretsere is played in English. First you draw circles in the sand. Some of these circles are then given names like 'boy,' 'girl' and 'school.' Others are named after vegetables, fruit, animals and mountains. Players take turns to call the name of a circle, and to kick an object into it. The person who scores the most hits, is the winner.

One of my favourite rope-skipping chants goes like this: *One, two, three, silele, second, open, dizele, hoy, hoy, dizele! Silele* and *dizele* means to duck when the rope swings over your head.



My father, Piet Mashavha, was a church minister. He was very strict! We had to obey him in all respects. We children were not allowed to wander outside at night. However, he and my mother Mashau loved us and taught us to pray constantly. My father died in 2008.

Because ours was a Christian home, my parents were against initiation schools. Once, when my mother was away from home, my grandmother sent me to *vhusha* and *musevhetho* (3.3). Nowadays *musevhetho* even includes Christian teachings.

I went to Muswodi Primary School and then Ratshibvumo Secondary School. I stopped my schooling in grade eleven because my parents were too poor to afford everything we needed. This was a pity because I liked maths and biology, but not agricultural studies!

My husband works in a Pick-and-Pay butchery in Randburg. He rents a house in Diepsloot. The children and I visit him during school vacations. He only returns home to Muswodi during Easter.

I have five children. Three of them are in Malingwe Primary School, here at Muswodi-Tshisimani.

My youngest was born in 2015. His name is Uhone. We always say, *'Mudzimu u hone'* ('God is with us').[i] He was born in Coronation hospital.

He was a breach baby, and the doctors struggled with him and me. I lost a lot of blood and had to stay in hospital for two weeks. I lost much weight. I know that God is powerful and that he cares for me. Even when I am given poison,[ii] I survive. I go to church to renew my faith in God.

[i] See the song entitled 'No education without God' (box 23).

[ii] Although there are anecdotes about actual poisoning, the concept serves as a

Fig. 94. A meeting at the headman’s homestead
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2009

2.20.1 The woman who ate python eggs / Musadzi we a ḽa makumba a ṱharu

Here comes a story!

There was a certain man and his wife. They had two children.

This woman did not eat the food that was cooked there at home. She only ate[i] the eggs of a python.

She told her husband she wanted him to go to the cave of a python. He had to look for a cave from which to take eggs.

The man left with his child who was a boy.

When they arrived at that cave, the boy remained standing at the opening to see when the beast came out. Should the beast arrive there, he had his song with which to warn his father.

Truly, his father entered the cave. He took the python's eggs!

That snake was coming there! It was arriving there from elsewhere.[ii]

The boy sang the song so that the father could hear.

He sang,

(Narrator)
There it is!
My mother is to blame![iii]
Because she likes eggs!
(Chorus)
The monster will eat my father.

His father started to come out immediately!

He left with his child. They went home.

The next morning the same happened. The child came and stood

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu vhaṅwe munna na mufumakadzi wavho. Vho vha vhe na vhana vhavhili.

Havha vha mufumakadzi vho vha vha sa ḽi zwiḽiwa zwo no bikiwa hafho. Vho vha vha tshi tshi ḽa nga makumba a ṱharu.

Vha vhudza munna wavho uri vha funa u ṱuwa uya mabakoni a ṱharu. Vha ye u ṱoḓa bako uri vha vha dzhiele makumba.

Vha munna vha tshi ṱuwa na ṅwana wavho wa mutukana.

Vha swika vha wana bako heḽo, wa mutukana a sala o ima muṋangoni wa bako uri a vhone ḽivhanḓa ḽi tshi swika. Ḽivhanḓa ḽi tshi swika heḽiani, o vha e na luimbo lwa u vhidza khotsi awe.

Nangoho, khotsi awe vha dzhena nga ngomu bakoni. Vha dzhia makumba a ṱharu!

Ḽivhanḓa ḽa vha ḽi tshi ḓa! Ḽi tshi ri ḽi ya swika ḽi tshe kule nyana.

A imba luimbo uri khotsi vha zwi pfe.

A ri,

(Musimi)
Asi!
Zwo itwa nga mme anga!
Ngo u funesa makumba!
(Vhabvumeli)
Ḽo Ḓangarivha ḽi ya ḽa khotsi wanga!

Khotsi awe vha mbo ḓi bva nga zwezwo!

Vha ṱuwa na ṅwana wavho. Vha ya hayani.

Nga matshelo mushumo ndi honoyo. Ṅwana u swika a ima fhaḽa muṋangoni. Khotsi vha dzhena nga ngomu, vha ntsha makumba.

Ḽi tshi swika ḽivhanḓa!

U khou imba luimbo futhi, 'Asi! …'

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[i] Lit. 'lived from.'
[ii] Lit. 'a bit far.'
[iii] Lit. 'it was done by my mother.' This kind of portent is a typical narrative strategy. It propels the plot and alludes to its tragic outcome.

there at the opening of the cave. The father went inside, he was taking eggs.

The beast arrived! The boy sang his song again, ‘There it is! …’

His father started to come out, carrying the bag with eggs. He came out and ran away with his child!

The python went into its hole.

When they arrived on the third day, they found the eggs were deep down there. The father entered, he entered there.

The child remained standing at the opening of the cave. While he stood there at the opening, that other one was taking eggs.

That beast was arriving!

When he saw it was still far, the boy started to sing, ‘There it is! …’

His father could not hear! He was deep down there!

The child started to cry while singing, ‘There it is! …’

This beast was arriving, he was coming close to that child!

When it arrived, that child ran far away!

The beast went into the hole, it entered the hole there! It wriggled until it found that man inside! It coiled around that man! It started to swallow!

That child left and went home crying.

When he arrived, his mother asked, ‘Where is father?’

He replied, ‘Father remained over there, and the beast went inside! I am sure father has been eaten!’

There was much shouting! They were crying!

This is the death of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 3 July 2014

Khotsi awe vha mbo ḓi bva na saga ḽa makumba. Vha bva vha shavha na ṅwana wavho!

Ṱharu ya dzhena mulindini wayo.

Nga ḓuvha ḽa vhuraru vha tshi swika vha wana makumba o no vha fhasi-fhasi.

Khotsi vha dzhena, vha tshi dzhena hafhaḽani.

Ṅwana a sala o ima muṋangoni. A tshi ima fhaḽa muṋango hafhaḽani, vhaḽa vha khou ntsha.

Ḽa vha ḽi ya swika ḽivhanḓa!

A tshi ḽi vhona ḽi kule a thoma luimbo, ‘Asi! …’

Khotsi awe a vha tsha zwi pfa! Vho no vha fhasi-fhasi hangei!

Ṅwana a thoma u imba a tshi khou lila, ‘Asi! …’ .

Heḽia ḽivhanḓa ḽa vha ḽi tshi khou swika, ḽa vha ḽi tshi khou swika tsini ha houḽa ṅwana!

Ḽi tshi swika, houḽa ṅwana a shavhela kule.

Ḽa vha ḽi ya dzhena mulindi. Ḽi tshi dzhena mulindini fhaḽa, ḽi tshi kolonganya ḽa wana vhaḽa munna nga ngomu! Ḽa mbo ḓi kata vhaḽa munna! Ḽa mbo ḓi vha mila!

Uḽa ṅwana a ṱuwa a tshi khou lila a tshi khou ya hayani.

A tshi swika, mme awe vha ri, ‘Baba vha gai?’

A ri, ‘Baba vho sala hanengei nga ngomu ende ḽivhanḓa ḽo dzhena nga ngomu! Zwi tou pfala zwa uri vho ḽiwa baba!’

Vha thoma u ṱavha mukosi! Vha khou lila!

Havha hu u fa ha lungano.

This story addresses marital infidelity. Its theme is varied in 'The man who scratched a lion' (2.21.1) and 'Marriage' (2.8.2). See the discussion of the latter for a detailed explanation.

Readings of regional variations of the story offer complex alternative meanings, but their interpretation is necessarily speculative and incomplete. The first of these meanings relates to beliefs about fertility and growth, which is symbolised by eggs.[i] Kriel[849] explains that 'the connection of eggs with procreation is brought out in two magical ways in (Karanga) folk tales, firstly by the fact that pregnant women are very fond of them ('My mother is to blame!'), which probably implies a connection between the egg and the developing child, and secondly by the fact that all kinds of wealth may appear from eggs in a miraculous way.'[850]

Kriel[851] also notes that 'the snake is the animal with the greatest magical power. To a man who has helped it, it gives an egg which produces wealth.' This may explain why theft of the eggs of snakes (like the python) with spiritual and magical attributes is linked to misfortune. Translator Pfanani Masase[852] explained that 'when the (water) 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.' *Ngano* thus often warn against interfering with uncontrollable magical forces.[ii]

Venda and Karanga narratives about eggs therefore appear to express an embryonic yet complex cosmology that integrates human and natural domains, with all their magical, spiritual and moral attributes. A Venda *ngano* tells of a grandmother who raids the nest of an ostrich during famine.[iii] Her desire to care for her grandchildren repeatedly compels her to return to the nest. As in this story by Tshamano, she eventually fails to hear the warning by a grandchild, and is killed. One explanation offered for her death is that she took too many eggs.[853] This value is developed in a Karanga *ngano* in which a mother repeatedly sends a child to raid the nest of a snake.[854] The snake eventually confronts the woman: 'Do you ever think of my children that you have eaten?' The woman answers, 'I did not think that I was eating your children, only that your eggs keep me and my children alive.' The snake then eats all the woman's children in hyperbolic retaliation. The story simply ends here, but it could invite reflection on the sanctity and integration of all life.[iv]

The death of the husband in Tshamano's story could be metaphoric. Several Karanga *ngano*[855] show him (or a son) falling into a river where the snake (or a large bird) lives. He drowns or is eaten by a crocodile. It is more than likely that the spiritual symbolism of rivers and certain of their inhabitants applies here. The children that are born after this event grow up, go to the river and resurrect the deceased. It is not clear what kind of transformation this involves.

The narrator and her sister, Tshamano Mashavha (see the previous story), are inheritors of a narrative practice transmitted via their grandmother and mother,[v] and it may therefore not be coincidental that both exploit the expressive qualities of speech and song.

As explained, Tshamano Mashavha's alternating singing and chanting differentiates between the worlds of humans and animals. Mpho Mashavha in turn utilises pitch variation in her performances of the song. These variations relate to the structure of the plot. Although the song is performed four times, the events it depicts are structured according to the familiar principle of the 'contrasting three' (two similar initial images contrasted by a concluding third).[vi] The snake's nest is raided three times. The first two attempts are successful. The boy sees the python approaching, warns his father, and escapes with him. The third visit culminates in the father's death, since he is unable to hear his son's warning. Realising that his father is deep in the python's lair, the boy sings louder and raises the pitch of the song by approximately a tone.

When his father fails to respond, he increases the pitch of the song by another tone. The narrator indicates here that 'The child started to cry while singing'. As explained in the discussion of the previous story, *lila* and its causative, *lidza,* indicate 'wailing' as well instrumental performance. It also refers to singing as a form of heightened emotional expression.

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metaphor for conflict here.

[i] See e.g. 'The egg that grew bigger while the man was singing' (Stayt, 1968/1931) and a story documented by Nenzhelele (1961:54–55).

[ii] 'The lion-hunter' (2.3.4).

[iii] 'The angry ostrich' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[iv] A related Karanga story (Von Sicard, 1965:276-277) describes a girl taking the egg of a snake, thinking it is a bird's egg. The snake complains and she understands what she had done. She returns the egg. Her parents give the snake an ox to pacify her.

[v] See their mother Mashau Tseisi's biographical sketch and stories (2.4).

[vi] See 'The python-healer' by Thizwilondi Kwinda (2.7.2).

Fig. 95. Folovhodwe
2009

2.21 Rosina Madabeni

See here, my ID gives my year of birth as 1920. This is a mistake. I think I am about eighty years old. I am still healthy and very strong.

My place of birth is Dzamba in the Rambuda district. I cannot remember my father's family name, but he was called Mutshinyalo. My mother was Musumuvhi.

My parents had one son and three daughters. My brother is Ntshengedzeni, and he lives at Tshixwadza, there in the mountains, near Harambuda.

One of my sisters is deceased. My other sister is called Selina Seaga. She lives at Piet Booi, south of Thohoyandou. We speak to one another by phone. We also gather during festive times, such as Easter, or when there is illness.

What I remember best from my childhood is playing *ndode* stone games (3.3) and *khadi* rope-skipping. For *khadi* we took a roll of tobacco. The roll was placed on the ground next to the skipping rope. A child had to pick the tobacco up and drop it again. If you missed a pickup, someone else got a turn.

We children liked to collect *mitshelo* wild fruit such as *thondo* berries.[i] We also gathered locusts and other insects. Birds were trapped with *vhulimbo* bird lime and rock-rabbits with a *tshikwekwe* snare.

We swam in the Tshikhuvhoni river, which often flowed strongly. Harambuda is a place where many streams gush down the mountain. You can see the water glistening from far during summer.

We also built *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3). Here we imagined that we were adults. We planted maize, weeded and cooked porridge and vegetables in a tiny clay pot. Children nowadays no longer build these villages. They go to school, and want to do different things. I hear you, Mr. Mavhetha: All children want nowadays is the remote for the TV.

Doing these things means I did not go to school. There were no schools at that time. My parents farmed with maize, peanuts and sheep. But I did go to initiation schools, including *domba*, which lasted a year. *Domba* is where you learn many songs, but most of them are secret. We also danced *tshigombela* songs, and went on *bepha* journeys (3.3) with them. We really enjoyed these outings! They usually lasted two days. We made new friends, and were given nice food to eat.

We girls also played the *lugube* bow (fig. 67). Who can forget that song, *'Tshitaka tsha Gole?'* [ii]

My mother's mother is the one who told us *ngano*. She was called Nyatshavhungwa Mulondo. *Ngano* were mostly told after harvest, especially when women were scraping the kernels off maize cobs. Like *mahundwane*, telling *ngano* is an old way of educating children. They tell of monsters to

[i] The fruit of *murondo*, the quinine berry, *Cephalantus natalensis*.

[ii] See the biographical sketch of Nyamukamadi Ndou (2.2).

frighten them into obedience. You know, when cars first appeared in our district, our parents were scared that we would be run over. And so they called a car *goloi ya mai-mai*, meaning a monster car!

I was married to William Matamela Madabeni. We are sitting here at the house that belonged to him. William came from Gogogo, also in the Rambuda district. We were cross-cousins, and our marriage was arranged. This is what old people did in the past.[i]

After our wedding, we lived for a short time at Tshixwadza, and then moved to Tshiawelo in Johannesburg. William worked for the municipality's roads department for many, many years.

A highlight of my life in town was going to the Lutheran church. Later I joined William in the ZCC. The most important commandment is love.

We retired here to Muswodi-Dipeni because William wanted to farm with cattle. He thought the area had enough grazing. We started out with two oxen. Later there were ten. But there was a terrible drought during the early 1980s. That was the time of Operation Hunger, when many people received gifts of food so as not to starve. The drought wiped out our herd. This was a very painful experience.

William died in 2013 from *swigiri* [ii] (diabetes).

I have a field on the outskirts of our village, but because it is so dry here, farming is difficult. When it rains, my daughter-in-law plants sorghum, maize, peanuts and beans.

I gave birth to three boys and three girls. Two girls are now deceased and the others all live here at Muswodi-Dipeni.

My son is a truck driver at Venetia mine.[iii] The couple have two daughters. This is Vhahangwele.[iv] Please take a photograph of us! (fig. 16).

Fig. 96. Backyard workshop
Folovhodwe, 2009

[i] Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained at this point in the conversation that he once courted a girl at Muswodi-Dipeni. When his uncle (the chief marriage negotiator) heard about this, he forbid their relationship. Mavhetha was so angry that he wandered aimlessly for hours before retuning home.

[ii] Lit. 'sugar.'

[iii] https://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de_beers/

[iv] 'Forgive them.'

2.21.1 The man who scratched a lion / Munna we a kweta ndau

Here comes a story!

There was a certain girl and her young man. Now, they married, they settled.[i]

This girl said, 'You, my young man,[ii] I do not just eat any kind of meat, I only eat crow meat.'[iii]

Hey! The young man started walking.[iv] Hah! He left, he left! He went so fast, it was as if he was flying!

He killed that crow, he returned with it. He came back to his wife.

He said, 'I am tired, I want water.'

The wife said, 'Right! Give me a large water calabash!'

The wife took that water calabash and slung it over her shoulder.

He said, 'When you go to fetch water, remember that I do not drink water in which frogs are croaking!'

She entered the footpath and walked while singing,

(Narrator)
My husband says, 'I am a Lemba.'
I do not drink water in which there is croaking of a frog.
(Chorus)
Tshi-wa-wa!

She came to a fountain. That frog said, 'kokorr!' She passed. There she was, there she was, there she was!

[i] Lit. 'they entered the home.'
[ii] This is not a proper form of address, and it serves as a harbinger of trouble.
[iii] This is a reference to marital infidelity, and contrasts with the image of beef or goat's meat that is normally consumed. The crow also symbolises the indiscriminate, opportunistic raiding of carcasses.
[iv] Lit. 'he entered the footpath.'

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu muṅwe musidzana na muṱhannga wawe. Zwino, vha vhingana, a dzhena muḓini.

Hoyu wa musidzana a ri, 'Iwe, muṱhannga wanga, nṋe a thi ḽi ṋama dzoṱhe, ndi ḽa ya funguvhu.'

Hei! Muṱhannga a dzhena ṋḓilani. Haa! A ṱuwa, a ṱuwa! A tshi dzhena ṋḓilani a tshi koṱo fhufha!

A vhulaya funguvhu heḽo, a vhuya na ḽo. A ḓa hafha ha mufumakadzi wawe.

A ri, 'Ndo neta, ndi khou nyaga maḓi.'

Mufumakadzi a ri, 'Ee! Mphe gumbu!'

Mufumakadzi a dzhia tshiḽa tshigumbu, a pakata.

A ri, 'Iwe u tshiya ya u nkela maḓi: A thi nwi maḓi a u lila tshiḓula!'

A dzhena ṋḓilani u khou tshimbila a tshi imbelela,

(Musimi)
Munna wanga u ri, 'Ndi Mushavhi.'
Thi nwi maḓi a lila.
(Vhabvumeli)
Tshi-wa-wa!

A wana tshisima. Tshiḓula tshiḽa tsha ri kokorr! A fhira. Asuuḽaa, asuuḽaa, asuuḽaa!

A vhuya a vhona tshisima. A tshi swika a tshi wana tshisima hetshiḽani.

A swika a dovha a imbelela, 'Munna wanga u ri …'

Tshiḓula tsha sa lile. A ka haaḽa maḓi, a nwa. Thumbu-pha! Ha tsha takuwa!

Ha ḓa dziphuka thi! Dziphuka dziḽa dzi khou ḓa dzi tshi nwa.

Ha swika ndau! Ndau yo mila houḽa musidzana!

Muṱhannga a vha u a takutshedza. U khou vhona musidzana a sa tsha

She came and saw another fountain. When she arrived, she found that fountain.

She arrived and sang again, 'My husband says, "I am a Lemba" …'

No frog cried. She collected water, she drank.

He stomach swelled, paa! She could not leave!

Wild animals came there! Those wild animals came there to drink.

Lion arrived! Lion swallowed that girl!

The young man became worried. He saw that the girl was not returning. He started walking.

(Hmm, I forget how the story goes.)[i]

He passed. What is he looking for? For that wild animal that swallowed his girl. Yes!

He left, he left.

When he arrived there at the fountain, he found the wild animal lying lazily there, nataa! It was full from eating the girl!

He started to sing,

(Narrator)
What ate the young woman must come and eat me.
What ate my beloved must come and eat me.
Nzhali-nzhe-nzhe-nzhe!
(Chorus)
Let it come![ii]

That wild animal woke up!

It said, 'You, come and scratch me while I am resting here!' That vhuya. A tshi dzhena ndilani.

Hmm, ndi do hangwa nne.)

A fhira. U khou nyagana na mini? Na phukha heila yo milaho musidzana wawe. Ehee!

A tuwa, a tuwa.

A tshi swika hanefhala tshisimani, u wana phukha kheyo yo tou, nataa! Yo fura ula musidzana.

A vha u ya thoma u imbelela,

(Musimi)
Tsho la khomba musidzana tshi do la nne.
Tsho la nyaṅwali wanga tshi do la nne.
Nzhali-nzhe-nzhe-nzhe!
(Vhabvumeli)
Nga tshi de!

Ila phukha yo vuwa!

Ha pfi, 'Iwe, idani u de u vhe u khou nkweta.'

Ula muthannga a vheya tshidzolo tshawe fhasi.

Habe u khou lidza zwino, 'Tsho la khomba musidzana tshi do la nne …'

Ehee! A vheya fhasi a swika fhala a yi kweta ila phukha, a yi kweta! Ndi hezwi a tshi vho i thavha nga pfumo!

Houla musidzana a mbo di bva. U bva hawe henefhala, ha vha hu u mbo di ri mini?

Ha vha hu u fa ha lungano u ri o bva thumbuni ya tshipukha.

[i] The narrator performed the song here as a memory device, and then carried on narrating.

[ii] As in the case of the song in 'The dancing mice' (2.1.3), this song also has been adapted for performance in other musical categories. I first heard it played in 1984 on the *tshihwana* braced mouth-bow (see Kruger 1986:83).

The man who scratched a lion / Munna we a kweta ndau (continued)

young man took his *tshidzolo*.[i]
He is now singing again, 'What ate the young woman must come and eat me …'

Yes! He took the *tshidzholo* and scratched[ii] that wild animal, scratched him! He then stabbed it with a spear!

That girl started to come out!

She came out, and what happened then? The story ends when she came out from the stomach of the wild animal

Muswodi-Dipeni, 3 July 2014

See 'Marriage' (2.8.2) for a discussion of this story.

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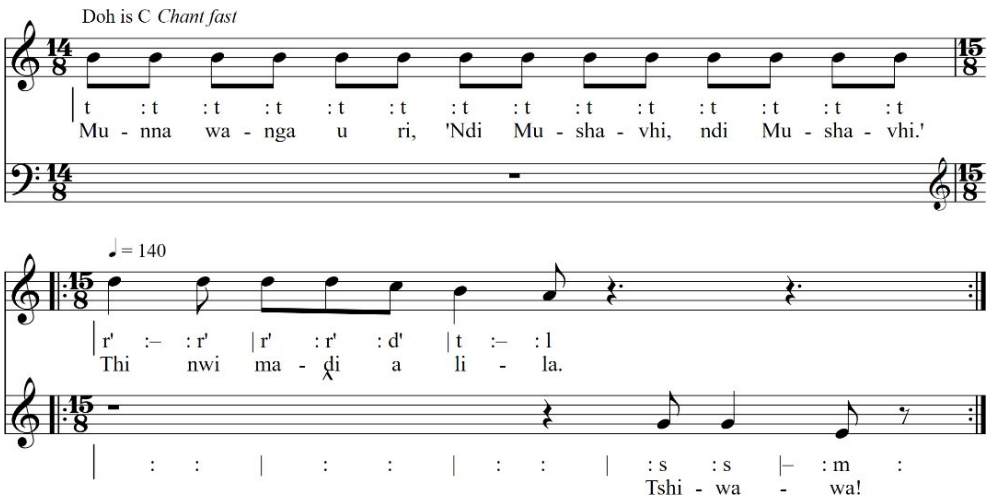
[i] The half-tube bowed zither (fig.111) (see Kirby, 1968; Kruger, 1986). The narrator explained that her paternal grandfather, called Vhangani, performed on this instrument at Dzamba, where she grew up.

[ii] *Kweta* refers both to bowing the instrument and 'scratching' or stabbing the stomach of the beast.



2.22 Ntshengedzeni Kwinda

I am Margaret Ntshengedzeni,[i] but just call me Megi. I am now seventy-three years old. I know my age because my father told my mother in 1962 that a young woman does not go to *musevhetho* puberty school at the age of twenty ... He was speaking about me!

As with so many other women, my date of birth is not correct in my ID. It shows that I am only fifty-eight. I should have become a pensioner long ago. I am suffering because of a careless mistake of those sitting comfortably on office chairs.

I was born on the farm Drievoet,[ii] there along the Nzhelele river. This is where my parents worked. The farm first belonged to Louis. I do not remember his surname. Then Tobie Fourie bought the farm (box 37).

My father was Joe Mualusi Kwinda. He was a cook. My mother Thikhatali[iii] worked in the vegetable fields and fruit orchards. She had five daughters. I am the third child.

I remember babysitting Louis's children. I carried them on my back when I collected baobab fruit in the veld. Louis's wife made clothes with a sowing machine. I always collected her off-cuts and used them to make clothes for my clay dolls. I carried them on my hip or back, like real babies! I made houses for them, and built *mahundwane* play-villages (fig. 107; 3.3).

There was no school near us during that time. But I did hear *ngano* from my mother's mother. She was called Lavhengwa. She also stayed on Drievoet. Young people no longer are interested in *ngano*. They can read books, but they mostly just sit and watch TV. Too much TV is bad.

When I grew up, I also worked for Tobie. I tended his mangos, oranges and peanuts. He allowed us to plant our own crops on the farm: maize, water-melon, pumpkin and sugar cane.

Tobie's nickname was Mugoba, Snake-of-the-Mountain. He knew Tshivenda and took this name as a joke. Snake-of-the-Mountain was very clever! He always knew whether his labourers were working or not! He later sold the farm and started Limpopo Diaries, there on the other side of Makhado.

I worked on Drievoet until my marriage. My husband worked on a nearby farm.[iv] It was owned by a man called Hurt. I met my husband during weekend dances. We did not have radios or record players. Guitarists performed for us. They were paid by people who sold *magwinya* [v] and beer.

After our marriage, we went to live on Hurt's farm. My father-in-law also worked there. He was a security guard who patrolled fences. My husband

[i] 'You are troubling me.'

[ii] Lit. 'Three-foot,' derived from Afrikaans, *drif*.

[iii] 'I do not tolerate trouble.'

[iv] Hume Farm (Tobie Fourie, personal communication).

[v] Afrikaans *vetkoek*, lit. 'fat-cakes,' dollops of dough sautéed in oil. See the biographical sketch of Mashudu Kwinda (2.14).

later worked at the copper mine in Musina. Then the mine closed down and he went to work for Water Affairs. During this time we moved here to Folovhodwe.

I have three boys and two girls. One son works in Johannesburg as a lorry driver. My other two boys live in Musina. One is a miner at Venetia, and the other one is a teacher. You have met my daughter Salfina (2.6). She is a passionate person and knows how to tell a story! My other daughter also lives close to me.

I started to go to the Tasululo Ministry Church because my husband went there. I always wear my membership card around my neck. This shows my faith, and makes me feel that I belong somewhere. Going to church makes my happy. God teaches us love.

I am fond of attending meetings at the headman's homestead. We are called there by a bell, and given information about our village. We also discuss important matters. Poor people often ask traditional leaders for money to bury a family member. Our headman was flooded with requests, and so he started a burial association. All men over thirty and women with at least one child must pay R360 a year. When a relative dies, a family gets R10 000 to organise their funeral.

Fig. 97. Domestic fence
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2008

2.22.1 The bull-husband / Munna wa phulu

Here comes a story!

There were certain girls.

Those girls, they were leaving. They said they were going to fetch water from the river.

When they arrived there and were filling their water calabashes, a certain young man came there. This young man started to come there.

When he arrived there, he spoke to them.

He said, 'I am asking for water.'

That girl, truly, she got up and fetched water in her small water calabash. She went and gave it to that young man.

That young man drank.

After that young man went to drink the water, he walked past those girls and said, 'Ah! Goodbye, girls. I am going further.'

When he went further, those girls remained behind. That girl who had given him water to drink, started to follow him.

She said, 'You girls, I am following that young man because I see that he is handsome.'

Truly, that girl started to follow him!

As she was following him, that young man turned around and found that girl. Truly, that young man started to wait for her and walked with her.

Now, as he was walking with her, the rain started to fall.

That was when he started to sing his song.

He started, he sang,

(Narrator)

You girls!

The child died because of this *dende!*[i]

She followed the big sound of the *dende*.

Salungano! Salungano!

Ho vha hu na vhaṅwe vhasidzana.

Havha vhasidzana-ii, vho vha vha tshi ṱuwa. Vha ri vha khou ya u ka maḓi mulamboni.

Vha tshi swika hafhaḽa vha tshi khou ḓi kela zwitemba zwavho, ha ḓa muṅwe muṱhannga. Hoyu muṱhannga a mbo ḓi ḓa.

A tshi swika kha havhaḽa a vha vhudza.

A ri, 'Ndi khou humbela maḓi.'

Havhaḽa vhasidzana, muṅwe a tshi nyaga u takuwa.

Houḽa muṱhannga a ri, 'Hi-ii! Ndi khou nyaga uri … ndi khou ri hoyo kha takuwe a nkele maḓi.'

Houḽa musidzana, ngoho, a takuwa a dzhia maḓi a ka nga tshiphapha tshawe. A yo fha houḽa muṱhannga.

Houḽa muṱhannga a nwa.

A tshi ya u nwa, houḽa muṱhannga a tshi fhira a ri, 'A! Salani vhasidzana! Nne ndi khou fhira.'

A tshi yo fhira, havhaḽa vhasidzana vha tshi sala. Houḽa musidzana we a mu fha maḓi u ri a nwe, a mbo ḓi mu tevhela.

A ri, 'Vheiwe, nne ndi khou tevhela houḽa muṱhannga ngauri ndi khou vhona o naka.'

Ngoho, houḽa musidzana a mbo ḓi tevhela!

A tshi ya u yo tevhela, houḽa muṱhannga a tshi sedza murahu, a wana houḽa musidzana a khou tevhela. Uḽa muṱhannga, ngoho, a mbo ḓi mu lindela a tshimbila naye.

Zwino, a tshi tshimbila naye, tshifhinga mvula i tshi thoma u na.

Ndi hezwi a tshi thoma u imba luimbo lwawe.

A tshi thoma, a ri,

(Musimi)

Iwe vhasikana!

Ṅwana ka lovha heḽo nga ludende!

[i] The braced gourd-bow (figs. 64, 66).

When she saw the old instrument.
Boo! The flashing of the *dende*.
Boo! Kenenenene! …[i]
(Chorus)
Lenga-ludende,[ii] haa-ee-haa, nga-ludende.

That young man, truly …

The rain abated and drifted far away. The rain had not made that girl wet.

That girl, when she arrived at her home, there at the home of her married life, when she arrived and settled,[iii] she gave birth to her child.[iv] When she started to carry that child,[v] those in-laws,[vi] they sat down and talked.

They said, 'Ah! This person came here long ago. Now, we are supposed to tell this person, "Go to your home and visit[vii] your parents."'

Truly, they told that girl, they said, 'You, prepare provisions for the road. Tomorrow, just tomorrow you will get up and go.'

That girl started to become surprised.

She said, 'Ah! Now, you want me to go, but there are only Zulus in this country! Now, before I arrive there at home, what if those savages catch me and my child along the way?'

Hah, there was silence.

A tevhela mvumili nga ludende.
A tshi vhona ku na kale nga ludende.
Boo! Vhaivhai nga ludende.
Boo! Kenenenene! …
(Vhabvumeli)
Lenga-ludende, haa-ee-haa, nga-ludende.

Houla muthannga, ngoho ...

A ralo heila mvula ya balangana ya tuwela kule. Houla musidzana a songo nelwa nga mvula.

Houlani musidzana, a tshi swika hayani hawe, hanengei mudini wa vhuhadzi, a tshi swika a dzula, a beba ṅwana wawe.

Musi ono beba ṅwana houla, havhala vha fhala vhuhadzi, vha dzula vha ri, vha tshi amba.

Vha ri, 'A! Hoyu muthu o da ndi kale. Zwino, ra ri khou tea uri hoyu muthu: A tuwe a ye hayani hawe a thome a ye u vhona vhabebi vhawe.'

Ngoho, vha mu vhudza houla musidzana, vha ri, 'Iwe, sindai mbuvha yau. Matshelo-ii, heli la matshelo, u khou vuwa wa tuwa.'

Houlani musidzana a thoma u mangala.

U ri, 'A! Zwino, vha tshi ri ndi tuwe ngauri heli shango ndi mabunyu fhedzi! Zwino, ndi di swika hangei hayani, mabunyu a nga bvelela hafha ndilani ndi na ṅwana naa?'

Hah, a sokou fhumula.

Nga matsheloni a tshi vuwa, vha ri, 'Kha de ri mu sumbedze munna wanu hoyu ane na do tuwa naye ane a do ni fhelekedza a ni swikisa hayani.'

Ngoho, houlani musidzana a mbo di bva hafhala nduni.

Vha tshi ya dangani, vha swika.

Ho vha hu na kholomo khulu. Ye ya vha i tshi fhira dzothe hafho dangani.

Vha ri, 'Hoyu ndi ene munna wanu ane a do ni fhira phanda u swika

---

[i] A thunderclap followed by its reverberations. The singer makes a decrescendo to portray the echo.
[ii] An onomatopoeia of the sound of the bow.
[iii] Lit. 'sat.'
[iv] Lit. 'she carried her child on her back.'
[v] I.e. the child no longer is kept in ritual seclusion. In this regard, see the biographical sketch of Nyamukamadi Ndou (2.2).
[vi] Lit. 'those of the marriage over there.'
[vii] Lit. 'see.'

When they woke up the next morning, they said, ‘Come, let us show you your husband that you will leave with and who will accompany you home.’

Truly, that girl started to come out of that house.

They went to the byre, they arrived.

There was a big ox. He was the biggest of all there in the byre.

They said, ‘This is your husband that you will go with until you arrive home.’

That one said, ‘Really?’

They replied, ‘Yes.’

Truly, that child started to speak.

She said, ‘But there are Zulus! I do not believe I will arrive safely with this ox.’

Truly, those people say, ‘Ah! Do not say it is just an ox. It is your husband that will help you arrive. When you find the savages, start to say, “Attack!”[i] When the enemy comes towards you, this ox will fold its legs around you. You must sit down. You must put down your child and breastfeed her. Do not be afraid of anything.’

Truly, they are walking, they are walking.

Truly, that girl did everything she was told.

The savages started to grab their spears and battle-axes, khelenge![ii]

When the ox saw this, he immediately said, ‘Hell!’

When the savages arrived, this ox started to fold his legs around that woman.

That woman sat down far away and put her child down.

When she put down the child there and breastfed her, that ox now started with its work.

It started to do this,

ni tshi swika hayani.’

Uḽa a ri, ‘Eyana?’

Vha ri, ‘Ee.’

Houḽa ṅwana ngoho a sokou tou amba.

U ri, ‘Mara shango ḽi na mabunyu! A thi kholwi zwauri ndi ḓo swika na kholomo heyi.’

Havhaḽa vhathu, ngoho, vha ri, ‘A! Ni songo ri ndi kholomo-ii! Ndi ene munna wanu o no ḓo ni swikisa. Hezwi na wana mabunyu, a tshi tou thoma u ri, “Phali!” A tshi khou ḓa kha vheiwe, heyi kholomo i ḓo ni kapetshela murahu nga khwaṋa. Inwi ni dzule fhasi. Ni tsitse ṅwana wanu ni mamise. Ni songo vhuya na tshuwa na tshithu-nii.’

Ngoho, vha tshimbila, vha tshimbila.

Ngoho, houḽani musidzana a ita zwenezwo zwe a laiwa.

Mabunyu a tshi tou thoma u tou khelenge ndo fara mapfumo na dzitsanga!

Ndi u ri heiḽa kholomo i tshi thoma u zwi vhona itshiri, ‘Maḽo!’

Mabunyu o no swika heiḽa kholomo ya thoma u kapetshela houḽa musadzi murahu.

Houḽa musadzi a dzula hangei kule a tsitsa ṅwana wawe.

A tshi ya u yo tsitsa ṅwana fhaḽa a khou mamisa, heiḽa kholomo zwino ya thoma u ita mushumo wayo.

Ya thoma ita zwenezwo zwa u ri,

(Musimi)
Phininga, phininga, phininga!
(Vhabvumeli)
Ha masi ha nunḓa boo!

Hezwi i tshi ralo i khou ṱhavha fhasi, mabunyu aḽo o wa nṱha hangei a tshiwa hangei ha ṱangana zwoṱhe!

A fara! A vho sokou wa a tshi fa oṱhe!

---

[i] *‘Phali!’*

[ii] The metallic sound of iron.

(Narrator)
Phininga, phininga, phininga!
(Flinging the enemy away with the horns)
(Chorus)
Ha masi ha nunda boo!
(Expanding the chest and neck to intimidate an enemy)

He lowered his horns and flung all those Zulus into the air! They came crashing down!

He grabbed them! They all fell down and died!

When this ox had finished there, he left and went to that woman. He came there and knelt.

That woman arrived and also knelt. She took the water and poured it into a basin.[i]

She washed his horns, she washed his horns, she washed his horns!

After finishing, she put her child on her back. The ox started to go in front while the woman followed.

They arrived.

When they arrived at her home, the woman's family saw she had arrived with an ox.

As she arrived there at her home, they asked, 'Hwii![ii] You walked with an ox?'

She answered, 'The Zulus attacked us because they are going around, killing people.'

The ox arrived and went into the byre.

When they went into the byre the next morning, they were told, 'Open the gate for the cattle!'

Heila kholomo i tshi fhedza hafhala, ya tuwa ya ya kha houla musadzi. Ya swika ya kwatamela fhasi.

Houla musadzi a dzhia madi a shela kha tshisambelo. A tanzwa nanga, a tanzwa nanga, a tanzwa nanga!

A tshi fhedza, a beba ṅwana wawe mutanani. Yone ya mbo di fhirela phanda, a sala murahu.

U swika.

Vha tshi swika hayani ha hawe, vha di vhona a tshi khou swika na kholomo.

A tshi swika hangeini hayani ha hawe, vha ri, 'Hwii! Iwe wo tou tshimbila na kholomo?'

'Mabunyu o tou tereka ngaurali a khou tou tshinga a khou vhulaya vhathu?'

Ya swika ya dzhenisiwa dangani.

I tshi ya u yo dzhenisiwa dangani nga matsheloni, ha pfi, 'Kha dzi vuliwe!'

Dza vuliwa ngauri evho o laiwa u pfi, 'Hezwi i tshi swika ni yi valele dangani na dziṅwe. Hezwi no i valela dangani na dziṅwe, na vhona duvha heli, inwi ni tshi khou nyaga u tuwa u ri ni humele murahu hangeno, hezwi ni tshi vula, ni do vhona i sa bvi, i do dzula nga ngomu dangani.'

Zwino-ii, ngoho, houla musadzi a ita ngauralo.

Heila kholomo ya vha i tshi dzhena dangani.

A ri, 'Dzhenani dangani ni lale na dziṅwe.'

Ngoho, heila ya mbo di dzhena.

Dzi tshi vuwa nga matsheloni, dza vuliwa dza tuwa dza ya hanengei thavhani. Dzi tshi ya hangei dza tangana na vho-mabunyu. Haa! Mabunyu a takala!

A ri, 'Heiii! Ri do tou thoma nga heneila khulwane heila!'

Ndi u ri heila kholomo, ndi u ri ya ya ya ita zwezwila zwa u ri, 'Phininga! …'

[i] *Tshisambelo*, a pottery washing basin.
[ii] A whistling sound that expresses surprise.

They opened the gate for them because she was told, ‘When it arrives, you must open the byre with others. On a certain day, when you open the byre with others, when you want to go back there, when you open, you will see he will not come out. He will stay inside the byre.’

Now, truly, that woman did just that.

Truly, the ox went and entered the byre.

She said, ‘Enter the byre and sleep with the others.’

Truly, that one started to go inside.

When they woke up the next morning, they got up and went over there to the mountain. They went there and found the Zulus.[i] Hey! The savages were excited!

They shouted, ‘Hey! We will start with this big one!’

It was that ox! He went there and did the same, ‘Phininga! …’

When he did that, he was killing the savages! All those Zulus died. They were finished off!

The ox returned excitedly.

That woman said, ‘Hey! It killed them over there, my mother. Look! There! He is returning!’

When he came back, his horns were cleaned in the same way. Truly, that woman, she took the water and poured it into the basin. When he was washing, he was washing the horn. He left and went there to sleep in the byre.

One day he said, ‘Now, I want to return home.’

The woman went there to the byre and opened it. The ox remained standing.

That woman asked, ‘Do you want to go?’

That ox replied, ‘Hoff!’

It was agreeing.

It said, ‘Hoff!’

Hezwi i tshi ralo, i khou vhulaya mabunyu! Mabunyu o̓the haa̓la a fa. A fhela!

Ya vha i tshi khasa i tshi vhuya.

Hou̓la musadzi a ri, ‘Hai! Yo vhulaya hangeini, mme anga! Vha khou i vhona! Khei̓la, i khou vhuya!’

I tshi vhuya ya d̓a ya netshedzela nanga sa zwezwi̓la. Hou̓la musadzi, ngoho, a vha a tshi dzhia mad̓i, a tshi shela kha tshisambelo. I tshi khou t̓amba, i tshi khou t̓anzwiwa nanga. Ya t̓uwa ya ya u yo lala hangei tsini na danga.

U swika d̓uvha i tshi ri, ‘Zwazwino, ndi khou humela hayani.’

A tshi ya hafha̓la dangani hu tshi vuliwa dziṅwe yone ya sala yo ima.

Hou̓la wa musadzi a ri, ‘Ni vho nyaga u t̓uwa naa?’

Hei̓la kholomo ya ri, ‘Hoff!’

Ndi u ri i a tenda zwayo ndi zwezwo.

I khou ri, ‘Hoff!’

Havha̓la vhathu vha ri, ‘Ha! Hei̓la kholomo i ri ndi vho nyaga u t̓uwa hayani.’

Nangoho, vha mbo d̓i i vulela hei̓la kholomo.

Ha! Ya vha zwino, i khou t̓uwa. Zwino, i khou t̓uwa hayani ha hayo. Zwino i yo̓the.

Hou̓la musadzi o sala hayani ha hawe.

Ya sokou t̓uwa zwino, vhusiku na masiari thi i yo̓the!

Hai! U swika, vha tshi swika, i tshi swika vha hanengei hayani ha hayo.

Ha mbo d̓i vha hu u fa ha salungano.

[i] Given that the first group had been defeated, this must be another group.

The bull-husband / Munna wa phulu (continued)

Those people said, 'Hah! This ox said, "I want to go home."'
Indeed, they started to open the byre for this ox.
Hah! It was going now, it was leaving. Now, it was going to its home. Now, it was alone.
That woman remained at her home.
It was going now, it was alone forever.[i]
So, it arrived, arrived there at its home.

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 4 July 2014

[i] Lit. 'at night and in the afternoon.'

This is one of many *ngano* dealing with courtship and early married life.[i] Its antiquity is evident in the Chikaranga term *vhasikana* (girls) that appears in the song.

The opening scene of a man accosting young women on a river bank is a common motif in *ngano*. This location is central to daily life, as it is where water is collected, and people wash themselves and their clothing. As various stories in this collection show, rivers also are the abode of ancestral spirits, and they consequently symbolise spirituality, morality and transformation. These qualities merge in this story which warns against youthful naivety and sexual impropriety. ('You girls! The child died because of this *dende!')*

The young women in this story are unmarried, and therefore in a state of 'sacred pollution' (see 'Child of the law'; 2.17.2). As explained in regard to 'The man who refused to marry' (2.3.3) and 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1), premarital sexual relations are a potential threat to established socio-economic relations, and are consequently addressed in initiation rituals[ii] as well as stories.

Dederen[856] notes that 'the protection of a young lady *(khomba)* against the sexual hunger of men is a central theme of ritual pedagogy' and that this is why 'folktales depict men (read predator, beast, or monster) and their sexual advances as a threat to girlhood.' This is portrayed in 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4) and 'The musician and the girl' (2.2.3).

The song in this story usually portrays a young man as aggressor.[iii] He takes on the identity of a *tshilombe* musician (2.1.4) who performs on a *dende* braced gourd-bow (figs. 64, 66).

In contrast to the demanding, aggressive male, Hangwani Ramano's 'Singa-Luvhale' involves a newly-married wife who is unable to control her sexual desire. The young woman in this story by Kwinda displays similar youthful indiscretion. She is accosted at the river by a young singer she finds very handsome (lit. 'beautiful'). His magnetism is evident in her pursuit of 'the big sound of the *dende*.' This is a reference to loud, confident vocal performance, which signifies energy and power.

The singer's request for water is a covert proposal for romantic relations. The young woman succumbs to desire, and follows him. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha explained that 'she only wanted a baby, not a husband.' This notion resurfaces towards the end of the story where it is implied that, having given birth, she has no desire to remain married, and separates from her husband.

Contrary to the typical image of the man as sexual predator, the young husband is represented as a bull; in other words, as an ideal spouse. ('Do not say it is just an ox. It is your husband that will help you arrive.') Bulls in oral narratives embody leadership, intelligence, power and fertility.[iv] When the young woman expresses fear of encountering invaders, her in-laws remain silent. They know the qualities of her husband.

His role as guardian and protector is firstly expressed in the song. This

[i] See e.g. 'Singa-Luvhale' (2.18.1) and 'The magic tree' (2.14.1), as well as 'Marriage,' 'The baboon in the orange tree' and 'A man refuses to dance' (Kruger, 2014).

[ii] *Domba* initiates are instructed, 'When they ask you if you have played with any youth since you saw your period, you must say "No!"' (Blacking, 1969:11.)

[iii] 'The girls and the dove' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), and 'A big hero' and 'Foolish girls' (Kruger, 2014).

[iv] See 'Milela, leader of the herd' (Le Roux,1996) and 'Mighty rooster' (Kruger, 2014). In 'Ramali, the red bull' (Postma, 1950), the animal 'does not want to, want to die. His wind, the wind of his life is too strong.'

explains why he warns, 'The child died because of this *dende*.' The narrator explained that the instrument is associated the *tshilombe* musician, who is an unsuitable life partner. The songline therefore warns the remaining girls against sexual temptation.

When this song is performed by a malevolent male, its reference to a storm with pelting rain, thunder and lightning represents his rapacious nature and the potential consequences of a relationship with him. Here, however, the storm is a threat that the bull-husband protects his wife against. The narrator explained that he wards off the storm before she becomes wet. This he achieves by means of his magical, 'thunderous' singing ('Boo!') and the lighting flashes produced on his instrument.[i]

The bull-husband proves his physical prowess by 'going in front' and protecting his wife against Zulu invaders *(mabunyu*, lit. 'naked savages'). This refers to populations fleeing north following Shaka's expansion wars *(mfecane)* during the early 19th century.[ii]

The skirmishes and their aftermath portray proper marriage relations. They depict nurturing, reciprocity and respect. The bull-husband enfolds his wife protectively while she in turn kneels and washes his horns.

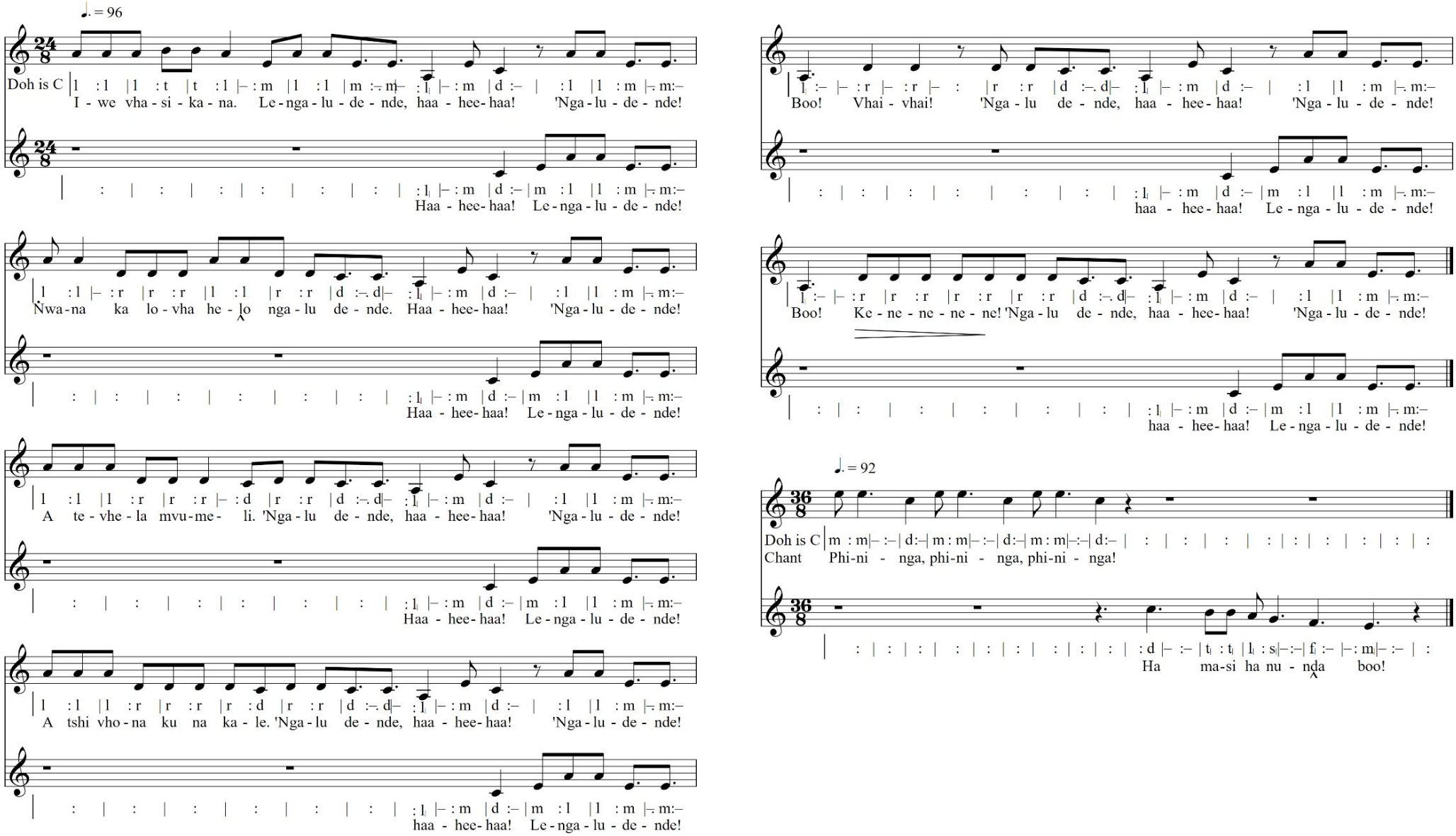
Given that the bull is a symbol, it follows that the byre is not real either, but the home of his in-laws. Because his wife is nursing her baby, he shares separate sleeping quarters with unmarried men.

He is the ox that will not come out of the byre one morning. Realising that separation is inevitable, he does not join the herd, but returns home. The brief moments of tender intimacy between the young spouses harboured potential for life-long love and fidelity. However, this is not to be. In typical fashion, the conclusion telescopes traumatic events into a terse, factual statement: 'That woman remained at her home. It was going now, it was alone forever. So, it arrived, arrived there at its home.'

Fig. 98. Incomplete house
Folovhodwe, 2008

[i] This could refer to the rapid movement of the beater as well as the vibrations of the string.

[ii] Xylophonist Wilson Ravele of Makonde described how his father hid in a warthog hole when a marauding group attacked people in the central Soutpansberg (Kruger, 1986).


♩. = 96
Doh is C
I - we vha - si - ka - na. Le - nga - lu - de - nde, haa - hee - haa! 'Nga - lu - de - nde!
Haa - hee - haa! Le - nga - lu - de - nde!
Nwa - na ka lo - vha he - lo nga - lu de - nde. Haa - hee - haa! 'Nga - lu - de - nde!
Haa - hee - haa! Le - nga - lu - de - nde!
A te - vhe - la mvu - me - li. 'Nga - lu de - nde, haa - hee - haa! 'Nga - lu - de - nde!
Haa - hee - haa! Le - nga - lu - de - nde!
A tshi vho - na ku na ka - le. 'Nga - lu de - nde, haa - hee - haa! 'Nga - lu - de - nde!
haa - hee - haa! Le - nga - lu - de - nde!
Boo! Vhai - vhai! 'Nga - lu de - nde, haa - hee - haa! 'Nga - lu - de - nde!
haa - hee - haa! Le - nga - lu - de - nde!
Boo! Ke - ne - ne - ne - ne - ne! 'Nga - lu de - nde, haa - hee - haa! 'Nga - lu - de - nde!
haa - hee - haa! Le - nga - lu - de - nde!
♩. = 92
Doh is C
Chant Phi - ni - nga, phi - ni - nga, phi - ni - nga!
Ha ma - si ha nu - nda boo!

2.23 Mbulaheni Phaswana

As explained in the introductory vignette (1), Mbulaheni Johannes Phaswana (fig. 4) was 94 years old when his two stories were recorded.

He was born to Andries Phaswana and Rebecca Mutshekwa in 1922. His place of birth was Manenzhe, a village once located immediately west of Folovhodwe, against the northern slope of the Soutpansberg (fig. 2).

The Phaswana couple owned cattle and farmland. They had three boys and three daughters. There were no schools at Manenzhe during Phaswana's youth. He attended the *murundu* initiation school for boys, and listened to stories told by his grandmother, Mrs. Tshiwawa.

As explained in the discussion on land dispossession (1.8.2), several communities living in Niani became uprooted following the establishment of ethnic enclaves. Manenzhe was divided into farms like Beatrice, Amonda, Deonberg and David. Many uprooted inhabitants relocated to villages that were closest by, and which had just managed to escape land dispossession, such as Folovhodwe and Muswodi. This is where most members of the Phaswana family settled.

Phaswana married two wives, Selina and Sanna, who have five and two children respectively. Phaswana was a migrant labourer who worked in Johannesburg for most of his active life, first as gardener, and subsequently as gold miner. Later during his life he returned to Folovhodwe, and worked in the nearby Tshikondeni coal mine.

Fig. 99. Folovhodwe
2011

2.23.1 The woman without children / Musadzi wa muumba

There was a certain old woman. She was called Mashudu. She kept mice.

Those mice … When she woke up in the morning, when she went to the fields, she said to them, 'I will return and give you food.'

(Narrator)[i]
Play
(Chorus)
and come back here, little mouse!

It was then that she went to the fields.

When she returned, she did that, she again sang, 'Play and come back here little mouse ...'

Those mice came out!

She gave them food. They ate and went back inside their hole.

Now, one day she went out again and sang again, 'Play and come back here little mouse ...'

She went out, she went to the fields.

When she returned, she did the same again, she sang 'Play and come back here little mouse ...'

Now, it happened that there was a cat!

The cat came there and tricked those mice.

It said, 'You, come, let us play outside the hole. We will play here, we will play!'

The mice said, 'No! We are not allowed to go outside!'

The cat tried to persuade the mice. The cat persuaded them and the

[i] Fixed alternation between solo and chorus is unclear. In a rendition of the song with guitar accompaniment, a group sang the entire phrase, while an expert singer thickened the harmonic texture with melodic variations (Kruger, 1993:444).

Ho vha hu na munwe mukegulu. A tshi pfi Mashudu. O fuwa mbevha.

Mbevha hedzo ... U vuwa nga matsheloni a tshi ya masimuni.

A ri, 'Ndi ḓo vhuya ndi tshi ni fha zwiliwa.'

(Musimi)
Tamba u tshi
(Vhabvumeli)
vhuya ngeno tshibevha!

Ndi musi a tshi ya masimuni.

A tshi yo vhuya, u ḓi touralo: U ḓi ri, 'Tamba u tshi …'

Zwibevha hezwila zwa bva!

A zwi fha zwiliwa. Zwa la zwa vhuyelela mulindini wazwo.

Zwino, ndi ha misi ha ḓuvha liṅwe a tshi bva a ḓi ralo sa zwezwo, 'Tamba u tshi …'

A bva, a ya masimuni.

A tshi yo vhuya, a ḓi ḓovha sa zwezwo, a ḓi ri, 'Tamba u tshi …'

Zwino, ha vha hu uri hu na tshikadzi!

Tshikadzi tsha ḓa tsha fura mbevha hedzila.

Tsha ri, 'Iwe, idani ri tambe ngeno mulindini. Ri khou tamba hanefha, ri tshi tamba.'

Mbevha dza ri, 'Hai! Rine a ri koni u ḓa hafho!'

Tsha luvhelela zwibevha, tshikadzi tsha luvhelela, zwibevha zwa swika hanefhala. Zwibevha zwi khou tanyiwa nga tshithihi nga tshithihi!

Zwino, hu tshi yo tsha matshelo.

Uri a tshi yo vhuya masimuni, a tshi ḓa a tshi imbelela, mbevha a hu tshena!

Ndi ha misi a tshi vho ḓi alela.

A tshi vuwa nga matsheloni a tshi yo sedza, a wana mbevha ya u fhedzisela yo lelwa hanefho mulindini.

2.23.1 The woman without children / Musadzi wa muumba (continued)

mice came out! The mice were caught one by one in the cat's claws!

Now, it became the next day.

When the old woman returned from the fields, when she came there singing, the mice were gone!

That was when she prepared for bed.

When she woke up the next morning she looked and found the last mouse being eaten there in the hole.

This is the death of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 28 June 2016

The core image of this story is its song. Like other *ngano* songs, it has been separated from its story for so long that its narrative meanings have largely slipped from memory. It has been adapted as a *malende* choral dance-song, a *tshihwana* mouth-bow song as well as a guitar song.[857] Some consequently say the song invites people to a beer drink. Others explain that it is sung by a husband to his adulterous wife. It is also interpreted as a warning to young children not to play in the veld, and to come home when called.

As the introductory vignette (1.1) explains, this story describes the experience of a childless woman who adopts mouse-children.[i] Childlessness is a theme so common to *ngano* that it requires no more than 'a little story' to evoke its deep sorrow.[ii] Variations of this theme have also been documented in Sotho stories.[858]

Kirkaldy[859] explains that, 'according to local belief structures, a man who had not fathered children had not fulfilled one of his primary missions (if not his primary mission) in life. Without descendants, the family line, and hence its ancestors, would die out.'

Motherhood is therefore also an essential social requirement. A woman is 'dependent on her children to reach a position of influence and respect in the community and material security in in old age.'[860] As such, 'barrenness is more bitter than death.'[861] Childless women in particular are subject to ridicule and insult, and they may even be driven from their marital home.[862]

The trauma of childlessness finds common expression in verbal and musical art.[863] Junod[864] cites a song in which a childless woman asks others to lend her a child. They refuse and she says to the child, 'Were I an eagle (…) I would carry thee away!' Venda songs similarly express the desire for children.[iii]

Ngano in turn portray the magical creation of humans. Actual figurines are usually made according to domains of labour. Men are woodcarvers, and *ngano* show them shaping women from logs. Women in turn are potters, and they usually shape clay figurines. In their most typical form, *ngano* show how a clay-boy is 'made in sorrow because there was no real child.'[iv]

The clay-boy breathes, walks and speaks like a human. He goes to the river, looks after goats and marries.[v] However, his life is fragile and brief:

> The rain came pounding down. The hand that held the stick separated from the clay arm. It fell on the ground, kunu! (…) Oh! The other hand also fell off. And the head, teku-teku! The clay body jerked like that of a dancer. (…) That small leg started to … started to fall off, kunu! As it came off, the body fell backwards, ga! Oh dear! The clay child was just a creation, an imitation, a zombie! He imploded into an anthill.[vi]

As explained in the discussion of 'The dancing mice' (2.1.3), domestic mice usually feature in stories about women's experiences. Mice are witch familiars, which 'are not real animals and can change shape and metamorphise into

[i] See Gavhi (1990:55-56) for a variation in which a childless woman adopts a baby crow. Her husband kills the bird and beats his wife.

[ii] See 'A little story' by Johanna Muleba of Muswodi-Tshisimani (Kruger, 2014). Also see 'The clay child' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and Scheub (1975:239-251.

[iii] A well-known *malende* choral dance-song indicates, *'Matakadza mbiluni ndi ṅwana'* ('A child brings joy to the heart'; Kruger, 1986:166-167).

[iv] From 'A little story' by Johanna Muleba of Muswodi-Tshisimani (Kruger, 2014).

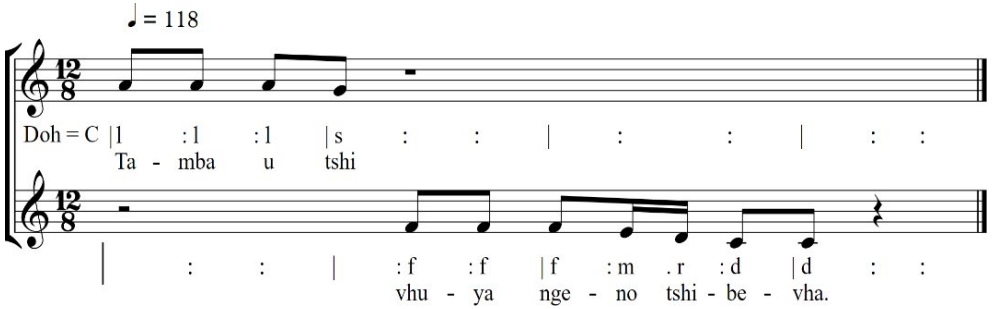
[v] See 'The clay child' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

[vi] Anthills are symbolic of fertility. See 'The magic hide' (2.9.1).

human form.'[865] Karanga *ngano* accordingly portray childless women who adopt animals.[866] 'In various cases where a woman tames an animal to grind or work for her in any way, the point is stressed that she has no children.' Furthermore, 'in some instances it appears that the animal is not even required to do any work, but is merely loved and fondled, and treated in a way that humans should not treat animals.'

These perspectives may explain why the woman's mouse-children are killed. Her domestic life appears normal for a brief moment: Her children are safely at home, she goes out to work in the fields, she returns home, she feeds her children, she goes back to work …

This is not so much a story about naïve young children lured beyond the safety of their home, as about the fictional quality of the clay-boy as a mere 'imitation.'[i] It is a fitting expression of the dream-like quality of a woman's experience, of harsh hopelessness that cannot be rationalised.



[i] From 'The clay child' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007:77).

2.23.2 Respect / Ṱhonipho

There was an old man who kept bees. When he went out to collect honey there in the morning, he sang and said,

(Narrator)
Totololo.
(Meaning unknown)
(Chorus, performed by the bees)
Ṱe-kumazhana.
(A honey comb with bee larvae)

He goes and fetches something[i] with which to carry the honey.
When he gets it, he goes out, he goes to the fields.
When he returns in the evening, he sings again, 'Totololo …'
He went to collect that honey over there. He returned and woke up the next morning.
He goes and sings again like that, 'Totololo …'
He is collecting honey again and leaves with it afterwards.
Now, when he returns the next evening, when he sings, he finds the bees not singing with him!
'I sang "Totololo!" but there was no response! Nothing!'
When he reached inside the hive, he felt nothing![ii]
'There is nothing! Nothing!'
He goes to sleep.
When he wakes up, he sings, he sings, he sings, he sings!
He finds the bees confused over there.
After starting to sing, he leaves for a certain homestead whose children had stolen that honey.
He squatted on a rock, he started to sing, 'Totololo …'

[i] The object is unknown, but it could be a strip of tree bark.
[ii] Afrikaans, *niks*.

Ho vha hu na mukalaha o fuwa notshi. A tshi bva u ya a tshi yo dzhia mazhana hafhaḽani nga matsheloni, u ya imba, a ri,

(Musimi)
Totololo.
(Vhabvumeli)
Ṱe-kumazhana.

A ya u dzhia maṱaha.
A tshi dzhia maṱaha hafhaḽa, a bva, a ya masimuni.
A tshi ya u vhuya nga madekwana, u ḓi ralo, 'Totololo …'
A ḓi yo dzhia mazhana aḽa hanefhaḽa.
A vhuya nga matsheloni a tshi vuwa.
U ya ḓi imba ngauraḽo, 'Totololo …'
A tshi ḓi dzhia mazhana a tshi ṱuwa nao.
Zwino, a tshi yo vhuya nga matsheloni, a tshi ya u imba, u wana notshi a dzi tsha mu bvumela!
'U ndo imba "Totololo!", a dzi tsha bvumela! Hai! A tshi ya u yo phuphuledza, u pfa niks!'
A hu tshe na tshithu! Hai!
A ya u lala.
A tshi yo vuwa, a imba, a imba, a imba, a imba!
A sokou wana notshi dzo sokou hangana hanefhaḽa.
A mbo ḓi imba, a imba, a ṱuwa a ya kha munwe muḓi honoyo wa vhana vho ḓaho vha tswa haaḽa mazhana.
A tumba kha tombo, a imbelela a tshi ḓi, 'Totololo …'
A tshi ya u imba, vhaḽa vhathu vha mbo ḓi bvela nnḓa.
Vha vhudzisa vhana vhavho: 'Hei! Vho-inwi! A no ngo silinga kha vhaḽa mukalaha naa?'
Vhana vha ri, 'Haa! Ro ṱou dzhia maṱaha kha notshi.'
'Hai! Ḓivhani zwauri no khakha!"

Respect / Ṱhonipho (continued)

When he sang, those people started to come out.

They asked their children: ‘Hey! You lot! Were you disrespectful[331] towards that old man?’

The children said, ‘Hey! We took the honeycombs.’

‘No! You must know that you made a mistake!’

It was that old woman. She went out and paid respect to that old man.

She said, ‘No, it was the children who were disrespecful. I asked them, and they said it was them who made a mistake.’

He answered, ‘No, you did the right thing by talking about the matter, talking. I was going to let the bees sting them!’

This is the death of the story.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, 28 June 2016

Ndi hezwi havhaḽa mukegulu, vha tshi bva vha tshi ḓa, vha tshi losha kha mukalaha houḽa.

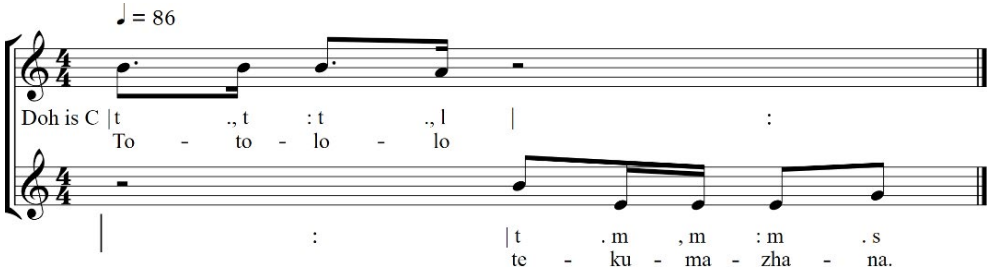
Vha ri, ‘Hai, ndi vhana vho silinga. Ndo vha vhudzisa, vha khou ri ndi riṋe ro silingaho.’

A ri, ‘Hai, no ita na amba. Nda ndi tshi ḓo ni lumisa nga notshi.’

Ha mbo ḓi vha hu u fa ha lungano.

This story tells of a farmer who is the owner of a magic song that enables him to collect honey from a hive in a tree on his land. The children of a neighbour overhear his song, and perform it to steal all the honey.

The story must be read in conjunction with ‘The lion-hunter’ (2.3.4) and its discussion.



2.24 Munyadziwa Matamela

Munyadziwa Maria Matamela was born in 1938 at Ha-Gumbu, which is located along the Limpopo river, on the eastern periphery of the Limpopo Valley.

Matamela's parents worked on a farm at Mukuyu, situated near the confluence of the Nwanedi and Limpopo river. Here she herded her father's cattle and goats, and listened to *ngano* at the knee of her grandmother, Nengudza Gumbu.

Matamela is a widow. Her husband was Titos Didjana Matamela. He was a migrant worker employed by an instant-lawn company in Johannesburg.

Matamela has resided at Folovhodwe for most of her life. She worked in the fields of the Nwanedi irrigation project as casual labourer.

She has eleven children, of whom one is deceased. Most live locally.

2.24.1 My mother and father / Mme anga na khotsi anga

Here comes a story!

My mother cooked meat.
She served it in that small clay bowl over there.
My father came there[i] and kicked that bowl.[ii]
That bowl fell on the ground.[iii]
My mother started to scold him.
He slapped her.

This is the end of the story!

Folovhodwe, 28 June 2016

Salungano! Salungano!

Mme anga vho bika n̓ama.
Vha avhela tshidongwanani fha̓la.
Khotsi anga vha d̓a vha raha tshidongwana tshi̓la.
Tshi̓la tshidongwana tsha tevhukana tsha d̓ala mavu.
Mme anga vha tshi amba.
Vha vha diya nga mpama.

Salungano! Salungano!

[i] The husband is drunk.
[ii] The husband is dissatisfied with his wife's cooking.
[iii] Lit. 'filled with soil.'

Although this story is obviously marked by brevity, it speaks to a narrative community fully conversant with marital conflict. This theme also characterises regional narratives. Mbiti[867] notes that, in Africa, 'the shorter the radius of kinship and family ties, the more scapegoats there are.' Spousal quarrels in *ngano* are foretold in the ubiquitous opening line, *'Ho vha hu na mu̓we munna e na musadzi wawe'* ('There was a certain man and his wife').

While the narrative portrayal of physical violence against women[i] could be hyperbolic, it correlates in many respects with ethnographic descriptions of

[i] See 'Mrs. Rock-Rabbit' (Kruger, 2014), and 'The flamboyant rooster' and 'Crow-woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).

the subjugation of women.[868] Narrator Masindi Maliyehe[869] remarks ironically that 'people had a certain custom long ago when they still lived in peace: If a man married a woman – a good woman – and she became a cripple because of a piece of firewood,[i] he could chase her away.'

Female narrators accordingly described themselves to Le Roux[870] as 'the silent ones.' They quoted expressions like *'Munna o fara lubada'* ('The man holds the stick that punishes') and *'Arali munna asiho, mudzimu a vho fa'* ('When a man falls away, a god dies').

While women are subject to various gender constraints, they also enact roles of power and independence within the family, with attendant conflict. These roles are portrayed in a large number of *ngano*.[ii] They usually involve that of wife, co-wife, sister, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother.[871] Conflict is also shown to involve the preparation of food, and the role of women as cook.[iii]

Locked into the politics and economy of patriarchy, divorce formerly was not an option for women in abusive relationships.[872] When they rebelled against their prescribed roles, they faced isolation, hardship and violence.

The narrator and Mathuvhelo Mavhetha indicated that wife abuse remains a routine occurrence. However, an elderly narrator explained to Le Roux that 'young women nowadays know divorce.' Mavhetha remarked similarly that a husband currently is likely to emerge from court 'wearing only his jacket.'

The narrator hinted that the story is autobiographical. She explained that the husband in the story comes home drunk, and, following the quarrel, chases his wife and children away ('the little ones followed her'). The trauma attendant on this event may explain the suppression of emotional content, and the factual brevity of the narrative. The representation of marital conflict appears to require few words.

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[i] In other words, she was assaulted.

[ii] See 'The wooden hoe,' 'Also a woman' and 'The tree with red flowers' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Mrs. Devhele goes down' (Kruger, 2014).

[iii] See 'We do not pound' (2.17.1) as well as 'Mrs. Devhele goes down,' 'Magic' and 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014).

2.24.2 The bird of Mangwane / Tshinoni tsha Mangwane

(Narrator sings and chants)
The bird of Mangwane cried.
Why did it cry?
It cried for its mother.
When they went to Venda, they returned.
She was wearing a dress, that wide wrap-around dress.
(Perhaps: Hitting a coiled-up *[petekana]* snake *[luvhiḓi]* with a switch *[lutamu]*.)
If you do not see a crow walking, or it is like a small one.
It was like *(lutitime*, unclear).
When it went there, it went to the place of Mr. Mopani.
(Chorus chants)
Thai!

Folovhodwe, 28 June 2016

(Musimi)
Tshinoni tsha Mangwane tsho lila.
Tsho lilelani?
Tsho lilela mme watsho.
Vha tshi ya Venda, vha vhuya kwavho.
Vha tshi nga ṅwenda, ṅwenda wa nzheti.
Ni sa wani luvhiḓi ḽo petekana, ḽo petekana kana ḽo no vha ḽutamu.
Ni sa vhone funguvhu mandeya-mandeya, kano ḽo no vha gwidzana.
Ḽi tshinga lutitime.
Lu tshi ya ngeyo, ha Vho-Mapani.
(Vhabvumeli)
Thai!

Matamela explained that this song was sung during *ngano* sessions. She identified it as *ngano dza vhana (ngano* of children) as well as *ndayo*, or moral instruction. It corresponds with a form of *ngano* described by Blacking[873] as

> songs of similar structure that are sung without a story to accompany them (…) (They) are generally sung by boys and girls together: the meaning of their words is often obscure, but their sequence suggests that they are stories set to music which have become corrupted with the passage of time.

Matamela was unable to provide any explicit interpretation, but did offer the following description:

This crow walked,	Hezwiḽa vho funguvhu mandeya-mandeya,
it is now a small one.	ḽo̍ novha gwidzana ndi lufhando.
Not seeing the snake coiled up.	Sa vhoni luvhiḓi lo̍ petekana.
Long ago there was a switch.	Kale haḽo̍ ḽo̍ vha luṱamu.
Now, it is a switch.	Zwino, ḽo̍ no vha luṱamu.
When it walked there, when it came there,	Lu tshi ya u tshimbila hafhaḽani, lu tshi ḓa hafhaḽani,
it changes, it created disorder.	lu vho shanduka, ḽavho ita nyoko.
When she put the switch down there,	Vha tshi vheya luṱamu hafhaḽani,
when she wanted to carry (object not identified)	vhone vha tshi ri vha khoyo̍ beba hafhaḽani,
over there, it is that switch!	ndi luṱamu ho luyani!
That switch struck!	Ya vho̍ lu huḓula,
It came about there that it flew up and went	Ha mbo ḓi swika hafhaḽani ya mbo ḓi vha
into the nostrils (of a person).	fhufhela ya dzhena nga dzi ningoni.

Section 3
Supporting narratives and life sketches, glossary, sources and references

3.1 Supporting narratives

3.1.1 Marcus Vhengani

Vhengani was a resident of Matangari village. He was a pensioner formerly employed as a dipping official in the Department of Agriculture. This narrative was recorded during a visit by him to his sister Miriam at Tshiungani.[874] She is also a narrator.[875]

Baboons / Mapfene

Long ago people used to farm in the mountain. They farmed open areas in valleys. They did not work with tractors.

They had to watch out for marauding baboons.

Now, we worked with young men like this one …[i] Now, this one, this is the very one.

I sat on top of a rock watching out for the baboons coming through the fence to raid the maize.

Now, this one started to come into the maize.

I got up.

When I saw it, I called this young man over to me.

We are starting now.

Now, when the baboon came into the field I started to sing,

(Narrator chants)
Nde tshakutshatsha.[ii]
(Chorus chants)
It suits me.

Now, from there it went back through the opening in the fence and left.

Kale-kale ho vha hu tshi limiwa thavhani. Hu sa limiwi khagala midavhini. Ri sa shumisi maṱeretere.

Hu tshi lindiwa mapfene.

Zwino, ro vha ri tshi shuma na vhathu vha vhaṱhannga vha no nga sa hoyu. Zwino, hoyu, ndi ane nne nga maanḓa.

Ndi tshi dzula ntha ha tombo ndi tshi gada mapfene hune a sera ngaho a tshi ḓa u ḽa mavhele.

Zwino, hezwi ḽi tshi thoma u dzhena mavhele.

Nne ndi a takuwa.

Hezwi ndi tshi ḽi vhona ndi a vhidza hoyu nde kha ḓe nga hafha tsini hanga kha takuwe a ḓe nga hafha tsini.

Ri khou thoma zwino.

Zwino, hezwi ḽo no dzhena nne ndi ḓo ita,

(Musimi)
Nde tshakutshatsha.
(Vhabvumeli)
Zwi a mpfanela-vho.

Zwino, u bva afho ḽa mbo ḓi dzhena nga tshivhana ḽa tuwa.

Asiḽo! Ḽo tuwa ḽo shavha ḽo ya. Ḽo tuwa pfene heḽia ḽo namba. Ḽo shavha ḽo balangana. Zwino, ḽo tuwa ḽo shavha.

[i] Pointing to a participant in his early twenties.
[ii] An idiophone of the sound of ankle rattles worn by dancers

Baboons / Mapfene (continued)

There it is! It left and ran away. That baboon left for good. It ran away and the rest scattered. Now, it left and ran.

Now, we will leave to go over there at the mountain.[i]

I took my walking stick.

It does not enter here.

Pardon me, won't you?

I am walking with the stick.

Pardon me.

Now, although it is not here.

Now, indeed, I left here walking slowly. I walked slowly like an adult, like an old man who is walking with his hands behind his back. It shows that the old man is an important person. The important old man must be respected, unlike a young person.

Male lion! Greetings! Male Lion![ii]

Tshiungani, 28 September 2008

Zwino, ri ḓo bva hangei thavhani.

Nṅe nda konou dzhia lubaḓa.

A ṅlu dzheni hafha.

Vha mpfarele thi ri?

Ndi tshimbila na lubaḓa.

A lu dzheni hafha vha mpfarele.

Zwino, naho lu si ho.

Zwino, nangoho nṅe ndi a bva hafha ndi tshi tou tshimbila zwavhuḓi. Ndo ḓi geḓa zwavhuḓi sa muthu muhulwane wa mukalaha ane nda ḓi tshimbilela ndo fara zwanḓa murahu. U sumbedza zwauri ndi mukalaha ndi muthu tshihulwane. Mukalaha muhulwane u a ṱoniphiwa, ha fani na muthu muṱuku.

Ndau ya nduna! Khakhamela! Ndau ya nduna!

---

[i] The narrator is announcing his departure.

[ii] The praise name of a traditional leader.

3.1.2 Rosiena Magadani

Magadani resided at Phadzima, and her stories were recorded by Le Roux[876] during 1991.

The zebras are jiving[877]

You people must say ‘salungano!’

Well, well! Lions!
Now, they had three children.
Now, the husband and wife used to go out to hunt.
Now, zebras came during the day. When they come, they kick those children, bvu-bvu!
‘Can your father kick so hard?’
They say, ‘He cannot! He cannot!’
‘Bring your father’s lamellophone!’
They bring it and give it to them.
The zebras sing,

(Narrator)
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke!
(The bright, metallic sounds of the lamellophone’s metal keys.)
Tsi-ntsi-ntsi!
(The rhythmic sound of the lamellophone’s vibrators.)[i]
(Chorus)
We will take your place as king of the animals!

The lions returned. Those zebras scattered! The wild animals came walking there, kwizi-kwizi!
‘Hey you, child, come here and pass me my lamellophone.’

Vhathu vha ri ‘salungano!’

Zwino, zwino! Dzindau!
Zwino, dzi na vhana vhadzo vhararu.
Zwino, dzi a bva munna na musadzi vha ya u zwima.
Zwino, hezwi nga masiari hu ḓa mbidi. Mbiḓi dzi tshi swika, dzi ri vhaḽa vhana, bvu-bvu!
‘Khotsi aṋu u na mupundu mungafha?’
Vha ri, ‘A vha na, a vha na!’
‘Ḓisani mbila dza khotsi aṋu!’
Vha dzhia, vha vha fha. Ha pfi,

(Musimi)
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke!
Tsi-ntsi-ntsi!
(Vhabvumeli)
Ha vhuya gumba ḽanga mu tsha pembela!

Dza vha dzi a vhuya ndau. Dziḽa mbiḓi wavhaa! Kwizi-kwizi dzipukha.
‘Heiwe ṅwana, iḓou mpha mbila dzanga asidzo.’
Vhaḽa vhana vha dzhia vha fha khotsi avho ndau. Ha pfi ‘vovongo-vongo!’

[i] These vibrators initially comprised fragments of snail shells, but were eventually replaced by metal bottle tops and rings.

The zebras are jiving (continued)

Those children fetch it and give it to their father, that lion. He tries to play on it, but the sound is dull, 'vovongu-vongu!'

(Narrator chants with increasing incoherence towards the end of the story)
Vovongu-vongu!
(Chorus chants)
Gavheka! (Lion puts his lamellophone down in disgust.)

'Who came here?'
'Nobody! Nobody!'
Vovongu-vongu! Gavheka! …
'Oh! By the ancestors! Something is wrong with my lamellophone! You, children, who came here and took this lamellophone?'
'Nobody! Nobody!'
'Oh well, hang my lamellophone there on its hook.'
They did that. They were eating. So! It was daybreak. They are leaving. The man and woman are hunting again. Those children always remain at home.
The zebras arrive. They are swanking, kigiḓi-kigiḓi-kigiḓi! They are kicking, bvu-bvu!
'Can your father kick so hard?'
'Yes, he can!'
Bvu-bvu!
'He cannot, he cannot!'
'Bring your father's lamellophone!'
They take the lamellophone down and give it to them.
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke! …
There was more than a little dust from dancing!
'Hey! Here is your father's lamellophone!'
Those children come and take it.

(Musimi)
Vovongo-vongo!
(Vhabvumeli)
Gavheka!

'Naa ho ḓa nnyi?'
'A hu na! A huna!'
Vovongu-vongu! Gavheka! …
'Ha! Vhathu vha Mudzimu! Mbila dzanga a dzo ngo luga hedzi! 'Iwe, vhana, ho ḓa nnyi a dzhia mbila hedzi?'
'A hu na! A hu na!'
'Ai! Fhahea hafhaḽa.'
Dza fhahewa. Ha ḽiwa. Hai! Ḽa tsha. Vha bva. Munna na musadzi vha yo zwima. Zwiḽa vhana zwi ḓi sala henefhaḽa hayani.
Mbiḓi dzi a ḓa, dzi tshi tou ṱonga, kigiḓi-kigiḓi-kigiḓi! Bvu-bvu!
'Khotsi aṉu u na mupunḓu mungafha?'
'Iii! A! Vha nawo!'
Bvu-bvu!
'A vha na, a vha na!'
'Ḓisani mbila hedzo dza khotsi aṉu.'
Zwa ya zwa fhahulula. Zwa dzi fha.
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke! …
A si ḽone ḽiruli hafho fhethu!
'A! I, asidzi mbila dza khotsi aṉu.'
Vhaḽa vhana vha a dzhia.
'Na vhuya na amba ii, ri ḓo ni raha!'
Ha! Vhaḽa vha vha dzhia vha yo vhea henefhaḽa.
Ndau dzi a swika, kwizi-kwizi!
'Hei! Iḓou mpha mbila dzanga!
'Ni song amba, ni songo amba!'
'Khedzi!'

The zebras are jiving (continued)

‘If you tell on us, we will kick you!’

The lions returned, kwizi-kwizi!

‘Hey, come and give me my lamellophone!’

‘Don’t tell, don’t tell.’

‘Here it is.’

Vovongu-vongu! Gavheka! …

‘Who came here?’

‘Nobody! Nobody!’

Vovongu-vongu! Gavheka! …

‘Hey, something is wrong with my lamellophone!’

‘Why is your cheek swollen?’

‘It is nothing.’

‘Ah, can’t you tell me why your cheek is swollen? There is a lump on your cheek! Did you fall?’

‘I did not fall.’

‘Hah! Tell me about these hoof marks.’

‘We … the zebras came, the zebras came …’

‘Ah! Why didn’t you tell me sooner?’

‘We were afraid that they would beat us up again!’

‘All right then,’ the lion says, ‘we won’t go out for long tomorrow. We will hide close by.’

Truly, the lions went out for a short while. They hid. Hah, then the others came galloping, dingindi-dingindi-dingindi!

Vovongu-vongu! Gavheka! …

‘Naa, ho ḓa nnyi nna?’

‘A hu na! A hu na!’

Vovongu-vongu! Gavheka! …

‘Ha, mbila dzanga a dzo ngo luga hedzi.’

‘Naa iwe wo zimba nga mini afha kha luṱaha?’

‘A hu na.’

‘A, a u mmbudzi uri wo zwimba nga mini? Ḽi … ḽishima ḽau ḽo zwimba! Wo tou wa?’

‘Tho ngo wa.’

‘Ha! Mmbudze, hafhano naa khwaṋda idzi ndi dza mini?

‘Riṋe … Hu ḓa mbiḓi, hu ḓa mbiḓi dzi …’

‘A, zwino, ni sa mmbudze kale?’

‘A, ri hou shavha zwauri dzi ḓo dovha dza ri diesa.’

Hai, ndi hone ndau i tshi ri, ‘Ndi zwone, matshelo ndi ḓo bva zwiṱukuṱuku. Ndi tou lalela.’

Nangoho, ndau dza bva zwiṱukuṱuku. Dza lalela. Ha, dza vha dzi a ḓa, dingindi-dingindi-dingindi!

The zebras are jiving (continued)

‘Can your father kick so hard?’
‘No, he can’t!’
Bvu-bvu!
‘No, he doesn’t!’
Bvu! bvu!
‘Here it is! Here it is! The lamellophone!’
‘Yes! Give us the lamellophone!’
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke! …
‘Can your father jive like we do?’
‘No, he can’t!’
‘Which dance is best: Ours or your father’s?’
‘Your jive is the best!’
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke! …
And then! The lions stormed in there, bulugudu! They jumped on the zebras and broke their necks with a crack, tlo-tlo!

This is the end of the story.

Phadzima, 15 March 1991

‘Khotsi anu u na mupundu mungafha?’
‘Hai, a vha na!’
Bvu-bvu!
‘Khedzi, khedzi, mbila!’
‘Ya, ri fheni mbila!’
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke! …
‘Khotsi anu u a dzhaiva unga rine?’
‘A vha koni.’
‘Vha a kona unga rine? Zwa khotsi anu na zwashu, hu naka zwifhio?’
‘Hu naka zwenezwi.’
Nzelelekunze! Nzelelezeke! …
Ndi hone, ndi hone henefho, ndau dza vha dzi tshi bulugudu! Dza ri dzila mbidi dzothe tlo-tlo!

Ha vha u fa ha lungano.

3.1.3 Mpho Muofhe

Mrs. Mpho Muofhe lived at Miluwani in Thohoyandou. Mr. M. Phuriwa recorded 'Mr. Jim' from her on 14 July 1991 for research purposes at the University of Venda. The recording was made on cassette tape which is housed in the Venda Musical History collection at the International Library of African Music (Rhodes University). The research report did not include the original Tshivenda text whose translated synopsis was revised and retold by the editor.[878]

Mr. Jim

Salungano, salungano, here comes a story!

There once was a man by the name of Jim. He was married to a woman called Tshinakaho.

Jim worked far from home in the big city of Johannesburg. He returned home by minibus taxi for a few days only every couple of months.

Tshinakaho remained at home with her son and Jim's two younger, unmarried brothers. She was a trader who sold fruit and vegetables at the market.

When she returned from work at night, she cooked food in a small three-legged pot on an open fire. This pot was only big enough for herself and her son.

Jim's small dog became very hungry, and he started to sing,

Ululu!	She cooks porridge and chicken.
(Howling)	*Ino bva Dzubege.*
Vho-Jimu!	He comes back from Johannesburg.
Mr Jim!	*A nzima na vhuswa!*
Tshinakaho hayani.	She refuses to give me porridge!
Tshinakaho is at home.	(Chorus)
O bika na vhuswa na ṋama ya khuhu.	*Salantevhele!*
She cooks porridge and chicken.	Always following me!

But Tshinakaho still refused to feed Jim's dog.

She said, 'I cook only for myself and my son because I work during the day. I also like to put on nice clothes and go shopping. Yes, I paint my nails and put on lipstick. I do not stay at home all day and cook in a large pot for all the other family members.'

And so Jim's dog had to live off scraps of discarded food, and by begging from neighbours while his owner worked in Johannesburg.

One day Jim arrived home for a visit. When his dog heard him arriving, he ran to him and sang, *'Ululu …!'*

Jim told Tshinakaho to cook for everyone at home, but she refused!

This is the end of the story.

3.1.4 Zachary Tshamano

'Dzwee' journey' and 'Olosi lives happily ever after' appear in a previous annotated collection,[879] and their interpretation has been expanded elsewhere.[i] See section 1.8 for an overview of these stories.

Dzwee's journey / Lwendo lwa Dzwee

This is where the story starts!

There was a certain young man called Dzwee. 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.'

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. He 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.'

'You will be devoured by predators because we are far from villages

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu muṅwe muṱhannga a tshi pfi Dzwee. A dinalea hayani. A semana na vhabebi. A ṅala a ri, 'Ndi a tuwa!'

A tshimbila a ya ḓakani ḽihulu ḽine a sa ḓivhe uri ndi ḽa gai. A swika a wana ndau. A lingedza u shavha.

Ya ri, 'U songo shavha! Iḓani u ṋtomole mupfa, ndo ṱhavhiwa.' 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 nnḓa ha maḓi.

Ya ri, 'Hee, iwe, Dzwee! Iḓa u ndzhie u mposele maḓini!'

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 maḓini.

A tshimbila a swika a wana bere.

Bere ya ri, 'Hei Dzwee! U khou ṱoḓani afha ḓakani ḽihulu-hulu?'

Dzwee a ri, 'Ndi khou sokou tshimbila, a thi ḓivhi hune nda khou ya hone.'

Bere ya ri, 'U ḓo ḽiwa nga zwivhanda ngauri hafha fhethu ndi kule na zwiṱentsi.'

A namela bere. A gada nayo, a gada nayo! Ya swika ya mu tsitsa zwiṱentsini. A swika a wana shopo ḽihulu ḽa magula.

A ri, 'Ndi a humbela mushumo.'

[i] Kruger & Verhoef (2015). http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/lit.v36i1.1140

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. They burned him, they burned him!

Magula vha ri, 'Ri khou fha tshikepe wa namela wa ya oversea wa yo dzhia khii na musadzi.'

Vha mu fha na zwiliwa a ya oversea. Vha mu namedza tshikepe.

Mudi wa hone wo tingiwa nga dzindau. A tshi ri u a dzhena ndau dza ri dzi a mu la. Heila ndau ye a i vangula ya ri, 'Ha liwi, o nthusa hoyu.'

A dzhena mudini. A bva na musadzi. Vha dzhena tshikepeni. Vho no vha vhukati ha lwanzhe musadzi a dzhia khii a posa lwanzheni.

Vha tshi vhuya fhala magula vha ri, 'Khii dzi gai?'

Musadzi a ri, 'Nne ndo posa madini. Ri a u ruma futhi. Tshimbila u yo pala khii lwanzheni.'

Vha mu shelela na zwiliwa. Dzwee a dzhena kha tshikepe. A dzula maduvha mavhili tshikepeni a lwanzheni a khou sedza.

Heila khovhe ya mu vhona ya ri, 'Hee, Dzwee, u khou toda mini afha?' A ri, 'Ndi khou toda khii.'

Khovhe ya langana na dzinwe khovhe madini, 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 mu badele. O ri shumela zwinzhi. Tshelede ndi nnzhi heyi.'

Vha dzhia vha mu valela tshikamarani tsha mulilo. Vha mu fhisa, vha mu fhisa! 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 vhothe vha tuwa. Shopo la vha lawe.

Ha da ndau. Ndau ya ri, 'Hee, Dzwee, u kha di zwi humbula u ri ndi nne ndo u lamulelaho u tshi khou toda u liwa naa?'

Dzwee a ri, 'Iwe a u dzuli na vhathu. Tuwa u ye dakani!'

Ha da khovhe. Khovhe ya ri, 'Hee, Dzwee, u kha di zwi humbula uri ndi nne we nda u thusa nga u todela khii naa?'

Dzwee a ri, 'Iwe, dzhena madini, iwe a u dzuli na vhathu.'

Dzwee's journey / Lwendo lwa Dzwee (continued)

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.'

This is the death of the story.

Folovhodwe, 17 June 2011

Bere ya ḓa. Ya ri, 'Hee, Dzwee, iwe u kha ḓi zwi humbula uri ndi nne we a u ḓisa afha naa?'

Dzwee a ri, 'Iwe, bere, i ya u vha u khou ḽa mahatsi hafhaḽa, a u dzuli na vhathu.'

Ha vha u fa ha salungano.

Olosi lives happily ever after / Olosi o tshila zwavhuḓi nga murahu

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. 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. 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 hide 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 hide 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

Salungano, salungano!

Ho vha hu munna a na vhasadzi vhavhili. Muṅwe musadzi a beba ṅwana a re na magic. A re na ṋaledzi hafha kha phanḓa. Heiḽa ṋaledzi a i timbula, u a vha muhulwane a wana a na tshelede ine ya vha na mukhuwa.

Houḽa musadzi a zwi vhona. A dzhia ṅwana a mu posa maḓini. Houḽa ṅwana a sa nukale. A dovha futhi. Havhaḽa vho ya khunini a humbula u dzhia houḽa ṅwana a mu posa maḓini. A ya a mu posa.

Vhathu vha muṱoḓa muḓi woṱhe, vha muṱoḓa shango ḽoṱhe.

Muṅwe munna a ri, 'Ndo vhona ṅwana ndi tshi khou bva khunini hangei e maḓini. A songo vhuya a nukala, ende futhi a sa eleli.'

Vha ya vha dzhia ṅwana. Vha mu dzhia vha vhuya nae muḓini.

Houḽa ṅwana a zwi vhona uri ndi a fa hafha fhethu. A tibuḽa ṋaledzi yawe a vha muhulwane.

A tshi vha muhulwane a ri, 'Mma, ndi a ṱuwa, ndi yo shuma.'

Vhaḽa vha ri, 'Aa! U a ṱuwa wa ya u shuma zwino u muṱuku so?'

A ri, 'Ndi khou ṱuwa ndi khou ya u shuma mme anga. Havha vhathu hu tou nga, vha ḓo mmbulaha.' Ndi u mu tendela a ṱuwa a yo shuma.

A ṱangana na tshiṅwe tshinna tsho ambara mukumba u re na dzinnda. Tsha ri, 'Hee iwe! U khou ya u shuma wo ambara sutu naa? U nga si ḓo vhuya wa wana mushumo na luthihi.'

Houḽa muṱhannga a ri, 'Mphe hezwo zwe wa ambara.' A mu fha mukumba. Hetshiḽa tshinna tsha ṱuwa tsho ambara sutu ...

A tshi swika muḓini muṅwe vha ri, 'Riṋe a ri ṱoḓi muthu wa dzinnda.'

A pfuka a ya kha muṅwe muḓi vha ri, 'Riṋe a ri ṱoḓi muthu wa dzinnda.' Ha pfi, 'Nne ri tou ya ha khosi Vho-Baulo.'

Vho-Baulo vha ri, 'Iḓai, ndi u thole.'

Vha mufhaṱela kuḓu kwawe kule na nnḓu yavho. Vha tshi tou ya vha tshi mu vhidza nga mushumo.

Hoyu muṱhannga o vha a tshi pfi Olosi. Houḽa muṱhannga: Ha ri

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. 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. 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!

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.

vhusiku ha u thoma a eḓela. Ha vhuvhili a tibula naledzi heila a wana e mukhuwa a na tshelede.

Nga ḓuvha li tevhelaho havhala munna vha ri, 'Olosi u sale na nndu-ii. Ndi khou thoma nda ya vhutamboni. Hu na mukhuwa ane a khou ya u vhoniwa.'

Vha tuwa, Olosi a sala. A tibula naledzi yawe. Ha ḓa bere tsini. A ambara sutu tshena. A namela bere yawe. A ri, kha-kha-kha-kha! A swika vhutamboni. Vha mu vhona!

Havhala Vho-Baulo vha vha vha a vhuya. Vha ri, 'Ṅwananga, iyani u vhidza Olosi.'

Vho-Baulo vho vha vhe na ṅwana 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 ḓa namusi. Mukhuwa ro mu vhona. Namusi ro diphina.'

Olosi a ri, 'Ndi zwavhuḓi.'

Ha pfi, 'Iwe, tuwa u yo eḓela.'

Nga li tevhelaho nga madekwana o no fhedza u shuma mishumo yawe yothe vha vhidza ṅwana wavho wa musidzana. Vha ri, 'Iyani, ni yo mmbidzela Olosi.'

Houla musidzana a swika a tou dodela. A wana Olosi o tibula naledzi. Phanda hawe huna dzitshelede, o tswuka e mukhuwa.

A tshi vhidzelela a ri, 'Hee, Olosi! Hu pfi iḓani!'

A tshi tiba, a ri, 'U songo tiba!' A ri, 'Nnyitele ndi vhone.'

Olosi a hana. A mu luvhelela, a mu luvhelela. A vhuya, a tenda. A mu itela.

Vhusiku vhuṅwe na vhuṅwe houla ṅwana wa Vho-Baulo a tshi dzula e henengei.

Vho-Baulo vha ri, 'U ya u toḓani hangei ha Olosi?'

A ri, 'Olosi u vha a khou nndzuwela, ri vha ri tshi khou tou dzuwa. U vha a tshi khou ntakadza.'

Olosi lives happily ever after / Olosi o tshila zwavhudi nga murahu (continued)

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.’

Her father asked, ‘Whom do you want to marry?’

She answered, ‘Olosi.’

Mr Baulo shouted, ‘I will kill Olosi! You will never marry him!’

That child cried and cried and cried!

The chief said, ‘Olosi 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 Olosi.’

The chief replied, ‘But Olosi is just the one who stays outside.’

The white man said, ‘Leave your daughter to do as she wants.’

And so they started to plan the wedding. They waited for Olosi 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 Olosi?’ Mr Baulo tore his own suit off in frustration and threw it down! He shouted, ‘No! This cannot be Olosi!’

He went to Olosi’s house but did not find him there. He was confused. ‘What is going on here?’

Olosi said, ‘Yes, this is really me.’

And so Olosi married his child, he married her. Yes, he lived with her. They had money!

This is where the story dies.

Fholovhodwe, 17 June 2011

Hu si kale-kale houla musidzana a ri, ‘Khotsi anga, a vha 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 mu thatha a tshi tsha mutoda.’

Haala mukhuwa a ri, ‘Vho-Baulo a vha thome vha ime muthu hoyu wa u pfi Olosi ri thome ri mu vhone.’

Vha ri, ‘Ndi Olosi wa nnda.’

Ha pfi, ‘Kha vha mu litshe a ite zwine a khou funa hoyu nwana.’

Wa itiwa mutshato. Ha sala zwauri Olosi a de. Vha wana hu khou bvelela munwe 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 nne.’

A tshata na nwana wavho, a mu mala, a dzula nae. Avha na tshelede!

Havha u fa ha lungano.

Fig. 100. Looking for scraps
Folovhodwe, 2014

3.1.5 The song from ‘Mighty rooster’

‘Mighty rooster’[880] is a narrativised account *(ngano dza ndivho)* of raids of crops and cattle. Its song lived on in daily performances by Lewis Tshinavhe on Radio Thohoyandou during the early 1990s (see 1.8.1, 2.14.2).

The rooster is a metaphor for a brave herdsman persuing Sotho cattle raiders (hyperbolised as cannibals) in the same way that a rooster is the cocky master of his flock. The last solo line refers to the infamous red soil of the Soutpansberg that becomes extreme slippery when wet.

Mighty rooster / Tshinoni tsha nkuku

(Solo)	(Musimi)
Hey you, rooster!	Iwe nkuku wee!
The cattle are leaving.	Kholomo dzi a tuwa.
With whom are they leaving?	Dzi tuwa na vhafhio?
They are leaving	Dzi tuwa na Malema.
with the Malemas.	Malema-Madyavhathu.
The Malemas-who-are-cannibals.	Ndila ndi ifhio?
Where is the footpath?	Ndila ndi ya fhasi.
The footpath is below.	Tserere nda gobagoba!
Sliding and falling!	(Vhabvumeli)
(Chorus)	Tshinoni tsha nkuku.
Mighty rooster!	

Fig. 101. The song from ‘Mighty rooster’

3.1.6 The song from ‘Mutshavhona’

As explained (1.8.1), *ngano* memory is sustained in contemporary choir singing. The story entitled ‘Mutshavhona’ (2.13.2) articulates experiences of orphanhood, family conflict and witchcraft. Its song is part of the choral and ‘school song’ repertoire, and even migrated to an urban setting.

Fig. 103 was recorded on 12 July 1992 in Shoshanguve by a student at Venda University, Mrs. M. Ngobeni.[881] It was performed by a group of young singers, namely Mmapula Matlou, Moleko Matlou, Jeremia Ndou and Mmoloki Dibeko.

Any particular *ngano* may differ in spoken and sung content. A comparison of fig. 102 (the song in ‘Mutshavhona,’ 2.13.2) with its choralised version (fig. 103) shows the retention of the call-and-response form and certain melodic phrases, and the added harmonisation of the response pattern.

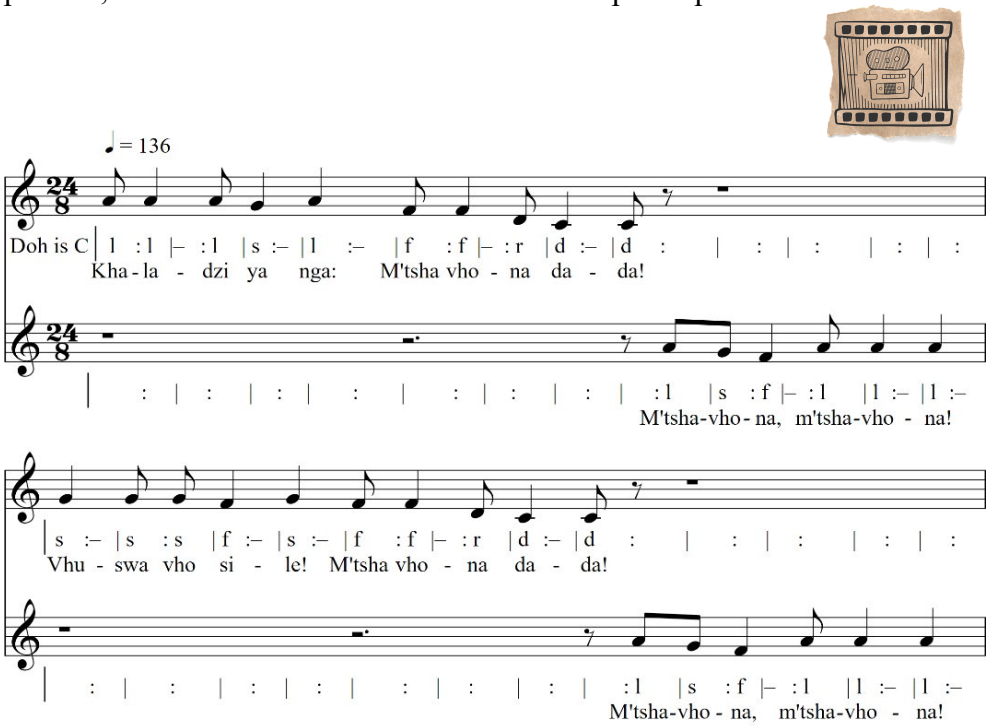

Fig. 102. Song extract from ‘Mutshavhona’ (2.13.2)

Fig. 103. Choralised form of the song from ‘Mighty rooster’

3.2 Supporting life sketches

Section 1.2.1 ('Identity narratives') explains that the sketches offered here expand the view of local lives. They are based on conversations by *ngano* scholar Ina le Roux (fig. 5) with two members of the local Tambani community project.[i] Le Roux founded the project in response to poverty among narrators and other women.

Fig. 104. (L to R) Sani Mudau, Eni Nenzhelele and Ema Vhengani at the Tambani head office, 2019

3.2.1 Ema Vhengani

I am Ema Vhengani.[ii] I was born in a small village called Ha-Gumbu, near Masisi.

When I think back to those early years, I can remember that we were happy children and that we had enough to eat. We had a good meal every evening.

My father worked in a mine nearby,[iii] and in the afternoons I waited for him at the stop where the truck dropped off all the workers. Even today I can remember how happy I was when I waited for my father at the truck stop: There my father climbs down from the truck! He waves at the driver and walks towards me with his bag. Inside that bag is a tin of maize meal and a tin of beans.

'Ndi madekwana' ('good evening'), I greet him politely. He smiles and takes my hand. My brother grabs the bag and runs ahead to where a pot of boiling water is waiting for the maize meal and beans. I thought our happy lives would never end.

Then something happened that made me even happier. I started school! I got a uniform: a white shirt and a black gym dress with a belt. The gym was very big but my father said I would grow.

My big brother bought me a long pencil. 'You must look well after this pencil. Don't chew it! You will not get another one in primary school.'

We did not have a school bell, only a heavy piece of metal suspended from a marula tree. A short while before it was time to start school, a boy would hit it with another piece of metal attached to a chain: clang-clang-clang! That meant, 'Hurry up! School is about to start!'

All the children would run faster, but not me! I was already in my classroom, waiting for them.

I can't remember this, but my mother said that in the mornings I was up and had washed before the sun came up, waiting to go to school. My brothers often had to bring me back from where I was walking along the footpath in the dark, going to school.

'It's too early Ema, the school is still closed, you can't go now. Wait for us,

i www.tambani.co.za

ii https://tambani.co.za/embroiderers/emmah-vhengani/

iii Tshikondeni Coal Mine.

we'll all walk together.'

'Come back Ema, you can't go to school today, it is Saturday. Take off your uniform, there is no school on Saturdays.'

During school holidays I cried and cried at the school gate. 'Open this gate, I want to go to school!'

One day a terrible thing happened. The mine truck arrived in the middle of the day. The driver was sent to pick up the wives of the mine workers.

'There was an accident this morning. The mine caved in. I am here to pick up family members. Only close family members!'

But everybody cried and rushed to get onto the truck. Many people stumbled and fell. Some even got hurt.

All were saved except my father and another man who were never found.

Now we became very poor. My mother had to feed seven children. My big brother was living at Tshakhuma where he worked in the gardens of Agriven. Many nights we did not have food. My brother tried to help but he got a small salary only.

I still loved school but when I started grade three, my school dress was above my knees and the white shirt was so small that I could not fasten the buttons. The pencil was as short as my little finger.

At the end of grade three my mother spoke to me. 'You cannot go back to school next year, there is no money for a uniform. And see, your pencil is finished, you can't even hold it. It has become too short.'

One day my big brother arrived with good news. 'They need tomato pickers. Come quickly, mama, there is a small truck waiting outside!'

Many of our neighbours also jumped on the truck and off they went, so happy.

Tomato picking is not a permanent job, but after that they needed women to pick mangoes for two months. We were so grateful.

But that was not the end of the good news. My brother sent a message that there was a job for me. His boss needed someone to look after his two small children in the afternoons. His wife got a job in the office and now they needed someone to take care of the children after school.

This was a wonderful new beginning for me because those two little white girls just loved to play school. Every afternoon I was the pupil and they were teachers. They loved to teach me to read and write. They showed me a map of Africa and I had to learn the names of rivers and mountains and cities. I had to count to a hundred and back, and to make sums until my head would burst.

I did not even need a gym dress or a white shirt or my own pencil.

3.2.2 Sani Mudau

My name is Sani Muragana Mudau.[i] When I was very young I lived for a while with my parents at Bandur in the west. First comes Waterpoort, then Bandur and then Evangelina.

I do not know when we started living in this dry place called Folovhodwe. My parents lived here and their parents too, as far as I can remember.

My father had three wives: Sara was the first wife and Maria was second. She was my mother. Anna was the third wife.

With three wives there were many children. We lived on the farm of Peter and Gertrude Smith.[ii] My father's job was to take care of all the cattle and goats.

Once every two months the master and missus would come from Pretoria to spend a weekend on the farm. The master would then call my father.

'Silas, how are things here on the farm? Is there enough water for the cattle? Are they healthy?'

'Yes boss, there are no problems.'

The missus would call all the children into the kitchen. She would give us each a sweet and an orange. She also gave our mothers old clothes and a bag of stale bread. At the end of the weekend they would go back to Pretoria after leaving us a bag of mealie meal. That was my father's payment. Our mothers would then confront my father.

'Did you tell the boss that this bag of mealie meal is not enough for two months?'

'I did not get time to talk to the boss.'

'You were too scared! Why didn't you speak up?'

'The boss is looking well after us.'

'He does not look well after us! We do not have enough food and we have no money to buy from the shop.'

'We also need to get money for the work we do!' said Anna, the youngest

[i] https://tambani.co.za/embroiderers/sani-mudau/

[ii] Pseudonynms.

wife.

There was a new farm worker on the neighbour's farm, a young man. Every weekend all the farm workers came together on a Friday night to dance and listen to music on the radio. The young worker said, 'How can this man pay you only with mealie meal? You should also get money.'

'Yes,' Anna said, 'We can't just work for old clothes and mealie meal.'

The man asked, 'Why don't you all leave for Nzhelele township?'

My father said, 'I like that idea, let's move. I'm tired of this farm.'

My mother said, 'No! What will we do in the township? Here we have water for a small spinach and tomato garden, and the mealies are growing.'

The other two wives agreed with my mother. They also did not want to leave.

But in 1966 my father got a truck and we packed all our belongings. My father sat in front with the driver and we all left the farm for Nzhelele.

We found a plot of land and built three huts. There was no food. Everywhere in Nzhelele people had nice gardens with tomatoes and beans and spinach. We had just three huts.

My father said to his three wives, 'Go and find work. Go to people with gardens and tell them that you will work for them.'

'No! You brought us here, you go and find work!'

My father looked helplessly at his hungry children and angry wives. He asked a neighbour, 'What can I do? My children are hungry, my wives are cross with me and I have no food and no money.'

'Go to the mine at Musina. You can sometimes get work there.'

The next morning my father left us and went to Musina. He travelled two days to get there!

At 6 o'clock he was waiting at the gate for the mine manager.

'There is no work today, come tomorrow at 6 o'clock.'

My father waited the whole day, and slept at the gate. Again he was told, 'We have no work today, come tomorrow at 6 o'clock.'

My father again spent the whole day at the gate. When the miners knocked off, he saw that they stood in a long line and every person was given a tin of mealie meal, a tin of dry sugar beans and a bottle of soured milk. He heard the miners grumbling that they got no fresh food. They had plenty to eat but they were craving fresh food.

My father got an idea. He came back to Nzhelele, borrowed some money and bought lots of tomatoes and spinach. He begged a man to lend him his donkeys and cart.

Two days later my father arrived at the mine. 'No, I don't want your money,' he said to the miners when they knocked off. 'Give me a tin of mealie meal and I will give you five tomatoes.'

The men were so happy, they nearly knocked over the donkey cart! By the end of the day all the spinach and tomatoes were gone.

'When are you coming again?' they asked.

My father came back home with the donkey cart loaded with mealie meal and beans, and paid back all that he owed. We had a feast that night!

My father very soon saw that donkeys were too slow and that the spinach wilted in the heat. He found a man with a small van. He could now pay with mealie meal and beans for the man to take him to the mine.

Later my father managed to buy a second hand van, and he never stopped going to the mine with fresh vegetables. And so we had enough to eat in Nzhelele.

Mudau is a well-known surname in Niani. We are *vhalanda* – ordinary people, people of the land, with no status. We don't get jobs in the South African government because we are not an important family. They ignore us and we don't even fight back or make a scene.

One advantage of living in such a far-flung, dry place is that nobody is jealous of what you have. I mean nobody … A government official drives past in a fancy car but does not even look left or right. He just watches out for the corrugations and the potholes and thinks of his cool house and the fridge with beer there in the outskirts of Thohoyandou.

I am married and have seven children. My husband is over sixty and still tries to find work, but as you can see there are no permanent jobs here.

In the past, when we both were young, my husband often spoke of getting a job in Johannesburg, but he never even managed to get to Polokwane.[i] How would he ask for work in a big city like Johannesburg, he who could only speak Venda? What work did he think of doing there? How we all survived I do not know. My life has not been easy.

About twenty years ago I found work in the kitchen of a white lady on a nearby farm. We couldn't believe our luck! I do not know how it happened,

[i] The provincial capital.

but there Sani stood – that is me – in the kitchen one morning with a *doek* around her waist: the lady called that an apron. That was the beginning of the happiest time in my life.

'Can you cook?' the lady asked.

'I can only make porridge.'

That morning I learnt the proper way to cook pumpkin. First you peel the pumpkin with a sharp knife and then you cut it into small pieces. Now comes the tricky part: You put the pumpkin pieces into a pot with very little water on the cool side of the stove and you listen very carefully how it simmers gently. Keep the lid closed, just listen. When your pumpkin is cooked, you will find a tasty meal.

I used to pick the most beautiful dish in the sideboard next to the piano for the cooked pumpkin. Sprinkle it well with sugar and spices. My *miesies* had a wonderful packet with sweet-smelling fine brown powder (I forget the name now). You cover the pumpkin well with sugar and this powder. Before you put the beautiful dish in the oven, remember to put many chunks of farm butter on top. Now you leave it to bake.

I used to sit in front of the oven listening to the pumpkin with the cat on my lap. For twelve years I worked in the kitchen and that was the happiest time of my life: Stroking the soft fur of the cat and listening to the pumpkin making soft noises, tshi-tshi-tshi.

The lady died and her husband moved away. We were poor again. Life was a struggle with all my children.

One day I went to Rev. Piet Mavhetha. I could not say much, I sat there crying. He called his wife who is a local coordinator in the Tambani project. He said, 'Teach this woman to embroider.'

My life changed again. I look at all the colours of the embroidery yarn and they make me so happy. My mother would have been so glad if she could see me now. I am sitting here, in my own home, embroidering beautiful things, with my grandchildren playing outside.

(Sani Mudau passed away in 2020.)

Fig. 105. Applique block by Sani Mudau (Detail from fig. 106)

Fig. 106. Embroidered illustration of the *ngano* entitled 'The flying rooster'

3.3 Glossary

This glossary explains certain social practices, choral dance-song genres, musical instruments and children's games referred to in this book.

Bepha

Bepha involved choral and instrumental dance groups such as *tshigombela* (fig. 20) and *tshikona* (fig. 110).[882] Their performances aimed to consolidate

> bonds between rulers or would-be rulers and their families, who are separated spatially by their occupation of ruling different districts, and commoners who live together within those districts. The overall effect is to reinforce the solidarity of the rulers and their families and their right to rule.[883]

Rulers sent their dance groups to one another for a variety of reasons, such as expressing bereavement, collecting tax and congratulating a new ruler. *Bepha* also served to 'consolidate and expand the bonds of fellowship which exist between age-mates of the same neighbourhood.'[884] The institution was, therefore, an agreeable means by which a ruler could 'cultivate indirectly the continued loyalty of his people and remind them of his position.'[885]

Dende

Dende was the braced musical gourd bow whose string is struck with a thick stalk of dry grass (figs. 64, 66). It always accompanied singing, and was therefore favoured by *zwilombe* wandering musicians. Its use by them may be the reason why, of all Venda musical bows, the *dende* remained longest in use (see the playlist link for *tshilombe* on page 447).

Domba

Blacking identifies *domba* as the most important Venda initiation school (fig. 17).[886] Although essentially for girls, boys could also attend its rituals on certain conditions. Its main dance has been described by Blacking as an instance 'of the most remarkable music to be heard in (South Africa).'[887] It is popularly but mistakenly interpreted to imitate the movements of a python.[i]

The instructions of the school are transmitted in the recitation of instructions *(milayo),* dance-songs as well as dramatic rites and performances (*dzingoma* and *maṱano).* They essentially stress 'the value of institutionalised motherhood, with all the checks and balances necessary to maintain the stability of the social system.'[888]

Khadi

Khadi refers to girls' rope skipping. It was a common street activity in the villages of Folovhodwe and Muswodi during school holidays (2005-2016). Children often used very long ropes that accommodated several jumpers simultaneously. This activity was usually accompanied by chanting or singing. In this regard, see the *khadi* chant and playlist link in Mpho Mashavha's biographical sketch (2.20).

Lugube

Lugube was the girl's mouth-resonated musical bow (fig. 67). The instrument was made from a length of reed and sinew. Sinew was replaced by nylon string during the 20th century. *Lugube* also referred to the mouth-harp.

The *lugube* was performed by unmarried girls who often performed songs expressing their longing for love and a husband (see 2.16).[889]

Mahundwane

Mahundwane children's villages (fig. 107) have a counterpart in Shona *mahumbwe.*[890]Once wide-spread, this institution may have derived its name from *mahu* (via *madze;* indirectly, 'play') and *ndwane*, which refers to small, temporary huts made from dry maize stalks and mud.[891] The village was

[i] Blacking (1969:216) explains that 'the reference to the python are in the *milayo* (instructions) and not in the dance.'

constructed after harvesting, and involved children of all ages.

Mahundwane has been described as a 'game' as well as a traditional school dedicated to adult role-play.[892] The interpretation of the event as a rite of passage seems borne out by the lighting of a bonfire and the burning of the huts to signal the conclusion of the event.[893] Referred to as *'u swa ha mahundwane'* ('the burning of *mahundwane*'), this is remniscent of the burning of the *murundu* boys' initiation lodge, which is the final phase in the initiates' passage to manhood.

Mahundwane essentially aimed to inculcate certain norms and values by means of play. The performance of dance-songs imparted 'moral lessons,' while the enactment of family life emphasised gender, age and political statuses by involving 'all the characteristic acts of courtesy and service that suit(ed) their respective parts.'[894] Boys were expected to prepare the building site and hunt while girls performed typical female domestic chores. A village leader was furthermore appointed from among older children (if possible, from the ruling family),[895] while an actual village councillor was the political supervisor of the event, in collaboration with parents. Failing to observe role expectations resulted in punishment that instilled discipline and discouraged 'all manner of disrespect.'[896]

The village was also a setting for 'trial-marriages'[897] in which each boy took 'one or more of the girls as his wife or wives to work for him' and to give him 'all the respect' that their mother showed to their father.[898] These marriages sometimes involved non-penetrative intercourse, but usually only by those older teenagers who had passed through initiation.[899] They did not have any choice of partner, since these marriages were 'arranged' in keeping with actual social practice. Participants 'were expected to live harmoniously together as husband and wife with each of them playing their role and attending to their responsibility fully.'[900]

Fig. 107. *Mahundwane* play-village
Muswodi-Tshisimani, 2011

Malende

Malende (fig. 108) are adult choral dance-songs performed during gatherings like work-parties, family visits and weddings.[901]

Malende was historically accompanied by handclapping only, but drums became de-ritualised from initiation during the 20th century, and found their way into this dance.

Malende lyrics typically address married relations. They may take the form of *mitambo malendeni* dance-plays that dramatise them.[902]

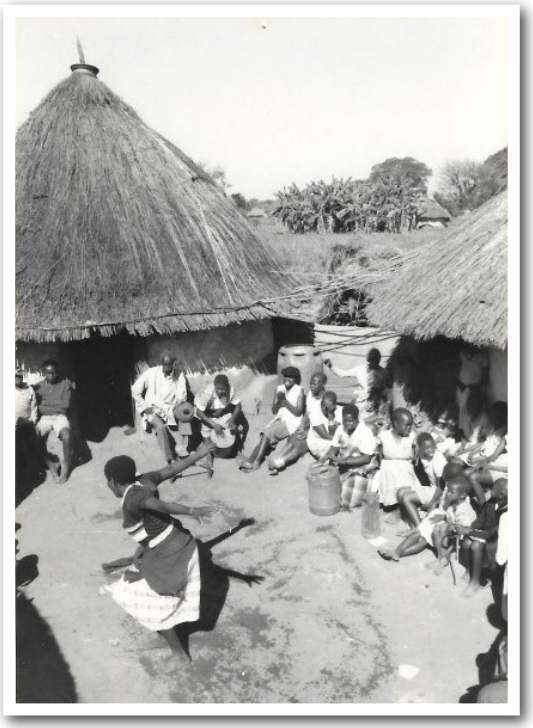

Fig. 108. *Malende*
Tshifudi, 1988

Mbila

This is the Venda lamellophone (fig. 71), fully referred to as *mbila dza madeze* (*madeze* is the instrument's gourd resonator), and differentiated from the xylophone, *mbila mutondo* (*mutondo*, kiaat wood from which the instrument was made).

The *mbila* was popular among *zwilombe* wandering musicians. As in the case of the Shona *mbira*, it served in religious ritual, but only among the Lemba sub-population.

Midzumbano

Midzumbano refers to the game of hide-and-seek. It was historically played within the confines of large homesteads where there were many places to hide.

The game was played by two teams. The team who searched would shout *'tshinoni lidza muludzu'* ('the bird whistles'), after which opposing team members would whistle briefly to indicate the vicinity of their hiding place. When they had all been found, the teams would switch roles.[903]

Mufuvha

This is the local version of the well-known African board-game. It is usually played by men on a wooden or adobe board comprising holes in which stones of pips are placed and manoeuvred. 'The game represents a cattle raid and the stones are the cattle. The player who first removes all his opponent's stones is the winner.'[904]

Murundu

Murundu is the boys' circumcision school, and the counterpart of girls' *musevhetho* initiation.[905] Both schools were introduced from neighbouring Sesotho-speaking populations.

Murundu, like similar extant schools elsewhere in South Africa, is conducted during winter. This period not only coincides with the hiatus in the horticultural cycle, and subsequently, the mid-year school holidays, but also challenges initiates who must be able to withstand low temperatures.

The *murundu* lodge is constructed with gates and various huts. As with other Venda initiation schools, instruction takes the form of secret, recited formulae and choral dance-songs. The only dance-song ever heard in public is 'Hogo!' which tells the uninitiated to keep their distance.

Musevhetho

Musevhetho is the girls' circumcision school. It is particularly popular in communities where boys' *murundu* circumcision takes place. Stayt explains that 'it is more in the nature of a secret society than a recognized feature of the social organisation.'[906]

The male leader of the school and his acolytes wear costumes made from bark, reeds and feathers. As in other initiation schools, *musevhetho* involves choral dance-song performances and ritual instructions.

Ndode

This is a variation of the well-known girls' stone game which has become part of the indigenous games curriculum of the Department of Sport and Recreation.[907] The following description is based on a demonstration of the game by the grade 6A class at Folovhodwe Primary School in 2009: Two players take approximately twenty stones and place them in a circle. Each player has a bigger stone called *gate*. Using one hand only, *gate* is thrown into the air while the others are scraped from the circle. *Gate* is thrown into the air again, and the stones are pushed back into the circle, leaving one behind. A player is counted out when she fails to catch *gate* or leaves more than one stone behind. The winner is the player who has captured the most stones.

The game requires good hand-eye coordination, and is usually accompanied by chanting or singing. The demonstration was accompanied by a chant.[908]

Ndode chant / Ndode

My mother has cooked
pumpkin stew.
They are refusing to
give me some.
They are leaving to
go to a healer.
They are returning with
a clever child who shows me
how to take the pips from
marula fruit with my teeth!
Kuzha-kuzha kumilikiti!
(An onomatopoeia for
removing the pips.)

Mme anga vho
bika thophi.
Vha la vha
dzima nn̂e.
Vha takuwa vha ya thanguni.[i]
Vha vhuya na
ṅwana wa ndele a
mpfunza vhulopolopo
ha u devha thebvu nga mano!
Kuzha-kuzha kumilikiti!

[i] In the recording, *khoroni* ('at tribal court').

Ngoma dza Midzimu

Ngoma dza Midzimu (Ritual of the Ancestral Spirits) trance dance, commonly referred to as *Malombo*, entered the Soutpansberg from eastern Zimbabwe during the 19th century.[909] Blacking explains that it 'was in some respects a sectarian protest again the formalism of traditional worship and an assertion of the importance of the mother's lineage in a society in which the authority of the father's lineage was an important factor in maintaining political power.'

The somatic trigger of entrancement is distinctive, fast and loud drumming, and vigorous dancing, while the psychological impetus is belief in ancestral spirits, and localised conflict and hardship, often in the family.[910]

These rituals are spectacular and communal, and they give people a unique opportunity to 'experience a way of feeling and relating to each other.'[11]

Tshifasi

Tshifasi (fig. 109) was one of a number of choral dance-forms that allowed teenage boys and girls to explore and establish romantic relations according to norms of propriety.[912] It was usually performed during winter evenings. Gatherings were informal and adult supervision was very limited.

The dance involved swapping couples and sets (often double pairs). Partners held hands or danced very closely to one another. Movements were often sexually daring.

The dance tempo was fast. Movements were very energetic, and accompanied by handclapping and sometimes also drums.[i]

Fig. 109. *Tshifasi*
Tshixwadza, 1991

[i] The video recording shows a version of the genre identified by participants as *tshifasi*. However, Mr. David Mashambe (University of Venda, 1993) described the dance as *tshikhaba*, noting that *tshifasi* historically did not feature drumming.

Fig. 110. *Tshikona*
Gaba, 1986

Tshidzolo

Tshidzolo (fig. 111) is a mono-chordal half-tube zither.[913] It was popularly associated with *zwilombe* wandering musicians whose singing it accompanied. It utilised a short bow that produced fundamentals as well as harmonic partials.

Tshigombela

Tshigombela (fig. 20) is a popular choral dance for girls and women.[914] It was originally under traditional political control and played an important role in late 20th century social transformation.[915]

Tshigombela takes the anti-clockwise, circular direction of most older dance forms. It involves a tenor and several alto drums *(thungwa* and *mirumba)*. Dancers usually blow fixed rhythmic patterns on metal whistles, and often wear elaborately decorated dance costumes.

Fig. 111. *Tshidzolo*-player Petros Mabilu
Phiphidi, 1983

Tshihwana

Tshihwana (fig. 68) is the boys' counterpart of the girls' *lugube* mouth-resonated bow (fig. 67).[916] While the *lugube* was a girls' instrument, the *tshihwana* was especially associated with boys and unmarried young men. Unlike the *lugube*, it took considerable woodcarving skill to make.

The sinew string (since the 20th century, wire string) was divided by means of a tie to the handle of the bow. This produced two fundamentals tuned a third or fifth apart. The string was plucked with the fingers, and, more recently, with a safety pin.

The radio is popularly believed to have replaced the bow in courtship practice. Because of this, the bow was also performed by girls during the 20th century.

Tshikona

Tshikona (figs. 45, 110) is the well-known bamboo-pipe choral dance. Its music, instruments, movements and social functions have been described in detail by various authors,[917] and video recordings of the dance are freely available on the internet.

Tshilombe

As explained in the discussion of 'The wandering musician' (2.1.4), the *tshilombe* (pl. *zwilombe;* figs. 64, 66, 111) was a member of a social class now obsolete. He was a roaming male performer who performed at villages in return for food and beer. The homesteads of chiefs were some of his favourite haunts, and some leaders even appointed him as court musician. He was criticised for his womanising, and idle life-style, yet admired for his artistic expertise and acerbic social commentary.[918]

Vhusha

Vhusha is one of the three most important initiation schools for Venda girls. It 'may be held several times a year at the headquarters of any district headman,' and should be attended as soon as possible after the first menstruation.[919]

It comprises three stages, namely *muhulu* (from *hula*, grow*), u laṱa maṱavha* ('to refuse salt') and *tshikhwakhwatho* ('to finish).[920] Its choral dance-songs impart a variety of norms and values, such as etiquette in marriage, personal hygiene and respect for seniors.[921]

3.4 Recording and translation

The video recordings from which the transcribed narratives in this book derive were made with a single, hand-held camera. A basic objective was to capture narration as audibly as possible. This required limiting ambient noise, especially from passing vehicles and domestic animals. The recordings consequently focus closely on the faces of performers, and therefore are framed representations that often exclude views of performance settings.

The video recordings allowed transcribers to watch the lips of narrators. This was necessary because performance at times involved fast delivery, and was influenced by the advanced age of some performers who lacked certain teeth, and were therefore unable to articulate their speech clearly.

Ngano are replete with linguistic and cultural nuances discernible to mother-tongue speakers only, and the contribution of translators (box 7) has been indispensable in this regard. Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, in his capacity as field researcher, furthermore clarified many core concepts.[i] These concepts were also discussed with narrators, either personally or during cell phone conversations.

Translation is not objective, but chronotopic, interlinguistic mediation that articulates a specific register, idiom and style.[922] All translation is therefore marked by the attenuation of poetics, cultural resonance, polyvalence, subtle register changes and neologisms.[923]

Translation in previous volumes adopted a mediating register aimed at a broad readership. However, attempts to make culture-specific oral narrative accessible may result in the bland flattening of original texts. The translation of *ngano* cannot be separated from identity construction, which requires the integrated representation of communal and personal narrative expression. The approach in this collection is therefore less interventionist than before, and involves a conscious effort to make the translation 'dance' and 'vibrate.'[924]

At the same time, a literal translation of stories by narrators such as Thizwilondi Kwinda (2.7) and Nyawasedza Mudau (2.12) creates confusion regarding actants, events, time and place, and they therefore require translation that is contextual and adaptive.

The mediation of orality and literacy may require the selective omission of repetition which is integral to live performance but migrates unsatisfactorily to written form.[ii] Consequently, neither the chanted *salungano* response nor songs are repeated.

However, not all extensive repetition was condensed. The following is a passage from 'The baby-sitter' (2.19.1). It would previously have been subject to considerable editing, but now aligns more closely with the original text:

> That woman started to take that child, she started to give it to Mrs. Duiker. When she went to give the child to Mrs. Duiker, Mrs. Duiker started to leave with the child. When she wanted to leave with the child in the evening, Mrs. Duiker started to return the child. When she returned the child, that woman started to leave with her child.

Repetition in this passage may come across as awkward, but its retention is an attempt to retain the rhythmicity of oral performance.

Ngano style is also evident in onomatopoeia like 'washa-washa' (wading in water), 'ngungundu' (the sound of a drum), 'tshokoto,' (a hopping frog), 'tyaka-tyaka' (convulsions), 'pha-pha-pha' (flapping wings) and numerous others. They are so culture-specific and creative that they are better left untranslated. Put differently, Tshivenda can dance autonomously in English, and in so doing, enrich the latter.[iii]

Another style feature now treated differently is tense. *Ngano* meander frequently between past and present, a process that unfolds in relation to narrator and story. This stylistic technique may obfuscate sequences of events. For this reason, previous translations usually reverted to the past tense. However, translation in this volume is more faithful to the frequent juxtaposition of the past and present historic tense. This not only conveys *ngano* style more appropriately, but also expresses the quality of dramatised narrative law. Use of the past tense articulates historical awareness and validates *milayo* as enduring ancestral law, while the present historic tense is

[i] Van Warmelo's Venda dictionary (1989) has also been valuable in this regard.

[ii] Both Le Roux (1996) and Mbuwe (1977) offer transcriptions that are formally mostly unmediated. Both present all chanted responses, while Le Roux indicates all repetitions.

[iii] For this reason onomatopoeia are generally not italicised in translation.

suited to dramatic purposes.[925]

Stories therefore often open in the past, and then shift to the present. 'The young man and the snake' (2.15.1) accordingly starts as follows: 'There once was a certain woman who had two children. Late one afternoon this woman is sitting with her children.'

The style of presentation is geared towards the written prose medium, to what Finnegan[926] describes as a 'bounded linear text.' Transcriptions tend to omit mistakes, pauses, coughs, dramatic gestures, voice inflection and wandering attention, and may offer a story that does not align exactly with live performance.

Paragraph construction follows convention. It articulates and clarifies plot changes. For the same reason, direct speech is indented. Speaking roles in turn are not always clear, and the identities of certain actants are sometimes indicated.

Finnegan explains that the use of titles in oral and written prose does not necessarily correlate, and that some leeway is therefore accorded in translation.[927]. 'Titles' in *ngano* usually take the form of a very short description of the plot: 'This is the story of Nyangalambuya' (the python healer). For practical purposes such descriptions have been reduced to short titles, while liberty has been taken to formulate certain titles in accordance with narrative content.

Fig. 112. Recording stories and children's songs, Muswodi-Tshisimani, June 2009
(L to R): Selina Mavhetha, Samson Nenzhelele, Jaco Kruger, Mathuvhelo Mavhetha, Eni Nenzhelele

3.5 Sources

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681 Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948:247, 249).
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688 'Savhalinda' (Mavhina *et al.*, 1977:7-8).
689 Postma (1957).
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692 Postma (1952:50).
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694 Postma (1952:51).
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714 'Crow-woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).
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732 Blacking (1985:69). Also see Chabalala (2003).
733 Blacking (1985:67).
734 Stayt (1968/1931:240-246).
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748 Kruger (2014 89-92). For a variation of this story see Krüger (1933/34:3-4).
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757 Morson (1999:304-306).
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762 Kruger (2014:118, 140).
763 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:41).
764 Mutshavhona' (Kruger, 2004), 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014), 'Spears eat those that make them' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007), 'The magic knobkerrie' (Stayt, 1968/1931), and 'The cattle herd Tovore and his sister' and 'Muramba-Tata' (Von Sicard, 1965:359-363).
765 Niehaus *et al.* (2001:84, 86, 105).
766 See e.g. 'The wooden hoe' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007) and 'Also a woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).
767 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:12).
768 From 'A fool is always eating' (Kruger, 2014:139).
769 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:116).
770 'Mutshavhona' (Kruger, 2004).
771 'The girl who was difficult to court' (Kruger, 2004) and 'A tree falls' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007). Also see 'A thin old woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).
772 See e.g. 'The baboon in the orange tree' (Kruger, 2014).
773 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:44).
774 'A tree falls' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007).
775 See 'A little story' (Kruger, 2014), which portrays the plight of a childless woman.
776 See 'Crow-woman' (Kruger & Le Roux, 2007). Crow-woman is an indiscriminate forager of men.
777 Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948:1089).
778 Stayt (1931:34).
779 Du Plessis (1940:154-55), Stayt (1968/1931:222).
780 Kruger (1993:363, 397).
781 Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948:1113).
782 Kruger (1986:220-221).
783 'Mighty rooster' (Kruger, 2014).
784 Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948:1111, 1113).
785 Scheub (1975:150).
786 Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948:1091).
787 Stayt (1968/1931) and Eberhardt (1958). This story is also known among the Karanga people. See Von Sicard (1965:231-236).
788 Eberhardt (1958:16).
789 Stayt (1931:337).
790 Eberhardt (1958:16-17).
791 Nettleton (1989:73).
792 Blacking (1969:227).
793 Stayt (1931:309-310).
794 Stayt (1931:257).
795 Shanafelt (2014:12, 28).
796 Wood (2005:354).
797 Niehaus *et al.* (2001:56).
798 Siebert (2016).
799 Shanafelt (2014:40).
800 Van der Post (1961:20).
801 Shanafelt (2014:6).
802 Shanafelt (2014:4-14, 28-29).
803 Shanafelt (2014:37).
804 Blacking (1964:50).
805 Shanafelt (2014:4, 5, 14).
806 Nettleton (1989:72-73), citing Phophi.
807 Ralushai (1977:84-84, 132).
808 Stayt (1931:259).
809 Eberhardt (1958:16).
810 Kirkaldy (2005:193, 203, 219, 219-221).
811 Stayt (1931:314).
812 Van Warmelo (1989:131).
813 Burger (2018:33).
814 Shanafelt (2014:30).
815 Shanafelt (2014:1, 33). Also see Booker (2004).

816 Von Sicard (1965:231-233).
817 Campbell (1968).
818 Kriel (1971:76).
819 Shanafelt (2014:29-30).
820 Kruger (2014:65).
821 Toolan (2009:45), also citing McAdams.
822 Scheub (1975:156).
823 Hammond-Tooke (1981:123), also citing Krige.
824 Blacking (1969:216-217).
825 Blacking (1969:157).
826 Blacking (1969:25, 74, 103, 150).
827 Hammond-Tooke (1981:113, 116, 152).
828 Von Sicard (1965:70-73).
829 Von Sicard (1965:72, 87, 102, 208), 'Spirit' (Kruger, 2014).
830 See Grimm & Grimm (1993:134).
831 Stayt (1931:349-351).
832 Dederen (2008b:224).
833 Kruger & Verhoef (2015:7).
834 Blacking (1969:150).
835 Blacking (1969:103).
836 Scheub (1975:391), Postma (1950:129-130).
837 See Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948: Part 3).
838 Postma (1950:124-131).
839 See Van Warmelo & Pophi (1948:241-246).
840 'The princess who slept late' (Kruger, 2014).
841 De Laurentis (1996:262, 271).
842 Kruger (2014:54).
843 De Laurentis (1996:262).
844 Kruger (2007:11-12).
845 Kruger (2014:226).
846 Kruger (2014:230).
847 Kruger (2014:230).
848 Van Warmelo (1989:135).
849 Kriel (1971:92).
850 See e.g. Von Sicard (1965:192-193, 265-271).
851 Kriel (1971:69).
852 Kruger (2014:241).
853 As explained by translator Edward Mpilo (Le Roux, 1996:507).
854 Von Sicard (1965:265-266).
855 Von Sicard (1965:267-274).
856 Dederen (2012:266).
857 Kruger (1993:444)
858 Makgamatha (1991:192-194), Postma (1957:23-26, 1950:107-116).
859 Kirkaldy (2005:45).
860 Jeannerat (1997:97).
861 Bullock (1927:11).
862 Kruger (2014:52).
863 Kruger (2014:53-54).
864 Junod (1927, II:188).
865 Hammond-Tooke (1981:99).
866 Kriel (1971:85, 144).
867 Mbiti (1990:204).
868 Cloete (1980), Du Plessis (1940), Rambau (1987), Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948).
869 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:47).
870 Le Roux (1996). Also see Kruger & Le Roux (2007:11).
871 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:13).
872 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:11).
873 Blacking (1967:24).
874 Kruger (2009).
875 Kruger (2014:163-177).
876 Le Roux (1996:72-87), Kruger & Le Roux (2007:102-132).
877 Kruger & Le Roux (2007:108-111).
878 Kruger (2004: 108-109).
879 Kruger (2014:195-206).
880 Kruger (2014:107-110).
881 Kruger (2004:75-58).
882 Blacking (1962:56-57).
883 Blacking (1962:54).
884 Blacking (1962:61).
885 Blacking (1962:62).
886 See Kruger (1986:111-141).

887 Blacking (1969:215).
888 Blacking (1969:150).
889 Kruger (1986:21-23).
890 Aschwanden (1982:94).
891 Daswa *et al.* (2018:11624).
892 Stayt (1968:100).
893 Daswa *et al.* (2018:63011) and Ramugondo (2009:103, 115).
894 Stayt (1968:100).
895 Stayt (1968:99).
896 Daswa *et al.* (2018:11634).
897 Aschwanden (1982:94).
898 Stayt (1968:99-100).
899 Daswa *et al.* (2018:11635).
900 Daswa *et al.* (2018:11635).
901 Blacking (1965:31).
902 Kruger (2000).
903 Stayt (1968:98).
904 Stayt (1968:364).
905 Stayt (1968:125-138).
906 Stayt (1968:139).
907 https://www.srsa.gov.za/sites/default/files/2018%20IG%20 General%20and%20 Code%20Specific%20Rules.pdf
908 As transcribed by the class teacher, Mr. Lufuno Nefolovhodwe.
909 Blacking (1985:70).
910 See Rouget (1985) and Chabalala (2003).
911 Blacking (1968:68).
912 Van Tonder (1987:110-116).
913 Kruger (1986:142-158).
914 Burnett-Van Tonder (1987:83-109).
915 Kruger (1999).
916 See Kruger (1986:46-87).
917 See Blacking (1965, 1967, 1976), Kirby (1968), Kruger (2007a) and Tracey & Gumboreshumba (2013).
918 Kruger (1999/2000, 2001).
919 Blacking (1969:3-4).
920 Blacking (1969:6-9).
921 Blacking (1969:13-15).
922 Pieterse (2007:22) and Hambidge (2018).
923 Hambidge (2018).
924 Hambidge (2018).
925 Heilna du Plooy, personal communication, North-West University (28 April, 2016).
926 Finnegan (1992:159).
927 Finnegan (1992:200).