

A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF VENDA GUITAR SONGS

THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the articulation in music of human worldviews, and the social contexts in which they emerge. It suggests that people project various forms of social reality through symbolic systems which operate dynamically to maintain and recreate cultural patterns.

The symbolic system investigated in support of this suggestion is that constituted by Venda guitar songs. In the performance of these songs, social reality emerges in a combination of symbolic forms: verbal, musical and somatic. The combination of these symbolic forms serves as a medium for individual self-awareness basic to the establishment of social reality and identity, and the drive for social power and legitimacy.

A study of these symbolic forms and their performance indicates that musicians invoke the potential of communal music to increase social support for certain principles on which survival strategies in a turbulently changing society might be based. The discourse of Venda guitar songs incorporates modes of popular expression and consciousness, and thus attempts to invoke states of intensified emotion to promote these survival strategies. Performance occasions emerge as a focus for community orientation and the exploration of social networks. They promote stabilizing social and economic interaction, and serve as a basis for moral and cooperative action.

Social reality also emerges in musical style, which is treated as the audible articulation of human thought and emotion. Stylistic choices are treated as integral to the

conceptualization of contemporary existence. A study of these choices reveals varying degrees of cultural resistance and assimilation, ranging from musical styles which are essentially rooted in traditional social patterns, to styles which integrate traditional and adopted musical elements as articulations of changing self-perceptions, social aspirations, and quests for new social identity.

I fail at school.  
School truly defeats me.  
It is better for me to go and dance beer songs.  
It is better for me to go and perform the reedpipe dance.  
Rudzani Tshalavhada, song 245

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Theoretical Approach

My theoretical approach has been influenced by a theme underlying John Blacking's many writings on Venda musical culture, namely the relationship between process and product. Blacking remarks that "we observe the infinite variety of cultural products, but rarely apprehend the universal human processes by which they are created" (Blacking 1969b: 3). From this flows the basic scientific quest to "discover relationships between life and music" (Blacking 1969a: 59). For Blacking, this process of discovery unfolds through the "cultural analysis of music" (Blacking 1964a, 1967). The purpose of this approach

is not simply to describe the cultural background of the music as human behaviour, and then to analyze peculiarities of style in terms of rhythm, tonality, timbre, instrumentation, frequency of ascending and descending intervals, and other essentially musical terminology, but *to describe both the music and its cultural background as interrelated parts of a total system*. Because music is humanly organized sound, there ought to be relationships between patterns of human organization and the patterns of sound produced in the course of organized interaction (Blacking 1971: 93, italics added).<sup>1</sup>

This kind of holistic approach does not typify South African musicology or music education. In this regard Heimes (1989) complains about an "academic aloofness" from South Africa's socio-musical context, and remarks that scope exists for the application of systematic musicology, "especially its sociological branch" (Heimes 1989: 11 f.)<sup>2</sup> Formal music education tends to center around the study of the internal laws of selected Western musical structures. Stylistic analysis often is no more than applications of ostensibly autonomous musical rules. It generally fails to proceed beyond relationships between musical tones. The result is an exposition of dehu-

manized musical elements, and not a treatment of music making as a communicative process. Thus music students learn about the relationships between musical tones, but not about the relationships between the producers of these tones. The life experiences of composers and musicians are often treated as almost incidental to musical creation and performance. However, a theory of music is also a theory of culture which should trace the life of signs in society, not in an invented world (cf. Geertz 1976: 1488). Product-centered approaches negate the function of music making as cultural expression, and deny it its reason for existence. Therefore, one of the fundamental tasks of the music educator and musicologist is to explore the sociology of musical knowledge: to study the expression in music of human thought, and the social context within which it arises (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1967: 16).

My theoretical approach has also been conditioned by circumstances surrounding my first investigation of Venda musical culture (Kruger 1986). This investigation generally focused on the musical product. It resulted from studying an aspect of traditional musical culture which had disappeared almost totally. My research was often carried out in haste as I hurried from one elderly, sometimes sickly musician to another in an attempt to record as many songs as possible. Most of the musicians I encountered were dim figures passing through the landscape of brief acquaintances. The only musician I came to know relatively well was veteran xylophonist Wilson Ravele of Makonde. However, he had not performed the xylophone actively for more than twenty years. Although my interest rekindled his playing, the original social environment of the xylophone had long ceased to exist. It was thus virtually impossible to delve deeply into the social foundations of its music.



Blacking's studies of Venda children's songs and girls' initiation schools (Blacking 1967 & 1969c) imply the importance of exploring process-product relationships in a vibrant musical culture. An opportunity of this nature presented itself during my first encounter with Venda musical culture (1983-1984). During this time I met some boys and young men performing on home made guitars. Eloff Mashandule, my elderly assistant, viewed these guitars with amusement. They were quaint, roughly made instruments which contrasted sharply with the elaborate, expertly crafted xylophone he and I had learned to construct (cf. Kirby 1968, Kruger 1986). I did not regard these guitars as traditional instruments, and thus appropriate to my scope of investigation. During July 1983 I noted in my field diary that traditional instrumental music was rapidly decaying. The influence of cheap guitars and the mass entertainment media was not only "shocking", but also "smothering" musical creativity. However, early in 1986 I met a young guitarist, Mashudu Mulaudzi from the village of Tsianda. Mashudu treated me to a stunning performance on his guitar. It slowly started to dawn on me that modern instruments were perhaps not as culturally "destructive" as I had thought. I subsequently made a point of looking out for them. It became clear to me during the next two years that the guitar was by far the most popular contemporary instrument. I started to record guitar songs and evaluate their social significance. I eventually came to realize that they were expressive of contemporary social dynamics, and that they afforded potential for a rewarding investigation of the relationship between process and product.

In spite of the popularity of the guitar on the African continent, few comprehensive studies have been made of African guitar and banjo performance cultures. A study of

Venda guitar music will thus also help to fill the large vacuum in the study of African and particularly South African guitar music. However, I wish to stress that this study is not a complete ethnography of all the features of Venda guitar playing. The nature of my investigation has been determined by my search for links between process and product. Thus ethnographic and musico-historical perspectives are subordinate to this search. I do not, for example, undertake detailed musical analysis of each guitarist included in this study. Nor do I investigate the early history of Venda guitar playing or relate Venda guitar playing to guitar styles of neighbouring ethnic groups.

This thesis, then, mainly attempts to interrelate musical performance with certain social processes in Venda culture. Blacking produced a considerable number of writings on this subject. However, the study of Venda guitar songs<sup>3</sup> integrates two largely unexplored aspects of Venda musical culture, namely processes of musical change, and individual musical behaviour.

Although Blacking regards expressive culture as an important adaptive cultural form, and discusses processes of general musical change (Blacking 1977a, 1977b & 1986), most of his writings on Venda music are concerned with styles of traditional music.<sup>4</sup> Despite on-going efforts by some authorities to present Venda as steeped in legend and age-old tradition, it has not escaped forces of change which have swept across twentieth century South Africa. Comprehensive studies of the role of music making in these forces are limited. Venda guitar songs afford a valuable opportunity to study processes of musical change because they are rooted in contemporary social experience. The guitar has increased steadily in

popularity since its introduction to Venda by migrant labourers during the early decades of this century. Guitar music is widely diffused through the mass media, and improved material circumstances during the past decade have put guitars within the financial reach of more people. A study of Venda guitar songs thus also affords an opportunity to focus on how musicians experience and respond to social change. This brings me to individual musical behaviour.

Blacking's most detailed writings on process and product (1967 & 1969c) were conducted at the level of the social group. The remainder of his related writings move on a wider level. Erlmann (1989) argues a strong case for a micro level, biographical approach to the study of African music. He notes that little headway seems to have been made in "exploring the dialectic of individual creativity, cultural aesthetics and collective processes of music making" (Erlmann 1989: 31). Venda guitar songs are well suited to this endeavour. Although some guitarists belong to small bands, there is a general tendency towards solo performance.<sup>5</sup> In addition, approximately a third of the guitarists included in my research sample are *zwilombe* musicians (cf. Blacking 1979, Kruger 1991). As I will show, these musicians are important individual figures in the social networks of certain local communities. Although they usually perform at communal gatherings, they are strongly individualistic in their behaviour. They generally do not tolerate other dominating musicians in the same performance situation, and are fond of taking leading roles.

Following Erlmann's approach, I structure my thesis around the biographies and life sketches of a number of guitarists. While certain approaches to the study of individual social

experience provide a solid social matrix for the discussion of behaviour, they seldom seem to bring out the flesh and blood of human existence. Dennis (1989) remarks that the "colourless objectivity affected by many ethnologists is a deception and a suppression of data" (Dennis 1989: 214). This does not imply an uncritical submission to subjectivity, but rather a careful attempt to extend the range of observations. Venda guitar songs portray a world rich in experience and conflict, and it is necessary to contextualize them beyond the limitations of explanatory footnotes. To understand the worldviews of guitarists, it is necessary to discuss and describe their experiences in relative detail. Also, while analyses of political or family structures perhaps can afford to be clinical and unemotional, any comprehensive cultural analysis of music deals with human emotions and their expression. Thus it is important to me that those guitarists whose lives I discuss in relative detail must come to life, and not be obscured behind impersonal facts.

My biographical approach is also a manifestation of the pervasive contemporary trend which seeks to downplay the notion of history or culture comprising a limited series of events with independent logical structure and divorced from other layers of history and human action (cf. Briggs 1985, Coplan 1985, Ortner 1984). As in much South African traditional historiography, this series of events correspondingly features only a limited number of social actors, often from dominant cultural groupings. History is usually portrayed as a succession of political events, and other aspects of culture are ignored or their importance played down. People are often treated as passive participants in historical processes, instead of contributors to social formation. By contrast, I look past macro accounts of Venda history (Stayt

1931, Van Warmelo 1932 & 1940, Nemudzivhadi 1985) and attempt to show that individual cultural expression which does not feature as standard historical subject matter indeed may provide historical perspectives otherwise not readily shown. Thus I show how Venda guitar performances allow people to conceptualize social relationships in a wider political economy. These performances are dynamic cultural constructs arising from processes of on-going symbolic interaction between people who share definitions of themselves and their social circumstances. These shared definitions are applied in pursuit of meaningful social existence, and they address the essence of human existence.

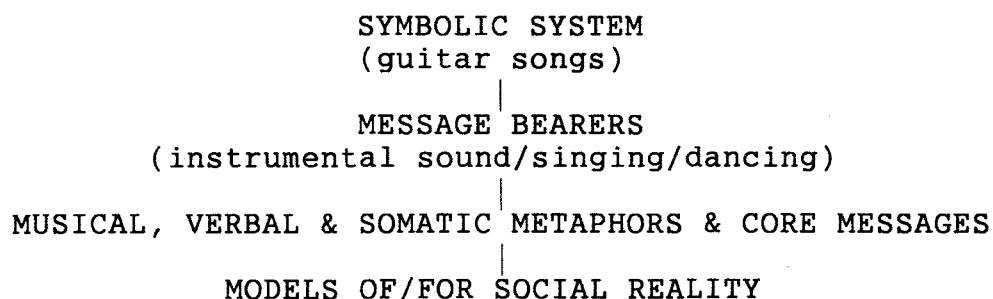
Human beings are distinct in the natural world in that they have evolved a debilitated instinctual structure and an attendant capacity for self-reflection. But they pay a costly price for this capacity. This price is the void of consciousness - those feelings of inexplicable longing for meaning in life, and of emotional disturbance caused by an awareness of the frequent savagery of human nature, and the inexorability of death. Venda guitar performances are settings for the mediation of this void of consciousness. As I will show, performances of guitar songs are regarded by musicians themselves as part of an ordered system of human interaction directed towards the effective functioning of society. This system is essentially religious. It legitimates a wide range of social institutions by "bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by *locating* them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference" (Berger 1973: 42; cf. also Durkheim 1915, Eliade 1989, Young 1992). In this sense Venda guitar performances are similar to Xhosa beer drinks (cf. McAllister 1986a & 1986b). Both social settings are located on the South African rural periphery. Not only is

there widespread reliance on migrant labour, but unemployment and poverty is pervasive, and land is limited. For many people survival is largely dependent on invoking familiar, traditional patterns of life. They infuse the present with meaning by promoting aspects of ancestral morality. Social interaction is constituted through "rituals and significant profane gestures which acquire the meaning attributed to them, and materialize that meaning, only because they deliberately repeat such and such acts posited *ab origine* by gods, heroes, or ancestors" (Eliade 1989: 5 f.). Music making is a strand in this web of social interaction, and it connects body, spirit, and community. For some old people the ancestral spirits of the Mudau clan of Tshiheni still reside in lake Fundudzi.<sup>6</sup> When a member of the clan dies, these spirits assemble to perform *tshikona*, the reedpipe dance. They collect the spirit of the deceased and incorporate it into their midst. *Tshikona* performances thus constitute divinely inspired ritual action which promotes the total well-being of people (Kruger 1989). The same ritual value is attached to several other categories of music, including guitar songs.

Musical ritual<sup>7</sup> plays an important role in processes of cultural construction and social evolution. It is an affective activity which promotes emotional solidarity and a moral social code, and provides cognitive "explanations" for experience (cf. Kluckhohn 1979, Collins 1986). Venda guitar songs comprise a set of verbal and non-verbal symbols (singing, and instrumental sound and dance) which emerge from communal participation in beer drinking, conversation and music making. Shared states of heightened awareness thus aroused promote group solidarity or "fellow-feeling" (cf. Blacking 1977a). They activate cognitive processes, charging them with emotional energy and effectiveness. As I will suggest, these

processes become part of a larger cultural resource of shared messages and moods which may be invoked under certain circumstances to achieve social objectives.

The cognitive aspects of guitar songs call into play the problems of cultural interpretation. Guitarist Solomon Mathase once remarked to me sardonically: "The problem is that your ballpoint cannot catch my mind". This kind of difficulty may be overcome by "searching out and analyzing symbolic forms - words, images, institutions, behaviours - in terms of which ... people actually represent themselves to themselves and to one another" (Geertz 1977: 483). To "catch the minds" of musicians and establish connections between process and product, I thus invoke the suggestion that people express themselves and formulate their social reality through symbolic systems which function dynamically to maintain and recreate cultural patterns (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1967, Dolgin et al 1977, Schreier 1985, Turner 1974). The meaning of Venda guitar songs as symbolic system is articulated through certain message bearers. These message bearers constitute a combination of symbolic forms: words and music, and usually also dancing and dramatic action, all expressed and circulated to generate and express meaning. This process may be represented as follows:



Cognitively speaking, guitar song performances may be regarded both as models of and for social reality (cf. Geertz 1973: ch. 4). In the first instance they depict the world as

it is experienced. They constitute models of actual social reality, of life in all its diversity. However, they also generate models for social reality. These models allow musicians to push,

in a controlled way, into the realm of the wondrous, the mysterious ... The mind flies out of its limits in the puny body and soars into a world of timeless beauty, meaning and justice. And this is how men come to exist in largely fabricated worlds of their own contrivance and derive their basic sustenance from these fabrications (Becker 1972: 131).

The concept of a fabricated world surfaces in the thought patterns of many Venda musicians. Gospel singer Mpho Mukwevho of Shayandima remarks:

**Ndi tshi imba, ndi pfulutshela kha liñwe lifhasi.**  
(When I sing, I go down to another world.)  
**Heli ndi shango la muzika.**  
(This is the world of music.)

(Magau 1992: 11)

Mukondeleli Netshiunda of Tshitereke recalls a song he composed as a young boy:

**Luthwethwe na lufhoru zwa lila, ndi a ñala.**  
(When the sunbird and the robin sing, I become pensive.)  
**Luthwethwe na lufhoru zwa lila, ndi a tuwa.**  
(When the sunbird and the robin sing, I leave).

Mukondeleli used to perform this song when taking his father's cattle home at sunset, tired after spending a long day in the veld. The singing of birds induced another reality for him. This was a dream world into which he could escape, rest, and forget about the troubles associated with herding cattle (Mashamba 1991: 5). The fabricated worlds of Venda guitar songs similarly emerge from the interplay of the imagination and the actual world. Guitarist Alfred Mangubana from Hamashau sings:

**Mpheni phapha, ndi rambe lothe.**  
(Give me wings and I will assemble all  
**Ri yo vhona dzivha Fundudzi.**  
to go and see lake Fundudzi.)  
**Khelia hafhala, mukalaha Netshiavha:**  
(There it is, old man Netshiavha:)<sup>8</sup>



Dzivha Fundudzi, dzivha Fundudzi.  
(Lake Fundudzi, lake Fundudzi.)  
Hei! Lo a lama ntha ha dzithavha.  
(Hey! It lies on top of the mountains.)

(Makhaga 1991: 5)

Fabricated worlds in Venda musical culture are often created in a ritual setting. The traditional ritual setting for most communal musical performances is the dancing ground at the homestead of rulers. Although this setting is socially constituted, musicians continue to emphasize its ritual quality. *Tshigombela* dancers (cf. Blacking 1962, Burnett-van Tonder 1987) often sing the phrase *ri a dzhena* ("we are entering") as they approach the dancing ground. The singing of this phrase ritually "consecrates" the dancing ground, turning it from an area where toddlers might otherwise play into a ritual space with special qualities. As I will show, the settings of individual as well as communal guitar performances take on similar ritual quality.

Ritual spaces are settings where the forces of nomos and chaos clash, sometimes visibly as when dancers concretize patterns of conflict through movement, and always in the abstract domain of musical and verbal sound. They allow the exploration of existence free from the limitations of actual time and space. Ritual spaces constitute "symbolic centres" where actual and virtual reality converge to produce an overarching "absolute reality" (Eliade 1989). This reality has an ordering quality. It constitutes normative social models: not of how the world really is, but of how it should be. Ritual action thus allows "for the expression of experience, thereby completing experience" (McAllister 1986: 22 & 190). In other words, models for social reality are not merely make-believe. They stand in dialectic relationship

with actual social reality and have the potential of acting back upon the existence in which they are rooted. As I show, some guitarists consciously act out aspects of their normative social models. I also present some evidence to show that these models have wider social impact.

My thesis is based on a collection of two hundred and fifty two songs. I place considerable emphasis on their texts in exploring the creation of fabricated worlds. These texts are "maps of experience" (cf. Vail & White 1991) which chart processes of transculturation and allow some perspective on psychological problems and processes peculiar to them (cf. Merriam 1964: 201). However, no song can be fully understood as mere verbal expression. Harries (1987) notes that historical reconstruction through song texts must also take musical style into account (Harries 1987: 95). In relating product to process, I show that the non-verbal elements of guitar songs "contain signs of the processes through which performers have realized their theoretical choices" and that

performers combine materials from cultures in contact into qualitatively new forms in response to changing conditions, needs, self-images, and aspirations ... stylistic elements from many sources have been recomposed into new frameworks of meaning, reflecting changing moral relations, systems of identity and value, and realities of power (Coplan 1985: 242 & 237).

Choice of dancing style, patterns of tuning and accompaniment, harmonic progression, formal structure, and melodic and rhythmic patterns all form part of the conceptualization and shaping of contemporary social reality which is firmly rooted in processes of social change and the restructuring of interpersonal relationships. My broad analysis of the non-verbal elements of guitar songs particularly aims at showing how stylistic choice is integrated into the wider traditionalizing strategy of guitarists.

## 1.2 Fieldwork methods

I have been living in Venda since 1986, and have maintained close contact with guitarists on a regular basis. I conducted interviews and informal conversations with musicians and other informants, made audio and video recordings of guitar performances, and acted as a participant-observer in communal guitar performance situations.

I had three general criteria in selecting guitarists. The first was that a person should own a guitar and perform on it regularly. The performer also had to be a reasonably capable musician, even if he was still young and inexperienced. Thirdly, because of recording difficulties, he should preferably not perform on an electric guitar.

I asked long-standing informants and friends, as well as colleagues and students at the University of Venda, to name guitarists to me. They often identified those musicians whose music is broadcast over Radio Venda and Radio Thohoyandou, such as the legendary Albert Mundalamo, and Albert Raedani. They also referred me to musicians living in their neighbourhood. From these guitarists I learned of other musicians. I regularly accompanied some guitarists to beer houses where they habitually perform. Here I met several more guitarists who exhibited various degrees of performance ability. I gradually separated beginners from more proficient players whose music I focused on.

Most of the guitarists under investigation live in the central districts of Venda. I did not consciously limit my investigation to this area. The geographical spread of musicians is partly a result of following up the recommen-

dations of informants. These central districts are the most densely populated, and feature a high frequency of musical activity. They surround Thohoyandou, the economic centre of Venda, and are a consequent attraction for musicians who busk at various public venues.

It was necessary to identify a performance situation that would adequately support a cultural analysis of music. In other words, it was important to pinpoint social situations that were vibrant. I identified three such situations. They are associated with the church, street busking, and beer houses<sup>9</sup> respectively.

Musical groups are an integral component of many contemporary church congregations in Venda. These groups are important partly in terms of recruiting new church members. Most attractive sometimes are congregations with small bands which accompany church as well as choir singing. Guitars and synthesizers often form the basis of these bands. Secondly, busking is a local informal economic activity. Some guitarists busk to supplement their income, while for others it is the only source of income. Thirdly, guitar playing is also an integral part of the activities taking place at rural beer houses.

I decided to focus on the latter performance situation. Although the first two situations are not less important for their participants, they do not provide as much scope for rewarding investigation. Personal interaction at beer houses is much more dynamic and creative than in the other cases. Whereas guitar playing is often the centre of activity at beer houses, this is usually not the case in the church context where musical activity and repertoire, although inte-

gral to proceedings, is more or less subordinate to liturgy and dogma. Personal interaction in busking situations is also not as intimate and creative as at beer houses. Although buskers accumulate people around them, these people are usually transient, being pedestrians and shoppers going about their daily business. As such, busking situations usually feature a guitarist as the only performer. I have not ignored busking and church performance situations. I refer briefly to the latter in the life sketches of guitarists Mashudu Mulaudzi and Phineas Mavhaga, while I present a case study of busker Piti Ravhura.

Approximately 40% of the guitarists included in this study regularly perform at beer houses. The selling of beer is an important aspect of the Venda rural economy, and beer drinks are a widespread and regular social occurrence. The setting at beer houses is informal and easily accessible. Owners of beer houses encourage musical performances which boost beer sales. Beer houses constitute good settings for the study of process and product, *tshilombe* and other types of individual musical behaviour, general guitar performance practice, the interaction between musicians and their community, as well as the nature and role of group identity in contemporary life.

I discuss these issues in chapters two and three, and center them around the life and music of guitarist Solomon Mathase of Ngulumbi. Solomon and I are both employees of the University of Venda. Solomon is a member of the university's maintenance staff. He is fond of visiting the music department. I met him there in 1988 when I was employed as a guitar teacher. Solomon is a popular figure in his community, and a prolific composer who addresses life's crises and joys in song. He regularly performs at beer drinks and financial

association (stokfel) meetings. Lastly, as someone who worked in Johannesburg for several years, Solomon is able to speak English, although on a limited basis only. His limited English and my limited Venda allowed us to communicate with relative effectiveness. Our relationship developed and intensified, and I spent many fruitful and enjoyable times with him over a period of three years. This not only allowed me to construe his life story, but also to observe the unfolding of some of his life experiences.

I also approach guitar songs at the level of the group. In chapter four I provide a much less detailed perspective on eighteen other guitarists. These musicians were selected from a total number of twenty-five. They were partly chosen on the basis of their potential to allow a wider evaluation of Solomon Mathase's life and music. In chapter four I show what they have in common with Solomon and with each other, thus providing a broad view on musical style, and on guitarists as a social grouping. I also highlight certain important individual idiosyncrasies.

Venda guitarists are virtually exclusively male. This appears partly related to the fact that male migrant labourers first brought guitars to Venda, and partly to its use by *zwilombe* musicians who have always been male. I have come across one female guitarist only. She is the daughter of guitarist Nemakhavhani Munyai of Makonde. She uses her father's guitar to perform religious songs.

Three guitarists have died since the start of my investigation. They are Albert Mundalamo, Nndanganeni Luambo, and Patrick Rañwashi. I was fortunate in recording some of Albert Mundalamo's music, and having a lengthy interview with him

shortly before his death. Nndanganeni Luambo died before I could follow up my initial visit to him. However, I managed to locate some of his relatives, who kindly provided me with information. I managed to complete most of my work with Patrick Rañwashi before his death. Most of my remaining queries were answered by his wife and his guitarist friend Nemakhavhani Munyai.

Six of the guitarists included in this study have been recorded by radio stations, or by record companies.<sup>10</sup> The semi-professional status of these musicians did not significantly affect the aims of my investigation. They are all performers who were schooled on home made guitars, and later, factory made acoustic guitars. They have made occasional forays into the commercial world, often on the same old battered instruments, singing arrangements of their songs. None of them has achieved commercial success or managed to make an independent living from their recordings.

Guitarists were given free rein to perform any songs. The number of songs I recorded from each particular guitarist depended on his general musical expertise. Some guitarists knew only a few songs. They were mostly younger musicians like Mbulaheni Netshipise from whom I recorded five songs. I recorded more songs by guitarists who were outstanding singers, or showed variation in terms of accompaniment. For example, I recorded seventeen songs by the musically versatile Mashudu Mulaudzi, and twelve by the musical story teller par excellence, Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila. My detailed investigation of Solomon Mathase focuses on the largest number of song recordings by an individual, namely ninety-six.

The songs were recorded on a stereo reel tape recorder. Performances of most of these songs were also videotaped. The song texts were transcribed by one of my assistants, Naledzani Munyembane. He is a playwright and novelist from Nzhelele. He and I translated the songs, after which I returned to the musicians for textual corrections and detailed explanations. I discussed many of these texts with successive years of undergraduate students at the University of Venda, and I was also able to observe their reactions to the songs. These discussions and observations provided me with added insight into the value of guitar songs.

While many of the songs presented for analysis were recorded purposely in relatively secluded and quiet environments (courtyards, half completed houses, or even under trees in the veld), I recorded on video as well as audio tape many live guitar performances at social occasions. These performances mostly took place at beer drinks. I found that musicians did not pay much attention to my relatively unobtrusive audio tape recorder. However, making video recordings was occasionally problematic. People often assumed that I had been sent by the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and that they were soon to see their images broadcast over national television. Denial of this did not always dampen boisterous enthusiasm and curiosity, and at times there was good natured competition for dance space in front of the camera. These recordings have not been presented for analysis. Fortunately, people got used to me at beer houses I visited regularly, and their curiosity soon wore off. As a result, I was able to videotape performances which were not unacceptable distortions of conventional performance practice.



### 1.3 On song translation and transcription

Guitar songs can be understood best when approached as total products. Their discussions in this thesis ideally should be evaluated in conjunction with their texts, recordings and transcriptions. Although some discussions may benefit from having complete song texts quoted in them, I place these texts after the biographies to promote the flow of discussion.

Song texts generally were transcribed as sung, without attempting to present them in conventional written grammatical form. Literal translations have mostly been relegated to footnotes. Some exclamations and interjections were left untranslated since it was problematic to find meaningful English counterparts for them. Where possible, however, the emotions transmitted in them are described in footnotes.

Repetition of song lines in performance generally has not been indicated, except where it is of semantic or structural importance. Song lines placed within quotation marks are spoken. Lines in italicized bold print are sung or spoken by someone other than the guitarist in question. Spaces between song lines indicate pauses in singing.

Because of typographical limitations, the dental symbol  $\wedge$  has been replaced by  $\_$  (e.g.  $\_d$  instead of  $\wedge_d$ ), while the velar  $\mathring{n}$  is represented as  $\tilde{n}$ .

Song numbers and lines are bracketed in discussion. Song numbers are separated by a semi-colon (e.g. 28; 45). A song line is separated from its song number by a colon (e.g. 30: 5 = song 30 line 5). Ll is the abbreviation of "lines", and l

of "line".

Following convention, guitar parts are transcribed one octave above actual pitch. The right hand thumb and index finger (generally used for plucking) are indicated by p and i respectively. Encircled numbers indicate stopped strings, with the highest-sounding string as number one. Open strings are indicated by a zero. Numbers without circles indicate fingers of the left hand, with the index finger as number one. Tuning patterns are indicated using note names. Figures indicate the relevant octave. Thus C4 is the C below concert A, and C3 is an octave lower.

Transcribed songs all have a cyclic structure. Only one variation of a cycle is generally presented. Metrical lengths and rhythmic structure have been indicated using pulse lines. Most transcriptions have been transposed to modes or keys featuring fewest accidentals.

#### 1.4 Notes

1 This approach seems reductionistic, but Blacking also remarks that "musical relationships *may* reflect social relationships" (Blacking 1971: 108; italics added), and that attempts to reduce music making to a purely sociological phenomenon should be resisted (Blacking 1977b: 1).

2 This situation is not restricted to South Africa. Hood remarked thirty years ago that "the continued insularity of Western musicology is embarrassingly anachronistic" (Hood 1963: 289). Similar complaints have been made ever since (cf. Chase 1976, Kerman 1985, Seeger 1987).

3 I use the term "song" (*luimbo*, pl *nyimbo*) in its African inclusive sense, designating all musical aspects as well as their attendant social dynamics.

4 Use of the term "traditional" in the Venda cultural context too often implies time-honoured, undifferentiated social experience. Tourist brochures and television programmes in particular are fond of portraying Venda as a culturally homo-

geneous, geographically isolated area, often neglecting to show the effect of sweeping social change. Nevertheless, the term "traditional" has some contemporary application. I thus invoke it in a flexible sense, avoiding constant use of inverted commas, or circumscription.

5 The term "solo" designates an instrumentalist who is not an integral part of any instrumental ensemble. It does not imply the absence of other performers such as singers or dancers.

6 Phophi Ramunangi, Madamalala, personal communication.

7 The term "ritual" is applied here in a general sense to refer to the physical assembly of a group of people, their shared focus of attention and mutual awareness of it, and a consequent common emotional mood and enhanced emotional energy (Collins 1986: 193).

8 The headman who has jurisdiction over the lake.

9 A beer house is a private home from which beer is sold, often by women who have no other professional option. I use the term "beer house" in preference to its common counterpart, "shebeen". The term "shebeen" has a historical association with illicit liquor sales and prostitution (cf. Coplan 1985) generally not applicable in the context of Venda culture (cf. also Afr. for shebeen: smokkelkroeg).

10 Mashudu Mulaudzi, Solomon Mathase and Albert Mundalamo have been recorded by Radio Thohoyandou and Radio Venda. Solomon Mathase and Albert Mundalamo have been recorded on seven singles, while George Singo recorded one long-playing record. The most successful musicians have been Albert Raedani and Nndanganeni Luambo, whose music is available on a few records and cassettes.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Solomon Mathase: Song texts and the formulation of social reality

In this chapter I discuss Solomon's formulation of social reality by referring essentially to the messages transmitted in his song texts. Firstly I provide a summary of his world-view in terms of his explanation of the song *Ri khou tshila rothe* ("We shall all live").

During March 1991 my colleague Ian Raper and I attended a *stokfel*<sup>1</sup> financial association meeting with Solomon. This meeting was held at the home of one of the association's members, Masindi *Netshiavha* of Madamalala. Masindi is the owner of a small beer house, and her home therefore is suited to *stokfel* meetings. It was a busy, noisy gathering, with visitors continually coming and going. The late afternoon was hot, but we managed to escape the slanting rays of the setting sun by sitting in the shallow shade of a wooden shed. Solomon was in a good mood. He had had a few beers, and songs poured out from him. Receding daylight forced me to focus my video camera closely on him. His face filled the camera lens, appearing larger than life. For a while the camera isolated him from his noisy surroundings, and contracted focus on a statement of the universal human condition (cf. video recording 1):

*Ri khou tshila rothe.*  
(We shall all live)  
*Shango lo fhela.*  
(The country is perishing.)  
*Sendelani Murena.*  
(Nearer thee to the Lord.)  
*Nne na vhone, vhabebi.*  
(Me and you, parents.)  
*Na rine ri khathutshele.*  
(And we ask forgiveness.)

Solomon then proceeded to explain the song:

Me, I am dying. You not die. You can't remember me. O.K.,  
me, I am not dying, you are dying. So, I'm remember you.  
That's all. Problem is just a little bit man. Just is  
little bit only. If I say I'm asking one cigarette, you  
5 give me my cigarette. I'm ask you, give ... Hai ("no"),  
I've got it, don't worry, it's the stories. Love, love,  
is too (incoherent), love, love, lufuno ("love"), love  
is, love ... is too heavy. Just like left and right  
(hands). O.K., what about ... (puts fingers in mouth to  
10 indicate teeth). And I got my mouth, and I got things:  
this and this (referring to teeth and tongue). And this  
thing (teeth) is not all right. Or this ... lulimi lwanga  
("my tongue"), lulimi hoyu lu a kwasha ("this tongue is  
sore"). Mara ("but") so, Jesus is Jesus. What about  
15 Jesus? And what about you? What about you? This thing,  
(teeth), this thing is not all right. This, this ... is  
not all right. Just like you, if you don't love me. You  
see now: here I'm drinking a liquor. I'm happy. These  
people, you are happy if me I got money ... but tomorrow  
20 if you haven't got money, and I haven't got money: tshi-  
lamba (something which is refused) this (pointing to beer  
bucket). It is the big problem man Mr Raper (incoherent).  
Me, I know. Me, I know. Just why I use this thing (the  
guitar). If I want to tell all my friends. My friend or  
25 my cousin or my brother. Still, my brother ... if I play  
this thing (the guitar). But because my brother he don't  
play ... he don't like for this. And my cousin he don't  
like this. And so my father is dead. And so my mother kan  
nie sien nie ("my mother cannot see"). And so, I got my  
30 big problem at my home. So, top on that, if I'm drinking  
to liquor, I got off my mind; my ... my mind at my heart.  
I say, I got my children. Just you see (pointing to his  
son Phatushedzo) my children. You want to see my mother.  
Where is the father now? And tomorrow you want the bread,  
35 tomorrow you want the sugar, tomorrow you want the tea,  
tomorrow you want the shoes, you want the skippers, you  
want everything at my home. And so I want the bread. And  
so my salary is too very small. So what about these  
people? You know, me, if I play my ... this thing (point-  
40 ing to his guitar). That's why I say: "this bloody,  
bloody fuckin' guitar". But because the secret ... (on)  
my side I know what can I do. And so I know where I'm  
going. And, but because Jesus is Jesus. No matter how.  
If you, you ... or you are a lawyer or you are the magis-  
45 trate or you are the chief. Or no matter how you are, I  
don't. Or so, you got anything. Money, everything, you  
got it. Me, I'm poor. So, I am not worry, because I know  
where I'm going. Jesus is Jesus. So that's why ... me, I  
... my problem is one thing, I haven't got for strum bass  
50 altogether. You know Mr Raper, if you give me something,  
so maybe one time, I pay. You are the rich man, and so,  
all my money (incoherent). I got nothing of my mind. And  
so, you know, you know, if you got something to here, I'm  
play. But because I know this and all that place. White  
55 man, black man. I'm not a politician. I'm not a politi-

cian. No, I want to wish everybody to be happy. Just little bit, I say. Your child ... maybe it's the birthday. Just like that. That's why me if I take this guitar. You, all this people here. They stay here, né? These  
60 people, if they drink, you see all the Mavenda do this. That's why me, if I do this guitar, me if I come, I don't do this (i.e. fight). No, I come to drink only liquor on my stomach, that's all. And so, I'm taking my guitar, I get it. I say, maybe these people, that man want to hit  
65 another man, or another woman, or another something. But, because on my side I don't want it. Because I say, don't do that. This man can't understand me. So for me, I take this thing (i.e. his guitar), I'm play. And so I play for them. But, because you can't understand me. And that man  
70 tomorrow you're going to the court. Not me also. That man got the problem. And another man. (incoherent) ... to me. But altogether you drink of this thing (beer ladle). Liquor only. That's why I say (singing):

**Rothe ri a fanana.**

(We are all the same.)

75 **Nne na vhone:**

(Me and you:)

**Rothe ri a fanana.**

(We are all the same.)

**Hu ri na mutshena.**

(Even a white person.)

**Hu ri na muvhi.**

(Even a bad person.)

**Ri khou tuwa rothe.**

(We are leaving together.)

80 **Nne na vhone.**

(Me and you.)

(Speaking): But because is the Jesus is Jesus. No matter you are the white woman, white, white, black man. Just like that. Still the same. Still the same! You eat, you eat, you eat. You drink, you drink. You smoke, you smoke.  
85 If you don't smoke you don't smoke. So, what about me: if I pick up (a stone), I come to you, I hit you. (several Venda sentences elaborating this). It is serious. No man, you're mad, man. I'm not that, on my side. So I want  
90 plenty people, they must come (incoherent) through man. I take only one drink. Don't worry. I play of this thing (i.e. guitar). One drink before me. I told you. I say this people, Mutshangana, Muvenda, Muzulu, Tswana, what (incoherent). Problem is only fighting. That's why ...  
95 Mr Raper, you come (incoherent). It's me, another man. You, O.K. No, plenty people here. I say why white man you stay here. Plenty people. But because, now I told you, I say, my friend. So, anyways, Masindi, you know, Mrs  
99 Masindi you know (incoherent). So, now everybody is happy.

This explanation (hereafter referred to as the monologue) articulates the main ideas which make up Solomon's basic philosophy of life - a constantly declared position from which he advocates a model for social reality. Solomon generally articulates his beliefs well. In doing so he sometimes uses the term "example" to show that his discourse is on a symbolic level. In 1 6 he gives a similar indication ("it's the stories"). In trying to formulate his social model, Solomon tries a few metaphors which he abandons: firstly, that of dying and remembrance (1 1). Secondly, that of giving a cigarette (1 4). This is interpreted literally by his friend and guitarist Robert Madzhie who wants to give him a cigarette, and Solomon decides against using this metaphor. He then attempts to use a metaphor which refers to the hands (1 8). The metaphor that finally succeeds is that of the mouth, teeth and tongue. Through it emerges the basis of Solomon's social model: the promotion of love, compassion, reciprocity, and interdependence in pursuit of happiness (1 56). This is symbolized by a child's birthday party (1 57) and the pleasures of a beer drink. Humanity is like the mouth. It has many interlocking parts. The mouth is unable to function properly when one of its constituent parts has a disease. Humanity is immoral and cannot function effectively when something is wrong with some of its components ("Just like you, if you don't love me"; 1 17). This kind of humanity is about as meaningless as a beer drink where people have no money for beer (11 17-22). Now Solomon's references to remembering the dead, the implied interdependence of the hands, and providing a cigarette to a needy smoker become clear: because we are all part of the same humanity (11 74-85), social justice must be universal. It must not merely cater for sectional interests only ("White man, black man. I'm not a politician."; 1 54).

As I suggested in chapter one, the general life strategy of Venda guitarists is rooted in their position in the wider South African political economy. Their model for social reality is essentially articulated from the basis of the suffering, selfishness and apathy that emanates from a culture of poverty ("love is too heavy"; l 8). Solomon knows many people, and has seen and experienced much ("me, I know"; l 23). This allows him to sing about issues which matter to people: "And so, you know, you know, if you got something to here (i.e. a troubled heart), I'm play. But because I know this and all that place." (l 53). This qualifies him to be a communal spokesperson. Unlike others (l 26), he passionately loves music, and is a good musician. Thus it is almost as if he is obliged to take the socially sanctioned role of itinerant prophet-musician (cf. Kruger 1991). His guitar is more than a musical instrument. It is a symbolic extension of ancestral morality: a means by which he appeals for peace and social justice (ll 57-72), and tries to bring temporary emotional relief. However, deep inside him, Solomon suspects that poverty and injustice may only come to an end with death: "So, I am not worry, because I know where I'm going" (i.e. to his death; l 47).

The promotion of love and reciprocity is articulated through two interdependent core messages embedded in the religious legitimation of the social order. The first of these is that of the potential power of Christian ethics ("Jesus is Jesus."; l 14). Solomon is not a Christian, but he believes that the promotion of Christian ethics can be to his advantage. People should expound Christian love and charity ("Jesus is Jesus. What about Jesus? And what about you?"; ll 14-15). People who do not love others are like a bad tooth or a sore tongue which affects the working of the whole



mouth. These people drink and like to fight, sometimes on an inter-ethnic basis (ll 92-94). Love spreads prosperity and happiness, in the same way that a person who buys beer for others at a beer drink brings joy (l 18).

Christian ethics are invoked in tandem with ancestral morality, especially that of the promotion of support which essentially functions in the context of the extended family and circle of close friends (l 24). When this support structure collapses, suffering ensues ("And so my father is dead. And so my mother kan nie sien nie"; l 27). Suffering is emotional and physical, and it is most acute in family life (ll 34-37). Compared to others such as lawyers and chiefs (l 44), Solomon earns a small salary and is poor (l 38). This is partly because of his limited education ("I got nothing of my mind"; l 52). He aggravates his poverty by drinking (l 30). This causes him much unhappiness (l 31). He pours out his grief and frustration by means of his guitar (ll 39-41). The instrument not only provides spiritual catharsis, but it also has the potential to provide him with extra income ("I know what can I do. And so I know where I'm going"; l 42). Exploiting this potential is hampered by his limited financial resources. He appeals to others to help him acquire musical instruments with which to start a band ("I haven't got for strum bass altogether"; l 49; strum bass: an electric guitar).



Plate 1. Solomon Mathase



Plate 2. The Mathase family. Back (l to r):  
Tshinakao, Sandra, Mbilummbi, & Solomon. Front  
(l to r): Avhatakali, Takalani, Phatushedzo,  
Michael, & Nyadzani.

## 2.1 "That song is my song": Poverty and the roots of a worldview

I will now look at the domestic and historical context of Solomon's poverty. Then I show how he responds to this condition in general as well as musical terms.

The Mathase family lives in the village of Ngulumbi, approximately ten kilometers north west of Thohoyandou. Ngulumbi is located on the western perimeter of the chiefly district of Tshivhase. The district is made up of approximately seventy densely populated villages.<sup>2</sup> It has a closely-knit social fabric, and there is a high frequency of daily face-to-face interaction. Messages and ideas, often generated in musical performance, are widely and rapidly disseminated by shouts that echo across small valleys, and along the myriad of footpaths that criss-cross hillsides and riverbeds.

The neighbouring village of Gondeni lies to the north. Beyond Gondeni, against the mountain, lies the chiefly village of Mukumbani. Like a fortress it looks out over its domain of valleys, hills and streams (cf. 9). The area has been largely deforested. However, it features many small clumps of indigenous trees, while mountain slopes and tops are thickly forested. The soil is fertile. Fruit trees abound, especially mango and banana. Maize patches and dense bush with dark green orchards chequer the undulating landscape. They are brown in winter and lush green in summer. On clear hot days yellowbilled kites soar dark brown high above. Birds always chatter unseen in the trees. The landscape is dotted with homesteads. Most homesteads, like that of the Mathase family, have thatched roofs and walls of clay brick. Interspersed between these homesteads are modest brick houses with

corrugated roofs. Solomon and many other poor people desire brick houses. Traditional homesteads require constant maintenance, and thatch grass has become harder to find, and expensive.<sup>3</sup>



Plate 3. The Mathase homestead

The Mathase homestead is located opposite that of the local headman. The two homesteads are separated by a narrow dirt road. The area has many large trees, including mobola plum, mitzeerie and mango which provide shelter against the sun when people gather for communal meetings. Sometimes, when arriving at or leaving the Mathase homestead with a group of singing weekend revellers, I become embarrassed when we disturb solemn-looking meetings at the headman's homestead.

Like the rest of Ngulumbi, Solomon's small plot slopes down towards the Mutshindudi river. On rainy days water rushes down the slope through holes in the courtyard walls. Inside the courtyard shallow furrows conduct the water further down

the slope. Maintaining such a homestead is a constant task which is entrusted to women. From time to time a large heap of red soil and cattle dung can be found in the courtyard when its walls and surface are being repaired.

Because of the hot climate, people generally do not spend much time indoors. The courtyard is the centre of everyday family activity, and formal and informal gatherings. After the birth of the two youngest Mathase sons, nappies always hung on a line strung across it (cf. pl. 3). Solomon's mother and sons often sit there, eating their meat, vegetables and maize meal porridge. The courtyard regularly becomes a ritual space where people gather for drinking beer and performing music. Its gray dung-plastered walls, reaching about waist height, are reminiscent of the low walls that surround the outdoor ritual spaces of certain Zion Christian Church congregations. During social gatherings, people sit on clay benches which jut out from the walls. On the western side of the courtyard is a lemon tree under whose shade they take shelter on hot summer afternoons.

The Mathase homestead comprises two sleeping huts and a cooking hut located close to each other. Their doors open out onto the walled courtyard in the centre. Solomon's mother, sister, and three elder sons sleep in the second, smaller hut. Space is limited, and they keep their clothes in suitcases. This hut is white with a dark red-brown border reaching about a meter from the ground. This is a common feature of houses and buildings. White walls are impractical in a country with rich red soil. The effect of the border is to make it seem as if the houses rise up directly from the soil. Like their inhabitants they are from and on the soil, destined to return there one day in the ceaseless flow of

life and decay. The hut has a bicycle tyre on the pinnacle of its roof. This, according to Solomon, is the "poor man's lightning conductor".

The kitchen has an interior blackened by soot. It is not generally used for sleeping. Only the occasional drunks who are unable to get home under their own steam sometimes sleep there. It is almost as if these somewhat undesirable people are banished to the dark interior of the hut. In the middle of the hut on the floor burns a small cooking fire. Because the roof structure is covered with plastic sheeting, smoke from the fire billows through the open door during meal times. The family buy their firewood from the nearby Tate Vondo state pine forest. The pine logs lie outside the cooking hut on a wooden frame. This prevents them becoming damp. A wheelbarrow lies upside down next to the kitchen. It is not generally used for gardening, but for carting. The women also wash clothes in its deep, narrow basin. Outside the kitchen is a water bowl for fowls and pigeons. After the rain during summer, flying ants pour from small holes in the ground next to the kitchen. They are a delicacy, and the Mathase sons and their friends often lie on their stomachs around these holes, waiting for them. Sometimes the ants are too small to be eaten by people. Then the fowls are allowed to peck at them. Next to the kitchen is a pigeon coop. The family keeps pigeons as a food supplement. They are only eaten when their number becomes sufficiently large. They are excellent guardians. They react quickly to strange people and sounds, protect the homestead, and generally interfere with musical recordings.

The large sleeping hut is for Solomon, his wife Sandra, and their two smallest sons. Its interior is a pleasant jumble of

objects indicative of the diversity of contemporary experience: beds, dressers, a large wardrobe, a radio, a small battery-operated television, a large mirror, a photograph of Nelson Mandela, an ANC rally poster, a calendar, a pinup, a poster of Jimmy Swaggart, religious prints portraying Adam and Eve, and Joseph, Mary and baby Christ, a large straw hat, a handbag, porcelain ornaments, a saw, and a sickle.

The toilet is built from bricks. It stands in the bottom corner of the plot. Local authorities give stiff fines to people who do not have pit latrines. People, many of whom are unemployed, have to choose between these fines and having a toilet built for as much as R350. In 1992 Solomon built one for his cousin Eric's wife who lives nearby. Eric was still working in Johannesburg, and his wife could no longer avoid having a toilet.

A tap outside the homestead provides water from the nearby Tate Vondo dam. During the crippling drought of 1992, all the local boreholes dried up, and a trickle of water was pumped only periodically from the dam. Many people relied on the Mutshindudi river for water. Next to the tap is a tin washing tub. During summer, when it is hot and the plot is covered with maize, the family take their baths in this tub between the banana trees and maize plants. This, according to them, is a typical "Venda bathroom".

The bottom part of the plot is covered with fruit trees: banana, mango, avocado, guava, orange and mulberry. Maize plants also stand interspersed with the fruit trees during the rainy season. The groundcrops on the plot are beans and groundnuts. Outside the kitchen is an area under large guava and syringa trees. Sometimes the women sit there on plastic

sheeting, knitting and embroidering. This is the other important ritual space at the Mathase homestead. It is shady, and people often gather there to drink beer and dance, especially during the cooler months of the year.

This, then, is the homestead established by Solomon's parents after their marriage. His father, Mbulaheni Jackson, came from Munangani, near Louis Trichardt. His mother, Tshinakao Lydia, grew up at Makonde, a village in the eastern part of the Tshivhase district. Mbulaheni was a diviner, hunter, and outstanding dancer and singer. He did not farm like others, but exchanged meat for maize. According to his wife, he was an expert hunter who never used any weapons. Instead, he relied on his dogs, his ability to run fast, and his hands. He made extensive use of snares, and used birdlime to catch smaller birds. His favourite prey included bush pigs, small antelopes, hares, guinea fowls, and francolins.

Tshinakao (b. 1918) lives with Solomon and his family. She started to lose her sight as a young girl. She was taken to Siloam hospital where tests were done on her. However, the doctors were unable to help her. Today she can see for only a few meters around her. Her eyes are almost totally closed, and she has to look carefully to identify people and objects. She sometimes scrutinizes an open beer bottle with some effort to see how much beer it still contains.

Tshinakao is a strong, large-boned woman noted for her outstanding physical strength (cf. 4: 6). Despite her age, she still opens a beer bottle by biting the cap off with her teeth. She is morose at times, and then sits aside, saying very little for a long time. However, she generally likes people, and can be full of fun. Sometimes she surreptitiously



passes one of her small grandsons a glass of beer, and enjoys his subsequent physical discomfort. She often wants me to take her to Cape Town for a vacation, and makes sure that I refill her snuff box regularly. Solomon seems to have inherited his expressive artistic ability from his mother who likes to give elaborate and dramatic descriptions of events. She does so in virtual folktale convention, complete with repetitions and onomatopoeia. She occasionally dances when people gather at the Mathase homestead to drink beer and listen to Solomon playing guitar.

Solomon Tshinetise Mathase was born on 2 February 1950 in the homestead where he still lives. Today he often looks back to his youth with reproach and regret: "I remember misery" (96: 3; cf. also 11; 30; 50; 62; 89). For him, the roots of his poverty lie in certain circumstances surrounding his parents. He was born from a mother who is visually impaired (50: 2-3). Although she was "filled with God's spirit" during his birth, and still loves her son (50: 9-10), her physical disability has always prevented her from providing him with adequate material support. This has led to a life of sorrow and "madness", a life whose crises are mediated through musical performance (50: 3 & 17).

Mbulaheni Mathase died in c. 1953 when Solomon was only about three years old. He left his family with suffering and poverty:

I am alone.  
Father left misery.  
I do not sleep in the forest like a bull.  
Gran, I am angry.  
Gran, I am leaving.

(song 89)

Mbulaheni's death is still deeply etched in Solomon's consciousness, and he regularly refers to it when talking and singing.

At the age of six Solomon developed severe pain in his eyes. He was taken to a traditional doctor. Any complaint of prolonged facial pain traditionally is ascribed to internal pressure. This pressure may be relieved by making two vertical incisions low on each cheek. These incisions are still clearly visible on Solomon's face, and he jokingly describes them as "11 + 11".

As a young boy Solomon looked after the goats, cattle and donkeys of his grandmother (cf 11: 17). While herding, he was fond of playing games with his friends. Their favourite pastime was to make clay oxen. These oxen were given horns comprising forked twigs. They were left to dry for two or three days. These oxen then fought each other with their horns. The owner of the ox which broke first was then at the beck and call of the winner. Solomon and his friends were also fond of playing *khororo*, a game similar to hockey.

During this time Solomon was exposed to certain musical instruments. He explored the *tshihwana* and *dende* musical bows, and the lamellaphone, *mbila* (cf. Kirby 1968). These were all boys' instruments traditionally associated with herding and courting. However, Solomon excelled in playing the *tshitiringo* transverse flute, and, starting at the age of fourteen, a home made guitar.

In 1963, at the age of thirteen, Solomon attended the boys' circumcision school, *murundu*, at the nearby village of Madamalala (5; 38; cf. Stayt 1931). The school lasted for

three months. Of this period, two months were spent in isolation. The fee for attending the school was about R2,50. Song 5 (cf. audio recording 1) is one of the final songs of the school, and its singing is associated with the burning of the circumcision lodge ("It will be burnt!"; l 1) and the return of the initiates to their community after their period of seclusion ("We are tired"; ll 3-4). Murundu songs are traditionally secret, and there is some controversy whether they should be performed publicly nowadays. Even Solomon at times appears uncertain about performing them. However, their adaptation for guitar, and their spontaneous performance at beer drinks point to the decreasing social relevance of the school in an environment characterized by the influence of new social institutions. Solomon's adaptation of this old song for performance in a contemporary context makes of it a ritual symbol which is "both backward and forward looking, enabling reflection on the past and providing a guideline for the future" (cf. McAllister 1986: 347). It is part of a much wider traditionalizing strategy which promotes ancestral morality in contemporary society.

Solomon attended nearby Ngovhela Primary School up to standard three. He enrolled in standard four at Maungani Primary School during 1967 when he was seventeen years old. He left school during June of that year under traumatic conditions:

I remember the day  
I ran away from school!  
My parents told me.  
They said: Things are changing.  
See, today I do not have anything.  
Alas mother!  
See, today things are changing.  
Schools and shops have been built.  
Cars have been purchased.  
Mother, today I do not have anything.  
Alas, my suffering at this place, alas.  
He, God, knows.  
Mother, I am in trouble!

I remember my father.  
The problem is that he died.  
If only he could be here.  
Because he conceived me he would have helped me.

(extract from song 62; cf. also song 96)

The guitar's meditative bass pattern and Solomon's voice join in resonant lamentation, offset against the delicate, circular pattern of the treble tones (cf. audio recording 2). The lamentation addresses Solomon's lack of education, his father's death, and his poverty and suffering which only God really understands. As a first generation scholar from a poor family, Solomon did not receive the domestic support needed to succeed at school. His father was deceased and his mother physically disabled and unemployed. In conversation and when singing, his parents' status becomes reified into stock phrases by means of which he addresses his poverty (1: 4-5; 3: 4-5; 11: 15; 13: 6; 50: 2-3; 62: 21-24; 89: 2).

Solomon often remarks that he left school because of a weak physical condition. He had "no money and no shoes", and he was hungry. At the time the family was surviving partly on veld food such as mobola plums and black jacks. This impoverished diet could have led to an eye condition which prevented him from seeing properly on the chalk board at school. He once remarked that it could also have been because of the intervention of his ancestral spirits. He said, however, that he was able to see outside the school. He also had much difficulty understanding the school work. It is therefore possible that his illness was psychosomatic.

Solomon visited his cousin Eric twice at Chiawelo in Johannesburg when he was still a boy. Eric worked at the UTC Tobacco Company, and retired during 1992. After leaving

school, Solomon went to live with him. At the age of about twenty (c. 1970), Solomon started to work for the Roodepoort municipality as a building assistant at R35 a week. He left after only a year. This was mainly because he clashed with his Zulu foreman. Communication was a big problem since he could not speak any language but Venda.

For most part of his stay in Johannesburg, Solomon worked as a machine operator at National Cold Storage (c. 1971-1981). His duty was to operate a machine that cuts cold meats. His initial pay was R55 a week. Before he was fired, he had advanced to foreman at R155 a week. He was dismissed for several reasons. He had an affair with a Xhosa woman, and his liaison with her caused him to come late for work several times. He also said he was a good worker, and that other employees were jealous of his status as foreman. This caused friction which contributed to his dismissal. During the next few years Solomon worked for four different employers. This was mainly because he experienced difficulties with labour influx control regulations. In 1982 he went to work at another meat processing company, Torras Meat in Braamfontein. The following year he worked for a restaurant in the Carlton Centre, delivering food to office workers. During 1984 he worked as a security guard for a Bradlows furniture store, earning R180 a month. The year after that he was employed as a temporary gardener at Witwatersrand University for nine months. He was paid R550 a month.

During his sojourn in Johannesburg, Solomon earned additional income through musical performance. He bought an acoustic guitar, and started to perform at weekend beer drinks. He mostly sang in his mother tongue, and frequented beer drinks where Venda speakers gathered. He relied on gifts of money

from beer drinkers, seldom less than R2 per person. He earned approximately R60 over a weekend. This additional income was important to him in terms of supporting his wife and mother. He became member of a musical group whose other members were all Sotho speakers. They translated some of his Venda songs into their own language. A record company (possibly Gallo) recorded two of these songs on solo singles. For the recordings, the band performed on guitars, piano and drums. The first song, a translation of "Dikeledi" (4), was recorded during the 1970s. The song was popular for a while, and some of Solomon's friends and family members still remember it. Solomon received a royalty of R997. The second song was an adaptation of "A poverty-stricken man" (2). It was recorded in 1985 and Solomon was paid R550.

Solomon became unemployed towards the end of 1985, and returned to Venda. At home he sold dagga for a short period. He bought the drug from a grower and packaged it in match boxes. Its selling price varied from R1.50-R2.50 per box. He had a relatively good income, as much as R600 a month. However, a woman reported him to the local headman, Thizwiloni Ratshitanga. The headman summoned and reprimanded him. Solomon responded by saying that he was unemployed, and that he had no option: he either had to sell dagga, or had his children stealing the headman's avocados. Through the indirect mediation of the Ratshitanga family, Solomon subsequently was appointed as a labourer in the maintenance department of the University of Venda. He has been working there since the end of 1985.

The Mathase household economy centres mainly around Solomon's income. When I started my investigation into Solomon's life in 1989, his net salary was R355 per month. This amount

increased to R392 in 1990, R460 in 1991, R495 in 1992, and R585 in 1993. The discrepancy between these amounts and the R550 per month which he earned at Witwatersrand University in 1985, makes him bitter, and he regularly complains of the "peanuts" he gets as salary (cf. 29: 79-80; 59: 9; 42: 4-5; 46: 40-41).

Solomon supplements his income through musical performance. He was once paid R60 for recording five songs for Radio Thohoyandou. He occasionally gets about R20 a month from them for broadcasting these songs. He is sometimes invited to perform at stokfel financial association meetings at month ends. His remuneration usually varies between R100 and R150. Solomon occasionally also performs at student hostels on the campus of Venda University, especially when he is in dire financial need. Students sing with him and dance. Many give him small cash amounts (R1-R2), and he sometimes accumulates about R100. The amounts he receives for musical performance bring temporary, insufficient relief only.

The women in the Mathase family do not work. Solomon's mother, Tshinakao, receives a pension of R345 a month (1993). This money is spent by her on personal effects. She does not contribute in any significant way to the income of the household. Solomon feels he cannot ask her to contribute to his domestic expenses as this would create problems among his brothers and sisters. Tshinakao does, however, make a domestic contribution by providing the family with mopani worms (cf. 33).<sup>4</sup>

Like many other local families, the Mathases do not farm extensively. 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 it regularly and guard the crop. The size of the field is also limited. Because of this, Solomon 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 with the headman, he was fined R10 for contempt of authority.

During good years the family cultivates maize, groundnuts and beans (phonda) on their domestic plot. Their many fruit trees also provide them with food, but on a seasonal basis only. It is difficult to establish what the family's income is in terms of farming and informal economic activities. They do not keep book, and are unable to make estimations of amounts. However, important as these activities may be in terms of additional income, the main source of income remains Solomon's salary. The 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 farming and house construction.

As indicated before, Solomon's worldview is essentially rooted in the context of his poverty. Solomon blames his poverty on a number of factors. Those referred to most frequently are his father's untimely death, and his subsequent failure to complete his education. These two factors are regarded by Solomon as interrelated and he regularly refers to them in conversation and song (cf. 11: 13-16).



Solomon qualifies his poverty by invoking two closely related metaphors. The first of these I refer to as the orphan metaphor (cf. 1; 4: 38; 12; 28: 5; 44: 3). For example, songs 1 and 89 are general references to Solomon's poverty. Even though he has a mother and other family members, the death of his father is so significant to him that he considers himself an orphan. Although he has family, he gets no significant support from them: "When I land in trouble, who will defend me in the chief's court?" (11 3-4). In fact, he has to support them. When he became the victim of a pickpocket (cf. 68), he turned to his employer who granted him an advance on his next salary. As such he is an orphan in terms of his poverty and lack of financial support, and not in terms of not having a family. Being an orphan is synonymous with poverty and suffering. The term generally used to express this condition is *vhusiwana* (cf. 3; 30: 10; 77: 9; 89: 2; 96: 3).

The second, related, metaphor I term the extended family metaphor. Several songs contain references to the extended family (1; 3: 11-13; 17; 30; 54; 63; 71; 79). The family is portrayed implicitly as a root metaphor of society. Family members are not identified by name, but by their position in the family: sister, brother, cousin, etc. Solomon is not so much talking in personal terms as in terms of corporate morality. However, social crises are experienced most intensely in the family from which lack of morality firstly stems (cf. 54: 7-8: "I am ashamed of my argumentative relatives"). Therefore, the extended family metaphor is multi-referential. In terms of poverty, it is underpinned by the general belief that having relatives and friends is a form of wealth. Ultimate poverty not only means having no parents, but also having no relatives at all (cf. 1). This is also

reflected in song 3 (ll 15-16), and song 44 (l 10) in which Solomon identifies himself as my child. He uses the metaphor of a winnowing basket which provides sifted flour, the basis of his family's staple food. This metaphor should not be interpreted literally. Solomon regards our relationship as one of interdependence, and hence approaching the type of morality characterizing the traditional extended family. Relatives should support one another, even if in a limited way only. In this sense I had become a "relative", and part of Solomon's overall strategy of survival.

Solomon also attributes his poverty and suffering to lack of love and compassion, and general immoral behaviour against which he expresses himself forcefully and emotionally (3: 6-9; 27; 28; 29; 42; 44: 5-6; 59: 23-25; 63; 68; 69; 70; 76; 79). For example, Frank Ravele, who led the Venda government during the late 1980s, is accused of being power hungry (29: 31-33), and not having the material welfare of his people at heart. Venda belongs to all its inhabitants, and they should all share in the riches of the country (28: 12). But this does not happen. Instead, the rich swank uncaringly (42), some are jealous when others achieve their ambitions and prosper (69: 11), some are greedy (44: 12; 88: 4), the president of the poor country has a "helicopter for a taxi" (29: 65), people engage in destructive competition in order to be more important than others (96), and there is no peace because "the rich are killing the poor" through exploitation. In this context, Ravele becomes representative (29: 46) of those who "break possessions" (27: 7), "cheat" people (29: 34-39), and of all incompetent and uneducated leaders (44: 5-6; 59: 23) whose immorality is mirrored in their ugly faces (70). He in fact becomes symbolic of all incompetence and apathy, and Solomon invokes his name to criticize an unsympa-

thetic employer (28). Corrupt politicians are contrasted with leaders such as Nelson Mandela who is seen as "breaking" apartheid and stimulating political consciousness, and the Venda military leader Gabriel Ramushwana who is "concerned about orphans" and has streamlined the paying of old-age pensions (29). However, there are ultimately no fully competent leaders (29: 47), and Solomon asks the perennial question: "Who is good?" (95).

Poverty is also the result of nepotism and usurpation (63). Solomon complains of a man whose section head he was at National Cold Storage. This person is now also employed at the University of Venda, but in a higher position. Solomon, who is suffering, has "come down" in life, while another, who had a "lower" position, has now surpassed him in professional status. Solomon also complains of others who were appointed several years after him. They are on more or less the same level as him, but they receive higher salaries.

People like him who have goals and ambitions are often thwarted by those with jealous and other selfish intentions (69: 11-12). This was brought home forcefully to him at the end of July 1991 when he was the victim of a pickpocket (cf. 68; 79). The thief stole R120 from the back pocket of his trousers while he was shopping in a Thohoyandou supermarket. He was shaken by what had occurred, and expressed disbelief that something like this could have happened to him. When I spoke to him subsequently, there were traces of cynicism in his voice. He remarked that he now "trusted no one". To make matters worse, his wife and mother swallowed his story with reluctance, suspecting that he had squandered the money.

Solomon recognizes that all the factors causing his poverty are not extraneous. In song 30 ("I absconded to Brits") he blames his poverty partly on himself (cf. reference to having erred). Solomon once remarked that if he had been more obedient to his mother as a child, he perhaps would not have been struggling today. The "rumours" in song 30 refer to his family talking about his youth. Line 4 ("I am just ashamed") pertains to the fact that he is now embarrassed about his past. It is also a reference to his poverty. In song 62 ("I ran away from school") Solomon blames himself for running away from school and for not listening to his parents who told him that society was changing.

Songs 58, 75, and 78 put the blame for poverty on his lifestyle. Although Solomon uses alcohol moderately, he feels he should not drink at all (implied in 45: 14-21; 58). Every cent spent on beer and cigarettes is a cent which could have been saved for supporting his family. Solomon once remarked that he had promised his wife to stop drinking. Their agreement was that they should save money for a new house. They had jokingly agreed for him to cut off a finger whenever he drank. And, when I was visiting his home on another occasion, he chastized me for sending one of his sons to buy beer for us while, as he put it, he needed maize meal. However, when I left him, he requested me to give him and his guitar a lift to a local beer house. In this lies a manifestation of some of the paradoxes and ironies of Solomon's existence. His emotional and physical survival partly depends on his attendance of beer drinks. Traditionally, beer has positive functions: it is a nourishing drink, it promotes orderly co-existence, and it is a means of sacrifice to ancestral spirits (cf. 87: 1-2). Yet for Solomon even moderate use of beer is ideally denied. Not only does he lack

money, but contemporary Christian ethics also oppose any use of alcohol:

We are happy because there is beer here.  
We are happy because there is food here.  
They say, my child, why do you drink beer?  
They say, leave beer and go to church.  
Drugs cause madness.  
He hit mother.  
He hit father.

(song 87)

My impression was that Solomon's attitude as expressed in the performance of this song was challenging and mocking: we were sitting around a bucket of beer.

One Saturday afternoon, when I was listening to Solomon performing, he nodded towards a neat brick house below his plot, saying: "That song is my song." This was said in the context of poverty and ambition. He remarked that he was under pressure from his wife for better living conditions. Therefore, song is a metaphor for the striving for a better life. But song is more than that: the long painful striving is made bearable through music and singing. Music and life fuse together, and unfold themselves together in time. However, in several songs, being a musician takes on a negative quality (6; 8; 74; 78). This kind of musician is a "guitar-bashing baboon" (6: 9; 74: 6) who spends his free time roving from one beer house to the next. He plays his guitar and drinks beer, thus neglecting his hungry children. The conflict and shame which emerges from this type of situation is reflected in song 67 ("Hunger"). In this song, sung to me on a bleak, bitterly cold June afternoon in 1991, Solomon refers to the problems he has to feed himself and his family (cf. also 40). His wife, sister and mother sometimes quarrel because of their poor financial situation. This embarrasses him, and negates a positive self-image. Later that afternoon he sang a

song to his toddler son Takalani. The boy was thickly clad and wore a woollen cap. He looked at his father and touched his guitar while Solomon sang:

**Nne ndo shengela, nne ndo tambula.**

(I suffered, I suffered.)

**Nne, tambulani, nne, n̄wana wanga.**

(I, suffer, I, my child.)

**Tolelani nne, Takalani.**

(Look at me, Takalani.)

**Tolelani n̄wana wanga, Taki, Taki, wee.**

(Look my child, Taki, Taki, alas.)

In this context Solomon often remarks that he is drunk, mad and ugly, and that his home is ugly and delapidated (cf. 60). He uses this concept of ugliness in a moral sense to refer to himself. Once he even said he is "shit" because he feels he does not provide adequately for his family. He continued by saying that he would be playing his guitar for an entire week. This meant that he would be teaching his son Michael how to perform music so that he would not suffer materially too.

In dealing with poverty, Solomon does not only refer to himself. This is reflected in a short song he sometimes sings:

**Heyi tshedelede yo tahisa, vhanna.**

(Alas men, poverty caused marital break-up.)

**But because I am a poor man.**

**I haven't got car, shoes.**

Solomon, the prophet-musician, addresses misery on a larger, even national scale (cf. 2; 11: 8-11; 29: 4-8; 30; 59: 4-7). It always seems to me that Solomon's songs about poverty are implicitly addressed to his close friend, Philemon M. Philemon is a striking symbol of the poverty that afflicts Solomon's social environment. He is a middle-aged man who exhibits a gentle dignity and a clear presence of mind. Philemon is without permanent employment. He is thin and

suffers from tuberculosis. He has also been to hospital with pneumonia. Philemon seldom gets excited about anything. He likes to visit Solomon's home, but talks little and does not participate in music making. There is often a vacuous expression in his eyes. Philemon has had an unhappy domestic history. He has three wives, but he is separated from them. Early in 1992 he bought a large bag of maize meal and new tyres for his small pickup truck. His was a credit purchase, and he was unable to settle his debt. He was handed over to a lawyer, but had no way of immediately repaying what he owed. In the process of trying to avoid litigation, he landed in Matatshe prison for contempt of court. During his sojourn there the thin man who looks older than his years worked in the prison's vegetable fields.

Song 30 ("I absconded to Brits") is not a song whose text explicitly suggests the expression of communal poverty. However, its performance during a stokfel financial association meeting during June 1990 at the beer house of Masindi Netshiavha of Madamalala was a truly communal expression of poverty (cf. audio recording 3). Solomon and his cross-cousin, Gilbert Tshibvumo, performed on their guitars, while a friend, Hendrik Ramulwela from Maungani, performed on his "saxophone" (*sekisifounu*). This was a kazoo comprising a long-toothed comb and a thin piece of plastic cut from a shopping bag. In performance Hendrik sang some lines (cf. ll 1-3) through the plastic membrane. He weaved his humming into the texture established by the guitars, and imitated their melodic patterns. Towards the end of the performance the musicians were joined in singing by one of the stokfel members, Albert Mamatsiari of Maungani. At this point the performance built up into a virtual symphony of shared expression.

In song 11 Solomon extends the condition of his poverty to people who are forced to leave their homes as migrant workers. His absolute poverty is reflected in l 19 ("I do not have anything here") and in the fact that when he looks for employment, he has to travel on foot (l 10). He attempts to mediate his emotional turmoil by making a sacrifice to his ancestral spirits (l 3). He decides to take the only remaining option for someone in his position: to become a migrant farm labourer at Brits (l 10). Solomon has never been to Brits. Yet, he assimilates common migrant labour experience by invoking the name of this town which is historically associated with migrant labour from Venda (cf. 11, note 3). He is accompanied to Brits by a cousin. Again Solomon invokes the extended family metaphor. The cataclysm of culture contact is reflected by the fact that no assistance comes from other family members - in fact, they are just as badly off.

## 2.2 The family: "Where crocodiles clash"

Tshinakao Mathase and her husband had a total of nine children, three boys and six girls. Two of the girls died when they were babies. Of Solomon's brothers and sisters, only three feature regularly in his life. Solomon's sister Nkhumeleni, who lives in the village of Vhufuli, sometimes visits the family. She once stayed with them for a few weeks after a quarrel with her husband. Solomon's sister, Mbilummbi Ethel (1966-1993), also lived in the homestead. She was a quiet, somewhat morose woman with high cheek bones so typical of the Mathase family. Mmbilummbi never married. She had a serious heart ailment and was unable to cope with stressful interpersonal situations. She went to Tshilidzini hospital where she was examined. It was recommended that she be sent



to Garankuwa hospital for open heart surgery. However, her family feared for her life, and decided to keep her at home. Solomon had much affection for her and did not object to supporting her. She went to a local Christian centre where she completed a course in sewing. She hoped to contribute towards the family income in this way. She occasionally came to life during beer parties, and led the singing of religious songs such as the well-known eschatological hymn "We are going home to Jerusalem" (cf. video recording 2).<sup>5</sup> During the winter of 1993, when the soil was drying out and the leaves of the mitzeerie tree outside the Mathase homestead were turning red and withered, Mbilummbi quietly succumbed to a heart attack while sleeping. A large crowd gathered for her funeral. The event was an opportunity for the Mathase extended family to renew bonds. They consoled Tshinakao who was devastated by Mbilummbi's death. Solomon remarked several times that his mother now had "only five children left".

Tshinakao Mathase has three sons. Her eldest son Robert also resides locally. He is employed as a labourer in the Department of Public Works. Labourers, who occupy the lowest rank in the civil service, receive a salary of no more than a few hundred rand a month. Robert is a somewhat dour, docile, enigmatic person who talks little. He sometimes just sits with his eyes closed, almost in a stupor. Sometimes I wonder if he does not have some latent illness. He likes beer, but usually gets drunk quietly, without any aggression or verbosity. However, occasionally he becomes demanding, and asks for money to buy new shoes. Robert always likes to sing, and sits close to Solomon when doing so. Sometimes the two brothers put their heads together when singing, or sing into each other's faces when performing in antiphonal style. When singing, Robert has the habit of pouting his lips and closing

his eyes as if his thoughts are far off. He likes children, and the young Mathase boys are fond of sitting on his lap during music making. Robert occasionally composes songs. "The teacher" (20) was composed by him. He also created the basis of the profound song "My aunt" (11) with its implicit reference to the cataclysm of culture contact. Solomon's younger brother, Alpheus, also lives locally. Alpheus is often unemployed. Sometimes he manages to secure menial employment, such as that of gardener.

Solomon married Sandra Ndeboho Mukwevho in 1978 while he was still living and working in Chiawelo. She was born in 1961 in Johannesburg of a Venda father and Sotho mother. Solomon brought Sandra to his ancestral home shortly after the wedding. She liked Ngulumbi, and indicated that she wanted to live there. Solomon returned to Johannesburg where he obtained her parents' consent.

Sandra has passed standard six. She writes and speaks passable English. This makes Solomon proud as well as embarrassed. He has a lower school qualification, and struggles to express himself in English. Sandra is an attractive, hard-working woman. A neighbour once remarked that she could not understand how such a beautiful woman could marry such an ugly man. This hurt Solomon. In conversation he often refers metaphorically to his supposed ugliness to describe his poverty.

There are five children in the Mathase family. They are all boys: Nyadzani (12), Michael (8), Phatushedzo (4), Takalani (2), and Avhatakali (1). Avhatakali's coming-out ritual (-bvisa *ñwana*) was conducted on 20 September 1992. This is an event at which a child is blessed, thus ensuring a prosperous

future (cf. Stayt 1931). To feed his visitors, Solomon bought a goat for R120, as well as beer. He invited his family, and Sandra invited members of her church, the United Apostolic Church. While the women sang hymns and prayed for the child in the homestead, Solomon entertained his male relatives outside around a bucket of beer. Later during the afternoon everybody moved into the courtyard and performed beer songs. Solomon also played on his guitar.

Solomon and Sandra had two more children. They died when they were babies. One of them was a boy, Tshimangadzo. This boy was approximately a year old when he suffered a seizure which made him contort and twist his neck. Solomon attributes his death to witchcraft (cf. 43: 15). The night before the boy's death, Solomon saw a thick snake on the roof. This snake had large eyes like a person. He also saw two polecats (witch familiars) sniffing outside the hut. This was a very distressing event, which still troubles the family. The other baby died during a difficult home birth.

Solomon's quest for an ordered existence is intimately related to his views on family life. He tries to raise his sons strictly according to traditional morality. During July 1993 he sent Nyadzani and Michael to attend a **murundu** initiation school held in the nearby Tate Vondo state forest. He remarks that "Jesus is Jesus, but my father is my father". This observation signifies religiously legitimized parental authority which is invoked to promote traditional family relationships during a period of confusing social change. Solomon's authority is clearly reflected in the way his sons generally act towards him. For example, they assume a kneeling, deferential posture when they bring him something. They remain in this position until he has finished talking to

them.

Parental respect is promoted in song 61. This song also advocates selfrespect and obedience on the basis of traditional and Christian morality. Solomon uses the phrase **shangoni la Mudzimu** ("in the land of God"; 1 2) whenever he promotes Christian ethics in the quest for a just society. His model for social reality is God's world, a place in which love and mutual respect reign.

Song 59 (1 1) puts the blame for the suffering of children on adults and national leaders. Song 81 is quite explicit: parents have a responsibility towards their children. If they abandon them, they become criminals (11 3-5) who rob people in supermarkets (cf. 68; 79). Children must be urged to go to school.

Several of Solomon's songs implicitly or explicitly refer to the issue of marital tension and conflict (6; 7; 13; 55; 60; 65; 66; 78; 93). In songs 6 and 7 wives desert their husbands. Neither of these songs explicitly states the reason for desertion. However, in the case of song 7 Solomon indicates that it was partly because of "neglect" by the husband. Song 66 refers to a wife who abuses alcohol and neglects her chores, while songs 55, 78 and 93 refer to a husband who roams the countryside, visiting beer houses and other women. Song 13 expresses sublimated longing by wives for their migrant husbands. It also points to conflict which arises from intimate liaisons between men and women whose migrant husbands are absent from home. Songs 40, 65, and 67 point to family conflict which arises from poverty.

Several songs deal with the issue of sexual relations. These relations are of three types: between unmarried people (56), prostitution (55), and extramarital affairs (6; 13; 35; 36; 46). Songs which refer to extramarital affairs are most common, and may be related to the role of the guitar at beer drinks. The majority of beer songs refer to extramarital affairs. The system of extramarital relationships is firmly established and complex. An in-depth analysis of this system falls outside the scope of my investigation. However, a brief examination is necessary to understand references to it in guitar songs.

The most common type of extramarital relationship dealt with by guitarists is that of *farekano*. This established social institution is succinctly defined by Van Warmelo (1989) as a "mutual-aid set-up" between a man and a woman. Van Warmelo and Phophi (1948: 403) note that "irregular unions" between men and women who have left their husbands is a "very common phenomenon". *Farekano* corresponds very closely to the system of *bonyatsi* as described by Spiegel (1991). Like *bonyatsi*, *farekano* is not regarded as prostitution, which is generally disapproved of. The Venda term for prostitute, *mudzhulumba*, derives from the verb *lumba*, "to wander around in destitution" (Van Warmelo 1989). The concept of wandering around is commonly used to refer to immoral sexual behaviour. As Solomon remarks, a prostitute is a person who visits a man "for thirty minutes only", and then moves on to someone else. This is reflected in a song Solomon often mockingly sings:

**Muñwe na muñwe u di funa Vho-Alilali.**  
(Everybody loves Mrs Alilali.)  
**Nne ndi a tuwa, ndi yo vhona Vho-Alilali.**  
(I am going to see Mrs Alilali.)

*Farekano*, by contrast, is a more lasting sexual liaison characterized by interdependence. In most cases the men in

these relationships appear to support the women irregularly with small amounts of cash. They are often women who receive no or inadequate support from their migrant husbands. From a general Christian viewpoint, **farekano** is an embarrassment. This is partly related to the violence which sometimes ensues when men fight among each other over a woman (35; 36): "To be involved with a lover nowadays is to invite death" (36: 18). However, from a traditional viewpoint **farekano** is acceptable. According to Solomon, a lover, **mufarekano**, is "your girlfriend outside your home (who is) like your wife" (the term also refers to a man). When I asked Solomon about the origin and social foundation of **farekano**, he immediately laughed and said: "it's nature". However, he subsequently also remarked that **farekano** exists because of "the stomach", i.e. poverty. As in the case of **bonyatsi**, the **farekano** system also diffuses available financial resources. Guitarist **Vhutshilo Netsianda** of **Madamalala** refers to a **farekano** relationship as **mundende**, or "pension".<sup>6</sup>

Song 46 illustrates this function, and several of the other characteristics of the **farekano** institution. The song essentially addresses the conflict and tension of the **farekano** relationship in the context of a culture of poverty. The woman in the song is in material need (ll 12-13 & 120-121). She is apparently without a husband (ll 57-58). She also has children to support (ll 103-108). Therefore, the phrase "do not play with me" (l 1), does not refer only to the emotional aspects of the relationship, but also to the material dependence of the woman on the man. The material support the woman requires includes food and personal effects for her and her children. Material support in **farekano** relationships extends to the giving of gifts (especially by the man; cf. l 81). The song is also a universal statement about the capri-

ces and mysteries of love: "What is the meaning of love?" (1 55). This is partly a moral injunction which questions the insincerity of love. Insincerity is manifested by the male partner in the role of bachelor (ll 6 & 9-10). Bachelors are well-known for their amorous exploits. These exploits are frowned upon. In fact, the status of bachelorhood is regarded as non-normative. People regard bachelors as socially "not important", and "not normal". Many people do not like bachelors because they cause marital conflict by seducing married women. These views are reflected in the idiomatic expressions *khombe ya fura i raha ndilo* ("a bachelor pushes the dish away after becoming sated") and *khombe i lotshelwa masudzi* ("a bachelor is bewitched to break wind only"). These expressions imply that a bachelor refuses marital responsibility. He uses women only to satisfy his physical needs. Not only is breaking up wind in public frowned upon, but it is considered as a useless act performed without effort. Through the association with irresponsible sex and breaking wind, a bachelor takes on a negative social image. In the song (1 46), the bachelor admits that he entered the *farekano* relationship on a purely sexual basis.

The male partner is also a married man. His problem is his inadequate income (ll 40-41), and the fact that he has a wife and several lovers to support (ll 33, 56-57 & 89). This leads to a situation of lying and evasion (ll 20-25 & 84-86), and subsequently, the breaking up of the marriage (ll 133-136).

### 2.3 "Living is learning": Education, ambitions and dreams

Several songs capture the circumstances and emotions surrounding Solomon's incomplete school education and their effect on his life. One of the main themes of these songs is that of

cultural confusion and disorientation: "Where should I go?" (11: 6). Like so many other people, Solomon is caught between two eras, suspended between the past and the present. Born of parents who had no school education, Solomon grew up attending a traditional initiation school, and doing domestic chores typically associated with boys in traditional society. The era in which he grew up did not adequately prepare him for the demands of destabilizing Western culture (71; 85). By contrast, traditional existence with its well-established conventions of morality is regarded as God's beautiful world (71: 2). This ordered world has been turned into a battleground (85: 3). It has been invaded and corrupted by schools, shops, roads, cars and new kinds of alcohol (45; 52; 62). People have also been corrupted. They fail to observe even some of the most fundamental conventions of ordered interaction, such as established forms of greeting (71). Salvation perhaps lies in the past which must return so that there can be order and life (85). However, Solomon knows change is irreversible (62: 12). From this knowledge is born a sense of hopelessness which sometimes borders on fatalism: "I don't know nothing" (42: 13), and, "I say, whenever I attempt something it ends in failure" (11: 7). These statements are rooted in his poverty and his inability to change his circumstances significantly because of his lack of education.

In songs 70 and 83 Solomon associates education with prosperity and happiness. In song 10 he links running water, electricity and education. These are all wonderful things which allow people to prosper. Education is viewed as integral to "progress" and "civilization". It is regarded by many as the single most important key to survival and prosperity. Solomon sometimes refers to Venda-speaking academics at the University of Venda as "clever", and being able to "look after



themselves". He, as "uneducated" and unable to look after himself, should receive support from others who are "rich" and knowledgeable. Above all, they should not exploit him (cf. 42).

#### 2.4 Achieving ambitions

Solomon may be categorized as a member of the "working class" in terms of his position in the relations of production. However, as Coplan (1985) suggests, social identity is often "more a matter of culture pattern, social aspiration, and self-perception than income" (Coplan 1985: 67). Solomon makes a clear distinction between himself and others in terms of educational level. He once remarked: "I am ugly and poor. I did not go to school". However, his ambitions, dreams, and strategy of resistance militate against the concept of "working class" (cf. Thornton 1989: 17). Thus he remarks: "I use my heart and mind, and I can do everything". This means that although he is poor and has limited school education, he has the intelligence and ambition to achieve his goals. After the birth of his last son, Solomon remarked that "five boys are all right", and that he did not want any more children. He was now "satisfied", and his next priority was "money". He identified several means to improve his financial position. The first is to be as independent as possible in terms of food production. Solomon has planted many fruit trees on his plot of land, and wants to feed his family on them. He often also remarks that he should stop spending grocery money on beer and cigarettes, but that this is very difficult.

Secondly, Solomon hopes to exploit his musical expertise. Like many guitarists and other local musicians he wants to establish a band and achieve commercial success. He remarks

that he is tired of being his "own battery", and that he wants a band with electric guitars and a synthesizer, as well as drums, concertina and penny whistle.

The third means to improve his financial position is through continued education. In 1991 he negotiated with a teacher at a local secondary school to start adult literacy classes in Venda, English and Afrikaans. A fee was agreed upon, but the teacher then did not feel like offering tuition any longer. Solomon is usually negative and depressed about his lack of education. However, in spite of his failure to organize literacy classes, he showed a positive attitude towards futhering his education, and appeared quite inspired by his thwarted efforts. He subsequently identified another teacher, started negotiations about the fee, and made plans to buy a dictionary. However, before anything could materialize, he was sent by his employer on a two-week building course during July 1992. He passed the course, and was presented with a certificate of which he is very proud. This gave him new hope in terms of career advancement.

Solomon's philosophical attitude towards education is best reflected in his pensive performance of song 83 ("Living is learning") with its sombre atmosphere and ponderous forward motion (cf. audio recording 4). The song is a complex social and psychological product. In 1992 Solomon had a dream in which an ancestral spirit urged him not to stop improving himself (cf. ll 3-4). This dream revelation arguably is rooted in his life experience and thought processes. His inadequate school education has made a permanent imprint on his mind. The dream became a further inspiration to attend night classes. Schooling brings wisdom which in turn results in happiness (ll 20-25). But the song also moves on another

level. Learning is not just restricted to the school context. The lessons of life also never stop. People can get ahead in life if they use their intelligence. Solomon feels he is intelligent enough (83: 17) to fulfil his ambitions and says: "In my mind I know what I can do."

Solomon's main ambition is to improve his family's standard of living. The first step in this direction has already been taken. Solomon wants to build a brick house on the site of the present homestead. A draughtsman drew a house plan for him. A sleeping hut and the kitchen are to be demolished, and the house built in their place. The house is to be situated so that a car can reach the garage. This will be added when Solomon fulfils his ambition to buy a car.

Solomon does not qualify for a bank loan, partly because he lives on communal land. However, he managed to secure a building loan from the University of Venda at the beginning of 1992. He borrowed R2270. This is paid off in installments of R46 a month (deducted from his salary). It will take him four years to settle this debt. When that has been done, he can apply for a further loan. In the mean time the doors and window frames bought with the initial loan stand waiting in the second sleeping hut. The subsequent loan will go towards buying bricks. Solomon is going to build the house himself.

## 2.5 "We shall all live": A philosophy of survival

The concept of interdependence and reciprocity promoted by Solomon in his monologue is explored more completely in the philosophy of *ri khou tshila rothe*: "we shall all live" (lit. we are all living; cf. 25; 46; 47; 49; 69; 85; 86). I borrow my translation of this expression from Achebe (1988) who

succinctly summarizes its philosophy as follows:

We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break (Achebe 1988: 29).<sup>7</sup>

I once asked a group of people who had assembled at Solomon's house for drinking beer about the derivation of *ri khou tshila rothe*. They thought that the phrase is of recent origin, and implied that it refers to mutual assistance in a culture of poverty. This was demonstrated explicitly to me in a broader social context. I once stood in a queue at a bank in Thohoyandou. In front of me were two men, a policeman in uniform, and a civilian. The policeman withdrew money, and gave some of it to the other man. The man thanked him, adding "*ri khou tshila rothe*". I do not know what the relationship between the two men was, but it is likely that they were either related or friends, and that the policeman was assisting the other man financially.

Solomon's worldview advocates reciprocity and sharing. As shown above in terms of the communal experience of poverty, Solomon here too integrates his musical discourse with modes of popular expression. In song 25, a well-known Zion Christian Church song, Solomon invokes the idea of spiritual unity as a moral basis from which to appeal for worldly justice. "Let us live together" (17) is not only a reference to spiritual unity, but also to social unity. Living together implies the sharing of worldly resources.

The expression "we shall all live" may be of recent origin. However, its underlying morality is ancient, and emerges from the context of the well-known saying *muthu ndi muthu nga vhañwe vhathu* (lit. a person is a person through other

people). This message is also articulated in a number of other expressions which appear in Solomon's songs. These expressions promote a universal humanity with implied mutual support. For example, *ri khou tuwa rothe* ("we are leaving together"; 49; 86) advocates the morality of fellowship. This expression may be linked to a pervasive pedestrian culture in which many small groups of people rove the rural countryside on foot over weekends, visiting friends and beer houses, talking by the road side, waiting for public transport, attending funerals and weddings, and going to soccer matches. Song 33 ("The small claypot") portrays fellowship and geniality. Like several of Solomon's other songs (e.g. 19; 20; 24), this song represents a frozen moment captured in musical performance, a moment in human action arrested to allow us a view of life. The image of a claypot is sometimes used to symbolize human action and feeling (cf. also 99). In song 33 it symbolizes the intimate gathering of people at a beer drink, a kind of ideal, preferred social situation. It conjures up a fabricated world which encloses people safely and warmly, in the same way that the worms are enclosed in the claypot. The gurgling sound of the worms cooking represents the hubbub of activity at the beer drink. The geniality of the gathering is disturbed when the singer is sent to the shop by his mother. Now the real, outside world invades the peace of the gathering, and makes demands on its order.

The performance of this popular song expresses the convivial joy of the beer drink (cf. audio recording 5). It starts softly and hesitantly, almost like the early part of a beer drink when only a few people have arrived, and underlying internal personal tensions have not yet been kneaded out by beer and social intercourse. Solomon picks a quiet guitar pattern, following the vocal melody. An antiphonal structure

is established, but the chorus still sings reticently in unison. The unison response refracts slowly into individual responses which are woven into the basic antiphonal structure. Solomon suddenly sings a loud line. For a fleeting moment there is a heavy silence. Then the chorus responds in unison with the bass pattern of the guitar as the song gains momentum and musical tension builds up. Solomon senses the increase of emotional tension and volume, and changes into a strumming pattern. At the climax of the performance a beer drinker starts to dance.

By contrast, song 22 is a model of social reality. It deals with the kind of behaviour which threatens the ordered social system, again metaphorically presented as a beer drink. However, this time it is disturbed by a drunk person. The best way to achieve peace and equilibrium is not to be provocative, but to avoid dangerous and disorderly beer houses. As Solomon sings:

**Siela mbilu vhudenga.**

(Leave that place which troubles your heart.)

**Madzanga a shango ndi manzhi.**

(There are many other enjoyable places.)

All hate, slander and gossip also militate against order (4: 8; 41; 54; 57; 69; 90). Witchcraft is possibly the most frightening destructive social force (21; 34; 39; 43; 54). According to Solomon, people engage in witchcraft because of "jealousy" and envy because they are poor. Witches are all people who are "strange" and do not conform to certain established norms. In song 34 these people are identified by the strange skin clothes that they wear. People must all dance together (34: 3). In other words, they must all work towards the strengthening of positive social relationships. Individual behaviour may not undermine the ordered framework of existence. As Solomon's friend and local guitarist Robert

Madzhie explains: "ri khou tshila rothe means you cannot always have your own way".

Rothe ri a fanana ("we are all the same"; 49; 70; 86), ro begwa rothe ("we are all the same"; lit. "we have all been born"; 69), rothe ri a lora ("we all dream"; 46), ri khou fhela rothe ("we are all perishing"), ri khou edela dzo no fana ("we all have to sleep"; 46), and Mudzimu o ri sika nga tshashu ("God created all of us"; 48) point to a universal humanity. Solomon knows that these statements are idealistic, and that their philosophy is often not realized. But, as he so succinctly and courageously remarks, "I know on my side, me I'm going underground. Six feet" (45: 25-26). We may not be equal in life, but we certainly are in death. And it is here where the philosophy of equality is taken to its ultimate destiny: ri khou fhela rothe, "we are all perishing". "We shall all live" and "we are leaving together" are coupled to human greed and frailty, and their humanistic philosophy realized during fleeting moments of compassion only. But in "we are all perishing" there is no uncertainty, no hope for salvation, only the ultimate reality of death (41: 1-2).

## 2.6 "Jesus is Jesus": The religious roots of a worldview

In songs 47 and 48 Solomon extends his belief about human equality to the Gulf War of 1991. He remarks that Jesus created us all, and that it is wrong to bomb women and children. This is partly reflected in song 47 (l 20) where he implies that the Bible opposes killing. As I suggested in chapter one, guitarists essentially legitimize social institutions and normative behaviour on religious grounds. Solomon promotes the concept of an ideal humanity from the basis of traditional as well as Christian ethics (cf. 71).

Solomon's traditional ethics stem from the corporate morality of the Mathase family which belongs to the Nyai clan with all its "beautiful" members (49: 13-14). Like many other Venda clans, this clan is of Zimbabwean origin. Solomon's popular song ("Children from our village"; 34) was inspired by a song he heard on a radio broadcast from Zimbabwe. One of its phrases, "children of the Munyai clan" (18), points to Mathase ancestry. Solomon and his brother Robert are fond of this song. For them, its performance is a religious expression which promotes ancestral morality. Through it they honour their ancestors, particularly their father.

Just before his death, Mbulaheni Mathase remarked that Solomon should not suffer during his life. This has affected and determined Solomon's religious worldview. During the traumatic time in 1967, his father's spirit first appeared in his dreams. He instructed Solomon always to sleep with the divining pouch he once used, under his pillow. This was an indication that he would protect his son if he leads a good life and makes the necessary religious sacrifices. Thus Solomon regularly promotes the honouring of ancestral spirits (cf. e.g. 80). He has also given his last-born son, Avhatakali, the second name Ifa. This name literally refers to a heritage or inheritance, but it also implies commemoration of the dead, and the promotion of ancestral morality. His father's spirit now guides his life continuously, as do those of his paternal grandfather and grandmother (cf. 83).

Mbulaheni Mathase's grave is situated about one hundred meters from Solomon's home. The ancestral Mathase land used to be much bigger than it is today. One can still see a large mango tree some distance outside the Mathase plot. This tree was planted on Mathase land by Solomon's father. The grave is



also situated on ancestral land. However, today it is located in the maize patch of a neighbour. The site has no grave stone, only a very low cement wall in rectangular shape. In the rectangle is a castor oil tree and some sugar cane planted by Solomon. At the end of each month Solomon puts a few rand on the grave by way of sacrifice. This money is accepted by his father's spirit, and it disappears. Solomon once found 50c and a few eggs on the grave. This he took to have come from his father's spirit. He put the money under his pillow and slept on it as a way of promoting prosperity. This clearly shows how Solomon enacts aspects of his model for social reality which is cast in the mould of religiously legitimized traditional social and economic relations.

Solomon regularly makes ancestral sacrifices (-phasa) when there is any trouble or unhappiness in the family, even in the case of something as ostensibly minor as a child who does not want to stop crying. Solomon has not felt it necessary to become a diviner himself. However, his father's divining pouch is an important sacred family object (tshitungulo). When Solomon sacrifices to his ancestors, he follows a more or less set pattern. An ancestral spirit appears to him at night in a dream and communicates with him. The following day Solomon offers a sacrifice. This usually takes place early in the morning, before work. The sacrifice requires at least three essential ritual items: the first is the calabash ladle (khavho) from which to drink the water that "cools down" the spirit. The second is a pinch of snuff which is offered in sacrifice. The third item is a piece of frayed blue cloth which Solomon keeps under his pillow. He puts this cloth over his head when conducting the ritual. Sometimes a traditional bracelet is also worn during the ritual. The sacrifice normally takes place on the floor next to Solomon's bed. The

water, however, is spat out outside the door. In some cases, such as when a child is ill or refuses to stop crying at night, Solomon immediately offers the sacrifice.

During the drought-stricken autumn of 1992 Solomon and I listened to a yellowbilled hornbill (*tshitohwio*) calling in some nearby trees. This bird is uncommonly found in the subtropical Soutpansberg, as it prefers more arid areas north and south of the mountain range. It forms part of Solomon's cosmology. He is glad to hear its call which is said to precede rain. Its brain and heart have medicinal value for him. During spring that year Solomon obtained a hornbill from the western Soutpansberg for R20. He took it to a local herbalist who prepared a powdered medicine for him.

Solomon's belief in magic is also reflected in the good luck charm (*mushonga*) around his neck. This is in the form of a small piece of root. In song 4 (ll 9-13) Solomon refers to obtaining a similar charm from a diviner to counteract his misfortune in love. This charm did not work, hence his critical opinion of diviners who cannot effect the desired results. He argues for these diviners to be forced to join a professional association to ensure "standards".

Solomon is a nominal Lutheran. The Lutheran church has historical roots in the area west of Thohoyandou. The first mission station in the central districts of Venda was established by the Lutherans at Maungani in 1872 (cf. *Nemudzivhadi* 1985). The church also established schools in the area, and the primary school at Ngulumbi apparently is of 19th century missionary origin. Solomon thinks that church attendance is a waste of time. Going to church keeps him from weekend music making which is a means of survival. There is

also little social and spiritual benefit to be had from attending church. Solomon regularly emphasizes that his religious observances are in the form of communication with and sacrifices to his ancestral spirits. The church does not give him acceptable answers in his quest for meaning in life. However, he often remarks that "Jesus is Jesus" (42: 14), "I am a child of this God, Lord Jesus" (43: 8) and that his is a Christian home (16: 10). This he explains by saying: "Me and you, we are the same. Jesus is Jesus. We all breathe the same air. We will all end up under the ground. The only problem is language". This is an extension of the philosophy of "we shall all live", in particular of "God created all of us" (48: 12) and "he died for the sins of black and white people" (43: 9). In other words, although we may have cultural differences, we are all God's creatures. We all breathe, and we will all die. We are therefore all the same, and deserve equal chances in life. Being "under Jesus" is similar to "I know where I am going", which implies that Solomon's path in life leads towards Jesus. This expresses Solomon's adherence to Christian ethics, especially in terms of love and charity. This means he can appeal for support from all those who subscribe to the same ethics. Solomon realizes that the influence of traditional religious authority on contemporary life is limited. He thus combines two moral systems. He has to. Christianity is a force to be reckoned with. If he wants to appeal to and negotiate with those who have more power and resources than him, he has to confront them on proverbial holy ground, otherwise his appeal will have little effect. He argues that those who profess to be Christians must act out their religious conviction. They must love and help him because God cares and "does not disassociate himself from his creatures" (50: 6-7). Good and helpful people are those who have God's spirit in them and who are inspired by him

(50: 9; 29: 11-12).

This partly explains the motivation behind those songs which have a Christian theme (16; 17; 23; 25; 73; 74; 78). But there are also more mundane reasons for their existence. Songs 16, 23, 25 and 78 are popular Zion Christian Church songs. They have been widely disseminated, also among people who do not belong to the church. Song 16 ("Moses"; cf. audio recording 6) is particularly popular, and I have even heard it being performed as a beer song with drum accompaniment. Some singers are very fond of certain church songs, yet they do not belong to any church. These songs appear to be popular songs which are not necessarily more important than any other song. They circulate in a cultural environment in which religious expression always has been a part of everyday life. The singing of Christian songs in a secular context is no more unusual than the singing of popular possession cult songs at beer drinks. However, this does not necessarily mean that their function and meaning remains the same. They are often heard outside their original context because they are enjoyable to perform.

## 2.7 "The land of God": A land-rooted philosophy

The morality of *ri khou tshila rothe* is also expressed as part of what I term a pervasive land-rooted philosophy. This philosophy is derived from the context in which the world-view, cultural patterns (including music making) and physical survival of people are intimately associated with the land on which they live (cf. Gourlay 1970, Kruger 1989, Okpewho 1979, Schoffeleers 1978). For Solomon the land with its mountains, valleys, caves, and hill-tops (cf. 9) does not have aesthetic value only. It provides maize and peanuts (37), mopani

worms (33), vegetables (15), as well as traditional medicines (31; 32). People eat and become sated (9). Such references in guitar songs may appear innocuous, but they are in fact profound expressions of the cosmology of many people living along the lush east-west subtropical belt of central Venda. They form part of a network of codified meanings and perceptions which holds the natural world up as a "reflection of human emotions or attributes" (cf. Beaton 1980: 58), and provides "fictional answers to man's existential problems" (cf. Becker 1972: 130).

The intimate association of people and their land is manifested in natural metaphors. A poverty-stricken person is lonely and mourns like a dove (1: 12-15), a researcher becomes a winnowing basket (3: 25-26), the scrapping of oppressive laws becomes the destruction of a mighty mountain (29: 25), reaching for a life goal is like scaling a mountain (69: 12), the problems of existence become clashing crocodiles (64), and ritual murder is so openly committed that even the trees see what happens (39: 8). Thus trees and people become integral parts of the land. The gnarled trunks of trees are reflected in the faces of adults, many of them former migrants, who attend beer drinks and visit the Mathase residence. These are earthy faces, criss-crossed with lines and wrinkles, faces that bear the signs of the times and the environment. They are the proverbial salt of the earth: good, honest people who are as integral a part of the natural environment as the trees in the valleys around Ngulumbi. They also pass through the landscape like trees which grow and are felled (cf. 38).

References to traditional authority (1: 2-3; 9: 20-22; 10: 17) emerge from the embeddedness of the social structure in

the politico-religious importance of land. A headman's homestead is beautiful because it is part of a larger, ordered social system (cf. 10: 17; 56). A leader, sometimes referred to as nemashango ("custodian of the land") or muavhekanyi wa mivhundu ("administrator of the land"), is responsible for land allocation and the administration of local resources. Solomon is also part of the local power structure. He is a councillor (mukoma) in charge of the local subward. He describes himself jokingly as a "half-chief". The Nyai clan is not a ruling clan. Solomon is unable to explain how his family became drawn into the local power structure. He inherited the position from his father who took the explanation with him to the grave. Solomon's ward comprises about fifty families. Amongst other things, he has to summon people for meetings at the headman's homestead, and deal with local issues such as marital conflict, witchcraft accusations, and failure to pay village tax. Although Solomon has little time for buffoons, and can be cutting with his tongue, he is also very polite and tactful. He is intelligent, and enjoys popular support as ward head.

The spirits of ancestors keep a watchful eye on their descendants and the land on which they live. "We shall all live" is a philosophy which promotes Solomon's concept of shango la Mudzimu, "the land of God", a model for social reality in which traditional patterns of authority, kinship, friendship, and neighbourly assistance are regarded as essential in the quest for survival. Thus, in song 18 ("Children of Murangoni"), the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Murangoni are "interesting" and "happy" people on account of their good social behaviour. Like the residents of Ngulumbi, they are hard-working people who add to the beauty and benevolence of their environment. They form civic associa-

tions, and provide running water, electricity, and schools (10; 51). However, culture generally lacks the apparent morality of nature. The land is beautiful: rain falls, grass grows, and wise insects gather food (77). However, it is troubled by people (96: 1-2) who discriminate, hate, gossip, mock, slander and pretend (77; 96).

## 2.8 Notes

1 Coplan (1985) defines stokfel as "a working-class rotating credit association with entertainment, social and economic functions" (Coplan 1985: 270).

2 The Development Bank of Southern Africa (1986: section 4) puts the population figure of Ngulumbi at 1 120.

3 During 1992/93 a bundle of thatch grass cost about R1.80. Thatching the roof of a new house amounted to approximately R450.

4 Every year during summer and autumn (often around Christmas and Easter) groups of women visit certain farms in the area between the Limpopo river and Pietersburg to collect the worms. A number of enterprising individuals (usually men who own a lorry) negotiate with certain farmers to let groups collect worms. A group does not necessarily visit the same farm every year. During autumn 1991 women from Ngulumbi were taken to a farm in the Pietersburg district by a local shopkeeper who charged them a return fare of R70. He left them on the farm, and collected them after two weeks. Each member of the group paid the farmer R100. In return for this the group collected worms, gathered firewood and had access to water (boreholes and dams). The group slept in the open. During January 1993 the same group visited a farm near Messina.

The worms are dried in hot ash after their intestines have been squeezed out. Most women manage to fill an 80 kg maize meal bag with these dry worms. Some women collect a bag and a half. The worms are used for personal consumption, but are mostly sold at approximately R2 per cup at street markets. The contents of an 80 kg bag sell for about R500, and profit after expenses amounts to approximately R300.

5 Ri a hayani Yerusalem.

We are going home to Jerusalem.

Ro wana na ndila.

We have met along the way.

Ri a tuwa.

We are going.

6 Lack of written information on the farekano system may be related to the fact that, as Solomon remarks, having an extramarital lover is a "very big secret". However, my own observations suggest that certain affairs are conducted quite openly. Some men I have come to know sometimes arrive at beer drinks with their lovers. Their community is small and closely-knit, and such friendships do not always remain secret. Extramarital affairs which become known generally seem to lead to bitter recriminations, many of which are expressed in beer songs. Some of the worst forms that these recriminations may take are assault (cf. Van Warmelo & Phophi 1948: 321) and poisoning. Poison is generally prepared in the kitchen which is not male domain. Thus men are unlikely to know when their wives plan to take retributive action.

7 For another version of this philosophy, see McAllister 1986: 162 & 227.



## 2.9 Solomon Mathase: Song texts

1

Ndo sala ndi ndothe (I am left alone)

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na wanga.  
I am left alone. I have no relatives.

Ndo khakha, musanda

When I land in trouble,  
ambelwa nga nnyi?

who will defend me in the chief's court?

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na vhabebi.

I am left alone. I have no parents.

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na baba.

I am left alone. I have no father.

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na khaladzi.

I am left alone. I have no sister.

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na muzwala.

I am left alone. I have no cousin.

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na mashaka.

I am left alone. I have no relatives.

Ndo sala ndi ndothe. A thi na wanga.

I am left alone. I have no relatives.

10 Ndo khakha, musanda

When I land in trouble,

ambelwa nga nnyi?

who will defend me in the chief's court?

Hee, nga liivha

The dove speaks for me

li tshi lila.

when it sings.<sup>1</sup>

Li ri: tutu, tutu, tutu.

It sings: tutu, tutu, tutu.

Li ri: tutu, tutu, tutu.

It sings: tutu, tutu, tutu.

1 The dove is a symbol of poverty, loneliness and destitution by reason of its mournful cry and solitary behaviour. Consider the idiomatic expression Ndo sala ndi tshisiwana sa liivha ("I am destitute like a dove"). The dove in question in the song is liivha-ntutu, possibly the emerald-spotted dove (cf. Van Warmelo 1989).

2

Nwana wa vhathu (A poverty-stricken man) (I)

Nwana wa vhathu, ngoho, o nakahani.

A poverty-stricken man is truly beautiful.

Ndi Ntshavheni, ngoho, nandi, o nakahani.

Hey, it is Ntshavheni<sup>1</sup> who is beautiful indeed.

Na ndevhe dzawe, ngoho, nandi, o nakahani.

Hey, even his ears are really beautiful.

Ha na na tshithu, ngoho, nandi, ha na na tshithu.

Hey, he has nothing, he really has nothing.

- Ha na na tshithu.  
 He has nothing.  
 Na vhurukhu a vhuho.  
 No trousers.  
 Na badzhi a i ho.  
 No jacket.  
 Na tshienda a tshiho.  
 No shoes.  
 Na watshi a i ho.  
 No watch.
- 10 Ha na na tshithu.  
 He has nothing.  
 Na tshelede a i ho.  
 No money.  
 Ha na na tshithu.  
 He has nothing.  
 O liwa ngafhi?  
 Where did he spend all his money?  
 O liwa Mapetla.  
 He spent everything at Mapetla.  
 Na musadzi haho.  
 No wife.  
 Ha na na tshithu. Ngoho, nandi, ñwana wa vhathu.  
 He has nothing. Hey, a truly poverty-stricken man.  
 Na mugayo a u ho. Ngoho, ha na na tshithu.  
 No maize meal. Indeed, he has nothing.  
 O liwa Mapetla.  
 He spent everything at Mapetla.  
 Tsere-tserere ndi ya mini ngomu nduni?  
 What is that shuffling noise inside the house?<sup>2</sup>
- 20 Ndi ya mini ngomu kamarani?  
 What is happening inside the room?  
 Vhudzisani ngoho  
 Ask the owners  
 kha vhane vha mudu.  
 of the house.  
 Vha do amba ngoho.  
 They will tell you the truth.  
 Mulandu ndi mini  
 What is the matter  
 nga hoyu ñwana?  
 with that child?  
 Na Elisa?  
 And Elisa?  
 Ha na na tshithu.  
 He has nothing.  
 O liwa ngafhi?  
 Where did he spend all his money?
- 29 O liwa Soweto.  
 He spent everything in Soweto.

1 This song refers to Ntshavheni Thovhogi, a friend of Solomon. The two friends met when they were employed in Johannesburg. Ntshavheni had a girlfriend called Elisa who had an affair with another man. Not only did Ntshavheni lose her, but she also squandered his money. Ntshavheni now lives in Venda and is employed at a beer factory in Shayandima.

2 A reference to the affair conducted by Elisa.

3

Nwana wa vhathu (A poverty-stricken man) (II)

**Vhusiwana!**

Poverty!

**Nne!**

I!

**Vhusiwana.**

Poverty.

**A thi na mme.**

I have no mother.

**A thi na khotsi.**

I have no father.

**Vhusiwana**

There is

**ndi dzhena fhano.**

poverty here.

**A vha mpfuni**

There is no

**ndi dzhena fhano.**

love here.

10 **Nne zwo fhela!**

I am finished!

**Vhusiwana.**

Poverty.

**A thi na khaladzi.**

I have no sister.

**A thi na mukomana.**

I have no elder brother.

**Hoyu ñwana o naka hani.**

This child is beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

**Ndi ñwana wa nnyi?**

Whose child is this?

**Ndi wa Kruger.**

It is Kruger's child.<sup>2</sup>

**U dzula ngafhi?**

Where does he stay?

**Hangei shangoni.**

Over there.

**Shangoni la hashu.**

In our country.

20 **Ndi la Venda.**

It is Venda.

**U dzula ngafhi?**

Where does he stay?

**U dzula Mbilwi.**

At Mbilwi.

**O beba ñwana.**

Bearing a child.

**Ha na na tshithu.**

He has nothing.

**Ndo vhuya luselo. Ndo lu wana zwino.**

I returned with the winnowing basket. I have now found it.

26 **Vha do** fhefhera ngalwo, mani, vhone.  
You, man, you will use it to winnow.

1 Solomon is referring to himself.

2 Solomon refers to his poverty in this song. I am regarded as his father because his own father is deceased, and because he benefits financially from our relationship. This idea is extended to include the image of a winnowing basket which provides flour for cooking (cf. last two lines).

4

#### Dikeledi<sup>1</sup>

Dikeledi, mpheni rokho yanga.  
Dikeledi, give me back my dress.  
Pateriki, mpheni badzhi yanga.  
Patrick, give me back my jacket.<sup>2</sup>  
Tshinetise vha mu wana, vha mu vhulahe.  
If you find Tshinetise, kill him.<sup>3</sup>  
Shangoni hu do sala vho nakaho.  
Only good people will remain at this place.  
Gidimani ni yo vhidza mme anga, wee.  
Rush and call my mother.  
Tshimbilani, ni yo vhidza Vho-Liboki.  
Go and call Mrs Liboki.<sup>4</sup>  
Ndo valelwa dangani sa kholomo.  
I am enclosed as if in a cattle byre.<sup>5</sup>  
"A! A! A!"

"Hu pfi mingome yothe kha i de i dzhie mabambiri Pretoria  
"They say all diviners must obtain their papers from  
10 hangei, ngauri ndi kale mingome i tshi khou lafha i sa koni."  
Pretoria, because in the past diviners healed under false  
pretenses."

"Muñwe na muñwe hu pfi kha vhe na sitifikheiti tshawe."  
"They say every diviner must have a certificate  
"Uri ene arali a mulafhi ene a vhe a tshi khou vhonala nga  
to prove that he is qualified."<sup>6</sup>  
sitifikheiti."

Nangwe vha ndzonda ngoho, a thi fheli mbilu.  
Even if you hate me, I shall not worry.  
Nangwe vha nnyala ngoho, a thi pfi tshithu.  
Even if you dislike me, I shall not worry.  
Nangwe vha ntsola ngoho, a vha ntsapoti.  
Even if you talk behind my back, you do'nt support me.  
"A! A! A!"

"E! Kha vha dou pfa!"  
"Listen!"

Tshimbilani, ni yo vhidza mme anga.  
Go and call my mother.  
20 Gidimani ni yo vhidza mme anga, wee.  
Rush and call my mother.  
Ndo valelwa dangani sa kholomo.  
I am enclosed as if in a cattle byre.

Tshinetise vha mu wana, vha mu vhulahe.  
 If you find Tshinetise, kill him.  
 Nangwe vha ndzonda ngoho, a thi fheli mbilu.  
 Even if you hate me, I shall not worry.  
 Nangwe vha nnyala ngoho, a thi dzuli navho.  
 Even if you dislike me, I don't stay with you.  
 "Ipfa! Ipfa! Ipfa!"  
 "Listen! Listen! Listen!"  
 Nne a thi fheli mbilu.  
 I shall not worry.

Dikeledi, mpheni rokho yanga.  
 Dikeledi, give me back my dress.  
 Pateriki, mpheni badzhi yanga.  
 Patrick, give me back my jacket.  
 Tshinetise vha mu wana, vha mu vhulahe.  
 If you find Tshinetise, kill him.

30 Shangoni hu do sala vho nakaho.  
 Only good people will remain at this place.  
 Gidimani ni yo vhidza mme anga, wee.  
 Rush and call my mother.  
 Tshimbilani, ni yo vhidza mme anga, wee.  
 Go and call my mother.  
 Ndo valelwa dangani sa kholomo.  
 I am enclosed as if in a cattle byre.

"A! A! A!"

Nangwe vha ndzonda ngoho, a vha ntsapoti.  
 Even if you hate me, you don't support me.  
 Nangwe vha nnyala ngoho, a thi dzuli navho.  
 Even if you dislike me, I don't stay with you.  
 Nangwe vha ntsola ngoho, a thi dzuli navho.  
 Even if you talk behind my back, I don't stay with you.

38 "A! A! A!" Makhulu, vhusiwana ndi vhuhulu.  
 Gran, to be an orphan is to suffer.

1 This song refers to Solomon's teenage years. He was part of a love triangle. The others involved in the triangle were his girlfriend Dikeledi from the neighbouring village of Ngwenani, and a friend, Patrick. Patrick managed to lure Dikeledi away from Solomon who tried to get her back by obtaining a good luck charm from a herbalist.

2 Solomon, feeling insulted and aggrieved, is requesting Dikeledi and Patrick to return presents of clothing he gave to them.

3 A metaphoric reference to the friction between the three young people.

4 Liboki is his mother's nickname. It refers to a large strong person.

5 I.e. being jailed. This is fictitious, and refers to fighting between rivals.

6 This part of the song refers to Solomon going to a herbalist to get a good-luck charm (mushonga). This charm was a

piece of root. It failed to work, hence Solomon's critical opinion of herbalists.

5

Vhana vhanga (My children)

(Chorus)

U a swa, wee!

It will be burnt!<sup>1</sup>

(solo)

He, towetse,<sup>2</sup> vhana vhanga.

Hey, elephant, my children.

Vho-Madala,<sup>3</sup> rine ri a tuwa.

Murundu-master, we are going.

Vho-Madala, rine ro no neta.

Murundu-master, we are tired.

1 I.e. the circumcision lodge.

2 From N.Sotho Tlou a tsee/Tlou ye tse (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1981 and Raatji 1992). The term elephant is an honorific name for someone in a position of authority.

3 Hamadala is the name used for the place where murundu is conducted, while Vho-Madala is the official name of the school instructor.

6

Mukumela (Mukumela)

Mukumela o shavha na John, vhathu!<sup>1</sup>

Oh people! Mukumela and John eloped.

Mukumela o beba n'wana, vhathu!

Oh people! Mukumela carried a child on her back.

Mutswukutswuku o no nga duvha, vhathu,

People! The child was beautiful like the sun,

duvha li tshi bva Vhuronga, vhathu.

like the rising sun in the east.

U a vhuya-vhuya-vhuya my dali.

My darling is returning.

U a vhuya-vhuya-vhuya musadzi wanga.

My wife is returning.

Nne u mala ndo mala ndo mala mudzhulumba.

I married a slut.

Kholomo dza khotsi dzo fhela nga ndala.

My father's cattle were wasted because of neglect.<sup>2</sup>

Die baboen slaan die katara.

The baboon is bashing the guitar.<sup>3</sup>

10 Vho-Sarah, kha vha ite pulane,

Mrs Sarah,<sup>4</sup> make a plan,

pulane ya u renga tshikalo.

a plan to buy a ladle of beer.

Tshikalo tsha u kela mahala.

A free ladle of beer.<sup>5</sup>

Nne u mala ndo mala ndo mala mudzhulumba.  
 I married a slut.  
 Kholomo dza khotsi dzo fhela nga ndala.  
 My father's cattle were wasted because of neglect.  
 Mutshini ndo renga wo runga muthavhela.  
 I bought a sewing machine with which to make a decorated  
 dress.  
 Vhurukhu na buluma ndi madele mapfani.  
 Trousers and bloomers are good friends.<sup>6</sup>  
 Tsindi na shedo ndi madele mapfani.  
 A loincloth and girdle are good friends.<sup>6</sup>  
 18 Nne ngavhe vha mbebe ndi fe.  
 I should have died when I was born.<sup>7</sup>

1 This song refers to Mukumela, the sister of the headman of Madamalala. She was married, but had an illicit relationship with John, a man from Phindula. They had an illegitimate child, and decided to run away together. She never returned to her husband.

2 Lit. because of hunger, i.e. the cattle provided as bride-wealth were wasted because of the elopement.

3 This implicitly refers to Solomon's "pub-crawling" weekends. The image of a baboon is derogative, and indicates disapproval of his social behaviour.

4 The wife of his brother Alpheus.

5 An implicit reference to Solomon's reward when performing at beer houses.

6 Derogative ways of suggesting that the relationship between Mukumela and John was purely physical.

7 Speaking for Mukumela's former husband.

7

Ndo mala vhasadzi vhatanu (I married five wives)

Ndi amba na vhone vha a shavha.  
 I am talking to you who are not listening.  
 Ndi amba na vhone vha a khona.  
 I am talking to you who are turning away.

Ndi amba na vhone vhomakhulu.  
 I am talking to you in-laws.  
 Ndo mala vhasadzi vhatanu, wee.  
 Alas, I married five wives.  
 Vhararu vho bva vha fhela. Nga vha thuse!  
 Three of them left me. Help!<sup>1</sup>  
 Nga vha nthuse  
 Help me  
 nga masheleni.  
 with money.

A u mala  
Return  
nga lumalo.  
the bridewealth.

- 10 Ndi amba na vhone vha a shavha.  
I am talking to you who are not listening.  
Ndi amba na vhone vha a khona.  
I am talking to you who are turning away.

A nga vha n̄wana wavho, wee,  
Alas, if your child  
o bva a fhela.  
runs away.  
Maria wavho  
Your Maria  
o bva o shavha.  
has already run away.  
Elisa wavho  
Your Elisa  
o bva o shavha.  
has already run away.  
Tshinakao wavho  
Your Tshinakao  
o bva o shavha.  
has already run away.

- 20 Ndi amba na vhone vha a shavha.  
I am talking to you who are not listening.  
Ndi amba na vhone vha a khona.  
I am talking to you who are turning away.  
Nga vha nthuse  
Help me  
nga masheleni.  
with money.

1 This song refers to the wives of headman Themeli of Ngwenani. Three of his wives left him because of apparent neglect. Their desertion was partly attributable to the fact that their marriages were arranged. Solomon suggested that the families of these women were only interested in the bridewealth they were to obtain from a wealthy headman.

8

Besekuwe (Madness)<sup>1</sup>

Kha vha sokou ralo.  
Just say that.<sup>2</sup>  
Kha vha sokou ralo, wee.  
Alas, just say that.  
Vha nnyita besekuwe, bada ya Ngovhela.  
You think me mad like a winding road, the Ngovhela road.<sup>3</sup>  
Vha nnyita maluwe.  
You think me insane.  
Vha nnyita besekuwe.  
You regard me as mad.



Vha nnyita besekuwe, mmawee!

Alas! You regard me as mad.

Vha nnyita besekuwe, bada ya Ngovhela.

You think me mad like a winding road, the Ngovhela road.

Zhimm!

Eeee!

10 Zhimm!

Eeee!

Pho!

Phi!

Phi!

Pho!

Kha vha sokou ralo.

Just say that.

Vha nnyita besekuwe, bada ya Ngovhela.

You think me mad like a winding road, the Ngovhela road.

Vha nnyita maluwe.

You think me insane.

Vha nnyita mpengo.

You think me mad.

20 Vha nnyita ndi a lwala.

You think me possessed.

Kha vha sokou ralo.

Just say that.

Zhimm!

Eeee!

Zhimm!

Eeee!

Pho!

Phi!

Phi!

29 Pho!

1 This song concerns a power struggle in the Ratshitanga ruling family of Ngulumbi. The headman apparently suspected one of his brothers of wanting to usurp his position (lit. "taking his jacket"). To oppose the alleged usurpation, rumours were spread about the brother who is a close friend of Solomon. The two friends have the habit of frequenting beer houses together. This habit was ridiculed in order to defame the brother.

2 An expression of defiance.

3 This is a reference to the road between Ngovhela and Sibasa before it was tarred during the middle 1980s. The idea of winding also refers to a drunken stagger from beer house to beer house.

9

Hatshivhasa (Sibasa)<sup>1</sup>

Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula Mukumbani.

Sibasa! We live at Mukumbani.<sup>2</sup>

Hatshivhasa! Ri divha Mukumbani.  
 Sibasa! We know Mukumbani.  
 Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula dzithavhani.  
 Sibasa! We live in the mountains.  
 Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula miedzini.  
 Sibasa! We live in the valleys.  
 Hatshivhasa ri a la. Ri a fura, ho!  
 We have enough to eat at Sibasa.  
 Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula mabakoni.  
 Sibasa! We live in caves.<sup>3</sup>  
 Hatshivhasa ri a la. Ri a takala.  
 We have food at Sibasa where we are contented.  
 Hatshivhasa! Ri dzula mapfeneni.  
 Sibasa! We live on rocky hill-tops.<sup>4</sup>  
 Khirikhitshi!<sup>5</sup> Ri divha Mphaya.  
 We know Mphaya.<sup>6</sup>

- 10 "Munna we a vha a tshi dzhia mbonndo thanu a vhofha ngadzo  
 "He was a man who used a five-pound note to light up a  
 fola."  
 cigarette."  
 "Munna we a vha a tshi dzhia kholomo yothe a i thavhela  
 "He was a man who used to slaughter an ox for the  
 mahunguvhu."  
 crows."  
 "Munna we a vha a tshi tshimbila nga bere yawe."  
 "He was a man who used to ride on his horse."  
 "Kha vha dou pfa! Kapata!"  
 "Listen! Clippety-clop!"  
 Hatshivhasa ri a la. Ri a fura.  
 We have enough to eat at Sibasa.  
 Mme anga vha tamba tshimodeni.  
 My mother dances in a modern style.  
 Khotso anga vha thula mavhotana.  
 My father dances in a modern style.<sup>7</sup>  
 Thula! Thula! Thula!  
 Dance! Dance! Dance!

- 20 Hatshivhasa. Khosi ndi Tshivhase.  
 Sibasa. The chief is Tshivhase.  
 Ha, mukoma ndi Muguru.  
 The petty headman is Mr Muguru.  
 Nduna ndi Malusele.  
 The headman is Mr Malusele.  
 Kha la Venda ri a la. Ri a fura.  
 We have enough food in Venda.  
 Kha la Venda ri a la. Ri a takala.  
 We have enough food in Venda and are contented.  
 Ri a la. Ri a pembela.  
 We eat and dance excitedly.

1 Based on a song by guitarist Ntondeni Tshivhase of Mukumbani.

2 Mukumbani: the village of chief Tshivhase.

3 People used to hide in these caves during times of war.

4 Lit. the place of baboons.

5 The neighing of chief Tshivhase's horse.

6 A reference to famous chief Rasimphi Mphaya ("Empire") Tshivhase, c. 1900-1952.

7 Lit. to shake the buttocks.

10

Shango la Ngulumbi (Ngulumbi village)

**Kushango huku kwa Ngulumbi kwo nakesa.**

The small village of Ngulumbi is beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

**Shango heli, shango la Ngulumbi.**

This place, the village of Ngulumbi.

**O naka, o naka, kwo nakesa!**

Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful!

**Hmmmmmm!**

**Na tshikolo,**

And there is indeed

**ngoho tshihone, mmawee!**

a school, mother!<sup>2</sup>

**Na tshikolo,**

And there is

**tshihone, tshihone, baba!**

a school, father!

**Na tshikolo,**

And there is

10 **tshihone, tshihone, makhulu!**

a school, gran!

**Na madi,**

And there is

**na madi a hone, mamai!**

water, mother!

**Na madi,**

And there is

**na madi a hone, gugu!**

water, gran!

**Na mavhone,**

And there is

**na mavhone a hone, makhulu!**

electricity, gran!<sup>3</sup>

**Haratshitanga ho nakesa.**

Ratshitanga's place is beautiful.

18 **Tuwani ni ye Lunungwi ni lavhelese.**

Let us go to Lunungwi and look.

1 This song praises Solomon's village. It is, however, classified as *luimbo* (song) and not *tshikodo* (praise).

2 This school appears to be of 19th century missionary origin.

3 Running water and electricity are considered luxuries in most rural areas, especially by people who have to carry

water and firewood to their homes over long distances. During the drought of 1992 boreholes at Ngulumbi dried up and people had to fetch water from the Mutshindudi river.

11

Makhadzi (My aunt)<sup>1</sup>

Mmmm! Nne, nne ndo tambula.

I suffered.

Ngoho ndo tambula.

I truly suffered.

Makhadzi wanga, idani ni shele madi.

My aunt, come and pour water.<sup>2</sup>

Makhadzi wanga, idani ni shele madi, wee!

Alas my aunt, come and pour water.

Nne ndo tambula.

I suffered.

Nne ndi ya ngafhi?

Where should I go?

Ndi ri, ndi kha tshino nga fhano zwi a tanama.

I say, whenever I attempt something it ends in failure.

Muzwala, nne, idani, ri tuwe.

Cousin, come, let us go.

Nne ndo tambula.

I suffered.

10 Buretse ndi tsini nga milenzhe. Nne nda humbula, nne ndi a Brits is not far to walk to.<sup>3</sup> I am thinking of leaving. I am tuwa. Nda ñala hayani.

forsaking home.

Nne ndo tambula.

I suffered.

Thi ngo funzwa.

I am not educated.

Nde thi ngo funzwa.

I am not educated.

Nne, nne, nne, baba, wee!

Me, me, me, alas father!

Nne, nne, nne ndo tambula.

Me, me, I suffered.

Nne ndo lisa mbudzi ndi kale ngoho.

Long ago I looked after goats.

Nne thi ngo, thi ngo funzwa ngoho.

I am not, not educated indeed.

Nne thi na na tshithu ndi fhano.

I do not have anything here.

20 Inwi makhadzi, lisani madi.

You aunt, bring water.

Inwi makhadzi, phasani madi.

You aunt, spit water out.

Nne ndo tambula.  
I suffered.

1 Based on a song by Solomon's brother Robert.

2 A reference to -phasa, to squirt water from the mouth. This is a ritual which is performed to pacify an angry ancestral spirit. Its function in the context of the song is that of easing conflict and tension caused by poverty.

3 Venda migrant labour has a close association with farm labour at places like Brits and Bethel (cf. also songs 30, 53 & 159). Labourers were fetched from Venda by truck (cf. biography of Nnditsheni Ramukhuvhathi). They were employed as "six-to-six" labourers (i.e. working daily from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.) on vegetable and tobacco farms. Guitarist Albert Munda-lamo remarked that, although the wages of farm labourers were low, they always received free food (particularly farm produce) and beer. There were also many "widows", referring to the keeping of lovers. By contrast, he added, tea estates in Venda do not offer these "benefits".

4 A reference to the early death of Solomon's father, and his family's subsequent poverty.

12

Rine ri zwisiwana (We are orphans)

Rine ri zwisiwana.  
We are orphans.  
Rine ri la ngoho nga u tambula ngoho.  
We are truly suffering.

Rine ri zwisiwana.  
We are orphans.  
He, vhone, makhulu, ngoho ri zwisiwana.  
Hey, you, granny, we are truly orphans.  
He, vhone, malume, ngoho ri zwisiwana.  
Hey, you, uncle, we are truly orphans.  
He, vhone, baba, ngoho ri zwisiwana.  
Hey, you, father, we are truly orphans.

13

Magaraba (Migrants)

(Solo)  
Ndi musu ndo vha tendela dali.  
I have agreed to be your lover.  
(chorus)  
Vho dina nga u kanda u la fiwana.  
You caused me trouble by treading on an infant.<sup>1</sup>  
(solo)  
Nne! ... Nne! ... Nne!  
Me! ... Me! ... Me!

(solo)  
Magaraba,  
All you migrants  
(chorus)  
vhuyani nothe.  
come home.

(solo)  
Vha lunako,  
All you beautiful ones,  
(chorus)  
dzhenani nothe.  
come in.

(solo)  
Vha miñwadzi,  
All you hat-wearers,  
(chorus)  
dzhenani nothe.  
come in.

(solo)  
10 Ndi musu ndo vha tendela mufunwa.  
I have agreed to be your lover.  
(chorus)  
Vho dina nga u kanda u la ñwana.  
You caused me trouble by treading on an infant.

1 The traditional periods of migrant visits to home (especially long weekends and Christmas) appear associated with a rise in the crime rate (Godfried Dederen, University of Venda, personal communication).

14

Mmbwa (The dog)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)  
Mmbwa yo fhedza thulwana ya marambo!  
A dog finished a heap of bones!

(chorus)  
*Hu pfi!*  
*So they say!*<sup>2</sup>

(solo)  
Vho i vhona yo dzula nga u tumba!  
They saw it squatting!

(chorus)  
*Hae, vho i vhona.*  
*Hey, they saw it.*

(solo)  
Tshinetise na Nndanduleni,  
Tshinetise and Nndanduleni,

(chorus)  
*hu pfi,*  
*so they say,*

(solo)  
ndi vhana vha Hamathase.  
are children of Mathase's place.

(chorus)  
*Hau!*

1 Apparently based on a song by well-known penny whistle player Albert Ralulimi.

15

Tshitiriri tsho lila (The whistle is blowing)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)

*Tshitiriri tsho lila.*

*The whistle is blowing.*<sup>2</sup>

(chorus)

*Tsho lilela Selinah.*

*It is blowing for Selinah.*<sup>3</sup>

(solo)

*Ho saina mama.*<sup>4</sup>

*It is a sign mama.*

(chorus)

*Saina, saina, saina.*

*A sign, a sign, a sign.*

(solo)

*Ho saina papa.*

*It is a sign papa.*

(chorus)

*Saina, saina, saina.*

*A sign, a sign, a sign.*

(solo)

*Mukusule ndi mini?*

*What are dried vegetables?*

(chorus)

*Ndi nama ya Vhavenda.*

*They are the favourite Venda food.*<sup>5</sup>

(solo)

*Tshidimela ndi mini?*

*What is a train?*<sup>6</sup>

(chorus)

*Ndi tsimbi dza makhuwa.*

*It is the iron of whites.*

1 The origin of this song is not clear. I heard it performed as a beer song. However, it is said to be a wedding song, and may be of urban origin. Some people know versions of the song which include Tsonga words. One informant first heard the song as a child during the 1950s. Others remember it being performed by penny whistler Albert Ralulimi.

2 The name of the whistle is onomatopoeic, and seems to derive from the type of whistle used in sport and on trains. The whistle referred to in the song is made from a short length of reed, stopped at one end. The tongue is placed into a diagonally-cut embouchure. The whistle emits a shrill piercing sound, and is used for signalling by boys when herding and hunting. The blowing of the whistle in the song seems to have two functions. It is firstly associated with the start of marriage arrangements, particularly those concerning the wedding ceremony. It is also associated with the train which apparently takes the married couple to their new home.

3 Solomon's sister who was married in 1968. She now lives at Vhufuli. Some people also know this line as tsho lilela kuvamba (partly Tsonga; "blowing for the departure").

4 A sign that marriage arrangements are about to start, or that the train is leaving. Some also say it refers to the signing of the marriage document.

5 Lit. meat. Thought by some to refer to food consumed at the wedding.

6 Some informants associate this reference with migrant labourers who travel to the reef by rail. These migrants marry non-Venda girls (cf. also song 72). A marriage contract is signed, because such a marriage is regarded as risky. This idea of marrying across ethnic lines is strengthened by the reference to dried vegetables. Some say the husband is informing his new wife about Venda customs.

16

Mushe (Moses)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)

Mushe, Mushe!

Moses, Moses!

(chorus)

*Bvula thovho dzau.*

*Remove your sandal.*

(solo)

Mushe, Mushe!

Moses, Moses!

(chorus)

*Fhano ndi hukhethwa!*

*It is sacred here!*

(solo)

Hayani

It is sacred

(chorus)

*fhano ndi hukhethwa!*

*here at home!*

(solo)

Bennde ya Hamathase.

The band of Mathase's place.

"Murwa Tshibvumo!"

"Son of Tshibvumo!"<sup>2</sup>

"Murwa Mathase mani!"

"Son of Mathase man!"<sup>2</sup>

10 Ndi haya ha Vhatendi.

It is the home of Christians.

(chorus)

*Bvula thovho dzau.*

*Remove your sandal.*

(solo)

Ri khou takala!

We are rejoicing!



(chorus)

*Bvula thovho dzau.*  
*Remove your sandal.*

(solo)

*Murwa, murwa Mathase!*

*Son, son of Mathase!*

(chorus)

*Fhano ndi hukhethwa!*

*It is sacred here!*

1 This is a well-known song of the United Apostolic Church. It has even been turned into a beer song.

2 I.e. Solomon Mathase and Gilbert Tshibvumo, the guitarists accompanying the singing.

17

Mutendi wa tshifhinga nyana (The backslider)<sup>1</sup>

(solo)

*Baba, vha songo vha Mutendi wa tshifhinga nyana.*

*Father, do not be a backslider.<sup>2</sup>*

*Mma, vha songo vha Mutendi wa tshifhinga nyana.*

*Mother, do not be a backslider.*

*Khaladzi, ni songo vha Mutendi wa tshifhinga nyana.*

*Sister, do not be a backslider.*

*Kha ri tende ene*

*Let us accept*

(chorus)

*Mudzimu.*

*God.*

(solo)

*Kha ri rende ene*

*Let us praise*

(chorus)

*Mudzimu.*

*God.*

*Malume, vha songo vha Mutendi wa tshifhinga nyana.*

*Uncle, do not be a backslider.*

*Murathu, ni songo vha Mutendi wa tshifhinga nyana.*

*Brother, do not be a backslider.*

1 This is Solomon's own composition.

2 Lit. do not be a Christian for a short while only.

18

Vhana vha Murangoni (Children of Murangoni)

(Chorus)

*Vhana vha Murangoni.*

*Children of Murangoni.*

(solo)

*Havha vhana vha Murangoni vhone ngoho vha ya takadza.*

These children of Murangoni are interesting indeed.<sup>1</sup>  
**Na vhommane na vhomma vhothe ngoho vha ya takadza.**  
 Both the aunt and the mother are interesting indeed.  
**Rine ro do u li dalela.**  
 We come to visit this place.  
**Rine ro do u takala navho.**  
 We are happy with them.  
**Havha vhana na vhakegulu vhothe vho takala.**  
 All these children and old women are happy.  
**Hu ri vkhotsi na vhomma ro do u takala navho.**  
 Even the fathers and mothers are happy with them.  
**Hu ri khaladzi na vhabebi ro do u takala navho.**  
 Even the sister and parents are happy with them.

1 Solomon ascribes the "interesting" and "happy" nature of people at Murangoni to their good behaviour. Murangoni is the western-most village of the Tshivhase district. It is situated in a fertile valley with a relatively low population density.

19

Masindi o farwa (Masindi was arrested)<sup>1</sup>

**Masindi o farwa.**  
 Masindi was arrested.  
**A sia mabundu**  
 She left light beer  
**na nama**  
 and meat  
**na halwa.**  
 and strong beer.  
**O lila a diphina mutani wawe.**  
 She cried bitterly at home.<sup>2</sup>  
 "Hehe! Yowee!"

1 Masindi is Solomon's sister. She was jailed for three months in 1968 for brewing muvhanya, an alcoholic beverage made from sorghum malt, sugar and water.

2 I.e. when arrested.

20

Vhothitshere (The teacher)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)  
**Vhothitshere**  
 The teacher  
 (chorus)  
 a vha ri vhudzi dzi number one, one, one!  
 does not tell us who is number one, one, one!<sup>2</sup>  
 (solo)  
**Vhavenda**  
 The Venda people

(chorus)

a vha ri vhudzi dzi number one, one, one!  
do not tell us who is number one, one, one!

(solo)

Vhoprofessor

The professor

(chorus)

a vha ri vhudzi dzi number one, one, one!  
does not tell us who is number one, one, one!

1 Based on a song by Solomon's brother Robert.

2 The song is a complaint by school pupils regarding delays in examination results.

21

Azwinndini (Azwinndini)<sup>1</sup>

Hai, mahola.

No, last year.

Azwinndini ndi n̄wana wa murathu wanga.

Azwinndini is the child of my younger brother.

"Huñwii!"

"Zwi tshi khou lidziwa nga ene S.T. Solomon Tshinetise

"He who is singing is S.T. Solomon Tshinetise

Mathase ano khou dzula ngei musanda fhasi Hangulumbi

Mathase who lives at Ngulumbi, down there at the Ratshitanga wa Ratshitanga."

royal homestead."

Ro vhona vnañwe mukegulu. Nazwino ngoho vha lowa masiari

We saw a certain old woman. Do you indeed bewitch in the naa vhone?

afternoon?

Vho balelwa u lowa vhusiku.

She could not bewitch at night.

10 Tshitemba tsho fura madi ri do nwa ngani mabundu ndi

What shall I drink the beer of my younger brother with thundu ya murathu wanga.

if the calabash is filled with water?

Ndi amba na vhone ngoho murathu wanga.

I am indeed talking to you my younger brother.

Nangwe vha ndodela vhusiku nazwino ngoho ndo themba

Even if you creep upon me at night I truly trust in him wa makoleni.

who is in heaven.

Hai, mahola.

No, last year.

16 Azwinndini ndi n̄wana wa murathu wanga.

Azwinndini is the child of my younger brother.

1 Based on Nndanganeni Luambo's well-known song "With what shall I dance?" (227).

Nwana wa Mozambiki (A Tsonga child)<sup>1</sup>

Arali vha vhana vha Vhavenda vhone ro vha vhona nga mishumo.<sup>2</sup>  
If they are Venda children we will know them by their  
behaviour.

Arali vha vhana vha Vhavenda lo ko u ri n̄wana wa Mozambiki  
If they are Venda or Tsonga children we will know them by  
taku vhona mitiro.  
their behaviour.

Hina tsembile taku vhona mitiro.

We know them by their behaviour.

Rine ro thembela ri do vha vhona nga mishumo.

We know them by their behaviour.

1 This song is an injunction against immoral behaviour. It was inspired during the late 1980s when a Tsonga man became drunk at a local beer house.

2 Lit. by their works.

Iyani Mushe (Go there Moses)<sup>1</sup> (I)

(Chorus)

Mushe, Mushe!

Moses, Moses!

(chorus)

Bvula thovho dzau.

Remove your sandal.

Iyani Mushe.

Go there Moses.

(solo)

Vhana vhangana vha khou tambusa.

My children are suffering.

*Vhana vha tshi pfa ndala.*

*The children are hungry.*

*Vhana vha khou shengela.*

*The children are suffering.*

*Iyani Egipita.*

*Go to Egypt.*

*Vha tshi ya Kanana,*

*When they go to Canaan,*

*ranga vhathu phanda.*

*lead them.*

10 *He, iwe Mushe.*

*You Moses.*

*Shangoni la vhupuli.*

*Land of slavery.*

1 A well-known Zion Christian Church song.

Mazwale (The daughter-in-law)

Mazwale, mmvuleleni, ri nelwa nga mvula.

Daughter-in-law, open the door, we are getting soaked.<sup>1</sup>

Yoyo! Yoyo!

1 This song is based on an incident which occurred at Tshisahulu in 1969. Solomon was visiting a friend, David Tshibalo Makumbane. It was raining early one evening, and David's mother asked his wife to let her inside the house.

Muthethelele (Dancing happily)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Amen! Halleluyah! Amen!

(solo)

Ahe! Muthethelele!

Dancing happily!

Ri themba Yesu.

We trust Jesus.

Tshinetise.

Hae, ndi themba Yesu.

I trust Jesus.

Ndi do lovha.

I shall die.<sup>2</sup>

Amen!

Kha ri tshile rothe.

Let us live together.

Vhana vha mme anga.

Children of my mother.

1 A Zion Christian Church song.

2 A reference to the dangers of contemporary life.

Limange (The mangy cat)<sup>1</sup>

Vho rwa limange litswu. Nazwino vha do tambula gai?

She beat the mangy black cat. Indeed, will she suffer?

Vho rwa limange litswu. Makhadzi vha do tambula.

She beat the mangy black cat. The aunt will suffer.<sup>2</sup>

Inwi makhadzi ngoho.

You, aunt, indeed.

A zwi lilelwi. Nazwino ngoho vha do tambula.

It is no use crying. Indeed, she will suffer.

Vho rwa limange la goya. Nazwino vha do tambula.

She beat the stray cat. She will indeed suffer.

**Makhadzi!**

**Aunt!**

Vho rwa limange litswu. Makhadzi, a li vhulaiwi.

She beat the mangy black cat. Aunt, it must not be killed.

1 Based on a song by Robert Mathase.

2 This song refers to Mrs Madilonga, the mother of guitarist Gilbert Tshibvumo. It is an old belief that killing a black cat results in misfortune.

27

Ravele o kwasha khali (Ravele broke the clay pot)<sup>1</sup>

Vho-Ravele vho todou kwasha ndaka.

Mr Ravele nearly broke someone's possession.

Makhadzi, ndo khakha nga u zwi amba.

Aunt, I erred by telling.<sup>2</sup>

Mpfareleni vhabebi, ndo khakha.

Forgive me parents, I made a mistake.

Makhadzi, na nne-vho ndo zwi khakha.

Aunt, I have just done wrong.

Makhulu, na nne-vho mpfareleni.

Granny, I must just be forgiven.

Ndo khakha. Ngoho, ndo zwi khakha.

I erred. Indeed, I erred.

Vho-Ravele vho khakha nga u kwasha ndaka.

Mr Ravele erred by breaking someone's possession.

"E! A! E! A!"

Makhadzi, ndo khakha nga u zwi amba.

Aunt, I erred by telling.

10 Mpfareleni!

Forgive me!

"E! Kha vna dou pfa!"

"Listen!"

1 A reference to the alleged corrupt activities of Frank Ravele during his presidency.

2 A typical utterance by a musician who criticizes the socio-political order. It functions as an "admission" of guilt to avoid possible retribution.

28

Vha litsheni vha lale (Leave them in peace)<sup>1</sup> (I)

Vha litsheni vha dzule.

Leave them in peace.

Ngoho, na vhone vha na shopho yavho, wee.

Indeed, he has a big shop.<sup>2</sup>

*Vha lale. nne!*

*In peace. I!*

Ngoho, vha na shopho yavho vhone, nne.

Indeed, he has a big shop.

Hezwi zwisiwana zwa hashu zwi khou lidza.

These orphans of ours are singing.

Rine ri shuma navho. A vha ri khathutsheli ngani?

We work with him. Why does he not sympathise with us?

A vha ri khathutsheli.

He does not sympathise with us.

- Vha lale vha litsheni, vhavenda.  
 Leave them in peace, sir.  
*Vha lale, na vhasidzana vha lale, nne.*  
*In peace, and the girls in peace.*
- 10 *Vha lale, na vhakalaha vha lale, nne.*  
*In peace, and the old men in peace.*  
 Vha litsheni vha takale.  
 Leave them to be happy.  
 Venda ndi la hashu.  
 Venda is ours.<sup>3</sup>  
 "Vhopresident, Mr Muvenda."  
 "Mr President, Mr Muvenda."  
 "You are going to sleep if you want to sleep."<sup>4</sup>  
*Vha lale, na vhakegulu vha lale, nne.*  
*In peace, the old women in peace.*
- 16 Iyo! Vha litsheni vha dzule.  
 Leave them in peace.

1 Lit. leave them to sleep. This is an injunction against political corruption. It urges President Ravele's government to rule wisely so that there should be peace. The idea of peace (lit. "sleep") derives from an incident which happened during certain wage negotiations in which Solomon took part. The chief negotiator fell asleep during the meeting.

2 This serves to emphasize the seemingly uncaring attitude of the negotiator who, as a shop owner, is thought to be financially well off.

3 I.e. everybody must be allowed to share in the riches of the country. This was a common expression following the declaration of independence in 1979.

4 A reference to Pres. Ravele. His apparent uncaring attitude is expressed in the metaphor of sleep.

29

Vha litsheni vha lale (Leave them in peace) (II)

Yo, vha litsheni vha lale, vhavenda.  
 Leave them in peace, honourable sirs.<sup>1</sup>  
 Yo, vha litsheni vha dzule.  
 Leave them in peace.  
 Inwi, Ramushwana.  
 You, Ramushwana.  
 Inwi no thusa vhone nga mundende kha vhakegulu  
 You have helped old women and men  
 na vhakalaha.  
 with pension.  
 Inwi no thusa  
 You have helped  
 nga vhakegulu.  
 old women.  
 Vha hola űwedzi muñwe na muñwe shangoni.  
 They receive their pension at the end of the month.

Vha hola n̄wedzi na muñwe na muñwe.

They receive their pension at the end of every month.<sup>2</sup>

10 Ri khou livhuwa.

We are thankful.

Mudzimu o thusa o fha Ramushwana

God helped us because

muhumbulo wawe wothe.

He inspired Ramushwana.

O do pfela

He was concerned

zwisewana.

about orphans.

O do pfela

He was concerned

madzingandevhe.

about the deaf.

O do pfela

He was concerned

na mabofu.

about the blind.

Ri khou thusana.

We must help each other.

20 Inwi Ramushwana, ri khou takala.

You Ramushwana, we are happy.

Vhakegulu vhashu vha hola tshothe

Our old women receive their pension

n̄wedzi muñwe na muñwe. Ri khou takala.

every month. We are happy.

Ngauri na vhañwe a vha na na vhana.

Because some have no children<sup>3</sup>

Hone ngeno, ri livhuwa Mandela.

We truly thank Mandela.

Ene o kwasha thavha yashu.

He broke this mountain.<sup>4</sup>

O do bonyolosa na mabofu othe.

He stimulated political consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Ngevhala

There is Mr Ravele,

ndi Vho-Ravele.

struggling to eat.

Vha khou swogola

Mr Ravele is

30 havha Vho-Ravele.

struggling.

Vho vhulaya na vhone Vho-Mphephu.

He killed Mr Mphephu.

Vha tshi nyaga tshidulo

He was after the

shangoni la Venda.

presidency of Venda.<sup>6</sup>

Vho roba hothe

He cheated everywhere,

na Taiwan.

in Taiwan too.<sup>7</sup>

Vho dzumba

He concealed



hei tshelede  
this money  
ngei Taiwan.  
in Taiwan.  
Vha la Vhavenda.  
He cheated the Venda people.

40 Vhavenda vhahashu,  
Our people,  
ri khou thela.  
we are paying tax.  
Ri khou thela  
We have to pay tax  
ngeno ri khou swogola.  
even though we struggle.

Vha litsheni vha lale, vhavenda.  
Leave them in peace, honourable sirs.  
Vha lana nga tshavho.  
They killed each other.  
Ri la ri vhanzhi u zwimbela dzi a talula.  
Many people ate, but only one became constipated.<sup>8</sup>  
Inwi, shangoni a hu na mutali.  
You, there is no clever person in this country.<sup>9</sup>  
A hu na mutali.  
No clever person.

Vha litsheni vha lale, vhavenda.  
Leave them in peace, honored sir.  
50 "Dzu! Dzu! Dzu!"  
Havha Vho-Ravele vhone vho dzhia hetshi tshidulo tsha  
This Mr Ravele took the position of  
president  
president  
"P.R. Mphephu."  
"P.R. Mphephu".  
A si zwavho  
It is not yours,  
vho tou renga  
you bought it.  
Namusi zwo fhela.  
Today that is over.  
Vha fana na nne naa?  
Are you like me?  
"Just like yourself,  
like me."<sup>10</sup>  
60 "But yesterday you were the president."  
"But because today you are suffering."  
"But because your position is not your position."

Ndi khwine vha mpfare.  
It is better to arrest me.  
Ndi khwine vha ndzhie.  
It is better to get rid of me by ritual murder.  
"Where is the helicopter from Thohoyandou to Nzhelele?"<sup>11</sup>  
"Is the S.T. Solomon Tshinetise Mathase is speaking."  
"Better to come to catch me,  
but because I am talking too true."  
"Indeed is indeed."<sup>12</sup>

70 Ndi khwine vha mpfare.  
It is better to arrest me.  
Ndi khwine vha ndzhie.  
It is better to get rid of me by ritual murder.

"Anytime I am ready."

"But because this people is long time you robbing that  
people, another people  
and me also  
and so,

on top of that I am a poor man."

"You want again another money."

"So my salary is only

80 R80 per month."<sup>13</sup>

Ndi khwine vha mpfare.  
It is better to arrest me.  
Ndi khwine vha ndzhie.  
It is better to get rid of me by ritual murder.

1 A reference to former presidents Mphephu and Ravele.

2 Pensions formerly were paid bi-monthly only.

3 I.e. to support them.

4 A reference to the scrapping of apartheid laws ("we can now  
sit anywhere").

5 Lit. to cure the blind.

6 Lit. after the chair.

7 A reference to a visit by Ravele to Taiwan to establish  
trade relations.

8 I.e. Ravele carried the blame for general corruption.

9 A reference to foolish politicians.

10 I.e. today the ex-president is as poor as Solomon.

11 A reference to one of Venda's defence force helicopters  
used to transport former Venda presidents.

12 I.e. that is how things are.

13 This amount is symbolic of an inadequate salary.

30

Ndo kholwa Buretse (I absconded to Brits)

*"Nne ndo kholwa Buretse!*

*"I absconded to Brits!"<sup>1</sup>*

*"Ariye! Ariye!"*

"Nne ndi khou tambula."  
"I am suffering."

Inwi, muawe! Nne, nne ndo shona-vho.  
You, mother! I, I am just ashamed.  
Phungo i bva mudini. Nne ndo shona-vho.  
There is a rumour from my home. I am just ashamed.  
My brother u hone. Nne ndo shona-vho.  
My brother is here. I am just ashamed.

Nne ndo kholwa Buretse. Nne ndo shona-vho.  
I absconded to Brits. I am just ashamed.  
Nne ndo begwa hayani. Nne ndo shona-vho.  
I was born at home. I am just ashamed.  
10 Nne ndo ya u shuma. Nne ndo kholwa vhone nga ndavha ya  
hone vhusiwana.  
I went to work. I abandoned home because of poverty.

Vhone, phungo yanga i bva hayani.  
You, the rumour about me comes from my home.  
Nne ndo itelwa phungo i bva hayani:  
The rumour about me comes from my home:  
Ndi hoyu khaladzi  
It is this sister  
na hoyu mukomana  
and this elder brother  
na hoyu baba  
and this father  
na hoyu khotsi-vho  
and also this father  
na hoyu mma.  
and this mother.

Nga heyi phungo yanga yo nnyisa kule hafha shangoni la hashu.  
This rumour has spread all over.

Nne ndo tshinya ngani shangoni?  
How have I erred at home?  
20 Vhabebi vho mbeba, ngoho, ndi tshi tshila-vho.  
I am just a normal person.<sup>2</sup>

Nne ndo tshinya ngani vhabebi vhanganga?  
How have I erred my parents?  
Phungo i bva hayani nne ndo khakha-vho.  
The rumour from home is that I just erred.  
Nne ndo tuwa mmawe, ndi ya Buretse ngoho.  
Indeed mother, I left for Brits.  
Nne ndi khou tuwa mmawe. Ndi yo shuma, wee!  
I am leaving mother. Alas, I am going to work!  
"Ipfa! Ipfa!"  
"Listen! Listen!"  
Nne ndo khakha ngani vhabebi vhanganga?  
How have I erred my parents.  
Nne ndo khakha ngani? Nne?  
How have I erred? I?  
Nne ndo khakha ngani baba?  
How have I erred father?

Nne ndo khakha ngani mukomana?  
How have I erred elder brother?  
30 Nne ndo khakha ngani muzwala?  
How have I erred cousin?  
Nne ndo khakha ngani makhulu?  
How have I erred granny?

1 Performed by kazoo player Hendrik Ramulwela.

2 Lit. I was also born alive.

31

Vho-Nyadenga (Mrs Nyadenga) (I)

Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na lunanga, makhulu.  
Mrs Nyadenga, come with the medicine horn, granny.  
U ya lwala Nthatheni, u ya lwala muduhulu.  
Nthatheni is ill, the grandchild is ill.<sup>1</sup>  
U ya lwala muduhulu, u ya lwala makhulu.  
The grandchild is ill, is ill granny.  
Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na mushonga mutswuku.  
Mrs Nyadenga, come with the red medicine.  
Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na muuluso mutswuku.  
Mrs Nyadenga, come with the red medicine.  
Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na lunanga lwa phofu.  
Mrs Nyadenga, come with the horn of the eland.

1 This song refers to a grandchild of headman Ratshitanga who fell ill at the village of Vhutatu in 1967. Mrs Nyadenga (now deceased) was a female relative of Solomon's mother. The child coughed blood, but recuperated after being given the crushed root of a certain plant.

32

Vho-Nyadenga (Mrs Nyadenga) (II)

Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na lunanga lwa phofu.  
Mrs Nyadenga, come with the horn of the eland.  
U ya lwala Nthatheni, u ya lwala muduhulu.  
Nthatheni is ill, the grandchild is ill.  
Tshinetise na ene uyu o vha netisa.  
Tshinetise has tired you.  
Ene nazwino ene o vhuya na mukhuwa.  
He has returned with a white man.  
Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na lunanga lwa ndou.  
Mrs Nyadenga, come with the elephant tusk.  
Tshinetise, na ene hoyu khotsimunene.  
Tshinetise, come with this young man.  
Tshinetise na ene ngoho o di vhuyela.  
Tshinetise has returned indeed.  
O vhuya ngoho nazwino ngoho na mukhuwa wawe.  
He has returned with his white man.  
A tshi lovha, na ene vha ri vhudze na ene.  
When I die, he must be told.

- 10 Ndi Kruger na ene ha na na ndavha.  
 It is Kruger who has no problem.  
 Kruger na ene u tshila na Vhavenda.  
 Kruger lives with the Venda people.  
 Mme anga, ene vho ri ene a de tshothe.  
 My mother said he must come permanently.  
 Ene-ene u tshila Venda.  
 To live in Venda.  
 Kruger ene ndi mutshena.  
 Kruger is a white man.  
 Vho-Nyadenga, nga vha de na lunanga lwa phofu.  
 Mrs Nyadenga, come with the horn of the eland.  
 U ya lwala Nthatheni, u ya lwala muduhulu.  
 Nthatheni is ill, the grandchild is ill.  
 Kruger na ene a mmbulunge.  
 Kruger must be a mourner  
 Nne ndi tshi ya ngei mavhidani.  
 when I go to the cemetery to be buried.  
 A de nazwino a nayitele thabelo.  
 He must furthermore come and pray for me.
- 20 A de na ene a ite thabelo.  
 He must come and pray.  
 Ngoho, Mudzimu u do mu vhudza.  
 Indeed, God will tell him.  
 U na mashudu ane a a wana.  
 God will tell him about his good fortune.  
 Ene ene ngoho u do a wana.  
 He will indeed receive it.  
 Mudzimu, shangoni ndi la Mudzimu.  
 God, the land of God.  
 Kruger nazwino u tshila na vhatu.  
 Kruger even stays with people.
- 26 "A! A! A! A! A!"

33

Tshidudu (The small claypot)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

*Tsho vhilingana, tsho vhilingana!*<sup>2</sup>

*Gurgle-gurgle, gurgle-gurgle!*

(solo)

*Tshidudu tsha mashonzha, wee!*

The small claypot with mopani worms!

*Ndo itwa nga mme anga, wee!*

Alas, my mother troubled me!

*Vha nthuma vhengeleni, wee!*

Alas, she sent me to the shop!<sup>3</sup>

*Ndo diŋwa nga mme anga, wee!*

Alas, my mother troubled me!

*Nga uri vha sa mpfuni, wee!*

Alas, because she does not love me!

*"Tsho diŋwa nga Vho-Nyamuofhe, wee!"*

"Alas, Mrs Nyamuofhe troubled me!"

1 Apparently based on a beer song.

2 The worms cooking. Also a mnemonic representation of the accompanying drum pattern, as well as a metaphor for all the activities occurring at the beer drink.

3 The singer is unhappy because he is now missing the fun at the beer drink.

34

Vhana doroba thina (Children of our place)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)

Vhana doroba thina.

The children of our place.

(chorus)

Vhana doroba thina, vha na pemberera.<sup>2</sup>

The children of our place are dancing excitedly.

(solo)

Tambani zwakanaka.

Dance well.

(chorus)

Tambani zwakanaka masimbana, iwe!

Dance well, you with the skin clothes!<sup>3</sup>

E, vha ri, tambani zwakanaka.

They say, dance well.

(solo)

Nguwe, nguwe!<sup>4</sup>

It is you, it is you!

(chorus)

Muthakhati ka loya.

One who bewitches.

(solo & chorus)

Vhana vha Vhanyai.

Children of Zimbabwe.<sup>5</sup>

1 Based on a song Solomon heard over a Radio Zimbabwe short-wave broadcast.

2 Karanga for pembela.

3 Although masimbana literally refers to skin clothes, the word is used here to refer to old people (because Venda people wore skins in the past). According to Solomon they are accused of being witches on account of their strange clothes. This ties in with the general pattern of witchcraft in terms of which old people are often accused of witchcraft because they are regarded as failing to conform to certain contemporary norms, and for acting in "strange" ways.

4 A contraction of ndi iwe.

5 Solomon is referring to his ancestry here. He is a member of the Nyai clan which is of Zimbabwean origin.

Vho-Mutshekwa (Mrs Mutshekwa)<sup>1</sup> (I)

Thi tsha do dovha u kanda Venda, wee.  
 Alas, I will never return to Venda.  
 Vho-Munzhedzi, thi tsha do dovha.  
 Mrs Munzhedzi, I will never return.  
 Ndo todou reñwa nga mbado madekwe.  
 I was nearly hacked with an axe last night.  
 Ndo todou thuntshwa nga tshigidi madekwe.  
 I was nearly shot last night.  
 Ndo todou thavhiwa nga lufhanga madekwe.  
 I was nearly stabbed last night.  
 Vho-Mutshekwa, hae.  
 Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa.  
 Ndo todou vhulawa nga mbado madekwe.  
 I was nearly killed with an axe last night.  
 Thi tsha do dovha Vho-Muofhe, hae.  
 I will never return again Mrs Muofhe.

1 Based on the famous song by Albert Mundalamo.

Vho-Mutshekwa (Mrs Mutshekwa) (II)

Vho-Mutshekwa, ndo todou reñwa nga mbado madekwe, wee.  
 Alas Mrs Mutshekwa, I was nearly hacked with an axe last night.  
 Thi tsha do dovha zwa u tunda Venda, mawee!  
 Oh mother! I will no longer support Venda.<sup>1</sup>  
 Hae, ñwananga!  
 Alas, my child!  
 Ndo todou thuntshwa nga tshigidi madekwe.  
 I was nearly shot last night.  
 Ndo todou thavhiwa nga lufhanga madekwe.  
 I was nearly stabbed last night.  
 Ndo todou vhulaiwa nga tshigidi madekwe.  
 I was nearly killed with a gun last night.  
 Ndo todou vhulawa nga vhaloi!  
 I was nearly killed by witches!  
 "Ariye! He-ho-ho!"  
 "Tonga, tonga, tonga, tonga, tonga, tonga!"  
 "Swank, swank, swank, swank, swank, swank!"

- 10 "Ramaremisa we a dzhena Luaname."  
 "Ramaremisa who entered Luaname."<sup>2</sup>  
 "Ndi lufhalafhala lwa Tshivhungululu  
 "The loud horn blowing from Tshivhungululu  
 a vhidza Vhambedzi dzithavhani."  
 is calling the Mbedzi people from the mountains  
 "Tsho swika hafha madali ana."  
 who arrive for a short visit."

*Ndo todou thuntshwa nga tshigidi madekwe!*  
*I was nearly shot last night!*

Ndo todou thavhiwa nga lufhanga madekwe.

I was nearly stabbed last night.

Vhulawa nga tonga, wee!

*Alas, killed because of flirting!*

Thi tsha do dovha zwa mufarekano.

I will never involve myself with a lover.

Ano maduvha zwa mufarekano, zwi a vhulaisa mufarekano.

To be involved with a lover nowadays is to invite death.

"Lovha, lovha, lovha, lovha!"

*"Die, die, die, die!"*

20 Vhulaiwa nga thonga, wee!

Alas, being killed with a club!

1 Lit. to provide Venda with food. From -tunda, to go on a food-collecting expedition. Here apparently a reference to migrants who work in far-away places.

2 A praise referring to the accession to chieftainship of Ramaremisa Tshivhase who was Rasimphi Tshivhase's predecessor (cf. Nemudzivhadi 1985: 25 ff.).

37

Timangeni! (Peanut patch!)<sup>1</sup>

Hiya! Timangeni! Nthoro!

Peanut patch! Maize pip!

Hiya! Timangeni, manano!

Peanut patch, mother!

Hiya! Timangeni, vhobaba!

Peanut patch, father!

Hiya! Timangeni, mmawe!

Peanut patch, mother!

1 This apparently is a Tsonga children's song.

38

Muhwana-muhwana (The muhwana tree)<sup>1</sup>

Muhwana-muhwana.

E, nda ri, tawa-tawa. Wa ri, ndi sa tawi.

I say, plant-plant. It says, I am not planted.

Wa ri, ndi sa tawi. Nda vhuya nda tawa.

It says, I am not planted. Then I was planted.

Nda ri, ndi sa meli. Nda vhuya nda mela.

I say, I did not sprout. Then I sprouted.

Wa ri, ndi sa meli. Nda vhuya nda mela.

It says, I did not sprout. Then I sprouted.

Nda vhuya nda mela. Nda ri, ndi sa meli.

Then I sprouted. I say, I did not sprout.



Wa ri, hula-hula. Nda ri, ndi sa huli.  
It says, grow-grow. I say, I did not grow.  
Nda ri, ndi sa huli. Nda vhuya nda hula.  
I say, I did not grow. Then I grew.  
Nda vhuya nda hula. Nda ri, ndi sa huli.  
Then I grew. I say, I did not grow.

- 10 Vha ri, anwa-anwa. Nda ri, ndi sa anwi.  
They say, bear fruit, bear. I say, I did not bear fruit.  
Nda ri, ndi sa anwi. Nda vhuya nda anwa.  
I say, I did not bear fruit. Then I bore fruit.  
Vha ri, vhibva-vhibva. Nda ri, ndi sa vhibvi.  
They say, ripen-ripen. I say, I did not ripen.  
Nda ri, ndi sa vhibvi. Muhwana-muhwana.  
I say, I did not ripen. Muhwana-muhwana.

Nda ri, ndi sa vhibvi, wee! Nda ri, ndi sa vhibvi.  
I say, alas, I did not ripen. I say, I did not ripen.

Nda vhuya nda vhibva, wee! Nda ri, ndi sa vhibvi.  
Then I ripened. I say, I did not ripen.

Nda ri, liwa-liwa. Nda ri, ndi sa liwi.  
I say, eat-eat. I say, I was not eaten.  
Nda ri, ndi sa liwi. Nda vhuya nda liwa.  
I say, I was not eaten. Then I was eaten.

Nda ri, ndi sa liwi. Nda vhuya nda liwa.  
I say, I was not eaten. Then I was eaten.  
Vha ri, fhela-fhela. Wa ri, ndi sa fheli.  
They say, finish-finish. It says, I am not finished.

- 20 Wa ri, ndi sa fheli. Nda vhuya nda fhela.  
It says, I am not finished. Then I was finished.  
Nda vhuya nda fhela. Vha ri, kuvha-kuvha.  
Then I was finished. They say, stop bearing.  
Vha ri, kuvha-kuvha. Nda ri, ndi sa kuvhi.  
They say, stop bearing. I say, I did not stop bearing.  
Nda ri, ndi sa kuvhi. Nda vhuya nda kuvha.  
I say, I did not stop bearing. Then I stopped bearing.

Vha ri, oma-oma. Nda ri, ndi sa omi.  
They say, dry up, dry up. I say, I did not dry up.  
Nda ri, ndi sa omi. Nda vhuya nda oma.  
I say, I did not dry up. Then I dried up.  
Nda vhuya nda oma vha mphanzaphanza.  
Then I dried up and they felled me.

Nda ri, ndi sa fhanzwi. Nda vhuya nda fhanzwa.  
I say, I was not felled. Then I was felled.  
Nda vhuya nda fhanzwa. Nda ri, ndi sa fhanzwi.  
Then I was felled. I say, I was not felled.

- 29 Vha nkhwala-khwala. Nda ri, ndi sa hwalwi.  
They carried me. I say, I could not be carried.

1 This is a song from the murundu circumcision school for boys. Muhwana is an unidentified tree found north of the Soutpansberg (Van Warmelo 1989). The tree apparently is extremely rare and known by very few people. This characteristic is transferred to the initiation school, and serves

as a prescription to the initiates to keep the laws of the school secret.

The transition from boyhood to manhood is symbolized by the life cycle of the *muhwana* tree. This cycle is partly described by a number of verbs such as growing and sprouting. The ritual passage is symbolized by a basic two-phrase or three-phrase unit, e.g. "Plant-plant. I am not planted. Then I was planted". The resistance and refusal expressed in each unit ("I am not planted") apparently is a reference to the fear that many boys have of the school as well as the force that is sometimes used to ensure attendance.

The apparent meaning of the verbs: planting (circumcision), sprouting (swelling and infection of wound), growing (eating of food provided by relatives), bearing fruit (the arrival of new boys), ripening (paying the entrance fee), eating (eating), finishing and bearing (the closing of the school), drying up (going home), felling (circumcision), carrying (forcing boys to attend the school).

39

A hu na mulalo (There is no peace)

(Chorus)

A hu na mulalo! Venda, wee!

There is no peace!<sup>1</sup> Alas Venda!

(solo)

Mulalo! Venda, wee!

Peace! Alas, Venda!

Ri khou viana.

We commit ritual murder.

Ri khou tsheana.

Ritual murder with knives and axes.<sup>2</sup>

Ri khou lowana.

We bewitch each other.

Ndi khwine nazwino-nazwino vha mmbenge,

I will be hated,<sup>3</sup>

muthu ene ngoho ndi wo ambiwa.

because I am about to criticize someone.

Na miri na yone i khou vhona.

And trees also see what happens.<sup>4</sup>

Ri khou shengela.

We are suffering.

10 Vu! Va! Va!

Mulalo!

Peace!

Mulaloi!<sup>5</sup>

Ri khou tambula.

We are suffering.

Ri khou fhela.

We are finished.

Ri khou dzhia.

We are taking.<sup>6</sup>

1 This is a common expression which apparently originated

during the presidency of Patrick Mphephu.

2 Lit. we commit ritual murder by cutting and hacking.

3 Lit. it is better to hate me now, because I am talking about a person.

4 I.e. crime is committed openly.

5 An admonishment against the perpetrators of violence and injustice. A combination of *mulalo* (peace) and *muloi* (witch).

6 I.e. taking lives.

40

Vha khou tambula (They are suffering)

Vha la vhurotho vhone vh si na tiye.  
They eat bread without tea.

Vha la vhurotho vhone vh si na gofhi.  
They eat bread without coffee.

*Vhañwe vha khou tambula.*  
*Some people are suffering.*

*Vhañwe vha khou takala.*

*Others are happy.*

*Hu liwa vhurotho*

*They eat bread*

*vh* *si* *na* *tie.*

*without tea.*

*Hu nwiwa tie.*

*They drink tea*

*a i* *na* *vhurotho.*

*without bread.*

*Vhañwe vha khou tambula.*

*Some people are suffering.*

10 *Vhañwe vha khou shengela.*

*Others are in despair.*

*Aha! Oho! Aha! Oho!*

*"Donorom, donorom, donorom."<sup>1</sup>*

*Bash him! Bash him! Bash him!*

*Vhañwe vha khou tambula.*

*Some people are suffering.*

*Vhañwe vha khou swogola.*

*Others are struggling.*

Vha la vhuswa a vh na muroho.

They eat porridge without vegetables.

*Vhañwe vha khou pembela*

*Some people are dancing excitedly*

*"dzo farwa nga ene, Razz Mathase, henefha ndi kha lone bogisi*

*"because He, Razz Mathase,<sup>2</sup> is in charge of the Pick-a-box*

*la poswo ndi 2309."*

Show

*"Radio Thohoyandou, vhone, muthetshesesi wa Radio V."*

*on Radio Thohoyandou, you, listeners of Radio V."<sup>3</sup>*

20 "Ndi tshi khou fara iñwe posikarata muñwe muthannga a mbo  
 "I took the postcard of a young man who said he  
 di ri ndi ene nnyi ari ndi ene Patrick Tshikudo henengei  
 was Patrick Tshikudo  
 Khangale, henengei Hamadamalala location."  
 from Khangale in the Madamalala district."<sup>4</sup>  
 "A ri a sa hangwi u lumelisa ndi ene nnyi a ri ndi ene S.T.  
 "He says he wants to greet S.T. Solomon Tshinetise Mathase  
 Solomon Tshinetise Mathase, hanengei Ngulumbi location."  
 from Ngulumbi."  
 "Ndi khou fara na iñwe posikarata muñwe muthannga a mbo di ri  
 "I took the postcard of a young man who said he  
 ndi ene nnyi ambo di ri ndi ene Steven Thomani Mudau henengei  
 was Steven Thomani Mudau.  
 Tshisahulu tsha Makumbane. Nda ri,  
 from Tshisaulu of Makumbane. I say,  
 nne ndi khou dzhena henefho. Nda ri, khakhamela muhali."  
 I am going there. I say, salutations sir."<sup>5</sup>

Vha la vhurotho vhone

They eat bread

30 vhu si na tiye.

without tea.

I ri vha khou tambula.

It means we are suffering.

I ri vha khou swogola.

It means we are struggling.

"Dzo farwa nga ene S.T. Solomon Tshinetise Mathase henengei  
 "Hey you listeners, it is he, S.T. Solomon Tshinetise Mathase  
 Ngulumbi, henengei Haratshitanga vhone muthetshelesi."  
 from Ngulumbi, Ratshitanga's place."

A hu na batha.

There is no butter.

A hu na dzhamu.

There is no jam.

A hu na na mini.

There is nothing.

A hu na na tshithu.

There is not a thing.

39 Vha la vhurotho vhone vhu si na batha.

They eat bread without butter.

1 From Afr. donner hom.

2 Solomon's cousin, a radio personality.

3 Radio Venda which broadcasts from Pietersburg.

4 Solomon is comparing himself to a disk jockey who plays music and thus entertains people during difficult times.

5 Lit. sorry to trouble you.

Litshani zwitshela (Stop gossiping)

Hafha shangoni la Vhavenda vha hashu  
 Here in the land of our Venda people  
 u lovha a si u yo u dala rine.  
 death is irreversible.<sup>1</sup>

Kha ri funane hafha shangoni.  
 Let us love each other here.  
 Nda ri, funane hafha shangoni.  
 I say, love each other here.  
 "Shem!"  
 "Shame!"

Namusi vho ntongela, matshelo ndi vhone.  
 Today you swank, tomorrow you die.  
 Zwi seisa hani shangoni la hashu.  
 It makes us laugh here.  
 Vhavenda vhahashu, litshani zwitshela.  
 Our Venda people, stop your gossiping.  
 Matshelo ndi inwi, zwi seisa hani.  
 Tomorrow it may be your turn, and then we will laugh.

10 Shangoni la hashu zwi seisa hani.  
 It makes us laugh here.  
 Tshivenda tshi tshi amba tshi ri: U songo sea  
 According to custom we say: Do not laugh  
 vhuhole u nwana mutuku shangoni.  
 at physical disability when you are young.<sup>2</sup>  
 Shangoni la hashu Vhavenda nothe.  
 The land of all us Venda people.  
 Zwi seisa hani, zwi seisa hani.  
 It makes us laugh, it makes us laugh.

1 Lit. it is not like a visit from which one returns.

2 I.e. it may strike you too.

Vhapfumi (Rich people)

Nne ndo dzhia vhurukhu na badzhi yanga.  
 I handed in my trousers and jacket  
 Ndo isa diraikilini.  
 at the dry cleaner.

Nwedzi wo fhela:  
 The month has ended:  
 Nne a thi ngo hola.  
 I did not receive pay.  
 Nda kundwa na peni.  
 I was penniless.

Havha vhapfumi vha tonga nga vhathu.  
 These rich people swank uncaringly.

Vhonani, ndi Gudu Furaidei.  
See, it is Good Friday.  
A thi na vhurukhu.  
I have no trousers.<sup>2</sup>  
A thi na badzhi.  
I have no jacket.

- 10 "You are the rich man."  
"But because, me,  
I'm very poor man."  
"I don't know nothing."  
"But because Jesus, Jesus is Jesus."<sup>3</sup>  
"Indeed is indeed."

Havha vhapfumi vha tonga nga vhathu.  
These rich people swank uncaringly.  
Ni songo sea.  
Do not laugh.  
Nya-da, wela.  
Come, let us cross.  
*Vhone, Vho-Nemaorani, vha songo kola nga vhathu.*<sup>4</sup>  
*You, Mr Nemaorani, do not swank uncaringly.*

- 20 "You are the rich."  
"Me, I'm very poor man."  
"But because I haven't got nothing."  
"Please try to help me."

Havha vhapfumi vha tonga nga vhathu.  
These rich people swank uncaringly.

1 A complaint about an inadequate wage.

2 The implication is that neat and clean clothes are needed for festivities which take place over Easter.

3 An implicit appeal to the Christian ethic of sharing.

4 The owner of a well-known dry cleaning shop, symbolic of wealth.

43

#### Muloro (The dream)

Nne madekwe ndo lora muloro  
Last night I dreamt  
phele dzi kha gigi ladzo, hee,  
the hyenas

magwitha a kha munyanya wao.  
and owls were feasting.<sup>1</sup>

Nne ndi livhuwa Mudzimu.  
I thank God.

Na ene o di tavhutshedza i hafha shangoni.  
And he revealed himself to us here on earth.

Na uri na phele dzi kha gigi ladzo.  
And he revealed the feasting of hyenas.  
Na magwitha a na gigi lao.  
And the feasting of owls.  
Nne ndi nwana hoyu wa Mudzimu, Murena Yesu.  
I am a child of this God, Lord Jesus.

O fela zwivhi zwa vhatswu na vhatshena.  
He died for the sins of black and white people.

10 Nne ndi livhuwa Mudzimu.  
I thank God.  
Na ene, na ene o vusa.  
And he, he raised the dead.

Nne madekwe ndo lora muloro  
Last night I dreamt  
phele dzi kha gigi ladzo, hee,  
the hyenas  
magwitha a kha munyanya wao.  
and owls were feasting.  
Nwananga vho mu ita tshithavhelo.  
My child was a victim.<sup>2</sup>

1 A metaphor describing witchcraft activities. Hyenas and owls are believed to be witch familiars.

2 I.e. of witchcraft (cf. biography).

44

Sofia na Benzhamini (Sofia and Benjamin)

Sofia na Benzhamini, vha a vhuya naa?  
Are Sofia and Benjamin returning?<sup>1</sup>

Rine ri a takalela one masuwitsi.  
We are happy about gifts.<sup>2</sup>  
Ro dzula ri tsiwana fhano shangoni.  
We live like orphans here.  
Nne ndi do takala ngauri Kruger. Ene o swika.  
I will be happy because of Kruger. He has arrived.  
Huri na vhone, vhamusanda vhanga.  
Even you, my honourable headman.  
A vha nthogomeli fhano shangoni.  
Here he does not care for me.

Sofia na Benzhamini, vha a vhuya naa?  
Are Sofia and Benjamin returning?

Inwi, mmawe, nne ndo tuwa.  
You, mother, I am leaving.  
Ndi khou tuwa na ene, Kruger.  
I am leaving with him, Kruger.

10 Ndi nwana wa muthu shangoni.  
I am someone's child at this place.<sup>3</sup>

Sofia na Benzhamini, vha a vhuya naa?  
Are Sofia and Benjamin returning?  
Huri vhañani na vhone vho takala.  
Even you must be happy, greedy people.

1 Sofia is a sister-in-law of Solomon. Benjamin is her brother.

2 Lit. sweets. A reference to the bringing of presents by travellers and migrant workers. In this case the travellers are from Johannesburg.

3 An expression of dependency.

45

Nne ndo kaidza vhabebi (I rebuked my parents)

Nne ndo kaidza vhabebi nga u kangwa nga halwa.  
I rebuked my parents about their drunkenness.  
U tonda hanga. Nne ndo tshinya.  
Care for mine. I erred.  
Ndo lwa na vhabebi nga u kaidza nga halwa.  
I rebuked my parents about beer.

*Vha vhuya vha lasha mulenze ndi zwone!*  
*They are prey to modern life!*  
Na vhone vhakegulu, vha vhuya vha lasha mulenze.  
And you old women, are prey to modern life.  
Na vhone vhathannga, vha vhuya vha lasha mulenze.  
And you young men, are prey to modern life.  
Na vhone vhasidzana, vha vhuya vha lasha mulenze.  
And you girls, are prey to modern life.  
"Lasha!"  
"Dance!"

Nne ndo khakha nga u kaidza vhabebi vhang.  
I erred by rebuking my parents.  
10 Nne ndi tshi amba na vhone.  
I am talking to you.  
Vha ri, ndo kangwa.  
You say, I was drunk.  
Ndo kangwa nga mbanzhe. Nne ndo kangwa.  
I was intoxicated by dagga. I was drunk.

Nne ndo khakha nga u kaidza vhabebi vhang.  
I erred by rebuking my parents.

"I don't like you."  
"But because you are drinking."  
"Over too much. Over too much."  
"Unnecessary. Over too much."  
"You are drinking too much. You haven't got money."  
"But it is because you go to friends if you've got money."  
20 "You lose your money."  
"But because, you are sleeping out of way."



Nne ndo khakha nga u kaidza vhabebi vhangana.  
I erred by rebuking my parents.

"Me, I want to help you."

"But because maybe tomorrow you come right."

"But because I know on my side, me I'm going underground."

"Six feet."

"My name is Solomon Tshinetise Mathase."

"If you want me come to Ngulumbi, Ratshitanga."

29 Nne ndo khakha nga u kaidza vhabebi vhangana.  
I erred by rebuking my parents.

1 Lit. they dance (from Zulu lahla) in a modern way. As in other songs, dancing symbolizes modern life.

46

Names: Mmbengeni Sivhugwana (S), Solomon Mathase (M), and Munzhedzi Lukoto (L).

Khofhe, ni songo tamba nga nne (Loving)

- (S) Ndi tshi ri khofhe, ni songo tamba nga nne.  
When I propose love<sup>1</sup>, do not play with me.  
Huri mupfumi u a edela, nne.  
Even a rich person has to sleep.  
Huri mushai na ene u edela, nne.  
Even a poor person has to sleep.<sup>2</sup>  
Ndi tshi ri khofhe,  
When I propose love,  
ndi tshi ri khofhe, mayo!  
alas, when I propose love!
- (L) "Ni songo tamba nga rine vhozwi dzikhombe."  
"Do not play with us you bachelors."  
"Ni songo tamba nga rine rine ra vha uri ri vhathu."  
"Do not play with us because we are only human."<sup>3</sup>  
"Ri di fana na vhozwi."  
"We are just like you."
- (M) Rine ri khombe.  
We are bachelors.
- 10 Rine ri khombe. Ri bva fhano.  
We are bachelors from here.
- (S/M) Rine ri khombe.  
We are bachelors.
- (L) "Ngauri ni vho do mu funa. Matshelo na dovha na mu litsha na  
"Because you will love her and tomorrow you will jilt her and  
mu sia o ralo a tshi khou tambula."  
leave her to suffer."  
"Ane a vha uri ngeno a ni tsha humbula tshisibe zwauri u a  
"You no longer remember that she must have soap to  
tamba."  
wash with."  
"Ende u ya ambara futhi."  
"And clothes to wear."  
"Ni zwi divhe zwenezwo zwauri, muthu u a tama u a ambara,  
"You must know that a person even likes

- 18 na tshienda mulenzheni."  
to wear shoes."
- (S) Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi!
- (M) "Mara mulovha vhone nne ndo vha rengela zwienda."  
"But yesterday I bought you shoes."
- (L) "Ni khou zwifha. Inwi a no ngo vhuya na nthengela. Ngauri  
"You are lying. You did not buy me any. Because  
hufha nne ndi tshi khou amba na inwi ndi tshi ri namusi ufha  
when we were at Fairways in  
fwedzi wo fhela-vho."  
Thohoyandou,  
"Ni tshi ntshavha u ntsheka nga tshienda tshanga na hana,  
I told you it was the end of the month,  
ngei Fairways Thohoyandou."  
and you ran away.
- (M) "Nna thi ri? Mufarekano u a nekedziwa-vho mahumi matanu naa?"  
"Is that so? Should a lover not also receive one hundred  
rand?"
- (S) Ndi tshi ri khofhe, ni songo tamba nga nne.  
When I propose love, do not play with me.
- (L) "Ni a mpha mahumi matanu a shuma mini na mugayo na u ambara  
"What will I do with only one hundred rand? I need maize  
na vhana?"  
meal and clothes for the children."
- 30 "Vhana vha a ya tshikoloni na u ambara vha a ambara dzhuni-  
"Children go to school and are expected  
fomo vha kho u i toda tshikoloni."  
to wear uniforms."
- (S) Ndi tshi ri khofhe, ni songo tamba nga nne.  
When I propose love, do not play with me.
- (M) "Ngoho! Vha ri, zwino, nne ndi na musadzi wanga-vho nne."  
"Indeed! Now, you must realise I also have a wife."  
"Ayo mahumi matanu nne nda vha fha handirethe randa ndi  
"One hundred rand is a lot of money  
tshelede nzhi ngamaanda mufarekano wanga."  
for my lover."
- (L) "Na nne ndi khou funa u i toda-vho ngauri na nne habe ndi  
"I need it because I also  
na vhana. Ndi a la. Ndi a rengelwa mugayo. Ndi a tamba."  
have children. I must eat. I must buy maize meal. I must  
"Na nne ndi a funa-vho u ambara."  
wash. And I also like clothes."
- (S) Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi!
- (M) "Nne ndi khou di tou balelwa ngauri salari yanga na yone ndi  
"It is not possible for me because my  
41 thukhu dali."  
salary is small darling."
- (S) Ndi tshi ri, mupfumi, ri khou edela dzo no fana.  
I say, rich person, we all have to sleep.
- (L) "Ezwo ni tshi zwi thoma a thi no vha no zwi tenda uri ni do  
"When you started this you agreed  
nnyitela zwothe na."  
to do everything for me."
- (S) Ndi tshi ri, mupfumi, ri khou edela dzo no fana.  
I say, rich person, we all have to sleep.
- (M) "Lwo vha lu tshi tou vha ndi lufuno fhedzi lwa nne na inwi-  
"It was only physical attraction between you

vho."  
and me."

- (S) Ndi tshi ri, tshisiwana, ri khou edela dzo no fana.  
I say, orphan, we all have to sleep.
- (L) "Hai! Zwino, zwi songo tou ralo. Kha zwi di ya phanda u fana  
"No! Now, it must not stop. It must continue as if I am your  
50 na musadzi a re hayani."  
wife at home."
- (S) Ndi tshi ri, tshisiwana, ri khou edela dzo no fana.  
I say, orphan, we all have to sleep.
- (M) "Vha ri, what is the meaning of the love? Lufuno ndi mini?"  
"We say, what is the meaning of love? What is love?"
- (S) Rothe ri a lora.  
We all dream.  
Rothe ri a lora, musi ro lala.  
We all dream when we sleep.
- (M) "Vha ri, what is the meaning of the love? Lufuno ndi mini?"  
"We say, what is the meaning of love? What is love?"
- (L) "Arali nda ni litsha, a ni nga d tambula ngauri inwi ni tshi  
"If I jilt you, you will not suffer because you have  
vho funa vhanu. Hu na uri duvha la u thoma ro funana na  
other lovers. At first you told me  
mmbudza zwauri ndi pfi divoso."  
you were divorced."
- (M) "Inwi ni tshidudzha nga maanda, ndi nga si ni litshe lavi  
"Because you are a very fat person<sup>5</sup>  
60 wanga."  
I will not leave you."
- (L) "Namusu ndi tshidudzha thi ndo di tou khwatha-vho u fana  
"Although I am a very fat person  
na vhañwe vhathu vhane vha khwatha-vho."  
I am just like others."
- (M) "Nne ndi tshi tou ambara suthu yanga. Nne na ene ri tshi vho  
"I put on my suit. She and I depart  
tuwa ri khou ya ngei Thohoyandou. Ngoho, zwi a ri fanela,  
for Thohoyandou. Indeed, that makes us smart  
mani inwi."  
man."
- (L) "Ee! Mara ndi khou nyaga-vho na mushonga-vho wa u phema  
"Yes! But I just want something to perm my hair with  
mavhudzi ndi tshi ya Thohoyandou. Ri tshi ya u tshintsha  
when I go to Thohoyandou. When we cash a  
tsheke."  
cheque."<sup>5</sup>
- (M) "Na ula muñwe mushonga wa u tou tona dzinala."  
"And those cosmetics with which to paint nails."  
70 "Na milomo."  
"And lips."
- (L) "Ee!"  
"Yes!"
- (M) "Vha dodza-vho na milomo, thi ri lavi?"  
"You also paint your lips, not so, lovey?"
- (L) "Ee!"  
"Yes!"
- (S) "Vhana vha u vhidza uri cutex."  
"Children call it cutex."

- (M) "Swithi, my lavi."  
"Sweetie, my lovey."
- (L) "Ndi khou toda phuthekhisi."  
"I need a suitcase."
- (S) "Swithi, my lavi."  
"Sweetie, my lovey."
- (S) Shake, my lavi.  
Shake, my lovey.
- (M) Come to my home, my love, my baby.
- (M/S) Come to my home, my love, my baby.
- (L) "Ngauri a no ngo mmbudza, a no ngo nthengela tshiketer."  
"Because you did not tell me you did not buy me a skirt."
- (M) Nne ndo vha funa  
I loved you
- (S) nga mbilu yanga.  
with all my heart.
- (L) "Mara no, nthembisa dzitseti. Mara ni vho mmbudza dzi-  
"But no, you promised the thirtieth. But now you tell  
85 fiftini. Ndi tshi da nga dzi fiftini ndi tshi da shophoni.  
me the fifteenth.<sup>7</sup> On the fifteenth I arrived at the shop."  
"Ndi wana inwi a niho shophoni."  
"But you were not there."
- (S) Nne ndo vha funa nga mbilu yanga.  
I love you with all my heart.
- (M) Nne ndo liwa nga vhañwe vhafarekano.  
I was taken in<sup>8</sup> by certain lovers.
- (M/S) Nne ndo liwa nga vhañwe vhafarekano.  
I was taken in by certain lovers.
- (S) "Aha!"
- (L) "Ndi khwine nne ndi tou funa muñwe Thohoyandou ndi bve  
"It is better for me to love someone at Thohoyandou<sup>9</sup>  
92 khazwo."  
and to jilt you."
- (M) "Ni songo wara swithi wanga."  
"Do not worry my sweetie."
- (L) "Ha! Ndi do kwata ngauri inwi ni a nthembisa zwithu zwine na  
"Ha! I shall become angry because you promised me things  
vha uri inwi ni khou wara nga zwithu zwinzhi."  
you cannot afford."
- (S) (imitates kissing)
- (M) Mudzimu ndi Yehova.  
Yehova is God.
- (S/M) O ri beba.  
He created us.
- (M) ( ) tshanga.  
( ) mine.  
Tshone tshi ngafhi?  
Where is it?
- (S) Swithi wanga.  
My sweetie.
- (M) Tshone tshi ngafhi?  
Where is it?
- 102 "Ni songo wara musadzi wanga."  
"Do not worry my wife."
- (L) "Hai! Ndi a kwata ngauri habe na ñwana u khou nyaga dzhuni-  
"No! I am angry because the child needs a uniform. She

fomo. Dzhunifomo o thathiwa tshikoloni."

was expelled for not having one."

"Zwino, nne ndi do ita mini? Ngauri nwana o thathiwa

"Now, what shall I do? Because the child was expelled from tshikoloni."

school."

"Ngauri hangei tshikoloni vha khou mu rwela bulupheni na

"Because there at school they punish a child for not having na dzhunifomo. Na tshienda tsha tshikolo. Ha na!"

a ballpoint pen and a uniform. And school shoes. None!"

"Inwi ni tshi di ri ni do hola na da na mpha tshelede

"You keep on promising to give me money

110 ya uri renegele nwana hezwo zwithu."

to buy the child those things."

(M) Nne ndi tama

I like

vhana vha tshi ya tshikoloni.

children who go to school."

(S) Nne ndi tama vhana vha tshi funzea.

I like children who become educated.

(M) Vhana vha tama. Vhana vha tshi ya tshikoloni. Matshelo ndi

Children who go to school are liked. Tomorrow you will be

dokotela.

doctors.

(L) "Nne, zwino ndi do tou ita hani? Ngauri ndo ni vhudza uri

"Now what will I do? Because I told you

na mugayo a thi na. Ndi khou tshimbila ndi tshi koloda."

I had no maize meal. I walk around and borrow.

(S) Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi!

(M) Matshelo ndi lineze.

Tomorrow you will be a nurse.

(L) "Ndi ya Habina. Bina ha ntendi ndi si na tshelede uri u toda

I am going to Bina's place. Bina becomes disagreeable when I

121 tshelede ya u renga mugayo."

have no money with which to buy maize meal."

(M) Matshelo ndi phirisipala.

Tomorrow you will be a principal.

Kana ndi Du Plessis.

Like Du Plessis.

Nne ndi tama

I like

Vho-Mulaudzi.

Mr Mulaudzi.<sup>10</sup>

Ofisi yavho

He is

a yo ngo vha fanela.

unfit for office.

(S) Zwi nga Vho-Ramushwana vhe muswa kha la Afrika.

It is just like Mr Ramushwana who is inexperienced in government.<sup>11</sup>

Zwi nga Vho-Ramushwana vha muswa

It is just like Mr Ramushwana

130 wa mahosi a ndamukanyi.

who is inexperienced in chiefly justice.

Kha la Venda vho sika vhuthihi.

He fostered unity in Venda.

- (S) E! E! E! E! E!  
 (M) Swithi, my lavi, vhuyani hayani.  
 Sweety, my lovey, come home.  
 (M/S) Swithi, my lavi, vhuyani hayani.  
 Sweety, my lovey, come home.  
 (S) Swithi, my lavi, come back home.  
 Sweety, my lovey, come back home..  
 Do not divorce me.  
 137 Are you suffering?

1 Lit. when I propose sleep.

2 I.e. all people are equal.

3 I.e. they might succumb to physical temptation.

4 Lit. it was love only.

5 Fatness here is associated with wealth.

6 A reference to government salary cheques which are often cashed at local shops.

7 Reference is made here to the staggered paying of state salaries.

8 Lit. to be eaten.

9 Thohoyandou, as the Venda capital, here functions as a symbol of affluence.

10 Mulaudzi is a pseudonym.

11 Lit. he is new in Africa.

47

Gombameni (In the Persian Gulf) (I)

Ndi bva ngei gombameni.  
 I am from the Gulf.<sup>1</sup>  
 Zwi pfa mbilu vhutungu vhabebi.  
 The hearts of parents will be hurt.<sup>2</sup>  
 America yo thoma nndwa.  
 America declared war.  
 Ho fa na dzi si na mulandu shangoni.  
 Innocent people have been killed.  
 Mudzimu, ngoho, mbilu yawe.  
 God, indeed, his heart.  
 Iraka lo kelema.  
 Iraq is stubborn.  
 Vha lwela oil.  
 They are fighting about oil.  
 Mudzimu o ri sika nga tshanu.  
 God created all of you.  
 Musanda ri yo vhiga nndwa.  
 We are going to inform the headman about the war.

- 10 Shango lo vhilingana.  
 The country is in turmoil.  
 Ndi pfela v<sup>h</sup>utungu Hamakumbane.  
 I feel sorry for the people of Makumbane.  
 A hu na na thavha ya u banda.  
 There is no mountain to shelter in.<sup>3</sup>  
 Nndwa yo swika.  
 War has come.  
 Saddam o kelema.  
 Saddam is stubborn.  
 Ndi dzi masele dzi sa fheli.  
 He is suffering from a severe attack of measles.  
 Rine ri khou tuwa.  
 We are leaving.  
 Mudzimu o ri sika.  
 God created us.  
 A dovha a semana.  
 He cursed himself  
 A ri muthu-ndo-mu-sikelani.  
 for creating humans.
- 20 A ri kha vha sedze mañwaloni.  
 Let us consult the scriptures.  
 Phiphidi ndi khwine.  
 Phiphidi is better.<sup>4</sup>  
 Nwana o sia vhabebi.  
 The child left the parents.  
 Ri ya musanda Pretoria.  
 We are going to the capital Pretoria.<sup>5</sup>

1 Referring to the 1991 Gulf War

2 Referring to parents who lost their sons during the war.

3/4 Makumbane is a suburb of Thohoyandou. It is a flat area which is likened to the desert flatness of Iraq which has little natural hiding place. This is contrasted to Phiphidi village which has hills, valleys and lush vegetation.

5 I.e. leaving for the battle front.

48

Gombameni (In the Persian Gulf) (II)

Amerika yo thoma nndwa.  
 America declared war.  
 Saddam o thoma nndwa.  
 Saddam declared war.  
 Amerika ndi shango lashu.  
 America is our country.  
 Saddam o kelema.  
 Saddam is stubborn.  
 Amerika yo mu dodela.  
 America advanced carefully on him.  
 Saddam o fhumula.  
 Saddam was quiet.

Namusi o sarenda.

He has now surrendered.

Namusi o huvhala.

He is now injured.

Nndwa ya hone ndi ya vhabebi.

The fight involved parents.

10 Mudzimu mbilu yawe ndi ndenya.

God's heart is getting upset.

Hu fa na dzi si na mulandu shangoni.

Even innocent people died.

Mudzimu o ri sika nga tshashu.

God created all of us.

49

Ri khou tshila rothe (We shall all live)

(Chorus)

Rothe ri a fanana.

We are all the same.

(solo)

Nne na vhone.

Me and you.

Muñwe na muñwe.

All of us.

Ri khou tshila rothe.<sup>1</sup>

We shall all live:

Hu ri na mushai rothe.

the poor

Hu ri na mupfumi.

and the rich.

Ri khou tuwa rothe.

We are leaving together.

Hu ri na bofu.

With the blind.

Hu ri na vhafunzi.

With the church ministers.

10 Hu ri na dabadaba.

With foolish people.

Ndi khwine vha mmbenge.

It is better to hate me.<sup>2</sup>

Ndi khwine vha ndzonde.

It is better to hate me.

Hu ri na Munyai.

With the Munyai clan.<sup>3</sup>

Vho nakahani, vho nakahani.

They are beautiful, beautiful.

Hoyu Mudzimu o ri khathushela.

This God has forgiven us.

Hu ri na dzingandevhe.

With the deaf.

Hu ri na tshimuma.

With the dumb.

Muñwali wa zwithu ha di ambi.

The narrator of things will not speak for himself.

19 Ndi amba Mudzimu o sokou fhumula.

I am talking while God is quiet.<sup>4</sup>



1 Lit. we all exist together.

2 For criticizing.

3 Solomon's clan.

4 A reference to divine inspiration. This is a way of escaping retribution for criticizing.

50

Inwi, mmawe (You, mother)

Vho-mme anga: Vho mbeba nga lwa bofu.  
My mother: You gave birth being blind.

Inwi, mmawe: No mbeba nga lwa bofu.  
You, mother: You gave birth being blind.  
Nne ndo tungufhala, nne ndo tungufhala, wee.  
I am in sorrow, alas, I am in sorrow.<sup>1</sup>  
Nne ndo tungufhala matsiko hu na muñwe na nne o ntseavho.  
I am in sorrow while someone is laughing at me.

Inwi, mmawe: No mbeba nga lwa bofu.  
You, mother: You gave birth being blind.  
Ene, Mudzimu, ene o ri vhavhalela.  
He, God, he cared for us.  
Mudzimu ha khethi kha vhutshilo hawe.  
God does not disassociate himself from his creatures.<sup>2</sup>  
Inwi, mmawe: No mbeba nga lwa bofu.  
You, mother: You gave birth being blind.

Hoyu Yehova o tshila na mma.  
Mother was inspired by this Jehova.<sup>3</sup>

10 Nne, mma ene ho ngo mphisa.  
I, mother did not harm me.<sup>4</sup>  
Nne, mma ene ho ngo mmbulaya.  
I, mother did not kill me.  
Zwi di nga na baba. Nne ndo sala.  
Neither did my father. I remained alive.  
Inwi, mmawe: No mbeba nga lwa bofu.  
You, mother: You gave birth being blind.  
Mudzimu o vhavhalela.  
God cared.  
Yehova o vhavhalela.  
Jehova cared.  
Iyani kerekeni, Mudzimu o vhavhalela.  
Go to church, God cared.  
Nne ndi khou penga nga heyi katara.  
This guitar is the thing that makes me mad.  
Mudzimu o vhavhalela.  
God cared.

*"Ndi ene khotsimunene wa Haratangulani. A no dzula hanengei  
"This is a young man from Ratangulani. He, Reckson Singo,  
20 Phiphidi ha Vho-Reckson Singo. A no dzula hafhala Phiphidi."  
stays at Phiphidi. He lives there at Phiphidi."*

"Now I am told you I will do a lead guitar one."

"Haha!"

"Saka! Saka! Saka!<sup>5</sup> Ayeye! Ayeye! Ayeye!"

Mudzimu o vhavhalela.

God cared.

1 Solomon is referring to his poverty which he partly blames on his mother's blindness.

2 Lit. God does not disassociate in his life.

3 This Jehova lived in mother.

4 Lit. did not burn me.

5 From Afr. sak, to dance on one's haunches.

51

#### Ngulumbi Civic Association

Ngulumbi, shango la vhudi.

Ngulumbi, a good place.

Li nyaga vhashumi

It needs

i vha na biko.

dedicated workers.

Civic Association fhando Ngulumbi.

The Civic Association here at Ngulumbi.

Ngulumbi, shango la vhudi.

Ngulumbi, a good place.

Hayani ha havho ndi ha vhudi.

Their homes are well cared for.

I nyaga vhashumi vha na biko.

It needs dedicated workers.

Yo thoma fhando Ngulumbi.

It was established here at Ngulumbi.<sup>1</sup>

1 The association was established in 1991. Civic associations in Venda partly came into existence to fulfil the functions of a crumbling traditional authority.

52

#### Venda lo shanduka (Venda has changed)

(Chorus)

*Ngoho, Venda lo shanduka.*

*Indeed, Venda has changed.*

(solo)

Ho fhatiwa zwickolo.

Schools were built.

Ho fhatiwa mashopo.

Shops were built.

Ho fhatiwa fuletse.

Flats were built.

Ho phulwa dzibada.  
Roads were constructed.  
Inwi papa, inwi mma, inwi khaladzi.  
You father, you mother, you sister.  
Oh my father, oh my mother, oh my brother, oh my sugar.

53

Siya Bethala (We are going to Bethal)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

*Siya Bethala. Siyo phanda mazambane.*

*We are going to Bethal. We are going to gather potatoes.*<sup>2</sup>

(solo)

Dankie baba!

Thank you sir!<sup>3</sup>

Nazwino vho mpfara.

I have now been arrested.

Ndo khakha ndi mini?

How did I err?

Sitesheni khomando:

Station commander:<sup>4</sup>

Ndi hambela pfarelo.

I am asking for forgiveness.

1 This is a song Solomon heard as awaiting trial prisoner during the mid-1970s. His imprisonment arose from an incident following the murder of a man by his wife and son. The man, who lived at Madamalala, was apparently killed in a feud over money. Local residents rose up in anger against his murder, and a crowd of them stoned his wife to death. The group, of which Solomon was a member, was arrested. The accused were jailed for approximately two months. They were then apparently all released, but Solomon was unable to explain on what legal grounds.

2 A reference to the practice whereby prisoners are used as labourers, in this case gathering potatoes on small holdings at Bethal.

3 The prisoners thanking the police for allowing them a spell outside the jail, even if only as labourers.

4 I.e. the commander of the police station.

54

Ri khou amba zwitshela (We are gossiping)<sup>1</sup>

Zwitanganya mma nga mafhungo avho.

My mother likes to gossip.

Zwitanganya malume nga mafhungo avho.

My uncle likes to gossip.

Zwitanganya khaladzi nga mafhungo avho.

My sister likes to gossip.

Zwitanganya murathu nga mafhungo avho.

My brother likes to gossip.

- Zwitanganya muzwala nga mafhungo avho.  
 My cousin likes to gossip.  
 Zwitanganya na mashaka (nga mafhungo avho).  
 My relatives like to gossip.  
 Nne ndo shona, ngauri ndo shona wee.  
 Alas, I am ashamed, I am ashamed of  
 nga lushaka vho lwa, wee.  
 of my argumentative relatives.  
 Hezwi lo kovhela ndi hone vha tshi konaha u goda vhañwe.  
 When it is evening<sup>1</sup> they mock others.
- 10 Vha kona u goda vhañwe.  
 They then mock others.  
 Vha kona u sola vhañwe.  
 They then curse others.  
 Vha kona u goda vhañwe avho vho furalela.  
 They then mock others behind their backs.  
 Avho vho furalela.  
 Behind their backs.  
 Namusi ndi nne.  
 Today it is me.  
 Ro da u daleliwa.  
 They came to visit us.  
 "Thakhatha! Thakhatha!"  
 "Bewitch! Bewitch!"  
 "Ni ri inwi muduhulu, ndi ni vhudze-vho zwauri nne ndo  
 "You my son, let me just tell you what I  
 vhona mini."  
 have seen."  
 Nne ndi zwitshela, a thi nyagi u thetshelasa.  
 I gossip, I do not want to listen.
- 20 Nazwino thetshelalani. A thi nyagi u thetshelasa.  
 Now listen. I do not want to listen.  
 Namusi ndi mafhungo hafha zwitangani.  
 Today there is gossiping at these cooking huts.  
 Ri tanga, ri khou amba.  
 We dance and talk.  
 Ndi yone khishi, khishi ya Vhavenda.  
 It is that kitchen, the kitchen of the Venda people.  
 Hetshi tshitanga.  
 This kitchen.  
 Kha ri ye tshitangani.  
 Let us go to the kitchen.  
 Ndi yone kitchen yashu.  
 It is our kitchen.  
 Ri khou amba zwitshela.  
 We are gossiping.
- 28 Ndi yone yashu.  
 It is ours.

1 According to Solomon, people mainly gossip under conditions of social stress and poverty.

2 I.e. gossiping takes place after work when people are at home.

Tshipotoni (At the beer house)

I am still leaving to the road.  
 Ke mang a buditse?  
 Who told on me?<sup>1</sup>  
 Ndi nnyi wa u vhudza swithi dali  
 Who told my sweetheart  
 a ri nne ndi nwa halwa?  
 that I drink beer?  
 Ndi nnyi wa u vhudza dali wanga  
 Who told my darling  
 a ri nne ndi nwa halwa?  
 that I drink beer?  
 Nda edela tshipotoni.  
 I sleep at the beer house.  
 Ndi nnyi wa u vhudza musadzi wanga?  
 Who told my wife?  
 Nda edela dzibarani.  
 I sleep at bars.  
 Nda edela dzidenndeni.  
 I sleep at construction camps.<sup>2</sup>

1 Most lines are repeated by the chorus.

2 Lit. place of tents. This is a reference to the drinking and partying which characterizes road construction camps over weekends. These camps are frequented at month-ends by impoverished rural women who offer sex to labourers.

Mahosi a Venda (Venda chiefs)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)  
 Musidzana  
 The girl  
 o fhufha luhura. Muthannga,  
 jumped over the fence. The young man  
 (chorus)  
 muthannga o shavha. A sia na lubasigira.  
 ran away.<sup>2</sup> He left his bicycle behind.  
 (solo)  
 Muthannga,  
 The young man  
 (chorus)  
 muthannga o shavha. A sia na lugadia.  
 ran away. He left his loincloth behind.  
 (chorus)  
 Mahosi a Venda ndi Ramabulana.  
 The chiefs of Venda are the Ramabulanas.  
 (solo)  
 Mphephu, Tshivhase, na ene Ramabulana.  
 Mphephu, Tshivhase, and him, Ramabulana.

(solo)

Mahosi a Venda

The chiefs of Venda

(chorus)

ndi Ramabulana.

are the Ramabulanas.

(solo)

10 Ho dzula Mphephu, Tshivhase, na ene Ramabulana.

The first were Mphephu, Tshivhase, and him, Ramabulana.

(solo)

Ho dzula Mphephu,

The first were Mphephu

(chorus)

Tshivhase, na ene Ramabulana.

Tshivhase, and him, Ramabulana.

Musidzana o fhufha luhura.

The girl jumped over the fence.

Muthannga, muthannga o shavha. A sia na lubokhathi.

The young man ran away. He left his jeans behind.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 Suggesting an illicit sexual liaison.

57

Vha vhudza mafhungo (They tell the news)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Ha-hi-hiphi.

(solo)

Ndi vha vhudza mafhungo. Vha vhudza vhañwe vhathu.

I am telling you the news. You are telling others

Shonisani, ndi ni vhudza mafhungo.

Shonisani, I am telling you the news.

Na vhudza mafhungo vhañwe vhathu.

And you are telling others.

1 A reference to gossiping.

58

Nne ndi humbula (I remember)

Nne ndi humbula nga liñwe duvha nne ndi hayani.

I remember a certain day when I was at home.

Nne hovhu halwa ndi vhu litshe.

I decided to stop drinking beer.<sup>1</sup>

Na nne-vho ndo khakha.

And I just erred.

1 Because drinking beer leads to aggression and family feuds.

Thambulo (Suffering)

Thetshelesani vhahulwane: Vhana vha khou lila.

Listen grownups: The children are crying.

Tshililo tsha murema tsho kalula.

The continual crying of a black person

Hune tsha kundwa na mufhumudzi.

which cannot be consoled.

Venda ndo ya. Ndi tshililo fhedzi.

I went to Venda. There was crying only.

Pitori ndo ya. Ndi zwililo fhedzi.

I went to Pretoria. There was crying only.

Lisuthu ndo ya. Ndi tshililo fhedzi.

I went to Lesotho. There was crying only.

Dzhubege ndi hone zihulwaneni.

In Johannesburg there is the most crying.

Thetshelesani vhahulwane: Vhana vha khou lila.<sup>1</sup>

Listen grownups: The children are crying.

U shuma ndi a shuma. Muholo ndi nduhu.

I work hard but I get peanuts.

10 Tshelede a hu na: Zwi pfisa vhutungu.

There is no money: It hurts.

Vhufobvu ho di fha maanda

Theft is rife

nga mulandu wa thambulo.

because of suffering.

Pfunzo a hu na nga mulandu wa tshelede.

There is no education because of lack of money.

Baba vha tuwa. Hu si na na peni.

Father has left. There is not a cent.

Vhuswoleni vho ya. Muholo a hu na.

He tried soldiering. There was no vacancy.

Vho ri vha tshi vhuya. Mushumo a hu na.

He returned. There was no vacancy.

Vhuhota ho di fha maanda.

Bad health is common.

Ndi dzhena ngani tshikolo, wee?

How am I supposed to go to school?

Vhufobvu ho di fha nga maanda.

Theft is rife.

20 Vho-Mandela vho da. Vha funa vhathu vhavho.

Mr Mandela came. He loves his people.

Vhahulwane, dzhia vhukando, wee.

Leaders, take action.

Lushaka lu kha thambulo.

The nation is suffering.

Zwikolo zwi a dura. Ni do vhusa lini vhofunzeaho?

Schooling is expensive. When will the educated govern?

Apartheid yo fheliswa. Kha ri le u fana.

Apartheid has been abolished. Let us be equal.

Ri fhate shango hu si na vhutshivha.

Let us build a country without jealousy.

26 Tshelede a hu na. Ho hula mushumo.  
People work, but there is no money.

1 Additional text obtained from transcription provided by performer.

60

Hayani ho vhifhaho (The dilapidated home)<sup>1</sup>

Nne ndi khou dzula hayani hu songo naka na vhañwe vhathu.  
I live at a home which is not beautiful like that of others.  
Nne vha a ntsea na vhañwe vhathu.  
I am laughed at by others.  
Vha a ntsea na vhañwe vhathu.  
Others laugh at me.  
Vha a ntsea. Nne ndi khou dzula  
They laugh. I live at this home,  
hafha hayani, hayani ho vhifhaho.  
the dilapidated home.  
Vha a ntsea. Vha ri ndi a lwala.  
They laugh. They say I am possessed.<sup>2</sup>  
Vha a ambenga. Vha ri ndi a lwala.  
They hate me. They say I am possessed.  
Nne ndi khou dzula hafha hayani,  
I live at this home,  
hayani ho vhifhaho.  
the dilapidated home.

10 Sedzani ngoho, inwi mungana. Ro fara mathada.  
Look here, you, friend. We are in trouble.  
Havha vhakegulu  
These old women  
vha dzula nga u vhaaisala.  
are always ill.  
Vha dzula nga u lwala.  
Are always ill.  
Namusi ndi mulenzhe.  
Today it is the leg.  
Matshelo ndi thoho.  
Tomorrow it is the head.  
Zwi a konda, zwi a vhavha.  
It is difficult, it is painful.  
Inwi, mungana wanga.  
You, my friend.  
Hafha hayani,  
This home,

19 mudini wo vhifhaho.  
the dilapidated home.

1 Lit. the ugly home.

2 A reference to an irresponsible, music-making lifestyle.



Hulisa vhabebi (Respect parents)

Inwi di thonifheni shangoni.

You must have selfrespect here.

Inwi di thonifheni shangoni la Mudzimu.

You must have selfrespect here in the land of God.

Vha ri, nwana o bebwaho u ene na milayo.

They say, a child is expected to be obedient.

Inwi, nwana, no bebwaho di thonifheni shangoni la

You, child, are expected to have selfrespect here in the Mudzimu.

land of God.

Vha ri, hulisa khotsi au na mme au.

They say, respect your father and mother.

Na inwi no begwa ndi shangoni.

You were born after me.

Vha ri, hulisa khotsi au na mme au.

They say, respect your father and mother.

Ndi hone u do kona u lalama shangoni.

You will live longer.

10 Shangoni,

In the land,

shangoni la Mudzimu.

the land of God.

Shangoni,

In the land,

shangoni la Yehova.

the land of Jehova.

Vha ri, hulisa khotsi au na mme au.

They say, respect your father and mother.

Arali vho begwa shangoni la Mudzimu.

If you are born in the land of God.

16 Hulisa khotsi au na mme au.

Respect your father and mother.

Ndo shavha tshikolo (I ran away from school)

Nne ndi humbula nga liñwe duvha.

I remember the day

Ndo shavha tshikolo, nne!

I ran away from school!

Vhabebi ngoho vho mmbudza.

My parents told me.

Vha ri: Zwithu zwi a tshintsha.

They said: Things are changing.

Vhonani, namusi a thi na na tshithu.

See, today I do not have anything.

Hae mmawe!

Alas mother!

Vhonani, namusi zwi a tshintsha.

See, today things are changing.

Ndo shavha tshikolo vhabebi vhang.

I ran away from school my parents.

Hae mmawe!

Alas mother!

- 10 Vhonani, namusi, wee, zwo tshintsha.  
Alas see, today things have changed.  
Hee!

Shango ngoho-ngoho lo tshintsha.

The country has truly changed.

Ho fhatiwa zwickolo na mashopo.

Schools and shops have been built.

Ho rengwa ngoho dzigoloi.

Cars have been purchased.

Namusi mmawe thi na na tshithu.

Mother, today I do not have anything.

Thambulo ndi yanga, wee, shangoni, wee.

Alas, my suffering at this place, alas.

Ene Mudzimu u a divha.

He, God, knows.<sup>1</sup>

Ene Mudzimu u a ...

He, God ...

"Hai! Hai! Hai!"

"No! No! No!"

- 20 Mmawee, ndo zwi wana!

Mother, I am in trouble!

Ndi humbula na baba vhangana.

I remember my father.

Vho khakha nga u lovha shangoni.

The problem is that he died.

Thañwe arali vha hone shangoni.

If only he could be here.

Hone vho mbeba vha do nthusa.

Because he conceived me he would have helped me.

"Tshua! Tshua!"

1 I.e. He knows that people are suffering.

63

Nwana wa tshidzula huvhuya (A privileged child)

Vha ri, nwana wa tshidzula huvhuya huvhi, huvhi hu a vhidza.

They say, a privileged child is easily spoilt.<sup>1</sup>

Huvhi hu a vhidza, vhone.

Is easily spoilt, you.

Hu a vhidza, vharathu.

Is easily spoilt, younger brothers.

Hu a vhidza, mukomana.

Is easily spoilt, elder brother.

Hu a vhidza, muzwala.

Is easily spoilt cousin.

Hu a vhidza, mungana.

Is easily spoilt, friend.

Vha ri, sedzani, shango na lone lo shanduka.

They say, look, the country has changed.

Mahosi vha tou dzhavhulelana.

Chiefs are usurping each other's position.

Hu di nga tshidulo tshavhudi ngoho vha tou dzhavhulelana.  
Good positions are being usurped.

- 10 Hayani mahosi na vhone vha tou dzhavhulelana.  
Chiefs, here at home you are usurping each other's position.  
Hu di nga na vhuthitshere na hone vha tou dzhavhulelana.  
There is usurpation in teaching.  
Hu di nga na vhubfumi na hone vha tou dzhavhulelana.  
Rich people usurp each other.

1 Lit. a child who sits comfortably is called by something bad.

64

Ngwena-vho i vhamba ngwena (Crocodiles clashing)<sup>1</sup>

Helelee, tshiñwe tsho nda phanda.  
Something threatened me in front.  
Helelee, tshiñwe tsho nda murahu.  
Something threatened me from behind.  
Nda wana zwo nkanganyisa.  
I was confused.  
Helelee, ngwena-vho i vhamba ngwena.  
Crocodiles clashing.

1 Lit. a crocodile stretching a crocodile.

65

Nne ndo mala musadzi (I married a woman)

Nne ndo mala musadzi nga u kundwa yone tshelede.  
I married a woman while in poverty.<sup>1</sup>  
Nne ndo mala musadzi, mma!  
Mother! I married a woman!  
Nne ndo mala musadzi, baba!  
Father! I married a woman!  
Kha ri tambe rothe.  
Let us play together.  
Hu di nga ndi vhone ndi malangane.  
It seems as if they planned the marriage.  
Ndi malangane, vhone.  
It was planned, you.  
Ndi malangane, mmawe.  
It was planned, mother.  
Ndi malangane, baba.  
It was planned, father.  
Ndi malangane, makhadzi.  
It was planned, aunt.

- 10 Musadzi na ene u tou shumeliwa.  
You must support a wife.  
Hoyu musadzi na ene u a kuvha, nne!  
This woman must also wash, oh dear!  
U ya la.  
Also eat,  
u ya kuvha.  
also wash.

U ya funa u renga na vhañwe nga yone ndi tshelede.  
 She likes to have money for shopping sprees with others.  
 Ndi yone tshelede,  
 It is money,  
 ndi yone tshelede,  
 money,  
 munakisa shango.  
 that makes life comfortable.  
 Heyi tshelede!  
 This money!  
 Heyi tshelede!  
 This money!

20 Ndi malangane.  
 It was planned.  
 Vho tangana dzibadani. Vho tangana dzindilani.  
 They met on the roads. They met on the footpaths.  
 Ndi malangane.  
 It was planned.

1 The song refers to a bridegroom unable to provide adequate bridewealth.

66

Mudi wo fhatiwa (The house was built)<sup>1</sup>

Ndo vhona lunako mutsharivhona. Musadzi wa tshidakwa.  
 I saw a beautiful girl,<sup>2</sup> a drunkard of a woman.  
 Ndo vhona u tswuka mutsharivhona. Nda ri ndi male.  
 I saw a girl with a light complexion. I married her.  
 Ngoho musadzi wa tshidakwa.  
 Truly a drunkard of a woman.  
 Ngoho u vuwa ndi u bva,  
 One who goes out to drink  
 ngoho u ya masosani.  
 after waking up in the morning.  
 Ngoho u nwa na halwa.  
 She even drinks bottled beer.  
 Ngoho na u bika ha biki.  
 She does not cook.  
 Ndo mala musadzi mutsharivhona. Musadzi wa tshidakwa.  
 I married a beautiful woman, a drunkard of a woman.  
 Ndo mala musadzi mutsharivhona. Nda ri ndi male.  
 I married a beautiful woman. I married her.

1 The title suggests that even if a husband provides well for his wife, she still engages in immoral behaviour.

2 Lit. the one we see in the morning. A metaphor which likens a beautiful woman to the rising sun.

Thumbu khalini (Hunger)

(Chorus)

**Nne ndo swogola.**

I struggled.

**Nne ndo shona.**

I was ashamed.

(solo)

**Vha ri, thumbu khalini.**They say, there is hunger.<sup>1</sup>**Vha ri, khaladzi anga.**

They say, my sister.

**Vha ri, vhone, makhadzi.**

They say, you, aunt.

**Vha ri, nne, murathu.**

They say, I, brother.

**Vha ri, inwi, ñwana wa mme anga.**

We say, you, child of my mother.

1 Lit. the stomach is at the cooking pot.

Swina langa (My enemy)<sup>1</sup>**Vha ri: Hafha shangoni ro dzula rothe.**

They say: We shall all live together in this land.

**Ndi Lavhutānu. Ndi ya ngei Thohoyandou.**

It is Friday. I am going to Thohoyandou.

**Nne ndo humbula hayani.**I remembered home.<sup>2</sup>**Nne ndi humbula zwone zwixele.**

I remember those toddlers.

**Ndi tshi tou ri kakara, zwanga vho dzhia.**

All of a sudden I realized my things had been taken.

**Mudzimu u hone. O li sedza heli swina langa.**

God is here. He is looking at my enemy.

**Ndi tshi humbula nga liñwe duvha ndi khou dzhena**

I remember a certain day I went shopping.

**mashoponi. Swina langa lo ntsedza.**

My enemy was watching me.

**Vhone vho ndzhiela.**

They took my things.

1 This song refers to Solomon losing money to a pickpocket at a Thohoyandou supermarket.

2 A reference to the fact that the stolen money was intended for the buying of groceries.

Ri a thusana (Helping each other)

**Nne na vhone:** Ndi khwine vha mmbudze  
Me and you: It is better to tell me when  
arali vha na zwiñwe zwi vha dinaho.

something troubles you,  
**Vha litshe u nkhubulela phanda.**  
instead of being prejudiced.<sup>1</sup>

**Ngauri liñwe duvha zwi do vha thusa.**  
Because one day you will benefit.

**Nne na vhone:** Ro begwa rothe.

Me and you: We are the same.<sup>2</sup>

**Vha mmbengelani hafha shangoni?**

Why do you hate me here?

**Vha ri, a si ilo dabadaba.**

They say I am foolish.

**Hafha shangoni ho vuwa u solana.**

There is gossip here.

**Hafha shangoni ho vuwa u zwigodo.**

There is mocking here.

10 **Vha mmbengelani? Rine ri khou fana.**

Why do you hate me? We are the same.

**Vhañwe na vhañwe a vha funi zwa vhañwe zwo nakelani.**

Some people are jealous when others prosper.<sup>3</sup>

**Nda humbula ndi khou tuwa ndi ya ngei thavhani.**

If I decide to go to the mountain.<sup>4</sup>

1 Lit. to think for another person.

2 Lit. we have all been born.

3 Lit. not loving beautiful people.

4 A reference to fulfilling ambitions.

Matsilu vho vhifha zwifhatuwo (Fools have ugly faces)<sup>1</sup>

**Nne na vhone:** Rothe ri a fanana.

Me and you: We are the same.

**Vhonani, Mandela o da.**

See, Mandela has arrived.

**O da u dzivhulusa heli shango.**

He arrived to enlighten this country.

**O do swika hafha university.**

He arrived at this university.<sup>2</sup>

**Nne ndi livhuwa SRC.**

I thank the SRC.

**Matsilu o vhifha zwifhatuwo.**

Fools have ugly faces.

**Vhatali vho takala.**

Clever people are happy.

**Shangoni a hu na a sa funi u la.**

There is no one here who does not have to survive.<sup>3</sup>

Vhavenda, talifhali.

Venda people, be clever.

10 Heyi university na yone yo talifhesa.

This university provides knowledge.

Avha vhatu vho zwi wanafhi?

Where did these people get it?

Haya matsilu vhone vho vhifha zwifhatuwo.

These fools have ugly faces.

Ri khou takala rothe.

We all rejoice.

1 A reference to incompetent leaders.

2 A reference to an ANC meeting held at the University of Venda during 1991.

3 Lit. there is no one who does not like to eat.

71

Vha tshi dzhena mudini (Manners)

Mudzimu o vhumba vhatu shangoni lawe.

God created people on his earth.

O nakisa shango.

He made a beautiful world.

Vha tshi dzhena mudini, vha ri: "Hee ndaa!"

When they enter home, they say: "Greetings!"

Vha wa musadzi, vha ri: "Hee aa!"

And women say: "Good day!"

Vharathu vhangana, no vhetshelani mulayo?

My brothers, why do you ignore this custom?

Mazwale wanga, no vhetshelani mulayo?

My cousin, why do you ignore this custom?

Makhadzi wanga, no vhetshelani mulayo?

My aunt, why do you ignore this custom?

Namusi no fhunguwa.

Nowadays you have no respect.

Ho dzhena Tshikhuwa.

You follow a Western life-style.

72

Dengankure (Buying love from far)

Vha ri: Dengankure.<sup>1</sup>

They say: We buy love from far.

Vha ri: Na Mudzimu a divha.<sup>2</sup>

They say: And God is omnipotent.

Vha ri: Zwo balela Yehova. O fela zwivhi zwashu.

They say: But even Jehova capitulated. He died for our sins.

Vha ri: Na lufuno vha lu renga kule.

They say: And love is bought from far.

Vha ri: Na lufuno lubva kule.

They say: And love comes from outside the home.

Ri bva kule.

We are from far.

**Dengankure, dengankure, dengankure.**  
Buying love from far.

**Vha ri: Ro takala, ro takala, wee.**  
They say: We are happy, hey, we are happy.

1 Apparently derived from Kalanga (Venda: renga, to buy, and kule, far). This refers to changing patterns of marriage. "Buying love from far" means that one is marrying a person from a distant place, or someone who belongs to a different ethnic group. See also song 15.

2 Lit. God knows.

73

**Nga nndani ha ene Mudzimu** (Only God may)

**A hu na ane a nga imisa vhutshilo ha muñwe.**  
You may not take a person's life away.  
**Nga nndani ha ene Mudzimu.**  
Only God may.  
**Zwo balela baba na mma.**  
Even one's father and mother may not.  
**Murathu o tovhowa.**  
The younger brother died.<sup>1</sup>

1 Lit. despaired.

74

**Ndo begwa nga Mudzimu wanga** (God created me)

**Nne ndo begwa nga Mudzimu wanga.**  
God created me.  
**A thi na nga u tongelana shangoni.**  
I do not swank here.  
**Shem!**  
Shame!  
**Hae, mmawe!**  
Alas, mother!  
**Nne ngavhe vha mbebe ndife, wee.**  
I should have died when I was born.  
**Baboen hy slaan die katara.**  
The baboon is bashing the guitar.

75

**Gigini Harabali** (The bar at Harabali)

(Chorus)

**Mmawee! Harabali!**

**Mother! Harabali!**

(solo)

**Nda humbera liñwe duvha ndi gigini Harabali.**

I remember a certain day in a bar at Harabali.



Yuwi, vho nkhuthuza.  
 Alas, I was robbed.  
 Nda ñwa halwa. Nne nda lala ndo kangwa.  
 I drank beer. I fell into a drunken sleep.  
 Nda vuwa ndi si na na peni.  
 I woke up without a cent.  
 Harabali mabodeloni. Harabali maguvhani.  
 In the bars at Harabali. Against the mud walls at Harabali.  
 Harabali nne thi tsha kanda.  
 I do not want to return to Harabali.  
 Vho-Nevari vha laye ñwana wavho Dafita.  
 Mr Nevari must reprimand his child David.

76

Ni songo funana lwa muhoyo (False love)

Ni songo funana lwa muhoyo.  
 Do not pretend to love.  
 Kha vha mpfune, kha ndi vha fune.  
 Love must be mutual.  
 Ri songo funana lwa muhoyo.  
 We must not pretend to love.  
 If you love me, I love you.  
 Inwi, Nthangeni: Ni ita mini vhukati ha shango?  
 You, Nthangeni: What are you doing around here?<sup>1</sup>  
 Inwi, Nthangeni: Ri songo funana lwa muhoyo.  
 You, Nthangeni: We must not pretend to love.  
 Zwithu zwi a fhira naa ndi shangoni.  
 Do good while still alive.<sup>2</sup>

1 Referring to a troublesome man.

2 Lit. things pass from earth.

77

Zwipuka (Wild animals)

Tshipuka tsho thanya.  
 A wild animal is wise.  
 A thi tsho dzhia na mmbulunge.  
 It does not hate.  
 A hu na zwitshela.  
 There is no gossiping.  
 A hu na u fhambana.  
 There is no discrimination.  
 A hu na u godana.  
 There is no mocking.  
 A hu na na solana.  
 There is no slandering.  
 Mahatsi o anda mvula yo na.  
 Grass shot up after the rain.  
 Rine ri a takala.  
 We are happy.  
 Vhusiwana zwothe.  
 We are all poor.

- 10 Lusunzi lwo thanya.  
 The ant is wise.  
 Luñwe tshi khou u bva.  
 When one leaves the nest  
 Luñwe tshi khou dzhena.  
 another one enters,  
 Lu hwalela zwiliwa zwi ya mulindini.  
 carrying food.  
 Ndi yone bannga heya vhusunzi.  
 The nest is their store.<sup>1</sup>  
 Zwipuka zwo tanya.  
 Wild animals are wise.
- 16 "God my witness."

1 Lit. bank.

78

Iyani Mushe (Go there Moses) (II)

Mushumo ndi u tsa na bada.  
 You are a habitual rover.  
 Vhana vha khou shengela hayani.  
 The children are suffering at home.  
 Iyani Mushe.  
 Go there Moses.  
 Vhana vha khou lila.  
 The children are crying.  
 A hu na tshi no liwa.  
 There is nothing to eat.  
 Mushumo ndi u nwa halwa na u hwala katara.  
 Your life consists of drinking beer and playing guitar.<sup>1</sup>  
 Havha vhathu vha a zwi funa ri tshi lwa.  
 These people like to see us fighting.  
 Evho! Evho! Evho!

1 Lit. to carry the guitar (from one beer house to another).

79

Nañwaha wo fhela 1991 (The end of 1991)

Nañwaha wo fhela 1991, vhone.  
 Hey you, 1991 has ended.  
 Vha ri: Vhomesisi, vha vule ma<sub>to</sub>.  
 They say: Our women, take care.<sup>1</sup>  
 Vhuruduru<sub>du</sub> shangoni la Venda.  
 They carefully spy on you in Venda.<sup>2</sup>  
 You must be wake up.  
 Khaladzi dzanga, vhommane, vhakomana, baba wanga,  
 My sister, aunt, brothers, my father,  
 kha vha vule ma<sub>to</sub>  
 take care.  
 vha tshi ya ngei, ngei Thohoyandou kana Sibasa.  
 when you go to there to Thohoyandou or Sibasa.  
 Ndi dzi 16 dza November.  
 It is the 16th of November.

- Shango lo ima nga milenzhe brother.  
The country is dangerous brother.<sup>3</sup>
- 10 Shango lo ima nga milenzhe sesi.  
The country is dangerous sister.  
Shango lo ima nga milenzhe my father.  
The country is dangerous my father.  
Ndi mukhuthuzano fhedzi.  
Theft is rife.  
Shango lo fhela.  
The country is finished.  
Ndi vhuruduru.  
There is spying.  
"I am looking for money, bonus, big pay, bonus, big pay."<sup>4</sup>  
Kha vha vhone tshothe.  
Be aware of danger.  
I vha di gade.  
Be on your guard.  
Razz Mathase u khou zwi amba.  
Razz Mathase is giving a warning.<sup>5</sup>  
Kha vha vhone vha ndzonda.  
Watch those who dislike you.
- 20 Tshelede dzavho vhone, i vha dzi dzhena.  
You must safeguard your money.  
I vha dzi vhone.  
Protect yourself.  
I vha dzi londe.  
Take care.  
Na vhone mesisi: kha vha thanye zwavho. Tshelede ndi yone  
And you my wife: be wise. Money is the  
ndi mulutanya shango.  
root of all evil.  
Plenty people looking for money.

1 Lit. open your eyes.

2 A reference to the time the singer was robbed by a pick-pocket (cf. song 68).

3 Lit. the country is standing on its legs.

4 A reference to Solomon's annual bonus which is paid to him at the end of November.

5 As in song 40, Solomon assumes the identity of his cousin Razz Mathase who is a radio personality. This signifies that he is informing the public about important issues.

80

Humbulani vhakale (Honour your ancestors)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Humbulani vhakale.

Honour your ancestors.

(solo)

Nwananga, namusi no humbula-vho.

My child, today we are just honouring.

**Namusi na inwi no nkumbula-vho.**

Today you are just honouring.

**"Ndi tshi amba ngauralo ndi humbula ngauri vhone vho siya**

"I am saying this because you left me

**ifa langa."**

a heritage."

1 Lit. remember your ancestors.

81

**Vha songo litsha vhana** (Do not abandon children)

**Nne ndi vhona havha vhana.**

I see these children.

**Vhañwe vha vhathu.**

Certain children.

**Vho ima OK. Munangoni wa shopho.**

They stand at the OK. In the entrance of the shop.<sup>1</sup>

**Vhone vhabebi, vha vha litsha ngani?**

You parents, why did you abandon them?

**Matshelo ndi matswotswi.**

Tomorrow they will be criminals.

**Iyani tshikoloni vharathu vhangana.**

Go to school my young brothers.

**Nne ndi vhona vharathu vhangana.**

I see my young brothers.

**Havha vhabebi vha litsheni vhana.**

These parents abandon children.

**Matshelo ndi matswotswi.**

Tomorrow they will be criminals.

10 **Ri dzhena hani OK?**

How are we going to enter the OK?<sup>2</sup>

**Dzindeñwa dzavho.**

Your spoilt children.

**Litshani vhana, vha ya tshikoloni.**

Let children be, they are going to school.

1 A reference to poverty-stricken boys who habitually frequent the entrance to a local supermarket. These boys carry shoppers' parcels and sell them carrier bags. Their appearance is generally unkempt. In addition they often have the habit of accosting shoppers in a somewhat aggressive manner. This song has been partly inspired by the pickpocket incident referred to in songs 68 & 79.

2 I.e. how can the boys be avoided?

82

**Tshikhipha** (The T-shirt)

(Solo)

**Tshikhipha tsha mufunwa wanga**

The T-shirt of my beloved says:

(chorus)

*tshi khou nwaliwa: GLM.*

*GLM.*<sup>1</sup>

1 The song refers to the fact that married people get to know each other very intimately. Many things are shared between them only. Very often messages are transmitted through gestures, brief looks or remarks. The letters GLM symbolize these intimate gestures and remarks.

83

U guda a u gumi (Living is learning)<sup>1</sup>

Nne madekwe ndo lora muloro wone u sa gumi.

Last night I had an unending dream.

Nne ndi tshi pfa: vha ri, hu lora a u gumi.

I was told<sup>2</sup> you dream as long as you live.<sup>3</sup>

I vha ri pfunzo, na yone a i gumi.

They also say, education is part of life.

Shangoni u guda a u gumi.

Living is learning in this place.

Nne ndi tshi vhona, ndi vhona zwa uri na na pfunzo

When I see, I see that education

na yone a i gumi.

is part of life.

U guda a u gumi.

Living is learning.

Nne ndi livhuwa muthu o thusa.

I thank the person who helped.

Nne ndi livhuwa muthu o da na pfunzo. Yo ri thusa shangoni.

I thank the person who brought education. It helped in this land.

10 Nne ndi livhuwa munna o da na pfunzo shangoni.

I thank the man who brought education to this land.

A nga si tende liwa phesenthe dzawe.

An educated person will prosper.<sup>4</sup>

Kha dzivhe nnzhi:

Let there be more:

Nne ndi tshi amba phesenthe dzawe.

I am referring to his prosperity.

Kha dzivhe gumi.

It must not end.

Nne ndi livhuwa muthu o da na pfunzo shangoni.

I thank the person who brought education to this land.

Ano maduvha na rine ro takala. Ri a divha, wee!

Nowadays we are also happy. We have knowledge!<sup>5</sup>

Vhutali hanga. Vhutali hanga, mmawe!

My wisdom. My wisdom, mother!

Vhutali hanga, baba. Vhutali hanga.

My wisdom, father. My wisdom.

Vhutali hanga, malume.

My wisdom uncle.

20 Nne ndo takala, wee.

I am happy.

Ndo ya tshikoloni, wee.

I attended school.

Vho nnyisa tshikoloni, wee.  
 They sent me to school.  
 Nne ndo takala ngauri  
 I am happy because  
 nne ndo thanya.  
 I am clever.  
 Nne ndi khou amba Afrikaans na English yanga.  
 I am speaking Afrikaans and English.  
 Nne ndo thanya.  
 I am clever.  
 Nda uri ndi khou amba Tshikhuwa.  
 I am speaking English.  
 Afrikaans yanga, na English yanga, wee!  
 My Afrikaans, and my English!  
 "I am still talking."

30 "I'm writing."

"I'm talking."

"Ek praat."

I am talking.

Nne ndo takala ngauri ndo guda ambela.

I am happy because I am learning to speak.

1 Lit. learning never stops.

2 By the singer's ancestral spirits.

3 Lit. dreaming never stops.

4 Lit. he cannot allow his percentage to be eaten. An idiomatic expression.

5 Lit. we know.

84

Vha songo thenga-thenga (Do not follow wrong ways)

Nne vha mbona ngani? Nne ndo tshinyani?

How do you regard me? Am I wrong?<sup>1</sup>

Murathu wanga ndi vhuhevhehevhe.

My young brother follows wrong ways.

Namusi no tshinya, matshelo no kona.

Today you err, tomorrow you do not.

Vhavenda vha ungwa, vha ungwa nga ula.

Venda people follow wrong ways.<sup>2</sup>

1 Each line is repeated by the chorus.

2 Lit. they are attracted by eating.

85

Pfananani (Mutual understanding)

Vha ri muzila kha u vhuve shango li lale.<sup>1</sup>

They say traditional authority<sup>2</sup> must be re-instituted so that there can be peace.<sup>3</sup>

Vha ri tshikale kha tshi vhuye shango li lale.  
They say tradition<sup>4</sup> must return so that there can be order.  
Na nne ndo zwi vhona zwa ri nndwa i bva ngafhi.  
And I realized how chaos<sup>5</sup> started.  
Vha ri, vhatshena na vhone a vha fani vhothe.  
They say, white people are not all the same.<sup>6</sup>  
Tshikale kha tshi vhuye. Ri tshile rothe.  
Tradition must return. We must all live.

1 Each line is repeated by the chorus.

2 Lit. tribal tax.

3 Lit. so that the country can sleep.

4 Lit. the past.

5 Lit. war.

6 I.e. in terms of their behaviour. An implicit reference to the destructive effect of Western culture.

86

Rothe ri a fanana (We are all the same)

Vho naka hani?  
How beautiful are you?  
Vho vhifha hani?  
How ugly are you?  
Vho pfuma hani?  
How rich are you?  
Vhañwe ndi mpengo:  
Some are mad:  
Rothe ri a fanana, wee!.  
Alas, we are all the same!  
Ro begwa rothe nga Mudzimu washu.  
We are all God's creatures.  
Ri khou vaya samu.  
We are leaving together.  
Ndi khwine vha mmbenge.  
It is better to hate me.  
Humbula vhakale vha nthuseni.  
Honour the ancestors so that they can help us.

10 Vho pfuma hani?  
How rich are you?  
Vho naka hani?  
How beautiful are you?  
Kana ndi dabadaba?  
Or is it foolishness?  
Ri khou tuwa rothe.  
We are leaving together.

Halwa (Beer)

Rine ri takala nga halwa shangoni.  
 We are happy because there is beer here.  
Rine ri takala nga zwiliwa shangoni.  
 We are happy because there is food here.  
 Vha ri, nwananga, ndi mini ni nwa halwa?  
 They say, my child, why do you drink beer?  
 Vha ri, litshani halwa, ni ye kerekeni.  
 They say, leave beer and go to church.  
 Zwidzidzivhadzi zwi a pengisa.  
 Drugs cause madness.  
 I lo rwa mma.  
 He hit mother.  
 Lo rwa baba.  
 He hit father.

A ri lilani (They do not mourn)

Vha ri, na nne, a ri lilani.  
 They say, and I, they do not mourn.  
 Vhone vho dela mini?  
 Why did you come here?  
 Matsina vho dela ula.  
 You came to eat.  
 Matsina vho dela u vhangana.  
 You came to grab.<sup>1</sup>  
 Vha ri zwo vusa bonyongo mathiko malume.  
 They say it caused trouble uncle.  
 Vha ri zwo vusa bonyonga mathiko vho-mme.  
 They say it caused trouble ladies.  
 A ri ho phathini.  
 We are not at a party.  
 A ri ho birthday.  
 We are not at a birthday.  
 Na rine a ri lilani.  
 And we do not mourn.  
 10 A vha shoni ngani? Ngauri ho dala livhandwa.  
 There are many people. Are you not ashamed?  
 Ndi uri na muñwe muthu a tshi tou zwi amba vhukati ha vhathu.  
 Even if people are talking about you among themselves?  
 A ri ho munyanyani.  
 We are not at a feast.

1 Lit. to claim unlawfully.

Nne ndi ndothe (I am alone)

Nne ndi ndothe.  
 I am alone.



**Nne**, baba vho ntsiela vhusiwana.  
I, father left misery.  
**Nne** thi lali dakani sa kholomo ya mboho.  
I do not sleep in the forest like a bull.  
**Nne**, makhulu, **nne** ndi a ñala.  
I, gran, I am angry.  
**Nne**, makhulu, **nne** ndi a tuwa.  
I, gran, I am leaving.

90

Vho thoma mafhungo (Starting rumours)

**Kha vhal**a na **vhal**a vho thoma mafhungo.  
Rumours start all over.  
**Mafhungo** ndi mini?  
What are the rumours?  
**Mafhungo** a ri a todi.  
We do not want rumours.  
**Mafhungo** a ri a funi.  
We do not like rumours.  
**Ho swika musadzi**, wee.  
A woman arrived.  
**Musadzi** hoyu o thoma mafhungo.  
This woman started the gossiping.  
**Ho swika Sophia**.  
Sophia arrived.

91

Katara yanga (My guitar)

**Nne** ndo lora katara.  
I dream with the guitar.  
**Ndi fa nayo**.  
I will die with it.  
**Vha ri**, na **nne** vha nnyita mpengo.  
They say, they regard me as mad.  
**Nne** thi hangwi. **Ndi fa nayo**.  
I do not forget. I will die with it.  
**Vha ri**, tshiitisi tshanu ndi mini nga heyi katara yanu?  
They say, what do you do through this guitar of yours?  
**Vha ri** matakadzambiluni ndi katara yanga.  
They say I gladden hearts with my guitar.  
**A hu na khakhathi** ndi katara yanga.  
My guitar causes no trouble.  
**Ndi madakalo** ndi katara yanga.  
There is happiness because of my guitar.  
**Ndi mungana wanga**. **Ndi fa nae**.  
It is my friend. I will die with it.  
10 **Lini na lini**. **Ndi fa nayo**.  
Always. I will die with it.  
**Mungana wanga**, katara yanga.  
My friend, my guitar.  
**Nne** ndi lini ndi na katara.  
I have been playing the guitar for long.

Mungana wanga marudzambilu.  
 My friend which pacifies hearts.  
 Khonani yanga ndi katara.  
 The guitar is my friend.  
 Katara yanga ndi fa nayo.  
 I will die with my guitar.  
 Naa ndi ngafhi ndi na iwe?  
 When am I with it?  
 Ndi vhusiku ndi na iwe.  
 I am with it at night.  
 Vha divha nne shangoni la fhanu.  
 They know me here.

- 19 Hoyu musadzi wanga. Ndi fa nae.  
 This wife of mine. I will die with her.

92

Mutukana ha hutu khotsi (Fathers and sons)<sup>1</sup>

Nne, 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, nwana wa musidzana u huta mmawe.  
 They say, the daughter scrubs the mother.  
 Vha ri, nwana wa mutukana ha hutu khotsi.  
 They say, the son does not scrub the father.  
 Vha ri, koto, wee!  
 They say, alas!  
 Vha ri, hoyu nwana o fhunguwa a tshi tou vhudzisa zwithu  
 They say, this child is a fool to ask these things.  
 zworaliho.

1 The singer questions what he perceives as the qualitative differences between father-son and mother-daughter relationships. Mothers and daughters are much closer to each other than fathers and sons. For example, fathers do not ask their sons to scrub their back while they are washing.

93

Lo tsha (Good morning)

Lo tsha mungana.  
 Good morning friend.  
 Ngoho, a ri edeli khonani.  
 Indeed, we did not sleep friend.  
 Ni tshi swika ni ri ro la masheleni.  
 When you arrive you say we wasted the money.  
 Mathiko ni khou kwasha  
 You are interfering when  
 ni tshi vhudza musadzi wanga.  
 you tell my wife.  
 A ri edeli.  
 We did not sleep.

Vhotswotswi (Criminals)

Vhotswotswi vho nnyimela dzikhoneni.  
 Criminals are waiting around corners.  
 Ri khetha i fhio ndila?  
 Which way should we take?  
 Ri bva nga ya fhasi.  
 We will take the bottom path.  
 Ya nthu i na mini?  
 What awaits us on the top path?  
 I na n̄wando.  
 There is dew.<sup>1</sup>

1 I.e. criminals.

Muvhuya ndi nnyi? (Who is good?)

I vha ri, muvhuya ndi nnyi  
 They say, who is good  
 shangoni la Mudzimu?  
 in the land of God?  
 I vha ri, wa vhukuma, ngoho, u bva ngafhi?  
 They say, where can a good person be found?  
 Nne ndo mangala hoyu Ramushwana a tshi ri Venda lo vhuzelela  
 I was amazed when this Ramushwana said that Venda has been  
 murahu.  
 incorporated.  
 I vha ri, sedzani Gatsha Buthelezi na zwithu zwawe.  
 They say, look at Gatsha Buthelezi and his things.  
 Nne ndo mangala i hoyu Mandela o lwa na musadzi shangoni la  
 I was amazed at this Mandela fighting with his wife in the  
 Mudzimu.  
 land of God.  
 I vha ri, Winnie Mandela o lwa na munna.  
 They say, Winnie Mandela fought with her husband.  
 10 Ndi ngazwo ndi vha vhudze:  
 That is why I am asking:  
 Muvhuya ndi nnyi?  
 Who is good?  
 Muvhuya ndi Yehova.  
 God is good.  
 Mulinda Israela  
 The protector of Israel  
 ha edeli.  
 does not sleep.  
 Mboho ndi mbili.  
 Two bulls.<sup>1</sup>  
 Winnie Mandela na ene ndi mboho.  
 Winnie Mandela is also a bull.

1 I.e. two people arguing.

Heli shango (This country)

Heli shango, heli shango lo naka.

This country, this country is beautiful.

Vha ri, li dinwa nga vhathu.

They say, it is troubled by people.

Nne ndi humbula vhusiwana.

I remember misery.

Nne tho ngo funzwa.

I am not educated.

Nne tho ngo ya tshikoloni.

I did not go to school.

Nne thi divhi na u vhala.

I do not how how to read.

Vhatali a vha fheli.

There are many clever people.

Nne ndi khwine ngauri ndi dabadaba.

I am better because I am ignorant.

Nne thi vhoni ndi tshi ndinaho. Ndi khou amba nga u sa

10 Nothing troubles me. I say this because I am not

funzwa.

educated.

Ndi khomphethisheni.

There is competition.

Ndi mupfufhi u sa mphire.

Everyone wants to be at the top.<sup>1</sup>

Vho tou thanyesa.

They are too clever for their own good.

1 Lit. the short one must not surpass the tall one.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Solomon Mathase: Music making and the formulation of social reality

The concepts which constitute Solomon's worldview are articulated through the various message bearers which comprise guitar performances: song texts, musical sound, and dancing and dramatic action. In chapter two I structured my discussion of Solomon's personal philosophy around his song texts. However, these texts are inseparable from the other message bearers, and all of them must be interpreted in terms of performance conventions. In chapter three I thus look more closely at how messages and ideas emerge from their matrix of musical performance practice.

I interpret Solomon's musical expression of ideas in terms of his status as *tshilombe* (pl *zwilombe*), or semi-professional itinerant musician (cf. Blacking 1979, Kruger 1991). Of the nineteen guitarists under investigation, eight may be considered *zwilombe*.<sup>1</sup> My discussion of Solomon as *tshilombe* thus not only serves as a basis from which to expand his formulation of social reality, and discuss his musical status and characteristics, but also as a general introduction to the *tshilombe* as guitarist.

#### 3.1 Tshilombe: Social sanction, inspiration and the process of musical creation

In Kruger (1991) I indicate that the image and status of *zwilombe* and the attitude of people towards them may partly be approached by considering some of the semantic references of the *tshilombe* concept. Blacking (1957: 37) remarks that

"the word tshilombe is undoubtedly connected with the malombo/zwilombo possession complexes". Tshilombe has the same root (-lomba) as the term tshilombo (pl zwilombo). Zwilombo partly are amoral foreign spirits associated with Venda possession cults (popularly known as malombo), and are "pacified" by them during a vigorous dance session (cf. Stayt 1931; Van Warmelo 1932; Ralushai 1984 & 1986). There is some correlation between the geographical distribution of the malombo cult and tshilombe performance culture in South Africa. Although there is a suggestion to the contrary (Ralushai 1984: 3), it is generally believed that malombo is characterized by a process of southward diffusion from Zimbabwe where the Shona counterparts of zwilombo spirits are known as zwirombo (cf. Von Sicard 1951: 16, Bullock 1927: 143 ff.). This process of diffusion apparently ended around Lydenburg in the Transvaal. Malombo-type possession cults have been reported among the Venda, Tsonga, and North Sotho (Lobedu, Kgaga and Pedi) people only (Boersema 1984, Hammond-Tooke 1981, Krige & Krige 1980, Mönnig 1967, Stayt 1931).

Although South African musical cultures generally feature musicians who perform music as part of ritual office, the Venda, Shangana-Tsonga and Lobedu seem to be the only peoples with the lombe class of musician.<sup>2</sup> Blacking (1957) defines a tshilombe as:

a wandering minstrel who specializes in clowning, novelty songs, and witty improvisations, and has a habit of turning up whenever there is a large gathering. He plays for gifts of food and beer and other favours: some chiefs and headmen like to have such a man available as an unofficial member of their entourage ... Minstrels like to hang around courts, where there is always plenty of food and beer, as well as visitors, and it is easier for them to make a living as an entertainer (Blacking 1957: 36 & 1965: 28).<sup>3</sup>

Krige & Krige (1980) refer to Lobedu "mendicant minstrels who played the xylophone and sang for their food and lodging" (Krige & Krige 1980: 316). Johnston (1971: 41) remarks that Shangana-Tsonga musical culture features a class of professional musician which includes "the wandering minstrel (**xilombe** - generally a player of the **xitende** braced gourd-bow)". South African **lombe** musical cultures appear to form the southern perimeter of what possibly may be a South East African **lombe** complex which includes Mozambique, Zimbabwe and the North Eastern Transvaal. Coplan (1985), referring to the 1586 journal of Friar Joao dos Santos, notes that a Chopi chief had "**marombes**, which means the same as jester, and who sang, shouted praises, told jokes, and performed acrobatics" (Coplan 1985: 64). Any possible historical link between these **marombe** and the Venda **tshilombe** tradition is not clear. The term **tshilombe** has the same root (**-lomba**) as **-lombaila** (to wander around) which appears to be of Pfumbi origin (Van Warmelo 1989). The Pfumbi are a Shona group which settled on both sides of the Limpopo river, apparently as far back as the 13th century and before (cf. Wentzel 1983: 44 ff.). They, together with a number of other clans, form part of the so-called Govha cultural cluster. Included in this cluster are the Ndaus of Eastern Zimbabwe and Mozambique who are regarded by Von Sicard (1951) as "the descendants of the **ma-rombe** jesters or musicians, who are mentioned by Dos Santos" (Von Sicard 1951: 19). Other references to the **lombe** concept in Zimbabwe are rare. Tracey (1965) uses the term **rombe** in a generic sense to refer to a musician.

As indicated above, **zwilombo** are spirits which possess members of Venda possession cults. The connection between **tshilombo** and **tshilombe** seems to lie in their common root **-lomba**, which means to "obtain something from far away" (Van

Warmelo 1989). In the case of **malombo** this seems to refer to the possession of a person by a "far-away" (i.e. foreign), restlessly wandering spirit. In the **tshilombe** context, **-lomba** seems to refer to the fact that musicians "must have some supernatural sanction, such as a dream, to convince them of their calling" (Blacking 1957: 37). Supernatural sanctioning also applies to Venda wood carvers, diviners, potters, iron smiths and initiation school instructors. This concept operates similarly in Shona **shave** possession cults, and it seems likely that there exists some historical link between Shona and Venda culture in this context.<sup>4</sup> Stayt (1931) notes that Venda woodcarvers "are not differentiated by any social distinction" Stayt (1931: 53). However, they, like Solomon and other **zwilombe**, are highly visible individuals whose specialist occupations put them in a potentially powerful yet precarious position in a communal social environment characterized to some extent by a hierarchy of forces, and a striving towards conformity on each level of this hierarchy (cf. Van Rooy 1978). In this context, ritual specialists adopt a special strategy to avoid conflict. Although musical artistry (**vhunambi**) is regarded as inborn (**zwa vhunambi zwi a bebelwa**), and tends to run in families, it is not automatically passed on from one generation to the next. Thus musicians often remark: "When I die, tie a rope around my throat so that my artistry should fall into my stomach" (**Ndi tshi fa, ni vhofhe mukulo. Vhunambi vhu wele thumbuni**). In other words, "musicianship develops because of social, rather than purely hereditary factors" (Blacking 1965: 50).<sup>5</sup> The status of **tshilombe** partly is acquired and maintained by supernatural sanction which functions as an occupational "license".



As happened to Solomon, supernatural sanction seldom occurs before the onset of puberty. It is transmitted via a dream, and mostly comes from an ancestral spirit who also was an outstanding musician. As I note elsewhere (Kruger 1991: 3), sometimes a *tshilombe* claims that he is "possessed". As in the case of guitarist Albert Raedani, this concept of "possession" is not negative. It does not suggest a state of physical and mental "disturbance", but refers to spiritual and divine artistic inspiration<sup>6</sup> (cf. 207: 9; 208: 8-9, 32-35). People do not consciously start out with the ambition to become a *tshilombe*. As in the case of Solomon, the *tshilombe* occupation seems to come with a certain amount of life experience, if not adulthood. From my investigation there emerges a general trend of people taking up the playing of an instrument (or dancing) by learning from and observing family members and friends. Those with the necessary interest and application subsequently reach such expertise that they are virtually obliged to obtain supernatural sanction. As Solomon sings: "The narrator of things will not speak for himself. I am talking while God is quiet" (49: 18-19). In other words, people do not directly obtain supernatural sanction to become a *tshilombe*, they obtain it when they have reached an advanced level of performance standard, and have attracted sufficient attention to lead to admiration, and possible envy and strife. In any case, the status of *tshilombe* is partly honorific, and usually is not claimed for himself by a musician. It is a status that must be earned, and it is normally accorded to him by his community.

Musicians act as spirit mediums, not only in the context of cult spirit possession, but also in the context of personal communication with, and sacrifices to, ancestral spirits. Musical performances under these circumstances are regarded

by musicians as "prayers", or a means of religious expression. As indicated, Solomon serves as the medium for the spirits of his father, grandfather and grandmother. Apart from sacrifices of water and snuff, these spirits at times also require him to offer a song on his guitar. This is sometimes a song inspired by the spirit itself. Musical communication with ancestral spirits in a communal context is well-known, and includes possession music and *tshikona* dancing (cf. Kruger 1989). However, I have also recorded several instances of the role of individual instrument playing and music making in terms of communication with ancestral spirits. This corresponds to the practice of Shona ancestor cults as well as those Shona *shave* possession cults which specifically involve a musical performance (cf. Berliner 1978, Gelfand 1966). Venda spirit mediums who are required to dance, sing, or play a musical instrument often come from families where these musical activities are practised. In cases where a medium is required to play a musical instrument, I have found that the spirit often used to be a player of that instrument, and that the instrument was in fact inherited by the family, thus becoming a sacred ritual object, *tshitungulo*.

As in the case of other *zwilombe*, Solomon's ancestral spirits play a role in the creation of his songs, but this only first occurred when he was already an adult and a relatively experienced performer. When the spirit of Mbulaheni Mathase first appeared to his son in 1967, he performed a song called *Tshimimarusi*.<sup>7</sup> This song served as the inspiration for "A poverty-stricken man" (2; 3). Subsequent musical inspiration occurred in 1968, and resulted in the creation of *Mukumela* (6). The *murundu* song, "My children" (5), was also a result of spiritual inspiration by Solomon's father who was a

murundu initiate himself. The very infectious and vibrant "Masindi was arrested" (19), is the only song inspired by the spirit of Solomon's grandmother (cf. audio recording 7).

Most of the songs presented to Solomon by his ancestral spirits are songs they used to sing. When Solomon dreams, these spirits appear very vividly to him. What he sees and hears is clear. For him, dreaming is real; "it is no joke". The spirits usually perform beer songs, the most common type of adult music. Sometimes Solomon's ancestral spirits sing an entire song. However, it seldom happens that a song is presented in full. Song motives more commonly appear. These motives are text phrases or musical phrases. In both cases Solomon has to adapt the beer song for guitar performance. Dream motives are developed and extended by him, and turned into a full-length composition. Songs which are presented in full in a dream are old songs which deal with the distant past. In the case of the presentation of motives, Solomon adds material which is based on his own current experiences.

It is possible for Solomon to compose a song about virtually anything. All he needs are the social "ingredients". Dream inspiration plays a relatively minor role in terms of Solomon's musical output. Most of his songs are a direct response to his life experiences. In this context the process of composition is not some supernatural process. Rooted in the well-known formulaic convention of creation which characterizes oral cultures, it is based on life-long exposure to a musical culture which generates many stock melodic, rhythmic and verbal phrases. At times Solomon exhibits a flash of brilliance, and is able to create a song within a few minutes. This creation usually is a product of a certain social situation, and the potential of that situation to be

represented in terms of the available stock phrases and formulas. A good example of this is the creation of "They do not mourn" (88). One Saturday afternoon during June 1992 I arrived at Solomon's homestead for a regular weekend visit. Solomon was still at the funeral of a young woman who had died in childbirth. When he arrived, it was clear that he was upset. Some people at the funeral had complained about the type of food given to them. He chastised them, saying that it was not a birthday party (88: 7). They had to mourn the deceased, and not bicker about unimportant things. He told them that a funeral was a place for eating brown bread, "not white bread with peanut butter". White bread with peanut butter is symbolic of joy and a good life. Brown bread, conversely, is suited to the sombre atmosphere of a funeral. This incident troubled Solomon severely. He sat down, and tuned and twanged his guitar strings for a few minutes. He then performed "They do not mourn" immediately, without any intermediate process of experimentation and trial. The incident had turned him into a sad and contemplative state, and he performed about twenty songs over a period of three hours. For Solomon, musical performance is an emotional expression which provides cathartic release from tension.

However, instances like these are not common. Composition generally is not some automatic, "natural" process for Solomon: "Sometimes it takes one week, sometimes one month. I cannot just pick up the guitar and make a song immediately". Not surprisingly, in terms of the oral musical context in which Solomon functions, the concept of borrowing is very common. For example, "The dog" (14) is a song whose basis Solomon has borrowed via his brother Robert from well-known penny whistle player Albert Ralulimi. Borrowing is not considered unethical if the borrowed material is reworked into a

new form. In referring to the adaptation of the songs of others, Solomon remarks that he "follows a different path" (ndila). An example of such a "path" can be found by comparing Solomon's Azwinndini (21) to its original, "With what shall I dance?" (227) by Nndanganeni Luambo (cf. audio recordings 8 & 9). Solomon copied the melody and certain phrases of the original. He added words of his own as well as a different accompaniment. He changed Luambo's driving strumming pattern with its underlying commercially-inspired dance rhythm to a gentle, contemplative, arpeggio accompaniment. Another example of Solomon's borrowing is evident in "Mrs Mutshekwa" (35; 36), based on the famous song by Albert Mundalamo (cf. 159). Here Solomon only borrowed the main theme of the song, but not its musical basis or actual text.

Solomon's promotion of a normative social model also applies in terms of musical creation. For him, direct copying of another person's music is dishonest and unethical. It is "the robbing business". Solomon once told me that well-known singer Irene Mawela, whose songs are regularly broadcast on Radio Thohoyandou, had recorded a version of his "Children of our place" (34). He wanted to know whether I gave it to her, and complained that certain musicians take his songs and "sell them to the radio". This is one of the main reasons why some guitarists want to have their music "produced" or commercially recorded. Already steeped in a cultural context where musical products are a commodity, they are hesitant to perform their music in public for fear of losing claim to its creation. For Solomon, copying exhibits false ethics. Music has effect only if the emotions stimulating it are *mbiluni* ("in the heart") and genuine: "I look at the people around me, and I play with my heart and my mind". The power of musical performance lies partly in its integrity. Thus, "true"

music only emerges from the inner self, and it is born of the suffering and joy of life.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2. The tshilombe as heroic and marginal figure

As I have indicated elsewhere (Kruger 1991), the tshilombe may be regarded as a "marginal" social figure. The concept of social "marginality" has received considerable attention (e.g. Babcock-Abrahams 1975, Coplan 1987, Turner 1974 & 1975, Van Gennep 1960). This "marginality" is a factor of the relationship between zwilombe and their community which is

a positive-negative, love-hate one which seems to fit the universal stereotype of the artist as heroic and marginal figure; as rebel and "loud-mouth lunatic-poet-musician", disliked for shocking people and for his failure to conform to their standards, yet admired for his artistry (Kruger 1991: 3).

Solomon's response to and engagement with his environment exploits this relationship and finds expression through his "marginal" status as a tshilombe. The basic positive-negative contradiction in the tshilombe character is reflected in a folktale related to me by ninety year old Wilson Ravele of Makonde, who heard it from his father during the first decade of this century,<sup>9</sup> and in a contemporary short story (Mahamba 1984).<sup>10</sup> The basic values of the tshilombe concept are also reflected in certain of the dominant semantic characteristics of its noun class (class seven).<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.2.1 "A Wizard of All Good Things": The Tshilombe as Heroic Figure

The power and extraordinary ability of zwilombe is referred to in Mahamba (1984) by a passenger on the bus (cf. note 10) who remarks of Mapani: "This man is a virtuoso. See how he

dances; listen to his singing". The first sentence translates directly as "this man is a wizard of all good things" (hoyu munna ndi muloi wa zwivhuya zwothe). These "good" things (zwivhuya) firstly refer to his musical expertise. However, **vhuya** seems mainly associated with morality. And indeed, during the argument that ensues on the bus over the behaviour of Mapani, it is remarked of **zwilombe**: "Some of them are foolish, some of them are good".

In explaining **vhuya**, Venda speakers sometimes distinguish between **muvhuya** (a good person; cf. song 95) and **muvh**i (a bad person; in the Christian context, a sinner; cf. song 195). The concept of **vhuya** is associated with any life-sustaining action. Certain **zwilombe** actually make a point of emphasizing their life-sustaining behaviour. For example, Solomon expresses himself against excessive drinking (45: 14-21), boastful behaviour (74: 2), and violence (monologue: ll 60-70 & 85-89). Instead, he wishes to spread happiness and mediate conflict through his music (monologue: ll 63, 67-69, 91). His guitar, as symbolic extension of religious authority, "shows the good way". It is something which gladdens and pacifies hearts (91: 6 & 13). It is not something that causes trouble (91: 7). His treatment of his instrument symbolizes ideal human relations. He does not "hit or pinch it", because it is his friend (91: 9) and second wife (91: 19): "I sleep here, it is there", he once said, pointing to a couch standing next to him, showing that he sleeps with it next to his bed.

For Van Rooy (1978) the meaning of **vhuya** is essentially abstract, referring to aspects such as "vital force, power, prestige, health, good luck etc." (Van Rooy 1978: 7; cf. also Van Deventer 1991). I wish to suggest that **vhuya** is an essential characteristic of **tshilombe** existence. It seems

partly associated with the function of the *tshilombe* as an outstanding individual musician "who puts himself in touch with spiritual forces, like a doctor or the member of a possession cult, and so is able to express a wider range of experiences than most people" (Blacking 1976: 48). *Zwilombe* seem to possess the extraordinary ability and power necessary to confront the mysteries and contradictions of life, and the inexplicable, powerful forces of nature. Like other ritual specialists, they are the "epitomy of man's participation in and experience of the religious universe" (cf. Mbiti 1989: 188). Guitar playing *zwilombe* are distinguished from other guitarists by their ability to conceive and formulate ideas about culture. *Zwilombe* like Solomon have a sense of "breadth and inclusiveness", and insight into humanity which sets them apart from other musicians. The processes and products of their music are characterized by a metaphysical dimension, an awareness of what it is to be human in the world (cf. Raper 1985). *Zwilombe* are aware of the main psychological undercurrents of contemporary communal existence. They interpret these undercurrents musically, especially those which they experience personally. Thus they continually circulate messages in typical oral fashion, integrating their musical discourse with modes of popular expression. When Solomon sings *shango lo fhela* ("the country is perishing"; 79: 13), he "fills" his mouth "with the words of others". He reaches out to and speaks for his fellow beer drinkers who struggle for existence and meaning in a culture of poverty and moral ambiguity. They join him in singing, a unifying expressive medium that allows the mediation and sharing of sorrow and joy. Thus the religiously sanctioned moral authority and musical expertise of *zwilombe* allows them to address community concerns, affect popular consciousness, and build a strong communal ideology and identity.



People often refer to a *tshilombe* as "a person who delights and pleases people" (*muthu wa u takadza vhathu*). This is expressed in the function of the *tshilombe* as entertainer and story-teller par excellence, "a clown who makes people laugh and forget their troubles" (Blacking 1965: 51). Topical songs and dramatic action elicit riveted audience attention, particularly if they contain narrative passages. Enjoyment, empathy and participation is particularly intense when songs deal with shared experiences: quarreling over lovers (35; 36), or lamenting over a poverty-stricken country without peace (39; 40; cf. video recording 3).

The status of Solomon and other *zwilombe* as popular entertainers is of vital importance in terms of the establishment and maintenance of a positive self-image. Solomon's life process takes on characteristics of Goffman's theatrical model of social reality (Goffmann 1975). In terms of this model, social reality comprises various spheres, each with its attendant social roles and identities. In other words, people perform various social roles and assume different identities depending on the social situation they find themselves in. Thus Solomon's existence assumes a quality perhaps more often associated with migrant labour (cf. Comaroff 1987). Migrant labour is experienced as humanly alienating. This alienation is represented by the Sotho-Tswana term *-bereka* (Afr. *werk*), self-destructive work that "has use only for your body" (Comaroff op. cit.: 192). Similarly, Solomon is a manual labourer who finds himself low in the professional and socio-economic hierarchy. For him, as for guitarist and migrant labourer Albert Mundalamo, work has an alienating quality, it is *mberego* (cf. 165). Solomon has little job satisfaction. He complains of his professional status and bad pay, and generally has low professional self-

esteem.

Solomon's work environment is in contrast with his home environment, the domain of traditional work, **mushumo**. Traditional work is carried out in the domain of material as well as social existence. Like a homestead, society is constructed (-fhata) by people. Constructing society is to participate in normative, rewarding social interaction (cf. 66). Solomon thus experiences a role reversal when at home. At work he is a peripheral figure, a deferential, unassuming man who quietly goes about carrying cement buckets, digging trenches, and following orders. His professional role is largely external to a meaningful social existence; it takes on the quality of Goffman's "working consensus". However, at home Solomon becomes the centre of communal energy flow. He is ward head, dynamic figure, principal actor, giver of orders, popular entertainer, and the fulcrum of musical activity. Once, during a particularly hectic part of an afternoon's music making and revelry with friends, Solomon remarked to me: "I am poor, but many people love me"; and on another occasion: "my house is not beautiful, but my father (i.e. his spirit) comes to visit". In other words, the joy of communal musical performance helps to counteract life's crises and the sorrows of material existence. What Solomon lacks in terms of material wealth and professional status, he makes up for in terms of the self-enhancement, emotional energy and collective consciousness stimulated by the socializing function of music making. Thus domestic musical performances are crucial for a positive self-image, and they constitute a vital counterbalance for the debilitating quality of work life. In Goffman's terms, Solomon's home environment becomes a backstage, a fabricated world or psychological space which allows reflection on existence in a stratified society.

This contrast between work and home life is a manifestation of an essence of life, namely the co-existence of sorrow and joy. Solomon informed me during the latter half of 1991 that his wife was expecting another child. I asked him whether he could afford another child, since he had told me before in clear terms that four children were enough. He replied that he could manage five. I continually ponder about this contradiction. It sometimes occurs to me that Solomon and his wife might be caught up in an intricate web of social convention on the one hand (e.g. large families as social institutions; opposition to contraception; views about masculinity and femininity), and the demands of poverty on the other. Solomon and his family clearly struggle. And as most of his songs show, he continually complains about his poverty. Therefore, it was difficult for me to understand why he was so seemingly complacent about the arrival of another child. From my conversation with him that afternoon it was my impression that he consciously allowed this to happen, and that he had resigned himself to its consequences. This attitude is reflected in the name Solomon gave to the child, a son, upon birth (1992). This is the name Avhatakali, which literally means "they are not happy". The name, according to Solomon, signifies happiness as well as unhappiness. This meaning is also reflected in Solomon's remark "today I am happy, tomorrow I am not", and a line he often sings: *ri a takala, ri a tambula* ("we are happy, we are suffering"). These expressions articulate the irony of human existence, namely to be painfully aware of the futility of existence, of living "in the teeth of paradoxes" (Becker 1972). During my conversation with Solomon about his last-born son, he associated me with employment and wealth: "You are white. You are the rich." When he informs his family that I will be visiting, they say: "money is coming". For him the dividing line be-

tween the haves and the have-nots often seems impossible to cross. That afternoon Solomon remarked again that his mother is blind, his father dead, and that he is not educated. He said that if his father were still alive and if his mother could see properly, they would have given him advice about his life and struggles. What made his lament different is that he added: "I will always be poor". Thus Solomon implies that his songs have very little real effect on his material conditions.

In the final analysis Solomon's songs allow him to support existential paradoxes. They effect the exercising of power, because power lies in the human ability to support contradictions (Becker 1972: 177). Thus Solomon remarks: "I am happy. Do not worry. I solve everything"; and his young music-loving friend Mbuiseni Netshiavha, who is unemployed and has no laces for his shoes: "people are suffering, but no problem". In other words, there is temporary happiness among those sitting in the shade, singing and drinking beer. However, in the long run there is often only the prospect of suffering and poverty. Thus, because no significant structural social change is effected as a result of ritual musical performance, Solomon's psychological release is only temporary. It must be repeated through continual performance, through on-going musical engagement with structural inequalities. Like certain Australians, Solomon and other Venda musicians also sing their world (sic) and their existence (cf. Chatwin 1987). Solomon's musical performances thus constitute a "particular style that a society adopts to deny despair, the particular ways it lies to itself about the nature of reality" (cf. Becker 1972: 150). They are an integral part of a broader pattern of conceptualizing existence and mediating despair:

I dream with the guitar.  
I will die with it.  
They say, they regard me mad.  
I do not forget. I will die with it.  
They say, what do you do through 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.

(song 91)

This reflective quality of Solomon's musical expression may be related to the qualities of the guitar. Solo instrumental playing (and this includes traditional instruments) often tends to be private and individual. Although solo musicians are welcome at beer houses, their music generates a spirit different from that of beer song performances. People like to dance to guitar music, but their dancing is not as aggressive and pulsating as when they are dancing beer songs with drum accompaniment. The guitar lends itself to more reflective playing, with emphasis on textual development (the lines of beer songs are short and seldom developed). As such the nature of solo musical instruments also seems to contribute towards the definition of what it is to be a musician, and particularly a tshilombe.

I have indicated that zwilombe integrate their musical discourse with modes of popular expression, and that group singing allows the mediation of life's problems. In other words, the power of zwilombe is rooted in the communal creation through music of meaningful social reality. For

Solomon, this reality is conceived of as "the land of God", a social model which promotes traditional morality. It is now appropriate to look at how Solomon invokes musical structure in the promotion of this morality.

I illustrate the basic structure of Solomon's songs in terms of his performance of beer songs, **malende** (usually pl), and **jive** songs. These two categories of song make up the bulk of Solomon's repertoire (his song categorization is discussed in ch. 3.5).

**Malende** (cf. figs 1 & 2) constitute the biggest category of Venda traditional communal music, and they are adapted for performance in other categories of communal music. **Malende** signify the singing, dancing, handclapping and drumming<sup>12</sup> performed by adults of both sexes gathered at beer houses. **Jive** songs seem to have emerged from beer house culture during the 1950s, and they show the influence of urban popular music. They are differentiated from **malende** in their harmonic progression, meter and dance steps which are expressive of modern culture (cf. ch. 3.5). By contrast **malende** are expressive of traditional culture. Nevertheless, **malende** and **jive** are regularly performed at the same beer drink.

The most basic structural aspect of **malende** and **jive** is their cyclic musical progression. This progression is analogous to a horizontal roundabout ("merry-go-round") which allows a person to get off or on at will, and revolves as long as it is pushed. Similarly, the repetition of a basic musical pattern allows easy entrance and exit for singers and dancers participating in group musical performance. **Malende** and **jive** have an antiphonal structure. Singing is divided between a song leader (**musimi**) who "plants a song" (from **-sima**, to

plant) and a chorus (*vhabvumeli*) which responds (from *-bvumela*, to respond). The response of the chorus does not change. Song leaders also have one or two standard lines, but good leaders often add lines of their own.

Many of Solomon's songs are widely known in Ngulumbi and surrounding villages. When people gather at the Mathase homestead to drink beer, and they do not know a particular song, Solomon teaches it to them immediately. He first sings the song without guitar accompaniment, and then with accompaniment. At this stage of the learning process singers sometimes express their preference for single line or arpeggio guitar accompaniment, *-tota* (to pinch or nip with the nails), as opposed to strumming, *-kweta* (to scratch). The reason for this is that picking or plucking allows singers who do not know a particular song to follow its melody with ease. The singers first pick up the chorus, and then start to improvise in beer song style. When the song is known well, Solomon strums his guitar to support the volume of singing.

Malende usually feature the most common cyclic lengths of Venda traditional songs, namely those comprising twelve, eighteen or twenty-four pulses (cf. Blacking 1970, Kruger 1986). Cycles are often characterized by the balancing of metrical and tonal phrases (cf. Blacking 1967: 7). This is evident in fig. 1 (cf. audio recording 10)<sup>13</sup> where the part of the song leader is divided into two phrases of twelve pulses each. These two phrases are also tonally balanced, each being rooted in a separate tonality. Although traditional songs have an implicit harmonic framework, their harmonic progressions are often reduced to a few basic chords which appear in skeleton form. These chords generally comprise harmonic equivalent tones an octave, fifth and fourth

apart. The most important tones in a harmonic progression are **phala** and **thakhula**. They are located a whole tone apart, **phala** being the lower tone. Their relationship is analogous to the tonic-leading tone relationship in Western music in the sense that they constitute the main tonality shift of the music (cf. Blacking 1959 & 1970). In the leader part of the fig. 1 the descending triad G-E-C constitutes **phala** tonality, and A-F-D **thakhula** tonality (following Blacking 1970, I encircle **thakhula**, and surround **phala** by a square throughout my transcriptions).

Figure 1 is a musical score for a song. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a 'leader' staff and a 'chorus' staff. The leader staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics under the leader staff are 'A- hee, Ma- nde- vhe- le!'. The chorus staff has a treble clef and the lyrics 'Vha vho to' vha- sa-'. The second system also has a 'leader' staff and a 'chorus' staff. The leader staff has a treble clef and the lyrics 'A- hee, Ma- nde- vhe- le! Hee haa.'. The chorus staff has a treble clef and the lyrics 'dzi. Ma- nde- vhe- le!'. There are tonality markers: a square around the first note of the leader staff in the first system, and a circle around the first note of the leader staff in the second system. A measure number '24' is written above the second system's leader staff.

Fig. 1: Pitch = C, original = G; 3 pulses = 106

Figure 2 is a musical score for a song. It consists of a single system of staves. The top staff is labeled 'leader' and has a treble clef. The lyrics under it are 'Ndi do fa nga vha- bva- na tshi- ke- gu- lu. Hai- wa! Yo!'. The middle staff is labeled 'guitar' and has a treble clef. The bottom staff is labeled 'clap' and has 'x' marks under each note. There are tonality markers: a square around the first note of the leader staff, and a circle around the first note of the leader staff. A measure number '18' is written above the right end of the leader staff.

Fig. 2: Pitch = C, original = Ab; 2 pulses = 160



The tonality shift of fig. 1 is relatively clearly manifested. However, tonality shifts more often are concealed in the sparse texture of songs. This is evident in fig. 2 in whose performance Solomon participated (cf. audio recording 11).<sup>14</sup> Its main tonality shift occurs between *thakhula* D at the end of the leader phrase and *phala* C at the beginning of the chorus phrase. The F (pulse six) is the root of a third chord. This chord is of secondary importance. It is sometimes omitted, leaving only *phala* and *thakhula* to constitute a bitonal shift (cf. Kruger 1986).

The typical tonality shift of traditional songs as illustrated in fig. 2 is relatively relaxed and effortless compared to the prominent cadential movement of Western music. This seems to contribute towards perpetual musical momentum and the absence of climaxes. Climaxes do occur in musical performance. However, they are of a social rather than musical nature. They usually occur in the dancing and dramatic action which is carried by the flowing, perpetual motion of the music (cf. ch. 3.5).

Solomon's *jive* songs are characterized by combinations of four basic chords. These chords may be described as the tonic (C or I), the supertonic (D or ii), the subdominant (F or IV) and the dominant (G or V). They normally are produced using the tuning given in fig. 3a. Approximately a third of the guitarists in my research sample use this tuning. The relative tuning of the four highest-sounding strings corresponds with that of the most popular four-string banjo tuning in Zambia and Malawi (cf. Kubik 1989: 12). The same relative tuning is also found among Zulu guitarists (cf. Koppers 1989, Rycroft 1977). Most older guitarists like Solomon were schooled on home made guitars. It is therefore reasonable to

assume that the tuning in fig. 3a also derives from that of home made guitars (relative tuning E4-C4-G3; cf. ch. 4.7.1).

Tuning patterns generally are rooted in particular social environments, and they serve musical style and objectives. Solomon's tuning is a practical one. It allows him to execute a scale (fig. 3b) and several chords (fig. 3c) without shifting his left hand. This is valuable for lengthy communal performances. Solomon normally uses five strings on his guitar. He has no string in the fourth string position. To produce tone C3 in chord V, he puts his thumb over the neck of the guitar and presses the fifth string (placed in the sixth string position) on fret two.

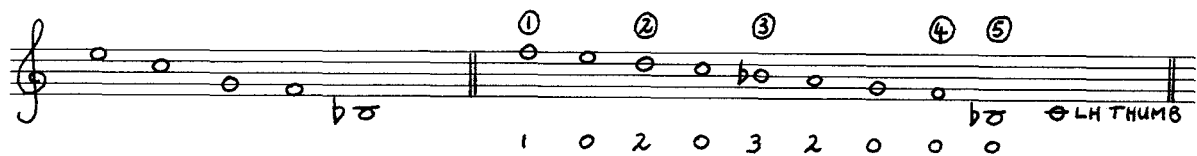


Fig. 3a: Pitch = E, original = Eb

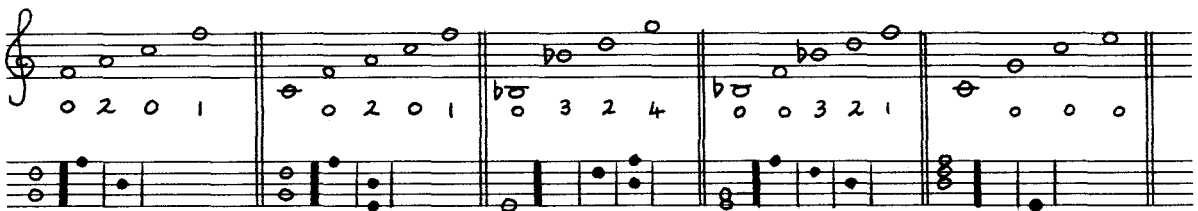


Fig. 3c

Solomon usually employs two chord progressions which seem related to the IV-I-V7-I *simanje-manje* formula described by Kubik (1974) as perhaps the most important ostinato harmonic pattern in southern Africa (Kubik 1974: 25). These progressions are IV-I6/4-V-I (cf. fig. 4 & audio recording 12) and I-ii6-I6/4-V7 (varied with I-ii6-I-V; cf. fig. 5 & audio recording 13). In most of Solomon's jive songs the voice part

follows the guitar chord progression (cf. fig. 4). However, Solomon sometimes subordinates the I-ii6-I6/4-V7 formula to the harmonic shift of traditional music (cf. Blacking 1959, Kubik 1974, Rycroft 1977). Blacking notes in this regard that

the regular movement of the root-progression a whole-tone above or below a tone which may be called the "tonal centre" of the progression, is a feature of much Venda music. Similar progressions are found ... in the Tonic-Subdominant-Dominant strumming that one often hears on guitars (Blacking 1959: 23).

When Venda guitarists settle down in performance by playing an instrumental introduction, one often hears a conventional Western chord progression. However, when singing starts, the harmonic certainty of the guitar part starts to wane. Structural ambiguity arises because the vocal part follows a traditional harmonic shift which opposes and subordinates the Western chord progression. In fig. 5 the I-ii6-I6/4-V7 progression is subordinated by the harmonic structure of the vocal part (subordinated chord progressions are bracketed through-out my transcriptions). The vocal part follows the typical descending melodic shape of traditional songs (cf. also figs 1 & 2). The main tonality shift of the song occurs between its beginning (F or *phala*) and end (G or *thakhula*). What is significant is that vocal movement does not occur from chord V to I, thus weakening any suggestion of conventional Western cadential movement. Kubik (1974) reports a similar guitar-voice relationship in the music of the Kachamba brothers from Malawi (cf. Kubik 1974: 21).

guitar

Ndi a- mbu na vho- ne vha a sha- vha.

IV P i P i I<sub>4</sub>

Ndi a- mba na vho- ne vha a kho- na.

V I

32

Fig. 4 (song 7): Pitch = F, original = E; 4 pulses = 86

tuning

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

guitar

Nne ndi hu- mbu- la nga

(I) (ii<sub>6</sub>)

li- nwe du.

(I<sub>4</sub>) (V<sub>7</sub>)

24

LH thumb

Fig. 5 (song 62): Pitch = F, original = E; 6 pulses = 88

The primary social value of the musical structure of **malende** and **jive** is that it promotes social solidarity. The musical cycle is a predetermined, known motif which allows singers to explore social reality. Playing essentially dance music, Solomon's ostinato guitar accompaniments are harmonically and rhythmically uniform. Although they comprise an integral layer of meaning in a total cultural product, they often seem to function as the basic musical grid which allows the communal interweaving of vocal lines. Vocal interweaving may be seen as one of the most structured forms of daily social interaction, extending from speech situations in which people "adapt their speech patterns and rhythms to one another" (cf. Collins 1986: 201 ff.). These speech situations are characterized by the synchronization of body movements with speech rhythm. Speakers also synchronize pitch register and range, loudness, tempo, and the duration of syllables. This kind of synchronization clearly is fundamental to successful musical performance. At times it becomes so intense that performers become "locked" into the ritual and "engrossed" by the reality it creates" (cf. Collins 1986: 202). This reality constitutes what I call "musical overdrive". This condition arises in ritual situations when various individual emotional levels reinforce each other to achieve a higher level of shared emotional intensity. This allows the human organism to go into "overdrive" and thus beyond its normal mode of experience, performance and output. In music it is a condition in which singers and dancers seem to have endless energy, and instrumentalists play until sweat pours down their face. It builds enthusiasm and a common emotional mood, and generates a feeling of social solidarity which may become the basis of action in life. This is a feeling I once experienced personally. During a social gathering at the Mathase home, Solomon performed "Masindi was arrested" (19). I was virtually the only

one who sang with him. We sang the song a couple of times. Then, during a repetition, we sang up to the end of the fourth line (ending with: "and strong beer"). I went on to the last line (starting with: "she cried bitterly"). However, Solomon deliberately went back to the first line of the song. I looked at him and he looked at me. We both knew that I had been "caught" out. He was deliberately toying with me. I laughed, and he laughed in response. I experienced a surge of surprise and joy, but above all a feeling of friendship and communication, as if a personal bond had been created between us. I had experienced power that was used responsibly and positively to strengthen human relationships.

Solomon thus employs musical structure to promote an ordered social environment. At times, when he performs at a beer drink, he attracts people like a magnet. His lean frame belies the assertiveness and energy he possesses. He sometimes sings for three hours virtually without stopping. His voice becomes hoarse because of the duration of the performance, and because he initiates and leads the singing amidst a group of rowdy drinkers. Solomon's power at times appears almost total. He more or less chooses whatever song he wants to sing. He starts and ends when he wants to. Others have but little option to follow suit if they want to participate. It is almost as if he sometimes controls a group like puppets.

Consider the video recording (no 4) of a communal performance of "The whistle is blowing" (15). This is a very popular song, thought originally to have been performed at weddings. The complete song has several lines. However, in performance Solomon mostly sings the line *mukusule ndi mini?* ("what are dried vegetables?"; 1 7). To this the group responds with the standard line, *ndi nama ya Vhavenda* ("they are the favourite

Venda food"; 1 8). Solomon holds the group quite firmly to this specific call and response pattern. This "grip" he has on the group is also reflected in the peculiar clashing of harmonies that results from playing a prolonged tonic ostinato on the guitar. This clash is deliberate. It seems as if Solomon balances the group on a musical precipice, halting movement and progression by creating tension between the unchanging chord on the guitar and the vocal harmony. It is a frozen moment of suspension and tension which is the seed of progression and new life: without warning he suddenly goes on to the next solo line, *tshidimela ndi mini?* ("what is a train?"; 1 9). The group is so conditioned by now that they continue to sing "it is the favourite Venda food", which is of course not the correct response. For a fleeting moment there is uncertainty, and then embarrassed laughter: Solomon has manipulated the group neatly, catching them unawares.

This kind of power is regarded jealously by some, and it seems to create problems in a social environment which generally strives towards conformity. How does the community mediate the *tshilombe's* individualism and commanding personality? The answer to this partly lies in performance practice. What I have come to identify as the ever present slightly inebriated nuisance one encounters at beer houses, in fact seems to function as a kind of antagonist in the social dramas in which Solomon is the protagonist. On some musical occasions one or two men continually join in Solomon's performance. They jump around him, sing, act, dance, shout, recite praises, and pull their faces (cf. 36: 10-13; 50: 19-23). Mostly their performance complements that of Solomon. At times they almost seem to "interfere" in Solomon's performance. But is this interference? Perhaps these performers are trying to assert themselves. They arguably act as counter-

balances for Solomon's forceful, magnetic personality. In effect they actually seem to offset or shield Solomon's individuality. They almost protect him from too much exposure, and hence also malice and jealousy. They support Solomon as institutionalized prophet-musician, yet they help to maintain the delicate balance between individuality and communality.

Tshilombe power is also a factor of the ritual licence that permits musicians to act as critics who force people "to remember that all is not well and that something ought to be done" (Blacking 1965: 51). Solomon remarks in his monologue:

60 people, if they drink, you see all the Mavenda do this. These  
That's why me, if I do this guitar, me if I come, I don't  
do this (i.e. fight). No, I come to drink only liquor on  
my stomach, that's all. And so, I'm taking my guitar, I  
get it. I say, maybe these people, that man want to hit  
65 another man, or another woman, or another something. But,  
because on my side I don't want it. Because I say, don't  
do that. This man can't understand me. So for me, I take  
this thing (i.e. his guitar), I'm play. And so I play for  
them.

As indicated above, tshilombe influence particularly seems to lie in its ability to affect social relations. Zwilombe are powerful because they apply supernaturally sanctioned energy and talent for this purpose. They are critics and moral guardians who, on spiritual command, remind people to "follow the ways of the ancestors". Thus their musical medium is a religiously legitimated means whereby social criticism may be expressed relatively free from restraint and retribution. "The veranda pole which changed and became a woman" (Lestrade 1942) is a Venda folktale which illustrates the role of musical performance in challenging corrupt leadership: a chief robs a man of his beautiful wife. The man takes up the occupation of tshilombe, and sets out for the chief's home-  
stead where he performs for all the villagers. His wife is



also present, and he turns her into a veranda pole. Challenged thus, the frightened chief returns the tshilombe's wife and compensates the couple.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the presence of other channels of public expression, the influencing function of zwiombe is by no means obsolete. Guitarists like Albert Mundalamo and Nndanganeni Luambo became culture heroes with their songs about the traumas of social life during the 1970s and 1980s (cf. 159 & 227). The turbulent 1980s in particular saw widespread social fear and uncertainty. Freedom of public expression was curtailed, and musicians had songs banned from the radio.<sup>16</sup> However, communal music making generally was not affected by restrictions. Noted in this regard was tshilombe performance culture, the female dance tshigombela, malende (beer song) performances, and guitar performances at beer houses. These musical traditions played a role in political processes by affecting public consciousness. Several informants indicated that it was a certain tshilombe itinerant musician (it is not clear whether he was a guitarist) who coined the phrase *Vhuthihi ha u via!* ("Unity commits ritual murder!") during the politically volatile period from 1979 to 1989. This phrase is derived from the nationalistic slogan *Vhuthihi ha Venda!* ("Unity of Venda!") which promoted national unity in support of independence and the hegemony of the ruling Venda National Party. "Unity commits ritual murder!" challenged the assumptions of "Unity of Venda!", suggesting that unity was a myth enforced through the violent suppression of divergent political views. The adapted slogan was widely circulated in the public domain, and became part of a larger cultural resource of shared messages and moods (cf. 21; 23; 27; 28; 29; 39; 49; 59; 63; 96).<sup>17</sup> This resource generated communal solidarity as well as emotional energy which continually sim-

mered under the surface of everyday existence, occasionally rising to view in the form of boycotts and public protests. The unbanning of the African National Congress and other political organizations at the beginning of 1990 initiated a final turbulent, violent three month period punctuated by the military overthrow of the government on 5 April 1990.

### 3.2.2 Where Madness Enters: Tshilombe as Marginal Figure

If *vhuya* is an integral part of *tshilombe* existence, so is "foolishness" (*vhudabadaba*) and "madness" (*tshipengo*). These are terms commonly used by people when referring to *tshilombe* behaviour. They function on several levels, and contribute to the ambiguous status of the *tshilombe*. They are firmly rooted in a general moralistic context in which any kind of deviant behaviour may be attributed to "madness", "foolishness" or "possession". For example, a hoeing song which says, "it is truly foolish and irresponsible to relieve yourself in a footpath", is a general moral injunction, while the well-known beer song, "Nyamuofhe the mad woman is crying", refers to immoral sexual behaviour as "madness".

This concept of "madness" is a crucially important functional element of *tshilombe* existence. As the narrator in *Mahamba* (1984) remarks, "artistry cannot be separated from certain things". *Zwilombe*, like spirit mediums, are accorded certain status and the "gift of illumination in return for a surrendering of the self" (Lewis 1971: 57). They often have to surrender pride and self-respect in order to carry out their function as critic. For example, several *zwilombe* assume a different, often comical, physical appearance. They are social actors who periodically change their identity by putting on unusual clothing. Some like to wear elaborate hats

made from animal fur, while others bedeck themselves in beads, and yet others don items of female clothing.

However, surrendering pride and self-respect more commonly is manifested in a declaration of "madness". As Hamlet says, "My madness speaks: It will but skin and film the ulcerous place". Similarly, Solomon sometimes sings a short song entitled "Madness enters here" (Tshipengo tshi khou mu dzhena). This is related to his comment that his guitar makes him "mad" (50: 17). Like Hamlet, Solomon therefore is "not in madness, but mad in craft". For him, "madness" is a "perfectly rational adjustment to an insane world", and he participates in it with "effective and deliberate complicity" (cf. Chetcuti et al 1985).<sup>18</sup>

But "madness" more than allows **zwilombe** to function as critics. It is also metaphoric for socially unacceptable behaviour and character traits. In Mahamba (1984) the narrator succinctly remarks:

A **tshilombe** is an outstanding musician but sometimes he talks too much. He always roams around. If you are an argumentative person, do not provoke him because he will shut you up and make a laughing stock of you (Mahamba 1984: 69).

Solomon is also sometimes accused of, as he puts it, "talking too much". People sometimes refer to **zwilombe** as **zwitekeshi**, argumentative chatterboxes. The attribute of being argumentative may be associated with the need of **zwilombe** to be assertive in a communal musical context. An assertive nature is an important quality for musicians who attempt to make a living by selling their music. This is reflected in a number of songs where Solomon "identifies" himself by way of advertising his musical expertise (21: 4-5; 40: 33-34; 45: 27-28). However, assertion is prone to transgressing the

boundary of tact and subtlety, such as the time when Solomon referred to some of his friends as "blockheads" (*madanda*, lit. logs of wood) when they disagreed with him about the meaning of song 20 ("The teacher") during an argument which lasted for half an hour. Importantly however, people also accuse *zwilombe* of being *zwitekeshi* when they are being criticized or ridiculed. They fear the sharp wit and even sharper tongue of the *tshilombe* (cf. e.g. songs 28, 29 & 45).

The image of *zwilombe* as "mad" is partly the result of their close association with "low-class" beer houses. Many first generation Christians stereotypically associate beer houses with excessive drinking, immorality and violence. They are fond of quoting 1 Corinthians 6: 10 which equates drunkards with sodomites and robbers - people who will not have eternal life. This is basically confirmed by Coplan (1985) who shows that participation in shebeen culture sometimes is a proletarian class attribute which some "middle-class" people reject. To certain aspiring members of this class they carry the taint of "peasant" culture. The type of existence led by many *zwilombe* does not tie in with "middle-class" ideals. *Zwilombe* are accorded a dubious reputation by some people who regard them as "lazy". They are regarded with apprehension and disapproval by persons who do not necessarily want to deny any family or friendly relations with them, but who are apprehensive about them and often embarrassed by their lifestyle and manners.<sup>19</sup> Several of Solomon's songs refer to the way he is viewed by people in this context. In song 8 he is likened to a winding road. In other words, he is a person who does not "go straight" in terms of behaviour. The metaphor of a winding road also refers to meandering from one beer house to the next, as well as to a drunken stagger.

Certain **zwilombe** are heavy drinkers, and some even seem to approach a condition of alcoholism. This is partly because they are usually rewarded with free beer for their playing at beer houses. The consumption of beer at musical occasions is an integral part of traditional life. Yet, this on-going practice also has a more recent historic precedent. An increase in the flow of migrant labourers during the middle decades of this century coincided with the rise in popularity of various informal financial associations, such as the well-known **stokfel**. Business was and still is always mixed with pleasure at these gatherings. The drinking and merry-making associated with these events did little to improve the negative image of the **tshilombe**. Some migrant labourers on leave from Johannesburg spent all their time going from one beer house to the next, enjoying themselves so much that they missed their transport back to town.<sup>20</sup> Among these were **zwilombe** dancers who got free beer for attracting customers to beer houses. Guitar playing **zwilombe** were and still are popular **stokfel** entertainers. Some guitar playing **zwilombe** are noted for their extravagant urban manners. They try to impress girls by dancing in new ways and swanking with their guitar behind their head. This has contributed to the naming of the guitar by missionaries as "the devil's instrument".

Several **zwilombe** seem to strengthen their popular image, perhaps deliberately, by "admitting" their social misdemeanors. They remark that they are "lazy" and, in Solomon's case, "drunk and mad". Solomon often refers to himself as a "guitar bashing baboon" who likes to drink (6: 9-12). However, **zwilombe** like him are usually quick to remark that their instruments are not lazy, and that all they want to do is to "make music all day". In this context Solomon indicated that the label of "madness" is also given to him by people who are

jealous of what they perceive of as the considerable financial benefits of his occupation.

As suggested before, drinking threatens family survival. Certain *zwilombe* are unable to provide even the basic needs of their family. The little income they receive from selling their music is often spent on alcohol only, and they consequently tend to resort to an existence of dependency on their relatives. Neglect of one's family is, not surprisingly, severely frowned on and should be viewed in terms of the fact that, in many African societies, marriage and the family comprise the foundation of social, economic and political existence. Thus, Elisa Mashule of Thohoyandou remarked to me of a certain *tshilombe*, "he never says goodbye; neither he nor anybody else knows where he will die". Forsaking one's ancestral home in this manner is to upset the cosmological order and to invite the wrath of the ancestors. The disapproval of people about the wandering existence of *zwilombe* should also be seen in this light. When I befriended guitarist Gilbert Tshibvumo of Madamalala, I was taken to his home where he introduced me to his wife. This was his way of legitimizing all the time he was to spend at beer houses with me. My presence was proof that he was engaged in "serious" work.

The "madness" of *zwilombe* is characteristically also associated with bachelorhood (cf. also 46: 6-11). As I indicated in terms of extramarital relationships, bachelorhood is regarded as non-normative. As reflected in song 46, bachelors are regarded as people who are unfaithful in their relationships. Bachelors are also taken as womanizers. In Mahamba (1984) a man says to Mapani in the bus, "indeed, has the lust for women bewitched you?" The reputation *zwilombe* have for

womanizing is partly related to the fact that some of them travel from place to place, and often vie for the attention of unaccompanied women at beer houses.<sup>21</sup> Blacking (1965: 28) remarks that **zwilombe** "often have a following of admiring women, and that there are stories of even chief's wives who have run away from the security of their homes to share the fortunes of an attractive minstrel".<sup>22</sup> In song 32 (1 3) Solomon sings, "Tshinetise has tired you". This is addressed to those people who disapprove of his wandering musical existence. They believe that he not only lures children from school with his singing, but that he also seduces married women at beer houses. This must also be interpreted in terms of the fact that basic musical ability is traditionally regarded as being fundamental to socialization and attracting lovers.<sup>23</sup>

Blacking (1965) remarks of the **tshilombe** that "at heart he is a sad, introvert, lonely person, trying to fight against the gradual acceptance of and indifference to, both his own lot and, by extension, that of his society" (Blacking 1965: 51).<sup>24</sup> In view of everything discussed so far, "madness" also emerges as a condition in which emotional and mental confusion is explored and mediated. When Solomon remarks that his musical instrument makes him cry and mad, and he refers to it as a "bloody, bloody fuckin' guitar" (monologue: 40-41), he is referring to more than critical licence: he is also referring to a state of mind. **Besekuwe** (cf. 8) is when one has "trouble inside you, in your mind". Therefore, **besekuwe** is not only a reference to "madness", but also to mental and emotional turmoil.

As such it is clear that the related characteristics of "madness", "foolishness" and "possession" operate on several

levels which contribute to the marginal, ambiguous status of the tshilombe. On one level "madness" is used positively and functionally by musicians to channel criticism. "Possession" operates on a spiritual level. People recognize, admire and enjoy tshilombe musical expertise which is sanctioned spiritually, almost in the same way that Shona shave spirits confer certain talents on their hosts. In this context "possession" and "madness" is positive, and a metaphor for divine musical inspiration. On another level "madness" is an anti-social human attribute. Zwilombe, those moral guardians of society, are evaluated as humans, and often found lacking in acceptable manners and ways of behaving. On this level "madness" is partly negative and derogative. Yet, it is positive in the sense that it helps to define standards of morality. Like other "moral deviants", certain zwilombe are "functionally useful internal enemies, the struggle against whom contributes to the self-identity and moral solidarity of the 'moral' majority" (cf. Collins 1988: 121).

### 3.3 Beer drinks and social networks: The inhabitants of God's land

To understand the dynamics of beer drinking and music making, and how they fit into Solomon's construction of social reality, it is necessary to show which people frequent rural beer houses, and briefly why they do so.

The social function of beer in Venda and other South African cultures has received considerable attention (cf. Blacking 1957, 1964b & 1965, McAllister 1986, Van Vuuren 1989), and it is therefore only necessary to provide a few relevant details here. Changing cultural patterns have affected the social function of beer. The influence of Christianity is marked in



this context. Most local Christians frown on the use of alcohol, often severely (cf. 182). Christianity for them is an integral part of a wider process of socio-economic mobilization, a process in which certain traditional cultural patterns have no or little value. This is in contrast to the central role of beer in terms of espousing traditional values, and its role in traditional marriage transactions and religious sacrifice. Not surprisingly, this contrast leads to social uncertainty, conflict and tension (cf. 87), and the consumption or avoidance of beer takes on symbolic value in terms of individual and group identification.

My impression is that the contemporary function of beer as a means of economic survival perhaps predominates over its more traditional functions. McAllister (1986a & b) shows that the presentation of free beer is a regular occurrence in certain Xhosa cultures. By contrast, I relatively seldom come across the presentation of free beer. The free presentation of marula beer is linked to the status of marula trees as communal property. However, the drinking of marula beer takes place for a month or two in summer only, and apparently not on any large scale. Free maize beer is offered to people who occasionally participate in communal work. It is also consumed at certain weddings and occasional gatherings at the homesteads of headmen. However, selling beer has become an overridingly important means of economic survival. Guitar performance culture is inextricably linked to this trade.

Most of the people I met at beer houses and beer drinks frequented by Solomon, are people from the area immediately north west of Thohoyandou, from the village of Maungani to Murangoni on the perimeter of Tate Vondo state forest. Despite its proximity to the commercial centre of Thohoya-

ndou, it is nevertheless still quite "rural", also in terms of the forms of entertainment and relaxation that are offered. While Thohoyandou features a few hotel bars, and several discos and beer halls, the area in which Solomon lives features beer houses only. These beer houses sell two types of beer: bottled beer and home made maize beer. Other types of alcohol such as brandy are very rarely found, partly because they are expensive, but mostly because they are too intoxicating for many people. A few beer houses have benches and tables where visitors may sit. They sometimes also offer cooldrinks, cigarettes and sweets for sale. Most beer houses, however, are modest, and do not offer these items. Their visitors sit outside in the shade of trees, women on the ground, and men on make-shift chairs. Some people buy bottled beer, but most can only afford maize beer which is relatively cheap.

Most of the people who frequent these beer houses are either unemployed, or employed in the lower ranks of the civil service which is the biggest local employer (cf. 59: 14-16). These people usually have no or primary schooling only. Most of the women are unemployed. Those men and women employed by the civil service often work as labourers in the Departments of Public Works or Water Affairs. A considerable number of unemployed men take on casual labour when possible. Some of this labour is seasonal, such as the thatching of roofs prior to the start of the rainy season. A few men work as gardeners for residents of Thohoyandou. Most casual labour is in the form of house construction. Some of the unemployed are men who used to work on the Reef. Some lost their jobs, while others found it difficult to cope with urban living (cf. 2), and decided to return home. Most of these people do not like the insecurity of their existence. They complain about being

idle and not knowing where their next casual employment will come from.

People who work for the civil service as labourers and temporary clerks seldom earn more than a few hundred rand a month. Because of the irregularity of their income, it is virtually impossible to determine what the monthly earnings of casual labourers are. However those people who frequent local beer houses with Solomon are generally very poor. This is the underlying reason why beer drinks may be considered social institutions cast in the idiom of traditional social organizational principles (cf. McAllister 1986b). Of these, the most important is that of support and cooperation. Some people who frequent beer houses (especially women), often consume cold drink only. For them, as for others, beer drinks are not so much a place where beer is available, but where they can meet and socially interact. Thus their attendance of beer drinks emerges "as the product of contending interests and the resources groups have for dominating one another and negotiating alliances and coalitions" (Collins 1986: 118). Guitarists continually are engaged in latent, symbolic conflict rooted in a wider political economy characterized by a division between the rich who "swank uncaringly" and the poor:

"You are the rich man."

"But because, me,

I'm very poor man."

"I don't know nothing."

"But because Jesus, Jesus is Jesus."

"Indeed is indeed."

"You are the rich."

"Me, I'm very poor man."

"But because I haven't got nothing."

"Please try to help me."

(42: 10-15, 20-23)

As indicated before, Solomon partly negotiates domination from the basis of traditional as well as Christian ethics. In song 42 he plays on the emotions of a "rich" man, and also invokes Christian ethics: he, Solomon, is poor and unable to help himself ("I don't know nothing"). He therefore deserves support. Thus Solomon regularly appeals for justice to those more powerful than himself. However, in practice he negotiates his stratified social environment from the basis of his membership of an informal status group comprising people of approximately equal rank. Collins (1986) notes that people with low resources "make their best deal with whomever will have them, which should eventually turn out to be at their own level" (Collins 1986: 359). Solomon's status group is that of people who frequent rural beer houses. These are beer houses of "old people", places which are safe, and seldom feature violence. But there is more to them than safety. As Reckson Singo of Phiphidi remarks: "It is nice to be with people. It is nice to be with old women". Beer drinks of "old people" generally are gatherings of people who share similar life circumstances and worldviews, and not so much gatherings of a certain age-set. Men of all ages attend these beer drinks. By contrast, the women are mostly middle-aged or elderly. Men and women sit apart, even in the case of married couples. Except where it is clear that people are involved in a dance-play, those women who are in the company of men are usually their lovers, *vhafarekano*. Occasionally they are "loose" women who can be identified by their brightly coloured print dresses with suggestive loose tops and large, revealing armholes.

The worldview of people attending beer drinks of "old people" emphasizes "old values". These are the values of sharing, inclusiveness, tolerance, respect, and formality (cf. 71).

They are, for instance, reflected in people's attitude towards the mentally ill. Although people laugh at them, they are not offensive towards them.<sup>25</sup> This tolerant attitude is spiritually sanctioned. It is a kind of value partly rooted in the context of Solomon's monthly sacrifices to his father, and the return that he once got in the way of eggs. As in certain Xhosa cultures, "beer drinks are thought to benefit the homestead by calling the attention of the shades and helping to ensure their continued general beneficence" (cf. McAllister 1986: 88). When some beer accidentally spills at the Mathase homestead, little fuss is made since the beer "makes the ancestors happy".

Beer drinks of "old people" function in a socio-economic environment where average income levels are low, where men roll their own cigarettes from cheap tobacco and newspaper, where the largest supermarket meat counter contains cheap chicken heads and feet ("Walkie Talkie"), and where people rely on the land and on each other in an attempt to survive. Beer drinks of "old people" manifest the dynamic, driving, optimistic nature of humans often oppressed by their environment. Its members are people whose exuberant lust for life is expressed in the exclamations and laughing of bright-eyed dancers. It is as if the human spirit attempts to rise above its mangling qualities in the form of an ode to life. Borrowing a song from the famous tshilombe bow player Jim Thanyani Mundalamo,<sup>26</sup> Solomon sings: *kondelelani, zwi do fhela* ("persevere, troubles will end"). In this sense beer drinks not only express cultural patterns, but also act in a therapeutic and cathartic manner to entertain, relieve tension, and mediate conflict.

Stokfel financial association gatherings, at which guitarists perform,<sup>27</sup> exhibit a similar attempt at ordering existence. Stokfel gatherings are in principle as socially inclusive as ordinary beer drinks, and nobody is barred from attending them. However, those wanting to join in drinking must pay a fee ranging from about R2.50-R5. This fee entitles a person to a certain amount of beer, and sometimes also food. Some stokfel gatherings also ask a small cover charge. In practice, therefore, stokfel gatherings are characterized by a certain degree of exclusivity. They tend to exclude those people who are only able to buy a calabash or tin of maize beer for 50c at an ordinary beer drink. Some stokfel clubs only offer relatively expensive bottled beer. People thus generally do not "hang" around at their meetings, hoping to beg a drink. Stokfel gatherings often are relatively formal, dignified affairs. These gatherings are not frequented by vagrants, nor are they characterized by the continual coming and going of people at certain beer houses. Their numbers are often somewhat smaller. All paid amounts are formally entered in a book. Participants are usually neatly dressed: women in "national" dress (sometimes quite magnificently), and men often in suits. Although sexual rivalry is not unknown at stokfel meetings, they are socially sanctioned events where "ordinary" women can drink without fear of social disapproval as sometimes seems the case with ordinary beer drinks.

Ordinary beer drinks and stokfel gatherings therefore not only fulfil a stabilizing economic function. Beer drink culture constitutes group membership, and its underlying beliefs, actions, aesthetic expressions and ritual objects have symbolic value. These shape social boundaries and identity, thus promoting group solidarity as a cultural resource in the quest for physical and spiritual survival.

### 3.4 The role of music making at beer drinks

Beer house owners encourage musical performances which lure customers and boost beer sales. The sound of weekend singing and drumming carries far in the relatively quiet countryside, attracting passersby. Solomon's regular presence at the beer house of Masindi Netshiavha of Madamalala helped to boost her sales, allowing her eventually to buy a large gas fridge to cool beer. She often indicated to me that she was very pleased with the effect music making was having on her sales. On a number of occasions, late on a Saturday afternoon, she dragged Solomon back to her house for more music making as he and I were making our way home after spending a few hours at her place.

How is the social system of beer drinks manifested in music making? And how does this music making contribute towards Solomon's formulation of social reality?

Not only do men and women generally sit apart at beer drinks, but there is also a tendency towards separation in terms of musical performance. Although women dance and sing to guitar music, the instrument is played almost exclusively by men, and generally is associated with them. At beer drinks women often approach me with the request to record "their music", i.e. beer songs. Women who become involved in dancing and the performance of dance-plays to the accompaniment of guitar playing, often do so as a result of invitations by men. They and the men then meet on "neutral" ground, the ritual dance area. Musical interaction at beer drinks thus is an integral part of patterns of general social interaction in a specific cultural context.

Musical interaction as a factor of wider social processes is reflected in the name Ngulumbi Band. This is the name Solomon intends giving to his future band. At present, however, Ngulumbi Band is more often a collective name for all those who dance and sing with Solomon at his home and at local beer houses. The name refers to communal musical performance, the sharing of musical ideas and the oral transmission of culture. Solomon's songs are widely known in and around Ngulumbi, and his song messages get carried into the community. However, in typical oral fashion, Solomon in turn is influenced by the ideas of others. As such the name Ngulumbi Band takes on microcosmic significance. It refers to a group of people which is representative of aspects of a larger social sphere, that of the village, and Venda as a whole. Its actions are ritual performances through which people enact and recreate culture.

An example of such a ritual performance by Ngulumbi Band is the fascinating "Loving" (song 46; audio recording 14). This song was recorded at a stokfel meeting at Ngwenani on 30 March 1991. The song basis (ll 1-5) was conceived by guitarist Mmbengeni Sivhugwana. It is rooted in the context of the singer's abject poverty. Like Solomon, he argues that, since people are basically all the same, they should genuinely love and support each other. This idea is taken up and developed by Solomon and a female acquaintance, Munzhedzi Lukoto of Ngwenani. In the song Solomon takes the part of a married man who has several lovers. Munzhedzi's part is that of one of these lovers, a woman in material need.

This was the only time I heard this song. It was created on the spur of the moment, a unique communal creation in which the singers "filled" their mouths "with the words of others".



They tuned into communal experience and effected an exchange of consciousness. They exchanged solo and chorus parts, wove vocal lines into the texture of the guitar accompaniment, and generally extemporized musically and verbally. However, their musical expression not only intensified musical experience but also social experience: "the function of music is to reinforce, or relate people more closely to, certain experiences which have come to have meaning in their social life" (Blacking 1971: 95). Consider Ntshavheni Thovhogi's clear, jazz-like counter-tenor line of vocables which hovers over the singing of Solomon and other musicians (song 57; audio recording 15). It followed on Solomon's performance of Ntshavheni's biographical song, "A poverty-stricken man" (2). In song 57, musical communication between these two men is a factor of their friendship, and of similar experiences of working life in Johannesburg. Similarly, when Solomon and his brother Robert engage in a fascinating antiphonal exchange in "Children of our place" (song 34; video recording 5), they do so as singers who have been performing music together for most of their lives. The antiphonal articulation of the song's verbal message promotes interpersonal linking in the family. It fosters an awareness of a common heritage and lineage, serving as a potential basis of moral and cooperative action in contemporary life. Vocal counterpoint is thus more than a musical structure. It is also the expression of shared experience and cooperation.

The general social status, character and life circumstances of guitar playing *zwilombe* and other guitarists is clearly reflected in terms of musical interaction at beer drinks. Guitarists often team up at these occasions. However, successful musical cooperation is dependent on the relationships between guitarists, and the way they generally interact. A

strong-willed, forceful musician like Solomon cooperates best with someone who is less assertive, and sometimes also less adept as a musician. In cases like these, Solomon usually plays lead guitar and determines which songs are to be sung, while his companion/s normally play a single tone bass pattern, often on guitars with one or two strings only. At beer drinks where Solomon is present, there are often raucous but good-natured battles between him and women who want to perform beer songs, or other guitarists who want to play their own songs. Solomon, however, being an experienced tshilombe, deliberately ignores them by playing and singing louder than they do. He forces them into submission and eventual silence. They usually admit defeat and join his performance.

Guitar playing zwilombe rarely perform together. They are individualists who prefer to be the only instrumentalists at a beer drink. In addition, beer drinks can seldom support more than one musician who hopes to gain financially from his performance. Consequently, the arrival of two guitar playing tshilombe at a beer drink sometimes leads to recriminations and animosity, especially if one of them manages to attract more attention than the other.

### 3.5 Beer drinks and dance-plays

Beer drinks and their accompanying dance-plays, mitambo (sing. mutambo), play an important role, not only in Solomon's socialization, but also in terms of the expression of his worldview, and as an engagement with his environment.

Blacking (1965 & 1969c) applies the term mitambo generically to refer to musical "amusements" or "recreational" songs

(especially the dances of children, young people, and beer drinkers). *Mitambo* may be distinguished from the other main category of Venda dance, *dzingoma*, which pertains to dances of an overtly sacred character (e.g. initiation dances and the reedpipe dance; cf. Kruger 1989). Interpreting *mitambo* as "amusements" may suggest that this category of dance has a frivolous, entertaining function only. However, *mitambo* partly may be considered social dramas, defined by Turner (1974: 37) as "units of aharmonic or disharmonic progress, arising in conflict situations". The category of *mitambo* is similar to the Sotho domain of games (*lipapali*) which

stands in a contrastive relationship not to work, but to war. This domain includes not only war but all sorts of disputes, anxieties, discontinuities, and conflicts in life ... In contrast, the concept of "games" includes cohesive, continuative actions that help "construct" society ... Games are ... analogues or metaphors of socially constructed understandings, aurally reordered models of social reality (Coplan 1987: 31).

Venda *mitambo* manifest thought and action as parts of processes by means of which adaptively valuable information is communicated between people gathered at rural beer houses. To understand Solomon's thoughts and actions in dance-plays, it is necessary to consider how he categorizes his songs. Solomon's categorization is one typical of African musical culture in which music is classified according to its function (cf. Hansen 1981b). His smallest song category is that of songs originating from the circumcision school for boys which he attended (cf. 5; 38). The next smallest category comprises Christian religious songs or "songs of the Lord" (*nyimbo dza Mudzimu*; e.g. 16; 17; 23; 25; 78). A somewhat larger category is that of *nyimbo dza Vhadzimu*, "songs of the Ancestral Spirits". These are songs of a relatively private, sacred nature. They are not commonly intended for dancing, and serve as a means of religious expression. They

seem to originate during times of personal, domestic and financial stress, and serve a cathartic function (e.g. 11; 61; 62; 64). The fourth category is that of beer songs, **malende**. The last, and by far the largest category, is that of jive songs. Solomon sometimes also refers to jive songs as dance-plays or **mitambo**. In this sense dance-plays firstly are interpreted broadly as "happenings", social gatherings at which drinking and music making are fundamental to proceedings. Dance-plays, according to Solomon, must have beer, meat, and music. Their symbolic interaction is a factor of social discourse accompanying eating, drinking, and music making. In this context music making cannot function on its own. Music per se is not **mitambo**, and music making cannot create and recreate culture in a vacuum. It must have a social matrix. This social matrix is the beer drink.

Solomon denies that his jive songs can be called **malende** even though they are very strongly rooted in **malende** performance culture, and are functionally similar. Jive usually excludes the drum-playing and handclapping which characterize **malende** performance. **Malende** generally is associated with the older generation, and has its own characteristic dance steps. The basic **malende** dance step is vigorous. The torso is the fulcrum for flailing arms and legs which stamp the ground hard in continual cross-rhythmic opposition to hand clapping and singing. Male dancers sometimes splay their legs and jump. This is considered sexually immoral in female **malende** dancing, and women must keep their thighs covered at all times. Although men and women may perform **malende** together, they usually do not have bodily contact.

Jive, on the other hand, is a term which is associated with transculturation. Like the term **kwela**, it may be regarded as

belonging "to a conceptual framework associated with social emancipation and increased intensity of life" (cf. Kubik 1974: 13). It is part of processes of subtly changing life patterns which have roots in traditional as well as contemporary culture. This is perhaps best illustrated in the use of the three chord formula (I-IV/ii6-V) in jive songs. As indicated before, this formula functions in the socially incorporative cyclic idiom of the traditional harmonic progression of *malende*. Yet it is more accommodating and forward looking, merging past and present in a qualitatively new expressive form. This is clearly evident in fig. 5 with its opposing instrumental and vocal harmonic structures.

The three chord formula is one of several jive group symbols which manifest contemporary social aspirations, and celebrate the vibrancy of modern existence. Group symbolic behaviour includes wearing fashionable clothing, drinking bottled beer, and performing on modern instruments, mostly the guitar and synthesizer. Jive dancing also symbolizes new cultural patterns. It is not as rhythmically complex as beer song dancing, and usually comprises a simple sideways movement of the body. It features very little cross-rhythmic patterning. The feet are lifted slightly only, and they are usually brought down on the beat. Unlike *malende* dancing, the hips are often gyrated and the buttocks pushed backwards. This is referred to as *thula mavhota!* ("shake the buttocks!"; 9: 18). This kind of pelvic dance movement traditionally is sexually immoral, and its performance by *malende* dancers is regarded as daring. However, it is common in jive where male and female dancers also often touch each other.

Although *mitambo* generally are musical happenings for Solomon, they should ideally carry a social message. When

Solomon sees somebody "doing something" (especially something bad or extraordinary), he "takes" his guitar (cf. also monologue: 59-69 & 85-92). In this context, for example, he warns of the danger of urban women (2), questions the integrity of certain diviners (4), and criticizes the person who picked his pocket (68). What drives these messages home forcefully is the dramatic action which accompanies them. The action is usually in the form of a dance-play, i.e. a combination of dancing and acting. The action can be simple and brief, or elaborate and complex. In all the *mitambo* I observed, the action was not planned virtually until it started. It normally arose from the circumstances of the beer drink. Performers mostly used simple props and make-shift costumes which were hurriedly fashioned.

I discuss here one brief *mutambo* case study, followed by two more detailed case studies.

### 3.5.1 Case study 1

On 25 May 1991 some visitors gathered at the shaded ritual space under the large syringa tree on the Mathase plot. Solomon performed three songs which featured the same prop and similar dramatic action. These were songs 23 ("Moses"), 43 ("The dream"), and 61 ("Respect parents"). These three songs all contain references to Christian religion and morality. The religious connotation of "Moses" is obvious. In "The dream", Christianity is promoted as a bulwark against witchcraft. In "Respect parents" it serves as moral sanction for parental respect. The basic message of Christian morality was dramatized through the use of a Bible. Some of the singers paged through the Bible as if they were seeking certain passages, and once it was placed between Solomon's feet. The

singers imitated the actions of church ministers. One "preached" from the Bible with a hand pointing dramatically in the air. Another took the role of the minister of a pentacostal denomination, gesticulating, and emotionally shouting "Hallelujah!" and "Praise the Lord!"

### 3.5.2 Case study 2 (video recording 6)

On 27 April 1991 I met Solomon at a beer house near the Lutheran settlement at Maungani. The beer house was a brick house surrounded by a high fence. It had a few benches outside, and inside sweets and some groceries were for sale. Solomon organized some chairs and benches to be placed in a shady spot behind the house, and soon a small group of men and women and children assembled there. Of this group, most of the men were in various stages of inebriation. In particular, one man was drinking quite heavily (cf. video recording). His name is Petros M, a cross-cousin of Solomon. He is a civil servant. He was somewhat of a nuisance throughout the afternoon. He shouted, and sang words and lines that had nothing to do with the songs being performed. In addition, the ritual space where we were gathered was quite small, and people were always bumping into each other. This increased potential for friction. Solomon and his guitarist friend Mmbengeni Sivhugwana performed several songs. At one stage during the afternoon, another friend of Solomon, Robert Madzhie, took Solomon's guitar and started to play. Solomon, who was also slightly inebriated, started to dance and sing. This was the start of a lengthy dance-play.

As the recording shows, Solomon dances, and Petros drunkenly enters the dancing area. Solomon jumps onto him and grabs him around the neck. Petros loses his balance and falls forward

onto his face with Solomon beneath him. Those present, especially the children, scream with laughter. Petros lies dazed on the ground. He has fallen quite hard. Being drunk in addition, he lies on the ground, unable to rise. Solomon however, being less drunk, virtually does not lose the beat of the music. He jumps up and continues dancing in a single fluid motion. He starts dancing and flirting in a sexually suggestive manner with a young girl and then an older woman. This determines the main theme of the dance-play, namely that of the dynamics of **farekano** extra-marital relationships. A second woman steps forward to dance. She seems a better "proposition" than the first women: she is sexy, attractive and well dressed. A number of people are milling around in the small performance area. They bump against each other. What follows is a fascinating alternation between symbolic dramatic action and reality. Petros is drunk, and he finds it difficult to control himself. He oversteps the conventions of the **mutambo** in progress, as well as the norms of public morality and **farekano** relationships: he puts his arms drunkenly around the beautiful woman, and hangs onto her in an improper manner. However, Solomon is still singing and acting within the context of the dance-play. He claims the woman for himself in dramatic fashion. Petros does not respond within dramatic convention: he is too inebriated to participate in the play. Solomon tries to wrench Petros's arms away from the woman. He remains acting, and, on the beat of the music, tells his cousin unequivocally to "get out", "voetsek" and "fok off". Petros feels aggrieved and insulted. He becomes aggressive and pushes Solomon violently away so that he falls backwards against the wall of a shed. Now the play is forgotten, action is real. The two antagonists stare angrily and tensely at each other. There is potential for a serious fight. We all hold our breath. Fortunately nothing happens.



Another woman enters the stage. She carries a tray. Petros feels embarrassed. He shouts at the woman in an aggressive manner, asking her what she is doing. She is no fool. She stays in the convention of farekano dynamics, and tells Petros that she loves him. She thus cleverly defuses the conflict. Solomon decides to make peace, and the drama continues. He takes his guitar and immediately composes a song in which he apologizes to his cousin for the fall. He dramatizes the apology by lying on his back as if he has fallen, but he remains playing the guitar. Petros does not remain angry. He even joins the play and acts the clown. I sympathize with him later, because I see blood on his forehead. He is sober enough to tell me not to worry: he knows that he has taken part in a dramatized version of reality in which those taking part were merely actors.

### 3.5.3 Case study 3 (video recording 7)

On 12 September 1991 a small number of women and children gather in the courtyard of the Mathase homestead. They listen to Solomon singing and occasionally also join him in performance. A cross-cousin of Solomon, Wilson N from Ngwenani, passes by the homestead. He is on a weekend "pubcrawling" spree. Wilson hears the music, and sees the small group of women. He observes the goings-on for a while, apparently pondering whether to join us. He eventually announces himself by blowing on a beaded whistle. He continues blowing on this whistle periodically for the whole afternoon. He exudes much aggression, sublimated by beer and dagga. Wilson is a large well-built man who is very strong. During the course of the afternoon he twice lifts up a kitchen chair with his teeth. His nickname, Manyanya (from -**manya**, to grab firmly), refers to his strength. He is partly so strong because he "digs

holes" for the Department of Public Works. All of us feel intimidated by his forceful physical presence, instinctively sensing the raw power which lies just below the surface. Wilson is morose. He does not say much, except when he tries to initiate some singing and when he appears to shout a praise. He is somewhat of a charlatan: he dominates proceedings for a long time without actually doing anything. His loud blowing on the whistle seems to fit his character. He occasionally jives. It often appears that he wants to explode into dancing, but this never happens. He cajoles the women and children present into some singing, but the absence of beer and his threatening presence seem to inhibit them. Also, Solomon tends to hold back his guitar accompaniment. He does not like the rudeness of his powerful relative, but because he is no physical match for him, he withholds his normally forceful character. At times Wilson tries to initiate a possession cult song, but Solomon simply withdraws without saying anything. Wilson continually makes passes at the women. He touches his crotch and makes sexually suggestive movements. At times he fondles the women and puts his arms around them, only to be repudiated. Some of the women eventually start to dance while fending him off. They start to perform a **mutambo** in the idiom of male-female relationships. One of the women puts his hat on her head and dances. Another one puts on overalls and a pair of men's shoes. She proceeds to dance mockingly in an exaggerated male style. Acting as a man, she accosts another woman in theatrical manner. The other women join her, and for a while there is pleasant chaos as people laugh, shout and dance.

These case studies clearly show us "mind at work through movements of bodies in space and time" (cf. Blacking 1977a: 21). In the first case study people make moral statements not

only in song, but also through acting. In the second case study the **mutambo** participants derive their patterns of bodily expression from the historical and ethical context of **farekano** extramarital relationships (cf. Blacking op. cit.: 4). The interaction between Solomon, Petros and the women implicitly points to the **farekano** tradition as an established cultural pattern which is partly related to the economic structure of society. **Farekano** relationships ideally are secretive affairs, not to be made public. Those involved in such relationships should treat each other with loving respect (cf. song 46). Their relationship involves more than superficial physical gratification - it should be based on interdependence and support over a certain period of time. Drunken amorous passes made publicly at women have unacceptable moral value, and are generally frowned on. This type of behaviour arguably may be considered expressive of the contemporary dynamics of **farekano** relationships which are complicated by social instability, poverty and migrant labour.

The **mutambo** in case study three may be described as a ritual of gender rebellion (cf. Hanna 1977 & 1983). The switching of gender roles by the women is a deliberate action. Women acting as men are able to effectively criticize male behaviour. Their bodily expression constitutes parodies of unacceptable male behaviour, and is meant to criticize and maintain morality. Wilson N's actions did not constitute a drastic moral crime, but rather a violation of "politeness, respectability, and social competence", and the procedure of punishment was symbolic rather than utilitarian (cf. Collins 1988: 196). For the women, the **mutambo** served as a "psychological defense mechanism" which deflected Wilson's socially unacceptable impulses in a non-threatening way (cf. Hanna 1977: 218 f.). The women cooperated and interacted in a

shared somatic state from which group consciousness emerged. This consciousness served as the basis for action and criticism.

Case study three also shows that the affective, non-verbal function of ritual sometimes predominates, making the choice of certain cognitive elements virtually arbitrary. Collins (1986) assumes an extreme position in terms of the interaction of cognitive and affective ritual elements. For him, natural rituals such as "conversations are not primarily cognitive, in the sense that their ostensible purpose is to convey information, express social rules, or allow people to calculate an exchange". What is important is that "an energetic flow of talk is set off" allowing "a warm feeling of satisfaction and an intensified social tie" (Collins 1986: 358). Such a view calls for debate, but it does stress the importance of affective ritual elements. What is significant about the latter part of the dance-play is that the very profane dramatic actions of the women are accompanied by a religious song, the well-known "Go there Moses" (23). Although the critical attitude of the women is rooted in a wider context of religiously legitimated morality, it is my conviction that the choice of song here was not intentional. The song text had no significance in terms of what the women tried to achieve. They conveyed their disapproval essentially through dramatic action. The music coordinated and fused group verbal and bodily expression, thus promoting the emotional intensity and solidarity needed for the physical expression of feeling.

### 3.6 Notes

1 They are Solomon Mathase, Nnditsheni Ramukhuvhati, Piti Ravhura, Mashudu Mulaudzi, Albert Mundalamo, Albert Raedani, Nndanganeni Luambo, and Patrick Rañwashi.

2 The *lombe* concept does not appear to exist in Nguni culture. According to Bongani Mthethwa (personal communication), Zulu speakers use the neologism *maskanda* (Afr. "musikant") for their contemporary counterpart of the Venda *tshilombe*. A comprehensive investigation into Xhosa musical culture (Hansen 1981a) produced only one related contemporary term, namely *ama-FM* (lit. roving radios).

3 Elderly Matamba *Nemaramboni* of Shakadza relates that his father was a xylophone playing *tshilombe* during the early part of this century. His home was at Tshidzini in eastern Venda, but he spent much time travelling on horseback (with his xylophone) from one chiefly homestead to another. His favourite chiefly homestead was Mbilwi (of chief Mphaphuli), mainly because of its size and proximity to the newly established trading post at Sibasa. He was rewarded with maize beer as a matter of course, but his real payment was in the form of a goat, and occasionally money.

4 Gelfand (1973: 129 f.) notes:

The belief in spirits also accounts for unusual people with exceptional qualities ... But from time to time a man or a woman appears to possess a talent or quality above that of the average or normal person. He may be outstanding at hunting, dancing, doctoring or indeed in any other skill. A person so endowed is believed to have acquired this talent through some spiritual agency other than the *vadzimu* (ancestral spirits), who are like the rest of their kin. Therefore, this talent is supposedly derived from a foreign spirit outside the family, the spirit of a stranger who died far from his home in a foreign land. Such a person was perhaps a hunter or one blessed with some special talent and as he was not buried in accordance with his own customs, his spirit roamed about until it found a host or medium who would accept it and in turn it would confer its talents on the new host ... Thus a gifted or brilliant person amongst the Shona does not inherit his skill but acquires it from a spirit called a *shave*.

5 This opposes the popular notion of the "natural, inborn talent" of African musicians. As Malian musician Yaya Diallo remarks, "music is not in our blood; we need to put it there through practice and training" (Diallo & Hall 1989: 104). Nevertheless, practice goes hand in glove with hereditary factors. In the Mathase family, Nyadzani seldom takes any interest in his father's singing and guitar playing. By contrast, Michael, Phatushedzo, and Takalani are always attracted by musical performances. They often dance, especially the simpler steps associated with church hymns.

However, it is clear that Takalani is most likely to follow a musical career. The boy always sticks to his father, and likes to touch him and his guitar when there is a performance. He becomes very unhappy when Solomon takes the guitar away from him.

6 Tina Nemaramboni, Shakadza, personal communication.

7 From tshimima (a gathering of feasting people), and tshioroso (beer given to people after communal work).

8 It is important to note that some of those guitarists accused by Solomon of the "robbing business" are unemployed. They undertake casual labour. For them, remuneration for musical performance at beer drinks is important in terms of survival. One of them, Vhutshilo Netsianda of Madamalala, is an unemployed carpenter. He copies popular songs from Radio Thohoyandou, and performs them at beer drinks in return for gifts of beer and small cash amounts. These songs are simply a commodity for him, a product to be sold in the struggle for existence. He can compose his own music. In his pocket he carries a piece of paper with a list of ten song titles. The list is divided into two sections, each section being intended for one side of the record he hopes someone will "produce" for him.

9 The tale is entitled Tshilombe tshi na ngoma lila-lila ("The tshilombe who commanded the drum to play"). Its basic plot is as follows:

A group of girls go to collect phemba, white clay used to smear walls. On their way back one girl turns back to go and fetch her head-dress she has left behind. She meets a tshilombe carrying a drum. He catches her and puts her inside the drum. He goes to a village, puts the drum down and commands it to play. The girl sings from inside the drum, and he dances and sings along with her. The tshilombe's performance is enjoyed, and he is rewarded with food and drink. He wanders from village to village repeating his performance. One day he drinks too much and becomes drunk. The girl calls for help. People come to investigate and they rescue her. They put a swarm of bees inside the drum. After the tshilombe becomes sober he is requested to perform again. He commands the drum to play, but the bees come out instead. They attack him and he flees.

10 The short story is appropriately entitled Matudzi ("Strange people"), and its basic plot is as follows:

The narrator is travelling on a bus from Messina to central Venda at the end of the month. After a while he hears a voice he identifies as that of a man called Mapani. This man is a miner on his way home to Tshamutshedzi in Eastern Venda. Mapani is a tshilombe, and the narrator avoids him because he talks too much. He starts to sing and people on the bus join in the performance. Mapani takes out a penny whistle and starts to play. A beautiful woman on the bus attracts

Mapani's attention. He goes and sits next to her. She rejects his attention. He becomes abusive and kisses her. The woman's husband who had been sitting elsewhere in the bus gets up and starts to fight with Mapani. The bus stops and the fight continues outside. Mapani gets into trouble and appeals for help. The fight is ended by a nature conservation official. They all get back onto the bus, and Mapani goes to sit next to another woman who also rejects his attention. People on the bus express their dissatisfaction with his behaviour, and Mapani responds in an impudent manner. The bus arrives at his village where he gets off. He arrives home and is shocked to find that his child has died.

11 These values all seem to refer to **tshilombe** existential and behavioural qualities, especially the positive-negative ambiguity. In this context **tshilombe** may be compared to three related personal categories, namely **murendi** (praise or literary poet), **mukhodi** (praise poet) and **nambi/munambi** (expert singer). These terms belong to the so-called person class of Venda (class one). Class seven, on the other hand, is sometimes also informally referred to as the "it" or "thing" class, because it comprises mainly material objects. Where **tshi** forms part of a personal pronoun, the latter is usually derogative: e.g. **tshiisana** (thing; contemptuous person), **tshidada** (fool, idiot), **tshiwaki** (habitual liar), **tshidakwa** (drunkard) and **tshitekeshi** (an irritating chatterbox). One may add to this the diminutive function of **tshi** (referring to things) and its derogatively diminutive function (referring to persons): **tshidula** (small frog), **tshidudu** (small pot); **tshingome** (a doctor not highly regarded), **tshikalaha** (pathetic little old man). The classification of **tshilombe** with material objects and lowly regarded people partly objectifies and "dehumanizes" him. Importantly however, a few class seven personal pronouns by contrast also suggest power and extraordinary ability: **tshihali** (great fighter), **tshiha-lima** (very powerful witch), **tshisulu** (thickset powerful man), and **tshigwili** (wealthy person). Class seven also includes some terms which exhibit a concrete spiritual characteristic: **tshifhe** (family priest), **tshifho** (sacred ancestral place) and **tshitungulo** (sacred ancestral object). Others refer to a malignant abstract spiritual dimension: **tshidudwane**, (malignant water spirit), **tshigwasha** and **tshilombo** (malicious possession spirits), **tshiguru** (bogey), and **tshivhimbili** (male witch).

12 According to Nkhumeleni Ralushai (Mbilwi), the practice of drum playing during **malende** performance is of colonial origin. In precolonial times the drums (**mirumba**) used in contemporary **malende** performance were symbolic of political power, and were usually kept at the homesteads of rulers. However, as the influence of rulers started to wane, many people acquired drums of their own, and used them for **malende** and church song performance.

13 **Vha vho toda vhasadzi! Mandevhele!**: "They are now looking for women!" (recorded at the house of Petros Rambofheni, Tshadani, 25/05/84). This beer song seems to refer to

invasions of Venda by Swazi and Zulu warriors (Mandevhele) during the middle decades of the 19th century (cf. Nemudzivhadi 1985: 20).

14 **Vhabvana-tshikegulu** ("The middle-aged woman"; recorded at Hamapholi, Ngwenani village, 30/03/91)

**Ndi do fa nga vhabvana-tshikegulu.**

I will die because of the middle-aged woman.

**Ndi do fa. Vha sala vha tshi takala.**

I will die. They will remain behind happily.

**Vhananga ni sale ni tshi takala.**

My children should remain behind happily.

**Ndi do fa ndi songo vhidzwa malume.**

I will die without being called uncle.

**Vhananga ni sale ni tshi pembela.**

My children must remain behind dancing joyously.

**Ndi do fa ndi songo vhidzwa makhadzi.**

I will die without being called aunt.

This song argues that a young unmarried man who involves himself with an older woman is "spoiling" himself in terms of his social future. Lines 2-6 have been borrowed from Albert Mundalamo (cf. song 160).

15 A variation of this tale was related to one of my students during 1992 by the eighty-one year old Makhaga Muravha of Hamashau (cf. Sibiya 1992).

16 One such song was composed by guitarist and band leader Dan Tshanda. Recorded during the presidency of Frank Ravele, it protested against ritual murders popularly ascribed to highly placed government officials:

Life is hard nowadays.

We are living furtively like wild animals.

We cannot even pay visits in the evening because of ritual murderers.

But we have seen them.

We know them.

(Mabale 1992: 25 f.)

17 **Tshigombela** (cf. Blacking 1962) performance in particular served to affect popular consciousness against government corruption and inefficiency. For example, a certain member of parliament was accused of failing to serve the interests of his constituency during the middle 1980s. Prior to the election of 1988, a local **tshigombela** team started to sing:

**Ro neta nga u shumela duxwani**

We are fed-up of supporting a zombie

**line la si vhuve la hotola nga u tshuwa.**

who is too afraid of speaking up (lit. coughing).

This song elicited popular support, and spread across the district. The MP eventually lost his seat.



18 Similarly tshidzolo (half-tube zither) playing tshilombe Petros Mabilu of Phiphidi sings: "Everybody calls me mad. I am not talking about you, Tshivhases" (recorded at Phiphidi, July 7, 1983). "Madness" is his way of protecting himself for criticizing the powerful Tshivhase ruling family.

19 Nelson M, an informant from Thohoyandou North, indignantly relates an incident regarding a cousin who is a tshilombe. Nelson was sitting down with other family members to a private graduation dinner for a female relative. His uninvited cousin arrived at the gathering and embarrassed everybody by telling the graduate that she was subservient to her husband, even though she was better qualified than him. He demanded to sit at the dinner table although there was no space for him. When he eventually left he passed the graduate's children who were sitting outside the door, eating their porridge and meat from a large bowl. He indicated that he had to provide his family with food, promptly took a piece of meat, and put it in his pocket.

20 Mbulaheni Musehane, Makwarela, personal communication.

21 Thus gourd-bow playing tshilombe Elias Ndou from Mangaya sings: "The women of this place are beautiful. Last night we fought to gain entrance to their rooms" (Kruger 1986: 124).

22 Ninety year old Wilson Ravele of Makonde remembers the behaviour of Marifhi who was the resident court tshilombe of headman Masindi Ravele. Marifhi was fond of wearing a white broad-rimmed hat, singing: Tshikonyokwa tsha muthu mathala tsho diphina ("A person's penis becomes worn out through pleasure").

23 Consider for example tshifasi, a dance for young people of both sexes (cf. Blacking 1957). The dance affords young people the opportunity to interact with members of the opposite sex. A popular tshifasi song goes:

**Ipfi langa li nga musevhe.**

My voice is like an arrow.

**Nda li ruma vhurwa, li a ya.**

When I send it to the south, it reaches there.

**Li do vhuya na musidzana.**

It will return with a girl.

24 Thus gourd-bow playing tshilombe Elias Ndou of Mangaya sings:

The lone old baboon is moving now.

Aa! This baboon! When I sing I cry.

The baboon is a nuisance in the fields.

Stop it! It is coming to the shelter!

It will eat all the soft porridge of the child.

Then we shall be troubled by the police.

(Recorded at Mangaya, May 5, 1983)

The singer compares himself to a lone old baboon that has been pushed out of the troop on account of his unacceptable behaviour. He adopts a wandering existence, only to be rejected wherever he goes. "When I sing I cry" (1 2) becomes an anguished plea against his fate.

25 I once observed a mentally ill teenage boy at a beer drink. He was dressed in tatters and a pair of white tackies. He was continually climbing over people in the confined space of the beer drink. He even made an attempt at some dancing. Although he was at times quite annoying, people regarded and treated him very good-naturedly.

26 Cf. Kruger 1986: 135 & 1991: 6.

27 Some stokfel organizers pay guitarists to perform for them on a Saturday afternoon and evening. At large meetings, some guitarists can apparently earn as much as R150. Some of the smaller stokfel clubs cannot afford to hire guitarists. However, they allow them free entrance, and provide them with free beer.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1 Mashudu Mulaudzi

I met Mashudu Mulaudzi early in 1986 when he was twenty-two years old. He was walking along the road from his mother's home at Tsianda to Levubu, a small rural farming community. He was accompanied by three boys in their early teens. Mashudu dominated the group, not only because he was older and taller than the others, but also because of his figure which was bulky from the accordion strapped across his chest. It was a Saturday morning at the end of the month, and the small group was on its way to busk at a shopping centre at Levubu. The shopping centre is small: a garage, a cafe, a butchery, a furniture shop and a small supermarket. The buildings are surrounded by several large flamboyant trees. Shady trees are popular meeting places in Venda with its stifling hot summers. At month ends farm labourers mill around under the trees at the shopping centre. They come to spend their meagre wages on food, and commercial maize beer they buy from the cafe. Certain *zwilombe*, like Mashudu, generate most of their income by busking at rural shops during month ends. Like many thousands of local people, they are also locked into bi-weekly economic cycles predominantly determined by the staggered payout of government salaries in the middle and at the end of every month. Over the weekend at the end of the month, hundreds of taxis and buses take to rural roads, transporting people to shops. Informal beer houses do a brisk trade, and *stokfel* associations gather for their monthly meetings. I became used to seeing Mashudu as a *tshilombe* busking for a living in this socio-economic setting. He always wandered around, sometimes alone, and sometimes with a small group of boys as poorly dressed as he.

He occasionally took on other work, but never managed to retain his position. I came to discover that Mashudu's musical style was intimately linked to these circumstances. And as I will show, changes in his musical style were expressive of his life process.

Mashudu's father is Muhanelwa Andries Mulaudzi, originally from Tshituni in the Nzhelele district. Muhanelwa worked as a carpenter in Johannesburg until 1990. He is now retired and lives in Thohoyandou. He is separated from his wife. Mashudu's mother is Shonisani Miriam Matambo, whose parental home is at Lwamondo. She is employed as a farm labourer at Levubu. Mashudu has two brothers and a sister who are all still at school.

Mashudu was born on 19 January 1963 at Manini, a village just south of Thohoyandou. His family moved to Hamagidi in northern Thohoyandou during the late 1960s. From Mashudu's sojourn there he later composed the songs "Shonisani" (101) and "Magidi" (106) with their references to immorality and marital tension. From Hamagidi the family moved west to Tsianda in 1979. Before he married, Mashudu lived in his mother's homestead with one of his brothers and his maternal uncle. The homestead is perched high against the hill on which the village of Tsianda is situated. From it a large expanse of land, dotted white and brown with houses and low hills, is visible. The area is heavily populated, and has been largely deforested. The homestead is a poor one. It comprises a solitary hut, and a dilapidated cooking shed constructed from thin planks. Although Mashudu had a claim to live at his mother's home before his marriage, he often slept at the houses of friends.

Mashudu attended school to standard five at Hamagidi. He repeated this standard when his family moved to Tsianda. The experience that led him to leave school is related in "The teacher" (98). Mashudu was approximately seventeen years old when he was in standard five at Mafharalala Primary School at Tsianda in 1980. His class teacher arrived slightly drunk ("just a cupful") at school one day. During the study period, early that afternoon, the teacher apparently demanded all his pupils' homework and corrections for the whole year (cf. 118: "I am trying to collect all my debts from January to December"). When the class did not comply, he started to beat some of them. Mashudu, being bigger than the others, returned the beating. A general brawl ensued in which the teacher suffered blows to the face. He was reprimanded for his behaviour. The effect of the fight was more noticeable in Mashudu's case. Although no disciplinary action was taken against him, he did not feel like returning to school.

Following this, Mashudu worked on a pineapple and cabbage farm at Levubu during 1981. Because he earned only R60 per month, he left after three months. Ever since then he has been employed for short periods only, or has received payment for busking or the occasional musical recording. In 1983 he recorded six songs for Radio Thohoyandou, including "There is life" (105) and "Modern girls" (107). He was paid R200.

In 1985 Mashudu went to the Reef to try and earn a living. He lived with his father at Alexandra for a while. However, his father's girlfriend forced him to leave. During his brief sojourn in town he was influenced by a Zulu musician who taught him how to play the guitar behind his head. He was also exposed to the playing of Sotho and Tsonga guitarists.

On his return to Venda, Mashudu became employed as a gardener at Makwarela in northern Thohoyandou. From his wages he bought himself an accordion for R60. Mashudu accompanied his church congregation (Apostolic Faith Mission) on the accordion. He also busked with the instrument at shopping centres at Levubu and Thohoyandou, as well as the old Sibasa market in northern Thohoyandou. The accordion was bought second hand. It did not last for long. When it broke, Mashudu discarded it. From money earned by busking with the accordion, he bought a guitar for R120. He formed a small band comprising five members. Mashudu played lead guitar. The other instruments were bass guitar,<sup>1</sup> melodica,<sup>2</sup> tin rattle, and a double-membrane drum with a tin shell (tshigubu). During 1985 the band was invited to perform at an end of the year function at Tshivhulani Primary School in northern Thohoyandou. The band charged an entry fee of 50c for children and R3 for adults. A group of young vagabonds from the neighbourhood was attracted by the music and gatecrashed the dance. They refused to pay the entrance fee, and apparently wanted to rob the band. A mass brawl ensued. Mashudu consequently decided to take the name Tshiwo Band for his group (from tshiwo: "an unwelcome happening").

Mashudu recorded six songs for Radio Venda in 1988. One of these songs was "Four-eyes" (99). Mashudu was paid R250. Later that year he busked with another guitarist. This was Vhutshilo Netsianda of Madamalala. The pair performed at a taxi rank in northern Thohoyandou for a month. They earned a total of about R25 a day. This amount was divided equally between them. They performed songs on request at 50c a song. Vhutshilo influenced Mashudu who performs an adapted version of his "Lukwareni Ironman" (108).

Following this, Mashudu worked for six months at a small supermarket in Louis Trichardt during 1988. He was employed at R250 per month to attract customers to the shop by advertising with a megaphone. He occasionally also busked outside the shop. Some of the shop employees became jealous of him "having two jobs". They complained and forced him to resign. He has since busked irregularly at a number of locations in Louis Trichardt and Thohoyandou, playing guitar as well as synthesizer. These locations are usually near supermarkets, or areas which carry heavy pedestrian traffic. Mashudu earned R15-R20 per day in 1990. His earnings amounted to approximately R50 per day at the peaks of the economic cycle.

Mashudu was once noticed by a shopowner at the Thohoyandou main shopping complex. This man asked him to play in front of his shop to attract customers. Mashudu was paid R150 a month. This was the shop where guitarist Piti Ravhura usually busks. Although every busker has a regular performance location, nothing seems to prevent him from playing at another's place if the "owner" is absent. Mashudu played at the shop for two months during 1990. Later that year he performed on a game show on Radio Venda. He received R150 for his performance.

During difficult periods Mashudu supplements his income by buying and selling clothes. He occasionally also sells vegetables, but his profit margin is low. In 1991 he turned to photography for a living. Using a cheap 35mm camera, he took photographs at social events such as weddings. Although he and his wife managed to survive on his income as photographer, this source of income was unreliable. Mashudu indicated that he wanted to go back to regular busking. He and an uncle, Thomas Muhanelwa, had established the Crusaders

Band, a group of nine singers based at Thohoyandou. Mashudu accompanied the group on synthesizer.

It seemed to me that Mashudu had the potential for improving his standard of living. According to figures provided by him, he had the potential to earn a minimum of R520 and a maximum of R690 a month in 1990 (cf. Solomon Mathase's R392 a month in that year). However, Mashudu never seemed to realize this potential. Like other buskers, he habitually performed for a few days until he had earned an amount which covered his most basic living expenses only. He then lived off this amount until he was required to perform again. He appeared to produce far below his ability. He projected the image of a care-free rough diamond who allowed every day to unfold by itself.

Like Solomon Mathase, Mashudu's songs are characterized by a very strong sense of morality applied in the context of disruptive social change (cf. 97; 98; 99: 60-61; 100; 101; 102: 9; 105; 106; 107; 109). Mashudu expresses his disapproval of changing relationships in the family, and the traumatic effect this has on various family members ("I am telling you mother: will you be able to handle this?"; cf. 97: 17-20). The implied orderly existence of the extended family is threatened by women who refuse to fulfil the traditional duties of a wife. They neglect their chores ("I ran away from the cooking pot" (97: 4-5) and are unfaithful to their husband ("at Magidi a woman deserted her home"; 106: 1). They are products of contemporary culture. They wear pantihose and perm their hair (97). These are acts which symbolize decadent urban living. Mashudu is a teetotaler, and expresses himself strongly against the destructive effects of alcohol abuse ("some have burnt lips from too much alcohol";



109: 7-8; cf. also 98; 105: 55-58; 108: 19-24;). Sexual immorality is a constant theme in Mashudu's songs. It is "sinful" and brings disaster (105: 26-28). Contemporary fashion is symbolic of this immorality: those who wear pantihose, perm their hair (97), put on a tie (106), paint their nails and wear suggestive clothing (105) are merely out to sell themselves like canned meat (105: 36-40). Although men are also regarded as immoral (105), the blame for sexual immorality is mainly put on "modern" women (97; 101; 105; 106; 107).

In spite of Mashudu's biting moral criticism, there emerges in his songs understated empathy and love for humanity. People are immoral because they are only humans with physical urges ("the spirit is strong but the flesh is weak"; 107: 49-51). Contemporary immorality is experienced intensely, but there is the nagging suspicion that it is perhaps ageless ("maybe it has been like this since creation"; 107: 42-45). Although people are foolish, they are also disoriented and confused. They are trailers taken in tow by fate and circumstances beyond their control, not knowing where they are going (107). In the end humanity is helpless, pathetic and to be pitied: a poverty-stricken, pregnant girl, wrapped in a sheet only, sits confused and dazed in the veld on a boulder, not knowing what to do or where to go (105: 49-54).

As in the case of several other guitarists, Mashudu claims that his sense of morality is partly inspired by Christian ethics, and that it is partly inherent. Like many other local Christians, Mashudu's religious worldview appears associated with the social trauma, disorientation and confusion brought about by culture contact. It is a worldview which exhibits the influence of the evangelical approach to mission theology

(cf. Bosch 1979: 29-36). In this worldview, gradations of moral evaluation generally are limited to polar opposites. These opposites contrast supreme Evil and supreme Virtue, commonly expressed in terms of the irreconcilable dichotomy of God or the Devil, Heaven or Hell, Sin or Salvation, etc. These opposites emerge from a context of cultural reorganization, in particular the redefinition of social roles and morality. For Mashudu, as for many others, this process is rooted in the total conversion to Christianity: "Our people, follow Jesus. To be without Jesus is to struggle in life" (105: 13). People who engage in immoral behaviour are those who "ignore" God (105: 29-30).

In conversation Mashudu remarks that the church is important to him. The spirit of God helps him, and protects him against troubles. Ancestral spirits play no role in his life. However, in keeping with evangelical mission theology (Bosch 1979: 33), Mashudu (like Solomon Mathase) seems to doubt that release from earthly suffering and confusion is possible. In spite of their passionate celebration of life, both men consider themselves to be passing through a perishing environment, and they express desire for eschatological release from existential turmoil. However, whereas Solomon's eschatological reality lies six feet underground (cf. 45: 25-26), Mashudu hopes to pass on to eternal life through Christian faith (cf. 102; 109: 54-79).

Mashudu's religious life is stormy. It manifests the universal human quest for meaning and social acceptance. It also reflects the brevity of Mashudu's friendships and alliances. Mashudu joined the Assemblies of God Church at the age of fifteen. Some five years later he joined the Apostolic Faith Mission Church, and accompanied their congregational singing

on his accordion. The accordion is regarded similarly to an organ, something which many local church congregations aspire to obtain. His involvement with these churches has been intense as well as erratic. As in other spheres of life, he became involved in religion only to reject it again. Once during 1990, when he was being persuaded by friends to go to church with them, he, like Solomon Mathase, replied that church was a "waste of time". When I confronted him about this statement, he replied that "there is no money in the church". Mashudu's approach to music making is emotional and passionate, but not to be separated from its material base. For him music making is a means of survival. In an environment in which social reform and the quest for social power is also pursued in religion, the involvement of bands and individual instrumentalists in church services is highly regarded in terms of recruiting new members. For some musicians, participation is a religious expression. For Mashudu it is also a potential source of survival. However, most congregations are poor, and do not reward musicians for their participation. Thus, for Mashudu the possible financial benefits of church membership did not materialize.

Mashudu's quest for survival is clearly manifested in the stylistic changes that took place in his music over a period of five years. I recorded Mashudu five times during this period: 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1991.

#### 1986

During June 1986 I recorded six of Mashudu's accordion songs. Three of these carried a religious theme. They were entitled "Joseph in Egypt", "The second coming", and "I sing to Jesus". The remaining songs included two which Mashudu subse-

quently adapted for the guitar: "Four-eyes" (99) and "Magidi" (106). These songs lacked rhythmic variety, and most of them featured a I-IV-V harmonic cycle. "Four-eyes" exhibited the bitonal shift of some traditional songs.

### 1987

When I approached Mashudu during June 1987 for further recording, I found that his accordion was broken. Instead, he had resorted to his guitar. On a windy, cloudy day I recorded him and two members of his band inside his uncle's small brick house at Tsianda. Mashudu and his friend Ezekiel Mulaudzi (on melodica) sat inside the small living room. The band's drummer, David Mukwevho, had to sit outside on the veranda so as not to overpower the singing. I recorded seven songs (97-103). Mashudu's guitar technique was much more varied than that of the accordion. Using a plectrum, his attack was aggressive, and he sang with confidence. Perhaps more than anything else, it was the driving rhythmic quality of his guitar playing which made his music so dynamic. He manipulated harmonic progressions, executed cross-rhythms, accentuated bass tones, and built up to dynamic climaxes. He also played glissandi, especially in the bass.<sup>3</sup> He varied timbre by only slightly depressing the strings with his left hand. This dampened string playing imitates drumming. Mashudu's body language was dramatic. The neck of his guitar was alternately held horizontally and almost vertically. One song was performed with the guitar played behind his head.

His songs manifested biting sarcasm at the frailty and corruption of human nature (100), intense empathy with the traumas of a changing society (97; 103), ridiculing political criticism (99: 54-72), emotional glorification of God (102),

and the tragicomic nature of some of the macabre rituals of a decadent humanity (98; 101). He was more than a musician: he was also an actor and story teller (97: 6-8; 99; 101) who had the riveted attention of an audience on the veranda. His songs contained many exclamations and exhibited dramatic vocal delivery. Above all they manifested power and vitality, and celebrated the diversity of life.

I discuss here in more detail four of the 1987 songs.

"The teacher" (song 98; audio recording 16)

This song is a serious moral injunction against cultural decay and decadence. Although the drunk teacher was the direct cause of the quarrel, the scene is set against the backdrop of poverty and cultural disorientation. Parents are idle and immoral (ll 13-14). They do not care properly for their children who in turn have little respect for school (ll 11-12). This song is a typical example of Mashudu's sublimated aggression and subversive humour.

Ll 1-8:

The song starts with a bass chord, punctuated heavily. It is an exclamation, a chord which commands the attention of the listener. This is followed by two powerful phrases on the high-sounding strings. This beginning determines the spirit of the song, one of power, vibrancy and vitality. Now follows a strumming pattern based on an eight beat I-IV-(I)-V cyclic pattern. The bass progression is strongly accented. The drum enters just before the voice. It has a powerful, thudding sound which is crucial to the forceful, dynamic nature of the song. The first seven vocal lines reveal that the I-IV-V

guitar progression is in fact subordinate to a traditional harmonic shift. The vocal lines start on **phala** (note E in chord I) and descend to **thakhula** (note B in chord V). The harmonic shift occurs between implied chords A/E and B/F#.

The descending vocal lines are complaints, cries of annoyance. Now follows the first series of exclamations. Mashudu commonly uses exclamations to dramatize the text, and affect emotions. The exclamation expresses annoyance at the behaviour of the teacher.

L1 9-30:

Now the texture changes: powerful, thudding bass patterns appear over an insistent drum pattern. A cross-rhythmic exchange briefly occurs between low and high-sounding strings. The timbre changes once more, now to that of strumming dampened strings. The sound that emerges is reinforced by the percussive sound of the drum. This musical change heralds and accompanies a structural change in the text (l 9), from singing to narration.<sup>4</sup> The dramatic staccato accompaniment supports the narrative: Mashudu tells of the drunk teacher demanding his pupils' homework. As the teacher beats the child, a toddler in the audience gives a cry!

L1 31-38:

The structure of the story and the music reverts back to that of the beginning of the song. Line 31 becomes a joyous exclamation about the humiliation of the corrupt teacher. It is punctuated by a strumming pattern on the high-sounding strings. This is contrasted with a bass ostinato pattern in **thakhula** tonality. Now follows an insistent pattern, almost

destructive in its power. It is mostly performed on the high-sounding strings, and is characterized by short, upward glissandi. The bass ostinato pattern returns, and is followed by a brief, almost frantic, chordal exchange between the low and high-sounding strings. A short pattern on the high-sounding strings diminishes the tension at the end of the song.

"Four-eyes" (song 99; audio recording 17)

This song is a mixture of fact and fiction. Mashudu was walking with his dog in the veld near the village of Hamutsha in 1984. He was accosted by a forestry official. Seeing the dog, the official asked Mashudu whether he was hunting. Hoping to avoid an argument, Mashudu decided to take to his heels. He was not apprehended. This incident is related in the first twenty-five lines of the song. The rest of the song is marvellously entertaining fiction with an undercurrent of political satire (ll 54-72). The singer manages to convince the police that the radio broadcast is real, and makes them appear like fools. This may be seen in terms of the role of the police in political repression during the decade of nominal independence and one-party rule (1979-1989). The experiences that some people had of social justice and nominal independence is reflected in the widely-used phrases **Riphabuliki ya Daka** (lit. the Bush Republic) and **Riphabuliki ya Gwavhavha** (lit. the Rock Lizard Republic; cf. ll 60-61). The dislike that people have of the rock lizard on account of its ugly appearance, served to qualify the opinion some people had of independence. The vacuous self-importance and incompetence of highly placed government officials becomes reflected in the ridiculous news broadcast which is taken for real by the police.

This song is based on the bitonal progression so typical of some traditional songs. This progression is the unwavering grid over which the dramatic tale is related. Singing is confined to lines 1-2, 26-30, and 75-78. The song progresses more or less uniformly until the introduction of the last section (ll 75-79). Here the regularity of the guitar accompaniment is disturbed. The instrument becomes dominant, and the drum is introduced for the first time. The somewhat submissive accompaniment dissolves into the same contemporary idiom<sup>5</sup> which characterizes "The teacher". It also features powerful bass glissandi and dampened string playing. The end of the song explores the potential for past and present to be unified. It becomes a search for new meaning amidst chaos. The music teeters momentarily on the precipice of break down: chaos looms in a bass ostinato punctuated with a glissando. However, Mashudu pulls in the reins and continues: the music becomes play, a celebration of the powerful vibrancy of newly created life.

"Something amazing" (song 100; audio recording 18)

This song arguably is one of Mashudu's finest creations, one which has never failed to produce strong reaction among my undergraduate students. In discussing the song, I also refer to the response of one class of first year students. The song's effectiveness essentially lies in the juxtaposing of the traditional bitonal progression and the I-IV-V progression, and how this juxtaposing serves Mashudu's mocking attitude towards religious morality.

Like "Four-eyes", this song is also part fact, part fiction. The bishop seems to have been the leader of a certain Zion Christian Church at Hamutsha. In this song Mashudu expresses



biting criticism against certain Zionists and their leaders. In conversation Mashudu remarks of Zionists that "they go to church yet they do bad things". He questions their morality because he believes that the presence or absence of the spirit of God can be seen in the deeds of people. The "bad" things he attributes to Zionists include murder and adultery. Mashudu's attitude is reflected in the use of the prefix li (1 3) in libishopo lihulwane ngamaanda ("an important, but corrupt and idiotic bishop"). Li is a prefix indicating personal disrespect. According to Mashudu the bishop achieved his rank in spite of having been a migrant labourer who lost all his money at gambling (11 32 ff.). The bishop's professional ignorance is reflected in the teaching of the hymn. My students also regularly interpret the bishop's actions in terms of the suspicion with which certain ZCC leaders are regarded. It is thought that they exploit their status to extort money from their followers who are often very poor.

After a short, characteristic introduction on the high-sounding strings, the song starts with a traditional bitonal progression. The first vocal line is also rooted in this familiar mode, symbolizing the heritage of the seemingly ordered, traditional past. The song quickly turns to a flowing narrative. The start of the hymn (1 22), is preceded by a musical announcement: a punctuated, four-tone bass ostinato on thakhula (B) tonality of the bitonal shift. This announcement signifies a structural change, leading to the hymn. It appears suddenly, jolting the attention of the students. Thakhula B falls back onto phala A which simultaneously serves as chord I of an almost laid-back eight beat I-IV-V progression. Mashudu's voice quality is mocking. His vowels are open, almost nasal in quality. They are drawn out in the ponderous way some congregations sing. The initial

surprise of some students, caused by the announcement, now turns into shock: the halves of the hymn (ll 1-2 & 3-4) are connected by a similarly mocking, punctuated bass pattern which is totally uncharacteristic of hymn singing. The shock is compounded by the new hymn (l 24) with its profane reference to eyebrows. The concluding part of this section is based on the bass pattern which so shocked some students. It climaxes with a mocking, alternating octave ostinato on the tonic which draws a burst of shocked laughter. The tonic becomes phala of the bitonal progression and its accompanying narrative. The hymn is reintroduced soon afterwards. Now the words are totally profane (l 29), having no link with the hymn text. This section is again punctuated with the tonic bass ostinato. By now the students are in virtual uproar, and do not subside until the end of the song. Some are shocked, others incredulous, many delighted. The music immediately reverts to the bitonal progression which supports further narrative (l 32 ff.). The narrative (ending in l 49) goes over to the familiar searching, accentuated playing which characterizes "The teacher". Yet it is still rooted in the bitonal progression. The drum also enters, giving added power and emotional impact to an accentuated bass pattern. The music builds up to a powerful climax, introducing the last section of the song (l 50 ff.).

"Suffering" (song 103; audio recording 19)

This song, above all, exudes Mashudu's unbridled energy from which no respite is to be had, leaving the listener emotionally exhausted. It is almost as if the listener can sensorily "tune in" and experience the suffering of those referred to in the song. The guitar part is prominent. By contrast the verbal text is restricted to a few contracted lines. However,

these lines are pregnant with latent meaning. Their full meaning emerges in the interaction between music and words which "become blurred into pure sonorous suggestions of cumulative figures of sound" (cf. Zumthor 1984: 86).

Like the previous songs, this song also starts in an unassuming way: a short introductory line on the high-sounding strings. This is all that is quiet and unassuming. The introduction is immediately followed by a driving bass ostinato, flanked by glissandi. An ostinato played on dampened high-sounding strings follows. This leads to a destructive I-IV-V progression characterized by strong bass tones, and supported by a powerful, thudding drum pattern. The first four vocal lines are emotional utterances, protests, lamentations against a cruel, suffering existence. They are followed by a number of exclamations which do not contribute to the surface meaning of the verbal text. They are affirmations of vital power, and timeless, forth-spewing life. They are cries which revolt - raw shouts which well up from an aching internal emotional and physical source.

The interlude between section two (ll 1-9) and section three (ll 10-15) manifests a search for meaning. Again we experience the precipice of chaos: a heavy, fleeting moment of silence punctuates a protracted dominant bass ostinato. However, Mashudu picks up the forward propulsion of the music immediately, and turns uncertainty into the inexorable certainty of desertion and suffering (l 10). Section three is also followed by a similar destructive interlude which leads to section 4 (l 16 ff.) with its varied harmonic progression (I-IV-I-V). The brief instrumental conclusion restates the raw emotional power of the song.

In my view, Mashudu's 1987 songs are his most creative. His life has never been care-free, but in 1987 he was still relatively young, and unmarried with little family responsibility. As a tshilombe he freely roamed the countryside and streets of Thohoyandou. His life-style was manifested in the almost reckless abandon of his guitar playing as well as the variety of experiences and emotional states manifested in his songs. Mashudu's musical expression of extraordinary social sensibility during this period was not only a result of his wandering existence, but also of his inherent ability to express the dilemmas of human existence. In this sense Mashudu is the opposite of Solomon Mathase. The music of both guitarists has universal reference. However, whereas Solomon addresses universal issues from the basis of explicitly personal experiences, Mashudu addresses his own existence only very implicitly in the context of a larger humanity. Mashudu is more introvert in character than Solomon. He is an individualist who does not perform at beer drinks. He tends to be shy and unassuming in his behaviour. However, this is a shell which is cast off in performance where he becomes an actor with an inner compulsion to express himself and address the exigencies of life. Mashudu's musical expression is basically altruistic, making him the essential artistic heroic figure. He is a tshilombe who takes on and tries to mediate the pain and suffering of others, even though he is also an integral part of that suffering. Localized as his experiences may be, his songs address total human existence. They transcend the boundaries of his experiences and take on a metaphysical and spatial sensibility which manifests an exchange of human consciousness: "filling our songs with the pain of others". It is in this sensibility that Mashudu's expressive power lies.

1988

I returned to Tsianda during July 1988. While Mashudu still played the guitar, he was no longer in the company of boys, but had struck up a friendship with two girls a few years younger than himself. They performed the chorus part of Mashudu's songs. Mashudu's new musical style came as a shock to me. Absent was the dynamic driving force behind his playing. The fusion of guitar cross-rhythms, vigorous drumming and narrative plot was replaced by an almost inhibited performance which lacked the boisterous attack of his previous songs. Instead of his vigorous, technically superb strumming, Mashudu had changed to picking the vocal melodies of songs only. Largely absent were also his complex personal songs of previous years. They had been partly replaced by renderings of a few children's songs (e.g. an adaptation of Frere Jacques; cf. audio recording 20)<sup>6</sup> and an arrangement of a possession cult song.

The only song which showed innovation was a rendering of the well-known hymn "Moses" (song 104; audio recording 21). Like "The teacher" (98) this song also exhibits the subordination of a Western chord progression to the harmonic shift of traditional music. The main tonality shift in the guitar part may be seen as occurring between chords I6/4 and V. However, the vocal parts are structured traditionally in the sense that they are metrically and tonally balanced (cf. discussion in ch. 3.2.1). The first half of the total pattern centers around *thakhula* (note C in chord I6/4), and the second half around *phala* (note B in chord V). This tonality shift is strengthened by the absence of movement in the guitar part onto the finality of a tonic chord in root form. Instead, chord I6/4 generates perpetual movement characteristic of

traditional music.

chorus

leader

guitar

(I  $\frac{4}{4}$ )

(V)

32

Fig. 6: Pitch = C, original = Bb; 4 pulses = 108

1990/91

Two years later, during July 1990, I recorded Mashudu again (105-109). He now performed alone. He had gone back to strumming, but his performance did not match its initial vitality and variety. However, his song texts resembled those I had heard during 1987. I recorded Mashudu again during April 1991 (110-113). He performed alone again, this time on a twelve string guitar. His strumming accompaniment was soft and gentle, without significant rhythmic drive (cf. audio recording 22). His voice quality was also soft and gentle, almost meditative. I thought he was inhibited by something. I stopped my tape recorder, and told him that he was free to perform as loudly as he wished. He nodded, and continued

playing in exactly the same way. In addition, most of his song texts were strangely removed from his previous heartfelt concern with everyday existence and survival (e.g. 110; 111).

These apparently unmotivated stylistic changes in Mashudu's songs were initially bewildering to me. However, I subsequently came to realize that they are related to Mashudu's life process and his struggle for survival.

Mashudu had showed in his changing musical style a desire for socio-economic mobilization. Not only is the guitar popular, freely available and relatively cheap, but it is capable of performing a variety of musical styles. The influence of the mass media has made many young unemployed people aware of the economic potential of music making. In the absence of sufficient job opportunities, amateur musicians aspire to become acknowledged as *vhasiki* (sing. *musiki*; from *-sika*, to create). *Vhasiki* are well-known composers and band leaders such as Colbert Mukwevho, Dan Tshanda, Alpheus Ramavhea, Fhatuwani Masevhe and Irene Mawela whose songs are broadcast on Radio Thohoyandou. I do not have sufficient data to show extensively how musicians are able to achieve success, but it seems that amateurs have to ensure a continuous and relatively high standard of playing. This allows their reputation to spread, increasing the chances that they will receive a visit from Radio Thohoyandou personnel. Once their music is broadcast over the radio, they stand a good chance of attracting the attention of a music entrepreneur or record company.

It is possible to construct a model of the various performance levels on which guitarists operate (fig. 7). The model

does not necessarily apply to all guitarists and only serves as a general indicator. In some cases a particular guitarist may progress through all these levels. Others, however, may only reach a certain level, not having the means or ability to proceed further. Some guitarists also fluctuate between certain levels, depending on changing personal circumstances.

#### Fig. 7: Guitar performance levels

##### Level 1

Beginners, usually boys not older than thirteen or fourteen, playing on home made guitars. They usually lack the musical and verbal skills of older players, but they exhibit the basic skills of guitar performance. Refer to Nkhwasheni Band and Mbulaheni Netshipise (ch. 4.7).

##### Level 2

Adults playing on cheap factory made guitars. These instruments often are gifts from working relatives, but guitarists sometimes buy their own instruments. Musicians in this category are technically reasonably proficient. Some are even outstanding. Most guitarists in my research sample function on this level.

##### Level 3

Enterprising guitarists form a small band usually comprising acoustic instruments only: usually lead and bass guitar, and a drum; sometimes also a hand-rattle. The music is usually of a high standard. Refer to Mmbangiseni Mphaga and Nkhangweleni Ramaswiela (ch. 4.2), and Phineas Mavhaga and Tshikambe Best Singers (ch. 4.6).

##### Level 4

As on levels two and three, but the guitarists have now attracted sufficient attention to have their music recorded by and broadcast on Radio Thohoyandou. The income from having their music broadcast is nominal, and they retain amateur status. Mashudu Mulaudzi occasionally functioned on this level. Another guitarist on this level is Solomon Mathase.

##### Level 5

As on level four, but the music has been adapted (usually without significant change) for performance on electric guitars and drums. Refer to Albert Mundalamo (ch. 4.4).



## Level 6

Guitarists turn professional and produce commercial recordings. Some have their original music arranged for a more "sophisticated" commercial sound, and others emulate popular musical styles. The language medium is either Venda or English, compared to other levels which mostly feature the use of Venda. My investigation does not focus on these guitarists. They include people like reggae musician Colbert Mukwevho.

As an individualist who does not perform at beer drinks, Mashudu's 1987 songs explore social reality in instrumental sound and singing, and not in actual social interaction. Unlike Solomon, his guitar playing is more than conventional accompaniment. It is central in terms of his engaged response to his social environment, and symbolizes a quest for order that the verbal text cannot fully show. Although Mashudu employs harmonic ostinatos in chordal form, the guitar part often meanders searchingly, and the formal design of his songs is unpredictable. He questions established cyclic musical conventions, and explores meaning in horizontal texture. The roots of this partly lie in Mashudu's attempt to emulate a band. He fuses lead, rhythm and bass guitar, as well as drums, into a coherent whole on his single guitar. By means of his superb strumming technique he imitates the characteristics of these band instruments at their respective pitch levels. This results in the suppression of strong harmonic ostinatos, and the creation of a kind of linear musical progression.

The marked stylistic difference between Mashudu's 1987 and 1988 songs is partly related to social factors. During 1988 Mashudu met two sisters, Judith and Florence Mamarigela, who were eighteen and twenty-one years old respectively. The two girls had moved to Venda from Johannesburg earlier during that year. They went to live with their sister at Tsianda.

Florence noticed Mashudu "going up and down, playing songs". She accosted him, telling him she would give him 20c a song if he came to play at their house. When he arrived there, she asked him if she and her sister could sing with him. For a few weeks Mashudu and the two girls performed together. Florence informed Mashudu that his guitar should "follow the words". In other words, he had to pick vocal melodies, and not strum. This was the case with their favourite styles of music, namely disco and gospel. Mashudu was thus in fact emulating a lead guitar pattern during 1988. However, this was not clear to me at the time. I asked Mashudu in astonishment why he had stopped strumming. He replied that strumming was "for beginners". But this is not so much a musical as a social judgement. Strumming is not only for "beginners", but also for socially "unsophisticated" people. The temporary alliance between Mashudu and the Mamarigela sisters had had a "sobering" influence on Mashudu's life pattern and personal appearance. Before this time Mashudu was constantly locked into a cycle of temporary personal and musical alliances, often with vagrant boys. These alliances were regulated by his erratic movements and lifestyle, which militated against stable, ongoing relationships. This affected his social image, and contributed towards his status as **tshilombe**. Some people frowned on his associations, mainly because they thought he exploited his young companions financially. Mashudu, moralist and prophet, did not like the label of **tshilombe**. To him **zwilombe** are "mad". They are known for behaviour he opposes: they always wander around, play for beer, and dress sloppily. When Mashudu met the Mamarigela sisters, his **tshilombe** status had become too much of an embarrassment to him. He broke up Tshiwo Band, and made a point of busking at a specific place on a regular basis. However, because the band's musical style was an expression

of the life-style of its members, Mashudu could not form an alliance with the Mamarigela sisters, and retain his old musical style. Thus his style of playing changed as a feature of his social aspirations.

Mashudu's alliance with the Mamarigela sisters did not last long, and he returned to solo busking. It is busking which forced Mashudu to resort to strumming again. For a single acoustic guitar to be heard above the noise of traffic and pedestrians, strumming is vital. However, the change in Mashudu seemed to have been irreversible. His strumming had lost its former explosive, powerful quality. As indicated, this was even more evident during 1991. Since the Mamarigela sisters had seemingly had a "sobering" influence on Mashudu a few years before, it occurred to me that his marriage, which took place at the end of 1990, might have influenced him similarly. But my romantic speculation was unfounded. Mashudu was in fact emulating Country and Western music he heard on Radio Thohoyandou. He managed to buy a twelve string guitar, and was gauging the popularity of Country and Western music to see what economic benefits may be derived from it.

In the final analysis Mashudu's various techniques were not so much attendant upon stylistic "changes" as they were part of his stylistic repertoire. In the idiom of culture as a dynamic, "floating resource", Mashudu, the busker in search of a dream, had chosen from a pool of musical resources what was required under particular social circumstances. Because of the exigencies of his life, particularly the need to survive, Mashudu could not always choose the style of music he wanted to play. His choice was partly determined by social factors. When he busked alone, he became a band *in reductio*. When he played with others, he employed the picking

technique.

It is more difficult to account for the decreasing vitality of Mashudu's later song texts (cf. 110; 111). However, it seemed to me that Mashudu became more mature over the five year period I studied him. Towards the end of this time he had worked out of his system much of the repressed anger and emotions which characterize his 1987 songs.

Towards the end of 1990 Mashudu met a girl, Matodzi Jeanette, alert and bright-eyed like himself. They fell in love, and Matodzi came to live with him. The couple wanted to marry in Mashudu's church. However, Matodzi is not a Christian. In addition, some of her family members belong to a possession cult. The church objected to this, and placed Mashudu under censure. Mashudu expressed shock about this. He left the church and continued to live with Matodzi. In 1993 he remarked bitterly that after three years he still was not sure whether his relationship with Matodzi was immoral or not.

It seemed to me as if musician and man had become one, as if Mashudu's musically fabricated world was not only a perspective on life, but also a way of life. Mashudu had helplessly become drawn into the social quagmire on whose periphery he had previously stood as empathetic observer. His critical attitude towards immorality had become relevant to himself. From Mashudu's bitterness it seemed to me as if he found himself looking at his musical mirror only to find that it had cracked, and that he was looking at a cruel caricature of himself.

## Notes

1 Unless stated otherwise, "bass guitar" refers to an acoustic guitar which plays the bass part of guitar song accompaniments. This bass part sometimes comprises a single line played on a one-stringed guitar (cf. pl. 6). Some bass guitars have three or four strings.

2 Mashudu referred to the melodica as *lomedica* (sic), fluit (flute), and *tshitiringo*, the name given to the Venda traditional transverse flute (cf. Kirby 1968).

3 He had no specific term for these glissandi, merely indicating that they constituted "voices".

4 This interaction between singing and narrative is common in traditional music (cf. Kruger 1986). It is arguably related to the narrative-song exchange of folktales which feature songs as an integral part of their structure and meaning.

5 Andrew Tracey remarks that the dynamic narrative form of songs 98-100 and 103 (cf. discussion) is reminiscent of that of Tsonga guitarists. I do not know to what extent Mashudu has been influenced by the music of his favourite artists, namely Adziambei Band (cf. discussion on Albert Raedani), Lucky Dube, and the Shinori sisters.

6 The text of the song:

**Ndi na ndala.**

I am hungry.

**Teachere, tsimbi lila lini?**

Teacher, when does the bell ring?

**Ra yo la.**

We are going to eat.

Vhuhadzi (Marriage)

Vhasidzana vha zwino a vha dzuli vhuhadzi.<sup>1</sup>  
Nowadays girls do not stay with their in-laws.  
Vha dzhia mahadzi vha tou tolela.  
They just call there briefly to see how things are.  
U tshi mu vhudzisa,  
When you ask her she answers,  
u ri o shavha bodo,  
I ran away from the cooking pot,  
bodo ya saizi four.  
pot size four.  
Vhana, vho tinga zwivhaso!  
Children, gather round the fire-place!<sup>2</sup>

Dou pfa!  
Listen!  
Khezwo!  
Oh dear!

"Vhasidzana vha zwino a vha dzuli mahadzi."  
"Nowadays girls do not stay with their in-laws."  
10 "Vha tshi ya mahadzi vha tou tolela."  
"They just call there briefly to see how things are."  
"Musi o vhingwa mudini une wa vha muhulwane, ha todi u  
"When she marries into a big family, she does not want to  
bikela vhana."  
cook for all the children."  
"U toda u bikela ene na vhana vhawe fhedzi na  
mukalaha wawe."  
"She wants to cook for her children and husband only."

Helelelelele! Venda!

Khoyo o phula milenze. O ya Thohoyandou.  
There she is, wearing pantihose. She went to Thohoyandou.<sup>3</sup>

Dali wanga, hoyu malisambilu.  
My darling, this heart-breaker.  
Swithi wanga, hoyu malisambilu.  
My sweetie, this heart-breaker.  
Ndi amba vhone mmawe:  
I am telling you mother:  
20 Vha do zwi kona naa?  
Will you be able to handle this?

Khoyo o phula milenze.  
There she is, wearing pantihose.  
O ya Thohoyandou.  
She went to Thohoyandou.  
Khoyo o phema mavhudzi.  
There she is, perming her hair.

O ya Thohoyandou.  
She went to Thohoyandou.

"Ndi yone Tshiwo band  
"The Tshiwo band

na vhalidzi vhararu:"  
has three players:"

"Wa u thoma ndi ene Samuel Mulaudzi."

"The first member is Samuel Mulaudzi."

"Wa vhuvhili ndi ene Zacharia Mulaudzi."

"The second member is Zacharia Mulaudzi."

"Wa vhuraru ndi ene David

"The third member is David

30 ndi ene mutshayi wa dirama."

who is the drummer.

"The composer

is Mr Netshifhefhe."<sup>4</sup>

1 Vhuhadzi: "A woman's new home with her husband" (Wentzel & Muloiwa 1982: 70). This song must be interpreted in terms of the Venda patrilineal extended family. In this context newly-wed women join the homesteads of their husbands. Also resident in the homestead are their husbands' fathers and their wives and sons. Newly-wed women are subject to the strict scrutiny of their in-laws, particularly with reference to their wifely duties. Apart from seeing to the needs of their husbands and children, they also have certain responsibilities towards the well-being of the entire extended family.

In this song the singer is implicitly commenting on social change with reference to the rejection of domestic discipline by certain young wives. By way of example Mashudu refers to the fact that they do not like cooking for members of the extended family. This is reflected by the size of the cooking pot (size four is a large communal cooking pot).

This song is based on reality. An eighteen year old girl from Tsianda, Flora Mudau, married a man from Tshakuma, Josef Makhuvha, during the middle 1980s. Josef was employed as a security guard in Johannesburg. A year after her marriage the girl left her in-laws and returned to her father's home. She apparently divorced her husband subsequently. Her family had to return the three cattle offered as bridewealth. She is now employed as a farm labourer at Levubu. Mashudu did not know the actual reason for her leaving. Perhaps, as the song suggests, she did not want to cook for many people. In her husband's family there were six people: herself, her husband, her mother-in-law, and three brothers-in-law. However, it is arguable that "pot size four" is metaphoric for all the domestic duties and the discipline of the mother-in-law.

In conversations about this song with Mashudu and my students I often hear the opinion expressed that the girl was "lazy". As in other guitar songs, there is a reaction against women who are seen to disturb the precolonial social fabric and

established order. There is clearly much difficulty in accepting the new role allocation of women. This is further illustrated by Mashudu's association of pantihose and permed hair with immoral women only.

2 This is a reference to story-telling around a fire during winter evenings.

3 Thohoyandou is generally considered as a symbol of modern contemporary socio-economic existence. However, it is also taken as a symbol of moral decay by association with gambling and prostitution.

4 The reference here is not to Mashudu but to a local teacher who is also a composer and musician.

98

Mudededzi (The teacher)

Muñwe mudededzi  
A certain teacher  
u nwa halwa  
drinks beer  
a ya tshikoloni.  
and then goes to school.  
A funza vhana  
He teaches children  
o kambiwa  
while he is drunk  
u dinyadzisa  
and they  
nga vhana.  
do not respect him.  
Tshola! Tshola! Tshola! Tshola!<sup>1</sup>

"Ndi matsheloni vhana."  
"Good morning children."

10 "Ndi matsheloni avhudi vhadedezi."  
"Good morning sir."

"Hu na vhañwe vhana hafhanoni tshikoloni:<sup>2</sup>  
"There are certain children here at school:

Vha dzhia u nga ri hetshi tshikolo ndi tsha vhabebi vhavho."  
They regard this school as if it is their parents' property."

"Vhabebi vhavho vha sokou tsa na zwitarata hafhanoni,  
"Their parents are walking up and down the streets here,  
vho phula milenze."  
wearing pantihose."<sup>3</sup>

"No dzhia zwa vhomme."  
"You have taken after your mother."

"Bilankulu ene u gai?"  
"Where is Bilankulu?"



"Bulekijani ene kha de ngeno phanda."

"Bulekijani<sup>4</sup> must come to the front."

"Ndi khou toda u vhila milandu yanga yothe u bva

I am trying to collect all my debts from January to  
January to December."

December.<sup>5</sup>

20 "Hee vhanna vha hashu, zwi khou di konda."

Alas people,<sup>6</sup> it is tough.

"A nga kona vho u mpha nyelelwa na dzi homework

"Is he<sup>7</sup> able to quote verses from the Bible and give me all  
dzothe dzanga?"

my homework?"

"A nga vha nne hedzo a thi na."

"I<sup>8</sup> did not do the work."

"Ni delela ngamaanda inwi mutukana:

"You are really despising me boy:

Imani ndi ni rwe."

Let me beat you."

"Dzhia! Vhea!"<sup>9</sup>

"Take that! Whack!"

"Dzhia! Vhea!"

"Take that! Whack!"

"Ngoho ndi nga si zwi kondele: Na nne ndi ya zama vho."

I really cannot tolerate this: I will also try to beat you."

"Vhufhuli! Motshari!"<sup>10</sup>

"Whap! Thump!

30 "Vhufhuli! Motshari!"

"Whap! Thump!"

Mifhululu, mifhululu, mifhululu, vhakegulu!

Ululate, ululate, ululate, old ladies!

Hae, gombo li na mitwe!

Hey, the extended belly-button is cracked!<sup>11</sup>

Yowee, gombo li na mitwe!

The extended belly-button is cracked!

Nda ri, khombo, musidzana!

I say, there is danger, girl!

Yowee, khombo, musidzana!

There is danger, girl!

Shua! Shua!

Shure! Shure!

Tshola! Tshola! Tshola!

38 Hae-ae-ae-ae manu-wee!

1 An exclamation of annoyance.

2 The teacher speaking.

3 I.e. they are idle.

4 A nickname referring to somebody with a very dark skin;  
from the combined Eng./Afr. "Black Jan".

5 Referring to the collection of the year's homework.

6 Lit. our men.

7 I.e. Bulakijani.

8 Lit. I do not have them.

9 Lit. take it, put it down: indicating the beating.

10 Lit. Vhufhuli! Mortuary! These are the names of the singer's fists. Vhufhuli is a district northeast of Thohoyandou. The actual reference here is to the mortuary of the Donald Fraser Hospital which is located in this district.

11 An insult directed at the teacher. The concept of an extended belly-button (apparently caused at birth when the umbilical cord is accidentally pulled) appears in a number of Venda songs. Its significance is not entirely clear. Some suggest that people refer to the extended belly button of others to annoy them. Others indicate that it may also have a sexual reference, the exact nature of which is unknown.

99

Tshamato (Four-eyes)

(Solo)

Tshamato.

Four-eyes.<sup>1</sup>

(chorus)

Mmbwa yanga.

My dog.

(solo)

"Heyi mmbwa Tshamato ndo vha ndi tshi i funa ngamaanda."

"I used to love this dog Four-eyes very much."

"Yo nkhakhela duvha liñwe ri khou zwima nga hangei fhasi."

"He dog made a mistake one day when we were hunting down there."

"Ya nkhela-khela, ndi si divhe uri i gai."

"He got lost, and I did not know where he was."

"Ya vhuya Tshamato

"Four-eyes came back,

i tshi khou thephula mutshila i tshi sokou ri,  
wagging his tail,

thephu,

swephu."

10 "Yo takala ngamaanda. Nda ri hei mmbwa

"He was very pleased. It seemed that this dog

i nga vha yo fara ntsa."

caught a duiker."

"Nda i sala nga murahu."

Then I followed him.

"Ndi tshi ndi ya phanda, nda wana Tshamato i tshi khou

"When I walked further on, I found Four-eyes going into the

dzhena dakani."  
forest."

"Mulandu ndi mini Tshamato? Ndi hone he wa fara hone  
"What is the matter Four-eyes? Is this where you caught  
ntsa naa?"

the duiker?"

"Ya tenda nga mutshila."

"He replied with his tail."

"Mathina Tshamato i ya vhulahisa."

"But Four-eyes can get you into trouble."

"Ndi tshi ya ngei dakani, nda wana mapholisa. Vha ri: Hee,  
"When I went into the forest, I found the police there who  
20 khotsimunene, naa ni na sethifikheithi tsha u zwima ntsa  
said: Hey young man, have you got a licence to hunt the  
naa?"

duiker?"

"Nda ri: Aiwa, a ke na baba, a ke na ntate."

"I said: No, I do not have one, father."

"Vha thoma u mpandamedza. Vha tshi ri:

"They started to chase me. They were shouting:

"Thivha! Thivha! Thivha! Thivha! Fara! Fara! Fara! Fara!

"Stop him! Stop him! Stop him! Catch him! Catch him!

Fara! Fara! Tsamaya!"

Catch him! Go!"

Helo duvha ndo vha ndi tshi pfi

That day I called myself

`Farani Dzindebvu'.

`Catch The Beards'.

Ndi swike ndi tangane

I met

na vhañwe vhakalaha

certain old men

30 vha khou gwa musele.

who were digging a ditch.

"Mapholisa vho ri vha tshi swika hafhalani,

"When the police arrived there,

vho tavha mukosi. Vha ri:

they shouted:

He vhakalaha, `Farani Dzindebvu', a suyo u khou fhira!"

Hey, old men, `Catch The Beards', there he is passing!"

"Havhala vhakalaha vha si pfe zwavhudi zwa uri hu fariwe

"Those old men did not hear clearly that they were referring  
nne lini."

to me."

"Muñwe na muñwe a sokou thoma u fara ndebvu dzawe."

"Everyone started to catch his beard."

"Ha pfala uri dzanga: Ndo fara khedzi! Dzanga hafhu dzi sa

"Then the police heard: I caught mine! Hey boy, I cannot  
farei mutukana!"

catch mine!"

"A si na kha fare gulokulo!"

"Then catch your adam's apple!"

40 "Nda swika muñwe mudini hu na ndu ya pulata."  
 "I reached a certain corrugated iron house  
 "Ho dzula mukegulu muthihi mutani. Nda ri: Hee ndaa makhulu!"  
 where an old lady was sitting in the courtyard. I said: Hallo  
 granny!"  
 "Naa mudini wavho a hu na gireme naa?"  
 "Have you got a gram radio here at home?"  
 "Vha ri: Gireme i hone muduhulu wanga. Hu tou kundwa  
 "She said: There it is my dear, but it has no  
 bitiri."  
 batteries."  
 "Zwino, vha nga si kone u ndzhenisa nga ngomu naa?"  
 "Now, can't you put me inside it?"  
 "Vha ndzhenisa nga ngomu giremeni hafhalani."  
 "Then the old woman put me inside."  
 "Hu si vhe u kweta ningo. Ndi tharavhulo."  
 "I hid, hoping not to be discovered. There was trouble."  
 "Mapholisa a vha a tshi khou dzhena. A ri:  
 "The police went inside and  
 "Naa a vho ngo vhona, muñwe munna a no itwa `Farani  
 asked the old woman: Didn't you see a certain man  
 50 Dzindebvuv' afha naa?"  
 called `Catch The Beards'?"  
 "Vhala mukegulu vha ri: Aiwa, tho ngo mu vhona  
 "That old woman said: No, I did not see him my  
 muduhulu wanga."  
 dear."  
 "Na `Farani Dzindebvuv' wa hone a thi mu divhi."  
 "I do not even know `Catch The Beards'."  
 "Vha ri: Kha vha vulele radio, ri pfe tshifhinga khathihi na  
 Then the police said: Switch the radio on, we want to hear  
 mafhungo a shango."  
 the time and the news."  
 "Vha tshi ri twatsha  
 "Because I was inside the radio  
 ngauri ndo vha ndi nga ngomu giremi hafhala,  
 when she switched it on,  
 ndo amba nda ri:  
 I announced the time:  
 Tshifhinga zwino ndi iri ya u thoma."  
 The time is now one'o clock."  
 60 "Heyi ndi Radio Gwavhavha, ipfi la Riphabuliki  
 "This is Radio Rock Lizard, the voice of the  
 ya Daka."  
 Banana Republic."<sup>3</sup>  
 "Mafhungo a shango a siya a vhalwa nga Bulekijani  
 "Here is the news read by Bulekijani  
 `Farani Dzindebvuv':  
 `Catch the Beards':  
 Minista Muhulwane wa ngei Magwavhavhani vho divhadza u ri  
 The Prime Minister of Bananaland announced that a big  
 mulovha ho bvelela khombo khulwane vhukuma kha bada  
 accident occurred on the main road yesterday."  
 ya tshigontiri."  
 "Hu pfi lusunzi lwo thulana na mmbwa, na zwino lusunzi lwo  
 "An ant collided with a dog, and the ant's leg

vundea mulenzhe. Yo lovhela henefho."  
was broken. The dog died instantly."

"Ri tshi khou amba zwino hu pfi holwo lusunzi lu khou itwa  
"It is said that the ant is undergoing an operation of the  
70 operesheni kha gona ngei vhuongeloni."  
knee in the hospital."

"Mapholisa vha ri: Dankie makhulu, ro livhuwa ngamaanda,  
"The police said: Dankie granny, thank you very much, switch  
kha vha vale radio yavho."  
off your radio."

"Vha tshi ri twatsha, nda mbo di doba katara yanga nda mbo  
"When she switched off, I took my guitar  
di tshimbila."  
and walked away."

Iyi mani!  
Hey man!  
Vha tshi lila mani!  
When they cry man!  
Yuwi Bulekijani!  
Wow Bulekijani!  
Vha tshi ri, Bulekijani!  
When they say, Bulekijani!

79 Thivha! Thivha! Thivha! Thivha!  
Stop him! Stop him! Stop him! Stop him!

1 Lit. one with eyes (one who watches and guards; cf. Afr.  
Wagter). Tshamato is the name given to any dog with two  
prominent spots on its forehead (as with Dobermans).

2 Lit. to scratch one's nose.

100

Tshimangadzo (Something amazing)

O ita tshimangadzo.  
He has done wonders.

"Ndi muñwe munna we a vha o lovhelwa nga mufumakadzi."  
"A certain man's wife was deceased."  
"Hoyu munna o vha a libishopo lihulwane ngamaanda."  
"This man was an important, but corrupt and idiotic bishop."  
"Tshi dinaho ndi u ri o vha a sa koni u imba luimbo lwa  
"His problem was that he did not know how to sing:  
Thamathama ndi Murena."  
What a friend have we in Jesus."

"Mashudu mavhuya ndi ngauri mufumakadzi a tshi lovha o mu sia  
"When his wife died she fortunately left him a daughter who  
a na ñwana muthihi fhedzi wa musidzana we a vha e na miñwaha  
ya malo."  
was eight years old."

"Dzina lawe vha ri ndi ene Snow White."

"Her name was Snow White."<sup>1</sup>

10 "Snow White o vha a tshi ya kerekeni a tshi ya Sunday school."

"Snow White regularly went to church and Sunday school."

"A tshi ya kha mitambo yothe ya Fhungo la Mudzimu."

"She attended her lessons where the Word of God was taught."

"Khotsi vho mu humbela uri a vha gudise luimbo lwa Thamathama

"Her father asked her to teach him the song: What a friend ndi Murena ngei mavhidani."

have we in Jesus, at the cemetery."<sup>2</sup>

"Vho tsa mavhidani hu kha di vha nga matsheloni."

"They went to the cemetery in the morning."

"Kula kwana kwa thoma kwa ri baba,

"That child said to her father:

Baba, wee a vha imbe vha ri:

Father, sing:

Thamathama ndi Murena. Yesu a di mpfunaho."

What a friend have we in Jesus. Jesus loves me."

"A dovha a ri:

"She further said:

20 Namusi ndi na makovhi, Mudzimu u do di nkhatshela."

Even if I have protruding eyebrows, God will have mercy on me."

"Vhala munna vha imba vha tshi ri:"

"Then that man sang:"

Thamathama ndi Murena.

What a friend have we in Jesus.

Yesu a di mpfunaho.

Jesus loves me.

Nangwe ndi na makovhi,

Even if I have protruding eyebrows,

U do di nkhatshela.

God will have mercy on me.

"Havhala munna vho vha vho ambara mabutswu a kingimaini."

"That man was wearing mining boots."

"Vha khakha vha kanda Snow White gunwe."

"He accidentally stepped on Snow White's toe."

"Snow White a ri:

"Then Snow White said:

Baba, ndi ri vha khou nkanda gunwe, a vha zwi vhoni naa?"

Father, you are treading on my toe, don't you see?"

30 "Vhala munna vha mbo di imba vha ri:"

"That man sang:"

Baba, vha khou nkanda gunwe - a vha zwi vhoni naa?

Father, you are treading on my toe - don't you see?

"Nga mbiti munna o vhuya ngeno Venda nga milenzhe."

"The enraged man<sup>3</sup> returned to Venda on foot."

"Mme awe vha tshi mu vhona, vha mu pfela ngamaanda vhutungu."

"When his mother saw him she felt very sorry for him and

"Vha ri:

said:

Oh shame tog!"

Oh shame!"

"Ag toggie tog!"

"Oh shame, shame!"

"Ag tog!"

"Oh shame!"

"Nwananga o onda ngamaanda - u tou nga mukoki."

"My child is very thin - like a strip of biltong."

"Makhadzi wawe vha ri:

"His aunt said:

40 Danu vhona ni na tshika."

You are dirty."

"Muthu u a dikilina, nwana wa khaladzi anga mani."

"Man, a person must clean himself, my sister's child."

"Ni tou onda na onda na ningo ya u fema iwe vhathu."

"Your thinness is even reflected in your nose."

"Ha vhudziswa vhana ha pfi naa muthu uyu ni a mu divha naa."

"Then they asked the children if they knew this person."

"Ha pfa evho, evho nne a ri vha divhi henevha vho ondaho ngaurali."

"No, we do not know such a thin person."

"Nga mbiti munna a tshi ri ndi yo vula basa a tshi todou

"The enraged man went to collect his pass book to show them ri ndi nne khotsi anu."

that he was their father."

"Ndo tuwa nga 1975."

"I left in 1975."

"A tshi khou balelwa u amba uri 1975."

"He was unable to tell them that it was 1975."

50 Hangei Dzhubege!

There in Johannesburg!

Magaratani!

Where they gamble with cards!

Vha ri, hu liwa!

They say, we eat!<sup>4</sup>

Dou pfa! Dou pfa! Dou pfa! Dou pfa!

Listen! Listen! Listen! Listen!

Dzhia! Dzhia! Dzhia! Dzhia!

Take! Take! Take! Take!

Ndi yone Tshiwo band.

This is the Tshiwo band.

1 On account of her character.

2 Thus concealing his ignorance from the congregation.

3 Because of having lost all his money.

4 I.e. money is lost irresponsibly through gambling.

Shonisani (Shonisani)<sup>1</sup>

Hae, Shonisani, hae.

Alas Shonisani, alas.

Ni pfi mbulaisi Shonisani, ni pfi mbulaisi Shonisani, hae.

Alas, you are a killer Shonisani, you are a killer.

"Shonisani o vha a tshi shuma na vhanna vhavhili femeni ye a vha a tshi shuma khayoy."

"Shonisani worked with two men in a firm."

"Ndi nga di ri ndi vhararu."

"I should say there were three."

Havha vhanna vhararu

Those three men

vho mu ambisa vhothe a vha funa,  
all proposed love to her,

nga tshifhinga tsho fhambananaho.  
and she accepted them separately.

"Muñwe o mu vhudza zwauri a de nga

"She told them to come at

10 one o' clock,

two o' clock,

two past two."

"Wa u thome wa one o' clock o ya a dovha a vhuya."

"The first one went at one o' clock and returned."

"Hoyu wa two o' clock,

"The one

o vhudzwa zwauri

who went at two o' clock,

a swike a edele ntha ha mmbete

was told to sleep on the bed,

a di fukedze nguvho

and to cover himself with a blanket

uri a sa vhonele."

so that he should not be seen."

"A vulele radio fhasi, fhasi, fhasi

"He had to switch the radio

20 i tou lila zwavhudi."

on softly, softly, softly."



"A vhuise na vothi."  
"He had to close the door."

"Wa vhuvhili o swika a ri: Hee ndaa, hee ndaa!"  
"The second one arrived and said: Hallo, hallo!"

"U fhana a no khou fhindula. A mbo di swika vho henengei  
"The one who was already there, answered. When he had arrived  
a vulele radio fhasi, fhasi, fhasi, fhasi, a vhuisa na  
there, he switched the radio on softly, softly, softly and  
vothi."  
closed the door."

"A mbo di edela nthha ha mmbete."  
"Then he went to sleep on the bed."

"A difukedza bai u ri a si vhonele."  
"Then he covered himself in order not to be seen."

"Hoyu wa vhuraru  
"This third one

o vha Muzulu."  
was a Zulu."

30 "Dzina lawe vha ri ndi ene Fanyana."  
"His name was Fanyana."

"O vhudzwa uri a tshi swika hafhala mudini  
"He was told that when he reached the house

a wana hu na muthu o edelaho nthha ha mmbete, a divhe  
and found a person sleeping on the bed, he had to know that  
zauri ndi ene wa mufumakadzi hoyu Shonisani."  
it would be the girl Shonisani."

"Liñwe o vha a tshi pfi U Se Ka Mpulaya."  
"Shonisani's other name was Do Not Kill Me."

"Nangoho zwa itea ngauralo."  
"It really happened like that."

"Nga hetshi tshifhinga ndi musi Shonisani a siho."  
"This time Shonisani was not at home."

"Fanyana a vha u a ya."  
"Fanyana went towards the bed."

"Khakhathi!"  
"Trouble!"  
"Hee ndaa!"  
"Hallo!"

40 "U pfa a hu na a no khou mu fhindula."  
"There was no response."

"A tshi sedza ntha ha mmbete u wana uri ala mafhungo ndi  
"When he looked on the bed, he found that a person was indeed  
one hu na muthu o edelaho ntha ha mmbete."  
sleeping there."

"A tshi dzhena u wana kuradio ku khou lilela  
When he entered he found the small radio playing  
fhasi, fhasi, fhasi."  
softly, softly, softly."

"U swika fhala tsini na mmbete, Fanyana ndi u thoma u bvula  
"When he approached the bed, Fanyana started to remove his  
mateki. E a vho o ambara  
canvas shoes,  
a mbo di ri na maswogisi awe."  
even his socks  
"A ri na vhurukhu hawe he a ambara."  
and his trousers."

"A salela nga tshikhindi. A mbo di ri na badzhi na hemmbe  
"He remained standing in his shorts. Then he took off his  
jacket,  
50 na thai na watshi."  
shirt, tie and watch."

"A amba nga luambo lwa hawe a ri:  
"He spoke in his own language:

U pfesisile mufazi wami, u pfesisile mufazi wami."  
You have finished your chores my wife, finished your  
chores."

"A tshi ralo u khou di posa ntha ha mmbete."

"Then he threw himself on the bed."

"Ntha ha ula munna."

"On top of the other man."

"Ula munna a tshi ri: Ndi nnyi ane a khou nkwanya?"

"That man shouted: Who is pressing me down?"

"A tshi mato u wana uri ndi munwe munna ngae."

"When he looked he found that it was another man."

"Ha thoma u lila, kili ntha ha thoho,

"They started to shout, hit one another on the head,  
vha thoma u lwa."  
and fight."

"Mmbete wa mbo di fhedza nga u wa ngauri ndi musi wo tikwa  
60 nga zwikotikoti."

"The bed tipped over because it had been placed on tins."

Hayi! U Se Ka Mpulaya!

Hayi! Do Not Kill Me!

"Shonisani o di sumbedza uri ha funi

"Shonisani showed that she did not love

vhanna vhararu avha vhothe,  
those three men,

o vha a tshi khou funa muthihi."  
but only one of them."

"Vhavhili o vha lutanyisa."  
"She caused the other two to quarrel."

Shonisani n̄wananga o tuwa, hae.  
Shonisani my child has gone.

67 Hae, Shonisani, hae.

1 This song is based on an incident that happened near Hamagidi in 1979, just before Mashudu and his family moved to Tsianda. The persons in question worked at a steel frame window and door company. The girl's name was Thembi and the men were Fanyana, Matshaya and Ntshavheni. Mashudu gave her the name Shonisani for the shame she brought upon her family (cf. shonisa: ashamed; shonisani: to make somebody ashamed). It seems that she only loved Matshaya, and that this is the reason why she deliberately set the other two up. Fanyana emerged as the victor of the fight. Fanyana was married to a Venda woman, and the meaning of the Zulu phrase as given to me by Mashudu, suggests that he perhaps had marital problems. Thembi apparently left her home out of fear for the two jilted lovers.

102

God is so good<sup>1</sup>

God is so good,  
is so good to me.  
Halleluya!  
Is so good.

"Everybody: God is so good."

"Today I am happy because

Jesus is standing at the door of your heart,

waiting for you to say yes or no."

"You can be saved from your sins today."

10 "Oh yeh. Oh Lord. Oh shame tog."

"God is so good,  
is so good to me."

1 This song is of church origin. Mashudu has performed this solo version at services of the Assemblies of God Church.

**Thambulo** (Suffering)<sup>1</sup>

**Hiyeo! Ahoya!**  
**Hiyeo, vhananga, vho tambula!**  
 My children, we are suffering!<sup>2</sup>  
**Hiyeo, u themba u lila!**  
 We are used to crying!  
**Tshinanne u themba u lila!**  
 Tshinanne is used to crying!  
**"Shua!"**  
**"Sure!"**  
**"Vula!"**  
**"Open!"**  
**"Vala!"**  
**"Close!"**  
**"Phanda!"**  
**"In front!"**  
**"Murahu!"**  
**"Behind!"**

10 **Masindi o taha!**

Masindi has eloped!<sup>3</sup>  
**"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"**  
**"Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure!"**  
**"Vula! Vala!"**  
**"Open! Close!"**  
**Nwana o nakesa!**  
 A beautiful child!<sup>4</sup>  
**Nwana wa tanzhe!**  
 A first-born child!  
**A dovha a tambula!**  
 She is suffering again!

**"Na iwe, babamathi. Mudzimu wa Zimbabwe:**  
**"And you, baby child. Father, God of Zimbabwe:<sup>5</sup>**  
**Na iwe u funa zwakanaka na iwe."**  
 You love something which is beautiful."

**"Shua!"**

**"Sure!"**

**"Phanda!"**

**"In front!"**

20 **"Murahu!"**

**"Behind!"**

**"Iwe!"**

**"You!"**

**"Shamara yango!"<sup>6</sup>**

**"My concubine!"**

**"Five hundred dollars."<sup>7</sup>**

1 This song is based on Mashudu's observances of community life.

2 The suffering of children is the result of their mother dying.

3 In song, a common cause of family suffering.

4 I.e. Masindi's child.

5 The reference here is to the Shona supreme being.

6 From Shona. Mashudu's songs contain several exclamations and phrases borrowed freely from other languages. His motivation for this is that he has to sell his music to the largest possible audience. By using phrases from other languages he attempts to attract the custom of their speakers.

7 The amount needed to support a lover.

104

Mushe (Moses)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Hae, Mushe, Mushe.

Moses, Moses.

(solo narration throughout)

Bvula thovho dzau.

Remove your sandal.

Ri rabele.

We pray.

Yuwi! Yuwi!

Dzhia! Dzhia!

Take! Take!

Asiulaa Mushe!

There is Moses!

Khoulaa Mushe!

There is Moses!

O takuwa Mushe!

Moses has left!

Yuwi, yuwi, yuwi, yuwi, yowee, yowee, yowea, yowea!

10 U mmbulahela mini iwe Mushe, Mushe?

Why are you killing me Moses, Moses?

Ndi a u vhulaha ngauri u Muegipita.

I am killing you because you are an Egyptian.

Wo bebelwa mini fhanu Isiraele?

Why were you born here in Israel?

Ndi do u vhulaha nda u fukedza nga mutavha.

I am going to kill you and bury you in the sand.

Khoulaa Mushe!

There is Moses!

U khou tuwa.

He is going.

A tangana

He meets

na tshitaka tshi tshi khou duga tshone tshi sa swi.

the bush which is aflame but not burning.

Ha bva ipfi lihulu

There came the loud voice

la Yehova la ri: Mushe, Mushe, Mushe, Mushe, Mushe,

of Jehova, saying: Moses, Moses, Moses, Moses, Moses,

- 20 **bvula thovho dzau u gwadame phanda hanga.**  
 remove your sandal and kneel before me.  
**U dibule vhuvhi hau hothe.**  
 Confess all your sins.  
**Mushe a ri: Ndo vhulaha**  
 Moses says: I have killed  
**Muegipita nda mu fukedza nga mutavha.**  
 an Egyptian and buried him in the sand.  
**Yehova a ri: Aiwa, Ndo zwi divha, Mushe**  
 Jehova says: No Moses, I knew that  
**zauri wo vhulaha Muegipita wa mu fukedza nga mutavha.**  
 you killed an Egyptian and buried him in the sand.  
**Zwino ndi a u ruma ha ngei Egipita**  
 Now I am sending you over there to Egypt  
**ha Kanana.**  
 of Canaan.  
**U khou tuwa nga kudila kusekene.**  
 He is leaving on a narrow path.<sup>2</sup>  
**Nga itsho tshifhinga ndi musu Vhaisraele vha**  
 At that time the Israelites were
- 30 **tshi khou pandamedziwa nga Vhaegipita.**  
 being chased by the Egyptians.  
**Vhaegipita vho namela dzibere.**  
 The Egyptians were on horseback.  
**Hu tshi pfala vhukikiriki!**  
 One could hear the galloping of horses!  
**Hu tshi khou duba buse.**  
 One could see billowing dust.  
**Vhaisraele vha swika mulamboni wa Yorodane.**  
 The Israelites arrived at the river Jordan.  
**Ha bva ipfi lihulu**  
 There came the loud voice  
**la Yehova la ri: Mushe, Mushe.**  
 of Jehova, saying: Moses, Moses.  
**Imisa thonga yau u rwe aya madi.**  
 Raise your staff and hit this water.  
**Hu do bva ndila khulwane vhukati ha madi.**  
 A big road will appear in the water.  
**Mushe nangoho a ita ngauralo.**  
 Moses did just that.
- 40 **A rwa ala madi.**  
 He hit that water.  
**Ha mbo bva bada khulwane vhukati ha madi.**  
 A big road appeared in the water.  
**Ha vha tshimangadzo tshihulwane ngamaanda.**  
 It was a wonderful surprise.  
**Madi a tshi nga dzithavha.**  
 The water was like mountains.  
**Vha pfukela kha la Kanana.**  
 They proceeded to Canaan.  
**Vhaegipita vha tshi da vho namela dzibere.**  
 The Egyptians followed them on horseback.  
**Vha tshi ri vha a dzhena fhala lwanzheni,**  
 When they were about to enter the sea,  
**madi a kuvhangana a mbo di vha kumba vhothe!**  
 the water converged on them and swept them all away

**Ngauri vho vha vha sa na lutendo.**  
because they did not have faith.

49 **Dzhia! Dzhia! Dzhia!**  
Take! Take! Take!

1 Mashudu first heard the story of Moses in standard four at school. He also knows **Mushe** as a Zion Christian Church song.

2 Travelling off the beaten track to escape.

105

Hu na vhutshilo (There is life)

**Hu na vhutshilo**  
There is life  
**dzinani la Yeso.**  
in the name of Jesus.

**Hu na mulalo**  
There is peace  
**dzinani lawe.<sup>1</sup>**  
in his name.

**Vha tshi vhona vhakalaha vha sa kalahi.**  
See the old men who try to be young.

**Thoho ndi mmbvi.**  
Their heads are grey with age.

**Miñwaha ndi mahumi**  
They count their age in multiples of ten  
**a vha litshi u dzhola.**  
but they still engage in illicit love affairs.

**Zwi itwa nga vhana.**  
Children do the same.

10 **Zwi itwa nga vhone.**  
You do the same.

**Zwi itwa nga vhatukana.**  
Boys do the same.

**Ndi mulandu wa zwivhi.**  
It is sinful.

**Vhathu vha hashu, idani ha Yeso.**  
Our people, follow Jesus.

**Ngovhani u sa vha na Yeso,**  
To be without Jesus  
**vhutshilo ndi mutshinyalo.**  
is to struggle in life.

**Halleluya!**

**Vha tshi vhona vhathannga vha hone**  
See the young men

**vha tama vhasidzana**  
who befriend girls.

**Vha milela na maduda.**  
They swallow their own mucus from lust.

20 **Marukhu vho khatha**  
Their trousers are  
**a guma nga magonani**  
cut off at the knee.

Vha tshi ri: Ri mapantsula.  
They say: We are pantsulas.  
Ndi mulandu wa zwivhi.  
It is sinful.

Vha edza phatholushaka,  
They act like studbulls,<sup>2</sup>  
kholomo ya mulimisi.  
cattle of a farmer.  
Zwi nga ndi u gweda  
It seems to be appropriate,<sup>3</sup>  
mathina ndi mutshinyalo.  
but it brings disaster.  
Ndi mulandu wa zwivhi.  
It is sinful.

Vha tshi vhona vhasidzana vha hone,  
See the girls from here,  
30 vha si na Mudzimu.  
those who ignore God.  
Vho tshipa badi,  
They are very cheap,  
u ngari ndi banana dza ngei Tshakuma, Venda.  
as cheap as bananas at the Tshakuma market in Venda.  
Dzirokho vho tsheya  
Their dresses are slit  
dza guma nga zwitikoni  
down the back.  
Vha tshi ri: Ndi dzifesheni.  
They say: It is fashionable.  
Vha vho tou di rengisa  
They sell themselves  
sa nama ya tshikotini.  
like canned meat  
A hu na bikani.  
which needs no cooking.  
Ndi vula ule  
You just open it and eat.  
40 Gwanda, mufana!  
Eat, boy!  
Dzikhundu vho vhofha  
They tie a  
nga one mabannda  
belt around their waist.  
Vha tshi ri: Ndi figa.  
They say: It accentuates the figure.  
Dzinala vho phauda  
They paint their  
nga yone cutex  
nails with cutex.  
Vha tshi ri: Ndi dzifesheni.  
They say: It is fashionable.  
Vha vho tou di andadza  
They display themselves like  
u ngari ndi nombelo dza ngei Tshakuma, Venda.  
fruit at the Tshakuma market, Venda.



"Ndo ri, ndi khou tshimbila kha liñwe shango. Ndi wana muñwe  
 "I say, I was walking at a certain place  
 50 wa khaladzi a si uyu."  
 when I met a girl".<sup>4</sup>  
 "O dzula ntha ha toambo la tshidzimba."  
 "She was sitting on top of a boulder".  
 "O fuka lagane."  
 "Covered in a sheet".  
 "Ndi tshi mu sedza nda vhona, u ngari na zwino ndi gwitha lo  
 "I saw her her looking like  
 zwimbelwa nga fulauru."  
 an owl constipated by flour."<sup>3</sup>  
 Vhathu vha hashu: Vhathu vha a fhela.  
 Our people: People are finished."  
 Vha a fhela nga mini?  
 What finishes them?  
 Vha fhela nga halwa ha madzhitadzhiṭa.  
 It is alcohol that finishes them.  
 58 Dzhita! Dzhita! Dzhita!

1 The first two lines of the song suggest a proper way of living compared to the way of life depicted in the song.

2 Lit. those who build the nation.

3 Lit. clearing a field in preparation for planting.

4 The last part of the song refers to an unmarried girl who falls pregnant. She wanders around dazed and confused in poverty, wrapped in a sheet because she has no clothes. She goes and sits on a rock in abject misery. In her pregnant state she looks like an owl constipated with flour. Mashudu uses this image because the owl can be a large bird. In addition, the girl's stomach is swelling like bread-flour during the baking process.

106

### Hamagidi (Magadi)

Hamagidi, musadzi o shavha mudi.  
 At Magidi a woman deserted her home.<sup>1</sup>  
 Hamagidi, donngi yo phula mulenze.  
 At Magidi a donkey put on pantihose.  
 Hamagidi, khuhu yo vhofha thai.  
 At Magidi a fowl put on a tie.<sup>2</sup>

"Ha pfi ndi muñwe munna a na mufumakadzi wawe  
 "It is said<sup>3</sup> that a certain man and his wife had  
 na vhana vhavhili vha mathwintsi kwa kutukana na kwa  
 twins. A small boy and girl."

kusidzana. Ndi Photoṭi  
 "They were called Photoṭi  
 na Photoṭana."  
 and Photoṭana."

"Tshi dinaho ndi tsha uri munna o do swika he a do lovha."  
 "The family was in trouble after the man died."

- "A sia hoyu mufumakadzi a na vhana vhavhili vha mathwintsi  
 10 kwa kutukana na kwa kusidzana."  
 "He left his wife and twins behind."  
 "Ula musadzi nga vhuvavhi ndi u mbo di sala ndi u mbo di  
 maliwa nga pfene."  
 "This foolish woman became married to a baboon."  
 "Ho ri nga matsheloni-tsheloni pfene lo dzula ntha ha  
 "Early one morning the baboon was sitting comfortably  
 tshidudu. Lo pomba na foo ngeno li sa shum*i*."  
 on top of a claypot without working."<sup>4</sup>  
 "Zwana zwa langana zwa ri:  
 "This was what the children thought:  
 Hai mani, khaladzi anga! Hai mani, Photi!"  
 No man, my sister! No man, Photi!"  
 "A si khotsi ashu havhanoni mani!"  
 "This is not our father man!"  
 "A ri tuwe ri yo vhudzisa uri ndi zwa vhukuma vha khotsi ashu  
 naa".  
 "Let us go and ask whether he is really our father."  
 20 "Ndi u mbo di swika ndi u dzula fhala fhanda ha lia pfene  
 "They went and sat in front of that baboon  
 ndi u mbo di losha. Lia pfene la ri:  
 and greeted him respectfully. That baboon said:  
 Ndaa nwananga!"  
 Morning my child!"  
 "Kwa kutukana kwa thoma kwa ri: Baba, we baba,  
 "The small boy said: Father,  
 ndi na mbudziso hafhanoni nda vhudzisa."  
 I have a question to ask, will you answer me?"  
 A vha nga ntoti ndevhe naa?"  
 "Will you not hurt me?"<sup>5</sup>  
 "Ha pfi a thi nga u toti nwananga vhudzisa."  
 "Do not be afraid to ask my child."<sup>6</sup>  
 "Kwa kutukana kwa thoma kwa ri, baba, khezwi vhone ano  
 "The small boy said, father, why do you have  
 maduvha vha na makovhi mangafha, baba?"  
 protruding eyebrows?"  
 "Lia pfene la fhindula nwana:  
 "That baboon answered the child:  
 30 A si makovhi. Vhonani, ki likepisi la u apara iwe u tshi  
 They are not protruding eyebrows. Look my child, it is a cap  
 tonga nwananga."  
 that you wear when you are swanking."  
 Hamagidi, musadzi o shavha mudi.  
 At Magidi a woman deserted her home.  
 Lufuluvhi idani-ha ri tangane.  
 Lufuluvhi, come, let us meet.<sup>7</sup>  
 Ri tangane tshititshini tsha Hasimba.  
 We must meet at Simba station.  
 Khumbi yanga na i wana ni namele.  
 When you find my kombi you must get in.  
 Kutshudeni kwo dzula nga murahu.  
 The small student sits at the back.<sup>8</sup>  
 "Ndi zwila kula kwa kusidzana ku tshi vhudzisa kwa ri: Baba,  
 "Then the small girl asked: Father, why do you have

khezwi vha na mamvele mangafha baba? Vha a tshuwisa ngoho zwavhukuma baba."

hair? You frighten me very much."

40 "Lia pfene la fhindula n̄wana:

"That baboon answered the child:

A si mamvele n̄wanaka. Ki li kuvho tsa maria n̄wanaka ri

It is not hair my little one. It is a winter blanket for shavhisa phepho hu a rothola, n̄wanaka." protection against the cold."

"Kwa kutukana kwa dovha kwa ri: Baba, khezwi vha na mutshila

"The small girl said again: Father, why do you have such a

mungafha? Lia pfene la ri: Hai n̄wanaka, a si mutshila we

big tail? That baboon said: No little one, it is not a

ki lipoma la urwa iwe u sa i sikoloni."

tail. It is something to whip you with when you bunk school."

46 Musadzi o shavha mudi. A fhedza a dzhera ndilani.

A woman deserted her home. She was leaving.

1 This song is based on observations from Mashudu's youth at Hamagidi. His argument is that women should not desert their families. If they do, they may end up marrying into worse conditions, as portrayed in the story about the baboon.

2 The images of the donkey and the fowl serve to point to immoral sexual behaviour, particularly among married people.

3 This part of the song is apparently based on a folk tale.

4 The woman's second husband is deliberately portrayed as a baboon because he is bad and too lazy to work. This portrayal is meant to counteract desertion.

5 Lit. are you not going to scratch my ear?

6 Lit. I will not scratch you.

7 Lufuluvhi was a former girl friend of Mashudu. Although her name is used here, she has no significance in the song. In this part of the song Mashudu is referring to men who drive around in their cars, picking up prostitutes at certain recognized points (such as a station).

8 A reference to a friend accompanying the prostitute. She has to sit on the back seat so as not to interfere with the prostitute and her client in front.

107

Vhasidzana vha zwino (Modern girls)

Vhasidzana vha zwino

Modern girls

vha nga zwigariki.

are like trailers.

Zwigariki zwone zwa raluwei.

The trailers of railway trucks.

- "Vhasidzana vha zwino vha tou nga zwigariki."  
 "Modern girls behave like trailers."  
 "Zwinezwi zwa raluwei."  
 "Railway trailers."  
 "Musu raluwei i tshi ya hangeini Giyani, kugariki ku di vha  
 "When the truck travels to Giyani, the small trailer is  
 ku nga murahu."  
 always behind."  
 "Raluwei i tshi vhuya poswoni, kugariki ku di vha ku nga  
 "When the mail truck returns from the post office, the  
 murahu."  
 small trailer follows."
- 10 "A ku divhi nahune kwa ya hone."  
 "It does not know where it is going."  
 "Ku sokou ri: Hanefho hune vhoraluwei vha do guma hone, na  
 "It says: Where the railway truck driver stops, I also  
 nne ndi do guma hanefho."  
 stop."  
 "Na vhasidzana vha zwino vho tou ralo."  
 "And girls of nowadays are the same."  
 "Kuthannga kwa tou amba vhuipfi vhuvhili vhuraru. Kwa ri:  
 "Even if a young man only utters two or three words such as:  
 Halo lavi,  
 Hallo lovey,  
 ndi do mu rengela vulamatshini,  
 I will buy you an aeroplane,  
 o tenda."  
 she agrees."  
 "U amba tshino o tenda."  
 "She agrees to everything."  
 "U vhuya a fhurwa na nga kuthannga kwa miñwaha ya 15 years."  
 "Even a young man of fifteen can have his way with her."
- 20 "Musu o no vha na ñwana zwi dina ngamaanda."  
 "The problem started when she bore a child."  
 "Ñwana u kundwa na maleri na zwiambaro na zwisibe zwa u tou  
 "She had a shortage of napkins for her baby, and soap to wash  
 kuvha maleri a ñwana wawe."  
 them with."  
 "Hezwi mufumakadzi a tshi tou ri: Aiwa khotsi a Magomboni."  
 "The woman said: No, father of Magomboni."  
 "Ndo vha ndi tshi khou humbela vha tou rengela ñwananga  
 "I am asking you to buy napkins for the baby."  
 maleri."  
 "Hu pfi: Ni khou lila nga maleri."  
 "He said: You are asking for nappies."  
 "O dadza ndu yothe naa? Ku do sokou dzhena nga ngomu nduni  
 "Is your house full of napkins? He will go inside the  
 kwa kherula furu ya tshikwama tsha Dzhege ha pfi ndi leri la  
 house and tear the lining from Jack's jacket to be  
 hone."  
 used as a napkin."
- 30 "Ku iteni? Ngauri na u shuma ku vha ku sa shumini."  
 "What will he do? Because he has no work."  
 "Ho vha hu duvha la u thoma ku tshi khou thoma  
 "It was his first  
 u thetshela lufuno."  
 experience of love."

"Hu si kale ri do ku wana kwo no rwiwa nga shango."

"Not long afterwards he became confused."

"Ku tshi vho tshimbila na musadzi muhuluhulu."

"He started soliciting with an older woman."

"Musadzi wa miñwaha ya forty,

"A woman of forty,

kwone ku na miñwaha ya fifteen years."

while he was only fifteen."

"Vha mu divhaho vha ri: Ndi tsheri magogo."

"Those who know say: She is an old cherry."

"Ku do tuwa kwa ya khefini kwa renga tshepisi nthihi fhedzi

"He will go to the cafe and buy one bubblegum only,

"Kwa nea mufumakadzi a kenya."

and give half to the woman."

40 "Mufumakadzi a phasisa wa munna a kenya ngauralo. Ngoralo ndi

"The woman will pass the piece back to the boy like a

mugavhisano ndi bola ya vhatukana na vhasidzana."

football. This is the way boys and girls have sex."

Khamusi

Maybe

zwo bva hone tsikoni.

it has been like this since creation.

Khamusi

Or maybe

ndi vhutshilo ha namusi.

it is just modern lifestyle.

O, o-o!

O, o-o!

O shame!

U a funa

The spirit is

50 muya wone u a funa,

strong but

u a funa nama, i ro shaya maanda.

the flesh is weak.

108

Lukwareni Matatshe (Lukwareni Matatshe)<sup>1</sup>

Posaito kwa dzhena kha Tshisahulu nda wana kwo nakanaka.

Posaito was incorporated into Tshisahulu, and it was good.<sup>2</sup>

Ndi ri tshi redza nga fhala Thanani, nda wana ndi la Vho-  
When I arrived at Thanani, I found that it was under the  
Mudade.

control of Mr Mudade.<sup>3</sup>

A vha takali ngani naa?

Why are you unhappy

Hezwi ñwedzi wo fhela?

at the end of the month?<sup>4</sup>

Marukhu anga ndo zwonya

My trousers were messed up.

O fhiswa-vho dzidenndeni.

They were just burnt at the construction camp.

Ndi ngwena thi koni u lwa?

Can a boss not fight?<sup>5</sup>

Kha vha de vha mmbonelevho.

Come and see for yourself.

10 Hu na Lukwareni Matatshe

It is Lukwareni Matatshe.

tsho dzula tsho tungufhala.

who is always melancholic.

Ngovhela thi nameli

When I want to go to Ngovhela

ndi sokou thamu nda swika.

I do not have to go by car.

Vho-Rosinah! Vho-Rosinah, vha khou vhidziwa.

Mrs Rosina! Mrs Rosina, you are called.<sup>6</sup>

Na iwe babamathi, muzukuru wa Zimbabwe no ngo funa zwangu

And you baby, grandchild of Zimbabwe who likes

zwakanaka na iwe.<sup>7</sup>

my music.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure! Sure!

Iwe! Shunguru zwangu!<sup>8</sup>

You! ( ? )

Na nwina Muzamani, kamutina ni ya kwii madembula?

And Muzamani, where are you going tonight?

20 A shavha shibuku mahafhe.

They bought beer.

U ta shi kuma na nwina.

You will also get it.

Famba u yo exhela, ni ta ku vhona minduku.

Go and sleep, I will see you tomorrow.

Shimanimani wa rila yo,

Everybody is crying,

u rilela shibuku mahafhei nkomo.

crying for beer.

Ndi sokou sinda ndila ni sa fhedzi ndi tshi ya kha  
vhafarekano.

I am always on my way to visit concubines.

1 Mashudu borrowed this song from Vhutshilo Netsianda of Madamalala. These two guitarists used to busk together.

2 Posaito is a western suburb of Thohoyandou which was developed during the late 1980s.

3 Mr Mudade is the owner of a beer house at Thanani in the Ngovhela district.

4 This is an advertisement for the beer house: those who do not go there at the end of the month when salaries are paid will be sorry!

5 A reference to fighting at the beer house. The fighter presumably is Lukwareni Matatshe, a strong man.

6 Rosinah is Vhutshilo's sister who is called to the beer house.

7 From here onwards the text is that of Mashudu. As in the case of song 103, the Shona and Tsonga phrases are meant to attract Shona and Tsonga pedestrians when busking. These phrases build on the idea of beer drinking, but I found that Mashudu has only a very vague idea of their meaning. Some words he uses he does not even understand (cf. note 8). My impression is that they also function in terms of creating musical effect.

8 Mashudu does not know the meaning of this phrase.

109

Vhathu a vha tendi Yesu (Unbelievers)

Vhathu!

People!

A vha tendi hoyu Yesu wa Nazaretha.

They do not believe in Jesus of Nazareth.

Mahalwa vha nwa nga khole.

They drink beer deliberately.

Zwothe-zwothe vha ita nga khole.

They do everything deliberately.

Vhuvhava vha ita nga khole.

They steal deliberately.

Masamba vha ita nga khole.

They deliberately use vulgar language.

Vhañwe vho swa na milomo

Some have burnt lips

nga mulandu wa thothotho.

from too much alcohol.

Vhañwe vho swa na mafhafhu

Some have burnt lungs

10 nga mulandu wa thothotho.

from too much alcohol.

"Mudzimu, Khotsi anga wa Nazaretha."

"God, my Father of Nazareth."

"Havha vhathu ri a vha

"We tell these people to believe

vhudza uri vha tende kha Murena Yesu Kristo. A vha tendi!"

in the Lord Jesus Christ. But they do not!"

"Vhañwe vha a ri sema. Vha ri: Ri khou penga."

"Some use abusive language. They say: We are mad."

"Mara vha khou

"But they

fhedza vha khou lovha vha tshi khou lovhela zwivhini."

die as sinners".

"U nga mangala muthu a tshi khou nwa biya o tanganyisa

"You will be surprised to find a person

burendi thothotho na

mixing brandy and

badama, ndi u setshe na halwa ha madzitatadzita

malt beer, beer and alcohol,

20 nga thungo u khou hotola."

and coughing because of it."

"Wa pfa a thi ri: Uuxu, oho!"  
 "You will hear him coughing: Uuxu, oho!"  
 "Nga ngomu thumbuni yawe ho no oma. Ndi uri fhafhu lo no tou  
 "His stomach is dry. His lungs are stone dry."  
 nga tombo. Milomo yo tswuka."  
 "His lips are red."  
 "A tshi hotola u hotola tshilangwa tsha malofha."  
 "He coughs up spit and blood."  
 "Hezwi zwithu vha zwi dzhia u nga ri ndi miswaswo. Zwi tshi  
 khou itea fhanu shangoni."  
 "They take this as a joke. But it is really happening."  
 "Vhafunzi vha ri vha tshi funza vha ri tshivhi tshau tshi do  
 "The disciples teach us that you will be judged by your  
 u wana."  
 deeds."  
 "Mara vhathu a vha tendi."  
 "But people do not believe."  
 30 "Ndi zwivhi zwinzhi zwine zwa khou vha wana vhathu."  
 "There are many sins which overcome people."  
 "Hu na muñwe mutukana we a vha e mungana wanga ngamaanda  
 "There was a certain boy at Tshakuma who was my  
 hangeini Tshakuma."  
 very best friend."<sup>1</sup>  
 "Ene a thi nga do mu amba nga dzina."  
 "I will not mention his name."  
 "O tswa nguluvhe ya vhañwe mukegulu."  
 "He stole a pig from a certain old woman."  
 "Havho mukegulu ndi musu vho fuwa ngamaanda."  
 "That old woman had much livestock."  
 "A i garaba a la nama ya hone a fhedza."  
 "He stole and ate the pig."  
 "Mukegulu wa hone ndi musu a songo dzula. A vho ngo dzula na  
 "The old woman did not leave the issue there."  
 luthihi."  
 "Not at all."  
 "Vha mutshimbilela."  
 "She went to consult a diviner."  
 40 "Vha ri: Hoyu muthu o tswaho nguluvhe yanga ngauri u khou  
 "She said: This person who stole my pig refuses to admit  
 hanedza."  
 guilt."  
 "Khwine ndi musu i tshi tou lila nga ngomu thumbuni yawe."  
 "It will be better for the pig to screech inside his  
 stomach."  
 "A tambule u swika zwenezwo a tshi do lovha."  
 "He must suffer until he dies."  
 "Na ngoho muthannga o vha a tshi funa ngamaanda u tamba bola  
 "And the young man was very fond of playing football  
 hafhala Fidasi."  
 at Fidasi."  
 "O do ri e henefhala Fidasi ngauri ndi musu a goalkeeper."  
 "He was goalkeeper at Fidasi."  
 "Zwino rine ro ima nga hangeno murahu ri tshi khou di sokou  
 "When we were standing behind him,  
 di ri:  
 shouting:



- Ahehe, goli!"  
 Hey, goalie!"
- 50 "Nguluvhe ya mbo di lila ya ri: Hu!"  
 "The pig started to grunt: Hu!"  
 "Hu!"  
 "Ene u kanganyedza nga u hotola. I tshi ri: Hu!"  
 "He tried to cover up the sound, but again it grunted: Hu!"  
 "Ene uri: Uxu! Uxu! Uxu!"  
 "He coughed: Uxu, uxu, uxu!"  
 Shango li khou lovha. Amen.  
 The country is perishing. Amen.  
 Heli shango li khou lovha. Amen.  
 This country is perishing. Amen.  
 Ri vhadali ri khou fhira. Amen.  
 We are only passing through. Amen.  
 "Uri a tshi amba Murena Yesu Kristo. Uri zwino ri tou bebwa zwi tshi bva u tendani."  
 "Jesus says we must be born again through faith."  
 "Ro pfumedzanywa na Mudzimu nga Murena washu Yesu Kristo."  
 "Jesus is the mediator between us and God."
- 60 "Ndi ene we ra wana ngae ndila ya uya mashuduni ane ano ane ra vha khao."  
 "The way to good fortune goes through him."  
 "Nga u tenda ri vho tou zuwa Murena Mudzimu ro mu fulufhela ri sa timatimi."  
 "We praise God without any fear through faith."  
 "Hone a ri zuwi izwo fhedzi. Ri zuwa ri kha  
 "If it was not that only, then we are suffering."  
 mathupho. Ri tshi divha uri mathupho a disa u kondelela."  
 "We know that suffering brings perseverance."  
 "U kondelela ha disa u fulufhedzea."  
 "Perseverance brings trust."  
 "Hone fhulufhelo a li thavhisi dzi thoni ngauri lufuno lwa  
 "When you have faith you are no longer ashamed of God's  
 Mudzimu  
 love  
 lwo tou tevhutshela dzimbiluni dzashu nga Muya Mukhethwa we  
 ra newa."
- 70 which was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit."  
 "U ri: Fhatuwani ngauri a ni divhi tshifhinga na tshikhathi  
 "It is said: Be ready because you do not know the time of his  
 tsha u vhuya hawe."  
 second coming."  
 "U ri ndi ya nduni ya Khotsi anga. Ndi yo ni lugisela  
 "He says that He is going to his Father's house to prepare  
 madzulo."  
 a place for us."  
 "Ngauri ngei nduni ya Khotsi anga hu na madzulo manzhi."  
 "Because there are many places at my Father's home."  
 "A ri ndi do vhuya ndi tshi dzhia vhothe vha mpfunaho vha  
 "He said he would come to take all those who believed in  
 tevhedzaho milayo yanga."  
 his commandments."  
 Shango li khou lovha. Amen.  
 The country is perishing. Amen.
- 79 Halleluya amen!

1 This part of the song is based on an incident which occurred in 1983 at Tshakhuma. An acquaintance of Mashudu stole a pig and ate it. He was not caught. Mashudu adapted and developed this incident to fit another occurrence which happened during the same year. This was a soccer match which took place between two local Tshakhuma teams, Fidasi and Raluthaga. Supporters of Fidasi gathered behind the goal posts of Raluthaga. They started to distract the attention of the goal keeper to improve the chances of their team scoring a goal. During the match the goal keeper's stomach rumbled. Those gathered behind the posts exploited this opportunity, saying he had a pig in his stomach.

110

Musanda wa Venda (The capital of Venda)

Ndi a vha vhudza divhazwakale ya shango lashu.

I want to tell you about the history of our country.

Nga 1971

Self-rule

ofisi dzashu dzo thoma ndi vhudivhusi.

was instituted in 1971.<sup>1</sup>

Dzibada ho vha hu si na tshigontiri, ndi musi hu mavu fhedzi.

There were dirt roads only. They had not been tarred yet.

Mvula dzo vha dzi tshi na dza tshinya dzibada.

Rain used to erode them.

Ho vha na gomelelo vhathu vha fhela.

People died because of drought.

Vhathu vho la midzi ya miri ya daka.

People ate the roots of trees growing in the forest.

Ndi a vha vhudza divhazwakale zwa dorobo yashu.

I want to tell you the history of our town.

Vhengele la u thoma lo vha Gireme.

The first shop belonged to the Graham family.<sup>2</sup>

10 Vhengele la vuvhili lo vha Bontshasi.

The second shop belonged to Bontshasi.

Vhengele lashu la vhuraru lo vha mukeguluni.

Our third shop was that of the old woman.<sup>3</sup>

Zwikolo ndi musi zwi siho. Tsho thoma Tshakhuma.

There were no schools. Schooling started at Tshakuma.<sup>4</sup>

Poswo yashu ya u thoma, yo thoma Hatshivhasa.

Our postal service was first established at Sibasa.

Khosi yashu ya u thoma o vha Raluswielo.

Our first chief was Raluswielo.

Khosi yashu ya vuvhili a vha Ramabulana.

Our second chief was Ramabulana.

Khosi yashu ya vhuraru a vha Mphaphuli.

Our third chief was Mphaphuli.

Khosi yashu ya vhuna o vha Tshivhase.

Our fourth chief was Tshivhase.

Khosi yashu ya vhumanu o vha Mphephu.

Our fifth chief was Mphephu.

Khosi yashu ya vhurathi o vha Ravele.

Our sixth chief was Ravele.

20 Namusi khosi yashu ndi Ramushwana.

Nowadays our chief is Ramushwana.

Hafha hu re na mavhengele a Venda, ho vha hu daka fhedzi.  
 Where shops are now there used to be a forest with  
 Ho vha hu sa dzuli muthu, hu tshi dzula phukha.  
 wild animals. Nobody lived there.  
 Musanda zwino washu wa Venda ndi Thohoyandou.  
 Nowadays our Venda capital is Thohoyandou.  
 Ndi musiri si na luvhande, lwa thomiwa Hatshivhasa.  
 We did not have a stadium, the first was erected at Sibasa.<sup>5</sup>  
Namusi luvhande lwashu ndi Thohoyandou.  
 Nowadays our stadium is at Thohoyandou.

1 "Self-rule" was actually instituted in 1969.

2 This well-known shop, now demolished, was situated opposite the Sibasa post office. The old family residence is still in existence.

3 This shop is still in existence across First National Bank in Sibasa. It was referred to as "the shop of the old woman" because of an old mentally disturbed woman who used to roam around there.

4 A reference to German mission schooling.

5 Makwarela stadium.

111

Vhatshena vha na vhutali (Whites are clever)

Havha vhatshena vha na vhutali.

These whites are clever.

Vha tshi ita basigira vho tswela kha luaviavi.

They invented a bicycle by observing<sup>1</sup> a chameleon.<sup>2</sup>

Vha tshi ita bupo vho tswela kha tshinoni.

They invented an aeroplane by observing a bird.

Vha tshi ita tshidimela vho tswela dongololo.

They invented a train by observing a centipede.

Vha tshi ita goloi vho tswela kha dziphupkha.

They invented a car by observing wild animals.<sup>3</sup>

Vha na vhutali havha vhatshena.

These whites are clever.

"Hezwi zwithu a zwo ngo thoma hafho fhedzi. Zwo thoma zwa

"These things did not originate just like that.<sup>4</sup> People,

konda, vhatshu vha hashu."

inventing them was difficult."

"Ho thoma ha lavhelesiwa uri naa ri nga ita hani tshithu tsha

Firstly they considered the invention of something that

10 u fhufha."

could fly,

"Tshine ngatsho

something which

tshi nga tshimbila muyani tshi tshi

would travel in the air,

- khou tou reliwa nga vhathu."  
 and be operated by people."  
 "Ha thesitiwa nga vhathu vhone vhone."  
 "It was tested by people themselves."  
 "Ha dzhiwa manoni mahulwane,  
 "Large birds were taken,  
 a thukhuliwa mafhafha,  
 and their wings removed."  
 a tumiwa kha zwannda zwa vhathu. Vha tshi khou thesita nga  
 "These wings were attached to people's shoulders. Testing was  
 vhone vhone."  
 done by people themselves."  
 "Helo duvha ho fiwa nga maanda  
 "On that day many died."  
 20 ngauri ndi musu vho gonya nthan-  
 "They climbed on top of high  
 kha dzinndu dzine dza vha dza dzi opositisi.  
 buildings and  
 "Vha dzhia muthu vha mu posela fhasi."  
 hurled a person off."  
 "Vha tshi khou ri ene a tou fhufha nga ene mune."  
 "They said he should fly by himself."  
 "Zwa bala vhathu vha hashu."  
 "It did not work people."  
 "Ndi hezwinoni vha tshi dzhia-ha tshinoni."  
 "It was then that they took a bird."  
 "Vha tshi lavhelesa zwavhudi."  
 "They studied it well."  
 "Na mafhufhele atsho na uri ndi nga mini tshi tshi fhufha  
 "How it flew  
 ngei nthan."  
 in the air."  
 "Ndi hezwi hu tshi bva arapulei henefho."  
 "This is how an aeroplane was invented."  
 30 "Vha sedza dongololo."  
 "They studied a centipede."  
 "Vha wana uri dongololo la hone  
 "They found that a centipede has  
 milenzhe ya hone a si mituku ndi minzhi nga maanda u nga si i  
 an uncountable number of  
 vhone."  
 small legs."  
 "Ha mbo di bva tshidimela henefho."  
 "This was how a train was invented."  
 "Ndi hezwinoni vha tshi ita basigira."  
 "A bicycle was then invented."  
 "Basigira vho tswela kha luaviavi."  
 "The bicycle was modeled on the chameleon."  
 "Vha wana uri luaviavi lu tshi tshimbila lu tou tshova nga  
 "They found that a chameleon  
 zwituku nga zwituku."  
 walks very slowly."  
 "Ha mbo di bva basigira henefho."  
 "This is how a bicycle was invented."  
 40 "Vha di sedza nga vhone vhone, u thoma kha dziphukha dza daka  
 "They first observed wild animals and

na dza hayani

domestic quadrupeds,

dza milenzhe mina."

and then themselves."

"Ha mbo di bva goloi henefho."

"This is how a car was invented."

"Ndi hezwi namusi ri tshi wana zwiendedzi zwo dala nga ndila

"This why nowadays we have different means

i mangadzo."

of transport."

"Hu na mabupo a no fhufha ntha ha muya

"There are aeroplanes which fly in the air

nga ndila i mangadzo."

in an amazing way."

"Ha mbo di vha uri vhatshu vho seivea."

"People's burdens were lightened in this way."

"Mabupo aya ndi one ane a vha thusa

"These aeroplanes help them to undertake

50 u fara dzi nyendo dzo fhambananaho."

various journeys."

"Vha nga ya hothe-hothe hune vha funa namusi

"You can go wherever you like because of

zwo bva kha muhumbulo muhulwane

the inventiveness

wa vhatshena."

of whites."

Vha na vhutali havha vhatshena.

These whites are clever.

1 Lit. to steal from, -tswela.

2 Because a cyclist's feet move like a chameleon's.

3 I.e. the number of wheels on a car is derived from the number of legs an animal has.

4 Lit. these things did not originate there only.

112

Mulalo (Peace)

Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee!

Alas, peace! Alas, peace! Alas, peace!

Mulalo ro u nyaga.

We strived for peace.

Mulalo ri si u wane.

We did not achieve peace.

Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee!

Alas, peace! Alas, peace! Alas, peace!

Vhusunzi ho fa nga u lwela mulalo, wee.

Alas, children<sup>1</sup> died fighting for peace.

Vhakegulu vho fa nga u lwela mulalo, wee.

Alas, old women died fighting for peace.

Vhathannga vho fa nga u lwela mulalo, wee.

Alas, young men died fighting for peace.

Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee!  
Alas, peace! Alas, peace! Alas, peace!  
Vhanna vho fa nga u lwela mulalo, wee.  
Alas, men died fighting for peace.

10 Mulalo ro u nyaga.

We strived for peace.

Mulalo ri si u wane.

We did not achieve peace.

Mulalo ro u lwela.

We fought for peace.

Hoyu mulalo ri si u wane.

This peace was not to be found.

Mulalo ro u wana

We found peace

kha maswole a Venda.

through the military coup.<sup>2</sup>

Shango lo dzika nga maswole a Venda.

The country calmed down because of the coup.

Shango lo dzika nga lwela mulalo, wee.

The country calmed down through the fight for peace.

Ho itwa zwi no funwa nga vhathu.

People's wishes were carried out.

Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee, u a konda.

Alas, peace! Alas, peace is difficult to achieve.

20 Vha tshi nyaga mulalo hu a fa muthu, wee.

People die striving for peace.

Vha tshi lwela mulalo hu a fa muthu, wee.

People die fighting for peace.

Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee! Mulalo, wee!

Alas, peace! Alas, peace! Alas, peace!

1 Lit. ants.

2 Lit. we found peace through the soldiers of Venda. A reference to the military coup of 5 April 1990.

113

Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa Vhavenda (Maize is the staple food)

Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa Vhavenda.

Maize is the staple food of the Venda people.

La makhaha ngoho vha li thonifhe.

Millet must be well cared for.<sup>1</sup>

Lo pakata ngoho vha li vhulunge.

Young cobs must be well looked after.

Li sa pakati ngoho vha li reme.

Cut the maize if it bears no cobs.

Mavhele a ita mugayo.

Meal is obtained from maize.

Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa vhakalaha.

Maize is the staple food of old men.

Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa vhakegulu.

Maize is the staple food of old women.

Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa vhana.

Maize is the staple food of children.

Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa vhasadzi.  
Maize is the staple food of women.  
10 Mavhele ndi zwiliwa zwa vhanna.  
Maize is the staple food of men.  
Lo pakata ngoho vha li thonifhe.  
Young cobs must be well cared for.  
Yuwii mavhele!  
Hooray for maize!

1 Lit. to be respected and honoured.

#### 4.2 Mmbangiseni Mphaga, Nkhangweleni Ramaswiela and Current Stars

Like all other guitarists in my research sample, Mmbangiseni Mphaga was also schooled on an acoustic guitar. However, he is the only musician who had permanently taken to playing an electric guitar. In my discussion I show that this change was a response to his poverty, and a factor of his consequent aspiration to establish a successful band. I also discuss the stylistic retentions and changes that accompanied the band's development.

Mmbangiseni Edward Mphaga and his twin sister Irice were born at the village of Vondwe in 1965. Their parents were migrant workers who lived at Alexandra in Johannesburg. Both died of illness, their mother Matodzi in 1972, and their father Gideon in 1973. Mmbangiseni stayed with his grandmother at Vondwe during 1974, and with a maternal uncle at Malavuwe from 1975-1978. During 1979 he joined his mother's elder brother at Gondeni. In 1980 he finally settled with a maternal uncle at Mukula. In 1989 Mmbangiseni became married to a local girl, Constance Mbedzi. She is twenty years old, and attends secondary school. The couple had a son, Mpho, in 1990. In 1992 Mmbangiseni built his family a small house at Mukula. It has clay walls and a corrugated roof.

Irice went to live with her uncle at Malavuwe after the death of her parents. She has been living there ever since. She became married in 1983. Mmbangiseni is very fond of her. In "Leave my sister alone" (114), he addresses her husband who is unemployed and spends his time drinking and causing general family conflict (cf. 14: "He always bewitches!"). Irice is employed locally as a domestic worker. She struggles



to support her family on her meagre pay. In the song, Mmbangiseni instructs his brother-in-law not to harm his sister. She is his closest relative. If she is killed, he will be totally alone. As in the case of Solomon Mathase, the presence of members of the extended family does not make up for the loss of someone in the immediate family.

Mmbangiseni matriculated from Mukula Secondary School in 1985. He is an intelligent young man who did not fail any standard at school. "Gratitude" (116) pertains to the time he attended secondary school. He had virtually no financial support, and struggled to survive (cf. "Hey, and you are suffering"; 11). Unable to afford school books, he had to borrow books from friends and make summaries of their content. Like Solomon Mathase, education is the key to survival for Mmbangiseni (cf. 115; 141). According to him, many children do not go to school because they are "lazy". These children have parents who urge them to go to school. However, they refuse, preferring to "fish and walk around, without thinking of the future".

Mmbangiseni is a nominal Christian who once belonged to the Zion Christian Church. Like Solomon Mathase, he nevertheless invokes religious authority in the quest for prosperity and justice (115; 117). Although he recognizes ancestral morality (115: 3), ancestor worship plays no role in his life.

Mmbangiseni has a very strong sense of morality, and his songs manifest a model for social reality similar to that of Solomon Mathase. Group musical performance (cf 121: 5-8) is a metaphor for the promotion of general social cooperation (131; 136). Mmbangiseni also promotes respect for parents and traditional authority (122; 123; 129; 139). He encourages

adult responsibility (128; 140; 144;), and expresses disapproval of jealousy (132; 135), nepotism (133), and hypocrisy (119).

Mmbangiseni's worldview also reveals the kind of resigned fatalism of Solomon Mathase. Thus we are told that we can never satisfy everybody (126). Life is essentially contradictory. Its progression is expressed as the interaction between opposites such as happy/crying, winning/losing, and living/dying (127; 138). Death is the ultimate reality. However, it is accepted because it brings an end to poverty (145).

Mmbangiseni states clearly that his musical ambition is a response to his poverty. He was appointed as a temporary clerk in a government department in 1986. Mmbangiseni has not yet received professional tenure. He has trained several newcomers, only to find that they were "registered" or appointed permanently. In explaining his inability to achieve tenure, Mmbangiseni blames nepotism. An applicant is asked: "Whose child are you?" (133: 5). If he is not from a ruling family, his chances of appointment are not good. He also has little chance of being appointed unless some of his family members are already employed in that specific department (cf. 133: 7).

"Unregistered" employees do not have any medical aid or pension fund benefits, and they are paid very poorly. Mmbangiseni's starting salary was R84 per month. Over the next few years it rose to R92, R160, and R250 per month. Mmbangiseni has been paid R10 a day since 1989, and his current (1991) salary varies between R300 and R310 per month. With this amount he tries to support his wife, their child, his mother-in-law, and her three children. To augment his

income, Mmbangiseni sells cigarettes and sweets to friends and colleagues. To add insult to injury, he is distinguished from permanent employees in terms of how he receives his salary. Mmbangiseni identifies himself as someone who gets his pay "in my hand", and explains that his salary is paid in cash by "someone who comes with a large suitcase filled with money". Mmbangiseni considers this an insult to his dignity and privacy. Because he does not hold permanent tenure, he is afraid to complain. Unemployment is rife, and he fears that he would simply be told to "pack and go".

Mmbangiseni started his musical career in a very modest way. In 1978, when he was twelve years old, he made himself a guitar (cf. ch. 4.7.1 for a discussion of the construction of home made guitars). He played this instrument for two years. In 1980 he was given an acoustic guitar by a friend. Shortly afterwards Mmbangiseni met a guitarist at Malavuwe who showed him a tuning different from that of his home made guitar. This was a "better, international" tuning: E4-B3-G3-D3-A2-E2. The only other guitarist in the research sample who uses a similar tuning is Albert Mundalamo. This tuning is considered quite difficult to handle by other guitarists. There seems to be a correlation between this tuning and the idiosyncratic style and technique of Mmbangiseni and Albert. These guitarists usually perform single line and arpeggio patterns. Mmbangiseni's comment that his tuning is an "international" one arguably ties in with his musical aspirations. His tuning allows him the potential to execute a wider range of musical patterns than seems to be the case with other tunings. This obviously is important in the competitive mass market.

During 1982 Mmbangiseni teamed up with a local friend, Nkhangweleni Ramaswiela (b. 1959). When I recorded them in

1986, Mmbangiseni played lead guitar and Nkhangweleni bass guitar. Another friend, Norman Rantsana (b. 1971), had joined the guitarists. He played drum on the resonant body of an old, broken guitar. The young men had not been performing together for long, and felt confident to play only four songs for me (114-117). Arpeggio and single line patterns give songs 114-117 an open, at times even delicate texture. The musicians also seem to distinguish between their guitars in terms of timbre. The lead attack is delicate and light, and the bass guitar is thumped heavily to achieve an electric bass guitar effect.

As with figs 5 and 6, figs 8 and 9 (songs 114 & 116; audio recordings 23 & 24) are characterized by harmonic ambiguity. The guitar parts in fig. 8 reveal a  $i\bar{i}6-I\bar{6}/4-I\bar{6}-V-I-I\bar{6}$  harmonic progression. This progression is also evident in the opening vocal lines. However, when the guitarists proceed to sing in antiphonal style, an opposing, traditional, harmonic structure emerges. The antiphonal exchange reveals two phrases which are tonally and metrically balanced. Each phrase constitutes twelve pulses. Tonally, the first phrase starts on thakhula A, while the second phrase starts on phala G. Both phrases move towards a third tonality, C/E. Kubik (1974) reports a similar feature in the music of the Kachamba brothers from Malawi, and remarks that "though there are three basic chords there is a *two-note shifting bass*" (Kubik 1974: 25). The traditional structure of fig. 8 is supported by the cyclic length of twenty-four pulses so typical of Venda traditional music. In addition, the twenty-four pulse pattern has a three pulse subdivision (cf. drum beat) also common in traditional songs (cf. Blacking 1970: 9).

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system (Fig. 8) includes staves for leader/chorus, leader, chorus, drum, lead guitar, and bass guitar. The lyrics are: Kha- l'a a- nga ni mu- Vha- dzi- a vu- wa! Ae- wee!. The second system (Fig. 9) includes staves for leader/chorus, leader, chorus, drum, lead guitar, and bass guitar. The lyrics are: li- tshé. Vha- dzi- a si- li- nga! Ae- wee!. Chords are indicated as ii6, I4, I6, V, I, and I6.

Fig. 8 (song 114): Pitch = C, original = B; 4 pulses = 106

Fig. 9 foreshadows the structure of Mmbangiseni's later songs (cf. figs 10-12). The song structure suggests a kind of Western chord progression. However, this progression is not marked by a strong feeling of conventional cadential movement. Apart from chord I (and, very briefly, chord ii), all the chords are in inverted form: I6/4-ii6/ii-I6/4-I6-V6/4-V6-I. This imbues the song with a feeling of the harmonically relaxed perpetual motion of traditional songs. Thus, although

the vocal part comes to rest on chord C (preceded by chord G), the main tonality shift also could be regarded as occurring between *thakhula* G at the beginning of the vocal part, and *phala* C at its end (G/D-F/C chord shift implied).

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a song, divided into two systems. The first system (measures 1-4) features a vocal line with lyrics "Hee- ye- ye, na". The accompaniment includes a lead guitar part with a melodic line, a drum part with 'x' marks, a bass guitar part with notes, and a bass guitar variation part with chord symbols:  $I_4^6$ ,  $ii_6$ ,  $(\text{---})$ ,  $I_4^6$ , and  $ii$ . The second system (measures 5-8) features a vocal line with lyrics "ta- mbu- la in". The accompaniment includes a lead guitar part with a melodic line, a drum part with 'x' marks, a bass guitar part with notes, and a bass guitar variation part with chord symbols:  $I_6$ ,  $V_4^6$ ,  $V_6$ ,  $I$ , and  $8ve$ . A measure number "32" is written at the end of the second system.

Fig. 9 (song 116): Pitch = C, original = B; 4 pulses = 136

The small band broke up in 1987 when Nkhangweleni moved to Johannesburg in search of work. He eventually became a miner, and lost interest in playing the guitar. Mmbangiseni performed alone until the beginning of 1991 when he was given an electric bass guitar by a friend. He managed to buy a second hand amplifier, and added to this a small synthesizer ("organ") which he paid off in monthly installments of R80.

The synthesizer was played by two, sometimes three teenage friends. They played with one hand each, but combined so that there were two or three parts most of the time. Mmbangiseni complained that he struggled to teach the instrument to his friends. This was because he had to teach himself first before he could instruct them.

I did not spend any time with the group in rehearsal. However, my impression was that the limited technique of the synthesizer players contributed towards the style of their music. Their technique was characterized by somewhat tense, flat hands, and outstretched fingers. Single line patterns were often played with a pointed index finger, while the other fingers were clenched in a fist. Thirds were played with the index and middle fingers, and triads with these fingers and the fourth finger. The small finger was never used. In addition, the three young performers sat squeezed in next to each other in front of the small instrument. There was little freedom for arm and hand movement. It seemed to me that this contributed towards the parallel chord movement and lack of melody in their playing.

From this small group I recorded songs 118-121 in 1991. Mmbangiseni played bass guitar, and he was also the only singer. He complained that he had many musical ideas but that it was difficult to construe them into a coherent whole. Mmbangiseni sang three songs (118; 119; 121) in English and only one (120) in Venda. This preponderance of English-medium songs is related to Mmbangiseni's ambition to make commercial recordings. Unlike the 1986 songs their topics are not local and personal only. Conceived during the period of the unbanning of liberation movements, they embrace topics of national concern (e.g. 119 & 121). Songs 118-121 are also

musically less ethnic and individual than the 1986 songs, and they all feature eight beat patterns (cf. fig. 10). Fig. 10 (song 118; audio recording 25) also reveals a degree of harmonic ambiguity. The bass line of the song (cf. guitar and first synthesizer part) suggests a conventional I-IV-I-V (C-F-C-G) progression. However, when all the parts are considered, the progression becomes  $I_{6/4}-(V_6)-I-I_{6/4}-(V_6)-V_{6/4}$  in the key of F. As in fig. 9 the inverted form of the chords in this progression contributes towards an absence of strong cadential movement.

The figure displays two systems of musical notation. The top system is labeled 'synthesizer' and 'bass guitar (basic progression)'. It features a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (F major) and a bass clef staff. The synthesizer part consists of a series of chords: a triad of F, A, and C in the first measure, followed by a triad of F, A, and C in the second measure, then a triad of F, A, and C in the third measure, and finally a triad of F, A, and C in the fourth measure. The bass guitar part shows a sequence of notes: F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C. Chord annotations are placed above the bass line:  $I_{6/4}$  above the first measure,  $V_6$  above the second measure,  $I$  above the third measure, and  $I$  above the fourth measure. The lyrics 'On bro- ther I' are written below the bass line. The bottom system is labeled '32' and shows a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat and a bass clef staff. The synthesizer part consists of a series of chords: a triad of F, A, and C in the first measure, followed by a triad of F, A, and C in the second measure, then a triad of F, A, and C in the third measure, and finally a triad of F, A, and C in the fourth measure. The bass guitar part shows a sequence of notes: F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A, C. Chord annotations are placed above the bass line:  $(I_{6/4}) V_6$  above the first measure,  $V_{6/4}$  above the second measure, and  $V_{6/4}$  above the third measure. The lyrics 'tell you.' are written below the bass line.

Fig. 10 (song 118): Pitch = F, original = F#; 4 pulses = 132



The addition of a synthesizer had reinforced the cyclic basis of Mmbangiseni's songs. Mmbangiseni's fondness for the synthesizer is partly attributable to its ability to preprogramme and call up short ostinato melodic and rhythmic patterns. Although this is advantageous for Mmbangiseni, I found that its capability for relentlessly metronomical propulsion results in a lack of the rhythmic subtlety and variation characteristic of manual musical performance. It is clearly not suitable for the type of dynamic progressions of Mashudu Mulaudzi's 1987 songs. Nor does it have the potential for the subtle rubatos of Solomon Mathase's music. It seems to stimulate a more uniform musical style which lacks the degree of individuality reflected in acoustic guitar music. But this suited Mmbangiseni perfectly. His intention was to sell his music, and for him the synthesizer was eminently suited to the creation of dance songs. In this Mmbangiseni has been influenced by mass media entertainment, particularly on radio. He sometimes takes his guitar or synthesizer and tries to play along with the radio. His favourite local musician is reggae artist Colbert Mukwevho, and his national favourite is Chicco Twala.

Towards the end of 1991 Mmbangiseni approached me with a request to make a so-called demo tape of his songs. His intention was to present this tape to radio stations and record companies. I recorded fourteen songs (122-135). Mmbangiseni's musical group had grown rapidly. Of his original small group, only the eighteen year old Humbulani Makhado had remained. However, they had been joined by eight other members, and chose the name Current Stars for themselves. Apart from Mmbangiseni and Humbulani, there were four boys and four girls ranging in age from eleven to sixteen. These band members are all local scholars. Mmbangiseni prefers

young band members, partly because they are easier to discipline and mobilize. By contrast older people often just "fool around" on his instruments without being serious. The composition of this band partly symbolizes an emerging social pattern which manifests a movement away from age and sex-based associations between young people.



Plate 4. Mbangiseni Mphaga (squatting) and Current Stars

Mbangiseni had acquired three more synthesizers. One was a gift, and he bought the other two. This instrumental ensemble was an improvement on his earlier band, but not yet what he wanted. His ultimate aim is to have lead and bass guitars, and two synthesizers only. The boys in the band had joined

Humbulani on synthesizer, while the girls sang the chorus parts. With songs 122-135 Mmbangiseni showed a further attempt to build a repertoire that would reach the largest possible audience. This is predominantly illustrated in his choice of language and song theme. Of the fifteen songs, five are in English, three in English and Venda, one in Tsonga (124), one in Sotho (129), one in Zulu (134), and three in Venda. Two songs (124; 130) express the popular theme of romantic love (cf. "Come, let us kiss"; 124: 10).

Musically speaking however, songs 122-135 reveal characteristics of Mmbangiseni's previous songs. The harmonically relaxed perpetual motion evident in figs 9 and 10 had become the main feature of Mmbangiseni's songs. Some of them even feature bitonal progressions. This is evident in song 123 (cf. audio recording 26) whose eight beat pattern is divided into two equal phrases, each based on a separate tonality. Songs 122-135 also feature inverted chords. The generation of these chords partly seems related to the spread-fingered, parallel chord technique of the synthesizer players. As in figs 9 and 10, these chords may function as a means whereby the harmonically relaxed perpetual motion of traditional dance music is presented in a popular, contemporary idiom. For example, fig. 11 (song 122; audio recording 27) starts with a bitonal progression which expands into a I-ii6-V7 progression. This progression is brief, and harmonic tension subsides with a I-ii6-vii6 (V6/4 implied) progression, and finally, the bitonal progression (cf. fig. 11).

The figure shows a musical score for a song in G major (one sharp). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains four measures of music, each with a chord symbol above it. The bass staff contains four measures of music, each with a chord symbol below it. The chord symbols are: (I), (ii), I, ii<sub>6</sub>, V<sub>7</sub>, I, ii<sub>6</sub>, vii<sub>6</sub>, (I), (ii). The vii<sub>6</sub> chord is also labeled with a circled V<sub>4</sub> below it.

Fig. 11: Basic harmonic scheme of song 122; pitch = original

Thus Mbangiseni's musical expression emerges as a factor of his ambition to achieve commercial success. This is perhaps best illustrated in the growth of his band, and the name Current Stars they chose for themselves. Influenced by styles of popular music, Current Stars exhibit the performance practice of well-known bands in their use of electronic instruments, female chorus singers, and the addressing of popular topics in a number of national languages. Their song style is generally characterized by the fusion of Western and traditional musical elements, and constitutes an expression of contemporary social experience. As suggested, the main feature of this fusion is the manipulation of Western chord progressions to achieve the harmonically relaxed perpetual motion of traditional dance music.

Mmbangiseni Mphaga: Song texts

114

Khaladzi anga ni mu litshe (You must leave my sister alone)

(Solo)

**Khaladzi anga ni mu litshe.**

You must leave my sister alone.<sup>1</sup>

**Khaladzi anga ni songo mu vhulaya.**

Do not kill my sister.

**Ni tshi mu vhulaya, ndi do sala na nnyi.**

If you kill her I will have nobody left.

**Vhadzia u vuwa!**

He always bewitches!<sup>2</sup>

(chorus)

**Aewee!**

Alas!

(solo)

**Vhadzia u silinga!**

He always bewitches!<sup>3</sup>

(chorus)

**Aewee!**

Alas!

1 The singer is referring to marital strife between his sister and her unemployed, quarrelsome husband.

2 Lit. he is awake (referring to the singer's brother-in-law). This derives from the belief that witches go about their evil deeds at night when others are asleep. This idea is reflected in the expression *u buba u songo tohola* (to rise early without pounding). Pounding is the first activity of the day. It takes place during the early hours of the morning when it is still dark. People who get up at this hour and do not pound are considered to be witches.

3 Lit. he is naughty.

115

Vhana, dzhenani tshikoloni (Children, go to school)

**Hiyo! Nda ri: Vhana, dzhenani tshikoloni.**

Hiyo! I said: Children, go to school.

**Dzhenani tshikoloni vhananga, zwothe zwi do nga mavu.**

Go to school children, you will prosper.<sup>1</sup>

**Hiyo! Nda ri: Vhana, vhadzimu vha hone.**

Hiyo! I said: Children, the spirits of the ancestors are with us.

**Pfunzo nangwe na kondelela, u si na Mudzimu a zwi naki.**

Even if one perserveres with education, there will be no beauty without God.

**Hiyo! Nda ri: Pfunzo nazwino Mudzimu a hu na.**

Hiyo! I said: Without God there is truly no education.

**Hiyo! Nda ri: Pfunzo ndi lone ifa lashu.**

Hiyo! I said: Education is our inheritance.

Hiyo! Nda ri: Vhana vha konwa nga pfunzo.  
Hiyo! I said: Children are improved through education.  
Vhane vha ri a hu na Mudzimu, Mudzimu u hone ngoho.  
Those who say there is no God, God is truly there.  
Vhane vha ri a hu na Mudzimu, Mudzimu u hone shangoni.  
Those who say there is no God, God is here on earth.  
Hiyo! Nda ri: Mudzimu u hone, hone shangoni.  
Hiyo! I said: God is here, here on earth.

1 Lit. everything will be like soil. Compare the expression  
lupfumo lu mavuni (there is wealth in the soil).

116

Livhuwani (Gratitude)

Hee, na tambula inwi.  
Hey, and you are suffering.  
Arali ni n̄wana no dzula mudini.  
If the child is sitting at home  
Livhuwani zwothe zwine zwa ni dela.  
Be thankful for what you receive.  
Livhuwani vhuswa.  
Be thankful for porridge.  
Livhuwani u lala.  
Be thankful for sleep.  
Hee, na tambula inwi.  
Hey, and you are suffering.

117

Zwothe-zwothe (All things)

Zwothe-zwothe  
All things  
zwi a fanana.  
are the same.  
Zwo nakaho,  
Beautiful things,  
zwo vhifhaho.  
ugly things,  
ndi zwivhumbwa  
are creatures  
zwa Mudzimu.  
of God.  
Zwothe-zwothe.  
All things.

118

Think before love

Oh! Brother I tell you.  
Oh! Baby I tell you.  
Don't say, honey I love you.  
First study her manner.  
Because tomorrow you will cry.

Equal rights, love and peace

Everybody wants an equal rights.  
 Everybody wants a peace.  
 Nobody wants an apartheid.  
 Why are you failing to love your neighbour?<sup>1</sup>  
 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?

<sup>1</sup> Mmbangiseni is addressing all South Africans in this song. In conversation he remarks that many people who complain about lack of liberty and compassion are pretentious, because they deny others liberty. This song specifically refers to the merciless gunning down of forty people at a funeral wake at Sebokeng during the night of 12 January 1991.

Venda ri a diphina (In Venda we enjoy ourselves)

Idani ngeno mufana.  
 Come here boy.  
 Venda a ri lili.  
 In Venda we do not cry.  
 Venda ri la zwikoli.  
 In Venda we eat maize cobs.<sup>1</sup>  
 Venda ri la nduhu.  
 In Venda we eat ground nuts.  
 Venda ri la mphwe.  
 In Venda we eat sugar cane.  
 Venda ri la manngo.  
 In Venda we eat mangos.  
 Venda a ri rengi.  
 We don't buy them in Venda.

<sup>1</sup> This song does not refer to commercial farming, but to the crops and fruit trees that people plant to supplement their income and food supply.

Around the world<sup>1</sup>

I was to move around the world.  
 I was to move on waste land.  
 I was to think that I shall be died there.  
 I found children playing their cards.  
 I say to them let's play together  
 I say to them let's sing together.  
 I say to them let's dance together.  
 I say to them let's sak together.<sup>1</sup>

1 This song was inspired by life in contemporary South Africa. From a distance the world looks like a human waste land, characterized by jealousy, spite, avarice and murder only. People appear hostile and threatening. However, those who make an effort to meet and understand others, and refrain from gossiping and generalizing, will actually find much goodwill and cooperation.

2 A reference to dancing on one's haunches.

122

Make a party

(Solo)  
Just make a party  
to show your parents.  
Just make a party  
to show your father.  
Just make a party  
to show your mother.  
Don't make a party  
while they are dead.  
Just make a party  
while they are living.  
Party yoo!  
(chorus)  
You show them party  
while they are dead.

123

Vhamusanda (The honourable headman)

(Solo)  
Hee ndaa! Ri a vusa.  
Good day! We greet you.  
(chorus)  
Ri a vusa vhamusanda Vho-Takalani.  
We greet honourable headman Mr Takalani.  
(solo)  
Hee aa! Ri a losha.  
Good day! We are paying respect.  
(chorus)  
Ri a losha vhamusanda Vho-Takalani.  
We are paying respect to honourable headman Mr Takalani:  
  
(solo/chorus)  
Na madi vho ri disela.  
And he provided us with water.  
Na zwickolo vho ri fhatela.  
And he built schools for us.  
Na dziposwo vho ri fhatela.  
And he built post offices for us.



(solo)

"Khakhamela mbila lume muhali.<sup>1</sup> Thindi ndi a mila ndi  
"I greet you respectfully sir."  
balelwa nga shambo."<sup>2</sup>

1 Lit. I have erred in approaching you.

2 Lit. I eat meat, not bones.

124

Shimatsatsa (A beautiful woman)

(Solo)

Hee, shimatsatsa, hee!

Hey, beautiful woman, hey!

(chorus)

Mina naku randza.

I love you.

(solo)

Hee, shimatsatsa, hee!

Hey, beautiful woman, hey!

(chorus)

Mina naku lava.

I need you.

(solo)

Hee, shimatsatsa, hee!

Hey, beautiful woman, hey!

(chorus)

Kasi u huma kwini?

Where do you come from?

(solo)

Hee, Thina/Ndivhoni/Joy/Tshifhiwa, wee!

Hey, Thina/Ndivhoni/Joy/Tshifhiwa!<sup>1</sup>

(chorus)

Rine ri a ni funa.

We love you.

(solo)

Hee, Thina/Ndivhoni/Joy/Tshifhiwa, wee!

Hey, Thina/Ndivhoni/Joy/Tshifhiwa!

(chorus)

Idani, ri u khise.

Come, let us kiss.

1 The girls in the band.

125

Lets gonna go<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)

Hee brother, hee-yoo.

(chorus)

Lets gonna go.

(solo)

Hee sister, hee-yoo.

(chorus)  
 Lets gonna go.  
 (solo)  
 Hee cousin, hee-yoo.  
 (chorus)  
 Lets gonna go.

(solo)  
 I'm longing to see you.  
 (chorus)  
 Hey you, South Africa.  
 (solo)  
 I'm longing to see you.  
 (chorus)  
 10 Hey you, Venda, yoo.  
 (solo)  
 I'm longing to see you.  
 (chorus)  
 Hey you, Lesotho.  
 (solo)  
 I'm longing to see you.  
 (chorus)  
 Hey you, Zimbabwe.  
 (solo)  
 I'm longing to see you.  
 (chorus)  
 Hey you, Gazankulu.  
 (solo)  
 17 "Like a man who was exiled for many many years ago."

1 This song refers to the return of political exiles to South Africa.

126

Who can satisfy the world?

(Chorus)  
 Nobody can satisfy  
 (solo)  
 the world.

(solo)  
 You can satisfy half of it.  
 You can satisfy quarter of it.  
 Others will bore you.  
 Vha nga takadza half yalo.  
 You can satisfy half of it.  
 Vha nga takadza quarter yalo.  
 You can satisfy quarter of it.  
 Others will bore you.

Thanks of what you are

(Solo)

If you are very happy,

(chorus)

others are crying.

(solo)

If you are winning,

(chorus)

others are losing.

(solo)

If you are being born,

(chorus)

others are dying.

(solo)

Musi vho takala,

When some are happy,

(chorus)

vhañwe vha khou lila.

others are crying.

(solo)

Musi vha tshi wina,

When some are winning,

(chorus)

10 vhañwe vha khou luza.

others are losing.

(solo)

Musi vha tshi bebwa,

When some are being born,

(chorus)

vhañwe vha khou lovha.

others are dying.

Ndi humbula zwila kale (I remember the past)

(Solo)

Ndi humbula zwila kale.<sup>1</sup>

I remember the past

Ndo dzula ndo digeda.

when I was living comfortably.

Ndi tshi la nda nwa.

I had enough to eat and drink.

Zwino zwo no fhela.

That is now over.

Ngauri ndo no hula.

Because I am an adult.

Ho sala u di shumela.

I have to work.

1 Each line is repeated by the chorus.

129

U lashile batswadi (Abandoning your parents)

(Chorus)

Hee-aa, hee!

Hey!

(solo)

Mma ba o hulisitse.

Your mother raised you.

Ntate ba o hulisitse.

Your father raised you.

Ba o kensise sikolo.

They sent you to school.

Wena o ja bereka.

You are now working.

U lashile batswadi.

But you are abandoning your parents.

O ja chelete li mosadi.

You are spending your money with your wife.

Mma u ntate ba u hlupea.

Your mother and father are suffering.

130

Honey my darling

(Chorus)

Remember me.

(solo)

Honey yee!

Darling yee!

Sweetie yee!

Come near me.

I dreamt you.

You are part of my life.

I'll remember you.

131

Mr Maluga

(Solo)

I went to my neighbour

to find some help.

I went to my relative

to find some help.

I went to my friend

to find some help.

They all failed to give me such a help.

"I should like to thank the following people:"

"Mr Maluga, M.E.,

10 a man from Nzhelele."

"Mr Titus Neluvhumbu,

a man from Mukula."

"Mr Gilbert Netshiombo,  
a man from Mukula."  
"Mr Solomon Fish Mabogo,  
a man from Mukula."  
"Mr Yerson Mbedzi,  
a man from Gondeni."  
20 "Mr Gladstone Ravele,  
a man from Tshikonelo."  
"Without forgetting our electronic man,  
Mr Nicholas Mbedzi."  
"They played a decisive role to improve our music."<sup>1</sup>  
"Thank you, thank you very much."

(solo)  
We are thank you Maluga.<sup>2</sup>  
We are thank you Titus.  
We are thank you Gilbert.  
We are thank you Solomon.  
We are thank you Yerson.  
30 We are thank you Ravele.

1 These persons are colleagues, friends and family members who assisted Current Stars in buying and repairing their instruments.

2 Each line is repeated by the chorus.

132

### Current Stars

(Solo)  
Hey you people,  
don't kill me.  
When I die  
you won't be a singer.  
Go away!  
Go away!  
Hey you people,  
don't kill me.  
When I die,  
10 you won't take my art.  
Go away!  
Go away!  
"People, don't kill Current Stars."

(solo)  
Current Stars, i a lisa.  
Enjoy the music of Current Stars.  
(chorus)  
I a lisa inwi.  
You must enjoy the music.  
(solo)  
Current Stars, i a zhisa.  
Enjoy the music of Current Stars.  
(chorus)

17 I a zhis a inwi.  
You must enjoy the music.

133

Vho ri dzima mushumo (Jobless)

(Sound of knocking)

"Nga ngomu."

"Come in."

"Hee ndaa nduna!"

"Good day sir!"

"Hee ndaa muduhulu."

"Good day young man."

"Ndi khou humbula mushumo."

"I am asking for work."

"U n̄wana wa nnyi?"

"Whose child are you?"

"Ndi n̄wana wa Vho-Mphaga."

"I am the child of Mr Mphaga."

"Hai! Vho-Mphaga a ri vha divha fhanao."

"No! We do not know any Mr Mphaga here."

"Come on, tuwa i bva ofisini yanga! Tshimbila, tolou diñwa."

"Come on, leave my office! Go, do not disturb me."

"Ndo livhuwa."

"Thank you."

10 "Tshimbila vhuswoleni."

"Apply for work at the defence force."

(chorus)

Hee, vho ri dzima mushumo!

Hey, they refused to employ us!

(solo)

Hee, vho ri dzima mushumo.

Hey, they refused to employ us.

Hee, vha tshi thola vha havho.

Hey, they appointed their relatives.

Hee, vha tshi thola mashaka.

Hey, they appointed their family.

Hee, vha tshi thola vhasadzi.

Hey, they appointed women.

Hee, nne ndi si na wa hanga.

Hey, I do not have relatives in the right places.

Hee, ndi do tholwa nga nnyi?

Hey, who is going to appoint me?

Hee, zwi a penga.

Hey, this is madness.

(Sound of knocking)

"Nga ngomu."

"Come in."

20 "Ndaa nduna."

"Good day sir."

"Ndaa muduhulu."

"Good day young man."

"Ndi khou humbula mushumo."  
 "I am asking for work."  
 "U n̄wana wa nnyi?"  
 "Whose child are you?"  
 "Ndi n̄wana wa Vho-Makhado."  
 "I am the child of Mr Makhado."  
 "Hai! Vho-Makhado todisani hanevho."  
 "No! Mr Makhado works here."  
 "Ri a livhuwa."  
 "Thank you."  
 "Hmm. ( ) dzhena mushumo ndi matshelo nda zwienda."  
 "Hmm. You may start working tomorrow."  
 "Ndi zwone."  
 "O.K."  
 "Hmm. Tshimbila zwavhudi."  
 "Hmm. Go well."

(solo)  
 30 Hee, who ri dzima mushumo!  
 Hey, they refused to employ us!  
 (chorus)  
 Hee, ri fa nga dala!  
 Hey, we are starving!

134

Ukuphi u mama wami? (Where is my mother?)

(Solo)  
 Ngabe u mama wami u be khona,  
 If only my mother was present,  
 (chorus)  
 u be khona.  
 present.  
 (solo)  
 Bengizokwa e kukhona u baba wami,  
 If only my father was present.  
 (chorus)  
 U baba wami.  
 My father.  
 (solo)  
 Bengizokwa e kukhona u gogo wami.  
 If only my grandmother was present.  
 (chorus)  
 U gogo wami.  
 My grandmother.  
 (solo)  
 Bengizokwa e kukhona u malume wami.  
 If only my uncle was present.  
 (chorus)  
 U malume wami.  
 My uncle.

(solo)  
 Ndi kathele u ku hluhwa.  
 I am tired of suffering.

10 "Nigithi hamba, man!"  
"I say, go man!"  
"Paka u hamba!"  
"Pack and go!"<sup>1</sup>

1 This song describes a family situation in which a widow remarries. She then dies, and her children from her first marriage are told by their stepfather to leave his home.

135

What's the problem?

(Solo)  
What's the main problem?  
(chorus)  
Hey you people.  
(solo)  
When I build a good house  
(chorus)  
you feel a pain.  
(solo)  
When I am educated  
(chorus)  
you feel a pain.  
(solo)  
When I improve my music  
(chorus)  
you feel a pain.  
(solo)  
When I am a rich man  
(chorus)

10 you feel a pain.  
(solo)  
"What's the problem sweety?"  
"What's the problem darling?"

(solo)  
When I live in poor hut  
(chorus)  
you feel so good.  
(solo)  
When I am a *danda* head<sup>1</sup>  
(chorus)  
you feel so good.  
(solo)  
When I am a poor man  
(chorus)  
you feel so good.  
(solo)  
"What's the problem?"

20 "Just tell me."  
"What's the main problem?"  
"These people are suffering from jealousy."

1 Lit. a block head. From *danda*: log.



The following texts were obtained in writing from the composer:

136

Unity with strength

In everything else: Unity with strength.

Kha tshiñwe na tshiñwe.

In everything.

Hu u fhata mudu.

When building a house.

Hu u foma bennde.

When forming a band.

"Aah, these people, man,

are like two animals

which were tied by a rope."

"One said: I go. One said: I go."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This song was inspired by a drawing found in many government offices. The drawing advocates team work. It shows two donkeys pulling on the same rope, but in opposite directions.

137

Ndo lavhelela Yehova (Awaiting Yehova)

Yehova, nthuseni. Yehova, nthuseni, wee.

Yehova, help me. Alas Yehova, help me.

Tshiñwe na tshiñwe tshine nda toda.

With all my needs.

Ndo lavhelela vhone Baba.

I am waiting for you Father.

Tshiñwe na tshiñwe nda shaya.

I do not have anything.

Ndo lavhelela vhone Baba.

I am waiting for you Father.

Tshiñwe na tshiñwe tshine nda lila.

I am pleading for everything I need.

Ndo lavhelela vhone Baba.

I am waiting for you Father.

138

Living and dying

When I am living  
people dislike me.

When I am dying  
people remember me.

When I do something good  
people forget me.

When I do something bad

people remember me.

139

Ndi ndavha ya musadzi (Because of a woman)

He, inwi ni khou itani?  
Hey, what are you doing?  
Ni tshi lata na khotsi anu.  
You have left your father.  
Ni tshi lata na mme anu.  
You have left your mother.  
Ni tshi lata na murathu anu.  
You have left your brother.  
Ni tshi lata na khaladzi anu.  
You have left your sister.  
Nga ndavha ya musadzi.  
Because of a woman.  
Rine ri tshi ita zwa vuhadzi.  
When we are married.

140

Spook Mathambo

Hey you, Spook Mathambo.<sup>1</sup>  
You go to the shebeen.  
You waste all the money.  
Your children are suffering.  
Hey you, Spook Mathambo.

1 A pseudonym.

141

Dzhenani tshikoloni (Go to school) (II)

Vhathu vha hashu, dzhenani tshikoloni.  
Our people, go to school.  
Vhutshilo ha zwino vhu konwa nga pfunzo.  
Life nowadays requires education.  
Na sa funzea a ni wani u shuma.  
If you are uneducated you will not find work.  
Vhathu, ro tea u dzhena tshikoloni.  
People, we must attend school.  
Hu madokotela vho dzhena tshikoloni.  
Even doctors attended school.  
Hu manese vho dzhena tshikoloni.  
Even nurses attended school.  
Hu mathitshere vho dzhena tshikoloni.  
Even teachers attended school.  
Hu zwipikitere vho dzhena tshikoloni.  
Even school inspectors attended school.

142

You love money

Honey, we love you.  
Honey, we need you.  
Oh now you love money.  
When I am working you seem to love me.  
When I am a rich man you seem to love me.  
When I am ill you don't come to me.  
When I am a poor man you don't come to me.

143

Ri a Venda (We are going to Venda)

A ri ye ni, ri a hone Venda.  
Let us go to Venda.  
Idani vhona:  
Come and see:  
Thavha dza Venda.  
The mountains of Venda.  
Milambo ya Venda.  
The rivers of Venda.  
Vhana vha Venda.  
The children of Venda.  
Mapa wa Venda.  
The map of Venda.  
Vhudala ha miri.  
The lush vegetation.<sup>1</sup>

1 Lit. the green trees.

144

Vhuleme ho swika (Burdens)

Vhana vhanga, idani ri shume.  
My children, come let us work.  
Hai, ro no neta.  
No, we are tired.  
Nda tuwa, ni do tambula.  
When I die you will suffer.  
Hai, ri do diphina.  
No, that will suit us.<sup>1</sup>  
Hai, nne ndo hula.  
No, I am an adult.  
Vhuleme ho swika.  
We have burdens.  
Nda sa shuma, a ni nga li.  
If I do not work, you will not survive.  
Ri do fa nga ndala.  
We will starve.  
Nda sa shuma, a ni nga fuki.  
If I do not work, you will not have clothing.  
Ri do tshimbila fhedzi.  
We will not have enough to wear.

1 Lit. we will enjoy that.

145

A hu na tshi sa fheli (Everything comes to an end)

A hu na tshi sa fheli.  
Everything comes to an end.  
Hu v<sup>h</sup>utshilo v<sup>h</sup>u a fhela.  
Life comes to an end.  
Hu u tonga hu a fhela.  
Swanking comes to an end.  
Hu lupfumo lu a fhela.  
Wealth comes to an end.  
Hu v<sup>h</sup>ushai v<sup>h</sup>u a fhela.  
Poverty comes to an end.

### 4.3 Piti Ravhura

Piti Ravhura is the only guitarist in my research sample who is a professional musician. I got to know him when he busked regularly in front of a shop situated in the busy Thohoyandou main shopping complex. This is the same shop where Mashudu Mulaudzi busked for some time. The shopowner encouraged Piti to sit outside his shop. When busking, Piti is usually surrounded by onlookers. As I will show in more detail, these onlookers are regarded by certain shopowners as potential customers. In this way, Piti becomes the fulcrum of a micro economic environment. Piti, like most of the other guitarists, comes from a poor family, and has had limited schooling. However, the main reason why he is a busker is because he is blind, and has no other source of income.

I got to know Piti when he was about twenty-six years old. He was born in c. 1961 at Dzingahe, a village located a few kilometers northeast of Thohoyandou. Piti's past family circumstances are somewhat obscure. Neither he nor any of his relatives like to discuss the past. Piti's parents were never happy together. His father is Jackson Mutshinyalo Ravhura, and his mother Anna Matodzi Mutshaeni. Shortly after Piti's birth, his parents quarreled. His mother took him and left her husband. She returned home one night, a year or two later. There was a bowl of soft porridge (*mukapu*) in the family hut. Piti's mother fed some of this porridge to her son. Soon afterwards Piti became afflicted with an eye disease. He was taken to Donald Fraser hospital, but the doctors could not help him, and he became totally blind at the age of about three. Piti's relatives indicated to me that he had become blind because a witch had poisoned the porridge. Whether witchcraft had become a factor of family

tension, or whether Piti's blindness was indeed a result of poisoning or natural causes I could not determine. The issue was too delicate, and I did not wish to spoil my relationship with the family.

Not surprisingly, Piti's blindness is a major factor determining his life and music making. It has not only affected him physically, but also emotionally, and several of his songs refer to his condition (cf. 150; 156-158). Piti still carries deep inside him the mental scars of people mocking his blindness when he was young. In "The girls mocked me" (150), he refers to an incident in his youth when some children mocked him. To him it felt as if the whole world was laughing at him, and he represents this idea by taking the initials of the children (Rudzani, Stella, and Azwinndini), and turning them into the abbreviation R.S.A. (Republic of South Africa). This suggests that the whole country mocked him. "If you don't love me Mary" (157), is a general injunction against girls who mock him for his blindness. In a revengeful fantasy he imagines that they accost him for his love. He then tests the sincerity of their love, only to find it lacking. His revenge partly lies in the high standard he sets (500 000). He eventually rejects them rudely ("Pack and go").

"Me and my shadow" (158) is also a type of fantasy. In it Piti describes the magic of one's shadow, how it moves. When one dances, your shadow "jives along". In the song he imagines what his shadow does. His imagination allows him to see. This is the magic he refers to (l 11). And he can see this at any time because the imagination is not restrictive. The last two sentences ("Don't cry baby. She is come back") is Piti's way of pacifying his child who is scared of his

blindness. He is assuring his child that he does not have to worry, his mother (who is absent doing some chores) will look after him and his father.

"You are the girl in fish" (156) is a puzzling and complex song. Piti explains that this song is "something wonderful". This concept operates on two related levels. First of all, the song has a fantastic element in terms of its content. The content was partly inspired by a dream Piti had. In the dream he heard the first line of the song spoken by an ancestral spirit. He created the rest of the song, complete with music. He said this is his only song partly inspired in a dream. The song deals with beautiful prostitutes who accost men (including himself) on the street. They are likened to a fish which is slimy and wet - an object of abhorrence. So, while the girl is beautiful, she also has negative qualities. This sort of girl becomes the personification of the kind of girl who mocks Piti's blindness. And in his fantasy he gets rid of her by making her go into the water where other slimy creatures live. Line 4 refers to the prostitute's beauty, while line 5 describes her persistent efforts to get customers. Piti gave a lively description of how these prostitutes operate. They are quite brazen and unashamed. They come up to a person saying, "I am thirsty!" There is something terrible and frightening about this song and the other ones which deal with Piti's blindness. I sense in them fear and uncertainty which even Piti's imagination cannot eradicate. There seems constant fear in Piti about losing his wife. Although Mavis loves Piti, my impression is that Piti is aware of the fragility of their relationship. This awareness also emerges in his songs.

Piti and his mother went to live with his grandmother at Lunungwi, a ward of Gondeni village. Gondeni is very close to Ngulumbi where Solomon Mathase lives. It is situated next to the Sapekoe tea estate where Piti's mother became employed as a labourer. During the mid-1970s Piti's mother took employment as a labourer on a farm at Levubu. She left her children (at the time apparently Piti, a brother and two sisters) in charge of her sister Muofhe who is also a labourer at the Sapekoe tea estate. This was a time of poverty and suffering for the children. In song 147 Piti addresses his mother, asking her to return home to care for her hungry children. Song 148 also refers to suffering, and criticizes his mother's sister for her harsh discipline. During this time Piti's sister Takalani left school to try and support her sister and brothers. She applied for a position as labourer at the tea estate, but was turned away because she was still a child (cf. 154).

When Piti was thirteen years old, a Swiss missionary noticed his blindness. The missionary took Piti to Siloe school for the blind near Pietersburg. Piti stayed there from about 1974 until 1977, leaving the school at the prescribed age of sixteen. It was at Siloe that Piti received his only schooling. He picked up a smattering of English, and several of his songs are in English (146; 156-158). The school is a Catholic institution, and this influence is reflected in song 151 where Piti challenges the religious views of his non-Christian family. However, Piti is a nominal Christian only, and makes sacrifices to his ancestral spirits.

Piti was exposed to local guitar playing as a boy. He eventually came to realize that some sort of living could be made from musical performance, and made himself a guitar when he



was twenty years old. He performed on this guitar for about three years. He is adamant that nobody taught him to play the guitar. When he was twenty-six years old in 1987, he acquired a new acoustic guitar with steel strings. This instrument was a gift from a friend, Mutshutshu Mamatho, son of the local headman. Not long afterwards, Piti achieved the status of tshilombe. He regarded this as a compliment, telling me that a tshilombe is a nambi (expert musician). Those who give zwilombe a bad name are jealous of the income they reputedly earn with their music.

Piti is restricted in his guitar performance by his blindness. In performance he sits, pulls his legs up, and places the guitar on his right thigh. He sits hunched over the instrument, with his face very near to the sound box. The neck of the guitar is horizontal to the ground, and Piti uses the second and third fingers of his left hand to press the strings over the top of the neck. Partly because of his blindness, he only strums a basic I-IV-I-V harmonic pattern, with little rhythmic variation. Piti's limited technique does not seem to have hampered him in busking. Busking on noisy pavements with an acoustic guitar does not readily allow delicate playing or the execution of complicated melodic and rhythmic patterns. What is required is powerful strumming and a loud voice, a performance practice Piti was forced to cultivate.

Although Piti generally uses a I-IV-I-V harmonic pattern, he also subordinates it to the traditional harmonic progression. In fig. 12 (song 149; audio recording 28) he strums a basic I-IV-I-V pattern which suggests conventional Western harmonic flow. However, the structure of the vocal part makes it clear that IV (F/C) and V (G/D) in fact are employed as **phala** and

thakhula respectively of a traditional harmonic progression, with C/E constituting the secondary tonality (cf. fig. 2).

The figure shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains two phrases of the lyrics "Kho-na-ni ya-nga." with a measure rest (16) at the end. The bottom staff is a guitar root progression in bass clef, showing four chords: (I), (ii6 IV), (I), and (V). The text "guitar root progression" is written to the left of the staff.

Fig. 12 (song 149): Pitch = C, original = Bb

During the late 1980s, when Piti was residing at Gondeni, he had four main locations of busking. He performed at the Thohoyandou shopping complex three times a week. He also made a point of performing there during the middle of the month when some government salaries were paid. Piti earned an average of R20 a day. Although the shopping centre is close to his home, it is frequented by poor people, and always yielded Piti's lowest income. Therefore he went to busk at Louis Trichardt at the end of the month. He performed in front of a local supermarket. Here he earned about R30 a day. Several buskers can be found in Louis Trichardt at month-ends. They usually arrive together at the local bus and taxi stand where they meet and exchange greetings. Buskers of necessity have an informal code of conduct which restricts interference in each other's business. Although clashes sometimes occur, new arrivals generally do not "trespass" on the streetcorners of established buskers. Piti occasionally took a taxi to the more lucrative location of Pietersburg. Here he earned up to R40 a day at certain open air markets. Although his audiences comprised mostly Sotho speakers, Piti always sang in Venda, a language most people understood. Piti also sang in English. At times he also performed at the open air market at Elim, near Louis Trichardt. This happened when he slept at his

sister Avhaphani's house at Valdezia, on the way to busk at Louis Trichardt.

Piti is the only full-time busker in the group of guitarists under investigation. In working with him, I observed certain aspects of guitar performance culture not evident with others. Thus I followed him on a couple of busking trips, and I give here an account of the circumstances of his busking at Louis Trichardt at the end of November 1987.

On Friday 27 November Piti left Gondenani by taxi for Thohoyandou. He was accompanied by his young brother John who guided him during that time. At Thohoyandou, Piti and John took another taxi to Valdezia near Louis Trichardt where they spent the night with their married sister Avhaphani. On Saturday morning 28 November the two brothers took a bus to Louis Trichardt where they arrived at about 9 a.m. They walked about two kilometres from the bus stop, and arrived in front of a large supermarket in the centre of town at about 9.30. Piti used to play next to the entrance of the supermarket. However, the manager politely banned him around the corner to the front of a clothes shop where he came to sit on the pavement of the main street (cf. pl. 5). He obtained permission from the owner of the shop to busk there. Although it was an upmarket shop, the owner nevertheless banked on Piti's presence to attract potential customers.

I had come to Louis Trichardt that morning to find other buskers. Because I could not locate them, I decided to look for Piti. When I found him, I managed to park my car close to him. I only made my presence known to him several hours later, and I was thus able to observe and video-tape him without being noticed.



Plate 5. Piti Ravhura

It was a difficult morning for Piti. This was mainly because he struggled with strings which broke repeatedly, thus preventing him from playing. I was hard pressed not to leave my car and help the struggling brothers. Piti and John battled until 10.30 to fix strings, and by the end of the morning Piti had spent a considerable sum replacing broken strings. Unfortunately he has a destructive strumming technique which puts strain on the cheap strings he uses. Once, when John remained absent for a long time, buying a new second string, Piti got impatient, and started to play on the remaining strings. This was possible because of the tuning pattern he uses. Piti tunes his guitar to the pattern given in fig. 13.

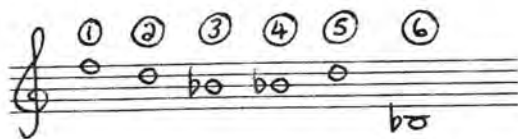


Fig. 13

Piti's tuning is F4-D4-Bb3-Bb3-D4-Bb2. Because Piti's second and fifth strings are tuned to D4, the absence of the second string did not prevent him from continuing his playing. However, he is one of the few players who uses all six strings. As indicated before, tunings are developed around what is required musically. In Piti's case the use of six strings is related to the volume needed for street performance. About half the tunings I measured basically correspond to that of Piti. His tuning also is clearly rooted in the use of the basic I-IV-V harmonic progression. This tuning is normally found with less adept players. Producing chords IV and V merely involves pressing down all the strings on the fifth and seventh frets.

Piti eventually started to play at 10.30. During the morning there were a few minutes when Piti had no audience. However, most of the time passersby watched him out of curiosity, listened to his music, or stopped to delve into their pockets for change to give to him. This was often a laborious process as people had to put down their shopping bags and parcels to search for money. They threw their change onto a plastic sheet Piti had put on the ground. Most presented Piti with copper coins, and 10c and 20c pieces. I was struck by the fact that well-dressed shoppers did not give any more readily to Piti than poorly-dressed ones. Over a period of an hour, sixty-three people gave Piti money.

Before I started to observe Piti's busking activities, I was under the impression that people rewarded him in due recognition for his creativity. However, this was largely a romantic illusion. I was surprised, even somewhat shocked, that most people who gave Piti money had little clue of what he was singing about. They did not care very much for the nature

of his musical product as long as they heard a continuous musical performance. Those I spoke to indicated that they supported Piti out of sympathy. Some said they admired him for working for a living in spite of his blindness, and not begging like others. They even gave Piti money while he was taking a smoke break or fixing a broken string. The fact that many people felt sorry for Piti does not mean that they did not respond to the music. Some people who gave money seemed to be impressed by what they heard. "Paradise" (152), with its contemporary social theme, was a particularly popular song, and people often laughed at its text. When Piti sensed that people were enjoying a song, and giving money more freely, he extended its performance.

Piti stopped playing at 10.50, at which time he took a smoke break. At 10.55 a lady employee of the clothes shop started to sweep the sidewalk in front of the shop. She noticed Piti's earnings, and urged him to put it away, helping him to arrange his money according to silver and copper coins. Piti's presence on the sidewalk more than attracted potential customers for the clothes shop. He generated around him a small sidewalk community. Friends used him as a meeting point where they greeted each other and had conversations. Several people used him as a kind of left-luggage office while they went to shop and run errands. At times the sidewalk community became quite large, blocking pedestrian flow. A traffic officer told Piti to move on. However, Piti did not understand what he wanted, and continued playing. The officer went away and did not pursue the matter.

Piti resumed playing at 11.00. After fifteen minutes a string broke, and he resumed playing only at 11.25. Piti took another smoke break at 11.50. At 12.05 p.m. he decided to try

his luck elsewhere. He and John gathered the money, put it inside the guitar, and departed for Eltivillas, a shopping area on the outskirts of town. Eltivillas is situated next to the main bus and taxi stand, and attracts customers from all directions, as far as Zimbabwe and Gazankulu. Eltivillas is a beehive of economic activity, formal as well as informal. It has a large open air market where vendors sell a wide variety of articles to travellers.

I gave Piti and John a lift to Eltivillas where we arrived at 12.15 p.m. Piti started to play in front of a general dealer's shop at 12.20. This was a well-chosen spot, since the dealer is situated next to a fast food outlet frequented by many people during the lunch hour. The shoppers here were poorer but more in number. In the centre of town Piti never managed to gather more than ten people around him. At Eltivillas he seldom accumulated fewer than fifteen people, and at times as many as twenty-five. In forty minutes thirty-two people gave Piti money. The general dealer welcomed Piti's presence. He promptly proceeded to take a tray of fashion jewellery from the shop, and showed it around outside. Interested passersby were whisked inside the shop to conclude deals started outside.

At 12.35 a string broke again, and Piti only managed to start playing again at 12.50. Seven minutes later another string broke. Piti continued playing at 1.05, but the string snapped again at 1.12. Piti and John struggled until 1.35 to replace it. Barely five minutes later a gambler exploited Piti's helplessness, and hijacked his audience to set up a game. But Piti's problems were not over yet. Soon afterwards he was accosted by a bohemian-looking Tsonga musician wielding a penny whistle. He helped Piti to fix another broken string,

but then kept the guitar and fooled around on it for about fifteen minutes, apparently in a drugged state. Around 2.00 p.m. Piti gave up, gathered his takings, and put them inside his guitar. The day had ended tensely, and I did not feel it appropriate to ask Piti to count his earnings. By my guess, it could have amounted to about R25.

Piti's mother worked on the farm at Levubu until the mid-1980s. During 1986 she secured employment at the Sapekoe tea estate at Valdezia. After a year she asked for a transfer to the Gondeni branch of the company so that she could care for her children. She worked there for about two or three years until her mother died. Having a long history of working and living in the Valdezia area, she asked to be transferred back there in 1989. Piti followed his mother soon afterwards. He and his wife renovated a very small hut at Hamashila, bordering onto the tea estate at Valdezia.

Piti met his wife in 1982. She is Mavis Mutami Mamatho (b. 1964) who hails from the ruling family at Lunungwi. Mavis attended school to standard five. She gave birth to her and Piti's son Ndinannyi, in 1986. The couple declared themselves married in November 1990 since Piti was too poor to pay bridewealth. In "Oh baby love me" (146) Piti addresses his wife. Piti composed this song during 1986 when he regularly busked at the open air market at Elim. Mavis wanted to go and ask for employment at the Sapekoe tea estate at Valdezia. Piti became scared that he would lose her to male labourers at the estate. The song, he explains, was his way of telling her not to worry about material things - God would provide.

Living at Hamashila, Piti is close to his mother and his sister Avhapfani. In addition, Hamashila is a convenient



midway point between Louis Trichardt and Thohoyandou where he busks. During 1990-1991 Piti busked for four days per week, assisted by his wife who also sang with him. He played at the Thohoyandou shopping complex on Saturdays and Mondays, and at the supermarket in Louis Trichardt on Thursdays and Fridays. He did not busk on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, apparently because business was bad on those days. I tried to determine the couple's income and expenses. However, I had limited success since they had only a very vague idea of their finances. Piti indicated that he earned about R30 per day at Louis Trichardt, and between R20 and R30 at Thohoyandou. At the end of the month he went to Thohoyandou, and here his income peaked at R40. After calculating the couple's considerable transport cost, the only reasonable conclusion I could come to was that they were living in abject poverty. While the little family appeared to have enough money for basic foodstuffs, there was clearly little or no money for anything else. Their general material environment was quite pathetic. They had occupied a deserted homestead of which only the walls of one small hut, the size of a large granary, had remained standing. The hut really was no more than a ruin with a makeshift roof comprising sheets of corrugated iron and plastic. It contained no furniture, and Piti and Mavis were sleeping on cardboard sheets on the hard clay floor. Mavis had constructed a crude paraffin lamp with a homemade wick from a small brandy bottle. Its inefficient burning had caused black streaks up the wall. Their clothing was in a bag suspended from a pole supporting the roof. A few utensils were placed against the wall on the floor. The courtyard was dilapidated, neither smeared nor cared for. The couple could not care for their two children, who had gone to live with Piti's mother.

During June 1992 Piti, Mavis and their six year old daughter Rabelani arrived on my doorstep. Neither Mavis nor Piti admitted that they were in trouble, nor did they directly ask for help. However, it was clear that the small family was in desperate financial need. They were poorly dressed, and only Rabelani wore shoes. The reason for their plight was that Piti had encountered trouble with his busking. Playing at the Thohoyandou shopping centre apparently was not viable anymore. His luck had also run out in Louis Trichardt where the police had instructed him not to play in the centre of town. People had complained that he and Mavis were making a "noise". Their only remaining source of income was derived from busking at Giyani in Gazankulu, about a hundred kilometers from their home. They went to Giyani by taxi for a week at the end of every month. However, their transport cost had a crippling effect on their income. The winter of 1992 was drought-stricken. Mavis complained bitterly about the fact that she had to pay to get drinking water for her family. The normally coherent and commanding woman appeared disheveled, and her eyes had a desperate look.

Piti Ravhura: Song texts

146

Oh baby love me<sup>1</sup>

Oh baby love me.  
She still love me baby.  
Oh baby love me.

Don't be worry my baby.  
She still love me.  
Oh baby love me.

Don't be worry my baby.  
Don't be worry my sugar.  
Don't be worry my chocolate, chekele, baby.  
"Ngcaaa!"

Oh baby love me.  
She still love me baby.  
Oh baby love me.  
She still love me baby.  
"Love me baby!"

1 The "baby" in this song is Piti's wife Mavis.

147

Vho-Elelwani (Mrs Elelwani)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)  
Vho-Elelwani, ngoho, ngoho.  
Truly, Mrs Elelwani, truly.  
(solo)  
Vho-Elelwani, ngoho, ngoho.  
Truly, Mrs Elelwani, truly.  
Ri a fa nga ndala, wee.  
Alas, we are dying of hunger.  
Ri na dora.  
We are thirsty.  
Nwana ndi do lela.  
I am going to nurse the child.<sup>2</sup>  
Vho-Elelwani, vhone, mmawe.  
Mrs Elelwani, you, mother.  
Nga vha vhuye.  
Come back.  
Nga vha vhuye.  
Come back.  
Nga vha vhuye.  
Come back.

1 Piti's mother.

2 A reference to Ntshavheni, Piti's youngest brother.

Haravhura (Ravhura's place)

Haravhura nga ngoho ro shengela.  
 We truly suffered at Ravhura's place.  
 Sonnyboy, *nwana*, wee-aa.  
 Sonnyboy, child.  
 Nwananga *vhuyani*, wee-aa.  
 Return my child.  
 Virginia *nwananga*, wee-aa.  
 Virginia my child.  
 Kholomoni *ndi ene*, wee-aa.  
 The one who herds cattle.  
 Tshitavhani *ndi ene*, wee-aa.  
 The one who is on the hill.  
 Haravhura, *mmawe*, ro shengela.  
 Mother, we suffered at Ravhura's place.

Khunini *ndi ene*, wee-aa.  
 The one who is collecting fire wood.  
 Mulamboni *ndi ene*, wee-aa.  
 The one who is at the river.  
 Nwananga *vhuyani*, wee-aa.  
 Return my child.<sup>1</sup>  
 Vhommane *vhone ngoho vha a shengedza*.  
 The sister is indeed the one who makes him suffer.

1 A request by Piti for his brothers and sisters to come home from chores imposed on them by their aunt.

Khonani yanga (My friend)

Khonani yanga.  
 My friend.  
 Khonani yanga.  
 My friend.  
 Vha tshi nwa halwa,  
 When you drink beer,  
 vha songo levha.  
 do not be vicious.<sup>1</sup>

Vha tshi levha,  
 When you are vicious,  
 vha do rwiwa.  
 you will be beaten.

U gai Nndini?<sup>2</sup>  
 Where is Nndini?  
 Nndini o tuwa.  
 Nndini has gone away.  
 Nga tshone tshibonda.  
 because of the walking stick.<sup>3</sup>

**Khonani yanga.**  
My friend.  
**Khonani yanga.**  
My friend.  
**Vha tshi nwa halwa,**  
When you drink beer,  
**vha songo levha.**  
do not be vicious.

**Kholidiringi.**  
Cooldrink.<sup>4</sup>  
Mello Yello.

**Khonani yanga.**  
My friend.  
**Khonani yanga.**  
My friend.  
**Vha tshi nwa halwa,**  
When you drink beer,  
**vha songo levha.**  
do not be vicious.

1 This song refers to alcohol abuse in general.

2 A common name referring to wives who are assaulted by their drunk husbands.

3 I.e. she was beaten with the walking stick.

4 The suggestion is that people should drink cooldrink instead of alcohol.

150

**Vhasidzana no nkolela** (The girls mocked me)

**Azwinndini ngoho no nkolela.**  
Azwinndini mocked me indeed.  
**Vhasidzana ngoho no nkolela.**  
The girls mocked me indeed.  
**Na Rudzani ngoho no nkolela.**  
And Rudzani mocked me indeed.  
**Na Stella ngoho no nkolela.**  
And Stella mocked me indeed.  
**R.S.A. no nkolela.**  
R.S.A. mocked me.  
**R.S.A. no nkolela.**  
**Vha vha laye ngauri vho nkolela.**  
Chastise them for mocking me.  
**Vhana vhavho vho nkolela.**  
Your children mocked me.  
**Thi ni funi ngauri no nkolela.**  
I do not love you because you mocked me.

151

Who themba mini? (In whom do you trust?)

Who themba mini? Mme anga vha sa rabeli.

In whom do you trust? My mother does not pray.

No themba mini? Khaladzi ni sa rabeli.

In whom do you trust? My sister does not pray.

No themba mini? Murathu wanga ni sa rabeli.

In whom do you trust? My younger brother does not pray.

152

Paradise

Nda ri, mulovha ndi khou bva Paradise.

I said, yesterday I was at the Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

Zwino vhonani, ndo thavhiwa nga lufhanga, wee.

Now look, I was stabbed with a knife.

Nga musadzi ngoho ndo mala.

Because of the woman I am married to.

Ngavhe ndi pfe zwa mmawe.

I should have listened to my mother.

Ndi musi ndi songo wela khomboni.

Then I would not have been in trouble.

Nda ri, mulovha ndi khou bva Paradise.

I said, yesterday I was at the Paradise.

Zwino vhonani, ndo thavhiwa nga lufhanga, wee.

Now look, I was stabbed with a knife.

"Ho vha hu liñwe duvha helo

"That day

ndo ri ndi tshe ndo dzula

when I was sitting

ndi na Lily musadzi wanga,

with my wife Lily,

a ri: Daddy."

she said: Daddy."

"Nda ri: Hallo!"

I said: Hallo!"

"A ri a si khwine ri tshi ya Paradise ilo duvha,

"She suggested it would be better to go to the Paradise on

ngauri a thi hu divhi."

that day, because she did not know the place."

"Nne sa mufunwa wanga nda ri: Sharp!"

Because she is my beloved I said: Sharp!"

"Ra swika henengei Paradise."

"We arrived there at the Paradise."

"Ha khuziwa biya mbili dza Castle."

"We bought two Castles."

"Ngauri ndi nwa yone."

"Because I drink that one."

"Ene a rengeliwa cold drink ya Sprite."

"I bought her a Sprite."

"Hu si kale-kale ha takuwa liñwe liduna helo

"After a while a certain man stood up

la thoma u dzhaiva na musadzi wanga."

and started to dance with my wife."

"Nda ri: He vhone, vhokhotsimuhulu! Naa vha khou ita  
zwifhio naa?"

"I said: Hey you, sir! What are you doing?"

"Vha ri: Murathu,

"He said: Young brother,

u khou penga?"

are you mad?"

"Nda ri: Ndi khou penga vha tshi khou dzhaivha na musadzi

I said: How can you ask me if I am mad when it is you who are  
wanga?"

dancing with my wife?"

"Le ri: Arali e mafeisi, u ambe murathu."

"He said: If it is about fighting young brother, just say  
so."

"Nne nda ri: Hoyee."

"I said: Right."

"Nga mafeisi iwe u nga si vhone."

"You cannot match me in fighting."

"Le ri nga lufhanga keru!"

"He stabbed me with a knife!"

"Le ri nga lufhanga keru!"

"He stabbed me with a knife!"

"Luraru lwothe."

"Three times."

"Three times."

"Nda shavha nda sia musadzi."

"I ran away and left my wife behind."

Nda ri, mulovha ndi khou bva Paradise.

I said, yesterday I was at the Paradise.

Zwino vhone, ndo thavhiwa nga lufhanga, wee.

Now look, I was stabbed with a knife, alas.

Nga musadzi ngoho ndo mala.

Because of the woman I am married to.

"Mmawe vha ri: Ndo u vhudza nwananga."

"My mother said: I told you my child."

"Nda ri: A hu yiwi hafhala fhethu."

"I said: Do not go there."

"Ndi u sa pfa!"

"You did not listen!"

"Ndi yone mini heyi nwananga? Wo thavhiwa nga lufhanga."

"What is this, my child? You have been stabbed with a knife."

"Malofha e vhugabegabe."

"The blood was spurting."

"Ro di amba ra ri arali u na musadzi u songo ya nae Paradise.  
"We told you that you must not go to the Paradise with a woman. "

"Ngauri Paradise vha a dzhiela."

"Because at the Paradise they rob you."

"Nga inwe ndila, hu pfi vha a swipha."<sup>2</sup>

"In other words, they take away your woman."

**Nda ri, mulovha ndi khou bva Paradise.**

I say, yesterday I was at the Paradise.

1 A well-known beer hall in Thohoyandou, initially owned by Baldwin Mudau, the Venda Independence People's Party leader. This is one of Piti's most popular songs. Piti ascribes its popularity to the fact that it deals with common experience ("people like to hear the truth"). He also says one of the functions of the song is to tell people to behave properly and to follow the ways of their ancestors.

2 **Swipha**: to sweep; a term used by young men when referring to taking someone's girl friend.

153

### Tshikunda

Hu vha hu liñwe duvha.

On a certain day.

Mme a ñwana ngoho!<sup>1</sup>

Oh dear!

Tshikunda, nne ndi nga si tsha ya.

I will not go to Tshikunda.

Ndo fhurwa nga Mushoni, wee.

Alas, I was deceived by Mushoni.

Tshikunda, nne ndi nga si tsha ya.

I will not go to Tshikunda.

Nga ndavha ya Mushoni, wee.

Alas, because of Mushoni.

Na nne-vho ndo fhurwa nga khirimu.

And I was just attracted by cream.<sup>2</sup>

Ndo vhona creme.

I saw cream.

Ndi musu ndi songo, yaa!

I would not have approached her!

Zwino mbilu yanga i a vhavha.

Now my heart is broken.

Nga ndavha ya Mushoni, wee!

Alas, because of Mushoni.

1 Lit. the child's mother!

2 I.e. by a pretty girl (cream: beauty cream used by girls).



**Nwananga o shavha tshikolo** (My child ran away from school)

**Nwananga o shavha tshikolo, vhomwawe!**  
 Oh mother! My child ran away from school.  
**Mushumo o toda ha i wani ngoho.**  
 She looked for a job without success.

**Sapekoe na yone ngoho.**  
 She went to Sapekoe.

**Nwananga! Nwananga! Nwananga!**  
 My child! My child! My child!

**Khremina o shavha tshikolo, vhomwawe!**  
 Oh mother! Khremina ran away from school.  
**Mushumo o toda ha i wani ngoho.**  
 She looked for a job without success.

"**Nne, nne, nne!**"  
 "I, I, I!"  
 "**Zwino, ndi yo guma ngafhi?**"  
 "Now, where will I end up?"  
 "**Ndo shavha tshikolo.**"  
 "I ran away from school."  
 "**Ndi ri, ndi yo toda mushumo.**"  
 "I say, I looked for work."  
 "**A thi u wani.**"  
 "Without success."  
 "**Ndi ri, ndi ye ngei Sapekoe.**"  
 "I say, I went over there to Sapekoe."<sup>1</sup>  
 "**Vha Sapekoe vha ri vha toda vha re na basa.**"  
 "The Sapekoe people said they wanted a person with an ID book."<sup>2</sup>  
 "**Zwino ri do la mini?**"  
 "Now what are we going to eat?"  
 "**Ri do fuka mini?**"  
 "What shall we wear?"  
 "**Lunungwi Diitele Band.**"  
 "Lunungwi One-man Band."<sup>3</sup>

**Sapekoe na yone ngoho.**  
 She went to Sapekoe.

**Nwananga! Nwananga! Nwananga!**  
 My child! My child! My child!

1 The Sapekoe tea estate at Gondeni.

2 I.e. a person over seventeen years of age.

3 Lit. the Do-it-yourself Band.

**Nwana o shavha baba** (The child ran away from her father)

(Solo)

**Hoyu ñwana**

This child

(chorus)

**u ya shavha baba.**is running away from her father.<sup>1</sup>

(solo)

**Kilivhoni**

Kilivhoni

(chorus)

**u ya shavha baba.**

is running away from her father.

(solo)

**Nne na zwino**

Now, I am

(chorus)

**ngoho ro mangala ngoho.**

truly surprised.

(solo)

**Kilivhoni**

Kilivhoni

(chorus)

**a tshi shavha baba.**

is running away from her father.

(solo)

**Hoyu ñwana u a shavha daddy, wee!**

Alas, this child is running away from daddy!

**"U a shavha daddy, u a shavha daddy, u a shavha daddy, iwe."****"Is running away from daddy, is running away from daddy, you."****"A vha shavhiwi daddy."****"Do not run away from daddy."****"Aikona!"****"No!"**

(solo)

**Hoyu ñwana**

This child

(chorus)

**u ya shavha baba.**

is running away from her father.

1 The girl is running away from home because her father, who is a migrant labourer, is not there to take care of her and exercise discipline.

156

You are the girl in fish

You are the girl in fish.<sup>1</sup>  
Going in the water.  
The people during me.  
Oh shining star.  
You never giving up.  
Going in the water.

You are the girl in fish.  
Going in the water.  
You never giving up.  
Going in the water.  
Oh shining star.  
You are my shining star.  
Oh shining star.  
Oh number one.

1 Each line is repeated by the chorus.

157

If you don't love me Mary

(Solo)  
If you don't love me, go back Mary.  
Ooooh, goodbye Mary.  
Uhoo, ooaa.

If you don't love me, go back Mary.  
Ooooh, goodbye Mary.  
So you can see, I'm blind Mary.  
So you can see, I'm blind Mary.  
Uhoo, ooaa.

"Oh Mary!"  
(chorus)  
"Hallo!"  
(solo)  
"How much love?"  
(chorus)  
"Five hundred thousand."

(solo)  
Oooh, goodbye Mary.  
Oooh, goodbye Mary.  
Uhoo.  
Ooaa.

"Oh Mary!"  
"How much love?"  
"Aaaeeeh?"  
"Five hundred thousand!"  
"Go back!"  
"Go back!"

"Pack and go."

If you don't love me, go back Mary.

If you don't love me, go back Mary.

Ooooh, goodbye Mary.

Uhoo.

Oohaa.

158

Me and my shadow

Me and my shadow, aah.

Me and my shadow, aah.

And dance is dance.

And klim is klim.

Me and my shadow, aah.

Me and my shadow, aah.

And dance is dance.

And klim is klim.

Anytime, baby.

Anytime, baby.

I see magic.

I see magic.

In my eyes.

In my eyes.

Don't be cry, baby.

Don't be cry, baby.

She is come back.

She is come back.

#### 4.4 Albert Mundalamo

Albert Mundalamo (c. 1938-1990) has been hailed as a "superstar" and an "undisputed artist",<sup>1</sup> partly on the basis of his famous song "Mrs Mutshekwa" (159), in which he captures the traumatic effect of disruptive migrant labour. The quintessential tshilombe, he was admired for his music, yet laughed at and scorned for his life-style. I met Albert on two occasions only, first during 1987 when I recorded seven of his songs (cf. 159-165), and during July 1990, two months before his death. Albert was ill during his last years (cf. 163: 9: "I am now a person who is always ill"; 160: 1: "I am dying"), and he had only vague, often contradicting recollections of his past. The biographical detail I provide here is thus limited and fragmentary, and all dates are approximate.

Albert Mushoni Tshishonge Mundalamo was born on 31 August 1938 at the village of Tshikundamalema. His father was Amos Thumbala Tshikundamalema (d. 1957) who was employed as a security guard in Johannesburg. His mother, Nyatshisevhe, came from Mavunde in the Makuya district. Albert attended Tshikundamalema Primary School until standard five. He left school because of poverty. From 1957-1959 Albert worked on the farm of Jan Venter near Nwanedi in the Limpopo valley. This is where he learned to play the guitar, mainly from Zimbabweans who worked with him.<sup>2</sup> Albert's sojourn on the farm does not seem to have been a happy one. Inspired by his experiences came "Mopani" (165), a song with which he became synonymous, and from which his nickname, Mapani, emanated. Albert's task on the farm was to water vegetables. His wage was two pounds per month. He complained to me that he had to work non-stop: "No Christmas, no New Year". This is manifested in the song by the repetition of the word mberego (work,

from Afr. werk). Mberego has all the negative connotations of wage labour, social change and human alienation (cf. Comaroff 1987, and ch. 3.2.1). Albert's poverty is illustrated powerfully by the metaphor of a pair of old men's overalls (cf. 15: "The old men's overalls have returned"). Too ashamed to admit that he is returning from his place of labour with nothing for himself or his family, he stands back and looks at himself from a distance. What he sees is a pathetic, poverty-stricken shoeless man returning home on foot.

From 1961-1964 Albert worked as a shop assistant at Tshikundamalema Trading Store at R8 a month. After this he became a migrant worker on the Reef. From 1965-1969 he was an employee of S.A. Piping in Witbank at R18 a month. He worked for Penguin Pools in 1971, and for Springbok Security in 1973 at R58 per month. From 1974-1976 Albert earned R78 per month as a loader of goods on the railway. He remained at home for a period, and returned to Johannesburg where he worked for nine months at the E.R.P.M. mine in Boksburg. His duty was to assist in supplying air to mine workers. He returned home, and was unemployed for several years. In 1982 he became employed locally at the Sibasa Bakery. Working a three-day week for a year, he earned R26 per month. Albert did not work again after this.

Like Solomon Mathase, Albert's working life was regulated by influx control regulations. It was clear from my conversations with him that his periodical forced returns to Venda to renew his contract, adversely affected his will for pursuing his working life. However, when I asked him why he did not persist with some of his better-paid jobs, he replied "sommer" ("because"), and "because of laziness". His reply was representative of his bohemian, lackadaisical, even stub-

born character which was saturated with melancholy and pessimism. I came to know Albert as a sad man who rarely smiled. And sadness and despondency permeates his singing (cf. 160 & 163). Albert's melancholy was partly a factor of his addiction to alcohol, a problem which extended to other family members (cf. 163: 19-20). Alcohol abuse was the main reason why Albert was viewed with disapproval by many people. The direct cause of Albert's death was pneumonia, but this was the indirect result of a frail, weak body, whose immune system had been broken down by alcohol and poverty. Albert was a regular patient at the nearby Donald Fraser hospital. However, he ignored warnings by hospital staff about his drinking. Towards the end of his life his drinking had led to slight mental disarray. It affected his verbal coherence, and he struggled to understand questions, and to express himself.

For Albert, approaching death was more than a matter of physical atrophy. It was also a process of mental retrogression. Albert told me that he was the victim of "slow poison". When I asked what this meant, he derogatively said it was "kaffir poison". This "poison" was spiritual rather than physical, and it referred to spite and jealousy. As a well-known musician living in a culture of poverty, Albert became a symbol of assumed wealth in spite of his obvious poverty. "Why are they killing me?" (160), was a response to this. The song particularly refers to his father's elder sister who lives at Mutale. She was under the impression that he was earning well with his music making. Since Albert's father was deceased, she told him she was now his father, and that he should support her. The song is almost a kind of death wish in which the singer parcels out his meagre earthly possessions to his relatives (ll 6-8 & 21). His father's sister will rejoice over his death (ll 1 & 20), since she

thinks she will inherit his assumed wealth. Reality, however, is that he is poverty-stricken (14). But, like Solomon Mathase, his poverty is not only measured in financial terms. He is also poor because he is surrounded by poverty, a condition under which interpersonal family and community conflict is acute. The lack of human support and warmth which often arises from this condition is expressed in terms of bachelorhood, being childless, and having nobody to care for him (160: 18-19 & 25: 163:1, 5-8 & 10).

"Slow poison" was thus a metaphor qualifying the end of his life. He had virtually no income, and his occasional remuneration for musical performance was usually spent on alcohol. His pensioned mother, who lived with him and his family, appeared to prevent the family from starving. The Mundalamo homestead was in a ruinous state. There was only one hut. A second one had fallen in, and although building had started on a new hut, no work was in progress when I visited the homestead before Albert's death. His children seemed doomed to be locked into a cycle of poverty. Lack of parental guidance and support had hindered their progress at school. Albert's son Makana was already nineteen years old, but still in standard five. His daughter Ntuwiseni (14) was in standard four, and his son Humbulani (9) in substandard B.

Like Solomon Mathase, Albert's response to his life circumstances was also expressed in eschatological terms, only much stronger. His response is perhaps best summarized by an expression he borrowed from singer Jim Reeves: "This world is not my home. My home is in heaven". A week before his death, Albert was visited by Mmbangiseni Mphaga with whom he played a few songs. Albert sang the song line Tuwani mbilu yanga - u ye ngeyi litadulu: "Go my heart - go to heaven".



Like Mashudu Mulaudzi, Albert's unique musical style was also a manifestation of his individualism and personal circumstances. Albert performed on a battered old Suzuki guitar. The instrument had been badly damaged. Not only had the neck been broken, but the belly was ripped along the seam. The latter had been badly repaired with glue. The neck was affixed with a nail which had been driven through the fingerboard at the eleventh fret. The repaired neck was warped, resulting in the strings being very high above the upper frets. Albert was restricted to four frets between a capo on the fifth fret and the nail. Albert used delicate, almost intimate arpeggio and single line patterns on these four frets. His arpeggio patterns were spread out over six strings which were basically tuned like those of Mmbangiseni Mphaga: E4-B3-G3-D3-A2-G2 (transposed a fourth down). Of these strings, Albert used the first five most often. The sixth string (G2), was only used as an open string.

In spite of the limitations of his guitar, Albert's sound production was outstanding. He used only two fingers for plucking: the thumb on the three lowest-sounding strings, and the index finger on the remaining three strings. His melodies were clear and ringing. This was not due so much to the steel strings he used, as to the fact that he used the short nail of his index finger for plucking. This contrasted effectively with the mellow, sustained bass tones produced by the fleshy tip of his thumb. Albert was also one of the very few guitarists who made use of accentuation as well as a staccato attack.

Albert also expressed the widely held view that single line and arpeggio picking allows a guitarist a better opportunity to complement and support the vocal line. I never heard

Albert strumming. He seemed to attach a negative connotation to strumming, and once referred to the Zimbabwean derived strumming patterns of Madamalala guitarist Vhutshilo Netsianda, as "bum-jive". Unlike the music of most other local guitarists, Albert's music did not appear to be geared towards dancing. His delicate rubato playing with its light accents and staccato attack was simply too personal and melancholic.

While Albert's guitar technique was idiosyncratic, his songs reflected characteristics found in the songs of other guitarists. He also subordinated Western harmonic progressions to the traditional tonality shift, and his songs consequently also feature harmonic ambiguity. The Western roots of this ambiguity were strengthened by the use of the supertonic, as well as inverted and seventh chords. First inversions are relatively rare, being restricted to the supertonic. Only the tonic and dominant occur in second inversion. A seventh is often added to all the chords. This kind of chord structure is illustrated in fig. 14 (song 161; audio recording 29). This is a rare example of a song in which the vocal part follows the basic I-IV-V progression of the guitar part. The guitar bass line manifests a IV-I-V-I progression. Viewing the harmonic progression in smaller segments, one may also identify ii6 (pulses 7-8) and V7 (pulses 19-24). The vocal part supports the harmonic progression of the guitar part. It starts on IV, proceeds to I and V, and ends on I.

Figs 15-17 employ similar chord progressions. However, their vocal parts are structured differently from that of fig. 14, and what emerges structurally is the traditional tonality shift. The main tonality shift of figs 15 and 16 (cf. audio recordings 30 & 31) occurs between phala G and thakhula A,

with chord "I" (C) functioning as the secondary tonality. This is evident in the two vocal phrases which are tonally balanced in the traditional idiom. The first centers around thakhula, and the second around phala.

guitar

Ndi a- mba Vho- Tshi- ku- nda- ma- le- ma, Vho- Ma- ne-

nzhe, Vho- Mu- te- le.

32

Fig. 14 (song 161): Pitch = original; 2 pulses = 86

guitar

Ee- wee! Ee- wee- le- le!

18

Fig. 15 (song 160): Pitch = original; 2 pulses = 140

A similar tonality shift is evident in fig. 17 (cf. audio recording 32). Its vocal line features the typical descending contour of Venda traditional melodies. It starts on thakhula E and descends to phala D. In addition, the vocal phrases of figs 15-17 generally do not start and end on a bass tone, thus weakening any suggestion of a strong I-IV-V harmonic progression. And as in fig. 5, vocal movement does not occur from chord V to I.

Se- con- da- ry, wee! Ee- ya, Mu- ku- la. 16

Ee, Mu- ku- la, wee! Kha |a Pha- te- le.

guitar

variations

Fig. 16 (song 162): Pitch = original; 2 pulses = 152

(ii<sub>6</sub>) (I) (V) (I)

guitar

Tsha ma- de- kwe ndo dzu- lu ndo li- nde- la.

16

Fig. 17 (song 163): Pitch = original; 2 pulses = 138

The structure of Albert's songs generally articulate harmonic and melodic variation. Like most other guitarists Albert used a relatively stable guitar accompaniment when singing, and regularly introduced variations when not singing.

Fig. 17 shows a characteristic found in traditional bow music, namely a tendency to vary part of a cycle, while the remainder of the cycle remains relatively or totally unchanged (cf. Kruger 1986: 68 ff.). In fig. 17 the material on pulses two to six remains relatively unchanged. However, the material on pulses thirteen to one and seven to nine reflects harmonic and melodic variation.

#### Notes

1 The Mirror newspaper, 28 September 1990.

2 Andrew Tracey remarks that Albert's guitar style is reminiscent of that of George Sibanda and other Zimbabwean guitarists from the Bulawayo area (c. 1950s).

Vho-Mutshekwa<sup>1</sup> (Mrs Mutshekwa)

Vho-Mutshekwa, wee, ndi a vhulawa.  
Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa, they are killing me.  
Vho-Mutshekwa, wee. Vulani, wee. Lo tsha.  
Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa. Alas, open. Day light.  
Munna wavho u vherega Buretse.  
Her husband works in Brits.  
Madekwe tho ngo da ha vhone.  
Last night I did not come to you.  
Madekwe tho ngo lala ha vhone.  
Last night I did not sleep with you.  
Vho-Mutshekwa, wee, ndi a vhulawa.  
Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa, they are killing me.

"Vho-Mutshekwa, ro amba ra pfana."  
"We made an agreement, Mrs Mutshekwa."

"Vha ri a thi na munna:  
"She said she had no husband:

"Munna wanga ndi kale vho ri sia."  
My husband died long ago."

10 "Nne nda ri zwavhudi."  
"I replied that it was fine."

"Nda bvisa bonndo thanu dzau tou thoma."  
"I left five pounds for the first visit."

"Vhusiku nga madautsha ndo lala henengei,  
"Early in the morning when I was asleep at her place,

nne ndi pfa goloi: zhmm!"  
I heard a car: zhmm!"

"Ndi vhona nga mavhone mutani o no tshena."  
"I saw its bright lights in the courtyard."

"Nde khulukhusu!"  
"I woke up suddenly!"

Lumela muhali!  
Hallo sir!

Lumela muhali!  
Hallo sir!

Vho-Mutshekwa, wee, ndi a vhulawa, wee.  
Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa, they are killing me.

Mbado yavho yo huma tshitikoni.  
His axe was behind my head.

20 **Thamahoga yo huma muvhomboni.**  
The battle-axe was against my cheek.

**Lufhanga lwo huma mukoloni.**  
The knife was against my throat.

**Vho-Mutshekwa, wee, ndi a vhulawa.**  
Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa, they are killing me.

**"Buretse nne a thi tsha ya. Ndo vhuya mahola."**  
"I do not want to work at Brits anymore. I returned last year."

**Buretse, wee.**  
Alas, Brits.

25 **Buretse. Vho-Mutshekwa, wee, ndi a vhulawa.**  
Brits. Alas, Mrs Mutshekwa, they are killing me.

1 Of all Albert's songs, this one is considered by many to be his most famous. Albert apparently first recorded it in 1974. It was inspired by a news report of an incident which occurred at Sibasa. Albert remarked that Mrs Mutshekwa's migrant husband (whose name he could not remember) was "called" home by his ancestral spirits. The reason for this was that he was neglecting his wife by not sending her money to support herself. It is because of this that she turned to prostitution. The fight did occur, and featured the use of a battle-axe. However, there was no serious injury.

160

Kha vha ri ndi felani? (Why are they killing me?)

**Nne ndi a fa. Vha sala vha tshi takala.**  
I am dying. Those who remain must rejoice.  
**Nne ndi do fa. Ni sale ni tshi funana, wee.**  
Alas, I am dying. You who remain must love each other.  
**Ndi do fa, ha takala. Na sala ni tshi vhoneana, wee.**  
I am dying, be happy. You who remain will still see each other.

**Nne, mme anga vho lovha vha songo hola.**  
I, my mother died before receiving any pension.<sup>1</sup>  
**Nyatshisevhe o lovha a songo hola.**  
Nyatshisevhe died before receiving any pension.  
**Mundende vha sale vha tshi fhana, wee.**  
Those who remain must give each other pension.<sup>2</sup>  
**Kholomo dzanga vha sale vha tshi rengisa.**  
Those who remain must sell my cattle.  
**Mbudzi dzanga vha sale vha tshi kovhana.**  
Those who remain must divide my goats.  
**Yowehehe.**

10 **Yewee.**

**Ha-Madala ndo vhuya ndi songo dzhena.**  
I returned from the circumcision school without participating.<sup>3</sup>

**Ha-Madala** ndo vhuya ndi songo fumba.  
 I returned from the circumcision school without being  
 circumcised.  
**Dombani** ha Nyamungozwa ndi ri li fhanu.  
 The domba of Nyamungozwa<sup>4</sup> takes place here.  
**Musevhethoni** ndo vha ndi tshi diphina.  
 I used to enjoy myself at the girls' circumcision school.<sup>5</sup>  
**Nne** nda vhina na vhathu vha do takala, wee.  
 People will rejoice when I sing and dance.  
**Lo kovhela mukhetengwa wo khathuwa**.  
 It is evening, broken wire waistband.<sup>6</sup>  
**Lo kovhela mukhetengwa ndi musekene**.  
 It is evening, thin waist.  
**Hee, ndi do fa** ndi songo mala zwo kunda.  
 I will die unmarried.  
**Ndi do fa** ndi songo vhidzwa malume.  
 I will die without being called uncle.  
 20 **Vhomakhadzi** vha sale vha tshi pembela.  
 The aunt will remain and dance excitedly.  
**Vhomakhadzi** vha sale vha tshi la ifa.  
 The aunt must remain and inherit everything.  
**Mithetshelo**<sup>7</sup> ni sale ni tshi i nwedzana.  
 You must give beer to each other.  
**Vhuhosi** ni sale ni tshi vhumba.  
 You must install other chiefs.<sup>8</sup>  
**Vhukoma** ni sale ni tshi nekana, wee.  
 The headmanship must be divided.  
**A nga vha nne** ndi do lovha ndi songo beba.  
 I shall die without any children.  
**Nne, nne**.  
 I, I.  
**Ewelewewe** yo.  
**Ewelele** yo.  
**Nne mahosi** ndi funa vha tshi vhumbiwa.  
 I enjoy the installation of chiefs.  
 30 **Tshikundamalema** ndi funa a tshi vhumbiwa, wee.  
 I would like Tshikundamalema to be installed.  
**Hai, a thi dzheni vuhosi** ndi songo bebelwa.  
 No, I do not want to be chief without a proper lineage.  
**Hai, a thi dzheni vuhosi** ndi songo dihwa.  
 No, I do not want to be made chief without being known.  
**A thi dzheni vuhosi** ndi songo ambwa.  
 I do not want to be made chief without being introduced.  
**A thi dzheni vuhosi** ndi songo lafhiwa.  
 I do not want to be made chief without the consultation of  
 diviners.  
**Ndi do fa. Ni sale ni tshi takala**.  
 I will die. You must remain and rejoice.  
**Vhananga** vha sale vha tshi la navho.  
 You must enjoy the inheritance with my children who remain.  
**Vho-Munzhedzi** vha sale vha tshi vha dzhia.  
 Mrs Munzhedzi<sup>9</sup> must remain and look after them.  
**Vevisa** a sale a tshi vha fida, wee.  
 Vevisa<sup>10</sup> must remain and feed them.  
**Makana, wee, nne** ndi fa nae.  
 Alas, I will die with Makana.<sup>11</sup>



40 Ntuwiseni ni sale ni tshi pambisa.

Ntuwiseni must remain and be given to somebody.

Humbulani a sale a tshi vherega, wee.

Humbulani must remain and work.

Nkhumeleni, wee, ni di tundele.

Nkhumeleni must feed himself.

Nne ...

I ...

1 Albert's mother is still alive. This is simply a metaphor describing his poverty.

2 A reference to sharing the inheritance.

3 Men from ruling families should not be circumcised.

4 The **domba** instructor.

5 Albert was an official of this school.

6 This line, and the three following it, come from a well-known beer song. The song refers to a love affair between a young man and a middle-aged woman. The song argues that such an affair "spoils" a young man, and that he will end up being unmarried.

7 Beer in its early non-alcoholic stage. From -thetshela (to taste).

8 This line, and the others referring to chieftainship, relate to Albert's status as a brother of chief Tshikundamalema. He felt he had a chance of becoming chief, and that this would have saved him from poverty.

9 His wife.

10 An employee of Radio Thohoyandou with whom Albert liaised in terms of having his music recorded.

11 Albert refers to his children in the last part of the song.

161

Mahosi a Venda (Venda chiefs)

"Vhavenda vha hashu."

"My fellow citizens."

"Ndi khou khoda mahosi a Venda."

"I am praising Venda chiefs."

"Vho dzhena vuhosi ngei Klein Tshipise nga 1966."

"He was installed at Klein Tshipise in 1966."<sup>1</sup>

"Ndi Vho-Tshikundamalema na Vho-Manenzhe na Vho-Mutele."

"It is Messrs Tshikundamalema and Manenzhe and Mutele."<sup>2</sup>

"Ndaa!"

"Greetings!"

**Ndi amba Vho-Tshikundamalema, Vho-Manenzhe, Vho-Mutele.**  
I am referring to Mr Tshikundamalema, Mr Manenzhe and Mr Mutele.

**Hee, ndi amba Vho-Tshikundamalema. Mahosi maswa**  
I am referring to Mr Tshikundamalema. New chiefs a Tshivhasa.

of Tshivhase.<sup>3</sup>

**Yee, vhañwe no newa vhunduna.**

Others are made headmen.

10 **Yee, vhañwe no newa vuhosi.**

Others are made chiefs.

**Yee, vhañwe no newa dzilori.**

Others are given lorries.<sup>4</sup>

**Rine ro newa mvelaphanda dza u vhala mashango**

We see progress by counting the districts

**a Afrika Tshipembe**

of South Africa

**"kha la Hatshivasa."**

"at Sibasa."<sup>5</sup>

**Ndi amba Vho-Thohoyandou.**

I am referring to Mr Thohoyandou.

**Vho-Mphephu-Ramabulana.**

Mr Mphephu-Ramabulana.

**Ndi amba vho-Thohoyandou.**

I am referring to Mr Thohoyandou,

**Vhoramabulana, vhane vha mavu.**

The Ramabulanas, those ruling the country.<sup>6</sup>

**Vho dovha hafhu vha bvisa mafhungo o ambwaho nga mahosi a Venda.**

He again advised Venda chiefs.<sup>7</sup>

20 **Ndi amba vhomudzulatsini: Vho-Mangoma, Vho-Mulaudzi.**

I am referring to those near the chief: Mr Mangoma and Mr Mulaudzi.<sup>8</sup>

**Vho dovha hafhu vha bvisa mafhungo o ambwaho nga**

He again advised the

**mahosi a Thohoyandou.**

Thohoyandou chiefs.

**Ndi amba mahosi maswa: Vho-Tshikundamalema,**

I am referring to the new chiefs: Messrs Tshikundamalema, Manenzhe, Mutele.

Manenzhe, Mutele.

**Yee, vhañwe ndi Vho-Khakhu.**

Others are Mr Khakhu.

**Yee, vhañwe ndi Vho-Rambuda.**

Others are Mr Rambuda.

**Vhañwe ndi Nho-Nethengwe.**

Others are Mr Nethengwe.

**Yee, vhañwe ndi Vho-Manenzhe.**

Others are Mr Manenzhe.

**Vhañwe ndi Vho-Tshikundamalema.**

Others are Mr Tshikundamalema.

30 **Vhañwe ndi Vho-Mutele.**

Others are Mr Mutele.

Vhañwe ndi Vho-Makuya.  
Others are Mr Makuya.

Ndi humbela mahosi a Venda  
I am asking the Venda chiefs  
ndi ni thuse nga mvelaphanda.  
to help you<sup>9</sup> with progress.

Ndo nwalele marifhi Pitori  
I have written letters to Pretoria  
35 ndi thusiwe nga mvelaphanda.  
to help you with progress.<sup>10</sup>

1 A reference to Albert's brother, Chief Pete Ratshivhumo Tshikundamalema.

2 Chief Mutele is Chief Tshikundamalema's cross-cousin. Chief Manenzhe is mentioned because he was installed on the same day.

3 Although each Venda chief has jurisdiction over a certain district, Albert claimed that the chiefs mentioned by him in this song are subservient ("handlangers") to chief Tshivhase.

4 A reference to pick-ups, a perk given to chiefs so that they could "travel to parliament".

5 Here Albert is implicitly claiming that he should have been chief, and not his brother. Instead he is now merely "watching" others in chiefly positions. By "progress" he is referring to chiefly rule, particularly in terms of the sanctioning of chiefly power under the "homeland" system.

6 Lit. owners of the soil.

7 Lit. he has again reported the news spoken by the Venda chiefs. This is a reference to the last Venda commissioner, Daan de Wet Nel, advising Venda chiefs to rule justly.

8 Councillors of chief Mphephu.

9 I.e. the Venda people.

10 Writing letters is a metaphor for singing, and Albert refers here to his praising of Venda chiefs. However, he implicitly also seems to refer to negotiations between the South African government and Venda leaders regarding political and economic issues.

162

Tshinoni (The lightning bird)

"Hoyu ndi Avhashoni."  
"This is Avhashoni."

"Albert Mundalamo Tshikundamalema."  
"Albert Mundalamo Tshikundamalema."

"A tshi ri rine madekwe  
"We could not sleep

a ro ngo lala."  
last night."

"A thetshelese ene:"  
"Listen:"

Rine madekwe  
We could not sleep  
a ro ngo lala.  
last night.  
Rine madekwe  
We could not sleep  
a ro ngo lala.  
last night.

- 10 Tshinoni tsho da u ri dalela.  
We were visited by the lightning bird.<sup>1</sup>  
Tshinoni tsho wa, tsho wa secondary, wee,  
The lightning bird fell  
secondary, wee,  
at Mukula  
ya Mukula,  
secondary school  
Yee, Mukula, wee,  
Mukula  
kha la Phatele.  
of Phatele.  
Vhamusanda, wee,  
Honourable headman,  
Vho-Robethe.  
Mr Robert.<sup>2</sup>  
Vhavenda, wee,  
The honourable,  
Vho-Fanuele.  
Mr Fanuele.

- 20 Vhavenda, wee,  
The honourable,  
Vho-Edward.  
Mr Edward.  
Vhavenda, wee,  
The honourable,  
Vho-Alfred.  
Mr Alfred.  
Vhavenda, wee,  
The honourable,  
Londolani.  
Londolani.<sup>3</sup>

Tshinoni tsho da u ri dalela.  
We were visited by the lightning bird.

Vho-Nyamananga, wee, kha vha de na thevhele, wee.  
Mr Nyamananga, come with the animal-hide pouch.<sup>4</sup>  
Vho-Nyamananga, wee, kha vha de ri eleliwe, wee.  
Mr Nyamananga, come and set the fractured bone.

Yee, Vho-Magatshana, wee, Vho-Madzhigiri,  
Mr Magatshana, Mr Madzhigiri,  
30 Yee, Vho-Madzhigiri, wee, yee, vha ngei Thengwe.  
Mr Madzhigiri, of Thengwe.  
Vho-Madzhigiri, kha vha de ri eleliwe, wee.  
Mr Madzhigiri, come and set the fractured bone.<sup>5</sup>  
Vho-Madzhigiri ndi ñanga ya madomba.  
Mr Madzhigiri is the diviner of domba.<sup>6</sup>

Ndi tshinoni de tshi si na na mabesu, wee?  
What kind of bird has no soft feathers?  
Ndi tshinoni de tshi si na na muthenga?  
What kind of bird has no feathers?  
Thamuwani tshinoni, fhufhani, wee.  
A hopping, flying bird.

"Purrr tshakata."<sup>7</sup>  
"Au! Aa! Aa! Ou! Aa! Aa!"  
"Yee, thamuwani."  
"Hopping."  
"Ngafhi, wee, tshinoni, thamuwani?"  
"Where is the hopping bird?"  
40 "Thamuwani."  
"Hopping."  
"Fhufhani, wee."  
"Flying."

"Au! Ou! Oo! Ou! Uh!"

1 This song is based on an incident during October 1979 when lightning struck a window at Mukula Secondary School.

2 Robert Takalani, headman of Mukula.

3 These are all names of the headman's councillors.

4 Nyamananga, Magatshana and Madzhigiri are diviners who were requested to determine the cause of the lightning. However, they apparently never came.

5 Determining the cause of the lightning.

6 A diviner whose ritual duty it is to ensure that the initiation will be conducted successfully.

7 An ideophone describing the hopping of the bird.

163

Tsha madekwe (Last night)

"Nne ndi muthu wa khombe."  
"I am a bachelor."

"Madekwe ndo vha ndo dzula hafhalani hayani."  
"Last night I was sitting there at home."<sup>1</sup>

"Ndo dzulela Vho-Tshavhungwe."

"I was waiting for Mrs Tshavhungwe."

"Tshavhungwe ha vhuyi."

"Tshavhungwe did not return."

"Nne ndi ite mini? A thi na mubikeli."

"What must I do? I do not have somebody to cook for me."

"A thi na a no nyadzela thovho."

"I do not have somebody to spread the mat for me."

"A thi na a no mbikela zwiliwa."

"I do not have somebody to cook food for me."

"A thi na a no nnekedza madi."

"I do not have somebody to bring me water."

"Ndo vhuya zwino ndi muhota."

"I am now a person who is always ill."

10 "Vhukombe hanga vhu khou ita hani?"

"What is happening about my unmarried state?"

Tsha madekwe ndo dzula ndo lindela.

Last night I sat and waited.

Tsha madekwe ndo dzula ndo lindela, Tshavhungwe.

Last night I sat and waited, Tshavhungwe.

Shango heli, shango heli la Vhavenda.

This country, this country of the Venda people.

Nne ndi takala ndo tsa Hatshivhasa.

I am happy when I am at Sibasa.

Nne ndi takala nda funzwa nga misisi.

I am happy when my wife comforts me.

Shango la Muofhe, Munzhedzi,

The country of Muofhe, Munzhedzi,

Munzhedzi, Vho-Mutshekwa, Masindi.

Munzhedzi, Mrs Mutshekwa, Masindi.<sup>2</sup>

Mme anga, idani ri ye haya.

Let us go home my mother.

Mme anga vho onda nga thothotho.

My mother is thin from too much alcohol.

20 Mme anga tshidakwa tsha mukegulu.

My mother is an old drunkard of a woman.

Dadadam ...

Mme anga idani ri ye haya.

Let us go home my mother.

Madekwe ndo dzula ndo lindela, Tshavhungwe.

Last night I sat and waited, Tshavhungwe.

Shango heli, shango heli la Vhavenda.

This country, this country of the Venda people.

Nne ndi takala ndo tsa Hatshivhasa.

I am happy when I am at Sibasa.

**Nne ndi takala nda funzwa nga misisi.**  
I am happy when my wife comforts me.  
**Shango la Muofhe, Munzhedzi,**  
The country of Muofhe, Munzhedzi,  
28 **Munzhedzi, Vho-Mutshekwa, Masindi.**  
Munzhedzi, Mrs Mutshekwa, Masindi.

1 This song is based on a well-known beer song which deals with relationships between men and women in and outside marriage.

2 Muofhe: his cross-cousin.  
Munzhedzi: his wife.  
Mutshekwa: The woman in song 159.  
Masindi: his cross-cousin.

164

**Vhokhotsimunene<sup>1</sup> (My uncle)**

**Vhokhotsimunene, nne ndi a tuwa, ye ye ...**  
My uncle, I am leaving.  
**Halwa ndi halwa de ho no dzimwa vhañwe? Ye ye ...**  
What kind of beer is that which is not given to others?<sup>2</sup>  
**Kwengeledzani!**  
Pacify!  
**Ni sale ni tshi nwa na vhafarekano.**  
You who remain must still drink it with your concubines.  
**Vhokhotsimunene.**  
My uncle.  
**Ahee! Ahee!**  
**Halwa ndi halwa de ho no dzimwa vhañwe?**  
What kind of beer is that which is not given to others?

**Poto!<sup>3</sup>**

**Hee, vhokhotsimunene, nne ri a tuwa, ye ye ...**  
My uncle, I am leaving.  
10 **Halwa ndi halwa de ho no dzimwa vhañwe, ye ye ...**  
What kind of beer is that which is not given to others?  
**Ni sale ni tshi nwa na vhafarekano, ye ye ...**  
You who remain must still drink it with your concubines.  
**Kwengeledzani!**  
Pacify!

**Hee ho hee hee ye. Kwengeledzani!**  
Pacify!

1 This song is based on a beer song.

2 The reference here seems to be to lack of social etiquette in terms of sharing of a communal beer ladle.

3 Exclamation expressing annoyance.

Mapani (Mopani)

Mberegogo, mberegogo<sup>1</sup> ya Mapani.

Work, work of Mopani.<sup>2</sup>

Mapani, wee, ndo vhuya nga milenzhe, wee.

Mopani, alas, I returned on foot, alas.

Ndi kundwa na tshienda tsha milenzhe, wee.

Alas, I do not even have shoes.

Ndi shona na u dzhena na hayani.

I am too ashamed to come home.

O vhuya magaweni nga vhakalaha.

The old men's overalls have returned.

Mberegogo, mberegogo ya Mapani.

Work, work of Mopani.

Yo! Yo! Yo! Yo! Yo! Mapani, wee!

Mberegogo, Mapani, mberegogo, Mapani, wee, yowee, mberegogo, wee.

Work, Mopani, work, Mopani, work.

Ndo kundwa na tshienda tsha milenzhe.

I did not even have shoes.

10 Yo! Yo! Yo! Yo! Yo! Yo! Mapani!

"Hangei Mapani a hu na tshelede."

"There is no money at Mopani."

"Ndo tuwa nga 1932."

"I went there in 1932."

"Nda swika nda kholwa u swika nda

"I stayed there until

1979."

1979."

"Nda vhuya ndi si na tshelede."

"I returned without money."

"Ndi tshi tou kundwa na tshiambaro,

"Without any clothes,

a hu na tshienda, gaweni do."

shoes or overalls."

Mberegogo, mberegogo, ya Mapani.

Work, work of Mopani.

Mapani, wee, ndo vhuya nga milenzhe, wee.

Mopani, alas, I returned on foot, alas.

20 Ndi shona na u dzhena na hayani.

I am too ashamed to come home.

O vhuya magaweni nga vhakalaha.

The old men's overalls have returned.

Mapani, wee, mberegogo, wee, Mapani, wee.

Alas, Mopani, alas, work, alas, Mopani.

Mberegogo, wee.

Alas, work.



Mapani, wee, tshede a hu na, wee.

Alas, Mopani, alas, no money.

25 Mapani, wee.

Alas, Mopani.

1 From Afr. werk. The counterpart of Sotho-Tswana **bereka** (cf. Comaroff 1987).

2 A misnomer for the Limpopo valley.

#### 4.5 Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila

I met Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila of Tshakuma during 1988. He was in charge of a road stall I regularly used to pass. I often noticed him playing guitar there to while away the time. He was a beginner guitarist with limited technique, yet he was an outstanding storyteller with a mission to please, entertain and instruct: "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" (171: 301-306).

Mmbangiseni Ernest Madzivhandila was born at Tshakuma in 1968. His father, Elias, was a timber worker at the nearby Entabeni state forest until his death in 1982. His mother, Phophi, works as a labourer in the Department of Agriculture. Mmbangiseni attended Tshimbiluni Primary School until standard five. He left school because his mother could no longer support him. He started to work on a farm at Levubu in 1985 when he was seventeen years old. His duty was to plant and harvest sweet potatoes, and pick bananas. His wage was R45 per month. Finding that he could not survive on this amount, he left after three months. He found employment on another local vegetable farm at R70 per month. Again he left soon afterwards, but this time because of an eye ailment. He then became a fruit and vegetable vendor, partly selling paw-paws and avocados from his own garden. In 1984 he was appointed to sell fruit and vegetables at the road stall where I met him. He worked there for four months, and received R60 a month. At the beginning of 1990 he started to work on another Levubu farm at R120 per month.

Mmbangiseni married Flora Mukauli Magaraba from Tshakuma in 1988. The couple had a boy at the beginning of 1990, but he died of influenza in infancy. Mmbangiseni, his wife and his mother live at the same homestead. Mmbangiseni complains that after buying a bag of maize meal, and seeing that his wife "beautifies and clothes herself", there is nothing left of his wage. His brother once smashed his guitar (fortunately after I recorded him), and he had no money to buy a new one. He was very keen to start a band, and complained that he lacked the financial resources to buy instruments.

In 1982, at the age of fourteen, Mmbangiseni constructed a guitar for himself. He subsequently stopped playing for a few years, and resumed his playing when he bought himself an acoustic guitar. He was still an inexperienced guitarist when I met him, and this is reflected in his accompaniments. All twelve songs I recorded feature a basic I-IV-I-V progression articulated in a few simple, unvaried strumming patterns (cf. song 166; audio recording 33).

Mmbangiseni's uniqueness lies in his expression of vitality and creative thought in his musical engagement with a changing society. Like Mmbangiseni Mphaga, his texts reveal maturity and social sensibility beyond his youth. Yet it is perhaps not surprising that such a young person should be so mature in his philosophical observations. Young people and children generally are not sheltered from the full variety of life, and many of them are exposed to general hardship; to thieves and drunks, poverty and crime, and witch-hunts and violence. The vicissitudes of this kind of life experience are forcefully manifested in "Sara, why are you angry?" (171), a fabricated world of epic proportion. Like Mashudu Mulaudzi, Mmbangiseni also recognizes in chaos and anarchy

the seed of vibrant new life. Poverty and suffering apparently cannot suppress youthful optimism and the exuberant celebration of life: "Even if you enjoy life here on earth, you will not enjoy it like me" (ll 428-429). The fabricated world of song 171 is that of a young man living in a changing society. It is a wonderful, sad new world, filled with many things and experiences: the Venda Sun Hotel with its attractive glittering lights and fashionably dressed people; beautiful Chinese and Tswana girls; planes, trains and cars which can also transport you to a dream world; dancing to powerful high-fidelity sound; the pantihose, permed hair, high-heeled shoes, deodorant, beauty cream and wedding outfit of a beautiful girl; and the harsh reality of Aids, violence, police, jail and mortuaries. Into this world enters a young man engaged in the universal quest for psychosexual release. His tale is one of acceptance and rejection, hope and despair, love and hate. These opposites emanate from the tension between nature and culture, idealism and reality. The quest for release is universal because it is natural; it is "ordinary tobacco" (l 89) which no person should be denied (l 163). However, there is tension between reality and idealism: the urge to freely smoke "ordinary tobacco" is restricted by the confines of social structure and the ominous presence of Aids (cf. ll 208-233). And this conflict forms the basis from which the singer quixotically sets out into the world where he passionately accosts girls with their beautiful smiles and laughter (ll 350-356). His relationships are passionate. In chivalrous style he kisses the hand of his beloved (ll 197-198). The lovers spoil and care for each other (ll 182 & 191; 482-484). There is a beautiful, frozen moment as the singer is presented with an expensive delicacy: fried chicken (ll 485-486). Gifts are important. They are the embodiment of love (l 364) and they formalize relationships (cf. ll 338-

341). But they are more than this. They are also important symbols in contemporary processes of socio-economic mobilization. They provide a sense of pride, meaning and exclusivity (ll 357-364).

But as passionate as the singer's relationships are, so shortlived and disappointing are they. The singer has rivals whose behaviour first makes him despair (ll 143-144), and subsequently drives him to violent and ruinous revenge (ll 252-269). Yet, in failed love lies the seed of other relationships, and ultimately of the process of life and development (ll 208-216). An aeroplane becomes the means whereby the singer attempts to escape his rejection and disappointment. It takes him on a flight of fantasy into a rich and varied world where other beautiful women are to be found (ll 286-292).

Most of Mmbangiseni's songs carry the same theme, namely that of the promotion of morality: "My songs are warnings to people", he remarks. Like Solomon Mathase, Mmbangiseni's basic message is that people should love each other (167: 72) in the same way that a guitarist "nurses" and cares for his instrument (171: 479-483). And, like Solomon Mathase, Mmbangiseni explores social reality in terms of traditional as well as Christian ethics. References to aspects of traditional material culture serve as a moral base from which to redefine norms: hoeing your field, and planting maize and fruit trees, as well as cooking with care, are life-supporting acts which manifest the dedication and perseverance needed for eternal life, and success and survival (166: 93-100; 171:67-69 & 477-479; 169: 82-84). But not only is Mmbangiseni "a person who follows the Lord" (170: 80-82), he is also an interpreter of God who passes on moral

directives: "Now, these things do not come from inside me. It is because of God's power" (171: 473-475). Mmbangiseni is a member of the Immanuel Church of God, a Zionist denomination, and several of his songs express his religious environment and beliefs (166; 167; 168; 173; 176). As with Mashudu Mulaudzi and other guitarists, Mmbangiseni's songs show the influence of evangelical mission theology: salvation lies in the second coming (166: 1-4). Church attendance and good moral behaviour are prerequisites for eternal life (166: 90-93; 167: 29-38), and Satan, the embodiment of sin, is rejected (173; 176).

Mmbangiseni shows similarity with Mashudu Mulaudzi in terms of the type of immorality he addresses, especially sexual promiscuity (166; 169) and alcohol abuse (169; 172). However, Mmbangiseni goes into considerably more detail, and also refers to lying, adultery, jealousy, witchcraft, theft, violence, deceitful women, desire, provocation, and gossip: "These are not good things" (166: 62), which are contrary to God's will (166: 118-119). Like a subconscious emotional urge rising to the surface of human perception, the dominant love theme of song 171 is continually interrupted by references to jealousy, evil and witchcraft (ll 31-32, 43-50, 316-320, 402-407).

Like Mashudu Mulaudzi, Mmbangiseni tends to be biased against women. The promiscuous girl in "Halleluya Hosanna" (166) is blamed for contracting Aids (ll 6-65), but the irresponsibility of her male partners is played down. Promiscuous girls appear to attract much attention. Mmbangiseni remarks that they like to flirt and swank. They stand next to the road and accost passing motorists by revealing their thighs (166: 108), a part of the body not to be bared in terms of tradi-

tional morality.<sup>1</sup> The bias against women is also manifested in accusations of adulterous behaviour (cf. 169; 171). Mmbangiseni believes that the main problem a married man has is the fear that his wife will run away with another man (cf. 171: 276). Drinking, roving wives are also common, and they cause heartbreak (cf. 171).

Many people clearly find it difficult to accept the changing status of women. Although certain female individuals and groups wield considerable power in the traditional social structure, women are generally expected to be submissive to their husbands. During the early years of colonization, girls and women tended to remain home, while boys and men went to school and town. However, women are becoming increasingly independent, and compete with men in the labour market. It is arguable that the stereotypical male view manifested by Mmbangiseni and others is a factor of the power-play between men and women who are renegotiating role allocations during a time of rapid social change.

Whatever the precise reasons might be for the conservative male view of women, contemporary guitarists act as "cultural brokers": individuals who transmit and mediate influences in terms of newly emerging social statuses (cf. Coplan 1985: 237). What makes musicians such important cultural brokers is that they explore new social patterns through an age-old, socially sanctioned critical medium. Musical expression allows the crossing of boundaries of conventional social etiquette in the quest for a redefined social reality.

## Notes

1 Mmbangiseni is not alone in his emotional condemnation of promiscuous girls. In a leading article, The Bugle newspaper (vol. 3, October 1990) describes a sixteen year old prostitute with bared thighs, adding that she is one of "the children who roam the streets of Thohoyandou town by night and become students by day ... and your daughter might be amongst them". These girls are described as "lustful" and "lasciviously dressed". They "lurk" in the streets in the "eerie" hours of the morning and engage in "cheap business".



166

Halleluya Hosanna<sup>1</sup>

Halleluya Hosanna.

Halelelelela, halelelela.

Kha hu rendiwe a daho

Let us glorify the one who is coming

nga dzina la Yesu.

in the name of Jesus.

Nne, nne.

I, I.

"Ndi mus<sup>i</sup> vho takuwa

"You were on your

vha tshi khou ya ha vhafunzi mus<sup>i</sup>

way to the minister

uri vhafunzi vha vha thuse ngauri nwana o vha a tshi khou

for assistance because the child

vhaisala u no."

was sick."

10 "Hezwi vha tshi khou tuwa vha ndilani,

"When they were on their way,

vha mu vhudzisa:

they asked her:

Ni vhaiswa nga mini nwana wa hashu?"

Our child, what is the matter?"

"Ndi khou vhaisala ngamaanda mmawe. A thi koni na u ima

"I am very ill mother. I cannot even

ndi tshi ndi hafha."

stand here."

"U ima ndi u tou dibabadedza."

"I am forcing myself to stand."

"He!"

"Vhafunzi vho vha vho diimisela u ya kerekeni helo duvha."

"The minister was prepared to go to church on that day."

"Vho kuvha na thambo dzavho dza kereke."

"He even washed his church ropes."

"Ndi tswuku

"They are red

20 na dala."

and green."

"Musidzana vha mbo di mu fara vhafunzi."

"The minister touched the girl."

"Vho mu vhofha thambo tswuku ntha ha thoho."

"He tied a red rope round her head."

"Vha ri, hoyu nwana u khou lwala ngamaanda. U khou lwala

"He said, this child is very ill. She is suffering

vhulwadze hune

from a disease

ha shavhisa ngamaanda,

which is very dangerous,

ngauri vhu balela na madokotela na manese na zwothe."

because even doctors and nurses cannot cure it."

U ya lwala ngoho musidzana.  
The girl is ill indeed.  
Ndi vhulwadze ngoho ha Aids.  
She is suffering from Aids.<sup>2</sup>  
Ho mu fara ngoho musidzana.  
The girl is truly suffering.

- 30 "Ha athu pfelela u bva henefho mani."  
"Even then she was not satisfied man."  
"A swika a wana vhanhanga vhararu vho dzula hafhalani."  
"She found three young men sitting over there."  
"Ai, vhafana!"  
"Oh, boys!"  
"Vha mu gidimela hangei vha swika vha mu fara."  
"They ran towards her and caught up with her."  
"Hezwi vha tshi khou mu fara hafhalani."  
"They caught up with her."  
"Ai, hu si kale vha ambedzana."  
"Oh, after a while they started to talk."  
"Ee, ndi a ni funa."  
"Yes, I love you."  
"Na nne ndi a ni funa."  
"And I love you too."  
"E!"  
"Unbelievable!"  
"Ula musidzana u khou vhudzisa muthannga uri inwi  
That girl asked where the young  
40 muthannga ni dzula gai."  
man stayed."  
"He! Muthannga a ri nne ndi dzula Shayandima."  
"The young man said he stayed at Shayandima."  
"Thohoyandou hangei,  
"Over there at Thohoyandou,  
tsini na Venda Sun hangei."  
near the Venda Sun."  
"Ee! Hu na magesi hangei."  
"Yes! There is electricity."  
"A ri fungi luvhone."  
"We do not light a lamp."  
"Ndi musu a tshi khou mu roba musu."  
"He was trying to seduce her."  
"Gireme la hone lipikara li lingana na kamara ya ndu  
"The speakers of the hi-fi were as large as a room of a  
ya pulata."  
corrugated iron house."  
"E!"  
"Unbelievable!"  
50 "Ha pfi, ni do dzhaiva."  
"He said, you will dance."  
"Milenzhe heinoni na wana  
"These legs are dancing so well,  
magona a tshi fhelela."  
you will find that the knees disappear."<sup>3</sup>  
"Mathina hayani ha muthannga hoyu ndi hafho Tshifulanani."  
"But the young man's home was at Tshifulanani."<sup>4</sup>  
U ya lila ngoho musidzana.  
The girl is crying indeed.

Yo mu wela ngoho ndi khombo.  
 She is in trouble.  
 O tou ita ngoho musidzana.  
 It was indeed the girl's fault.<sup>5</sup>  
 "Ndi u sa pfuka muthu hoyu."  
 "Falling in love with many people."  
 "Na wana uno,  
 "You find this one,  
 na tuwa nae."  
 you go with him."  
 60 "Na wana uno,  
 "You find that one,  
 hai na tuwa nae."  
 you go with him."  
 "Zwi nga si nake hezwi zwithu."  
 "These are not good things."  
 "Dzulani na munna wanu. Ni dzule ni kwakwane mani."  
 "Stay with your husband. Stay closer to him man."  
 "Honoyu muthihi ndi ene ene."  
 "One person is sufficient."  
 "Oi!"

U ya lwala ngoho ndi Aids.  
 She is truly suffering from Aids.  
 U ya lwala ngoho ndi Aids. "Yo mu fara!"  
 She is truly suffering from Aids. "She is suffering!"  
 "U do onda a fhelela. A i mu fareli henefho musu."  
 "She is going to be thin. The symptoms are not seen at once."  
 "A sala a tshi tou nga lutanda. O phula na milenze  
 70 musidzana."  
 "She will be thin like a stick. The girl put on pantihose."  
 "O tamba a naka mani."  
 "She washed herself and was beautiful man."  
 "O ambara na cap o di phema na mavhudzi."  
 "She put on a cap and permed her hair."

"O thoma a zwifhelwa nga iñwe ñanga. O di ya hone a tshi khou  
 "A certain diviner told her lies. She went there,  
 humbela thuso."  
 asking for help."  
 "Ya ri, ñwana,  
 "He said, child,  
 mushonga wa hone ndi do ri  
 the medicine that will help you is  
 kota na afukhada  
 a quarter-loaf of bread  
 i do kona u ni thusa."  
 and an avocado."

A zwi kondi ngoho.  
 It is not difficult.<sup>6</sup>  
 80 Ho!  
 Helelelele!  
 Halleluya Hosanna.  
 Kha hu rendiwe a daho  
 Let us us glorify the one who is coming.

"Nne arali ndi na vhana vhangana, hee!"

"If I am with my children."

"Nga Swondaha, hee!"

"On Sunday."

"Ndi nga vha kunga vhothe."

"I can persuade them, saying:

"Nda ri, kha ri ye kerekeni."

Let us go to church."

"Arali hu si na goloi hu kule kerekeni,

"If there is no car and the church is far away,

nne ndi nga toda goloi musu, nda i hira."

I can hire a car."

90 "Nda ri, kha ri tuwe."

"I say, let us go

"Ri ye kerekeni sa vhananga musu."

to church with my children."

"U gudisa vhana u tshila vhakerekeni ndi zwavhudi hezwo."

"To teach children to go to church is a good thing."

"Zwi vha itela zwauri vha tshile vhutshilo vhu sa fheliho."

"It enables them to have eternal life."

"Hezwi ri a zwi divha zwauri

"We know that for a person

u tshidzwa

to be saved by

ha Murena

the Lord

u bva kha muthu ane a tou kondolela."

requires perseverance."

"Zwi di nga vhone vha tshi khou lima tsimu yavho, hee."

"It is similar to hoeing your field."

"Hezwi vha khou lima tsimu yavho. Arali ya sa vhibva mavhele,

100 vha nga si takale."

maize, you will not be happy."

U ya lwala ngoho musidzana.

The girl is truly suffering.

"Ndi Aids heyo!"

"It is Aids!"

"Nne ndo bula ngauri ndo amba."

"I have exposed a confidential issue through my talking."

"Aids heino i khou bva na vhathu vhakulekule."

"Aids originated from sleeping with outsiders."<sup>7</sup>

"Musidzana a sa fhiriho vhanna mani."

"The girl does not pass by men."

"A tamba, u di humbula tshigontirini,

After having washed, she thinks of being on the main road

hafho fhasi."

down there."<sup>8</sup>

"Lifithi ya hone, i imiswa nga mulenzhe nthani la tshanda."

"To get a lift she puts out a leg instead of a hand."<sup>9</sup>

"Gunwe heli lo itelwa u imisa lifithi,

110 mara u imisa nga mulenzhe."

but she uses the leg."

"Hee, vhasidzana!"

"Oh, girls!"

No dzhenelwa ngoho vhasizana.

You are truly in trouble girls.

No dzhenelwa ngoho vhasidzana. Ndi khombo ngoho vhasidzana.

You are truly in trouble girls. There is danger indeed girls.

Ndi khombo hei,

This danger.

Hei, hei.

"Khotsi anga

"My father

na mme anga:

and mother:

"Ndo neta nne nga u vhone hezwi zwithu zwine zwa khou itwa

"I am tired of seeing these things that are done

shangoni la Khotsi anga."

on my Father's earth."

120 "Aids i khou shelwa nga vhatu vhakulekule."

"Aids comes from sleeping with outsiders."

"I kungwa nga vhasidzana hafha vhane vha si pfeledze mitani

"It is brought by these girls who do not become satisfied at

yavho

their homes,

kana shangoni la havho."

or in their village."

"U wane muthu wa fhanu shangoni lino,

"You find a person who stays in this village

u khou ya u funa muthu wa kulekule hangei."

falling in love with an outsider."

"And ha divhi zwine zwa vha hone sa malwadze o da shangoni."

"And she does not know about diseases in the country."

"Vhatu wele, vhatu wele, hee!"

"Alas people, alas people!"

"Nda wana o onda o fhelela hoyu nwana vhone."

"When I found her she was very thin."

"Na u amba a sa tsha kona."

"And she could not speak."

130 "E!"

Ndi Aids ngoho musidzana.

It is indeed Aids, girl.

"E!"

"Hee!"

"Ndi u sea khole hezwo."

"I am laughing mockingly."

"Ri khou mu goda nga huñwe."

"We are saying unpleasant things about her."

"O vha a tshi ri pfuka hafha badani, a tshi ri pfela na mare."

"She used to pass us next to the road, spitting at us."

"Ri tshi nga vhudziwa u pfi `sisi'. Ra kondolela sa muthu-

"She used to say `sies' to us. We knew her for what she was, vho."

and did not respond."9

140 "Zwo mu fhelela."<sup>10</sup>  
 "She has succumbed to disease."  
 Ndi Aids ngoho,  
 It is Aids indeed.  
 Ndi Aids ngoho, musidzana.  
 It is Aids indeed, girl.  
 Yo ni fara, musidzana.  
 You are suffering from Aids, girl.  
 "Kha vha vhone zwino,  
 "See now,  
 lu vho tou nga shonzha lo hamuliwa mani."  
 she is as thin as a squeezed mopani worm man."

1 The title of the song is taken from a church hymn. Although it is not directly stated, the hymn is sung by the congregation when praying to God to heal the girl.

2 This song is not based on an actual case, nor does Mmbangiseni know anyone with Aids. He heard about the disease on Radio Thohoyandou.

3 I.e. dancing so fast that the dancer's knees disappear in a flurry of movement. Contemporary dancing often is sexually suggestive.

4 An area near Shayandima. In other words the girl was lured to Shayandima under the false pretence of love.

5 Lit. the girl did that.

6 I.e. it is not difficult to get help from God.

7 Lit. Aids originated from people who come from far.

8 I.e. she has prepared herself to be picked up by men on the road. "Down there" is a reference to roads on plains and in valleys by people living in the many villages located on hills.

9 Lit. we persevered because she was also a person.

10 Lit. she has come to an end.

167

A vha ri funi (They do not like us)<sup>1</sup>

Ndi dzula navho. Ngoho, a vha ri funi.  
 We are neighbours.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, they do not like us.  
 Ri dzula navho, mara a vha ri nyagi-vho.  
 We are neighbours, but they just do not need us.  
 Ri dzula navho. Ngoho, a vha ri todi nge ra.  
 We are neighbours. Indeed, they do not need us.  
 Ri dzula navho. Ngoho, a vha ri todi nge ra  
 We are neighbours. Indeed, they do not like us  
 renga mmbete izwo. A vha zwi funi vho.  
 because we bought a bed. They do not like that.

Ra renga mmbete, mara a vha zwi nyagi ngoho.  
We bought a bed, but they really do not like that.  
Ooh haa, ooh haa.  
Thende nde nde nde nde nde.

"Vha nga fhata kudi kwavho zwavhudi mani,  
"Man, if you build your little home well,

10 ho ku kudi kwavho  
your little home

ku kwa masenenge, vhathu welee,  
with its corrugated iron roof,  
u do di wana muthu a tshi khou dodela vho vhusiku."  
you will find a person stalking you at night.<sup>3</sup> Alas people."

"Zwi a vhavha ngoho."  
"It is hurting indeed."  
"And zwi a tungufhadza."  
"And there is distress."  
"Ngoho, a vha zwi funi."  
"Indeed, they do not like that."

"Ndi kha di humbula muñwe ñwaha hezwo:  
"I still remember a certain year:  
Wo vha u muhumbulo wanga  
Alas, it was my

nda di ri ndi vhe  
intention to  
ndi vhe na zwanga vho, wee."  
possess things."  
20 "Nda di renga zwine zwa vha zwanga khuhu yanga, wee."  
"I bought myself some fowls."  
"Khuhu."  
"Fowls."  
"Heyi ya khuhu."  
"These fowls."  
"Nda di ri, heyi khuhu dza di fhela nga nthihi nga  
nthihi vhathu."  
"I say, people, these fowls disappeared one by one."  
"He!"

"Vha tshi khou di vhulaha vhañwe vha tshi zhota vha tshi la."  
"They were killing and eating them."<sup>4</sup>

"Khavho vho vha vha tshi khou vhona u nga ndi zwavhudi."  
"They thought it was quite acceptable."  
"Vha tshi diamba nga tshavho vha tshi dikhoda."  
"They used to talk about it and praise themselves."  
"Zwino, ndi a vha divhadza zwauri  
"Now, I am informing them that

30 hoyu ane a khou lidza, hee,  
this one who is singing,  
ndi mufana wa Thevheni,  
is a boy from Thevheni,

and ndi mufana, mani."  
is a boy, man."

"Mufana wavhudi."  
"A good boy."

"Ndi ngamula  
"A gentleman

fhedzi a si ngamula ya fhanu shangoni lini."  
who does not belong to this earth."

"Ndi ngamula kha Mudzimu."  
"A gentleman of God."

"Kha vha divhe zwauri  
"They should realize that

nne u naka ndi divhiwa nga Khotsi anga wa tadulu."  
my heavenly Father knows I am good."

"Mme anga a vha nndivhi na kale."

"My mother has not known me for a long time."<sup>5</sup>

- 40 Ri dzula navho. Ngoho, a vha ri funi.  
We are neighbours. Indeed, they do not like us.  
Ndi vhudza nnyi ngoho? Ndi vhudza baba naa?  
Indeed, who do I tell? Should I tell father?  
Ndi vhudza nnyi? Mara nda vhudza mma, yoo.  
Who do I tell? If I tell mother.  
Ho ho, ho ho ho.

"Ri khou tou amba-vho."  
"I am just talking."<sup>6</sup>

"E, sa vhathu-vho, he!"  
"They are just people!"<sup>7</sup>  
"Jealousy ya vhozwi a yo ngo luga."  
"Your jealousy is not good."  
"Ni divhe zwauri arali ndo rali  
"You must know that if you  
na nga ndowa,  
bewitch me,  
na inwi ni do fa."  
you will also die."

- 50 "O amba Mudzimu a ri,  
"God said,  
muñwe na muñwe u do fa."  
everyone will die."  
"Vele, vele ndi ngoho."  
"It is really true."

"Nne ndi mufana."  
"I am a boy."  
"Fhedzi arali tshifhinga tshine nda khou amba ngatsho  
"But if you  
vha tshi khou thetshesha,  
listen to me now,



hezwi zwithu zwi nga vha fhata."  
these things will change you."<sup>8</sup>  
"Na vhuloi vha nga vhu lata."  
"You may even refrain from witchcraft."  
"Vha nga si tsha lowa."  
"You will no longer bewitch."

Ri dzula navho. Ngoho a vha ri funi-vho.  
We are neighbours. Indeed, they just do not like us.

60 "Vhathu ngoho kha vha litshe vhuloi."  
"People must truly leave witchcraft."  
"Ngoho hezwi zwithu a zwi itiwu  
"Indeed, these things and stealing  
na u tswa hohu."  
must not be done."

"Kha vha humbule  
"Think of

u pfa u pfi  
being known

vhone vha mbava  
as a thief

shangoni lifhio, lifhio na lifhio."  
all over."

"Zwi a vha vhavha."  
"It is hurtful."

Mara a vha ri funi ngoho.

But they really do not like us.

Ri dzula navho. Ngoho a vha ri funi ngoho.

We stay with them. They really do not like us.

70 Ri dzula navho mara a vha ri nyagi-vho.

We stay with them but they just do not need us.

Ho ho, o-ho ha, o-ho ha, o-ho ha, o-ho ha, o-ho ha, o!

"Funani muñwe mani!"

"Love each other man!"

"Hezwi zwa u dzula ni tshi vhenga muthu."

"The tendency is to hate a person."

"A thi divhi zwauri

"I do not know why

ni mu vhengela mini. Ngauri ha li zwanu."

you hate him. Because he does not eat yours."<sup>9</sup>

"Habe ha khou da u ni tswenya hoyu muthu."

"This person is not coming to worry you."

"Ni nga si pfe o da na tshigodelo

"You will not see him coming with a bowl

a ri khou humbela madi,

to ask for water,

kana a da na ndishi

or with a bowl

80 a ri u khou humbela madi a u tamba."

to ask for bathing water."

"Nahone madi ha rengiwi."

"Furthermore, water is not sold."

Ri dzula navho. Ngoho a vha ri funi-vho.

We stay with them. They really just do not like us.

1 This song refers to jealous people. It was inspired by an incident in which Mmbangiseni was involved. He was performing at a beer house at Muledane when some drunkards became envious about the fact that he was earning money with his guitar playing.

2 Lit. we stay with them.

3 A reference to jealous people who bewitch others.

4 This part of the song is based on an incident which happened during 1987. Some of Mmbangiseni's fowls wandered away from home. They were stolen by a neighbour, but most managed to escape. Some were not seen again, and Mmbangiseni chased around his neighbourhood to catch the others.

5 Mmbangiseni was unable to explain this line.

6 This is a typical remark found in songs when singers are dealing with sensitive topics and wish to escape retribution. It indicates that the singer should not be taken seriously.

7 I.e. as rational human beings they will realize that they are wrong.

8 Lit. they will build you; give you a new shape.

9 I.e. your fowls.

168

Ri vhana vhavho Murena (We are your children, Lord)

Ri vhana vhavho, na rine ri vhana vhavho Murena.

We are your children Lord, we are yours.

Ri khou humbela mashudu phanda ha vhone Vhobaba.

We are praying for your blessing Father.

"Ndi musu rine ro no dzhena kha dza Tsioni:"

"Us Zionists sing:"

Ri vhana vhavho Murena, na rine ri vhana vhavho Vhobaba.

We are your children Lord, we are your children Father.

"Ndi Murena musu."

"He is the Lord."

"U wane mufunzi o tou bva."

"You find a minister leaving."<sup>1</sup>

"Hee, mufunzi!"

"Hey, minister!"

"A bve o fara na Bivhili yawe."  
"Leaving with a Bible in his hand."  
"Vha pfe a tshi thoma u rabela."  
"Listen when he starts to pray."  
10 "Rrrrrr!"<sup>2</sup>  
"Baba, ramasi<sup>a</sup> tombo la v<sup>h</sup>utshilo."  
"Lord, the stone of life."  
"Mudzimu wanga, Mudzimu wa tadulu, Mudzimu a tshilaho."  
"My Lord, heavenly Lord, the living Lord."

"Ndi humbela zwauri  
"I am asking

hafha shangoni hu vhe na mulalo."  
for peace in this land."

"Vhathu vha dzule vho takala."  
"People should always be happy."

Vhana vhavho Murena, na rine ri vhana vhavho Vhobaba.  
We are your children Lord, we are yours.  
Ri khou lila Murena phanda ha vhone Vhobaba.  
We are crying out before you Father.  
"Hei!"

"Hezwi zwithu zwi a difha arali vha tshi khou zwi kona."  
"These things<sup>3</sup> are enjoyable if you are dedicated."  
20 "Fhedzi a vha tou khomanisiwa."  
"But you are not forced."<sup>4</sup>  
"Vha tou guda vha kona u zwi kona."  
"You learn, and then you succeed in doing that."

Ri vhana vhavho, na rine ri vhana vhavho Murena.  
We are your children Lord, we are yours.  
Ri humbela mashudu phanda ha vhone Vhobaba.  
We are praying for your blessing Father.

"Hee!"  
"Hey!"

"A vha funza,  
"He preached

a vha funza kha ndimana hedzi:  
to them from these verses:

Psalm fourteen."  
Psalm fourteen."

"Vha matsilu mbiluni dzavho vha ri:  
"Fools say in their heart:

a hu na Mudzimu."  
there is no God."

30 "Vha shanduka vha tevhela mikhuvha mivhi."  
"They change, and then follow wrong ways."<sup>5</sup>

"Xe!"

"Hu si na muvhuya  
"There is no righteous

khavho."  
person among them."

Vhana vhavho Murena.  
Your children Lord.  
Ri vhana vhavho Murena.  
We are your children Lord.  
36 Ri humbela mashudu phanda ha vhone VhoBaba.  
We are praying for your blessing Father.

1 A reference to Mbangiseni's minister.

2 A mocking reference to the dramatic way the minister prays.

3 I.e. Christianity.

4 Lit. if you can do them.

5 Lit. to have bad manners.

169

Sara, ni songo tamba tshipotoni (Sara, do not fool around at  
the beer house)

Hee inwi, Sara, ni khou tamba tshipotoni, a ni khou  
Hey you, Sara, you are fooling around at the beer house,  
tamba tshipotoni.

don't do that.<sup>1</sup>

Hee, inwi.

Hey, you.

Miñwaha mitanu ndi khou ni toda.

I have been looking for you for five years.

Ni khou tamba tshipotoni.

You are fooling around at the beer house.

Hee, inwi.

Hey, you.

"Sa musadzi wanga ro malana, hee."

"We are married and you are my wife."

"Ro langana zwavhudi khezwi:

"We had an agreement:

Nne a thi nwi halwa,

I do not drink beer,

10 na ene a ri ha nga nwi ngauri nne a thi nwi."  
and therefore she would not drink either."

"Hu ri liñwe duvha nne ndi tshi tou bva ndi tshi tou ya

"On a certain day I went to the mountain to collect

bashani-vho."

fire wood."

"A sala a nenga vhana a ri u khou ya mulamboni."  
"She told the children that she was going to the river."

"A vhana vha tendelela mani."  
"The children acknowledged that, man."<sup>2</sup>

"Ndi tshi tou vhuya bashani, ndi mu wana khou la vhukati  
"When I returned from the mountain I found her mixing  
ha Vho-Jim na vho-Jack mani. Hetshi!"<sup>3</sup>  
indiscriminately with Dick, Tom and Harry."

"U khou nwa navho halwa o fara na bodelo la biya."  
"She was drinking a bottle of beer with them."  
"A!"

"Sara!"

20 "Musadzi wanga, ni khou ita mini afho? Inwi ngauri no mmbudza  
"What are you doing there my wife? You told me you  
zwauro a ni nwi halwa."  
do not drink beer."

"E!"

"Jack a vha a tshi takutshedza mani."

"Dick stood up man."

"Ndi musadzi wanga ndo tou mu mala nga kholomo thanu."

"I married my wife for five head of cattle."<sup>4</sup>

"Xee! A!"

"Nne sa mufana wa Thevheni. Ngauri ndo dikhoreithiwa. Ndi  
"I am a boy from Thevheni.<sup>5</sup> I am strong. I am able to knock  
rwa tsha dzima."  
you out."

"Feisi ya hone

"My fist

i rwa ya vusa fhasi."

knocks a person down."

30 "Sa vhafana vha Thevheni vho vha vhe hone nga hafha tsini."  
"Some boys from Thevheni were nearby."

"Ndo mu dia feisi ya phirimela gopwani lawe a wela  
kule hangei."

"I punched him under the arm and he fell."

"Xee!"

"Vhafana vha tshi khou di khodedzela vha tshi khou  
khuza mani."

"The boys were praising me, and cheering me on man."

"Nda mu raha nga mpundu, hee,

"I kicked him,

nda wana ndebvu dzo kwama fhasi. Vhathu welee! Ndebvu dzi  
and his beard touched the ground. Oh, people! The tufts of  
na mabuse dzi a dina. Dzi a nengisa."

beard were dusty. They were disgusting."

"Hoyu muthu o vha o sokou amba zwauro ha hawe hu na kholomo."

"This person said that there were cattle at his place."<sup>6</sup>

40 "A hu na na kholomo na nthihi. Hu na khuhu tharu na zwibode  
"But there is not a single one. There are only three fowls  
zwiraru."  
and three tortoises."

Hee inwi, Sara, ni khou tamba tshipotoni.  
Hey you, Sara, you are fooling around at the beer house.  
Ni khou tamba tshipotoni.  
You are fooling around at the beer house.  
Hee, inwi.  
Hey, you.

"Ndi miñwaha mitanu ndi tshi khou mu toda hoyu musadzi mani."  
"I have been looking for this woman for five years man."

"Hee inwi, lovey wanga Sara."  
"Hey you, Sara my lovey."

"Mara a ni pfi."  
"But you do not listen."

"Ni tou kundwa u dzula ni nice, nice, nice,  
"You are just not a

sa musadzi-vho."  
nice, well-mannered woman."

50 "Ni sa nwi halwa, ni do wana ni musadzi wavhudi mani.  
"If you do not drink beer, you will be a good woman man."

"Hee!"

"Hee!"

"Hafhu ndo ri ndi tshi li dia Jack, hee,  
"When I beat Dick he fell and  
la wa la dzidzivhala."  
became unconscious."

"Thabelo ya hone ho vha Tshibuku,  
"He pleaded for  
o vuwa ngaho,  
beer to  
nga Tshibuku hetsho."  
revive himself."

"Ndi halwa."

"It is beer."

"Hovhu ho bvelelaho zwino."

"Now, it is a new beer."7

60 "Muthu

"If a

a tou nwa ha hee,  
person drinks

ha divhalekani."

he gets a bad character."

"Ha!"

"A nga kha di dzhia na nwana a gotsha muliloni hetsho  
"He can take a child when he is drunk, and throw him  
tshifhinga ngauri o vhu nwa."  
in the fire."

"A!"

"Vhañwe vha do vha wana vho vhunwa havha musadzi, he."  
"Some people will find this woman drunk."

"Vhafana!"

"Boys!"

"Vha songo lilela tshine  
"Do not cry for something  
70 vha sa do tshi wana hee."  
you will not get."

"Halwa a ho ngo, mara hee,  
"You are not

iledzwa u swika hafho uri vha songo nwa."  
prohibited from drinking beer."

"Ho pfi vha nwe, vha le mara vha songo lesa."  
"You should drink and eat in moderation."

"Hezwi zwo ambiwa."  
"This has been said."<sup>8</sup>

"Zwino, vhone vha vho la vha vho fhirisa mpimo."  
"Now, you will eat more than is necessary."

"E!"

Miñwaha mitanu ndi tshi khou mu toda.

I have been looking for her for five years.

U khou tamba tshipotoni.

She fools around at the beer house.

"Hezwi zwithu, hee,

"I learnt these

80 ndo tou guda nne sa mufana wa Thevheni mani."  
things as a boy from Thevheni man."

"Nda kona u kona."

"I succeeded in learning."

"Habe arali u tshi khou toda zwauri nama i vhibve i difhe,  
"If you want meat to be well cooked and enjoyable,

u fanela u i shela na munu. Wa i khuthedza ya vhibva ya tou  
you should add salt. You need to put a lot of wood on the

kwata wholevhole."

fire to have the meat well cooked."<sup>9</sup>

"Tsho vhibvaho tshi a difha, tshi a nandiya kunene."  
"A thing which is ripe is enjoyable."

"A ne a khou lidza ndi mufana wa Thevheni."  
"The one who is singing is a boy from Thevheni."

"Muthannga wa u naka."  
"A handsome young man."

- "Mara u di vha mutswu u fana na vhone."  
 "But he is black like you."  
 "Fhedzi kha Mudzimu a tho ngo vhifha."  
 "But to the Lord I am not ugly."  
 90 "Ndo vhifha fhano shangoni."  
 "I am only ugly here on earth."
- "Tshine a mpfunela tshone Mudzimu ndi ngauri zwothe zwine  
 "The Lord loves me because he gives me  
 nda mu humbela u a nnea."  
 everything I need."  
 "U a mphuluphedza, na nne ndi a mu fulufhedza."  
 "He trusts me and I trust him."  
 "Mara arali vhone  
 "But if you ask for  
 vha nga tou humbela dzhomela ha nga vha fhi."  
 a beer mug he will not give it to you."  
 96 "Never."

1 This song is not based on personal experience, but on Mmbangiseni's observations of general social behaviour.

2 Lit. they allowed it.

3 An exclamation of surprised annoyance.

4 This signifies the legality of his relationship with Sara.

5 I.e. he has experienced and seen much.

6 I.e. an indication that he would give them to the singer if he stopped beating him.

7 A reference to commercially produced maize beer.

8 I.e. it comes from the Bible.

9 I.e. success only comes from hard work.

170

Gollopa (A stone)

A tshi na mala, gollopa<sup>1</sup> a tshi na mala.  
 A stone has no intestines, has no intestines.  
 A tshi na ndevhe.  
 Has no ears.  
 Ende a tshi li.  
 And it does not eat.  
 Ende a tshi pfi.  
 And it does not hear.  
 A tshi na mala, gollopa a tshi na mala.  
 A stone has no intestines, has no intestines.

"Vha nga tshi dzula ntha, mara  
 "You can sit on it, but it has



a tshi pfi."  
 no feeling."  
 "Kana vha nga tou tshi pwasha."  
 "Or you may crush it."  
 "A hu na mala nga ngomu."  
 "It has no intestines."  
 10 "Ndi tombo lenelo."  
 "It is a stone."  
 "Tombo vho no li pwasha vha vhona mala alo?"  
 "Have you ever crushed a stone and found intestines?"

"Nga tshifhinga tsha musu  
 "During the time when  
 vhafana vha tshi khou lwa."  
 boys are fighting."  
 "Hee!"  
 "Vha tshi khou lwa, vha doba tshone gollopa."  
 "When fighting, they pick up a stone."<sup>2</sup>  
 "Tsha u dia u do vha,  
 "If it hits you,  
 u do vha na ophuresheni."  
 you will need an operation."  
 "Tshone a tshi na ophuresheni."  
 "It does not need an operation."  
 "Ndi kha di humbula muñwe musu:  
 "I still remember a certain time:  
 20 Muñwe mutukana o  
 A certain boy  
 o rwa muñwe nga tombo."  
 threw another one with a stone."<sup>3</sup>  
 "Hee!"  
 "A tuwa nalo sibadela hangei."  
 "He went to the hospital with the stone."

A tshi na mala, gollopa a tshi na mala.  
 A stone has no intestines, has no intestines.

"Na ndevhe a tshi na,  
 "And it has no ears,  
 enda a tshi pfi."  
 and does not hear."  
 "E!"  
 "Tsha rwa muñwe, tshi a mu vhaisa."  
 "When it hits a person, it hurts him."  
 "Tshi a levha."  
 "(You are) provocative."  
 30 "Mara no."  
 "But no."  
 "Hmhu. A tshi levhi."  
 "Hmhu. It is not provocative."  
 "Ho levha iwe ngauri ndi iwe wo tshi dobaho,  
 "You are the provocative one, because you picked it up,  
 mm, wo vha wo pfa u vhavha mani."  
 mm, after you felt the pain man."  
 A tshi na mala, gollopa a tshi na mala.  
 Has no intestines, a stone has no intestines.

"Ende a ku pfi."  
"And the small stone does not hear."  
"Ende a ku li."  
"And the small stone does not eat."  
"Ende a ku nwi."  
"And the small stone does not drink."  
"He!"

A tshi na ndevhe, gollopa a tshi na ndevhe.  
A stone has no ears, has no ears.  
40 Ende a tshi pfi, gollopa a tshi na ndevhe.  
A stone has no ears, does not hear.  
"A tshi pfi! Xe!"  
"Does not hear!"  
"Tshithu tshi sa pfi."  
"The thing that does not hear."  
"Kana vha nga tshi fara,  
"Or you can grab it  
vha tshi kandekanya."  
and step on it."  
"Xee! Mara mala vha nga si a vhone."  
"But you will see no intestines."  
"Ndi tombo mani!"  
"It is a stone man!"  
"Zwino, vhone, vho pwasha tombo vha vhona li na mala?"  
"Now, you, have you ever crushed a stone and found any  
intestines?"  
"Kana vha nga li pwashisa hani."  
"You may crush it in any manner."  
"A hu na, never."  
"There is none, never."  
50 "Mala vha nga si a vhone."  
"You will not see any intestines."

"Rine ri a zwi tongisa zwa u tamba nga gollopa. Gollopa tshi  
We show off when we play with a stone. A stone hits  
a dia vhone."  
very hard."

"Tsha vha rutha, vha wa fhasi."  
"If it hits you, you will fall to the ground."

"Vha sa vha na mbonzhe vha khou tou litsha."  
"You will have a wound."  
A tshi na mala, gollopa a tshi na mala.  
Has no intestines, a stone has no intestines.

"Ende a tshi pfi."  
"And the stone does not hear."  
"Ende a ku pfi."  
"And the small stone does not hear."  
"Ende a ku nwi."  
"And the small stone does not drink."

"Hetshi tshithu tshine tsha pfi gollopa, hee,  
"By this thing called a gollopa,  
60 hu ambwa tombo."  
we mean a stone."

"Ngauri toambo a li na mala."

"Because a stone has no intestines."

"Kana vha nga li pwashisa hani."

"You may crush it in any manner."

"A li na mala."

"It has no intestines."

"La rwa muthu, hee,

"If it hits a person

kana la rwa tshifuwo, hee,

or an animal,

must tshifuwo tshi fe."

the animal must die."

"A tshi nwi hetshi tshithu,

"This thing does not drink

ende a tshi li."

and it does not eat."

"Vho no vhuya vha pfa toambo liñwe duvha li tshi ri

70 "Have you ever heard a stone saying on a certain day

li na dora?"

that it is thirsty?"

"Kana vha nga li shela madi!"

Even if you pour water on it, it does not drink!"

"Xe!"

A tshi na mala, gollopa a tshi na mala.

Has no intestines, a stone has no intestines.

"Mulidzi

"The singer

ndi mufana."

is a boy."

"Ende ndi mufana mani."

"And he is a boy man."

"Mufana o nakaho."

"A handsome boy."

"Ende a tshi pfi hetshi tshithu mani."

"And this thing does not hear man."

"Gollopa!"

"Stone!"

80 "Nne ndi muthu

"I am a person

ane a tshila

who follows

a fhasi ha Mudzimu."

the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

"Hothe hune vha nga nngwana hone,

"Wherever you may find me,

vha do nngwana dakalo langa li la misi."

I am always happy."

"Vha nga si nngwane ndo tshintsha."

"You will not find me changed."

1 From Afr. "klip".

2 In other words, evil is inherent in people, not in objects.

3 A reference to an incident which happened at Tshakuma in 1986. Some boys were playing soccer. They started to argue about something and proceeded to throw stones at each other. Nobody was seriously hurt.

4 Lit. living under God.

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Sara, no kwatela mini? (Sara, why are you angry?)

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you angry?  
Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ri dzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.<sup>1</sup>

"He!"

"U tou ndzima fola vhone."  
"You are stingy about tobacco."

"Nga maduvha u a di mpha fola nda daha."  
"She always gives me tobacco and I smoke."

"A!"

"Helo duvha, hee,  
"On that day  
ndi Sara, hee,  
I said to Sara,  
ndi khou humbela vho fola mani."  
I am asking for tobacco man."

- 10 "Nga maduvha, nga maduvha, hee!"  
"Always, always!"  
"Ndi divha zwauri madamu awe ha huli u swika hafho lini."  
"I know her breasts are not that big."

"Zwino, helo duvha ndi vhona  
"Now, on that day I saw  
o khuduluwa nga tshibobo hetshi tsha fola."  
her breast protruding because of the snuff box."

"Mathina u khou tou dzima."  
"But she was stingy."  
"Na Jim o vhuya a nyambela nyana."  
"And Jim spoke on my behalf."  
"A ri,  
"He said,  
kha vha do vha nea Vho-Sara mani, afhu vho tou pakata  
give it to him Ms Sara man, you have it  
na afho naa."  
on your breast."  
"Hee!"

20 Zwino no kwatela mini? Khee ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima?  
Now why are you angry? Why are you stingy when I ask for it?  
"E!"

"Ndo no di vha vhudza  
"I have already told you

vhalidzi  
the musicians

havha vhane vha khou lidza  
who are playing

ndi vhafana vha Thevheni."  
are boys from Thevheni."  
"Aa! Vha nga si vha divhe."  
"Aa! You do not know them."  
"Vha khou dzulela henefhano  
"They live this  
kusaidini Ganawa  
side, at Ganawa  
30 ha Vho-Ndwammbi."  
of Mr Ndwammbi."

"Vha songo nndodela vha mmbulaya. Ndi kha di funa u tshila."  
"You must not creep up on me and kill me. I still want to live."  
"Mpho ndo tou newa nga Mudzimu. A tho ngo tou tswa."  
"God gave me this talent.<sup>2</sup> I did not steal it."

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you angry?  
Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.

"Hoyu muthu ane a pfi Sara, hee,  
"This person called Sara

ndi muthu wanga."  
is my lover."

"Helo duvha, hee,  
"On that day  
ro humbelana fola."  
we asked for tobacco."

"A mbo di ndzima."  
"She was stingy."

40 Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you angry?  
Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.  
"E!"

"Zwithu zwi a tula."  
"These are superstitious things."  
"Ngoho, zwithu zwi a tula."  
"These are superstitious things indeed."

"Muthu wo mu thembaho duvha na liñwe  
"The person you trust daily  
u a u itela tshituhu."  
commits cruel deeds against you."  
"Wa di vhona, u nga thi ri  
"You see, you love

u khou funa muthu,  
a person,  
mathina, hee,  
but  
50 ndi tshivhulahi."  
he is a killer."

Hoo, hoo, no kwatela mini?  
Why are you angry?  
Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, why are you angry?  
Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.

"O ndzima!"  
"Stingy!"  
"Mara u a zwifha."  
"But she is lying."  
"One day ndi do mu tala mani."  
"One day I will divorce her man."  
"Nda funa muñwe."  
"I love someone else."  
"Hafhu maduvha ano hu khou bva vhana vho nakaho mani  
"Nowadays you see beautiful children  
vho phemaho na mavhudzi."  
with permed hair man."  
60 "Vha pheme ine ya kha  
"A lasting  
di dzula ngamaanda."  
perm."  
"Phemu, hee."  
"A perm."  
"Hee! Xee, vhona!"  
"See!"  
"I khou dura ngamaanda ngauri  
"It is very expensive because  
vha nga kha di wana na ya twenty rannda."  
you can find a twenty rand perm."  
"Ya twenty rannda,  
"A twenty rand perm,  
hu pfi,  
it is said,  
i fhedza vhege mbili, wee."  
lasts for two weeks."

"Hezwo ndi khou tou humbulelela."  
 "I am assuming this."  
 70 "Hee!"

"Vha wane o ambara na milenze, o diphula musidzana."  
 "You find a girl putting on pantihose."  
 "Hei!"

"O polisha na zwienda zwawe  
 "And polishing her shoes  
 zwo naka mani!"  
 nicely man!"  
 "Ende vha ambara hezwi la zwitshena zwa migo."  
 "And they wear white high-heeled shoes."

"Une a tshi tou swika, hee,  
 "When she arrives  
 u pfa a tshi khou lidza nga `CC' heila  
 you can smell the `CC'  
 ya u fafadzela."  
 deodorant."  
 "Hee, vhasidzana!"  
 "Oh, girls!"  
 80 "A!"

"O diphonza na khofheni hawe hafha  
 "She beautified her face  
 o nakelela."  
 with cream."  
 "Ane u tshi tou mu vhona wa ri,  
 "When you see her, you say,  
 daai een is 'n cherrie."  
 that one is a cherry."

"E!"

"Ndi a mu tala a thi tsha mu funa mani."  
 "I am divorcing her because I do not love her anymore man."  
 "E! Ndi ngazwo ngauri zwine a khou ita a zwi ntakadzi."  
 "Because I do not like what she is doing."  
 "U ndzima fola!"  
 "To be stingy about tobacco!"  
 "La fola!"  
 "Ordinary tobacco!"  
 90 "A never."  
 "Never."

"O ndzima."  
 "Stingy."

"Hmm. O ndzima."  
 "Hmm. Stingy."  
 "Ende ndi khou gungula hezwi ndi hafha."  
 "And I am complaining now."  
 "A vha zwi pfi vho mara ngoho?"  
 "Can't you hear that?"

"O ndzima, o ndzima."  
"Stingy, stingy."  
Ende tshe nda humbela fola na ndzima.  
And I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.  
Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you angry?  
"Ha!"

"Ha! Sara hounoni  
"This Sara  
100 ndi muthu ane a vha cherry yanga mani."  
person is my cherry, man."  
"Sara ndi tshi tangana nae."  
"I met Sara  
"Ndo mu wana hangei Durban!"  
there in Durban!"  
"Musi ndo ya henegei."  
"When I was there."  
"Ndi tshi kha di dzhena tshikoloni."  
"When I was still at school."

"He! Vhone! Nde ndi tshi mu sedza hee!"  
"Wow! When I looked at her!"  
"Yowee! Yowee! Yowee!"  
"E! He!"  
"Nda ri, mathina muthu u a naka naa?"  
"I said, can a person be beautiful?"  
"Nne ndo vha ndi tshi ri ha naki."  
"I thought a person cannot be beautiful."  
110 "Ha! Hoyu! Vhone! Vhone! Vhone!"  
"Wow! This one is beautiful!"  
"Ndo tou vhona u nga a nga di ri u tamba nga mafhi."  
"I thought she might say she washes herself with milk."  
"Ha tamba nga madi a no nga a vhañwe mani."  
"She does not use water like other people, man."  
"Hm."

"Mulidzi ndi mufana."  
"The singer is a boy."  
"Thevheni mufana."  
"A Thevheni boy."

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you angry?  
He, ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.  
"He!"  
"U a zwifha. Ndo mu tala."  
"She is lying. I have divorced her."  
120 "Ndo vhona kuñwe kwo phemiwaho,  
"I saw a small girl with a perm,  
he,  
kwa u nakesesa mani u fhira ene."  
who is more beautiful than her."  
"A!"  
"U khou vhona mini naa?"  
"What are you looking at?"



"E!"

"Ha! Hoku kwo nnakelela nne."

"This one looks beautiful to me."

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?

Sara, now why are you angry?

Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.

I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.

"Ni ri vhudze tshe na kwatela tshone."

"Tell us what made you angry."

130 "Ndo ni rengela rokho ya mutshato

"I bought you a wedding dress and

na zwienda zwa mutshato."

wedding shoes."

"Zwino ni khou di mmbengela mini mani?"

"Now why do you hate me man?"

"Hae, lovey wanga hoyu."

"My very own love."

"Tshila tshifhinga, hee,

"During that time

ro vha ri tshi tou nesana."

we pampered each other."

"Wa wana ri tshi tshimbila hafha badani."

"Everything was well."<sup>3</sup>

"Ha! Ngoho!"

"Truly!"

"Ndi kha di humbula

"I still remember

"Johannes houla wa hangei

"Johannes from

140 Johannesbege."

Johannesburg."

"A tshi khou mu tamelela ri tshi khou vhuya."

"He was attracted by her when we were on our way back."

"E!"

"A mu khwikhwidza nga dzirokho. Vha a divha zwauri ndo

"He pulled her dress. Do you know that

lila divha lothe?"

I cried the whole day?"

"Nda mbo di dzhia nda mbo di ri ngoho-ngoho

"I thought it truly would be better

ndi khwine ndi badele laisentsi ya aeroplane ndi

to pay for an aeroplane ticket

shavhe naye nne."

and run away with her."

"A! Nangoho ra vhuya."

"Truly, we returned."

"Aeroplane yo ri tsitsa hafho airpoto."  
"We got off the aeroplane at the airport."  
150 "E!"

Heehoo!  
Hoo-hoo!

"Ha!"  
"Kana na nga naka nothe vhasidzana."  
"I tell you girls, you are  
"Hafho ndi a ni amba."  
all beautiful."  
"Kha Sara ni nga si swike."  
"You cannot equal Sara."  
"Sara vha tshi pfa ndi tshi khou mu imba, hee."  
"When you hear me singing about Sara."  
"Ha! Ngoho! Musidzana o nakesa hoyu mani."  
"Truly! This girl is beautiful, man."  
"Mara,  
"But,

160 helo duvha o vha o di tou khakha."  
on that day she made a mistake."  
"A khakhela nne."  
"She wronged me."  
"Hm!"

"Ndi khou humbela sa muthu."  
"When I was asking as a person."<sup>4</sup>

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you stingy?  
Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.  
"E!"

"Hoyu nwana vha a divha zwauri mini? Ndi Mutswana."  
"Do you know about this girl? She is a Tswana."<sup>5</sup>  
"Mutswana o naka vhone."  
"A Tswana is beautiful."  
"Xe!"

170 "Vhone!"  
"Xe! Mavhudzi a hone!"  
"Her hair!"  
"Vha tou pfa u nga di ri, na zwino, hee!"  
"You hear that, and now!"  
"E!"

"Pheme ya hone a si heinoni ine ya sokou tshofelelwa,  
"Her perm is not one which is  
tshofelelwa lini."  
done hurriedly."  
"Yone i itiwa zwavhudi, grand-grand."  
"Hers is done well, grand-grand."

"Nice-nice."  
"Tshavhudi tshi a khodiwa."  
"A beautiful thing deserves praise."

"Beautiful ndi zwavhudi musii."  
"That which is beautiful is good."

180 Hee, Sara, zwino o kwatela mini. "Lovey?"  
Hey Sara, now why are you angry. "Lovey?"  
Ndi tshi mu humbela fola a mbo di ndzima.  
When I asked you, you refused.

"U a mpoila hoyu musidzana."

"The girl is spoiling me."

"E! He!"

"Habe, ngoho, muthu, hee:

"Furthermore, indeed, a person:

Wo mu dowela ngamaanda mani,

If you are familiar with him,

hm,

wa mu funa a fhirisisa vhatu vhothe."

you love him more than other people."

"U tshi mu fara sa kumba."

"You treat her like an egg."

"Ndo vha ndi sa tendi a tshi rwiwa mara lini,

"I did not allow myself or anybody else

190 na nne ndo vha ndi sa mu dii."

to beat her."

"Yo vha i ndeñwa yanga."

"She was my spoilt one."

"O vha o nakesa."

"She was very beautiful."

"Vhone vho vha vha tshi tou shona na u mu rwa na nga mpama."

"You were ashamed to beat her with an open hand."

"O nakesa hoyu musidzana."

"This girl is very beautiful."

"Hm!"

"A tou vha isala, hee."

"If she may be hurt."

"He tshila tshanda tshawe arali a tou ñombelela ndo do tshi

"Do you know, if that hand of hers grasps me, I kiss it

mune ngamaanda. Vha a divha?"

passionately."

"E!"

200 Sara, zwino wo kwatela mini?

Sara, now why are you angry?

Ndi tshi u humbela fola wa mbo di ndzima. "Lovey."

When I asked you for tobacco, you refused. "Lovey."

Ene, huno, wo kwatela mini?

Why are you angry?

"E!"

"U a dzima!"

"Stingy!"

"Zwino ndi a lila, zwanga,

"Now I must cry,

ngauri no ntala inwi musadzi wanga."  
because you, my wife, divorced me."  
"Lovey!"

"O nditsha."  
"She has divorced me."

"Mara no problem:

"But no problem:

210 Ee, hu na Sophie nga hangei."

Yes, Sophie is over there."

"Ngoho, zwa vhukuma ndi fanela u tshimbila na zwipoto zwothe

"Indeed, I must search all the beer houses,

ndi tshi khou mu toda. Ndi do mu wana."

looking for her. I shall find her."

"Aa!"

"Nda renga biya mbili kana tharu, nda mu nea."

"When I bought two or three beers, I gave them to her."

"Nne a thi nwi mara."

"But I do not drink."

"Aa, o ntenda."

"She will agree."

"Mara ngoho,

"But truly,

vha khou ri vhatu vha tshi amba vha ri

people say you should

ni thanye

be aware of

220 Aids."

Aids."

"I a dina ngamaanda."

"It is very troublesome."

"Hm!"

"I balela

"Doctors cannot

na madokotela."

cure it."

"Ee, na dziñanga

"Yes, neither diviners

na vhothe."

nor anyone else."

"Ee, mara zwino, xee!"

"Yes, but now!"

"Ha-uh, hm-m."

"Hu khou pfi

"It is said

230 ho bvelela philisi dza hone."

that pills have been produced for Aids."

"Sixty rannda nthihi."

"Sixty rand each."

"Aa, saga ya mugayo yo phaphwa na nga ntha, mani."

"That costs more than a bag of maize, man."

"E!"

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?

Sara, now why are you angry?

Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.  
"Nga musadzi wanga."  
"Because of my wife."

"Sarah, ndo mu toda  
"I have loved Sara  
a tshee n̄wana mutukutuku badi."  
since childhood."

"Tshithu tshe nda di tou gudisa tshi henefha vho."  
"I taught her everything."

240 "Ngoho."  
"Really."

"Ngoho, ndi tshi mu humbela, mara hee,  
"Indeed, when I think of her,  
ndi a lila."  
I cry."  
"O naka houla musidzana."  
"That girl is beautiful."  
"Hm!"

"Na musi vha nga mu vhona o tou phemiwa hoyu musidzana,  
"Even if you see this girl with a perm,

pheme ya hone,  
her perm,  
ha, ngoho, khe tsha muñwe tshi a khodwa."  
indeed, you should praise others."  
"Ngoho, tsha muñwe tshi a khodwa."  
"Indeed, you should praise others."

"Sa musadzi wanga vha mu vhenga,  
"If you hate my wife,  
250 vho vhenga na nne."  
you also hate me."  
"Ngoho."  
"Truly."

"Ndi tshi ri ndi male musadzi wavhudi,  
"When I want to marry a beautiful woman,  
havha vhathu vha a ndzhiela."  
these people take her from me."  
"Vha a divha mara hu na gollopa hafha fhethu."  
"You know there are stones here."  
"Gollopa ro no tshi imba, a thi ri?  
"We have spoken of stones, not so?<sup>6</sup>  
"Ha! Ngoho!"  
"Ha! Truly!"

"Tshi a shuma."  
"It works."  
"Wa doba gollopa wa mu dia nga daa,  
"If you pick up a stone and hit him there,

u do zwi vhona  
 you will see  
 260 authi i do fhufhela ntha."  
 a young man jumping."  
 "Aa, ndi do tou doba gollopa."  
 "Aah, I shall pick up a stone."  
 "Gollopa tshi do ndaela kha vhasadzi vhangha havha vha  
 dzhiwaho."  
 "A stone will warn people who take my women."  
 "Na thamahoga. Ya! Ya! Ya!"  
 "And a battle-axe! Ya! Ya! Ya!"  
 "Ndo humbula."  
 "I remembered."  
 "Thamahoga i a shuma ngamaanda."  
 "A battle-axe is effective."  
 "E! Mara vha a fara mapholisa, a thi ri?"  
 "E! But the police will arrest you, not so?"  
 "Ha! Mara ndi do kondelela."  
 "Ha! But I will persevere."

"Dzhele ndi fhethu hune wa di shuma wa di vhuya mani!"  
 "Jail is a place where you serve your sentence and are then  
 released man!"

270 "Ndi khou laya vhoiwi vhañwe havha  
 "I am warning you  
 ni ne na kha di vha murahu kha nne:  
 young people:  
 Ni songo fhurwa nga vhasadzi na sokou tuwa navho na yo  
 Do not be deceived by women and then stay  
 dzula navho."  
 with them."

"U do ni itela tshitori ni tshi khou dzula nae inwi."  
 "She will come with stories when you stay with her."  
 "Ngoho, ni songo tama musadzi."  
 "Indeed, do not desire a woman."  
 "Ni na musadzi ni dzula, ni na dziproblem nanzhi ngamaanda."  
 "When you stay with a woman, you always have many  
 problems."  
 "Ende u divhaisa nga khole uri inwi ni mu vhande mani."  
 "And she hurts herself intentionally so that you must comfort  
 her man."

"Ya, ndi Mmbangiseni hoyu."  
 "Yes, this is Mmbangiseni."  
 "Mmbangiseni:"  
 280 "Ndi muthu wavhudi ngamaanda wa vhulenda ngamaanda."  
 "I am a good and kind person."  
 "Hezwi hafhanoni."  
 "This, here."  
 "Hee!"  
 "Hezwi a tshi ri a ite zwithu  
 "When I want to do things  
 zwawe vha a zwi tshinya. Vhathu weelee."  
 they cause a disturbance.<sup>7</sup> Alas people."  
 "Hm!"

"Vha a divha, ndo no dzula nda renga ula misi nyana,  
"You know, during that time I bought

nda renga aeroplane nyana. Hai, ndo vha ndo tou i koloda."  
a small aeroplane. No, I rented it."

"Hee!"

"Nda mbo di namedza vha a divha."

"I gave somebody a lift."

290 "Ndo namedza na muñwe musadzi. E! Xe! A!"

"I gave a certain woman a lift."

"Wa Mutshaina."

"A Chinese."<sup>8</sup>

"Yo!"

"Ende hoyu ñwana, hee."

"And this child."<sup>9</sup>

"Ha! Ngoho! Jealousy tsha muñwe."

"Ha! Indeed! The jealousy of people."

"Habe u khou i kweta."

"Furthermore there is guitar-playing."<sup>10</sup>

"Ende hafhanoni."

"And here."

"A ri vhavhili, a ri vhararu, ndi ndothe."

"We are not two, we are not three, I am alone."<sup>11</sup>

"Hoku kwe nda ku litsha, hee,

"This one I have left

ndi hoku kune kwa khou nesa-nesa."

is the one pampering me."

300 "Hee!"

"Vha divhe uri hezwi zwine nda zwi lidza

"You must know that what I sing about

ndi uri vhone vha tshi zwi pfa. Vha tou pfa u nga

is for you to hear. You taste it as if it

ndi raisi

is rice

vha khou i la nga lebula."

which is eaten with a spoon."

"E!"

"Vha khou la nice-nice-nice-nice."

"You are enjoying it very much."

"Zwithu zwavhudi ri a zwi nyaga."

"We want beautiful things."

Sara, zwino no kwatela mini?

Sara, now why are you angry?

Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na dzima.

I ask for tobacco and you refuse.

310 "Mulandu wanu ndi mini mara lovey?"

"But what is the matter with you, lovey?"

"Kha do ri

"Come closer

kha sendele tsini  
so that I  
ndi mu vhone."  
can see you."

"Na vhañwe-vho vha a zwi tama vho."

"And others just admire that."

"Fhedzi ni songo ndodela vhusiku. Vhanna, ndi khou humbela  
please."

"But you must not creep upon me at night. People, I beg you."

"Na mmbulahela zwine zwa vha zwanga, ndi do ni pukela."

"If you kill me for what belongs to me, I will become an  
evil spirit."

"Hafho hune na do vha ni hone,

"Wherever you are

haa, ncpu,

320 ndi do ni dela nne."

I will follow."

"Habe, nne ndi mufana."

"Furthermore, I am a boy."

"A thi levhi."

"I am not provocative."

"A thi dini muthu."

"I do not annoy a person."

"Ndi hana u levheliwa."

"I am against provocation."

"Arali na nndina ndi dzhia gollopa, mufana!"

"If you annoy me I will take a stone, boy!"

"Xaa!"

"Ndi a tshifeiva ngauri ndi a tshi doba nne."

"I like doing that."<sup>12</sup>

"Nda ni dia dzikhumbakhumba ni do zwi pfa mufana zwauri

"If I hit you behind the ears you will feel

no rwiwa."

the pain boy."

330 "Aa!"

"Mafeisi anga ndi motshari."

"My fists will send you to the mortuary."

"Nau! Ncpu!"

Aa! Yowee!

Yuwee-yuwee-yuwee!

Ndi-ni-ni-ni-ni-ni!

"Aa!"

"Lovey wanga Sarah."

"Sarah, my lovey."

"Ndi ni funa ngamaanda!"

"I love you very much!"

"Ndo ni rengela na rokho ya mutshato, wena mani."

"I bought you a wedding dress, man."



- 340 "Na zwienda hezwila zwa migo zwauri thaphuthaphu zwavhudi mani."  
 "And high-heeled shoes which tap nicely when you walk, man."  
 "E!"  
 "U funa musadzi. Ndi u mu funa."  
 "Loving a woman. I love her."  
 "Hafhu u tou mu nesa."  
 "You should pamper her."
- "U nga mbudza zwauri Sarah lovey,  
 "Sarah lovey, can you tell me  
 wo kwatela mini?"  
 why you are angry?"  
 "Ngauri ndi khou humbela fola  
 "Because I am asking for tobacco,  
 a u funi."  
 and you do not agree."  
 "Ya! U fanela u amba."  
 "Yes! She should have spoken."
- 350 "Vha a divha zwauri ... musidzana,  
 "Do you know that ... when a  
 a tshi  
 girl  
 vha vhona, u smaila ha hone, u sea ha hone. Kha vha vhona who  
 sees you, she smiles and laughs."  
 ha hone."  
 "See how."  
 "U tou sea u fana a thi divhi zwauri ndi mini lini."  
 "Her laughter defies description."  
 "Ndi mini tsho nakesaho mara afha shangoni?"  
 "What is the most beautiful thing in the world?"  
 "Ya!"  
 "Yes!"
- "Ndi do ni rengela TV musadzi wanga, hee."  
 "I will buy you a TV my wife."  
 "Na tshidimela ni do gidima ngatsho."  
 "And you will also travel in a train."  
 "Na aeroplane ni do fhufha muyani."  
 "And you will fly in an aeroplane."
- 360 "Vha do tama."  
 "They will admire you."  
 "Goloi ya hone ndi heilani  
 "The car is that one with  
 yo phemiwaho wethu."  
 tinted windows."<sup>13</sup>  
 "Ha! Ngoho!"  
 "Ha! Indeed!"  
 "Ndi u mu funa mani."  
 "Doing these things shows my love man."
- "Rokho ya hone ni do wana vhanzhi vha tshi i tama. A nga  
 "Many people will admire her dress. Nobody  
 si i wane."  
 will get it."<sup>14</sup>  
 "Never!"

"Muñwe muthu a nga si i wane."  
 "Others will not get it."  
 "Ndi renga rokho ine ya khou dura two thousand nne."  
 "I buy a dress worth two thousand rand."  
 370 "Aha! Mufana!"  
 "Aha! Boy!"  
 "U a zwi divha na ene."  
 "Even she knows."<sup>15</sup>

"Mara ni ri a ni tsha mpfuna."  
 "But now you say you do not love me anymore."

"Ndo ni tshinya mini?"  
 "How have I wronged you?"  
 "Ndo ni funa zwavhudi lovey."  
 "I love you very much lovey."  
 "Ha, lovey, nga ri vhuyelelane lovey."  
 "Hey lovey, let us be lovers again lovey."  
 "A ngoho nnyi."  
 "You indeed."  
 "Ndi khou ni funa badi."  
 "I love you very much."

Ee, Sara, zwino wo kwatela mini?  
 Yes, Sara, now why are you angry?  
 Aa, ndi tshi u humbela fola wa mbo di ndzima.  
 Aah, when I asked for tobacco you were stingy.

380 "Vha khou mu vhona hoyu muthannga."  
 "You are seeing this young man."  
 "Hoyu muthannga, hee."  
 "This young man."  
 "He!"  
 "Mufana!"  
 "Boy!"  
 "E!"

"Vha toda u ndivha vhanzhi."  
 "Many people want to know me."  
 "Arali vha tshi khou ntoda, hee,  
 "If you want to see me,  
 kana u vhidza bennde yanga,  
 or to book my band,  
 ndi wanala  
 I stay at  
 Ganawa ha Vho-Nndwammbi."  
 Ganawa of Mr Nndwammbi."

390 "Vho-Nndwammbi,  
 "Mr Nndwammbi,  
 nahone ndi tou ri ndi Tshakuma ha Madzivhandila mani."  
 at Tshakuma of Madzivhandila, man."

"Ende vha nga si vhuye vha ri ndi,  
 "And you will not  
 ndi do vhuya  
 be able to  
 nda khakha kha kwine nda khou ita zwone lini."  
 fault me on my playing."

"Ndi nga si khakhe."  
"I will make no mistakes."  
"E!"

"Vhananga, ni tshi hula, hee,  
"My children, your growing up  
mpho khe<sup>i</sup> ndi tshi khou ni itela."  
is supported by my musical talent."  
"Vhoinwi vhañwe no no di vhaho hone,  
"You who are still small,  
400 sedzani zwine khotsi anu a khou ita."  
see what your father is doing."

"Ni zwi kone."  
"You should know that."

"Vhoinwi ni mmbengaho, na mmbulaha, hee,  
You who hate me, you are mistaken if you think  
ni a zwifha."  
you will benefit from killing me."  
"Ndi do ni pukela."  
"I will haunt you."  
"Ni vhone hovhu."  
"You see this."  
"E."  
"Ndo luga ngamaanda, mara kha zwivhi ndi stout."  
"I am a very kind person, but I oppose those harming me."

Te-nde-nde-nde.  
Hoo.  
410 Tandendendendenda.

"Ndi tshi amba ngoho ni ri ndi a zwifha, a thi ri?"  
"When I speak the truth you say I am lying, not so?"

"Ni a divha ni songo humbulela tsha mbiluni ya muñwe ni songo  
"You cannot read  
dzhena mbiluni yawe wethu."  
the thoughts of another person."<sup>16</sup>

"Uh."  
"Tshine na khou toda u vha tshone."  
"What you are trying to be."<sup>17</sup>  
"Hee!"  
"Hei katara,  
"This guitar,  
ndo i gudiswa nga Mudzimu. A si inwi no nngudisaho."  
I was taught by God. You did not teach me."  
"No vha ni tshi do vha ni tshi khou kona zwine zwa khou  
"If you were the one you would be able to do what  
420 itwa nga nne."  
I am doing."

Sara, zwino o kwatela mini?  
Sara, now why are you angry?  
Ndi tshi mu humbela fola a mbo di ndzima.  
I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.

"Ndi fola helo la vhafana!"

"This is the tobacco which is smoked by boys!"

"Hee!"

Hoo!

We-we-we-we.

"Hmm."

"Kana ni nga diphina hafha shangoni ni nga si diphine

"Even if you enjoy life here on earth, you will not

u fana na nne."

enjoy it like me."

430 "Muthu a sa funi nndwa."

"I am a person who dislikes fighting."

"Wa vhulenda."

"A kind person."

"Ha nyagi zwa khakhati."

"I do not want trouble."

"Hai, u hana u diniwa. Na mu dina u do

"No, he hates to be troubled. If you trouble me  
ni mura hekhe!"

I will beat you."

"Hoyu ndi mufana."

"I am a boy."

"Ndi nga ni dia nda vhuya nda ni dobela na gollopa. Nne,

"I may beat you and even pick up a stone. I,

sa mufana, mani,

as a boy, man,

na magadishe a thi

do not even

a thi shumisi."

use a knife."

440 "Rine ri takala ro dzula, wethu."

"We enjoy life."

"Ro dzula fhasi ha murunzi wa duvha."

"We are enjoying life."<sup>18</sup>

"Ro tou dzula ro digeda, so."

"We are living comfortably."<sup>19</sup>

"A!"

"Vha a divha vhanzhi. Vhunzhi havho hafhanoni."

"Many people know that. Those who stay here."

"He!"

"Vha ndivha ngauri."

"They know me."

"E."

"Kupfi mini kula kudzina?"

"What is that small name?"

"E."

450 "La tshikhuwa ndi Ernest."

"The English name is Ernest."

"Ndi lone la munangi henelo."

"That is the one chosen for me."

"Ndi lone dzina li no nandiya kunene lelo."

"It is the name I like very much."

"Li mnandi helo."

"It is nice."

"Grand-grand."

"A sharp name."

Eyowee-yowee-yowee, zwino.

Eyowee-yowee-yowee, now.

"Sarah, mani, lovey!"

"Sarah, man, lovey!"

Zwino wo kwatela mini?

Now why are you angry?

Ndi tshi u humbela fola wa ndzima.

I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.

460 "Ndi tou amba."

"I am speaking."

"A thi di khodi vhunambi hanga."

"I do not boast about my talent."

"Tshine tsha vha hone

"The truth is that

nne ndi do khodwa nga Mudzimu o ntsikaho."

I shall be praised by God who created me."

Sara, zwino wo kwatela mini?

Sara, now why are you angry?

Ndi tshi ni humbela fola na ndzima.

I ask for tobacco and you are stingy.

Tendendendende!

"Ndi a lima

"I am hoeing

tshitensi tshanga."

my plot."

"Nda tavha zwothe na mitshelo, nne, mufana."

"I saw everything including fruit trees, me, a boy."<sup>20</sup>

470 "E, mufana."

"Boy."

"Hee."

"Zwa tenda!"

"It will be successful."<sup>21</sup>

"Zwino, izwi zwithu

"Now, these things do

nne a si maanda anga."

not come from inside me."

"Ndi maanda a ene Mudzimu."

"It is because of God's power."

"Katara ndi khou lidza

"I am always playing the guitar,

tshifhinga tshothe: day or day."

every day."

"E!"

"A, mufana u a i nesa."

"The boy is playing the guitar well."<sup>22</sup>

- 480 "Nice-nice-nice-nice."  
 "Ndi zwine a khou lidza zwi nice."  
 "I am playing it well."  
  
 "Ri tou nesana ro tshi khou tshila, hee."  
 "Even in life we care for each other."  
 "Sa vhathu vhavhili, wee, Sarah."  
 "As two people, Sarah."  
 "A, ngoho."  
 "Ah, indeed."  
 "Ndi kha di u humbula hezwila u tshi khou ndisela Kentucky  
 "I still remember that time when you brought me Kentucky  
 hafhalani tafulani. Ndo dzula ndo tou digeda. Nne, mufana."  
 there on the table. I was sitting comfortably. Me, a boy."  
 "E!"  
  
 "Mara tshithu tshithihi khetshi:"  
 "But this is one thing:"  
  
 "Hmm!"
- 490 "Ndi na inwi Sarah, thi ri,  
 "You are mine, Sarah,  
 wanga?"  
 not so?"  
  
 "Ni divhe u nkhakhela sa muthu a sa ambiho, hee,  
 "You must know that to have wronged me worried me,  
 ndi pfa zwi tshi mbaisa ngamaanda."  
 because I do not gossip."  
 "Ndi uri ndi humbula zwithe."  
 "It is because I think about everything."  
 "Musadzi wanga, a thi ri, lovey?"  
 "My wife, not so, lovey?"  
 "Hm."
- "Wau ndi wau, ndi musadzi wau musi."  
 "Your wife is your wife."  
 "U fanela u mu tongisa tshifhinga tshothe."  
 "You should always be proud of her."  
 "Nne ndi nga mu imisa hafhalani."  
 "I can make her stand over there."
- 500 "Ane a da a mu dzhia mufana ndi doba gollopa."  
 "Anyone who takes her must know that I will pick up a stone."  
 "Yaa!"  
 "Yes!"  
 "Ndo mu imisa mani o diphema."  
 "When I ordered her to stand there with her perm."

1 Smoking tobacco: a metaphor for sex.

2 I.e. his singing talent.

3 Lit. you find us walking this road.

4 The implication is that a person is not usually refused such a thing.

- 6 A reference to song 170.
- 7 I.e. jealous, malicious people.
- 8 A reference to Venda's Taiwanese community. Many Taiwanese people living in Venda are manufacturers who were attracted by economic incentives after the declaration of independence in 1979.
- 9 The singer is referring to himself.
- 10 Lit. to scratch guitar strings.
- 11 A reference to being a bachelor or without a lover.
- 12 Lit. it is my favourite because I pick it up.
- 13 Lit. permed windows.
- 14 It was made exclusively for her.
- 15 I.e. even she knows the price of the dress.
- 16 Lit. another person's heart cannot be entered.
- 17 I.e. others are admiring his musical talent.
- 18 Lit. we are sitting in the shade of the sun.
- 19 Lit. we are sitting comfortably.
- 20 As a result of ploughing.
- 21 I.e. his crop.
- 22 Lit. to nurse the guitar.

172

Mukatshelwa (Mukatshelwa)

O vha o kangwa Mukatshelwa.  
 Mukatshelwa was drunk.  
 A mbo di i bena khuhu yanga.  
 She stole my fowl.<sup>1</sup>  
 A mbo di fara khuhu yanga.  
 She caught my fowl.  
 A mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.  
 She picked up my fowl.  
 "Yo vha yo ngedana."  
 "It was all I had."<sup>2</sup>

"Ende na u tswa li a tswa heli lisadzi."  
 "And this despicable woman is a thief."

- O vha o kangwa Mukatshelwa.  
Mukatshelwa was drunk.  
A mbo di i bena khuhu yanga.  
She stole my fowl.  
A mbo di fara khuhu yanga.  
She caught my fowl.
- 10 Lo vha lo shivha Mukatshelwa.  
Mukatshelwa was stealing.  
"Hae!"  
"Nda mbo di vhona zwauri  
"I saw that  
lo kangwa heli Mukatshelwa."  
Mutshekwa was drunk."  
"Nda li hunga, nne."  
"I tied her up."  
"Au!"  
"Habe lo vha lo no i thuvhula na mathenga haya."  
"She had already plucked the fowl."  
"Li tshi khou i la."  
"She was eating it."  
"Hm!"  
"Musadzi u na tshituhu hoyu."  
"This is a cruel woman."
- 20 "Ndi nduni ndi pfa nwana a tshi ri, a!"  
"When I was inside the house I heard the child saying, a!"  
"Papa,  
"Papa,  
na hu na khuhu ine ya khou lila nnda mara dzavho papa ndo  
I have locked up all your fowls but there is still one  
valela dzothe."  
clucking outside."  
"E!"
- "Hezwi ndi tshi tou bva, ndi tshi ima munangoni, ndi wana hu  
"When I came out, standing next to the door,  
uri ndi Mukatshelwa."  
I saw Mukatshelwa."  
"U khou i thuvha nga mano na mathenga."  
"She was plucking with her teeth."  
"He! Na mathenga ayo, mani!"  
"He! The feathers man!"  
Tsho vha tsho kangwa Mukatshelwa.  
Mukatshelwa was drunk.
- 30 Tsha mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.  
She picked up my fowl.  
"Hai!"  
"No!"
- "Hoyu musadzi ndi mbava."  
"This woman is a thief."
- "Tshisahulu vho lila nga mahola."  
"People at Tshisahulu complained about her last year."  
"E!"  
"Nda mbo di vuwa nda li hunga  
"I woke up in the morning



nga matsheloni."  
and tied her up."

"Uri a mmbudze zwauri khuhu yanga o tou i ita mini."

"So that she should tell what she had done with my fowl."

"Oa!"

"Mara helo duvha ndo mu latisa u tswa nne."

"But on that day I forced her to stop stealing."

40 "Sa mufana wa Thevheni."

"As a boy of Thevheni."

"Aaa!"

"Habe ndo mu dia."

"I also beat her."

O vha o kangwa Mukatshelwa.

Mukatshelwa was drunk.

Tsha mbo di fara khuhu yanga.

She caught my fowl.

"Hei khuhu yanga ndi ya phambo ngoho, ngoho, ngoho."

"This fowl is a hen indeed, indeed, indeed."

"He!"

"Ende i a kudzela vha a divha."

"And it lays many eggs."

"Hetsho a si tshitori lini."

"That is not a lie."

"Khuhu i tou kudzela heyo."

"That fowl lays eggs."

50 Lo vha lo shivha Mukatshelwa.

Mukatshelwa was thieving.

La mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.

She picked up my fowl.

Tsha mbo di fara khuhu yanga.

She caught my fowl.

Tsha mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.

She picked up my fowl.

"Tshi khou tuwa."

"She was leaving."

"Hm!"

"Hai, musadzi ndi tshidakwa hoyu."

"No, this woman is a drunkard."

"Namusi u do vhu lata vhudakwa hawe hovhu vhune a ri u

"Today she will forswear drunkness which forces her

nwa halwa a tila khuhu dza vhathu."

to steal people's fowls."

"Nne dzanga ndi do mu dia u penga."

"Because of my fowls I will beat her thoroughly."

60 "Nne ndi mufana musu."

"I am a boy."

"Ende a thi tambi."

"And I do not fool around."

"Hei!"

"Ndi khou humbula hetshila tshifhinga tshe nda rwa Jack."

"I remember that time when I beat Jack."

"Hu tshi pfi o tswa hamula ya muñwe mudini."  
 "When it was alleged that he stole a hammer from a certain house."  
 "Ndo mu dia, hae."  
 "I beat him."  
 "Ai!"  
 "Nda wana o bva mabulu ayi mivho mbo yothe."  
 "His cheeks were swollen."  
 "Tshifhatuwo tshi sa vhoneali."  
 "You could not recognize the face."  
 "Feisi ya hone ndi mutshari mani."  
 "My fist will land you in the mortuary, man."  
 70 "A thi ri, ndo no di vhuya nda dia  
 "I say, I once beat  
 Jack zwila o dzhiela musadzi."  
 Jack when he took my wife."  
 "Zwila ndi tshi do mu nuda  
 "That time when I beat him  
 a mbo di dzidzivhala."  
 unconscious."  
 "A vuwa thabelo yawe ya vha Tshibuku."  
 "He woke up and pleaded for beer."  
 "Hei! Mara hezwi zwithu."  
 "But these things!"  
 "Zwino, ndi Mukatshelwa khoyu."  
 "Now, it is this Mukatshelwa."  
 "Li shivha ngamaanda! Li a nwa! Li a kangwa!"  
 "A big thief! She drinks! She is drunk!"  
 "He!"  
 Tsho vha tsho kangwa Mukatshelwa.  
 Mukatshelwa was drunk.  
 80 Tsha mbo di fara khuhu yanga.  
 She caught my fowl.  
 Tsho vha tsho kangwa Mukatshelwa.  
 Mukatshelwa was drunk.  
 "Litshani halwa mani musadzi. Ni musadzi wa dabadaba inwi."  
 "Man, leave beer, woman. You are foolish."  
 "A ni musadzi wa nice lini."  
 "You are not a good woman."  
 "Hai!"  
 "No!"  
 "Ende vha vhone li tshi tshimbila."  
 "And you must also look when she walks."  
 "Li tou nga lihwarahwara mani. A si muthu hetshi tshithu. A  
 "She is like a scoundrel man. This thing is not a person. She  
 si musadzi mani."  
 is not a woman man."  
 "Mukatshelwa, ni a divha arali hu tshi pfi muthu u a  
 "Mukatshelwa, if it was allowed to kill a person,  
 vhulahiwa o tshi khou tshila, ro vha ro no ni vhulaha kale  
 we would kill you and throw you  
 90 ra ni posa kule hangei."  
 far away."  
 "Ngauri a ni tshili."  
 "Because you are dead."

"Ni a tswa."

"You steal."

"Why, halwa hanu ni tshi ri u vhu nwa ha di ni sumba u tswa?"

"Why, after drinking beer, do you like to steal?"

"Ai!"

"Lo no i puta nga tshitzhali ila khuhu yanga."

"She has wrapped my fowl in a shawl."

Lo vha lo kangwa Mukatshelwa.

Mukatshelwa was drunk.

La mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.

She picked up my fowl.

"Ndi phambo hei khuhu."

"This fowl is a hen."

"Mara hei khuhu, mara ngoho-ngoho."

"But this fowl, but indeed, indeed."

100 "Yo vha yo no nnyitela na zwikukwana zwinzhi."

"It has produced many chickens."

"Zwino, e!"

"Now!"

"La i fara."

"She caught it."

"Lo i shenga na mathenga, vhathu. Vha khou zwi pfa musu."

"She ate it feathers and all, people. When you are listening."

"Ndi do mu vhidzela mapholisa a Vuwani, nne."

"I shall report her to the Vuwani police."

"Vha mu vhofha."

"They will handcuff her."

"U a tswa musu."

"When she steals."

"Phungo yo no di ya guma na kule badi."

"Her reputation has spread very far."

"Hai! Hm."

"No! Hm."

"Hoyu Mukatshelwa, a thi divhi zwauri ndi musadzi wa vho ..."

"I do not know whose wife this Mukatshelwa is."

110 e ... vha pfi vhonny?"

E ... what is his name?"

"He! Ndi a vha hangwa mani."

"I have forgotten man."

"Ee! Wa Vho-Tshilapfene. Ndi kha di humbula hezwo zwithu."

"Yes! Mr Tshilapfene's wife. I still remember those things."

"E!"

"U tswa ngamaanda!"

"A big thief!"

"Vha tou dzula nae."

"He stays with her."

"O vhuya a hwala phuleithi ya vhuswa ya muñwe mudini."

"She once took a plate of porridge from a certain house."

Lo vha lo shivha Mukatshelwa.

Mukatshelwa was thieving.

La mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.

She picked up my fowl.

- "Wo i doba mani!"  
 "You picked it up man!"  
 120 "U a tswa."  
 "You steal."  
 "Vhuvhava!"  
 "Theft!"  
 "A vhu lisi lini."  
 "It is not a good thing."  
 "Rine vhafana vha Thevheni ra u wanedza u tshi khou ri tswela  
 "If we boys from Thevheni caught you stealing our fowl  
 khuhu yashu ri mbo di u dia."  
 we would have beaten you."
- "Feisi ya hone ndi mutshari musu."  
 "Because my fist will land you in the mortuary."  
 "Arali u munwi wa halwa, hee,  
 "If you are a beer drinker,  
 u fanela u vuwa nga Tshibuku."  
 you will feel revived after drinking beer."  
 "Thabelo yau i fanela u vha Tshibuku ngauri  
 "After we boys from Thevheni have beaten you,  
 ro no u dia rine Vhothevheni. Ha, ri vhafana."  
 your prayer will be for beer."
- 130 Hee, tsho vha tsho khinya Mukatshelwa.  
 Mukatshelwa is drunk.  
 "A tshi tambu Tshibuku lini."  
 "Beer is not something to play with."  
 "A! U tshi shavhe!"  
 "You must run away from it!"  
 "U songo ruda mato wa rudela Tshibuku lini."  
 "Do not open your eyes to beer."  
 "A! Tshi do u sumbedza."  
 "It will ruin you."<sup>3</sup>
- "Ee, halwa vha vhu late u vhu nwa vhathu."  
 "Yes, people should refrain from drinking beer."  
 "Ngauri hezwi vha tshi vhu nwa vhu a vha khontrola nthani  
 "Because after drinking it controls you instead  
 vhone vha khontrola halwa."  
 of you controlling it."
- "Zwino havhanoni Vho-Mukatshelwa vha tou nwa, hee,  
 "Now this Mrs Mukatshelwa starts stealing  
 vhu vha sumba u ya u tswa."  
 after drinking."
- 140 "Vha mbo di ya u tswa khuhu dza vhathu hezwi. Vha tshi lila  
 "She will go to steal people's fowls. They will complain  
 ngavho."  
 about her."  
 "Ende a vha tswi masiari lini, ndi vhusiku hovho  
 "And she does not steal during the day, but at night  
 vhathu vho edela."  
 when people are sleeping."  
 Tsho vha tsho khinya Mukatshelwa.  
 Mukatshelwa was drunk.  
 "Tsho i tswa!"  
 "She stole it!"

Lo vha lo shivha Mukatshelwa.  
Mukatshelwa was thieving.

"Habe lo vha lo i puta nga tshitzhalana."  
"She furthermore wrapped it in a small shawl."  
"A!"

"Khuhu ya mufana wa Thevheni i ya lila vha a divha."  
"The fowl of the boy from Thevheni was cackling you know."  
150 "Yo lila ya phula tshitzhalana hetshila. Ya bvisa thoho."  
"The fowl was cackling and it tore the shawl. Its head emerged."  
"Nda wana musadzi a si tsha divha."  
"The woman did not know what to do."  
"O vhuya a edzisa na u i kenya. A i la na mathenga."  
"She even tried to eat it. She ate it, feathers and all."

La mbo di i doba khuhu yanga.  
She picked up my fowl.

"U a tswa mani!"  
"She steals man!"

"Habe, hi!"  
"Furthermore!"  
"Wa vha musadzi ane a vhuswa nga halwa, hee,  
"If you are a woman controlled by beer,  
na na mudini a hu naki."  
there will be disorder in your house."  
"U vuwa ndi hone u ya halwani."  
"She is an habitual drinker."<sup>4</sup>  
"Li nwa ngamaanda heli lisadzi."  
"This despicable woman drinks very much."

160 Lo vha lo khinya Mukatshelwa.  
Mukatshelwa was drunk.  
Tsho vha tsho kangwa Mukatshelwa.  
Mukatshelwa was intoxicated.  
Tsha mbo di i bena khuhu yanga.  
She stole my fowl.  
"E!"

"Li a tswa mani!"  
"She steals man!"  
"Hm!"

"U tswa tsha muñwe  
"One does not enjoy  
zwi nga si nake o tshi la mani ngauri no tou tswa."  
that which is stolen man."  
"Ni do di vhona u nga nne wa Thevheni ndi khou  
"You will think that I from Thevheni am about to  
swika henefho."  
arrive there."  
170 "Na lubada kana thamahoga."  
"With a stick or a hatchet."

1 The song is based on an incident which happened at Tshisahulu. A woman tried to steal a fowl but was caught red-handed. She was tied up and beaten by the fowl's owner.

2 Lit. it was enough for me.

3 Lit. it will show you.

4 Lit. after waking up she goes drinking.

173

Tshi khou shavha Sathane (Satan is running)<sup>1</sup>

Shavha Sathane tsho hwala mihwalo. Tshi khou shavha  
Satan is running. Satan is running with  
Sathane.

a burden.<sup>2</sup>

Hmmm!

"Hetshi Sathane, hee."

"This Satan."

"Tshi a ri tshiñwe tshifhinga tshi tshi vhona vhakhethwa, hee  
When he sees Christians he feels

tsha pfa arali tshi tshi khou fhenyiwa nga zwine zwa  
defeated by what they  
khou itwa hafhanoni kerekeni."  
do there in church."

"Tsha mbo di doba yatsho mihwalo tsha sokou shavha nayo."  
"He took his burden and ran away."

Tsho, tshi khou shavha tsho hwala mihwalo. Tsho, tshi  
Is running with a burden. Satan is  
10 khou shavha Sathane.  
running.

"Vhathu vha nga vha vha sa divhi uri Sathane ndi mini."

"People may not know what Satan is."

"Na muthu a nga di vha Sathane

"Even a person can be Satan

arali mishumo yawe i sa andani na ine vhañwe vha ita yone."  
when his deeds are bad."

"U a divha Sathane."

"He knows Satan."

O, tshi khou shavha tsho mihwalo. Tshi khou shavha Sathane.  
Running with a burden. Satan is running.

16 Hmmm .....

1 This song is based on a church hymn.

2 I.e. sin.

Vho-Munzhedzi (Mrs Munzhedzi)<sup>1</sup>

Hwala khali, wee, Vho-Munzhedzi vho hwala khali, wee.  
Carrying a pot, Mrs Munzhedzi is carrying a pot.

"Ha!"

"Vhone vhathu!"

"You people!"

"Ndi musi vho i hwala vha tshi khou ya u vhambadza."

"The pot she carried was for sale."

"Ngauri hu na aya Matshangana a hone."

"Because there are Shangaans."<sup>2</sup>

"Zwino, vho hwala. Vha khou ya u vhambadza."

"Now, she is carrying. She is going to sell them."

Hwala khali, wee. Vho-Munzhedzi vho hwala khali, wee.

Carrying a pot, Mrs Munzhedzi is carrying a pot.

1 This song is based on a beer song.

2 I.e. people who are interested in buying pots.

Donngi (The donkey)

Ri tshi amba: Donngi yo fela u luga.

Our saying is: The donkey was killed for its kindness.<sup>1</sup>

Nangwe na i rwa!

Even if you beat it!

Nangwe na i rwa ngoho yo fela u luga.

It remains kind even if you beat it.

"Hai!"

"No!"

"Kana na nga tou i pana!"

"Even if you harness it!"

"Hee!"

"Ni tshi khou i tshaya nga tshimebi nga murahu!"

"When you whip it on the rump!"

"I a kondelela."

"It perseveres."

"Kana na nga i lisa vhuswa i sa li. I do la."

"Even if you force it to eat porridge it will eat."

10 "A thi ri, ni khou tou i kombetshedza."

"Because you are forcing it I say."

Yo fela u luga. Donngi yo fela u luga.

Killed for its kindness. A donkey was killed for its kindness.

"Kana vha nga i rwa!"  
 "Even if you beat it;  
 "Yo fela u luga mani."  
 it remains kind man."  
 "Zwothe zwine vha nga i ita. Kana tou i hwalisa na saga ya  
 "Whatever you may do to it. Even if you force it to carry a  
 mugayo."  
 bag of maize-meal."  
 "I do kondelela mani."  
 "It will persevere man."  
 "Ndi donngi heyo."  
 "It is a donkey."

Ri tshi amba: Donngi yo fela u luga.  
 Our saying is: A donkey was killed for its kindness.  
 Ye! Mm! Mme-nee! Nee! Ne! Ne!

20 Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne! Ne!  
 Nde! Nde! Nde! Nde! Nde! Nde! Nde!

"Munna a dobe tshimebi mani."  
 "A man picked up a whip."  
 "A i tshaye  
 "He beat the donkey  
 yo hwala saga ya mugayo."  
 which was carrying a bag of maize-meal."  
 "A u do wana i tshi kondelela mani. A Mudzimu!"  
 "You will be surprised by its perseverance man. Oh God!"  
 "He!"  
 "Kana a i pane ha. Kana li dzembe nga murahu."  
 "Even if you harness it. Even if it is pulling a plough."  
 28 "I do khwikhwidza."  
 "It will pull very hard."

1 A reference to the type of person who allows others to take  
 advantage of her.

176

Sathane u ya mpfuna (Satan loves me)

Sathane u ya mpfuna. Nne a thi mu funi.  
 Satan loves me. I do not love him.  
 Hezwi a tshi mpfuna, nne a thi mu nyagi.  
 When he loves me, I do not want him.

"Sathane u a mpfuna."  
 Satan loves me.  
 "Nne a thi mu nyagi."  
 "I do not want him."

Sathane u a mpfuna. Nne a thi mu funi.  
 Satan loves me. I do not love him.



**Vhukondeleli** (Perseverance)

**Kondelelani ne, wee. Vhathu kondelelani, wee.**  
Persevere people, persevere.<sup>1</sup>

**Ndi uri tshiñwe na tshiñwe hafhanoni u tou kondelela.**

It is because you must persevere with everything.

**Pheleledzoni ya u kondelela u wana zwivhuya.**

You will be rewarded for your perseverance.

1 Mmbangiseni is instructing people to persevere with their lives in spite of problems. According to him the biggest problem facing people is poverty.

#### 4.6 Phineas Mavhaga, Khathutshelo Mulaudzi and Tshikambe Best Singers

Tshikambe Best Singers are an acoustic band which originated during 1986 at Tshikambe in eastern Venda. The band moved to Johannesburg during the early 1990s. It comprises four members: leader and bass guitarist Phineas Mulingoni Mavhaga (20), lead guitarist Khathutshelo William Mulaudzi (19), drummer Wilson Fhatuwani Ndou (20), and rattle player Nelson Azwinndini Mulaudzi (15), who is Khathutshelo's brother (ages in 1989).



Plate 6. Tshikambe Best Singers

Phineas and Khathutshelo both learned to play the guitar from elder brothers who are migrant workers. Most of the songs performed by the band were composed by Phineas (180-182; 185 & 186). The rest were composed by other band members. The band members formerly all lived in the same neighbourhood at Tshikambe. When I met them, Khathutshelo had already matri-

culated. Phineas was a matric pupil at Fhatuwani Secondary School at Malavuwe. Nelson was in standard seven, and Wilson had left school before matric.

Phineas's father is Edward Madala Mavhaga. He is a migrant labourer who has been working as a full-time gardener in Oaklands, Johannesburg, for many years. He only comes home during leave, and during Easter and Christmas. He supports his unemployed wife, Mercy Phophi, but does not earn enough to pay for the education of his three school-going sons.

After passing matric, Phineas enrolled for an engineering course at a technikon in Mamelodi. He hopes to be appointed at the Tshikondeni coal mine in Venda on completion of his studies. Phineas gets only limited support from his parents. He finances himself and two younger brothers from his income as an author. He has published thirteen Venda works. These include dramas, short stories and poetry collections, some of which have been prescribed for school use.

The band dispersed temporarily during 1990. Khathutshelo was appointed as a post office clerk in Pretoria at the end of 1989. His father is a shopkeeper in Rivonia, and his mother still resides at Tshikambe. Wilson became employed as a shop assistant near Tshiombo in northern Venda, and Nelson and Phineas remained at school. The band performed infrequently when Khathutshelo returned from town on a visit. During 1991 Phineas started his technikon studies in Mamelodi, and Wilson was appointed as a plumber's assistant in Pretoria. This allowed the band to resume its playing.

Tshikambe Best Singers exhibit a performance practice which is an integral component of their aspirations and worldview.

Phineas and Khathutshelo belong to the younger, socio-economically mobile generation of guitarists. Unlike Solomon Mathase, Albert Mundalamo and other, usually older guitarists, Phineas and Khathutshelo are matriculants with hope of a relatively prosperous future. They are members of the Apostolic Faith Mission Church (AFM) which allows considerably more scope for individual expression than the Zion Christian Church. Some members of the AFM remark that they dislike the uniformity which characterizes the Zion Christian Church, especially in terms of dress as well as communal musical expression which is often divided along gender lines. By contrast, the AFM allows individuals and small groups the opportunity for religious and musical expression during services. These groups are often gospel choirs comprising young men and women. Sometimes they are accompanied by guitarists and keyboard players. Guitarists who belong to the AFM are often stimulated in their musical output by their church membership and religious experiences. For example, song 181 (cf. audio recording 34) is not only a religious expression. Its form and content resemble an AFM church service in which emotional tension gradually rises to a climax when certain members of the congregation enter a state of altered consciousness (cf. 181: 11-23).

AFM guitarists like Phineas and William are periodically requested by church officials to perform during services, church concerts, conferences and other ceremonies. In some cases they form part of musical groups which do not perform outside the church context. These groups are important in terms of attracting new church members, and people sometimes walk several kilometres to attend services at which they perform. Sometimes they sing standard hymns, and at other times they sing their own compositions.

Tshikambe Best Singers also performed in the school context when its members were still scholars. They were requested to perform at various school functions such as matric farewells (cf. 183). For them, musical performance is an expression of contemporary social experience. Young people love music, and they like to dance, as happened when the Tshikambe Best Singers performed at school concerts.

Unlike Mashudu Mulaudzi and his temporary musical associations, Tshikambe Best Singers have managed to remain together. Like other small guitar bands their ambition is to achieve commercial success. They find themselves on level three of the model of the performance levels on which guitarists operate (cf. fig. 7). On this level they are still unknown outside their immediate environment. However, they are ambitious, and are building a reputation for themselves: "People of this place do not know us. They will know us because of our talent" (184: 3-4). Although music making is a joy to them, the uncertainty of life necessitates a view of musical performance as a potential source of survival and prosperity.

Proceeding from this intermediate level to commercial success is problematic. Tshikambe Best Singers, like so many other musical groups, are reticent to perform in public. This is partly to avoid jealousy (cf. 184 & 185), but mainly to protect their musical creations. Tshikambe Best Singers want to make a commercial recording before starting to perform publicly, thus preventing other artists from copying their music. This also precludes the band from busking, which is a potential source of income. In addition, Phineas considers busking on the Reef too risky on account of the high level of public violence. As band leader he feels he has a responsi-

bility towards the other members of the band, and cannot allow their lives and property to be endangered.

Although Tshikambe Best Singers have become based in Johannesburg, they have not changed their style of performance. For Phineas, the band's performance style remains that of **muzika wa sia lala**. This literally means the "music of those who have been left behind sleeping", i.e. "music of the deceased", or "music of the ancestors". Phineas is one of the very few guitarists who describe and classify their music explicitly. Most musicians refer to their music generically as **nyimbo dza Vhavenda** (Venda songs). However, Phineas makes a distinction between **nyimbo** and **muzika**. **Nyimbo** comprise all styles of traditional music. This music is essentially vocal, but it also includes drumming. **Muzika**, on the other hand, is any contemporary music which is either exclusively instrumental, or comprises singing and instrument playing. Phineas translates **muzika wa sia lala** as "cultural music". This type of music is syncretic. It exhibits traditional roots, and particularly promotes patterns of traditional morality. Thus the concept of **muzika** refers to more than musical sound. It is a contemporary application of the traditional concept of **ngoma** (i.e. music and ritual) as a way and view of life (cf. Kruger 1989). **Muzika** proceeds from the moral basis of **nyimbo**. The songs of Tshikambe Best Singers are classified as "cultural music" because they deal with topics commonly associated with traditional music. The fact that the songs comprise a basic I-IV-V pattern does not matter.

In terms of content, virtually all the songs under discussion in this thesis may be classified as **muzika wa sia lala**. As indicated before, they are part of a conscious effort to interpret and redefine the present on the basis of tradi-

tional morality. Most contemporary guitarists are critical of their social environment. One of Phineas's published poetry collections is called *Posa ito* (lit. to cast an eye). This title refers to the artistic endeavour of looking critically and philosophically at the world, and to comment on its ills. It applies to literature as well as music. In the song texts of Tshikambe Best Singers, there is no evidence of complacency and social disengagement. These musicians confront contemporary existence head-on. They address family and marital problems (178-180), criticize jealousy (184 & 185) and alcohol abuse (182; 187), show concern for community needs (186), and express religious experience (181).

The urban environment in which Tshikambe Best Singers have come to function has not affected their performance practice. Phineas notes that most of his audience were born in urban areas. They have had no or very little exposure to styles of rural traditional music. Therefore, "cultural music" is something new to them. It is interesting - "it is a fashion". By contrast, Phineas associates Solomon Mathase's jive songs with elderly people residing in rural areas. While young urbanites want to know about "cultural music", elderly people want to be "modern" by adopting new forms of cultural expression. Jiving may thus be considered generic of many aspects of contemporary experience and behaviour. Like *marabi*, jive and "cultural music" serve as a symbolic expression of the birth of new cultural patterns. They may express traditional morality, but their ultimate form reflects the desire of people to "modernise by absorbing new cultural elements within a familiar structure" (cf. Coplan 1985: 107).

Tshikambe Best Singers: Song texts

178

Mme a Shoni (Mother of Shoni)

**Mme a Shoni, ngoho, vha nnyita 'ni nne?**  
Mother of Shoni, what are you doing to me?  
**Vho mmalela musadzi wa dabadaba.**  
You chose a bad wife for me.<sup>1</sup>

**Ndi tshi dzhena nduni yanga**  
When I entered my house  
**ndi wana ho ngo shula.**  
I found she had not done any smearing.  
**Ndi tshi bvela mutani wa hone**  
When I reached the courtyard from the house  
**ndi wana ho ngo swiela.**  
I found she had done no sweeping.  
**Ndi tshi la vhuswa ha hone**  
When I ate her porridge  
**ho ngo pwasha mapundu.**  
I found lumps in it.<sup>2</sup>  
**Ndi tshi la muroho wa hone**  
When I ate her vegetables  
10 **ho ngo shela na muno.**  
I found she added no salt.  
**A tshi kuvha thundu dzanga**  
When she washed my clothes  
**u tou rwise na matombo.**  
she did a bad job.<sup>3</sup>  
**A tshi aina thundu dzanga**  
When she ironed my clothes  
**u fhisa marukhu anga.**  
she burnt my trousers.  
**Mme a Shoni, ngoho, vha nnyita 'ni nne?**  
Mother of Shoni, what are you doing to me?  
16 **Vho mmalela musadzi wa dabadaba.**  
You chose a bad wife for me.

1 This song is based on reality and concerns a couple residing at Tshifudi.

2 Lit. pimples.

3 Lit. the clothes appear to have been rubbed with stones.

179

Musadzi o rema n̄wana (A woman hacked a child)<sup>1</sup>

**Ndi musadzi o rema n̄wana, wee-ahee.**  
It was a woman who hacked a child.  
**Ahee, a songo lila, wee-ahee.**  
Do not cry,  
**Nne, mme anga vha songo lila, wee-ahee.**  
Do not cry mother.



**Nne, mme anga vha takale, wee-ahee.**  
Be happy mother.  
**Ndi vhone vho nthemisaho, wee-ahee.**  
You are the cause.<sup>2</sup>  
**Ndi tshi fa vha takale, wee-ahee, vha songo lila.**  
When I die you must rejoice, do not cry.  
**Vha do vha vho awela, wee-ahee, vha songo lila.**  
You will be free of trouble, do not cry.  
**A tshi ri ndi vha Hatshivhasa, wee-ahee, vha songo lila.**  
Because you are from Sibasa, do not cry.

1 This song is based on a well-known beer song which has also been adapted for tshigombela performance.

2 The song relates to fictitious interpersonal conflict during a time of social transition. Involved here are three female family members: grandmother, mother and grandchild. The girl wishes to have a boyfriend of her own choosing, but her grandmother wants to arrange a marriage according to precolonial custom. The mother gets involved in the argument, and eventually (but unexplained) ends up murdering the child. In the song the mother is addressing the grandmother in a very bitter and cynical fashion.

180

Lufuno (Love)

Lufuno, lufuno,  
Love, love,  
yuwii, lufuno lu ya konda.  
it is hard to find love.<sup>1</sup>  
Lufuno, lufuno. Tshukhwi, lu ya konda.  
Love, love. Indeed, it is hard to find love.

Vhaswa ni itani,  
Young people, what do you think you  
ni tshi tamba nga lufuno?  
are doing, playing with love?

Mudi a si mutambo. Mudi u ya konda.  
Having a family is not a game. Having a family is hard.

Lumalo, tshukhwi, lumalo na lwone lu ya konda.  
Marriage, indeed, marriage is also hard.

1 This is "because girls pretend" when it comes to love.

181

Murena a tshi ri sika (The Lord created us)<sup>1</sup>

Murena a tshi ri sika o ri sikela mulalo.  
The Lord created us to live in peace.  
Murena a tshi ri sika o ri itela mukovhe.  
The Lord created us and gave us a talent.

Muthu nga u thanyesa  
A person created a talent  
a diitela mukovhe.  
for himself through wisdom.

Ha mbo vha u tshinya phanda ha Murena.  
That was an offense against God.<sup>2</sup>

Murena ho ngo ri lata. U ri toda ri tshi vhuya.  
The Lord has not abandoned us. He wants us to repent.  
Ri nga vhuya hayani, hayani nga lutendo.  
We can find him through faith.<sup>3</sup>  
Ri tshi humbela pfarelo, pfarelo nga thabelo.  
We ask for forgiveness, forgiveness through prayer.

Vhatendi shavhani, shavhani zwivhi.  
Leave, leave your sins Christians.  
10 Vhuvhi hanga, vhuvhi hanga, vhuvhi hanga.  
My sins, my sins, my sins.

"Ndo zwi vhona zwauri ndi muitazwivhi Murena."  
"I have realized I am a sinner God."<sup>4</sup>  
"Khotsi ndi a disola phanda ha tshifhatuwo tsha vhone."  
"Father, I am confessing to you."  
"Khotsi, vha nga vha vhone vhane vha nkhangwela  
"Father, you are the one who can forgive me  
mune wanga u bva namusi."  
from now on."

"Ndi a dikumedzela phanda ha tshifhatuwo tshavho  
"I am submitting myself to you  
uri vha vhe vhone vhane vha nthanga phanda."  
so that you may be my saviour."<sup>5</sup>  
"Vha vhe vhone vhane vha ntsireledza hothe hune nda vha ndi  
"You will protect me wherever  
hone."  
I am."

"Khotsi anga, ndi a tenda uri vhone vha a tshila  
"My Father, I believe that you are the living God  
20 nahone vha a fulufhedzea."  
who can be trusted."

"Khotsi anga, ndo zwi vhona uri ndi muitazwivhi Murena."  
"My Father, I have realized I am a sinner, Lord."  
"Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Nggggg! Ai! Ai!"  
"Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai! Halleluya! Halleluya! Amen!"

Ndo zwi vhona, ndo zwi vhona, Yehova u a tshila.  
I have realized, I have realized God is alive.  
Ro zwi vhona, ro zwi vhona, Yehova u a tshila.  
We have realized, we have realized God is alive.  
U ya fhodza, u ya fhodza, u ya fhodza na malwadze.  
He cures, he cures, he cures diseases.  
27 U ya fhodza, u ya fhodza, u ya fhodza na tshipengo.  
He cures, he cures, he even cures madness.

1 This song has been inspired by Phineas's involvement in the  
Apostolic Faith Mission Church.

2 I.e. only God creates and gives talents.

3 Lit. we can return home through faith.

4 This part of the song pertains to that emotional part of the service during which some people enter a state of altered consciousness.

5 Lit. the one who leads.

182

Gigini (At the beer house)

(Chorus)

Gigini, a thi lali gigini.

I cannot sleep because of a beer house.

(solo)

Gigini nda humbula a thi lali, wee.

Alas, I cannot sleep when I am thinking of a beer house.<sup>1</sup>

Gigini nda humbula ndi a ofha, wee.

When I think of a beer house I am afraid.

Gigini hu lala mavemu, wee.

Criminals sleep at a beer house.<sup>2</sup>

Gigini, a thi lali gigini.

I cannot sleep because of a beer house.

Mulaudzi ndi inwi.

You, Mulaudzi.

Mavhagani nahone ndi fhethu ha gigini, wee.

At Mavhaga's place there is also a beer house.

Gigini ndi fhethu ha mavemu, wee.

Criminals gather at a beer house.

Gigini hu dzula zwidakwa, wee.

There are drunkards at a beer house.

10 Gigini vha lala na dzimbado, wee.

They sleep with axes at a beer house.

Gigini vha lala na dziphanga, wee.

They sleep with knives at a beer house.

Gigini, a thi lali gigini.

I cannot sleep because of a beer house.

Tshikambe ndi shango la dzigigi, wee.

Tshikambe is beer house country.

Gigini hu lala madabadaba, wee.

A mad person sleeps at a beer house.

Gigini hu lala zwidabadaba, wee.

Mad people sleep at a beer house.

16 Gigini, a thi lali gigini.

I cannot sleep because of a beer house.

1 Gigini: a house where beer is made and sold or a house where a party is given.

2 These criminals are people who become so drunk at a beer house that they end up sleeping there because they are incapable of getting home. They usually end up arguing and fighting.

183

Ri khou tuwa (We are going)<sup>1</sup>

We are going now, we are going now.  
Goodbye teacher.  
We are going now, we are going now.  
Ri khou tuwa rine. Ri khou tuwa nañwaha.  
We are going. We are going this year.  
Vha do sala  
You will remain  
vha tshi funza vhañwe, teacher.  
teaching others, teacher.

1 A matric farewell song.

184

Mpho yashu (Our talent)

Ndi mpho yashu zwa vhunambi, ndi mpho yashu.  
Singing, singing is our talent.

Rine ri a dzhena vha Tshikambe, rine ri a dzhena.  
You, people of Tshikambe, we are entering.

A vha ri divhi vha mashango, a vha ri divhi.  
People of this place do not know us.  
Vha do ri divha nga vhunambi, vha do ri divha.  
They will know us because of our talent.

Ndi mpho yashu zwa vhunambi, ndi mpho yashu.  
Singing, singing is our talent.  
Ndi mpho yashu vha vhutshivha ni songo tshivha.  
It is our talent, do not be jealous.<sup>1</sup>  
Ni songo tshivha.  
Do not be jealous.  
Hai, litshani ri ye phanda.  
No, leave us to improve.  
Heli shango li ye phanda.  
This country will make progress.<sup>2</sup>

10 Hai, litshani ri ye phanda.  
No, leave us to improve.

1 Tshikambe Best Singers are regarded with jealousy because people believe they earn money with their music making.

2 In other words Tshikambe will become well-known through its association with the band.

185

Vhasadzi vha Tshikambe (Women of Tshikambe)

(Chorus)  
Zwi a mmbavha nne.  
It hurts me.

**Ndi mutuku nne.**

I am a young person.

(solo)

**Vhasadzi vha Tshikambe, ndo vha tshinya mini?**

Women of Tshikambe, how have I wronged you?

**Hezwi vha tshi ntsola.**

When you talk behind my back.<sup>1</sup>

**Ndo vha tshinya mini? Nne mutshetshe mungafha.**

How have I wronged you? I am just a young person.

**Ndo vha tshinya mini? Nne mutukutuku.**

How have I wronged you? I am just a young person.

**A vha shoni ngani u sola lutshetshe lungafha?**

Don't you feel ashamed of talking behind a young person's back?

**O vha tshinya mini, n̄wana wa Vho-Mercy?**

How have I wronged you, child of Mercy?<sup>2</sup>

**O vha tshinya mini, n̄wana wa Vho-Thaina?**

How have I wronged you, child of Thaina?<sup>3</sup>

10 **Ndo vha lela mini ha? Nne lutshetshe lungafha?**

What have I done? I am just a young person.

**Ndi tshi vha koloda, kha vha ambe nne ndi lifhe.**

If I am in your debt, let us discuss the matter, and I will repay you.

1 This song also refers to people who are jealous of the band.

2 Phineas's mother.

3 William's mother.

186

**Vhamusanda Vho-Tshikambe** (Headman Tshikambe)

(Chorus)

**Vho-Ratshinyiwaho.**

Mr Ratshinyiwaho.

(solo)

**Ndi vhamusanda**

The headman

**ndi Vho-Tshikambe.**

is Mr Tshikambe.

**Ndi vhamusanda**

The headman

**Vho-Ratshinyiwaho.**

is Mr Ratshinyiwaho.<sup>1</sup>

**Kha vha ri thuse nne**

Help us

**muhali washu.**

honourable sir.

**Rine ri khou tambula.**

We are suffering.

**Magwedzho fhano.**

We want waterpumps here.

10 Zwikolo fhano.

We want schools here.<sup>2</sup>

1 Rulers are presented with a new name, symbolic of ruling status, on their succession. The name Ratshinyiwaho means "if you turn against me, there will be trouble". This refers to the trappings of political authority, and how the latter is maintained.

2 The headman listened to this song at the Mavhaga home. He received it favourably by "smiling". He was subsequently instrumental in implementing the building of a new school.

187

Tshengelo (Tshengelo)

(Chorus)

Ahee, Tshengelo.

(solo)

Tshengelo inwi.

You, Tshengelo.

Tshengelo ñwananga.

Tshengelo my child.

Tshengelo, ni lisa mbilu ñwananga.

Tshengelo my child, you are breaking my heart.<sup>1</sup>

Lo tsha ni lala nnda Tshengelo ñwananga.

Time and again you arrive at home the next morning,<sup>2</sup>

Tshengelo my child.

Lo tsha ni vhuya vhusiku Tshengelo ñwananga.

Time and again you arrive home at night, Tshengelo my child.

Tshengelo, ni lisa mbilu vhabebi.

Tshengelo, you are breaking your parents' hearts.

Khotsi anga,

My father,

zwothe zwe vha nndaya ndo zwi pfa, baba.

I have listened to your advice.

1 This song refers to a young man who drinks too much. His father is the singer.

2 Lit. to sleep outside.

#### 4.7 Home made guitars and the basics of guitar performance

I encountered several home made guitars during my first visits to Venda (1983-1984). These instruments appear to have been common in the past as most adult guitarists I know started their musical career on one. However, home made guitars have become rare, apparently because more people are able to afford factory made guitars, or receive them as presents from working relatives. I met only two players of home made guitars during the past few years. They were Mbulaheni Netshipise of Tshififi, and Mviseni Masikhwa of Ngudza. Mbulaheni is the more competent of the two players, and I discuss his songs in this section.

My limited information on the performance culture of the home made guitar correlates with some of the findings of Kubik (1989). As I indicate in my model of guitar performance levels (fig. 7), home made guitars are usually associated with boys around the age of early puberty. These instruments have become symbolic of the identity and aspirations of a contemporary age-set. Kubik notes that the popularity of home made banjos among Zambian male adolescents is partly due to the "gap created by the breakdown ... of traditional educational systems and the consequential loss of ideals with which the younger generation can identify" (Kubik 1989: 5). Mbulaheni and Mviseni were members of two separate groups of young boys I found wandering along rural roads over a weekend. Such groups are quite common. They not only sometimes include a person carrying a guitar, but also a radio or a soccer ball. Like fried chicken, wedding dresses and motor cars (cf. song 171), these objects are popular symbols of contemporary social experience and identity. Home made guitars also provide a cheap, yet valuable way for the explo-

ration and consolidation of musical technique and performance practice. Performances on home made guitars exhibit the basic principles of guitar playing, and they lay the foundation for subsequent expert performance.

Consider the video recording (no 8) of Nkhwasheni (lit. "break me") Band of Tshapasha. This band comprises four boys. The guitarist is Dzhutas Nemaungani (10). The two drummers are Ntanganedza Muaga (12) and Moses Sitagu (9) (on the drum-cymbal combination). The leading vocalist, who also composes many of their songs, is Thinavhuyo Tshikhotho (he is on the extreme right of the band on the recording). The guitar has a polish tin resonator, a short neck, and five thin nylon strings attached to nails. The strings are not tuned, and there are no frets. The drums comprise tins covered with inner-tube. One drum also has its own "cymbal" in the form of bottle tops threaded onto a length of wire.

Although these instruments are crude, and the songs simple, the performance practice of Nkhwasheni Band reveals the social aspirations and identity of its young members. In the recorded song (cf. fig. 18), Dzhutas strums the open strings (cf. / mark). However, he also dampens them at regular intervals (X mark). This dampening is probably the forerunner of chord changes on a proper guitar.

Fig. 18 (cf. video recording 8) comprises a traditional structural design. The antiphonal singing of the band is divided into two phrases which are tonally and metrically balanced. The main tonality shift of the song is evident in the part of the leader. His first phrase is on thakhula G, and his second phrase on phala F. These two tones are supported by their harmonic equivalents (C and Bb) in the



chorus part.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a song. Each system includes staves for leader, chorus, guitar, drum 1, and drum 2. The lyrics are 'Tshi-ka-te i' and 'du-ra one thou-sand'. The guitar part uses slashes for open strings and 'X' for dampened strings. The drum parts are marked with 'L' and 'R' for left and right drums. The number '32' is written in the top right corner of the second system.

Fig. 18 (Tshikate i dura one thousand. Darata i dura one thousand ("A coil of wire costs one thousand"): Pitch = G, original = G#; 4 pulses = 116; guitar: / = open strings, X = dampened strings.

The songs of Nkhwasheni Band express patterns of contemporary Christian ethics and class formation:

Ndi muhulu Mudzimu wanga.  
 (My God is powerful.)  
 Sathane ndi tshituku.  
 (Satan is weak.)

And:

Pfunzo! Ndi yone pfunzo.  
 (Education! It is education.)

The first song is one the boys learned in their church, the

Apostolic Faith Mission Church. In terms of their worldview and aspirations, Nkhwasheni Band seems to be a basic version of Phineas Mavhaga's Tshikambe Best Singers. Group musical performance for them also is an expression of contemporary life. They attach importance to school education, and use band performance as a setting for religious expression. This performance practice emphasizes the importance of linking cultural products with their creative processes and social expressions. Relatively simple cultural products are not necessarily congruent with lack of complex thought processes. The instruments of the band might appear as crude children's toys. However, it is clear that they are symbolically and expressively no less relevant than more complex and widely used instruments. As guitarist Ndishavhelafhi Nemurura of Madamalala remarks in a song:

I do not want to be insulted by someone's mother.  
I have my own guitar.  
It is a home made guitar.  
I can break it when I am troubled.  
It can make you cry and reflect.

(Marole 1992: 19)

#### 4.7.1 The construction of home made guitars

A wide range of terms exists for various parts of the guitar. Not surprisingly, musicians who make their own instruments are most familiar with them. I provide here the terms used by Mbulaheni Netshipise, as well as some other terms in common use.

Any kind of guitar is usually referred to as katara (cf. Afr. kitaar). A home made guitar is also called gomboza. This seems to be a word of Zulu origin, signifying any large, empty container. It specifically refers to the sound box of the guitar which usually comprises a five liter oil-can (cf.

pl. 7). A number of other terms signifying an empty container are also in use to refer to a home made guitar. Mbulaheni uses the archaic term *tshituruturu*, which refers to a one gallon tin. Although Venda home made guitars form part of a larger Southern African cultural complex (cf. Kubik 1989), the name *banjo* is unknown except to a few older migrant workers who remember the instrument being played in Johannesburg.



Plate 7. Mbulaheni *Netshipise*

Mbulaheni has no specific term for the neck of the guitar, but Solomon Mathase refers to it as *mufhini* (the haft of an implement). The neck comprises any suitable piece of wood. The neck of Mbulaheni's instrument is approximately fifty cms in length, six cms wide, and two cms thick. It is inserted lengthwise into the oil-can through a hole cut for this purpose. The plank is pushed down to the bottom of the oil-can, giving the instrument an overall length of approximately seventy-eight cms. The plank is secured by having nails

driven into it through the tin. Because of the position of the plank, the soundhole (*buli*, hole) is made in the side of the instrument.

Mbulaheni's instrument has eight frets comprising lengths of thick wire. A fret is commonly referred to as *tshititshi* ("station"). This refers to the fact that the string vibrates from the bridge to where it is stopped at a fret. The fret thus becomes the "station" where the "train" or string stops. The lengths of wire comprising the frets are pressed firmly into the wood, and bent around the sides of the neck. In performance Mbulaheni uses the second, third, fourth and fifth frets. The third and fourth frets feature prominently, and the chords produced by stopping the strings on them are a whole tone apart.

Home made guitars feature nylon strings only. Mbulaheni refers to a nylon string as *lutale*, defined by Van Warmelo (1989) as the "thick dorsal muscle along spine, from which long sinew for sewing is taken; hence such sinew; thread". Metal strings, which are used on factory made guitars, are referred to as *dzirale* (sing. *lurale*, wire). The strings on Mbulaheni's guitar are inserted through holes made in the bottom seam of the oil-can. The strings are knotted to prevent them slipping out. All the home made guitars I observed had three strings. A home made guitar I encountered at Hamukuya in 1984 (cf. Kruger 1986, pl. 38) had four tuning pegs, but only three strings. From the width of the neck of the guitar and the spaces between its strings it seems that a fourth string may have caused performance difficulties.

The strings are wound around forked sticks (approximately ten cms in length) which are thrust through holes made in the

head of the instrument. These tuning pegs are referred to as *zwitanda zwa u rea*, "the sticks which hold" (the strings). It is quite difficult to tune a home made guitar, as the tuning pegs tend to slip in their holes.

The tuning used by Mbulaheni and Mviseni corresponds to that recorded by Kirby for the *ramkie* (cf. Kirby 1968: 254), and what Kubik (1989) describes as "the core tuning of homemade banjos all over Southern Africa" (Kubik 1989: 10). The tuning used by Mbulaheni is approximately D#4-B3-F#3, while that of Mviseni is a semi-tone higher. As I indicate elsewhere (ch. 3.2.1), this tuning probably led to the tuning employed by Solomon Mathase and other adult guitarists (cf. fig. 3a).

Mbulaheni uses a plastic plectrum, cut from any piece of suitable plastic. The plectrum is referred to as *tshilidzi* ("the thing which sings"; from *-lila*, to cry). Guitarists also use a number of terms which signify a scraping or scratching action, such as *tshifhali* (lit. the scraper; from *-fhala*, to scrape).

The neckstrap is referred to as *mukungelo* (a thong used to carry something). The bridge is *tshitanda tsha u tika thale* ("the small piece of wood which supports the strings").

#### 4.7.2 Mbulaheni Netshipise

Mbulaheni Netshipise (16) is from Tshififi. He performs with his close friend Mapfumo Masala (15) who is learning from him, and who sings with him. Both boys are pupils at Dzwaboni Secondary School. Mbulaheni is in standard eight and Mapfumo in standard six. When I recorded Mbulaheni in 1989, he had only been playing for a year. He saw another local boy

playing a home made guitar. Liking its sound, he made his own. When he was recorded by one of my students some three years later, he was still performing on a home made guitar (cf. Mukwevho 1992). He is one of the very few older players of a home made guitar. As I indicate above, players of home made guitars are usually young teenagers.

Mbulaheni and Mapfumo performed their entire repertoire of five songs for me. As in the case of Nkhwasheni Band, their performance was a basic version of a performance by an expert adult guitarist.

The texts of Mbulaheni's songs are generally very short, seldom exceeding two or three lines (cf. 188-192). In addition, their performance mostly lacks confidence, volume and dramatic effects. Yet, Mbulaheni's songs are an expression of wider social reality. They express fear about the destructive power of witchcraft (188), and address religious morality (189; 190 & 192) and the problems associated with sexual relationships between young unmarried people:

**Ni do dovha, ni a zwifha.**  
(You will do it again, you are lying.)

(Mukwevho 1992)

This song refers to a common occurrence. A girl falls in love with a "playboy". She interprets warnings by her friends about her boyfriend's sexual immorality merely as indicative of jealousy. She falls pregnant and gives birth. Her consequent resolution not to fall pregnant again is regarded with suspicion by the singer (Mukwevho 1992: 4 ff.).

Mbulaheni's songs with a religious theme may be seen as expressing the roots of the type of comprehensive worldview expressed by Solomon Mathase. Both Mbulaheni and Masala are

members of the Zion Christian Church. Some of their songs which carry a religious theme were conceived in the church context (e.g. 190). Others, however, were conceived independently. However, they are also rooted in a religious context. As in the case of other guitarists, religious themes with no direct church connection form an important part of repertoires. In addition, Mbulaheni has been invited on occasion to perform some of his religious songs at Apostolic Faith Mission services (Mukwevho 1992: 9).

Song 190 (fig. 19; audio recording 35) reveals a structural organization common to forms of traditional music. It is one of those songs in which "there can never be less than four 'lines', and all repeats must therefore be multiples of four 'lines' (Blacking 1967: 162). The metrical basis of fig. 19 is a twelve pulse phrase. The instrumental and vocal parts comprise four twelve pulse phrases which combine to give a total metrical pattern of forty-eight pulses. Fig. 19 also exhibits a feature found in Venda and Zulu gourd bow music, namely "the lack of simultaneity between vocal and instrumental phrases. These never begin or end together" (Rycroft 1975/6: 62 f.; cf. Kruger 1986: 126 ff.). This may be regarded as an effort by an individual instrumentalist to produce a form of antiphonal exchange (Rycroft loc. cit.).

Like previous figures, fig. 19 also reveals a degree of harmonic ambiguity. The vocal part of fig. 19 is structured around a basic IV-I-V-I progression, and it comes to rest on the tonic in the last phrase. However, Mbulaheni invokes the IV-I-V-I chord progression in second inversion on the guitar. This weakens the harmonic design of the vocal part, and provides the song with a feeling of harmonically relaxed perpetual motion characteristic of traditional music.

Song 192 (fig. 20; audio recording 36) also illustrates the harmonic ambiguity that arises from the subordination of the Western chord system to a traditional tonality shift. The song is divided into two twelve pulse phrases. Each instrumental phrase comprises a I<sup>6</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-I<sup>6</sup>-V progression. Chord I<sup>6</sup>/<sub>4</sub> constitutes phala tonality, and chord V thakhula tonality in a traditional shift. This shift is supported by the vocal phrases which feature a traditional descending contour. They start on phala G and descend to thakhula tonality A/D.

guitar

He, vha tou fa- na- na.

He, vha tou fa- na- na.

He, vha tou fa- na- na.

Ye- su vha tou kwa- kwa- kuu.

48

Fig. 19 (song 190): Pitch = C, original = Bb; 3 pulses = 144



guitar

'Dzim' a si nwa- na, ngo- ho.

(I) (V)

'Dzim' a si nwa- na.

(I) (V) 24

Fig. 20 (song 192): Pitch = C, original = Bb; 6 pulses = 76

Mbulaheni Netshipise: Song texts

188

U tshimbila vhusiku (Walking around at night)

Ngoho, u tshimbila vhusiku ndo lata. Nne, mmawe!

Indeed, I have stopped walking around at night.<sup>1</sup> Oh mother!

Ndi a lovha.

I am dying.

Ngoho, ndo vhona na zwi sa vhone. Nne, mmawe!

Indeed, I saw what I ought not to have seen.<sup>2</sup> Oh mother!

Ndi a lovha.

I am dying.

1 In order to avoid witches who are believed to be active at night.

2 I.e. witches.

189

Litshani zwisiwana (Let orphans be)

Litshani zwisiwana.

Let orphans be.

Zwi di tshilele.

They are just children.

Zwi do di tou dzhiwa.

They will be taken

nga ene Mudzimu.

by God.<sup>1</sup>

*"Vhathu litshani u shengedza zwisiwana ngauri ndi vhathu*

*"People must not ill-treat orphans because*

*vhane vha tshila na rine."*

*they are part of us."*

*"Ni songo shengedza navhone vha kha di vha vhathu vhane vha*

*"Do not ill-treat them because they*

*tshila na rine fhano shangoni."*

*are part of us."*

*"Ni songo vhulaha ndi zwisiwana zwa rine rothe."*

*"Do not kill orphans, they are ours."<sup>2</sup>*

10 Litshani zwisiwana.

Let orphans be.

Zwi di tshilele.

They are just children.

Zwi do di tou dzhiwa

They will be taken

nga ene Mudzimu.

by God.

1 I.e. do not make orphans suffer. They are in the charge of God, and he will eventually claim them from life. From the idiomatic expression u dzhia nga Mudzimu, to be taken by God.

2 Narrated by Mapfumo Masala.

190

Vhana vha Mudzimu (The Lord's children)

He, vha tou fanana,  
Hey, are the same.  
he, vha tou fanana,  
hey, are the same  
he, vha tou fanana Yesu vha tou kwakwakwa.<sup>1</sup>  
hey, children of God are the same as Jesus.

1 Kwakwakwa: from gwagwagwa, to join, meet. I.e. there is a spiritual union between God and his children. This song is based on a Zion Christian Church hymn.

191

Sikhumba Nthambeleni (Ironman Nthambeleni)

(Chorus)  
Hoo-hee! Sikhumba Nthambeleni!  
Ironman Ntambeleni!<sup>1</sup>  
(solo)  
Sikhumba Nthambeleni!  
Ironman Ntambeleni!  
"Sikhumba-vha-mu-fare!"  
"Ironman-you-must-catch-him!"

1 This song refers to a notorious criminal jailed at Matatshe state prison. He was known for his brutality and physical strength (cf. -kumba, to overpower completely).

192

Mudzimu a si ñwana (God is omnipotent)

Mudzimu a si ñwana, ngoho.  
God is omnipotent indeed.<sup>1</sup>  
Hezwi zwithu ngoho zwe nda ita.  
These sins that I have committed.  
U do zwi vhona ngoho.  
He will truly be able to see them.

1 Lit. God is not a child.

#### 4.8 Rural conservatism

Section 4.8 focuses on four guitarists whose songs may be regarded as the most conservative. They are Patrick Rañwashi, Nemakhavhani Munyai, George Singo and Albert Munyai. This conservatism is not only rooted in a rural existence, but also in the fact that the first three guitarists are the oldest musicians in my sample group. My brief musical discussion focuses mainly on the ensemble playing of Patrick Rañwashi and Nemakhavhani Munyai.

##### 5.1 Patrick Rañwashi and Nemakhavhani Munyai

Patrick Rañwashi (c. 1922-1993) lived close to his fellow guitarist Nemakhavhani Munyai on the border of the villages of Makonde and Haluvhimbi. The two guitarists started to perform together c. 1985.

Patrick Vhiseni Israel Rañwashi was born at Makonde. He attended a local school to standard five. He left home for the first time during 1952, and worked for four months as a farm labourer at Devon on the Reef. Later that year he became employed at a Johannesburg nursery where he worked until 1973. He remained in Johannesburg until 1976, taking on part-time employment. He finally returned home at the end of 1976. He became a pensioner in 1987, initially receiving R175 per month, and a few years later approximately R220 per month.

Patrick became ill during 1990. He started to lose weight, and developed a skin rash. He went for treatment to Donald Fraser hospital, but was unable to tell me what diagnosis had been made. He merely indicated that there was a "snake" in his stomach, and that he had some blood disease. Although he

periodically returned to hospital, he disliked the place, saying he was afraid to die there. During one of my visits to his home, he and I sat under a large tree. He demonstrated to me the position he had to sleep in because of his illness. He lay down on the ground on his side in a foetal position with his hands under his head. He was as thin as a reed, and his weight was that of a child. He looked very vulnerable in his home wear - an old T-shirt, threadbare trousers and shoes without laces. To me it was almost as if he was already dead, or as if he was preparing to die. For a moment it seemed as if he was returning to the fertile soil of Makonde with its birds and fruit he sang about in his songs. Someone brought his guitar, but he was too weak to play. His instrument just lay on the ground next to him. Patrick said he wanted to make a *tshihwana* musical bow which was easier to play. He died of his illness during May 1993. He was buried a few meters from the large tree under which we once sat.

Ntshimbidzeni Nemakhavhani Munyai is a few years younger than Patrick. Also born at Makonde, he left school after standard six. He was employed at a timber yard in Tzaneen from 1955-1965. He then worked as a builder in Sasolburg until 1978, when he finally returned home. He farms on a picturesque hillside plot which is situated above that of Patrick. He relies heavily on the land which yields a profusion of maize, mangos and avocados. His wife Sylvia sells home made beer. During the week several unemployed men may be found sitting idly about the Munyai beer house.

Patrick learned the guitar from his older brother who was a migrant labourer. He first started to play on his brother's factory made guitar (a Wizard) in c. 1930 when he was about eight years old. Both Nemakhavhani and he learned finger

plucking on the guitar. This is a technique they always followed. Like other guitarists they did not like strumming because it did not "follow the melody".

Patrick regarded himself as a tshilombe. He denied that a tshilombe must always be a wanderer. A tshilombe may also be a tshilombe tsha hayani, an expert musician who "plays alone at home". It seems that what distinguishes such a musician from other musicians is that he is an individual who does not feel bound to perform in a group only. This seems to tie in with the ambiguous way zwilombe are regarded because of their tendency towards individualism. While individualism plays a role in society, it seldom finds general sanction in terms of music making. People are usually expected to take part in dancing, singing and drumming in a communal context. Even if a person does not perform music, he is still part of the group, even if he merely watches and drinks. However, adults who sit alone or in small groups at night playing an instrument seem to be regarded as "anti-social", as persons who do not promote wider communal cohesion.

Patrick and Nemakhavhani thus usually performed in the privacy of their homes, usually towards and during the evening when they were drinking beer. Their families usually took the chorus parts of their songs which were mostly traditional beer songs, or songs from other categories adapted for beer song performance. This is a performance practice Patrick followed most of his life. Patrick was the unofficial leader of the group. Nemakhavhani generally did not sing along, but played guitar only.



Plate 8. Back (l to r): Patrick Rañwashi, Nemakhavhani Munyai. Front (l to r): Miriam, Sylvia and Shumani Munyai.

As indicated in the discussion of Solomon Mathase's performance practice, beer songs comprise the largest category of adult music, and they are expressive of rural traditional cultural patterns. Although beer songs are an important regulator of marital and general sexual relations, they also address a wide range of other personal and communal issues. For example, song 197 is mainly biographical and deals with events and things which are troublesome. Firstly, it refers to the recent contesting of the Makonde headmanship (cf. ll 5-14) in which two brothers, Malinda and Mudzhivhi, laid claim to the headmanship. Secondly, Patrick refers to drunkenness, and applies it to himself in a figurative manner (cf. ll 15-17). He goes visiting with his family. Along the way they see the tracks of a lion. Something stirs in the brush. The singer gets so frightened that he runs away and leaves his family behind (l 11). But the lion is really himself. When he gets drunk, he becomes as aggressive as one. He realizes his own shortcomings as a person: he sees his own "tracks", and he runs away from himself. Thus, in lines 18-20

the village of Mutele, which is the ancestral home of his clan (Mbedzi), becomes a symbolic refuge from existential turmoil and fear.

Song 202 addresses the jealousy between wives in a traditional extended family, while song 204 celebrates the pleasures of a rural beer house. Several of Patrick's songs manifest the land-rooted ideology found in the songs of other guitarists. Patrick lived in a place where people still offer sacrifices for rain. In particular, the fertile, densely forested mountainside on which he lived is reflected in his song texts. The mountain provides material as well as spiritual security. The traditional supreme being, Raluvhimba, is said to have rested once on the mountain which teems with lush vegetation and small wildlife. Thus, song 193 celebrates the fertility of the land which allows people to survive. During a performance of this song, Nemakhavhani placed a large bunch of bananas on the ground. His wife and daughters danced around it. Songs 194, 198 and 200 refer to Makonde's rich birdlife. Birds are still widely hunted with catapults, and their eggs are a delicacy (cf. 200).

As in Solomon Mathase's songs, nature becomes a reflection of human emotions and attributes. In song 198 ("The bulbul") the eternal conflict between good and evil is addressed. A chattering bulbul and falling rain are symbolic of goodness, growth and life. There is no uncertainty about the underlying beneficence of nature: the rain will fall (1 2), and the people shall live off the land. However, the incessant chattering of the bulbul becomes a call that warns of the evil of humanity. This evil is represented by destructive witchcraft (cf. 1 3). Even though people are treated with kindness (1 8), some are like ungrateful dogs who defile themselves



and others with their immoral behaviour (1 9).

Similarly, song 199 deals with a love triangle between two women and a man. The guilt that the man feels about rejecting one of the women (cf. l 13) is projected into a mythical evil being. The rejected girl goes to fetch water at the river where the evil being lurks. It kills her (cf. ll 17-20). However, this killing seems metaphoric for the girl deserting her village (cf. ll 23-24, and reference to village border, ll 3 & 29). In line 30 the man indicates that he has forgotten the girl. His subconscious mind seems to suppress unpleasant memories of the incident. Thus life goes on and its processes repeat themselves endlessly.

Song 201 (fig. 21; audio recording 37) is a well-known beer song that shows close correlation with traditional xylophone music (cf. Kruger 1986: 226 ff. & fig. 22/audio recording 38). Neither Nemakhavhani nor Patrick played the xylophone. However, Makonde is a village situated in an area historically associated with xylophone playing. Nemakhavhani knew the Mutomi family whose members were well-known for their expertise in making and playing the xylophone (cf. Blacking 1979: pl. 7, Kruger 1986: 222). Patrick died before I could question him about his knowledge of the xylophone.

Figs 21 and 22 exhibit significant correlation in terms of basic melodic shape, tonality shift and chord structure, as well as the interaction between performers. Both figures feature a traditional tonality shift contained within a typical descending melodic contour. In fig. 21 the main tonality shift occurs between **thakhula E** and **phala G** (A/E-G/D chord shift implied), while fig. 22 features a basic tonality shift between **phala D** and **thakhula E**.

16

guitar 1

guitar 2

variation

chorus

leader

Tshi tsho tsha ma- de- kwe.

Tsha ma- de- kwe. Tshi tsho tsha ma- de- kwe.

Fig. 21 (song 201): Pitch = C, original = A; 2 pulses = 144; notes not on pulse lines are halfway between them

xylophone

player 3

player 2

player 1

chorus

leader

ku 'la ku 'la ma- da- ndi- la.

'Da- ndi- la, wee

Fig. 22. (Ku lila ku na madandila: "The hornbills are singing"): Pitch = C, original = Bb; 3 pulses = 88

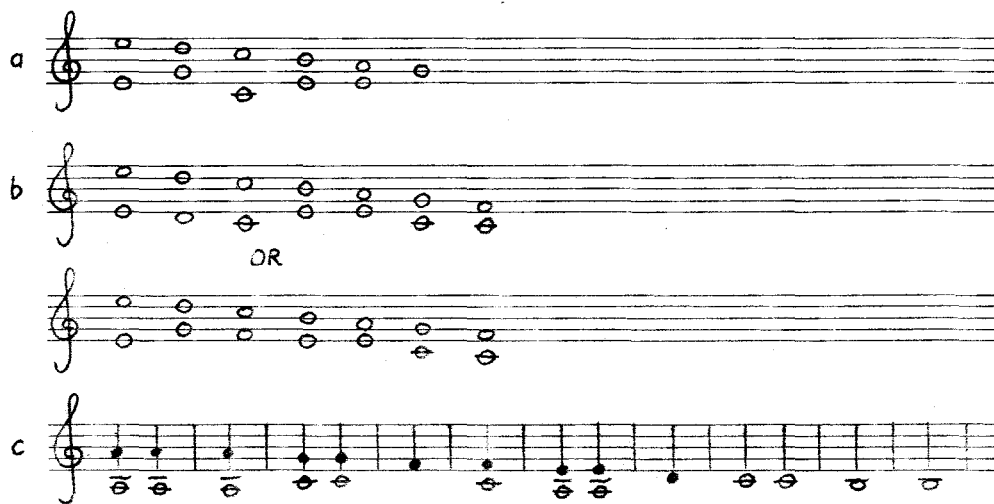


Fig. 23a: Basic chord progression of fig. 21  
 Fig. 23b: Typical xylophone chord progression  
 Fig. 23c: Second xylophone part, showing typical left hand pattern; o = left hand, • = right hand

The basic chord progression of fig. 21 (cf. fig. 23a) also shows correlation with the typical chord progression of xylophone music (cf. fig. 23b & Kruger 1986: 227). Furthermore, the first guitar part (performed by Patrick) may be regarded as the song basis from which the second guitar part (performed by Nemakhavhani) derives. Nemakhavhani thus provides harmonic and melodic support in the same way that the first and third xylophone parts support the second xylophone part which constitutes the basis of xylophone music (cf. fig. 22 & Kruger 1986: 227). The variation performed by Nemakhavhani in fig. 21 also is reminiscent of the typical left hand pattern performed by the second xylophone player (cf. fig. 23c & Kruger 1986: 242). This pattern constitutes an alternation between two tones a third apart, and it derives from the use of octave, fifth and fourth harmonic equivalent tones in chord construction.

193

Venda la manakanaka (Beautiful Venda)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Venda lashu,  
Our Venda,  
Venda la manakanaka.  
beautiful Venda.

(solo)

Venda lashu,  
Our Venda,  
Venda la manakanaka.  
beautiful Venda.  
Ri dzula hone.  
We enjoy living there  
Ri diphina nga mitshelo.  
because of fruit.

1 This song emanates from the school context.

194

Mangwili (The boubou)<sup>1</sup>

O, mangwili tshi nazwo.  
Oh, the boubou has certain calls.  
O, vho-nngwana Sofaya Vho-Lumange.  
Oh, Mr Lumange found me at Sophiatown.  
O, tshidimela tshi vho swika Gammbani.  
Oh, the train is now also arriving at Sibasa.  
Tshidimela, tshidimela, tshidimela.  
Shoo-shoo-shoo.

1 This is an old beer song Patrick learned from his parents. The song praises the steam train and the building of the railway from Johannesburg to Louis Trichardt. Travellers to the reef were reminded of the variable call of the southern boubou by all the sounds of the steam train (cf. 1 1).

195

Tshivhumbeo tshiswa (Those who are reborn)<sup>1</sup>

Tshivhumbeo tshiswa,  
Those who are reborn,<sup>2</sup>  
hayani ndi litadulu.  
your home is in heaven.  
Nwana muvhi,  
Bad child,  
hayani ndi heleni.  
your home is in hell.

1 Lit. those who have assumed a new shape. Patrick was a nominal Lutheran. The Lutherans established a mission at the

nearby village of Tshifudi in 1877 (cf. Nemudzivhadi 1985: 21). Because of malaria the mission was moved soon afterwards to a mountain site at Haluvhimbi, only a few hundred meters from where Patrick lived.

2 Each line of the song is repeated by the chorus.

196

Ndi do mu renda ngani? (Praising God)<sup>1</sup>

Ndi do mu renda. Ndi do mu renda ngani?  
I shall praise God. With what shall I praise God?  
Hoyu Jesu wanga. Ndi do mu renda ngani?  
This Jesus of mine. With what shall I praise God?  
Kha ri mu rende. Kha ri mu rende nga mbilu.  
Let us praise God. Let us praise with our heart.

1 This song is also associated with the Lutheran church (cf. song 195).

197

Shango la Makonde (Makonde)

Shango lino lo nndina, mmawe!  
This place is worrying me, mother!  
Nda ri, ndi ya hayani Hamutele.  
I said, I am going home to Mutele.

Hamutele, nne ndo begwa hone.  
I was born at Mutele.  
Shango lino lo nndina vhone.  
This place is worrying me sir.  
Vho-Malinda vha ri lavho heli shango.  
Mr Malinda says this is his place.  
Vho-Mudzhivhi vha ri lavho heli shango.  
Mr Mudzhivhi says this is his place  
A ni vhoni vho no fhenda na thavha.  
because he even ruled the mountain.<sup>1</sup>  
Vha ri ndi hone musanda.  
He says the chiefly homestead is there.

Avhafarei a zwi kandedza ngoho.  
Avhafarei is truly trying to prevent trouble.<sup>2</sup>

10 A ri, ni lwela mini? Ni vhana vha khotsi anga nothe.  
He said, why are you quarreling? Children of the same father.

Hafhu nne ndo sia na Vho-Munzhedzi.  
I have even left Mrs Munzhedzi.  
Maria mafela swobo,  
It was futile to try and  
nama a songo la.  
prevent trouble.<sup>3</sup>  
O tou fela swobo fhedzi.  
It was really futile.

Ndo vhona marimba a ndau-tshidakwa.  
I saw the tracks of a lion-drunkard.  
Nda shavha ndi tshi vhuya tshidakwa.  
I ran away from the drunkard.  
Ndau, a thi ngo i vhona tshidakwa.  
Lion, I did not see the drunkard.

Shango lino lo nndina vhone.  
This place is worrying me sir.  
Nda ri, ndi a vhuyelela Hamutele.  
I said, I am returning to Mutele.

20 Hamutele, nne ndo begwa hone.  
I was born at Mutele.

Fhedzi mahamba u do vhuya.  
Only he who swaggers will return.

Shango lino lo nndina vhone.  
This place is worrying me sir.  
Nda ri, ndi ya hayani Hamutele.  
I said, I am going home to Mutele.

1 Lit. to inspect the mountain. This refers to the fact that the claimant was acting headman at another village before. Because of this, he argues, he is well equipped to handle the headmanship of Makonde.

2 Avhafarei is the previous headman's son who tried to resolve the quarrel between the brothers.

3 Lit. Maria was killed for gravy without eating meat. A reference to futile attempts to solve the contesting of the headmanship.

198

Gwede (The bulbul)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Gwede: Nthongozwila?

The bulbul sings: Is it not a wound?<sup>2</sup>

(solo)

Mvula i do na.

The rain will fall.

Ndi nwananga a na tshilonda.

It is my child who has a festering sore.

Ndi nwana wa Vho-Nyazwivhuya.

It is the child of Mrs Nyazwivhuya.

Tshi vhuya tsha mmbwa ndi tshani?

What is the use of a dog?

Ndi nwana wa nnyi tshivhanda?

Whose child are you?

Ya bva nnda i la dzitshika.

It eats rubbish outside.

Hu tou nga wo ifha munamba,

If you give it porridge cooked with milk,

ya bva nda i la dzitshika.  
it eats rubbish outside.

10 Mvula i do na.  
The rain will fall.

Gwede:  
The bulbul sings:  
Ntongozwila.

1 This song is based on a beer song.

2 Caused by witchcraft (cf. also 1 3).

199

Tsimbe (Strife)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Haiwa! Dada! **Vhakoma!**  
No! Monster! Councillors!  
(solo)

Hae, Nyawasedza!  
Alas, Nyawadsedza!  
Murangoni nda ha thavha.  
The village border is on the other side of the mountain.  
**Nne** ndo lamba Thivhafuni.  
I rejected Thivhafuni.  
Thivhafuni ndo mu lamba.  
I rejected Thivhafuni.  
Hae, Nyawasedza!  
Alas, Nyawadsedza!  
Ee, ndi do zwi vhona.  
Yes, I will see that.

Hae, Nyawasedza!  
Alas, Nyawadsedza!  
Ee, ndi do zwi vhona.  
Yes, I will see that.

10 Hei! Hei! Hei! Hei!

**Nne** ndo lamba Thivhafuni.  
I refused to marry Thivhafuni.  
**Nne** ndo funwa nga Thivhafuni.  
Thivhafuni has fallen in love with me.  
**Nda** lambana na Nyawasedza.  
I refused to marry Nyawasedza.  
Thivhafuni ndo mu funa, hei!  
Hey! I loved Thivhafuni.  
Ee, ndi do zwi vhona.  
Yes, I will see that.

Hae, Thivhafuni!  
Alas, Thivhafuni!  
**Nne**, mulamboni hu na dithu!  
I, there is a monster in the river!  
Hu na dithu Nyawasedza!  
There is a monster Nyawasedza!

Hae, Nyawasedza!  
Alas, Nyawasedza!  
20 Mulamboni ha nga vhuyi.  
She will not return from the river.

Hae, nne, mmawee!  
Woe is me, mother!  
Hae, vho tuwa.  
She has gone.  
Hae, nne ndi do tuwa  
I will go.<sup>2</sup>  
Ndi tshi tuwa thi nga vhuyi.  
When I go I will not return.  
Hae, ndi do zwi vhona.  
Alas, I will see that.

Hae, mmawee, hae!  
Alas, mother, alas!  
Ndi tshi tuwa thi nga vhuyi.  
When I go I will not return.  
Nda vhidzelela Nyawasedza.  
I called Nyawasedza.  
Murangoni nda ha thavha.  
The village border is on the other side of the mountain.  
30 Ndi ndo hangwa Nyawasedza.  
I have forgotten Nyawasedza.  
Hae, ndi do zwi vhona.  
Alas, I will see that.

1 This song is based on an old beer song.

2 Nyawasedza speaking.

200

Gumba tshinyanyani (The egg of a small wild bird)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Gumba tshinyanyani.

The egg of a small wild bird.

(solo)

Nne nañwaha ndo wina mahumi mana.

This year I won R80.

Liñwe fumi nne ndo nea Thinandavha.

I gave the other R20 to Thinandavha.

Thinandavha u do renga ngalo mbila.

Thinandavha will buy that lamellaphone.

Mbila hedzo u do dzula a tshi lidza.

He will always play this lamellaphone.

Hae, hae hae, tshinyanyani.

Hey, hey, hey, wild bird.

Liovhelwa wa li kanga li a difha.

A stork is nice to eat if you add something to it.<sup>2</sup>

U li shele zwavhudi na tamatisi.

And carefully add some tomatoes.

Wa li shela zwavhudi na phiriphiri.

And carefully add some pepper.



10 Hae, hae hae, tshinyanyani.  
Hey, hey, hey, wild bird.  
Wa li shela zwavhudi na anyanisi.  
And carefully add some onions.  
Hia! Hia!

1 Based on a beer song.

2 People still commonly eat wild birds which they shoot with catapults.

201

Tsha madekwe (Last night)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Tshi tsho tsha madekwe.  
Since last night.

(solo)

Tshi tsho tsha mulovha.  
Since yesterday.

Musadzi o tuwa na vhana.

The woman has left with her children.<sup>2</sup>

Madekwe a tho ngo lala.

I could not sleep last night.

Oo, ahee, iyo-ha, haya-yae.

Ndo lala u do bvelela.

I thought she would appear while I was asleep.

Tsha mazhazhai a khuni.

The crackling sound of burning twigs.<sup>3</sup>

Oo, ahee, iyo-ha, haya-yae.

Ndi gogodo la dzikhundu.

The tinkling of waists.<sup>4</sup>

1 Based on a well-known beer song.

2 Because of her husband's drunkenness.

3 A metaphor for domestic quarreling.

4 A reference to the sound made by a woman's wire belt.

202

Vivho (Jealousy)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Hu dzula musadzi wa kholomo.

The woman staying here is legally married.<sup>2</sup>

(solo)

Fhano mudini hu dzula nne.

I am living here at home.

Vivho la musadzi Tshinakao.

The jealousy of the woman Tshinakao.

Vivho la musadzi muhulwane.

The jealousy of the senior wife.

**Fhano mudini hu dzula nnyi?**  
Who is staying here at home?  
**Hu sala musadzi muhulwane.**  
The senior wife should remain.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 Lit. the one staying here is the cattle woman. This is a reference to the paying of bride-wealth. The song deals with the tension between co-wives. The senior wife, Tshinakao, is presumably jealous because her husband is paying more attention to his younger wives. She is indicating that if anyone is to leave the homestead, it should not be her since her marriage was properly and legally arranged through the provision of bride-wealth in the form of cattle.

203

**Tshibevha** (Small mouse)<sup>1</sup>

**Tamba u tshi vhuya ngeno tshibevha**  
Play close to home, small mouse.

1 Based on a beer song. Interpretations of this song vary. Some say it refers to inviting people to a beer drink. Others disagree, saying the song is sung by a husband to his adulterous wife. Some also say it is sung by parents during the early evening, calling their playing children home.

204

**Kudi kuno** (This small homestead)<sup>1</sup>

(Solo)  
**Kudi kuno**  
This small homestead  
(chorus)  
**ku ntakadza hani.**  
pleases me.<sup>2</sup>

1 Based on a beer song.

2 Because it is a beer house with a wide variety of beer and traditional foodstuffs.

#### 4.8.2 Albert Raedani

Albert Tshivhangwaho Raedani was born in 1951 at Guyuni in the Rambuda district. He left school after standard four. As a sixteen year old boy he worked for six months on a farm near Tshipise. He returned home to Guyuni, and a few years later departed for Roodepoort where he worked as a civil guard during 1973 and 1974. He returned home after this, and then worked at a steel firm in Florida in 1975. After that he returned to Venda where he has been residing ever since. Until recently Albert took on casual labour such as thatching roofs, woodcarving and house painting. He struggled to support his wife and three children. He eventually separated from his wife and started to live with another woman who bore him a child (Mutshinyalo 1992: 4). This woman started to brew beer for additional income. This has led to alcohol abuse and family strife (cf. 206). During 1990 he became employed by the Department of Public Works as a painter at R222,50 a month. Unable to survive on his salary (cf. 205 & 206), he earns additional income by performing at stokfel meetings. Albert is a well-known guitarist, and receives invitations to play as far afield as Hamanenzhe in the north. Sometimes the four man band of which he is a member performs at a stokfel meeting. On occasions like these the band may earn in excess of R250 for their performance.

In 1963, when Albert was twelve years old, he had a dream in which his father's spirit instructed him to become a musician (cf. 208). His father was a professional trumpeter in Johannesburg. He learned the trumpet while soldiering during World War I. Albert's instruction had a moral base. He was to go about singing, and teach (-funza) people about good conduct. In the convention of tshilombe performance culture, the

morality of the instruction was a sanction of Albert's musical calling. He also said his father's spirit saw that his family was struggling at the time, and ordered Albert to take up music making as a means of economic survival. As in the case of many other guitarists, Albert also started to play a home made guitar. His father's spirit continued to appear in his dreams, and provide him with musical motives. He liked to rove with his guitar, and performed at cattle dipping tanks and soccer matches.

Albert was a member of Adziambe Band. This band comprised two guitars ("first and lead"), a small double-membrane drum, and a hand rattle. Albert was one of the band's guitarists, together with Johannes Kwinda from Guyuni. The band released two long playing records during the late 1980s under the Tusk label. As in the case of Albert Mundalamo, the band's songs were transferred to electric guitars with no essential musical change to their strong traditional roots. The traditional basis of Albert's music is illustrated by comparing his performance of song 206 (cf. audio recording 40) with its original lamellaphone version (cf. audio recording 39).

Albert and the band did not achieve significant success. Each band member got a R50 advance during the recording session (c. 1983). Three subsequent bi-annual payments followed, amounting to R520, R317, and R500 per person. The band did not receive anything until March 1989 when each member received approximately R500. Like other guitarists, Albert finds it difficult to understand why his royalties are so limited, and accuses the record company of dishonesty. Because of lack of success, the band broke up.

Like Albert Mundalamo, Albert Raedani also became the target of envy and expectation by his father's elder sister. This process was also traumatic for him. He eventually decided to move away from his ancestral home to avoid further conflict. This happened in 1989 when he moved to Tshandama in the Thengwe district. Like Solomon Mathase, singing for him becomes a means whereby emotional trauma is expressed and mediated (cf. 207 & 208).

Albert Raedani: Song texts

205

Ri vhana vhavho Murena (We are your children Lord)<sup>1</sup>

Ri vhana vhavho.  
We are your children.  
Ri vhana vhavho Murena.  
We are your children Lord.<sup>2</sup>  
A vha ri thuse Vhobaba.  
We are asking for help Father.  
A ri na nungo.  
We lack spiritual power.  
Ri lamulele Vhobaba.  
Save us Father

- Ndi n̄wana wavho Murena.  
I am your child Lord.  
Ndi zwana zwavho Murena.  
They are your small children Lord.<sup>3</sup>  
A vha na maanda Vhobaba.  
We are asking for spiritual power Father.  
Hee, ro no neta ha Baba.  
Alas, we are truly tired Father.<sup>4</sup>  
10 A vha ri thuse Vhobaba.  
We are asking for help Father.  
Ndi Tshivhangwaho,  
It is Tshivhangwaho,  
he, kwana kwavho Murena.  
your small child Lord.  
Naa ndi felani? Wee!  
Alas, why are they killing me?<sup>5</sup>  
Hee, n̄wana wavho Murena.  
Your child Lord.  
Wanga a songo fa, wee.  
Mine should not die.<sup>6</sup>  
16 Ahee! Ri takalela Vhobaba.  
We are rejoicing Father.<sup>7</sup>

1 This title is also that of a well-known Zion Christian Church hymn. Albert learned the hymn at the Tshandama United African Apostolic Church.

2 The chorus line of the hymn.

3 A reference to children only.

4 I.e. tired of hunger and poverty.

5 A reference to poverty.

6 A reference to the singer's children.

7 Praising God.

Zwintombi zwa Matshona (Shona girls)<sup>1</sup>

Ndi ri, musadzi wanga, inwi ye tsimuni.

I say, go to the field my wife.

Hae, ndi musadzi wanga. Vuwani ni ye tsimuni.

It is my wife. Wake up and go to the field.

A ri: A vha mukalaha wanga, nne vha khou mmangadza ngoho.

She said: My husband truly surprised me

Zwino vha tshi ndi ye tsimuni. Ndi yo shumaniha mukalaha?

when he told me to go to the field. What must I do there husband?

A vha do vhona, kudzembe kwanga kwo rovhea, mukalaha.

Look husband, my small hoe is broken.

Zwino, vhone vha tshi khou bva vha khou ya ngafhi ngeyo nda?

Now, where are you going?

Ndo tou vhona u ngari vha khou livha barani.

I thought you were going to the beer hall.

Hee, ndi ri, a la mapeni vha do shenga othe, wee-hee.

Hey, I say, you will chew up all the money.

A thi tsha divha u ri vhananga vha do la zwifhio, hee.

I do not know what my children will eat.

10 Havha mukalaha ndi khwine ndi tshi tou vha litsha.

It is better to leave this husband.

Vho ndiya!

He hit me!

Ndo rwiwa mbamulovha.

I was beaten the day before yesterday.

Vho ndiya!

He hit me!

Ndo rahiwa mbamulovha.

I was kicked the day before yesterday.

Aee! Vhulombo ndi a vhavha, hoo-hee!

Alas, poverty hurts!

Ha, ndi ri, kha vha nnditshe ndi wele Luvuvhu u tshina

I say, let me cross the Levubu river to go and join a ngoma.

possession dance.<sup>2</sup>

Ha, ndi ri, vha ra ralo, vha do wana i khakhathi, wee.

I say, if you do that there will be trouble.

Aho-ho-hohoho, mma!

20 He-yee, mma!

He-hoo, mma!

Hee, ndi ri, ndi vhulombo hanga, vhakoma, wee.

Alas! I say, it is my poverty, councillor.

Hee, ndi ri, ndi vhulombo hanga ho wela tsiwana.

Alas! I say, I am as poor as an orphan.

Ha, ndi ri, Tshivhangwaho ndi tshidakwa tsha mafhelelo, mma!

Oh mother! I say, Tshivhangwaho is a true drunkard.

O fura halwa o vhuñwa mbamulovha, mma!

Oh mother! He is still drunk after two days.

A thi divhi u ri o vhu ñwiswa nga nnyi.

I don't know who gave him the beer.

Mbilu wee!  
 Alas, my heart!  
 Tshimbilani, ha ri vhone.  
 Walk so that we can see.  
 Ndi vhulombo hee!  
 Alas, it is because of poverty!  
 30 Ngauri ndi tsiwana.  
 Because I am an orphan.

Duvha lo kovhela mungana. Kha ri ye hayani.  
 The sun has set friend. Let us go home.  
 Iwe, khonani yanga. Nne kholomo yo xela, yee.  
 You, my friend. My ox is lost.  
 Ndi ri, nda ya hayani ngoho vha do nthwa, wee, mmm.  
 I say, if I go home they will beat me.  
 Vuwani ni ye tsimuni.  
 Wake up and go to the field.  
Namusu nne a thi ngayi.  
 I am not going today.  
 Ahee-haa!  
 37 Ndi vhulombo, hee!  
 It is because of poverty!

1 The song takes its title and harmonic progression from that of a well-known mbila (lamellaphone) song.

2 This is an illustration of the function of peripheral possession cults as vehicles of female protest against male domination (cf. Lewis 1971).

207

Vho-Nkhetheni (Mr Nkhetheni)<sup>1</sup>

Ndi vhidzelela. Vho-Nkhetheni, shango lo tshinyala. Ho!  
 I am calling. Mr Nkhetheni, the country is spoilt.<sup>2</sup>  
 Vhidzelelani Vho-Nkhetheni. Nwana o pfuluwa. Ho!  
 Call Mr Nkhetheni. The child has moved elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>  
 Tshivhangwaho ndi dabadaba u a penga. Ho!  
 Tshivhangwaho is foolish and mad!<sup>4</sup>  
 Vhañwe vho ya tshikimuni vho ya u renga muroho. Ho!  
 Some have gone to the irrigation scheme to buy vegetables.<sup>5</sup>  
 He, vha tshi amba vhe muroho a huna vho fhedza. Hee.  
 They say there are no more vegetables.  
 A vha vhone, mphwe dzo swa dzothe dzo fhela.  
 Look, the sugar cane has all been burnt.<sup>6</sup>  
 Ndi fulela ngani mungana i dzo mmbudzavho. Hee!  
 Tell me, what shall I thatch the roof with?<sup>7</sup>  
 Ahee! Yehowee! Mbilu yanga i a vhavha.  
 Alas! My heart aches.  
 Ahee! Yehowee! Tshivhangwaho u a lwala.  
 Alas! Tshivhangwaho is possessed.<sup>8</sup>  
 10 Ahee! Yohowee! Vho-Raedani, a ri ye tolela.  
 Mr Raedani, let us go and visit the possessed one.  
 Ahee! Yohowee! Ndi nga ya hayani hanga.  
 I can go to my home.



Ahee! Yehowee! Mbilu yanga yo no rothola.  
My heart aches.

Vhidzelelani Vho-Nkhetheni. Nwana o pfuluwa. Ho!  
Call Mr Nkhetheni. The child has moved elsewhere.

Tshivhangwaho ndi dabadaba o shavha.

Tshivhangwaho is foolish because he ran away.<sup>9</sup>

A vha vhone, na mphwe dzo swa dza thothela.

Look, the sugar cane has been burnt totally.

A vha vhone, na hatsi ho fhela.

Look, there is no more grass.

"A vha vhone!"

"Look!"

"Ahe! Ahe! Ahe! Ahehe!"

"Hey!"

20 "Arali ho vha hu tshe mulovha mutamvu u tshee na thodzi."

"When I was young nobody dared to

"Aa! Ro vha ri tshi u takuwa mathannga na muthihi a si tsha  
challenge us in boxing."<sup>10</sup>

dovha a takuwa."

Ndala i a vhavha.

Hunger hurts.

Vhunambi hanga nne vhu a lovha, murathu wanga, hoo!

My artistic talent is failing, my younger brother.<sup>11</sup>

25 Ndo dinwa nga Vho-Nyatshisevhe, makhadzi wanga, hoo.

Mrs Nyatshisevhe, my aunt, hurt me.

1 The singer's thirteen year old son to whom this song is dedicated. The song refers to the strife between Albert and his deceased father's elder sister (cf. last line). As in the case of Albert Mundalamo, Albert's aunt has the mistaken impression that he has a steady income from his recordings. She put pressure on him to support her. Because of his own poverty, the singer was unable to comply. This led to a bitter quarrel which prompted Albert to forsake his ancestral home (cf. song 208).

2 A reference to the quarrel.

3 The composer is referring to leaving his ancestral home.

4 This line refers firstly to Albert's involvement in the quarrel, and secondly to his status as tshilombe.

5 A reference to the Tshandama irrigation scheme which obtains its water from the Mutale river.

6 This refers to a man from Guyuni who was burning weeds when preparing his field for hoeing. The fire spread and burnt the vegetable, sugar cane and grass fields of his neighbours. The singer uses this event as an extended metaphor to describe his own misfortune and misery. Before his quarrel his life was meaningful like a fertile valley abundant with crops. After the quarrel it is spiritually and financially bare like burnt fields.

7 A metaphor referring to his poverty.

8 Cf. note 4.

9 A reference to forsaking his ancestral home.

10 A reference to boxing bouts between boys waiting to have their cattle dipped: a metaphoric description of his artistic talent.

11 Albert is referring to his musical creativity. As a result of the quarrel he feels hesitant to continue his musical career. This is directly responsible for his poverty.

208

Tshikona<sup>1</sup>

Nya-nda u vhona dembe.

Come and see something wonderful.

Dzingoma dza manakanaka.

The music is fantastic.<sup>2</sup>

Tshitandani nne a thi nga dzuli,

I will not stay at Tshitandani

ho tou dzula na malelega.

because there are stalk-eyed flies

A tshi luma a tou tongisa.

which like to bite.<sup>3</sup>

Vhunambi ha hone vhu a luvha.

My talent deserves praise.

Ndo dinwa nga Vho-Nyatshisevhe.

Nyatshisevhe hurt me.

Mukegulu a no bva Tshiwisa,

A grandparent from Tshiwisa

o wisiswa, mme.

who was possessed.<sup>4</sup>

10 Hee!

Ahee!

Vhathannga na vhasidzana:

Young men and girls:

Idani ni lidze tshikona.

Come and dance tshikona.

Mananga itali o tangana.

The dance is on.

Tshivhangwaho a nga si doya.

Tshivhangwaho is not going.

U dzula na Vho-Nyamuthenga.

He is staying with Nyamuthenga.<sup>5</sup>

Mukalaha u dzula Duthuni.

The old man lives at Duthuni.

Hiye! Hiye! Hiye!

Ahee!

20 Vho ri fha tshibudzana.

They gave a small goat.<sup>6</sup>

A si matangwa ndi tshikona.

It is not matangwa but tshikona.<sup>7</sup>

**Musadzi u vhona tshikona.**  
 The woman<sup>8</sup> sees tshikona.  
**Nne nañwaha a thi nga dovhi.**  
 I will not do it again this year.<sup>9</sup>  
**Ndo dinwa nga Vho-Nyamuthenga.**  
 Nyamuthenga hurt me.  
**Ngoho, Mudzimu a nga si tende.**  
 Indeed, God will not offer his consent.<sup>10</sup>  
**Hoo, ahee—hee—hoo.**  
**Mbilu yanga i mililani.**  
 My heart is crying.  
**Ndo dinwa nga Vho-Nyatshisevhe.**  
 Nyatshisevhe hurt me.  
**Vho lima tshihu na khoroni.**  
 She planted groundnuts at the chief's court.  
 30 **Zwa phalo nga khwali na khanga.**  
 They are being eaten by francolins and guinea fowls.  
**Hiye! Hiye! Hiye!**  
**Nedzanani o di wisela.**  
 Nedzanani was possessed.<sup>11</sup>  
**O beba mutsila nga shango.**  
 He bore an artist of this place.<sup>12</sup>  
**Muthanga a no bva Tshiwisa.**  
 A young man from Tshiwisa.  
**O wisa zwa mme na ñwana.**  
 He inherited his artistry from the mother and the child.<sup>13</sup>  
**Litshani, ndi tavhanye u tuwa.**  
 Leave me, I am in a hurry to go.  
**Hoo—ahoo—hoo—ahoo!**  
**Havha na ndwa nne a thi thembi.**  
 If a fight ensues I will not stand a chance.  
**Nañwaha nne ndi a lovha.**  
 I am going to die this year.  
 40 **Ndo dinwa nga Vho-Nyamudenga.**  
 I was hurt by Nyamudenga.  
**Vho dinwa nge vha ri ndi tuwe.**  
 She hurt me by telling me to leave.  
**A vha ri, nne ndi tuwe zwino.**  
 I say, I am leaving now.  
**Ndi ye haya hanga zwino.**  
 I am going home now.  
**Ahee—hoo!**

1 The name tshikona (referring to the traditionally important reedpipe dance) is invoked as a metaphor to describe the outstanding quality of Albert's music (cf. ll 1-2). This song deals with the same topic as song 207.

2 Referring to Albert's music.

3 A reference to the quarrel between Albert and his aunt.

4 Albert indicates that he comes from a musical family, and that his talent should not be denigrated.

5 Albert's grandfather.

6/7 **Mathangwa** is a reedpipe dance for young men (cf. Blacking 1957: 7). It is of lesser social importance than **tshikona**. The singer is complaining that he does not receive adequate recognition and payment for his music which is compared to **tshikona**. It is appropriate to reward a **mathangwa** performance with a goat, but a **tshikona** performance should be awarded beer and an ox (cf. Blacking 1962).

8 Albert's aunt.

9 A reference to his musical performances. This is in order to avoid further conflict.

10 I.e. for him to be hurt or bewitched.

11 A reference to his father's musical talent.

12/13 Further references to himself, indicating that he inherited his musical talent from his parents and grandparents.

209

**Tshimanzhemanzhe** (Modern life)

**Fhumulani, ndi ni vhudze.**

Be quiet, so that I can tell you.

**Vhakegulu na vhakalaha:**

Old women and men:

**Vhana vhanu a ri vha layi ngani naa?**

Why should you not advise your children?

**Vha dinwa nga tshimanzhemanzhe tshavho, wee.**

Alas, their problems are caused by their modern life style.

**Madekwe ro lala, a si ho hayani.**

Last night we slept at home, but she did not.<sup>1</sup>

**O vhuya nga matamba-ndou.**

She came back early in the morning.<sup>2</sup>

**Izwi zwithu zwi na vhulombo, mmawe.**

Oh mother! These things cause misery.

**Nwana wavho ndi phenya dziñwe, mmawee, hae.**

Your child excels.

**Ndi tshi mu vhudza a nga si tende, mmawee.**

Oh mother! When I advise her she does not listen.

10 **Vha a divha, ndo no neta, wee-ye.**

You know, I am tired.

**Tshe nda kondelela, wee-ye.**

I have persevered.

**Fhumulani, ndi ni vhudze.**

Be quiet, so that I can tell you.

**A ri ye ni ri ye hayani, mmawe-ye**

Come, let us go home.

**U tshi mu kaidza ha tsha pfa.**

When you reprimand her she does not listen.

**U kaidzwa nga nnyi? Mmawe!**

Oh mother! Who should reprimand her?

**Nga vha litshe a digede.**

Leave her alone.

Kondelela, ndo no neta ngaye.  
Persevere, I am tired of her.  
18 A vha litshe ndi tou zwi litsha, wee-ye.  
Let me stop advising her.

1 The song refers to Albert's sister who left home. She started to lead an existence of drinking and sexual immorality in Thohoyandou. Her family is unaware of her present whereabouts.

2 Lit. she came back when the elephants wash.

210

Vhomakhulu (The in-laws)

Ndi a wela vhomakhulu, xee-xee, hee.  
I am going to my in-laws.  
Aa! Awela, vhomakhulu, ho-hee.  
Relax, in-laws!  
Vho do u tola mukwasha, ee-hee.  
They are coming to visit the betrothed.  
Haa, vho da na thongo yavho.  
They came with their billy goat.  
Haa, ri do i la.  
We will eat it.  
Haa-ahee-he-ho-ho-ho!  
Ri kha di ya u vha vhona.  
We are going to see them.

1 A well-known beer song referring to the transactions which occur between families before a marriage.

#### 4.8.3 George Singo

George Nyelisani Singo is related to the Rambuda ruling dynasty. His family originally lived near Harambuda, the chiefly mountain stronghold (cf. 211: 3-5; 223: 9-25). One of his ancestors moved down the mountain (presumably early during the 20th century) to Tshapasha in the Mutale valley (cf. 215). During the 1930s, George's parents moved to Gaba in the east where there was good grazing for their cattle. This is where George was born in 1937. His father, Madadzhe, became headman of Tshitavha, north of Gaba, during George's youth. However, conflict arose about the headmanship, and George's family returned to Harambuda where Madadzhe died some time afterwards (Mabuda 1992: 2). George believes his death is attributable to witchcraft arising from the conflict over headmanship. George's mother died a few weeks after her husband, affected by her husband's death. The death of his parents had a devastating emotional effect on George (Mabuda loc. cit.).

George attended school for a year or two only, and he is illiterate. His youth was spent tending cattle, and when he became older, he helped his family to farm. George was introduced to musical instruments during this time. He made himself a guitar in 1953 when he was sixteen years old (Mabuda 1992: 2). He also learnt to play the dende gourd-bow and the mbila heptatonic lamellaphone (cf. Kirby 1968).

George worked in Johannesburg for three years, but he has only vague recollections of his urban experiences. He worked at a goldmine at Denver for one year as a cleaner. After returning home for a while, he managed to get employment as a construction worker in Krugersdorp for two years. He did not

return to town for work again. He spent many years taking on casual labour in his home area. In 1982 he was appointed as a cleaner at Mafukane by the Thengwe local authority.

George's rural roots are manifested in song references to local historical and political processes (211; 217; 218; 223). A regional identity emerges from these songs, partly as a factor of history, and partly as a factor of contemporary power-play among ruling families (211). However, there is also a latent desire for interfactional friction to end, and for the emergence of wider cooperation (218). Rural roots and a land-rooted ideology are also manifested in natural metaphors and references. Families involved in border disputes become guineafowls fighting over seed (218: 8), and people hoeing their fields look like ground hornbills pecking with their large, curved bills (219). People still wash in rivers (218: 13-14), a village is woken by the sound of a whistle (215), the numerous rivers and streams of the Mutale valley are in flow during the rainy season (217), and a young man sloshes through the mud to go and visit his fiancée (217: 6). Traditional moral conventions still have validity: sexual immorality and failure to bear children is frowned upon (212; 213), travellers are expected to return home with gifts for their family (216), and a certain social etiquette still applies in terms of sharing a communal beer ladle (221).

George's musical style is a manifestation of his quest for survival in a rural environment. George identified the guitar as "number one for getting food", and he supplements his income by performing at beer houses. At times he also performs at stokfel meetings where he earns an average of R60 per session. People do not consider George a tshilombe because he does not lead a wandering existence. Instead, he

performs regularly at certain local beer houses only.

George was approached by an employee of Radio Thohoyandou in 1983 with a proposal to market his music commercially. This person appears to have liaised between George and the recording company, Tusk Records. He took George to Johannesburg where several songs were adapted for ensemble performance. The recording was released under the title of George's favourite song, "The skirt" (216). George received R165 immediately after the recording session. However, he had to wait until the second half of 1990 for his first royalty. He received a cheque for R38,73. This payment was for the period January-June 1990. George was very agitated about this small amount, and indicated that he was being "robbed" by the record company.<sup>1</sup>

I detected in George, as well as certain other guitarists, a lack of understanding of market mechanisms. Apparently influenced by the success of artists of national repute, these musicians generally expect immediate and significant financial success after their first commercial release. They do not seem to realize how competitive the mass market is. In addition, not only do they usually sing in their mother tongue only, but their music is often firmly rooted in local traditional musical culture which has limited wider appeal. This seems the case with George's musical style which shows a marked lack of extraneous influence. It is firmly rooted in the traditional beer song tradition, but in a different way from that of Solomon Mathase. Virtually all George's songs seem to be guitar adaptations of beer songs. Of the thirteen recorded songs (211-223), only two are not original beer songs. These two have been adapted for beer song performance from other categories of traditional music. They are no 217,



based on a well-known children's song, and no 218, an adaptation of *tshikona*, the reedpipe dance.

George often receives supernatural inspiration for a beer song adaptation. When dreaming, he hears a song motive performed by a paternal ancestral spirit. Adaptation arguably is not a fully appropriate term to describe George's performance of beer songs on the guitar. Although his guitar style is unique, he does not exploit the instrument in the way Mashudu Mulaudzi and Solomon Mathase do. His style is marked by an attempt to represent existing beer songs as faithfully as possible on the guitar.

George uses a plucking technique (-*tika*, to lift) to reproduce vocal melodies. George does not execute arpeggio patterns, nor does he strum. Like Albert Mundalamo, he views strumming negatively. Strumming ostensibly is a "lazy" way of playing since it involves taking "short-cuts". It also results in "noise" (-*rasa*, from Afr. *raas*). However, in reality strumming and arpeggio playing are considered to "conceal" vocal melodies. By contrast, plucking allows a guitarist to faithfully represent them. This is in keeping with traditional convention in terms of which good instrumentalists are identified by their ability to faithfully represent a vocal melody on their instrument (cf. Kruger 1986: 286).

The recorded songs feature the two most common cyclic lengths of traditional music, namely those comprising twelve or sixteen pulses (cf. Kruger 1986). All the songs also follow a traditional tonality shift. Compared to the music of most other guitarists, George's bass progression is relatively unaccented. Generally, one is much less aware of tonality

shifts in George's music than that of, for example, Solomon Mathase. This is in keeping with the beer song idiom in which his music is presented. In beer songs the basic tonality shift is often concealed within the melodic movement. George's music manifests this because he attempts to reproduce the vocal melodies faithfully. In general his guitar accompaniment tends to focus on melodic playing on the high strings. By contrast there are no bass runs, and movement in the bass is generally restricted to an unaccented progression (cf. audio recording 41).

#### Notes

1 George referred to this affair as "stadium robbery". This is a reference to previous annual independence celebrations (conducted at the national stadium in Thohoyandou) which George regarded as a crooked affair.

Vhudilangi (Independence)

(Chorus)

Rine ri a tuwa.

We are leaving.

Ri yo tangana Phondo Maria.

We are going to meet at Punda Maria.<sup>1</sup>

(solo)

"Ri fhando Dzimauli-tshi-wa-nga-matembele!"

"We live at Dzimauli where they descended with vines!"<sup>2</sup>

"Hune wa pfa ndala wa lila."

"A place where you cry when you are hungry."

Thavha ya hone i wa shotha la madi.

"Where water drips from the mountain."<sup>3</sup>

Vho-Mphephu, wee!

Alas, Mr Mphephu!<sup>4</sup>

Ndi Vho-Ravele vho shavha shango.

It is Mr Ravele who left the country.<sup>5</sup>

Ndi vhudilangi na vhudivhusi.

It is independence and self-government.

Hee, Vho-Mphephu, wee, ri yo tangana ngei vhudilangi.

Alas, Mr Mphephu, we shall meet at the independence stadium.

10 He vha ya hayani Thohoyandou.

They are going home to Thohoyandou.<sup>6</sup>

Ndi vha do sala vha lino shango.

Those from this place will remain.<sup>7</sup>

1 These lines derive from a well-known beer song.

2 This is the praise of Harambuda, the residence of Chief Rambuda. The Rambuda chieftainship was contested between Tshikosi and Tshipuma, c. 1880-1896 (cf. Nemudzivhadi 1985: 21 ff.). Tshipuma initially managed to assume chieftainship, but was eventually deposed by Tshikosi. Harambuda is situated against the slope of a high, almost vertical cliff. The praise tshi-wa-nga-matembele derives from the word matembeledzi, meaning long supple vines. Tshikosi's warriors made use of vines to lower themselves down the cliff, and surprise and overpower the chiefly village.

3 This is a reference to local caves in which the Rambuda people hid during times of fighting. These caves offered good hiding, partly because they had water which dripped from their walls.

4 A reference to political repression and corruption during Mphephu's presidency.

5 This is a reference to the beginning of the socio-political upheavals early during 1990 which lead to the military coup of April 5th. President Frank Ravele had left on a visit to Hong Kong to establish trade relations. His absence was marked by the start of what was to become a drawn-out strike

by teachers in favour of high salaries and against various aspects of the education system in Venda. The flames of general discontent were fanned by the rumour that the president had in fact fled the country.

6 A reference to people who attended independence celebrations at Thohoyandou.

7 An expression of mockery by people who were opposed to the concept of independence. According to George, "independence was a bad thing because people were killed".

212

**Nyawasedza** (Nyawasedza)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Ha vhulawi Nyawasedza.

Do not kill Nyawasedza.<sup>2</sup>

(solo)

Inwi, mmawe!

You, mother!

Yowee-hae. Munna wa muñwe.

Alas, someone else's husband.

Yowee, khomba i disa mavhava.

Alas, the girl is attracting vagabonds.<sup>3</sup>

Khomba ha vhulawi.

The girl must not be killed.

Ndi a fa na?

Should I die

Nyawasedza ha vhulawi.

Nyawasedza should not be killed.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 A reference to an adulterous woman.

3 Lit. to attract thieves; referring to a woman who attracts unsavoury characters with her immoral sexual behaviour.

213

**Senenga a li tuwi**<sup>1</sup> (The stench remains)

(Chorus)

Thula mavhota!

Shake the buttocks!<sup>2</sup>

Senenga li a vhavha.

The stench is nauseating.<sup>3</sup>

Munna wa ñanga khulwane.

A certain man is a doctor.

(solo)

He, nangwe vha mona na sibadela, ñwana vha nga si mu wane.

Even if you go to the hospital you will not be able to bear a child.<sup>4</sup>

He, nangwe vha tamba vha dola, ndi uri senenga a li tuwi.

Even if you wash and beautify yourself, the stench remains.

He, nangwe vha mona na Vho-Ramasuvha, munna wa ñanga khulwane.

Even if you consult Dr Ramasuvha<sup>5</sup> who is a medical doctor.

He, nangwe vha mona na Vho-Tshikovha, munna wa ñanga khulwane.

Even if you consult Mr Tshikovha<sup>6</sup> who is a herbalist.

10 He, ndi vhidzelela munna wa ñanga khulwane.

I am summoning the doctor.

He, vho losha fhasi vuhadzi ho vha balela.

Her marriage has broken up.

Vho tshimbilesa, ñwana vha nga si mu wane.

She is unable to bear a child because of her wandering.<sup>7</sup>

Ngauri vha vhuya vho vhuya sibadela ñwana o vha balela.

Because she returned from the hospital without success.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 Immoral sexual behaviour. This phrase is often used to refer to "modern" life in general, and specifically to a life-style marked by drinking and prostitution.

3 A reference to body odour, intended to express disapproval of immoral sexual behaviour.

4 Because of venereal disease and abortions the woman is unable to conceive.

5 From Makwarela.

6 From Mutale.

7 People who regularly engage in illicit sexual relationships are referred to as "wanderers".

214

Tsha madekwe (Last night)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Tshi tsho tsha madekwe.

Since last night.

(solo)

Musadzi o tuwa na ñwana.

The woman has left with the child.<sup>2</sup>

Nne a tho ngo lala.

I could not sleep.

Ndo lala, ndo imelela.

I slept, expecting her.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 Because of marital problems.

Vuwani (Waking up)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Vuwani, ri ye mushumoni.

Wake up, we are going to work.

(solo)

Nanga yo lila, mmawe!Oh Mother! The reedpipe has sounded.<sup>2</sup>

Yowee, yowee! Mai vhavho!

Oh dear, oh dear! Oh mother!<sup>3</sup>

Mai vhavho! Siya musebenzini!

Oh mother! Go to work!

Ndi tzwio-tzwio vho i pfa na?Did you hear the whistle?<sup>4</sup>

Vuwani! Mai vhavho!

Wake up! Oh mother!<sup>5</sup>

Bisi yo ima! Mai vhavho!

The bus has stopped! My mother!

Bisi yo swika.

The bus has arrived.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 The usual meaning of this phrase is "there is no use crying over spilt milk". In this song however, it refers to a waking-up signal.

3 Lit. their mother.

4 This is a reference to *dzwio*, a signal whistle made from bone or wood (cf. Kirby 1968). It is used here to wake people up. People formerly commonly used a horn or a whip.

5 The whistle gives its final warning when people hear the bus arriving at the neighbouring village of Tshiombo on the opposite side of the Mutale river. Those who get up at this signal are late, and usually rush cursing to catch the bus which reaches Tshapasha at 7 a.m.

Tshikete (The skirt)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Tshikete a vha mu rengeli na.

They do not buy a skirt for him.

(solo)

Nne, ñanwaha ndo huma Photogisi, Vhavenda.This year I returned from afar,<sup>2</sup> honourable sir.

Mufarekano u tou dzangeliwa.

The concubine is being given presents.

Na munna u tou rengeliwa.

And a man should be given a gift.

1 Based on a beer song. This is George's favourite song. It refers to the custom which requires travellers to bring presents to those at home.

2 Lit. Portugal; a generic name denoting any distant place.

217

I a vhuya mulobilo (It is pouring)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Kolongonya.<sup>2</sup>

(solo)

He, vhommane, mbebeni.

Hey, aunty, carry me on your back.

He, nndu khulu dzi na biko.

Hey, big houses are warm.<sup>3</sup>

I a vhuya mulobilo.

It is pouring.

I a vhuya, mbebeni.

It is falling, carry me on your back.

"Ha-hae!"

"Ndi hone yo tangana ya muhwe tsholokoto."

"The betrothed sloshes in the rain."<sup>4</sup>

I a vhuya mulobilo.

It is pouring.

He, nndu khulu dzi na biko.

Hey, big houses are warm.

10 "Ndi hone tsho limuwa yo tangana."

"It is summer, that is why it is raining."

"A songo rengaho zenenge u do vhuya a humbula ñwaha wa

"Those who did not buy corrugated iron will remember this

nañwaha. Milambo yo dala."

year.<sup>5</sup> Rivers are in flow."

I a vhuya mulobilo.

It is pouring.

He, nndu khulu dzi na biko.

Hey, big houses are warm.

"Ahaa!"

Ri yo tamba lugeroni.

We are playing at the water-furrow.

E, Vho-Makhaya vha na swili.

Mr Makhaya is naughty.<sup>6</sup>

E, Vho-Ravele vha na phungo.

There are rumours concerning Mr Ravele.<sup>7</sup>

I a vhuya mulobilo.

It is pouring.

20 He, nndu khulu dzi na biko.  
Hey, big houses are warm.

1 Based on a well-known children's song.

2 An ideophone describing large rain drops falling off a thatch roof.

3 Lit. they are sweating. This is possibly a reference to the making of fires on cold rainy days. Since huts are not provided with chimneys, it is common to see smoke filtering through thatch roofs, providing the image of a hot smouldering enclosed space.

4 Cf. the name for March, Tafamuhwe, which describes a young betrothed man sloshing through the mud to visit his future wife.

5 A reference to houses with corrugated roofs which keep rain out better than ordinary thatch roofs.

6 A person from Thengwe who used to smoke dagga.

7 Cf. song 211.

218

### Tshikona<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Tzwi-tzwi-tzwi, hae!<sup>2</sup>

Vho-Mapholi ndi khosi.

Mr Mapholi is headman.

(solo)

Aa, vhe ndi lu humbelo.

One who is begging.<sup>3</sup>

Hee nnda! Vhone, ri ya, wee.

Greetings! They, we are going.

Nya-da u vhone madembe.

Come and see wonders.

Ndi takala ndi Mukumbani.

I am happy at Mukumbani.<sup>4</sup>

Dzimauli la madzivhiswa.

Dzimauli which is refused!<sup>5</sup>

Vho dzivhisa khanga u tshela.

They have refused the guineafowls<sup>6</sup> any seeds.

Tshavho ndi luhumbelo, wee.

They are begging.

10 Ndi takala ndi maholoni.

I am happy at the chief's homestead.

O funa u fhio mutuka, hee?

Which one did she love?<sup>7</sup>

O funa wa tshanda tsha monde.

She loved the left-handed one.



**Ndi Gadabi la mutumba-pfunda.**

The Gadabi river is a place where a beautiful woman washes.

**Lo tanzwa Munzhedzi a naka.**

It is where Munzhedzi washes.

1 The well-known Venda reedpipe dance.

2 The sound of tshikona pipes (cf. Kirby 1968).

3 This song refers to a contemporary land issue between the Tshivhase and Rambuda ruling families. Headman Mapholi is in charge of Ngwenani, a village near Donald Fraser Hospital. He is "begging" for land which lies on the border between the two chiefly districts. George advocates that the strife should stop. According to him, the land belongs to both families because of intermarriage between them.

4 Mukumbani is the home of chief Tshivhase. The singer praises Mukumbani here to promote unity between the two families.

5 A praise opposing the Tshivhase land claim (from -dzivhisa, to refuse).

6 Referring to the Tshivhase family and their land claim.

7 Love is a metaphor promoting national unity in contemporary Venda. Gadabi, a river at Nzhelele, refers to the marrying of Tshikosi to a woman from the Ramabulana family (cf. Nemudzihvadi 1985: 21 f.).

219

**Madandila** (The ground hornbills)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

He, ku lima ku na madandila.

Hey, the ground hornbills are hoeing.<sup>2</sup>

He, ku lima ku na madandila, wee, vhommane.

Hey, the ground hornbills are hoeing. Alas, aunt.

(solo)

Ri ya la na nduhu tsimu yanga.

We eat groundnuts from my field.

He, vha ri, ndi a fa nga mbilu, vhommane.

Hey, they say I am dying from an aching heart, aunt.

He, vha ri, vha fa nga ndala, vhommane.

Hey, they say they are dying from hunger, aunt.<sup>3</sup>

1 Based on an old beer song which refers to people being woken early in the morning by the call of ground hornbills for domestic and horticultural work.

2 A reference to people working in their fields, and to hornbills eating groundnuts from these fields.

3 A reference to those people who ignored the waking call of the ground hornbills.

Tshiendela-magaraba (Migrants)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Tshiendela-magaraba.<sup>2</sup>

Migrants.

(solo)

He, wanga u hone.

Hey, mine is also there.

Tshiendela, mani, vhone, yae-ya-ho!

You man, the home-leavers.

Vhamakhuwani kha vha vhuve, yae-ya-ho.

The town people should return.

Nne ndi a tuwa makhuwani, wee.

Alas, I am going to town.

Vha ya lila, mmawee-yo!

Oh mother! They are crying!

Tshiendela, mani, vhone, hae-ya. Vha ya lila havha vhangha.

You man, the home-leavers. Our dear ones at home are crying.

Huwee, huwelele.

Tshiendela Vho-Munzhedzi, hae-ya. Vha do lila havha vhangha.

Mr Munzhedzi the home-leaver. Our dear ones at home will cry.

10 Vha songo lila havha vhangha.

Do not cry, our dear ones.

Tshiendela Vho-Muofhe.

Mr Muofhe the home-leaver.

Tshiendela Vho-Mutshekwa.

Mr Mutshekwa the home-leaver.

Vho-Mukondeleli tshiendela, ye-ha.

Mr Mukondeleli the home-leaver.

Vho-Gilihoni vha vhudze. Darling mani George.

Mr Gilihoni should tell. Darling George, man.

Ndi ri, Joey u hone ngoho.

I say, Joey is truly mine.<sup>3</sup>

1 Based on a beer song.

2 Magaraba (sing. ligaraba) is a generic name for migrant workers. Its original meaning is derogative, as it refers to someone who has forsaken his home and cut ties with his family.

3 A reference to an illicit relationship between the singer and the wife of an absent migrant.

Kwengweledzani (Pacify)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Kwengweledzani vkhotsimunene.

Pacify the uncle.

(solo)

Nne ndi a ñala.

I am leaving in anger.

Halwa ndi halwa de vhu no dziñwa vhañwe?  
 What kind of beer is that which is not given to all?  
 Ndi ri, kwengweledzani. Halwa ndi halwa de vha sa funi u  
 I say, pacify. What kind of beer is that which you do not  
 fhiwa vhañwe?  
 like to give all?  
 Nne ndi a tuwa, vhokhotsimunene.  
 I am leaving uncle.  
 Rine ri a tuwa.  
 We are leaving.  
 Halwa ndi halwa. Ndi vha vhudze.  
 Beer is beer. I am telling you.  
 Vhokhotsimunene, rine ri a ñala.  
 Uncle, we are leaving in anger.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 George is referring to himself in this song. He likes drinking and always tries to obtain free beer, sometimes unsuccessfully as indicated in the song.

222

Tshidudu tsha makhulu Matodzi (The small claypot)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Tshidudu tsha makhulu Matodzi tsho vhidekana.  
 The small claypot of granny Matodzi has cracked.<sup>2</sup>  
 (solo)

Mbilu yanga yo vhavha yo fhola.  
 I was angry,<sup>3</sup> but not any more.  
 Ndi vha songo shavha. Vhannani hae!  
 Do not run away. Alas gentlemen!  
 Ndo pfa mukosi wo lila. Vho-George, ha-yae.  
 I heard loud crying. Alas, George.

1 Based on a beer song.

2 The cracked pot symbolizes agitation and misfortune.

3 Lit. my heart ached.

223

Gumba tshinyanyane (The egg of a small wild bird)<sup>1</sup>

(Chorus)

Gumba tshinyanyane.  
 The egg of a small wild bird.  
 (solo)  
 Vha do fela Photogisi.  
 They will die far away.<sup>2</sup>  
 Mmawe! Vha do fela Photogisi.  
 Mother! They will die far away.  
 Vhavenda vha do fela Photogisi.  
 The Venda people will die far away.

Kha vha vhone, vha do fela Photogisi.  
Look, they will die far away.  
Vha sa vhone. Vha do fela Photogisi.  
If you do not look. They will die far away.  
Kha vha tuwe. Vha do fela Photogisi.  
Let us go. They will die far away.  
Haa-la-la-wee, helele.

"Hee! U a sala, hee!"

"Hey! He remains!"<sup>3</sup>

10 "Ndi henengeyi Dzimauli maholoni!"

"There at the Dzimauli chiefly homestead!"

"Tshi-wa-nga-matembete!"

"Where they descend with vines!"<sup>4</sup>

"Hune vha dzhena bakoni la Tshavhadinda vha vhone lo

"When you enter the Tshavhadinda cave

sokotela henengeyi bvungwi he ha vha hu tshoi ya

you can see its interior where our

vhomakhulu washu."

ancestors used to hide."

Aha-wee, kha vha vhone!

Look!

"Ndi henefha hune madi a sa pfuki mulambo ri henefha

"It is here where water does not even cross the river

Tshapasha."

at Tshapasha."<sup>5</sup>

"Li tshi pfuka shango hu tshi toda u dzhena Tshibvumo."

"When we cross the place we reach Tshibvumo."<sup>6</sup>

"Ro dzula mutshilikini!"

"We sat under the mahogany."

20 "Mirunzini!"

"Shade!"

"Ri tshi ya u kuma henengeyi Havhondivhuho."

"We sang praises on our way to Vhondivhuho."<sup>6</sup>

"Ra vha ri tshi khona ri ri tshi vhuya nalo ri tshi gonya

"We leave him and

nalo na thavha."

ascend the mountain."

"Ri tshi ya henengeyi Dzimauli ha vho. Tshi-wa-nga-matembete!"

"We ascend the mountain on our way to Dzimauli where they descended with vines!"

"Dzithavhani mabakoni henengeyi."

"There are caves in the mountains."

1 Based on a beer song.

2 They: the Tshivhase family. This song also refers to the Tshivhase-Rambuda land issue (cf. song 218). The singer suggests that the claim of the Tshivhase family will be repudiated.

3 I.e. chief Rambuda (see note 2).

4 Cf. song 211.

5 This is a reference to the Mutale river which seemingly emerges magically from the ground. In fact, it originates in

Lake Fundudzi from where it runs underground for a distance.

6 Tshibvumo and Vhondivhuho are areas near Harambuda.

#### 4.9 Nndanganeni Luambo

I had only one interview with Nndanganeni Luambo before his death in 1990. As such I did not know him well, and have limited information about his life. However, a brief discussion of his life and music is desirable. Nndanganeni was one of the few guitarists under investigation who managed to have some of his songs marketed commercially. In the process he achieved status as a local culture hero. This was partly because he represented certain meaningful traditional themes in a modern idiom.

Nndanganeni Daniel Luambo was born c. 1957 at the village of Muhuyu where he lived most of his life. He attended school to substandard B, and remained at home until his late teens. In 1971 he left home for the first time. He worked for two years as a labourer on a vegetable farm outside Roodepoort. After this he joined a pottery in Roodepoort for nine months. He returned home until 1975 when he left for Roodepoort again. This time he worked at the Durban Deep gold mine for six months, and after that at a brickyard for eight months. He returned home where he remained until 1982 when he became a security guard in Florida. He worked there for a year, and returned home until 1985 when he worked for four months at the Geduld gold mine at Odendaalsrus. Like Albert Mundalamo, Nndanganeni also found the contract system detrimental to a stable working life. He practised subsistence farming during his sojourns at home. He also earned a small income from performing on his guitar at beer houses. When I met him in 1987, some of his songs (mostly of a religious nature) had been recorded by Black Talent Music, but he had not yet received any royalties.

Nndanganeni's status as folk hero partly derives from his song "With what shall I dance?" (song 227; audio recording 42). Dealing partly with witchcraft (ll 16-35), the song achieved popularity during the turbulent years of political repression following the declaration of independence in 1979. Nndanganeni's fear of witches and nocturnal evil was ironically and cruelly prophetic. Early during 1990 he went into a local mountain with a cousin to fell trees for use in building construction. An argument ensued about the wood. During the evening of that day Nndanganeni was in his hut. Someone hailed him from outside. When he opened the door, a person wearing a balaclava hacked his head with an axe. He was rushed to Elim hospital where he died soon afterwards. His cousin was eventually charged with the murder.

Nndanganeni's musical style suggests that he aimed to market his songs as dance music. All six recorded songs (224-229) feature an eight beat cycle rooted in a basic I-IV-V harmonic progression. The music has fast, strong forward motion, propelled by an almost metronomic rhythmic regularity. It features little in the way of rhythmic, harmonic or melodic variation. Nndanganeni's singing is similarly fast, and, unlike that of some other guitarists, features few sustained tones.

Five of the six songs Nndanganeni performed for me reflect a curious, yet not surprising combination of constituent elements (cf. 224-228). Although Nndanganeni aimed at the local mass market with these songs, their Venda texts do not express any popular theme. They contain autobiographical detail and express a personal worldview.<sup>1</sup> These aspects emerge as a complex of layered, latent meanings. The surface layer reveals references to precolonial culture: possession

dancing (224 & 227), girls' initiation (225), divination (226), traditional foodstuffs and clothing (226 & 227), and a subsistence economy (228). On a deeper level, these references manifest a nostalgic longing for the physical and emotional security embedded in patterns of precolonial existence. Nndanganeni seems to have been a person struggling to find true identity during a time of confusing social transition. He appears to have been suspended between traditional and contemporary patterns of production, not being incorporated fully into either. He was a devout member of the Zion Christian Church, and apparently did not actively participate in traditional rituals. He nevertheless keenly observed them, and had an emotional attachment to them. In addition, his deceased aunt, Muofhe, was a possession cult member (cf. 224: 24), and his maternal uncle, Tshiedzaedza Nepfumbada of Khubvi, and maternal cousin Tshivhidzo of Muhuyu, are both diviners (cf. 226). Nndanganeni seems to have drawn some spiritual and emotional security from the knowledge of his ancestral roots (224: 3; 226; 227: 5-13; 228). "Riches of old" (228) is a powerful expression of the longing for the relative security of the past (l 11), and the emotions arising from the knowledge that social change is irreversible (ll 7-10). And as for Solomon Mathase, music making for Nndanganeni was a means whereby the confusion of existence was explored and mediated (l 5).

On the third, deepest level, patterns of precolonial culture become metaphoric for the passionate and intimate emotions arising from family conflict (cf. 224; 227). Nndanganeni became separated from his wife Gladys before I met him. She took their two small daughters Lufuno and Nnditsheni, and returned to her paternal home at Khubvi (224: 4-7). This had a profound emotional impact on Nndanganeni, and in song 224



possession dancing becomes a metaphor for his hurt feelings (cf. l 5). The performance of possession music is also metaphoric for Nndanganeni's musical mediation of pain. As I indicate elsewhere (Kruger 1988), the concept of *ngoma* (cf. ll 1-3, 9-11 & 21-24) not only refers to song and dance, but also to a state of heightened consciousness. Marital separation was a traumatic experience for Nndanganeni. It produced in him a state of emotional excitement and tension. Through his music he "exorcized" his hurt emotions in the same stressful, yet cathartic way that a cult medium exorcizes a troubled spirit. His music became the "drums" that broke his heart (l 11), a sad cry going up over the loss of his wife and children. And he drew emotional power and security from the knowledge that perseverance is required from a spirit medium who wants to pacify the troubled spirit (l 8). But Nndanganeni did not seem to achieve internal peace again. Until his death he wandered restlessly and unhappily around the countryside, performing on his guitar (cf. ll 7, 9 & 19).

### Notes

1 I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Nndanganeni's elder sister Muofhe, and her husband Phineas Maumela, for helping me to interpret the song texts, and for providing biographical detail.

Ngoma dza malombo (Possession dancing)

Vha tshi tshina ngoma dza Tshivenda,  
When the Venda dance,  
ngoho vha do dzunguluwa.  
they indeed do so in a circle.  
Vhakalanga na vhone vha ri Vhavenda vha divha ngoma.  
The Karanga say the Venda know the music.<sup>1</sup>  
Hee, vhananga vha wela Khubvi.  
My children are going to Khubvi.  
Nahone ngoho zwi a tungufhadza, wee.  
Alas, it hurts badly indeed.  
Vho wela Khubvi kha la Randima.  
Kubvi of Randima.<sup>2</sup>  
Ndi Lufuno na Nnditsheni. Ngoho, nne ndi ya na shango.  
They are Lufuno and Nnditsheni. Indeed, I am leaving for  
ever.  
Makalanga matsina vhone vha ri vha toda u kondelela.  
But the Karanga say they want to persevere.  
Vha sale zwavhudi na vhone vha tshi vhona ngoma.  
Remain well and watch the dancing.

- 10 Ahelelee.  
Ndi ngoma dza malisambilu, wee.  
Alas, the music that breaks my heart.  
Ahelelee.  
Nne, mme anga vho vhona mboni.  
My mother saw something strange.<sup>3</sup>  
Ahelelee.

Kha vha de vha do vhona ngoma, mmawe, ahee.  
Come and see the dance, mother!  
Ahelelee!  
Ahelelee. Malo!<sup>4</sup>  
Zwi a mangadza, helelee.  
It is wonderful.  
Nne ndi ya na shango.  
I am leaving for ever.

- 20 Vhutanzi ha hone nne ndo fha Vho-Nemavhola.  
I presented the evidence to Mr Nemavhola.<sup>5</sup>  
U la ndi Mukandangalwo u do dzhena ngoma.  
It is Mukandangalwo who will become possessed.<sup>6</sup>

Ngoma dza Tshivenda. Na vhone ngoho vha do dzunguluwa.  
Venda dances. You will do it in a circle indeed.

Ahelelee.  
Vhakegulu vha tshina ngoma.  
The old women perform possession dancing.

1 A reference to the Shona origin of possession dancing.

2 Randima is the name of the ruling family of Khubvi, the

place where Nndanganeni's wife comes from.

3 I.e. spirit possession as well as marital separation.

4 An exclamation of shocked surprise.

5 Mr Nemavhola is the headman of Tshipakao, a neighbouring village of Muhuyu. "Presenting the evidence" refers to reporting the separation to the headman.

6 Lit. to go inside the drum.

225

Vhakololo (Royalty)

**Vhakololo vha musanda.**

Royalty of the chief's place.<sup>1</sup>

**Vha tshi swika khoroni,**

When they arrive at the court yard,

**hu do vhidzwa vhamusanda.**

the chief will be called.

**Vhamusanda vha tshi swika,**

When the chief arrives,

**hu do thoma Mukatshelwa.**

Mukatshelwa will be first.

**Mukatshelwa u do tseda.**

Mukatshelwa will perform the tseda<sup>2</sup> step.

**U gudiswa nga Vho-Denga, wee.**

Mrs Denga will teach her.<sup>3</sup>

**Kha vha de vha do vhona-vho**

Just come and see what

**zwa n̄wana wa Vho-Luambo.**

the child of Mr Luambo will be doing.<sup>4</sup>

10 **A tshi tshina tsha musanda.**

He is performing the dance of the chief's place.

**Vha Dzanani vha na phungo.**

Dzanani people have a reputation as good musicians.

**Vhasiwana vha ya tseda.**

Commoners perform the tseda step.

**Vha gudiswa nga Vho-Denga.**

Mrs Denga taught them.

**Vho-Mudzunga vha ngafhi?**

Where is Mrs Mudzunga?

**Hu do tseda Vho-Mudzunga, wee.**

Mrs Mudzunga is performing the tseda step.

**Vho-Mudzunga vha Muhuyu, wee.**

Mrs Mudzunga of Muhuyu.

**Vha do tseda tsha musanda.**

She is performing the tseda step at the chief's place.

**Vhakololo vha musanda.**

Royalty of the chief's place.

**Vhakololo a vha tsemi.**

Royal people do not perform the tseda step.

20 **Nne, nazwino, ngoho.**

I, and then, indeed.

**Khomba dzi mulamboni.**

Young women at the river.<sup>5</sup>

**Vhasiwana vha a tseda.**

Commoners do the tseda step.

**Vha gudiswa nga Vho-Denga.**

They are taught by Mrs Denga.

**Vha Dzanani vha na phungo.**

Dzanani people have a reputation as good musicians.

1 A reference to the homestead of headman Mukumela Tshivhase of Muhuyu.

2 A step performed at **vhusha ha vhasiwana** (initiation of girls from non-ruling families). The tseda step is physically demanding, involving a jumping action in a squatting position. Girls taking part in **vhusha ha vhakololo** (initiation of girls from ruling families) are allowed the privilege of not performing this demanding step.

3 The school instructor.

4 Nndanganeni here refers to his own musical expertise.

5 A reference to sitting in a cold stream early in the morning as part of an "endurance test" during initiation. It may also refer to the final washing after completion of the initiation process.

226

**Malume anga ndi ñanga** (My uncle is a diviner)

**Vho-Tshiedzaedza ndi ñanga, wee.**

Mr Tshiedzaedza is a diviner.<sup>1</sup>

**Na Vho-Tshivhidzo ndi ñanga.**

Mr Tshivhidzo is a diviner too.<sup>2</sup>

**Vha tungula na nga thangu.**

They are informed by the divining dice.

**Vho fhiwa nga vhafhasi.**

They were given by the forefathers.

**Mulifho wa zwivhi ndi lufu.**

The penalty for sins is death.<sup>3</sup>

**Na Vho-Tshivhidzo ndi ñanga, wee.**

Mr Tshivhidzo is a diviner too.

**Vho-Tshiedzaedza ndi ñanga.**

Mr Tshiedzaedza is a diviner.

**Vho fhiwa nga vhafhasi.**

They were given by the ancestors.

**Vhakegulu ndi vhakale.**

Old women of the past.

10 **Vha divha miroho ya kale.**

They know vegetables of the past.

**Tshikili ndi dza dovhi, wee.**

The fruit of the mahogany is used to make a gravy.

**Dzo divhiwa nga vhakale.**

They were known by our forefathers.

- Na Vho-Tshivhidzo ndi n̄anga, wee.  
 Mr Tshivhidzo is a diviner too.  
 Vha fhodza vhulwadze ha tshiivha.  
 He cures fits.  
 Vhakegulu ndi vhakale.  
 Old women of the past.  
 Vha divha miroho ya kale.  
 They know vegetables of the past.
- 17 Vha divhiswa nga vhakale.  
 They learned from their ancestors.

1 Mr Tshiedzaedza Nepfumbada, Nndanganeni's maternal uncle from Khubvi.

2 A cousin of Nndanganeni's mother. He lives at Muhuyu.

3 This is obviously of church origin. It is applied here in terms of finding the source of trouble and misfortune by divination, and taking appropriate action.

227

Ndi do tshina ngani ngoma? (With what shall I dance?)

Mudzimu yo fura madi. Ndi do nwa ngani mabundu? Vha pfana  
 The spirit becomes sated with water.<sup>1</sup> What shall I use to  
 na murathu wanga, wee.

drink beer with? She is in love with my younger brother.<sup>2</sup>

Thumbu yo fura madi. Ndi do nwa ngani mabundu? Vha pfana

The large stomach becomes sated with water. What shall I use  
 na murathu wanga.

to drink beer with? She is in love with my younger brother.

Ndi amba na vhone, wee. Ndi do tshina ngani ngoma tsindi

I am speaking to you. With what shall I dance if I have  
 yango yo kheruwana?

a torn loincloth?<sup>3</sup>

Ndi amba mugwarelo.

I am referring to the men's girdle.

Na wone ngoho ndo vhudzwa nga malume anga.

Truly, my uncle told me about it.

"Malume anga ndi vhone vho mmbudzaho zwauri kale ho vha

"My uncle told me that people of old used to wear these

- 10 hu tshi ambariwa migwarelo."  
 girdles."

"Ndi tshi vhudzisa kha malume anga ndi tshi ri migwarelo ndi

"When I asked my uncle about these girdles he informed me

mini vho mmbudza zwauri ndi zwithu zwe zwa vha tshi

ambariwa nga Vhavenda u bva kale-kale."

that they have been worn by Venda people since long ago."

Ndi amba na vhone, wee: Ndi do tshina ngani tsindi yanga

I am indeed speaking to you: With what shall I dance if I  
 yo kheruwa?

have a torn loin-cloth?

Nangwe vha ndodela vhusiku nazwino ndo themba wa Makoleni.

I trust in God, even if you come at night.<sup>4</sup>

Nangwe vha dzula nga nne vhone nazwino ndo themba wa makoleni.

I trust in God, even if you conspire against me.

Hone, wee, fhumulani, wee. Ndo zwi vhona, nahone vha tamba

20 But, be silent. I have seen, they are furthermore playing nga murathu wanga.

with my younger brother.

Ndi amba mahola.

I am talking about last year.

Azwinndini u pfana na murathu wanga.

Azwinndini was in love with my younger brother.

Ndo vhona vhañwe mukegulu.

I saw a certain old woman.<sup>5</sup>

Nazwino ngoho vha lowa masiari naa?

Do they indeed bewitch in the afternoon?<sup>6</sup>

Fhumulani nazwino ngoho. Vha lowa masiari naa?

Be silent indeed. Do they bewitch in the afternoon?

Vho balelwa u lowa vhusiku.

They cannot bewitch at night.

Na zwino vha lowa masiari naa?

Do they bewitch in the afternoon?

Huñwii!<sup>5</sup>

Huñwii!

30 "Ndi zwithu zwa Vhavenda zwine vha silinga ngazwo vhusiku

"These are the things the Venda people use to bewitch us musu ro di edelela mitumbani yashu."

with at night when we are sleeping at our homes."

"Vhone vhaloi vha tshi ya u lowa, a vha na ndavha yauri

"When the witches go to bewitch, they do not care whether ndi tshisiwana naa kana ndi tshipfumi."

they bewitch an orphan or a rich person."

"Namusi muthu a songo tshinya tshithu, vhaloi vha a di u

"Even if a person did not do any harm, the witches can come dodela vhusiku vha u lowa vha ita zwine vha funa."

at night and bewitch you and do whatever they like."

1 A reference to the drinking of water by a person becoming possessed. As in song 224, possession dancing becomes a metaphor for certain existential dilemmas, in this case witchcraft. Tension is built up by referring to the problem the dancer has with a torn dancing costume. Nndanganeni's sister was unable to say what sort of witchcraft-related incident is referred to in this song. However, it is possible that Nndanganeni was partly referring to tension between his brother and his cousin (cf. note 2). There was apparently also some trouble between Nndanganeni and his paternal aunt (cf. note 5).

2 A reference to Azwinndini, a cousin of Nndanganeni, and his younger brother Mmbangiseni Mackson Luambo, now living at Tshivhulani.

3 There are strict moral codes with regard to what people (especially women) should wear when dancing. For example, it is not acceptable for women to bare their thighs, and as

such they are required to wrap a towel round their waist before starting to dance.

4 A reference to witchcraft.

5 Apparently a reference to a quarrel between Nndanganeni and his paternal aunt. The reference to bewitching in the afternoon (ll 24-25) is to her. A person who engages in witchcraft in the afternoon is not as bad as a person who bewitches at night.

6 The sound of the hyena, a witch familiar.

228

Lupfumo lwa kale (Riches of old)

Vhathu vha kale nazwino vho vha vho dzula.

People of old were rich indeed.

Mara vha tshi hola zukwa, wee.

But they only earned five cents.

Na madanga vho vha vhe na. Vho vha vho dzula.

They had cattle byres. They were rich.

Zwino, ri nga ita mini? Wee.

Alas, now what must we do?

Zwino, ri nga lidza mini? Wee.

Alas, now what must we sing?

Zwino, ri nga ita mini? Wee.

Alas, now what must we do?

Musalauno nazwino ngoho wo shona ngoho.

Nowadays we are truly ashamed.

Musalauno nazwino ngoho wo kundiwa ngoho.

Nowadays we are truly overcome.

Zwino, vha tshi hola tshelede. Vho vha vho kundiwa.

Now, even if we get money we are overcome.

10 Vha tou tusa nga gwama. Vho vha vho kundiwa.

They get more money. They are overcome.

Vha fhirwa nga vhathu vha kale.

People of old were better off.

Na kholomo dzo vha dzi hone. Vho vha vho dzula.

They had cattle. They were rich.

Zwimangadzaho ndi zwauri vho vha vho dzula.

What is amazing is that they were rich.

Vhuswa nahone vho vha vha tshi la. Vho vha vho dzula.

They furthermore used to eat porridge. They were rich.

Zwino, ndi nga ita mini? Wee.

Alas, now what must I do?

Tsha khwine ndi u ya u lima ngoho.

Indeed, the best thing is to go and hoe.

Thamusi ndi do pfuma ngoho ro vha ro dzula.

Perhaps we will become truly rich.

Zwino ndi nga ita mini? Wee.

Alas, now what must I do?

19 Kharali ra lima zwi nga ita khwine ngoho, ngoho.

Indeed, the best thing is to go and hoe.

Khosi Herode (King Herod)<sup>1</sup>

Khosi Herode o vha e na maanda.

King Herode had power.

E a vhuya a wela fhasi

The power once declined

e nga dzibomo. Nga dzibomo dza vhafana.

because of bombs. Because of bombs of boys.

1 The derivation of this song is not clear. However, it seems to have been conceived in the context of the singer's membership of the Zion Christian Church.



#### 4.10 Nnditsheni Ramukhuvhathi

Nnditsheni Mackson Ramukhuvhathi was born at Thomboni, west of Sibasa, on 22 May 1963. His father, Thangeni, died in 1967. Nnditsheni lives with his mother who is a pensioner. Nnditsheni's maternal grandparents came under attack by enemy warriors (Zulus or Swazis) during the middle of the nineteenth century. Because they had family living at Hamodjadji near Duiwelskloof, the couple fled there, and this is where Nnditsheni's mother was born. Nnditsheni occasionally visits his mother's family at Hamodjadji (cf. 231). Mrs Ramukhuvhati also houses her divorced sister, and three children of a deceased brother. Her pension is the family's main source of income.

Nnditsheni ran away from home in 1975 when he was twelve years old. He was recruited by a tobacco farmer from Potgietersrust who came to Sibasa with a lorry. Nnditsheni knew the farmer as Hennie. The farm's name was Sterkrivier. As a young, newly appointed labourer, Nnditsheni earned R6 a month. He worked on the farm for two months only. He returned home, wishing to go back to school. He entered Khonanani Primary School at Ngovhela in standard one. However, he left school permanently at the end of the next year (1976). He returned to Sterkrivier where he worked from January to August 1977, earning R14 a month. From September 1977 to June 1978 he was employed on a flower farm at Kempton Park at R28 a month. He again returned to Sterkrivier in July 1978, and worked there until January 1979, receiving R18 a month. During February and March 1979 he worked on a tomato farm near Badplaas at R57 a month. From April until October 1979 he worked at Sterkrivier again. He then returned home where he obtained his identity document. This allowed him to take

on work contracts on the Reef. In September 1980 he worked for about three weeks on a Roodepoort flower farm at R1 a day. He returned to Sterkrivier where he worked from October 1980 to April 1981. From May 1981 to January 1982 he was employed on a vegetable farm near Cullinan, earning R37 a month. From February to September 1982 he assisted a plumber at Mondana in Pretoria at R180 a month. He returned home briefly and obtained a contract at Grootvlei Gold Mine at Springs. His pay was R167 per month. He left the mine in March 1983 after he became ill and a doctor had diagnosed a defective heart valve. He returned home and accepted a contract in October 1983 at a gold mine near Westonaria. He worked there for only one month before his heart troubled him again. He returned home, and remained there until 1986 when he worked briefly on a tomato farm at Mooketsi (cf. 230). Later that year he underwent a successful heart operation at Garankuwa hospital. He now occasionally takes on casual labour such as repairing shoes and working as a builder's assistant.

Like other guitarists Nnditsheni has had limited schooling, forcing him to resort to a career as migrant labourer. This career had little stabilizing effect on his life. Financially he accumulated very little, and is dependent on his family for survival. He is thin and appears underfed. He struggles to concentrate, and takes a long time to respond to questions. From this basis of poverty he appeals for support and love, promoting the ideology of "we shall all live" (235). For him the world is characterized by jealousy, deceit, extortion and corruption (234; 235).

Nnditsheni also identified musical performance as a means of survival. However, only limited financial reward is to be

gained from a local tshilombe existence. This type of existence is for some the very last and only opportunity to survive. One of Nnditsheni's friends remarked that a tshilombe career is a matter of -shumela thumbu, "working for the stomach". Nnditsheni has only been playing the guitar since 1987, and his technique, steeped in the eight beat I-IV-V idiom, still lacks precision and variation. He has yet to reach a standard where people may reward him with small cash amounts. Currently he is only offered free beer when performing at beer houses. His relatives living at Hamodjadji have encouraged him to try and have some of his songs recorded by Radio Thohoyandou.

Some of Nnditsheni's acquaintances identified him as a tshilombe. To them a tshilombe is someone who roams streets and visits beer houses. He is basically a good person. This view is partly related to Nnditsheni's inoffensive, gentle manner. However, Nnditsheni's tshilombe status also derives from his ability to address communal concerns and experiences (cf. 230; 232-234). He is able to dramatize experiences rooted in a culture of poverty. "The cock crowed" (song 230; video recording 9) is set in a working class context, and it explores the family conflict resulting from poverty (cf. ll 33-37). This is Nnditsheni's most popular song, and its performance at beer drinks always elicits an emotional response from beer drinkers who sing along about their own struggle for survival.

Nnditsheni Ramukhuvhathi: Song texts

230

Mukukulume wo lila (The cock crowed)

Mukukulume wo lila, wee.

Alas, the cock crowed.

Wa ri: Konkokolikoko!

He says: Konkokolikoko!

Wo lila nga tshifhinga-de naa?

When did he crow?

Wo lila nga madautsha.

He crowed very early one morning.

Nga kotaphasi fo

At quarter past four

u tshi vusa vhashumi.

to wake up those who have to go to work.

U tshi ri: Vhashumi vuwani!

He says: Get up you workers!

Ri ye mushumoni, wee.

Oh dear, we have to go to work.

Ri yo shuma.

We are going to work.

10 "Kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho!"

"Hee ndaa!"

"Good morning!"

"Naa ndi vhone vho nnyi vhane vha khou nkhokhonyedzela nga

"Who is it who knocks on my door so early

matsheloni mangafhangafha naa? Vhanna vhashu!"

in the morning? Damn it!"

Nne ndi Vho-Juwele, Nnditsheni.

I am Mr Joel, Nnditsheni.<sup>1</sup>

Vha ri mini Vho-Juwele? Hae!

What do you say Mr Joel?

Ndi ri: Vuwani Nnditsheni, wee.

I say: Alas, get up Nnditsheni.

Ri ye gai naa?

Where are we going?

Ri ye mushumoni mani.

We have to go to work man.

Nne ndi Nnditsheni, na wee.

I am Nnditsheni.

20 "Ee-a!"

"Naa a thi ri no ri kharali nda nga pfa mukhuwa a tshi ri ndi

"Did you not say that when a white man is looking for a

khou toda muthu wa u shuma gadeni boy,

garden boy

ndi ni vhudze ni do

that I must inform you

ya na shuma naa, muthannga?"

so that you can go and work young man?"

Nne ndi Nnditsheni, na wee.

I am Nnditsheni.

"Ee-a!"

A thi funi u shuma, wee.

Oh dear, I do not like to work.

U shuma zwi a vhavha, wee.

Alas, work is irksome.

Ni do tshila ngani nwananga Nnditsheni?

How will you survive Nnditsheni my child?

30 Ndi do la matari sa mbudzi: "Meee!"

You will eat leaves like a goat: "Meee!"

Ndi do la damba sa nguluvhe: "Hotshi-hu!"

You will eat herbs like a pig: "Hotshi-hu!"

Ndi do la hatsi sa kholomo: "Mooo!"

You will eat grass like an ox: "Mooo!"

Mukukulume wo zwifhela phambo, wee.

Alas, the cock lied to the hen.<sup>2</sup>

Wa ri: Mukegulu o tevhula vhuse, wee.

He said: Old woman, spread the ground mealie kernels.

Ndi dziedzi, mmawe!

Oh mother! There is misery!

Tzio-tzio-tzio!

37 "Kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-kho."

1 Joel is from Modjadji. He worked with Nnditsheni on the tomato farm.

2 The last section of the song refers to family tension as a result of poverty. It follows on the previous section which refers to the irksome necessity to work, and lack of food when there is no work or when someone is too lazy to work. The cock and the hen represent the husband and the wife. The husband is lying and making excuses about not working. This results in the children not having food. They are represented by the tzio-tzio sound of young fowls.

231

Vhomakhulu (The in-laws)

Vhomakhulu vho da u tola mukwasha.

The wife-givers are visiting the betrothed.

Mukwasha ha ngo vhuya madekwe, yeee.

The betrothed did not come home last night.

Yeee.

Mukwasha o edela sosani.

The betrothed slept at the beer house.<sup>1</sup>

Mukwasha o edela tshipotoni.

The betrothed slept by the beer pots.

Mukwasha o edela halwani.

The betrothed slept at the bar.

Vhomakhulu vho disa murula.

The wife-givers brought ritual beer.

Aaaa!

Mukwanyani o edela tshipotoni.

Mukwanyani slept by the beer pots.

Hmmm!

1 Based on an incident which happened at Modjadji when a

betrothed man became drunk and fell asleep at a beer house when his future in-laws came on a ritual visit.

232

Muvhuda na tshibode (The hare and the tortoise)<sup>1</sup>

He, kula kuñwe kwo mbvundekanya khundu mulovha.  
Hey, something small broke my hip yesterday.  
He, kula kuñwe kwo nthovhekanya khundu mulovha.  
Hey, something small broke my hip yesterday.  
Tshibode tshila tshiñwe.  
The other tortoise.

1 This song refers to a story which is apparently very old. It is also known among Shona speakers (cf. Kriel 1971: 56). Nnditsheni learned the story from a primary school reader: The hare was stealing ground nuts from someone's field. He was spotted, but managed to run away. He reached the forest where he started to praise his ability to run so fast. He was overheard by a tortoise who reprimanded him for boasting so immorally. The tortoise decided to teach him a lesson and challenged him to a race. The tortoise conspired with some of his friends. They positioned themselves at intervals along the track so that the hare always thought he was behind. This made him exert himself to the point of utter exhaustion, hence the song line: "Something small (i.e. the tortoise) broke my hip yesterday."

233

Vhokhotsimuhulu vha khou tonga ngamaanda (Swanking)

He vhone, vhokhotsimuhulu vha khou tonga ngamaanda.  
Hey you, mister, are swanking outrageously.<sup>1</sup>  
Naa khezwi vha tshi tonga ngaaurali?  
Why are you swanking like this?  
Tshithihi tshine nda ri kha vha mbudze tshone:  
I would like you to tell me something:  
Naa vha khou tongisani?  
What makes you swank?  
Ee-ee!  
Ndi amba, ngauri a vha na tshavho. Vha di nga sa nne.  
I say, because you have nothing. You are just like me.

Kani vha khou tongisa iyo three-piece yavho.  
You are swanking with your three-piece suit.  
Vhurukhu na tshinorovhagi ngoho.  
Indeed, the trousers and waistcoat.  
Na badzhi i si na tshiletshe.  
And a jacket with a slash.

10 Ee-ee!

Vha dzhia dza mahosi a kale.  
You dress in an old-fashioned way.<sup>2</sup>

Ndi amba, ngauri hezwi vha tshi tonga vha tou bamba.<sup>3</sup>  
I say, because when you dance you swank.

U nga ri vho bommbelwa nga bombo.  
It looks as if you have been pumped up.

Vha tonga ngamaanda u fhirisa ndingano.  
You are overdoing your swanking.  
Hafhu hezwi vha tshi tonga vha di lavhelese, wee.  
Alas, look at yourself when you swank.  
Naa vha tongisani? Yo-wee-yo.  
What makes you swank?

Hezwi vha tshi tonga vha di ita funguvhu.  
When you swank you act like the crow  
Funguvhu lo fhira mudi duvha lo kovhela.  
who ignored advice and did not go home at dusk.  
Lo ri: A thi laiwi ngoho.  
He said: Do not advise me.  
20 Li tshi ri: Hwarr, hwarr!  
He crows: Hwarr, hwarr!

1 This song especially refers to migrants who put on airs when they come home to visit their relatives.

2 Lit. you dress the way chiefs use to dress long ago.

3 Bammba: bumping, a modern way of dancing.

234

Vhamusanda vha khou ri vhengela mini? (Hate)

Vhamusanda, vha khou ri vhengela mini? Wee!  
Alas honourable headman, why do you hate us?<sup>1</sup>  
Na tshinkwa na tshone ri tshi disa, wee.  
And we bring you bread.  
Na tshisibe tshone ri tshi bvisa, wee.  
And we give you soap.  
Vhamusanda, naa vha ri vhengela mini naa?  
Honourable headman, why do you hate us?

Vhamusanda, ndo sala ndo tou rano.  
Honourable headman, I remain behind alone.  
Thi na wanga nahasi. Zwo nngwela.  
I have no relatives. I am in trouble.  
Thi na wanga. Ndo sala ndi ndothe.  
I have no relatives. I remain behind alone.

Mufarekano ha todi u phatha-phatha, wee.  
The concubine does not like to dance phatha-phatha.  
Wa mu phatha-phatha, u do ri: Kha ri tuwe mani dali.  
When you touch her, she will say: Man, let us go darling.<sup>2</sup>  
10 Ro tendelwa mani swithi.  
Man, we are allowed sweetie.

Hamugwazini musadzi o rema nguluvhe.  
At Mugwazini's place a woman hacked a pig.  
Hamugwazini donngi yo phula mulenze.  
At Mugwazini's place a donkey dressed in stockings.<sup>3</sup>

Hamugwazini khuhu yo vhofha thai.  
At Mugwazini's place a fowl put on a tie.<sup>3</sup>  
Tshitadani vhatukana vha khou tshina malende.  
Boys are dancing beer songs at Tshitadani.

Vhamusanda, vha khou ri vhengela mini? Wee!  
Alas honourable headman, why do you hate us?  
Thi na wanga. Ndo sala ndi ndothe.  
I have no relatives. I remain behind alone.

Miliñyeni mukegulu o rema.  
An old women hacked at Miliñyeni.  
18 Miñyeni mukegulu o shavha, mmawe!  
Oh mother! An old woman ran away at Miliñyeni.

1 This song refers to Nnditsheni's headman who allegedly extorts illegal tax from people (cf. references to bread and soap), and blocks various applications (e.g. for government employment) of people he dislikes. Nnditsheni blames corruption (with its apparent accompanying riches) partly for his own state of poverty. Poverty is equated with having no relatives.

2 This refers to an incident at a beer house at Tshitadani in the Modjadji district. A woman discovered that her husband was conducting an affair and she attacked his lover (cf. reference to hacking a pig).

3 These phrases were borrowed from Mashudu Mulaudzi (cf. 106). They criticize immoral, boastful social behaviour. Nnditsheni heard them during one of Mashudu's busking sessions at the Thohoyandou shopping centre.

235

Ri tshi khou tshila rothe (We shall all live)

Ri tshi khou tshila rothe fhano shangoni.  
We shall all live in this country.  
Ri tshi sea rothe ri tshi vhuya ra bvisa madinga-mmbwa.  
When we laugh our canines show.  
Ri tshi sumba u nga ri ri pfana ngamaanda.  
It seems as if we have excellent understanding.  
Wa funana na mungana wau wa ri u a u funa,  
You may like your friend, and think that he loves you,  
mbiluni yawe u nga si dzhene.  
but he hides things from you.<sup>1</sup>  
Mbiluni yawe u songo vhuya wa dzhena.  
Things you will not know.  
A u seisa ngamaanda na iwe wa museisa.  
Then he will make you laugh very much.  
Ni tshi sea na vhuya na bvisa madinga-mmbwa. "Haha! He, vhathu."  
Laughing so that our canines show. "Haha! Hey, people."  
10 Mmada wanga.  
My friend.



Matsiko ene mbiluni yawe. Ha ho kha iwe!  
But his heart. Is not you!

Hu na vhañwe vha sa funi zwa vhañwe zwi tshi naka.  
There are some who do not like others to succeed.<sup>2</sup>  
Vha sa funi zwa vhañwe zwi tshi naka.  
There are some who do not like others to succeed.

Ndi vho mutanda iwai ri wane makwati.  
We derive benefit from the misfortune of others.<sup>3</sup>

Vhoravhutshivha vha sa funi zwa vhañwe zwi tshi naka.  
Those who are jealous do not like others to succeed.

Ri tshi khou tshila rothe fano shangoni.  
We shall all live in this country.  
Ri tshi seisana rothe ri tshi sumbedza vha funanaho.  
We all laugh and pretend to love each other.

Matsiko hu na muñwe o pangaho tshikwama mbiluni!  
But there is someone who lusts after wealth!<sup>4</sup>  
A sa funi tsha muñwe tshi tshi naka.  
He who does not like others to succeed.

20 Vhoravhutshivha ngoho-ngoho.  
Those who are jealous indeed.  
Vhathu vhavhi vha songo lugaho vhanevho ndi vhoravhutshivha.  
The jealous are not kind.

1 Lit. you cannot enter his heart.

2 Lit. there are some who do not like those who are beautiful.

3 Lit. bark is obtained from a fallen tree.

4 Lit. someone with a pocket in the heart.

236

Ngei thavhani (At the mountain)<sup>1</sup>

Ndo vha ndi ngei thavhani.

I was at the mountain.

Nda pfa mukosi a tshi lila.

I hear a loud sound.

Nda tangana na Mmbebeda. Mmbebeda o hwala nama.

I met Mmbebeda who was carrying meat.

Nda ri: Nthukhulelevho ndi yo gotsha. A ntungedza nga

I said: Give me a piece to roast. He showed me a small kurambo.

bone.<sup>2</sup>

He, kurambo kwayo ku ya Hamulima. Hamulima hu na mbudzi  
Hey, the small bone is going to Mulima. There is a white tshena.

goat at Mulima.

Hamulima hu na mbudzi tshena. Mbudzi tshena dzi a penga.

There is a white goat at Mulima. White goats are mad.<sup>3</sup>

He, dzi penga-penga na Mashau wadzo. 'Shau, 'shau, dzembeni.  
Hey, they and Mashau, their owner, are mad. Mashau, Mashau,  
at the field.

10 I i, dzembe heli a li limi.

This hoe does not hoe.

I i, hu lima zwikhara. I, na vho makhara-khara wavho.

There is vigorous hoeing. Ladies hoeing theirs.

wavho/wanga.

theirs/mine.

I i, hu lima zwikhara. I, na vho makhara-khara wanga.

There is vigorous hoeing. Ladies hoeing mine.

Khara-khara dzembeni.

Vigorous hoeing at the field.

1 This song also refers to a story Nnditsheni learned from a book. He was unable to relate the story.

2 Blacking (1967: 117) suggests that the first part of the song refers to some celebration (cf. 1 2) at the homestead of a chief (chiefly homesteads were located on hills for defensive purposes). The singer meets a person returning from the celebration. He asks for meat, but is given a bone only.

3 A metaphor for the mist which descends on the mountains in the Mulima area during winter.

#### 4.11 Mashudu Rasivhendele

Mashudu Mackson Rasivhendele was born in 1968 at Mbilwi. His father died when he was a small boy. His mother is still alive. She is Mutshekwa Tshikudo. After the death of Mashudu's father, his mother moved to her sister at Gondeni. Here she became a labourer at the local Sapekoe tea estate. She gave birth to nine children, six boys and three girls. Her daughters are married (cf. 240 & 243). She cares for all her young sons of whom Mashudu is the eldest. Mashudu's five brothers are all of school-going age, but only two attend school. The others rove around unemployed. Mashudu attended Lunungwi Primary School up to standard two.

Mashudu is a tragic figure in a landscape of rural poverty, and his songs emerge from his poverty-stricken environment. His song texts are characterized by simplicity and understated reality. Their sentences are short and to the point. There is no humour, only terse statement, criticism and lament.

The Rasivhendele household comprises two huts: a kitchen and a sleeping hut. They contain virtually no furniture. Clothes are strung across the interior of the sleeping hut. The clothing worn by the Rasivhendele boys is thread-bare and full of holes. Although Mashudu appears physically well, he suffers from a mental disorder, possibly as a result of his depressed circumstances. He struggles to concentrate, and takes a long time to respond to questions, almost as if he is in a stupor. Sometimes he cannot remember things that happened only recently.

Mashudu worked as a potato picker on a smallholding when he was a boy, but he cannot remember where or when. His clearest, and only other recollection of work, is of his employment at the nearby tea estate where his mother is employed. He worked at the estate from 1988-1989 as a labourer, earning R82 a month. He became embroiled in an argument with his foreman who accused him of not working, and he left the estate at the end of March 1990 with a severance pay of R260.

Following this, Mashudu decided to become a nambi, an expert musician. He learned to play a home made guitar at the age of about thirteen. He subsequently gained access to the factory made guitar of a brother. Mashudu was directly influenced in his decision to become a professional musician through his friendship with Piti Ravhura who lived near him at Gondeni. He observed Piti performing, and also acted as one of his chorus singers. Mashudu bought himself a guitar for R102 at a shop in Louis Trichardt during April 1990. Like so many other young men with a limited education, Mashudu took to busking as a last economic resort. I met him a few weeks after he bought his guitar. He had already set two goals for himself: "to sing Venda songs", and to establish a band.

Mashudu is heavily influenced by Piti in terms of musical style and performance practice. Even his playing position is the same: a horizontal guitar neck, his head bent low over the instrument, and pressing the strings over the top of the neck. As with Piti, Mashudu's standard sixteen pulse I-IV-V strumming patterns overpower his voice. He also imitates Piti's singing style with its open vowels, which makes his singing accessible only to those listening closely. Many of his songs (not included) are taken from Piti's repertoire. Although Mashudu was not called to the musical profession by

supernatural sanction, his ancestral spirits provide him with musical inspiration when he dreams.

Following Piti's example, Mashudu decided to take to the streets with his instrument. Not wanting to interfere with Piti's busking at the Thohoyandou main shopping centre, he started to busk at a shopping centre in northern Thohoyandou. He went to live with his father's sister at nearby Mbilwi (cf. 237). He started to busk outside a supermarket. He aimed to perform there every day. However, partly because he was still developing his technique and repertoire, he only performed a few days every week. He earned an average of R6,50 a day. His earnings rose steadily until he earned approximately R25 a day. He also started to busk in Thohoyandou where he earned slightly more. Mashudu stopped playing after a few months when his guitar broke.

The year 1990 was a year of mental and emotional turmoil for Mashudu. At the beginning of that year he started to live with a girlfriend, Georgina, from the nearby village of Maranzhe. Their relationship lasted for two months only, ostensibly because Georgina did not do her domestic chores (cf. 239). Shortly after this, Mashudu married a girl called Grace, from the village of Duthuni. Mashudu paid an initial sum of R40 for bridewealth, but was unable to make any further payment. After four months, Grace's grandmother came to fetch her, and took her to her parental home (cf. 241 & audio recording 43). Mashudu's in-laws had objected to his profession, the unpaid bride-wealth, and the fact that he seemed incapable of providing adequately for his wife. In addition, Mashudu had been suffering from mental lapses since the previous year. During such a lapse in 1990, he attacked his mother and wife, and was locked up at the headman's home-

stead for a night (cf. 242).

Cultural transition and pervasive poverty play an important role in terms of Mashudu's relationships. In his love life he attracts, and is attracted to girls who seem just as poor and wretched as he is. It comes as little surprise that his sisters experience marriage difficulties: they are as much products of a culture of poverty as their brothers. Both "Georgina" (239) and "The in-laws" (241) are intensely personal, much more personal than any of the other songs dealing with Mashudu's family. They were inspired by ancestral spirits in dreams. In their creation lies the role and value of ancestral spirits which "look after" their descendants. Their performance are ritual acts - acts by means of which pain and longing is mediated. Their short, simple sentences and understated reality conceal much pain and suffering. It is almost as if the sparse verbal and musical texture of the songs concretizes their creator's meagre existence.

Makhadzi wanga (My aunt)

- Ngarieni, ngarieni,  
Let us go, let us go,  
ngarieni ha makhadzi wanga.  
let us go to my aunt.<sup>1</sup>
- Ngarieni, ngarieni,  
Let us go, let us go,  
ngarieni Vho-Luvhengo.  
let us go to Mrs Luvhengo.  
Ngarieni ha makhadzi wanga.  
Let us go to my aunt.  
Ngarieni Vho-Gladys.  
Let us go Mrs Gladys.<sup>2</sup>
- Ngarieni ri yo vha vhona.  
Let us go and see them.  
Ngarieni hosipitala.  
Let us go to the hospital.  
Ngarieni Tshilidzini.  
Let us go to Tshilidzini.
- 10 Ngarieni ri yo vha vhona.  
Let us go and see them.  
Ngarieni Vho-Selina,  
Let us go Mrs Selinah.<sup>2</sup>  
musadzi wa muzwala.  
wife of my cousin.  
Tshilidzi, wee-aa, u twa magaratani.  
Tshilidzi<sup>3</sup> spends all her time at cards.<sup>4</sup>  
Khaladzi anga u tamba magarata.  
My sister plays cards.  
No bika ha biki hoyu n̄wana.  
This child does not cook.  
No bika ha biki khaladzi anga.  
My sister does not cook.  
Duvha lo tuwa, Vho-Magirethe.  
It is sunset,<sup>5</sup> Mrs Margaret.<sup>6</sup>  
Duvha lo tuwa, Vho-Susan.  
It is sunset, Mrs Susan.<sup>7</sup>
- 19 Ngarieni dzitaxini.  
Let us go to the taxi rank.

1 Mrs Luvhengo, who spent four months in Tshilidzini Hospital with a stomach ailment.

2 Both names refer to the wife of William Tshitangana, a cousin of Mashudu.

3 Tshitangana's married daughter.

4 A reference to gambling, drinking and prostitution. All the women in this song, except the singer's aunt, stand accused of immoral behaviour and neglecting their families.

5 I.e. that time of the day when people should return home to do their chores and be with their families.

6 A distant female relative of the singer.

7 Mashudu's sister.

238

Vho-Virginia (Mrs Virginia)<sup>1</sup>

Vho-Virginia, Vho-Virginia.  
Mrs Virginia, Mrs Virginia.  
Duvha lo tuwa, Vho-Virginia.  
It is sunset Mrs Virginia.  
Vhana vhavho  
Your children  
vha na zwitshela.  
gossip.  
Havha vhana  
These children  
vha vha kaidze.  
should be reprimanded.

1 The title of this song refers to a woman with whom Mashudu worked at the Sapekoe tea estate. She once sent him on an errand to her home to fetch fence poles. However, her children accused him of wanting to steal the poles. He subsequently sang the song to them by way of reprimand. According to him, singing plays a mediating role in conflict, and it aids ordinary discussion.

239

Georgina

Duvha lo tuwa, Georgina, wee-aa.  
It is sunset, Georgina.  
Duvha lo tuwa, mufunwa wanga.  
It is sunset, my beloved.  
Ndo mala musadzi Georgina.  
I married the woman Georgina.  
No bika ha biki Georgina.  
Georgina does not cook.  
No bika ha biki n̄wana wavho.  
Your child does not cook.  
Ndo mala musadzi, khaladzi anga.  
I married a woman, my sister.  
Ndo mala musadzi, ndi Georgina.  
I married a woman, it is Georgina.  
No bika ha biki hoyu n̄wana.  
This child does not cook.  
Ndi thambatshira n̄wana wavho.  
Your child invites trouble.



Sharon o shavha vhuhadzi (Sharon ran away from marriage)

O vhuya vhuhadzi hoyu Sharon.

This Sharon<sup>1</sup> ran away from marriage.

O vhuya vhuhadzi khaladzi anga.

My sister ran away from marriage.

Vhana vhavho vha lamba u la.

Your children do not pursue married life.<sup>2</sup>

Havha vhana vha lamba zwiliwa.

These children refuse a good opportunity.

Vhuyelelani ngei vhuhadzi.

Come back to your husband's home.

O vhuya vhuhadzi ñwana wa mme anga.

The child of my mother returned to her husband's home.

Kana wa ya Sapekoe, ñwana wa mme anga.

Or you may go to Sapekoe,<sup>3</sup> child of my mother.

A zwi nga shumi, ñwana wa mme anga.

That will not work, child of my mother.

Kana wa ya Gammhani, ñwana wa mme anga.

Or you may go to Sibasa,<sup>3</sup> child of my mother.

10 A zwi nga thusi, ñwana wa mme anga.

That will not help, child of my mother.

1 One of Mashudu's sisters who is married to a Tsonga man at Tshikundu. The couple once had an argument and Sharon deserted her husband. She eventually returned to him.

2 Lit. refusing to eat.

3 References to her mother's home where she stayed during her absence from home.

## 241

Vhomakhulu (The in-laws)

Vhomakhulu vho khakha.

The in-laws have erred.

Vho ntungufhadza.

They brought sorrow.

Vho ndzhiela musadzi.

They took my wife.

"A thi ngo hana

"I did not protest

musi vha tshi mu dzhia."

when they took her."

## 242

Ndo vhidzwa musanda (I was summoned to the headman)

Ndo vhidzwa musanda nga liñwe duvha.

I was summoned to the headman's place one day.

A thi ngo hana nga ilo duvha

I did not refuse to

u do dzivhofholola tsimbi dzawee.  
go there on that day.<sup>1</sup>  
A thi na mulandu khotsimunene.  
You are not guilty young man.  
Ha na mulandu khotsimunene.  
You are not guilty young man.  
Ha na mulandu n̄wana wavho.  
Your child is not guilty.  
Ha na mulandu hoyu n̄wana.  
This child is not guilty.  
Ha na mulandu hoyu Mashudu.  
This Mashudu is not guilty.

1 Lit. I did not refuse to remove the chains.

243

Vho-Renette (Mrs Renette)<sup>1</sup>

Ndi amba vhone, Vho-Renette.  
I am talking to you, Mrs Renette.  
Kha vha vhuye hafha hayani ngoho.  
Indeed, return home.  
Ndi amba inwi ngoho Nthumeni.  
Indeed, I am talking to you Nthumeni.  
Ndi amba inwi ngoho sivhara wanga.  
Indeed, I am talking to you my brother-in-law.  
Kha ambe navho vha vhuye hafha hayani.  
Tell her to come home.

1 This song refers to Mashudu's sister who lives with her husband, Nthumeni Mbavhe, at Mbilwi. Like her sister Sharon, she also left home after an argument.

#### 4.12 Rudzani Tshalavhada and Victor Ngwenani

Rudzani Tshalavhada is leader of a small band based at Gaba in eastern Venda. The band comprises four members, all born at Gaba: Rudzani (18), the bass guitarist, Victor Ngwenani (20), the lead guitarist, and two singers, Mmbengeni Tshalavhada (12) and Aifheli Likhala (13). At times Rudzani performs alone on lead guitar with the vocal support of the two younger boys. Rudzani and Victor were both pupils at Ntodeni Secondary School during the late 1980s. Rudzani's father is Samuel Ntshavheni Tshalavhada, a pensioner. His mother is Munzhedzi Gegana, whose family lives at Lufule. Rudzani is intelligent and ambitious. He wants to study at university, but lacks financial resources. Victor's father is deceased, and he lives with his mother.



Plate 9. Back (l to r): Rudzani Tshalavhada, Victor Ngwenani. Front (l to r): Aifheli Likhala, Mmbengeni Tshalavhada.

Rudzani started to play a home made guitar as a boy around puberty. He got his first factory made guitar from an elder brother, and established his small group in 1985. One of his aspirations is to become a professional musician. His friends like to dance to his playing, but he receives no remuneration from them.

Rudzani is a member of a local Zion Christian Church denomination, Church of the Nazarene. Rudzani has an extensive repertoire of songs which derive from the church context. He occasionally performs these songs at church, but mostly at home. They express the typical fundamentalism of evangelical Christianity (cf. 244, 249 & 250). Most of his secular songs reflect his social surroundings. In particular, they provide a perspective on the educational problems occurring during a period of social transition (cf. 245, 246, & 248). The social environment some people emerge from is still characterized by certain traditional patterns of existence. These people feel spiritually more at home in traditional culture (245: 19-22; cf. audio recording 44). In addition, boys often leave school because they are forced to go and work. However, those who fail at school do so because of lack of discipline, and they need to blame themselves (cf. 246: 17-18).

Rudzani Tshalavhada: Song texts

244

Sathane u toda vha tshi xela (The Devil)

Sathane u toda vha tshi xela.  
The Devil tries to lead you astray.  
Kha Vhatendi, uri a si vha wane.  
Of Christians, so he must not get them.  
Murena Yesu u do vha tshidza.  
Lord Jesus will save them.

U zwivhi zwanga zwo no andesa.  
My sins are many.  
U thi tsha kona na u zwi fhungudza.  
I cannot diminish them.<sup>1</sup>  
Nga mulandu wawe Sathane.  
Because of the Devil.  
O Yesu Kristo nga a nkhangwele.  
Oh, Jesus Christ, forgive me.

1 The Devil speaking.

245

Hezwi zwa tshikolo zwo nkunda (School truly defeats me)

(Solo)  
Heli budo langa a si lone la u dzhena tshikolo.  
My intention is not to attend school.<sup>1</sup>  
(chorus)  
O! A si lone la u dzhena tshikolo.  
Oh! It is not.  
(solo)  
Heli budo langa a si lone la vhoradzipfunzo.  
My intention is not to be an educated person.  
(chorus)  
O! A si lone la vhoradzipfunzo.  
Oh! It is not.  
(solo)  
Hoyu ñwedzi tshi vhona nne tshikolo.  
I do not go to school this month.  
(chorus)  
O! Tshi vhona nne tshikolo.  
Oh! I do not go to school.  
(solo)  
Kilasiweke dzi vhona nne tshikolo.  
I do not do the class work.  
(chorus)  
O! Dzi vhona nne tshikolo.  
Oh! I do not.  
(solo)  
Milayo ya tshikolo i lwa na nne tshikolo.  
I do not obey the rules of the school.  
(chorus)

- 10 O! I lwa na nne tshikolo.  
 Oh! I do not obey.  
 (solo)  
 Vhadededzi vha lwa na nne tshikolo.  
 I argue with the teachers at school.  
 (chorus)  
 O! Vha lwa na nne tshikolo.  
 Oh! I argue at school.  
 (solo)  
 Thoho ya tshikolo i lwa na nne tshikolo.  
 I argue with the school principal.  
 (chorus)  
 O! I lwa na nne tshikolo.  
 Oh! I argue.  
 (solo)  
 Phanishimennde i vho na nne tshikolo.  
 I am punished at school.  
 (chorus)  
 O! I vho na nne tshikolo.  
 Oh! At school.  
 (solo)  
 U feila hu vhona nne tshikolo.  
 I fail at school.  
 (chorus)  
 O! Hu vhona nne tshikolo.  
 Oh! At school.  
 (solo)  
 Hezwi zwa tshikolo mani vhone ngoho zwo nkunda.  
 School truly defeats me.
- 20 Nne ndi khwine mani vhone ndi yo tshina malende.  
 Man, it is better for me to go and dance beer songs.  
Nne ndi khwine mani vhone ndi yo tshina tshikona.  
 Man, it is better for me to go and perform the reedpipe  
 dance.  
 Hezwi zwa tshikolo mani vhone ngoho zwo nkunda.  
 School truly defeats me.

1 Lit. this intention.

246

Nwananga, iya tshikoloni (My child, go to school)

(Solo)  
 O, nne, mme anga  
 Oh, my mother  
 (chorus)  
 o, vho mbudza vha ri:  
 oh, told me:  
 (solo)  
 O vhe nwananga,  
 Oh, my child,  
 (chorus)  
 iya tshikoloni.  
 go to school.  
 (solo)  
 O, ndi tshi swika

Oh, when I arrive  
 (chorus)  
 ngei tshikoloni,  
 at school,  
 (solo)  
 o, nda mbo thoma zwa u  
 oh, I started to  
 (chorus)  
 zwa u rwa vhadededzi.  
 fight with the teachers.  
 (solo)  
 Thoho ya tshikolo ngoho ya,  
 The principal  
 (chorus)  
 10 ngoho ya mbo mpandela.  
 expelled me indeed.  
 (solo)  
 O, ndi vhonani zwino ngoho,  
 Oh, look now,  
 (chorus)  
 zwino ngoho, nne a thi shumi.  
 look now, I am indeed not working.  
 (solo)  
 Khonani dzanga dzo no vha,  
 My friends are  
 (chorus)  
 dzo no vha vhadedezi.  
 now teachers.  
 (solo)  
 O, vhañwe vha hone ngoho  
 Oh, some of them  
 (chorus)  
 ngoho ndi foromane.  
 are foremen indeed.  
 (solo)  
 O, ndi vhonani, zwino ndi,  
 Oh, look now, I am  
 (chorus)  
 18 zwino ndi khou di sola.  
 blaming myself.

247

Musidzana, a thi ni funi (Girl, I do not love you)

(Solo)<sup>1</sup>

Ndo ni vhudza musidzana, a thi ni funi.  
 I told you girl, I do not love you.  
 Fhedzi no nkombetshedza nda vhuya nda tenda.  
 You persuaded me and I eventually agreed.  
 Namusi vhonani zwithu zwo no tshinyala.  
 Look, things have now gone wrong.  
 Ndo ni tshinya. Ndi songo humbula.  
 I made you pregnant. I was not thinking.  
 Ndi fhano thi divhi uri ndi ite hani.  
 Now I do not know what to do.

**Khonani dzanga, nne ndi hambela thuso.**  
My friends, I am asking for help.  
**Mafungo aya ngoho, ngoho a ya mmbavha.**  
This news hurt me indeed.  
**Fhedzi ngoho: Tshiitamune a tshi vhavhi.**  
But indeed: You will reap what you sow.

1 Each solo line is repeated twice by the chorus.

248

Iyani pfunzoni (Get on with your education)

(Solo only)

**O, ndi ri a thi nga do zwi kona nwananga.**  
Oh, I say, I cannot do that my child.  
**A thi nga do zwi kona nwananga.**  
I cannot do that my child.  
**Ndo ni vhudza ngoho nwananga:**  
I told you indeed my child:  
**Iyani pfunzoni ngoho nwananga.**  
Indeed, get on with your education my child.  
**No ro sa pfa ngoho nwananga.**  
You did not listen my child.  
**No vhuya na shavha inwi na livha tshikhuwani.**  
You ran away and went to town.  
**Namusi no vhuya inwi a ni na na peni inwi.**  
Today you are back without a penny.  
**Ni fanela u mala, a ni na na peni inwi.**  
You should marry, but you do not have a penny.  
**Nne a thi na tshelede ya u malela nwana a sa pfi ngoho.**  
I have no money for the marriage of a stubborn child.

249

Vhoguneaho (Backsliders)

(Solo)

**Mbilu yanga i a vhavha ngoho.**  
My heart is aching indeed.

(chorus)

**Mbilu yanga i a vhavha ngoho.**  
My heart is aching indeed.

(solo)

**Nga vhathu havha.**  
Because of these people.

(chorus)

**Nga vhathu havha.**  
Because of these people.

(solo)

**Vhoguneaho.**  
Backsliders.

(chorus)

**Vhoguneaho.**  
Backsliders.



(solo)  
Vholovhedzwaho.  
The baptized.  
(chorus)  
Vholovhedzwaho.  
The baptized.  
(solo)  
Zwino vho gunea.  
They have now backslid.

250

Ni tshi vhuelela zwivhini? (Why are you sinning again?)

(Chorus)  
Ni tshi vhuelela zwivhini? No sia ni naa?  
Why are you sinning again? What happened?<sup>1</sup>

(solo)  
He, khonani yanga ni itani?  
Hey, what are you doing my friend?  
He, murathu wanga ni itani?  
Hey, what are you doing my younger brother?  
He, mukomana ni itani?  
Hey, what are you doing elder brother?  
He, khaladzi anga ni itani?  
Hey, what are you doing my sister?

1 Lit. what was left there?

251

Mitambo ya Vhavenda (Games of the Venda people)

(Solo)  
Thetshelesani!  
Listen!  
(chorus)  
Mitambo ya Vhavenda.  
Games of the Venda people.  
(solo)  
Vhasidzana vha ngafhi ngoho?  
Indeed, where are the girls?  
(chorus)  
Vha ndodeni.  
Playing ndode.<sup>1</sup>  
(solo)  
Vhatukana vha ngafhi ngoho?  
Indeed, where are the boys?  
(chorus)  
Vha bolani.  
Playing soccer.  
(solo)  
Vhathannga vha ngafhi ngoho?  
Indeed, where are the young men?

(chorus)  
Vha khou tamba.  
They are playing.

(solo)  
Vha khou tamba mini ngoho?  
Indeed, what are they playing?

(chorus)  
10 Muravharavha.<sup>2</sup>  
The board game.

(solo)  
Vhakalaha vha ngafhi ngoho?  
Indeed, where are the old men?

(chorus)  
Vha mufuvhani.  
Playing mufuvha.<sup>3</sup>

1 "A pebble or pip is tossed up and intercepted; in the interval, other pebbles must be scratched out of a circle" (Van Warmelo 1989: 268).

2 A game in which pebbles are moved between points in a geometric diagram drawn on the ground.

3 The Venda version of the African board game. During 1990 this game was still being played at two locations at Gaba namely the headman's homestead and the local maize grinding shop.

252

Vhudakwa hanga (My drunkenness)

(Solo only)  
Fhumulani ngoho ndi ni vhudze.  
Be quiet so that I can tell you.  
Vhonani, vhudakwa hanga ngoho vhu khou ntambudza.  
Look, my drunkenness causes me to suffer.  
Ndo huvhadza muthu ngoho nne ndo kambiwa.  
I hurt a person when I was drunk.  
Ndi ri, vhonani zwino, ndo no farwa.  
I say, look now, I have been arrested.  
Ndi ri, vhonani zwino, ndo no vha dzhele.  
I say, look now, I am in jail.  
Ndi humbula lia duvha ndi tshi khou tshimbila.  
I remember that day when I was walking.  
Nda mbo di tangana na malume vha mbo di ndaya  
I met uncle who advised me  
ndi songo tsha dovha zwezwi zwa vhudakwa.  
not to be drunk again.  
Vho ndaya fhedzi ndo tou sa zwi pfa.  
He advised me, but I did not listen.  
10 Ndi ri, vhonani zwino, ndi khomboni.  
I say, look now, I am in trouble.  
Nne ndi khou tambula.  
I am suffering

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### 5.1 The fabricated worlds of Venda guitar songs

This thesis interrelates musical performance and its products with social processes. It invokes the concept of culture as more or less shared, in particular "in what forms, by whom, under what circumstances, and most importantly, for what reasons" (Coplan 1989: 4). I have attempted to answer these questions on the basis of the suggestion that social reality emerges in symbolic systems which maintain and recreate cultural patterns. This approach treats the combination of music, language and dance as a medium for individual self-awareness basic to the establishment of social identity and the drive for social power and legitimacy. Venda guitar songs thus emerge as expression rooted in human action; in choices that are made by poor people who ritually enact and shape cultural patterns in a context of confusing, even cataclysmic social transition. In terms of Solomon Mathase's views and performance practice, music making is not socially isolated "artistic" action: "I look at the people around me, and I play with my heart and my mind". For Solomon, social reality partly emerges in music making, eating and drinking associated with beer house culture. It is clear that the life experiences of Solomon and other guitarists are not incidental to musical style. From the viewpoint of Venda guitar songs it is thus debatable whether musical sound has significant objective value (cf. Tame 1984). Although sound is a physical phenomenon, and musical sounds are combined in mathematical ratios, sound per se is not music, and music is not mathematics (cf. Kimmey 1988: 88). Most human beings have the capacity to utter sounds. However, the kind of sounds they make, and the way these sounds are stringed together horizon-

tally and vertically, is often culturally determined. In Venda guitar performance culture the power and effect of music lies not so much in itself as in the social application of its structural and physical qualities: in its ability to create states of fellow-feeling and to affect the emotions and thoughts of people. Attempts by Venda guitarists at transforming their social environment are not made through the application of ostensibly autonomous musical energy. They are made through human energy which is released and organized through music making. Guitar songs per se do not change or affect society. They constitute a model for social reality: a comprehensive, long-term strategy which attempts to influence the attitude and behaviour of people in the promotion of an ordered, supportive social environment. This environment is religiously constituted. It is represented by guitarist Solomon Mathase's concept of "God's land" in which guitarists "talk while God is quiet". They are prophet-musicians who act on spiritual command. In this process their instruments become "spirit", symbolic extensions of religious authority.

"God's land" is a fabricated world characterized by ideal human behaviour. Music making is metaphoric of ordered human relations in this fabricated world. Broadly speaking, music is conceived as "music of the ancestors". Its performance exhibits patterns of thought and expression derived from older, precolonial forms of music. "Music of the ancestors" promotes the philosophy of "we shall all live". This philosophy is rooted in the ordered familiarity of traditional social interaction. It acknowledges traditional patterns of production, the wealth of the soil, and the ostensible morality of nature. It also promotes respect for elders and ancestors, and traditional patterns of authority, kinship, friendship, and neighbourly assistance which are regarded as

essential in the quest for survival. Traditional patterns of interaction shelter the insecure and lonely. They promote compassion, humility, sensitivity and sharing. "God's land" is one in which all must have the opportunity to be happy and lead meaningful lives. "Music of the ancestors" thus functions as a traditionalizing medium by means of which the past is fostered as a strategic resource and defense against social confusion, marginality and alienation (cf. McAllister 1986, Simone 1991).

Guitar performances at rural beer houses may be regarded as settings for the projection of alternative social models in an environment characterized by ambiguous and corrupt political rule. Unable to effectively explore social alternatives in formal national socio-political and economic spheres, the real business of life is conducted "in bars, beer joints, shrines, sanctuaries, and in the gatherings of prophets, sorcerers, evangelists, and healers" (cf. Simone 1991: 4). For members of beer house culture, social identity and meaning is not embedded in the myths of national unity, but in the relative autonomy of everyday face-to-face relations of small local gatherings which provide the moral and symbolic resources required to cope with change (cf. McAllister 1986: 34 ff.). These gatherings serve as settings for community orientation and the exploration of social networks and institutions (cf. Coplan 1985: 244). Participation in beer house culture promotes stabilizing social and economic interaction, and symbolizes the quest for new identity in a changing environment in which traditional social patterns have decreased and redefined value. This is evident in guitar jive, a musical expression rooted in beer house culture. Jive retains certain traditional musical elements, yet it redefines them in response to the demands of contemporary social

experience. Jive songs are deeply rooted in the stratification of contemporary society, and their beliefs, actions, aesthetic expressions and ritual objects have significant symbolic value. They shape social boundaries and identity, thus promoting group solidarity as a cultural resource in the quest for physical and spiritual survival.

The vibrancy of jive cannot always suppress feelings of confusion and disorientation, especially among older musicians. The era in which they grew up did not adequately equip them for the demands of contemporary life. Solomon Mathase's question, "Where should I go?" (11: 6), represents a wider quest for existential meaning and order. From this quest often is born a sense of hopelessness, even fatalism. For some musicians, the only measure of relative certainty and security often lies elsewhere: "six feet down", in the safety of a heavenly Jerusalem, or in musical performance. The fabricated worlds of guitar songs not only engage social confusion and ambiguity cognitively. They also function as an emotional barrier against the anguish of human consciousness, and the anxieties of existential contradictions. The artistic "madness" of *zwilombe* guitarists emerges as a condition in which emotional confusion is explored and mediated. Solomon Mathase's musical instrument makes him cry: it is a "bloody, bloody fuckin' guitar". For Nndanganeni Luambo life is the music that breaks the heart (224: 11). These are metaphors for troubled states of mind rooted in contemporary existence. They are atoms of human consciousness and its expansion through forms of expressive culture. In their musical expression lies the exercising of power, because power for humans lies in their ability to support contradictions (Becker 1972: 177). For Solomon Mathase, musical performance mediates the contradiction between work and home life. Ritual musical

interaction in his domestic environment provides him with status achievement and temporary mental regeneration. This condition emerges from the self-enhancement, emotional energy and collective consciousness stimulated by the socializing function of music making. Mental regeneration also is a reward attendant on musical performance as a medium of spiritual communication and self-discovery. Because this reward is temporary only, it must be generated through continual performance. Thus music making is not merely a metaphor for existence or potential reality. Because life's problems are mediated musically, music making becomes the very essence of existence. The fabricated worlds of Venda guitar songs comprise an integral part of broader patterns of conceptualizing existence and mediating despair. And this, from a sociological viewpoint, is the ultimate role of music making, namely as lived reality.

By contrast, there is an awareness among younger guitarists that they have the potential for better control over the outcome of their efforts than do their elders, even though their lives often are also characterized by poverty and limited opportunities. For Mmbangiseni Madzivhandila and Mashudu Mulaudzi music making is not only an escape from reality, it is also "an experience of becoming", an adventure into a wonderful new world. They recognize in chaos and anarchy the seed of progress. Freedom from time and space allows them to nurture this seed and to reflect on their experiences and fears. This leads to self-discovery and awareness of the potential for the establishment of social identity. Social identity "needs not be legitimated by being known at all times by the individual; it is enough, for purposes of legitimation, that it is *knowable*". By anchoring their self-perception in fabricated worlds, individuals

receive a measure of protection "from both the contingencies of socialization and the malevolent self-transformations of marginal experience" (Berger & Luckmann 1967: 118).

## 5.2 Musical structure and social change

Venda guitar songs reveal varying degrees of cultural resistance and assimilation. In them the past and the present interact in dialectic fashion to produce "qualitatively new forms" (cf. Coplan 1985: 237). This interaction is manifested in the combination of traditional and adopted musical elements. The exact way in which these elements are combined is determined by individual circumstances and worldviews. However, Venda guitar songs generally express a conservative cultural attitude, and choice of musical elements also emerges as part of a wider strategy of traditionalization. In terms of Blacking's caveat (Blacking 1986), guitar songs may be of contemporary origin, but they generally do not reveal any radical musical change. Instead they show relatively minor variations and innovations within the system of Venda traditional musical culture. Many guitar songs in fact are traditional beer songs with guitar accompaniment, and not guitar songs comprising a separate category. I have shown that these songs are often performed by certain older guitarists whose musical expression is a factor of a quest for survival in a rural socio-economic environment which relies to a significant degree on traditional social organizational principles. These guitarists generate income by performing at rural beer houses, and their musical and verbal messages combine to create a strong rural traditional identity.



The songs of the majority of guitarists exhibit combinations of traditional and adopted musical elements. Adopted musical patterns are often the result of economic necessity. Venda guitarists set out on their quest for social power and identity from their position in the socio-economic hierarchy. Many of them have incomplete or no school education, and find themselves unemployed or engaged as manual labourers. The life sketches of some of these musicians clearly illustrate the powerful economic incentives involved in maintaining and shaping guitar performance culture. Their musical ambition and style can be related to their poor financial position, and they choose from an available pool of musical resources what is most appropriate in their quest for survival at a particular time. For example, there is a tendency among these guitarists to sing in other languages than Venda, particularly English, but also African languages. This is part of their strategy to reach the largest possible audience, not only busking in the cosmopolitan streets of certain South African towns, but also in terms of producing commercial recordings. Some of their songs exhibit similarity in terms of content and vocal style. In order to survive, these guitarists sometimes move away from song content which has strong local topical appeal. Topics like sentimental love have become more prevalent. There is also a tendency to abandon the traditional practice of singing one word-syllable to one tone in favour of a more melismatic style of singing borrowed from popular musical practice.

However, as in other African musical cultures (Kubik 1974, Rycroft 1977), there is a general tendency among guitarists to make adopted musical elements subordinate to traditional musical practice. The adaptation and subordination of the Western chord system to the traditional harmonic shift is

notable in this regard. In addition, guitarists sometimes produce streams of chords in inverted form. These progressions are harmonically relaxed and thus they assume the characteristic perpetual motion of traditional dance music. Harmonic ambiguity thus created is expressive of the ambiguity and diversity of contemporary experience.

In cases where the basic three chord (I-IV/ii6-V) formula is not a traditional harmonic progression in disguise, it usually is employed in traditional cyclic fashion. Its exponents live in a changed social environment in which traditional social patterns still have some significance and value. Musicians attempt to redefine social relationships on the basis of traditional cultural conventions. Thus the basic three chord formula provides the foundation for communal musical creation. It is a set motif which allows singers to explore social reality in a familiar, predictable idiom. It promotes face-to-face relationships which find expression in the polyphonic weaving of song lines into a tightly-knit musical unit. Antiphonal singing and the combination of harmonic equivalent tones are more than musical expressions. They are manifestations of "we shall all live", of the philosophy of cooperation and sharing. Their structural quality promotes interpersonal linking, serving as a basis of moral and cooperative action. This kind of musical expression thus not only intensifies musical experience, but also social experience.

The eight beat rhythmic structure of the basic three chord formula is generally less complex than that of traditional six beat harmonic progressions. The dance styles of the basic three chord formula also emphasize a regular beat as opposed to the deliberate cross-rhythmic patterning of traditional

dancing. This tendency towards rhythmic simplicity does not merely constitute musical change. It is part of a total reaction towards a changing social environment. The "levelling out" of the wide array of traditional rhythmic patterns and cyclic lengths (cf. Blacking 1969c, Kruger 1986) is a manifestation of wider processes of social change which exhibit the emergence of broader South African cultures as opposed to the more distinctive ethnic cultures of the past. Venda guitar songs which feature traditional harmonic progressions tend to articulate more or less traditional patterns of thought and experience, and local communal and regional identity. By contrast, the basic three chord formula appeals to a wider audience. It transcends local borders and manifests affiliation to national and international cultures. It is symbolic of detribalization, social integration and patterns of urbanization. It is a social root metaphor which allows people to explore and integrate familiar and new cultural elements into forms which articulate contemporary social experiences and aspirations. Its proponents are often socio-economically mobile people who select effective and appropriate means of communication. For them the basic three chord formula is the *musica franca* of contemporary existence.

Mashudu Mulaudzi's 1987 songs are of considerable significance in terms of the relationship between musical structure and social change. In them Mashudu questions cyclic musical convention. He explores musical meaning in terms of horizontal texture which articulates a unique musical response to changing social patterns and cosmological values. I suggest that the 1987 songs articulate and epitomize widely experienced changing conditions and concerns which are not yet widely crystallized in communal musical expression (cf. Blacking 1986). Their searching, forward propulsion arguably

symbolizes social exploration of a diverse world in which a multiplicity of meanings are possible. The traditional introspective musical cycle with its promotion of social solidarity has limited value in a world where little seems secure or predetermined. Instead, the essence of Mashudu's 1987 songs lies in their unfolding in time, in the exploration and manipulation of their potential to establish existential meaning and order in a chaotic world.

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