

**THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN TSHIVENDA<sup>^</sup>  
TRADITIONAL SONGS**



By

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(i)

## DECLARATION

I declare that STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN TSHIVENDA SONGS is my work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MAY Semapat

SIGNATURE

DATE: 29 June 1999

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## SUMMARY

Chapter one dealt with the theoretical Guidelines with regard to structure and meaning in African Traditional songs. The aims of the study were also given. It identified the types of traditional songs that are found in *Tshivenda*. The Chapter also outlined the Research Methodology that was used.

Chapter two dealt with the theoretical guidelines regarding the structure and meaning in African Traditional songs, both non-instrumental and instrumental. More emphasis was put on African Traditional songs other than those of *Tshivenda*.

Chapter three of the study investigated the types of traditional songs that are found in *Tshivenda*. It also examined and illustrated the types of *Tshivenda* traditional songs. The chapter also made a survey of *Tshivenda* traditional songs.

Chapter four aimed at investigating how structure is Revealed in *Tshivenda* Traditional songs viz. *Malombo* (ancestral worship), *Malende* (beer drinking sessions songs), *Davha* (songs pertaining to communal work groups), and *Mafhuwe* (stamping songs).

Chapter five investigated how the meaning is revealed in *Tshivenda* Traditional songs namely, *Malombo*, *Malende*, *Davha* and *Mafhuwe*.

Chapter 6 (six), the final chapter, gave the summary of the issues worked on in earlier chapters. It also gave the conclusion as well as recommendations based on the entire research.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PROBLEM ORIENTATION

Structure is the way in which all parts of the whole are organized or fitted together. In other words, parts are organized or fitted together to form a whole.

About structure Reber (1985:739) says:

Generally, the term is used whenever one wishes to convey the notion that the entire being characterized, taken as a whole, has intrinsic organization and that this organization is, in fact, one of its most salient aspects.

In literature, structure and meaning go or work together. Meaning is what is meant. Morgan and Saxton (1991: 22) say:

However, expression without meaning is a hollow shell, and meaning must have expressive action in order to ratify itself.

This means that an expression must have meaning. The people or the reader must get the meaning out of an expression. If these expressions cannot give the people any meaning or if people cannot understand what is meant, not because it is difficult for them, but because it is not well structured, then that expression is useless.

Dias and Hayhoe (1988:8) say:

that structure is ... a concern to understand the general principles or structures by which literary works have meaning.

This is an indication that structure has parts that must be joined together to bring about the meaning. This emphasizes the fact that structure and meaning work hand in hand.

About meaning Reber (1985:424)says:

Communication consists of three components, a transmitter, a medium and a receiver. Therefore, the meaning of a message as communicated or any element thereof (e.g. a word, a phrase, a gesture, etc.) may be defined from any of three perspectives: 1. That which the speaker or writer intended to convey. As Lewis Carroll puts it, speaking through Humpty-Dumpty, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean- neither more nor less" 2. The representation associated with the physical symbol used, the thing that it designates; "x" marks a spot, ♀ "means female," ψ "stands for psychology." 3. The apprehended representation of the hearer or reader, the significance of the message as received. "This means that the speaker is going to use his language which has words, phrases, speech sounds, metaphors, personifications, symbols and gestures".

This is called structure because the listeners get many parts to form a whole. When the receiver gets the message out of the structure, he understands what is meant by the speaker.

All writing is made up of many parts that form a structure, which means a set of formal relevant parts of speech. Eagleton (1983:102) says:

Each word in the text is linked by a whole set of formal structure to several other words, and its meaning is thus always 'overdetermined', always the result of several different determinants acting together.

The above statement also emphasizes the serious linkage between the structure and meaning. They are inseparable.

According to the Longman Dictionary of the English Language (1988:1592) tradition is "the handing down of information, beliefs and customs by word of mouth or by examples from one generation to another". The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Micropaedia Volume x(1979:84) concurs with the above view and thus says:

Tradition is the aggregate of customs, beliefs and practices that give continuity to a culture, civilization, or social group and thus shape its views; taken in this sense laws and institutions are also part of tradition.

The information and beliefs that the different groups of people have, are also based on their traditional songs. The information and these beliefs are conveyed to the entire community by means of the structure and meaning of these traditional songs. For example, repetition, in the structure gives more emphasis to the message.



The traditional songs have different structures and meaning based on what they want to teach the people, as well as according to the views that they want to put across to their particular group of people.

Different groups of people have their own traditions and therefore their own traditional songs, often in the form of poetry. In the poems that are sung, the message is very deep.

This is brought about by the structure and this structure goes together with meaning to bring about the message to the people of that very same group (Finnegan in *Milubi* 1988:47). People living in different countries have their own traditional songs with their own structure and meaning. Like any other nation or group of people, the *Vhavenda* people have their own traditional songs. These songs should have their own structure and meaning in order to give messages to the *Vhavenda* people.

Songs are an aspect of traditional African life. They provide the repositories of traditional beliefs, ideas, wisdom and feeling (*Mbiti in Rabothata* 1991:3). In this case also, the *Tshivenda* traditional songs are no exception.

Taking the above into consideration, the study will investigate the following research problem:-

- Is there any structure and meaning in *Tshivenda* traditional songs?

In order to properly investigate this, the following will also be looked into.

- What are the theoretical guidelines with regard to structure and meaning in African traditional songs?
- Which types of traditional songs exist in *Tshivenda*?
- How is structure and meaning revealed in *Tshivenda* traditional songs?
- How do structure and meaning work together in *Tshivenda* traditional songs?

## 1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is:

- To investigate as to whether there is any structure and meaning in *Tshivenda* traditional songs.
- To identify the theoretical guidelines with regard to structure and meaning in African Traditional Songs.
- To identify the types of traditional songs that are found in *Tshivenda*.
- To investigate how structure and meaning is revealed in *Tshivenda* traditional songs.
- To investigate the manner in which structure and meaning work together in *Tshivenda* traditional songs.

### 1.3 RESEARCH METHODS

It is a fact that most of the *Tshivenda* Traditional songs have as yet not been recorded. They are largely sung orally. The researcher will use Primary Sources whereby the information on the traditional songs will be obtained from elderly persons.

The researcher will also use the Secondary Sources. This is the method whereby the information is obtained from books and audio cassettes (From Radio *Thohoyandou* and Radio *Venda* as well as video cassettes).

Since traditional songs also deal with cultural activities of a certain people, this study will also use the Sociological Method. This is the method whereby cultural knowledge is used to interpret and analyze literary texts contextually.

The textual criticism method will also be employed. The researcher will be compelled to analyze certain aspects i.e. structure and meaning, from printed texts. Without this tool, the researcher will not be able to analyze the *Tshivenda* traditional songs' structural make-up.

### 1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Studies have been conducted concerning traditional songs by people such as *Rabothata* (1991), *Blacking* (1967) and *Milubi* (1988). Such studies will be consulted to help in this study. There are also other people who are always involved in traditional songs like cultural organizations, chiefs and radio stations like Radio *Thohoyandou* and *Phalaphala* Fm (Radio *Venda*). This will also be of immense help to the researcher.



The Scope of this study will be confined to *Tshivenda* traditional songs. The study will confine itself to the following types of traditional songs:

- (i) *Malombo* (Songs pertaining to ancestral worship)
- (ii) *Malende* (Songs pertaining to beer drinking sessions)
- (iii) *Mafhuwe* (Songs pertaining to stamping)
- (iv) *Davha* (Songs pertaining to communal work groups)

These are not the only types of traditional songs in *Tshivenda*. Other *Tshivenda* traditional songs exist e.g.

- (i) *Domba* (snake dance)
- (ii) *Tshikona* (National dance)
- (iii) *Lugube* (*Lugube* instrument)
- (iv) *Dende* (*Dende* instrument)
- (v) *Tshihwana* (*Tshihwana* instrument)

However, for the sake of brevity and length of the study only the first four types of traditional songs will be dealt with in this study.

## 1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This study will serve to preserve some aspects of the *Tshivenda* culture which are disappearing in today's multicultural South Africa. The study will preserve traditional songs for the coming generations to read and to know. In the olden days traditional songs

were sung all the time and everywhere. People could even sing them when they were working and also in the evening when they were drinking traditional beer.

Today most of the people use that time for listening to radio, watching soccer matches, television and video cassettes. They do not listen to traditional songs seriously anymore.

The study will attempt to instill a sense of pride in the *Tshivenda* songs. Some *Tshivenda* speaking people think that foreign languages like English are superior in terms of the standing of their songs and thus feel ashamed of singing *Tshivenda* traditional songs. This study will try to show that *Tshivenda* traditional songs are of as much cultural value as those of any other language.

The study will endeavour to show that *Tshivenda* traditional songs are a fully fledged genre in their own right and that this genre should be cultivated. This will be achieved by showing the literary qualities that are specific to this genre.

It is hoped that the study will also encourage educators to include *Tshivenda* traditional songs in the school syllabi, from primary to tertiary, as they carry many cultural values. These songs may also be used for entertainment both at school and outside the classroom situation. Through the study, the *Venda* culture may be given exposure both nationally and internationally.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2. THE THEORETICAL GUIDELINES REGARDING STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SONGS BOTH INSTRUMENTAL AND NON-INSTRUMENTAL**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This part deals with the theoretical guidelines regarding the structure and the meaning in African Traditional songs, both non-instrumental and instrumental. The theoretical framework will reflect on African songs in general and it will not pin itself to the specifics of *Tshivenda* songs since this will be attended to in the chapters to come. The emphasis will be on African Traditional songs other than those of *Tshivenda*.

#### **2.2 THEORETICAL STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN NON-INSTRUMENTAL AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SONGS**

Non-instrumental African Traditional songs are those that people sing verbally. Even if those people were to use instruments as background to African Traditional songs, the sound of the voice remains important. The people will pay more attention to structure and meaning of the song first and only later, to the structure and meaning of the instrument.

Structure in non-instrumental African Traditional songs is as follows:

### 2.2.1 Harmony

Harmony is an important ingredient of African Traditional songs. Harmony is when the voices go up and down producing different sounds. Two tones are sounded together. The African Traditional songs have these in their structure. On harmony Ratner (1977:39) says:

The differences in sound among intervals is the basic of harmony. Harmony deals with (a) effect created when two tones are sounded together or arranged in series of and (b) the use of these effects for sound, movement and arrival.

When the two tones are made to sound together they give a meaning which is very important and valuable to the African people. This is also cemented by Diamond (1987:58) when he says:

Harmony is concerned with the way in which chords are formed and the way in which they are used one after another to make musical sense.

The structure is when these apparent chords are formed one after another. This structure will reveal the meaning of the African Traditional songs. It is interesting to note that there are similarities between European songs and Black African songs when it comes to harmony. In this case the going up and down of tones is common in the European songs as well as in the Black African songs (African traditional

songs) Politoske (1974:44) says:

A general similarity between European and Bantu music is the use of harmony. Vertical harmony is common, and so is parallelism between voices, usually in thirds, fourths and fifths.

Therefore harmony in the European and African Traditional music brings about the sounding together of two tones or more tones. The result will be the effects of musical depth. This harmony in terms of structure brings about experience because the harmonic materials support melody. When this takes place the meaning comes into existence.

About this Politoske (1974:15) says:

One is aware of enjoying a richer and more satisfying experience because the melody is supported by harmonic materials.

Therefore harmony gives listeners structure and meaning in African traditional songs.

### 2.2.2 Melody

Melody is when a caller or the one who starts the song comes up with the linear succession of sounds. Those who will respond will bring about harmony. When talking about African traditional songs, the focus is on calls and response. Therefore the melody is another form of structure in African traditional songs.

To support this Ratner (1990:41) says:

Melody can be defined as a linear succession of sounds which are rhythmically and harmonically controlled. The human ear experiences melody as being pleasant or meaningful.

Melody is therefore part of the structure in African traditional songs. When it is joined together with harmony the listeners get the meaning. Melody may also be taken as a series of tunes. These tunes are generally different in as far as the pitch is concerned, as well as the time or the duration, which brings about the idea of the music being played. In the structure of the African traditional songs melody is not taken for granted. Sounds are selected carefully. They are not just collected at random or randomly because they would not bring about melody.

About structure in African traditional songs, the melody is to convince, the structure has a definite beginning as well as the ending. It also gives a direction. It gives a shape and a sense of continuity as well. This is the case in the African traditional songs concerning melody as part of the structure, that brings about meaning. About this melody, Miller, Tayler and Williams (1991:33) says:

Melody is a series of tunes usually varying in pitch and duration, that forms a satisfying musical idea. Just as random words do not form a meaningful sentence, random sounds do not constitute a melody. A convincing melody has a definite beginning and ending and conveys a sense of direction, shape and continuity.

Sounds follow one another. When this happens the listeners get melody in African traditional songs. This melody gives the structure that results in meaning. Karolyi (1987:59) says:

Melody in the physical sense is nothing else than a succession of sounds.

When these sounds follow one another it is obvious that they reveal the structure which will be followed by the meaning.

The people will therefore benefit out of these songs because when the tones succeed one another, they do it in a meaningful way. This causes the listeners to remember the music they have listened to. Melody is the most significant thing that the people listen for. In African traditional songs it is so well structured and the meaning very significant. About this Politoske (1974:6) says:

... a succession of tones used in a meaningful way. This is the "tune" that is remembered from a musical work, and is generally the first thing we listen for.

As this melody forms the structure in African traditional songs, it has lines that are sometimes shown by the movement that goes down. It may also be noticed by both the upward and the downward movements. Sometimes there is no movement at all.

To give more emphasis to this Politoske (1974:6) says:



Melody lines may be characterized by upward or downward movement, by both, or by hardly any movement at all.

This melody in African traditional songs as structure, brings to the people the motive of the song. This will indicate why the singer is singing the song. To emphasize this Ratner (1977:32) says:

Melodic motives are the most important easily recognized elements of the musical form. Once you hear a motive, you can recognize it later in the piece, and this helps you to keep your bearings as far as the form is concerned. A motive can be repeated exactly, or it can be varied in many ways and yet retain its similarity to what was heard before.

### 2.2.3 Dynamics

Dynamics is the strength of the tone. This is the indication of how loud or soft the tonal strength is. Sometimes there may be rapid change of the tone from soft to loud or from loud to soft. This is very much the case in African traditional songs. Dynamics brings up the structure which results in the meaning. Grobler (1994:40) says:

The expressive element of dynamics is the indication of tonal strength which determines how loud or how soft the notes in the music are played.

In this case Grobler also talks about notes in the music. In the structure of African traditional songs, people do not talk about notes. They talk about sound. So about



loudness or softness of the sound, there is no difference between the notes in the European songs and the sound in African traditional songs. The thing is, in European music they take notes into consideration. When the European music is mastered, when notes are no longer necessary, there is no difference between the dynamics of the African traditional music and European music.

The most important thing is the volume that is found in both the European songs and the African traditional songs depending on its degree. Swift (1971:79) says:

Dynamic indicates a steady volume or loudness. Remember, these are loud or soft in varying degree.

The dynamics forming the structure in the African traditional songs, is very essential and very basic to all the expressions of music. In African traditional music as well as the loudness and the softness of the sound, it is also the first thing that the people will be taking into consideration. Politoske (1974:28) says:

Intensity of sound, or dynamics, is the basic to all musical expression. In traditional music, the listeners often first become aware of the impact of dynamic effects from soft to loud or vice versa.

This softness and loudness of the sound form structure that will give out the meaning of the song in African traditional songs.

#### 2.2.4 Rhythm

It is the way in which the song goes on. It concerns the song's movement. It therefore implies the movement of sound. This movement contributes to the so-called rhythmical flow of the song. About this Ratner (1977:22) says:

More specifically, rhythm means the manner in which a piece moves its pace regularity, articulation, and intensity of movement.

Rhythm forms a structure in African traditional songs by means of movement of sound. That rhythmical flow of the song brings about the meaning of the song. Rhythm is associated with the heartbeat. When African traditional songs are sung, what people experience in as far as rhythm is concerned, is just like life itself. Grobler (1987:41) says:

Rhythm is more physical than intellectual. It is not a solution one reaches at the conclusion of an exercise in logic. Rather it is an experience as basic as life itself, as fundamental as a heartbeat.

Rhythm as structure in African traditional songs, also involves the flow of the feelings, body and the mind. It also involves time, space as well as energy.

In support of this Chomsky (1986:40) says:

Jaques - Dalcrose used the word "rhythm" to mean a balance and ratio of the flow among body, mind, and feelings, as well as a balance between conscious and unconscious movement. In this theory, rhythm exists in a time space - energy and context, but is produced by complicated interactions among many elements of motion.

This rhythm includes the speed at which music is played. When this takes place the listeners perceive the structure that results in meaning in African traditional songs.

#### **2.2.5 The Question Plot**

The question plot is also a structure in the African traditional songs. The question is posed in the first opening line of the song. In other words it is the caller who asks a question and he or she responds to question asked. This gives a person who is listening some clues about the plot which is coming. It is then that the listeners are going to get the meaning of the African traditional songs. Davis (1988:14) says:

In one of the best - known example of the question plot, a wife greets her arriving - home husband with "Guess who I saw Today (my dear)?" Body/Grand. She proceeds to tell him that after shopping she stopped in a café to have a bite. In a dark corner she saw a couple. "So much in love" that they were oblivious to their surroundings. She finally answers her own question: "Guess who I saw today .... I saw you". The introductory verse gave the alert listener a hint of the plot to come in the foreshadowing line. You are so late getting home from the office..."

Out of this question plot the listeners get the structure and the meaning of the song, as the woman is complaining about her husband's late coming back home.

About the question plot, *Netshitungani* of *Ngovhela*, choir master (personal interview) says:

The question plot as structure of the songs is when the caller asks a question in the form of a song and then gives an answer again. Those who respond to the caller will do so but the caller does that with them also.

To cement what has been mentioned by *Netshitungani*, there is a song that goes: *Yowee, vho vhuya naa?* (Yowee, have they come back? It goes as follows:

*Yowee vho vhuya naa?*  
Yowee, did they come back?  
*Vho vhuya mulovha.*  
They come back yesterday.

In this song the caller calls by asking a question and gives the answer again. The people responding will do that with the caller who asked the question in the song.

#### 2.2.6 The return

The return in African traditional songs is when the first or the opening line of the song returns again in the last line of the song. The reason why it comes back or repeats itself is because of the very same situation that is prevailing at that

particular time. When this happens, the listeners perceive the structure and finally, the meaning of the song. Davis (1988:15) says:

Sometimes a song's opening line returns as a lyric's last line to show the habitualness of the action. For example Mac Davis "In the Ghetto".

"On a cold and grey Chicago morning a baby's born and his mother cries... Hearing that line echoed at the end of the song reminds us of the vicious circle of poverty and crime.

About the return as structure *Mugovhani* of *Thohoyandou*, a choir master (personal interview) says:

Return is also called ostinato. The phrase keeps on to be repeated. Certain voices can come out and improve on the rhythm of the ostinato. Melody does not change, and the rhythm does not change as well. The rhythm is the same but the melody is inserted.

In this case the first line of the song keeps on coming back. *Nephawe* of *Mbilwi* a choir master and a composer (personal interview) says:

The started melody returns again in the form of a cycle. There is no hard and fast rule in the African traditional songs.

*Tshifhango* of *Hadumasi*, a choir master, also concurs with what *Nephawe* has indicated. He (personal interview) says:

It is cyclic in nature. It is recurrence occurrence.

To cement the return is when the lines of the song keep on coming back, *Zuma* of *Makwarela* choir master (personal interview) says:

Lines repeat themselves to emphasize a point that one feels strongly about.

African traditional songs do have the same return that forms the structure, that will give out meaning.

### 2.2.7 Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing in the structure of the African traditional songs is when the development of the plot is hinted at even before it is known. The first line is the most important. It makes the listeners guess what information they are going to be given. About this Davis (1988:14) says:

This technique suggests a plot development before it occurs. One of the most memorable examples is the opening line: "Everybody considered him the coward of the country" (Bowling/Wheeler). That hints that we are going to hear a story that will show "everyone" was wrong.

Out of this foreshadowing the listeners find the structure in African traditional songs. After the structure the meaning of the song is found.

About foreshadowing *Zuma* of *Makwarela*, choir master (personal interview) says:

When we start a song we are open. Sometimes it becomes a statement.

This means that a statement is understood by many listeners when it comes to the plot of the song. To illustrate this *Sumbana* of *Muledane*, a choir master and a composer (personal interview) says:

Foreshadowing as structure has an opening, climax and a conclusion.

In this case this structure gives the hints about the plot of the song.

#### 2.2.8 The scene method

The scene method is the way in which African traditional songs are formed in such a way that they create the scene. Names of places are also given to make people understand the meaning of the song more deeply after the structure has been created. Davis (1988:13) says:

Like dramatic, Lyricists often present Scene, for example, the sequential vignettes of “By the Time I Get to Phoenix” and “It Was A Very Good Year”.



The scene has been created as well as the name that has been given. This is very important in the structure and meaning of African traditional songs when they are formed.

### 2.2.9 Conflict

The “conflict” is when the heart of a person is not at peace with itself or with the owner. The person singing the song may be blaming another person or the society as a whole. The structure of the song will be relevant to the way a person feels. Usually the song becomes more sarcastic. The words build up a structure that suits the conflict. The meaning is also found based on the conflict of the African traditional song. About this Davis (1988:15) says:

Sometimes it's the human heart in conflict with itself as in “Coming in and Out of Your Life”. Often the conflict is between the singer and the singee such as “What Are We Doing in Love”? Occasionally the singer is at odds with Society as in “Society's Child”.

To illustrate this structure *Sumbana* (personal interview) says:

This has to do with the mood of the song. An Italian word may be used to show mood of the song. This Italian word is ‘funoso’ which means furiously or vigoroso - vigorously.

This denotes that the singer is not happy. He or she is in conflict with him or herself blaming another person or the community as a whole.



### 2.2.10 Ironic tension

There is ironic tension in African traditional songs, in as far as the structure and meaning is concerned. Ironic tension is when songs have conflict or surprise. When this takes place, the people's interest will be stimulated. This is also found in the structure and meaning of African traditional songs. About ironic tension Davis (1988:16) says:

Songs without either conflict or a surprise cannot of course sustain our interest. "Send in the Clowns" is a perfect example. Its success rests partially on the tension engendered between the singer's expectation of renewing a romance she had ended and the ironic actually that it's too late.

*Mugovhani* (personal interview) says:

This is the most dominating trait of *Venda* traditional culture which is found in the song as well.

An example of the song to cement this is as follows:

*Wanga muthannga ha dini*

My boyfriend is of good character.

*Hu na Savhadina*

There is *Savhadina*.

That means that the singer's boyfriend is not troublesome but there are those that are troublesome. *Savhadina* means causing troubles.

### **2.2.11 Ambiguous meaning**

The ambiguous meaning is when there is double meanings in the song. What is meant here is that the listeners do not have one meaning. The meaning is twofold or more. Davis (1988:17) says:

In "Blowing in the Wind" Bob Dylan pricked our conscience on the question of racial discrimination and war. The plot is clear. My quizzing of students on what "Blowing in the Wind" meant to them has promoted such responses as "The Wind is blowing seeds of meaning". "I can harness the wind". The wind has blown the answers away. "The answers are illusive: If we tune into nature, we will find that answer" often, what has not been spelled out can be made more evocative by being unstated.

In the structure and meaning of African traditional songs, there is an ambiguous meaning. Moreover, there is a desirable ambiguity and an undesirable ambiguity.

Desirable ambiguity is when the listener of the song enjoys interpreting the song into different meanings he desires. His interpretation of song is clear.

In an undesirable ambiguity, there is no good or proper answer. Davis (1988:18) says:

... there are two kinds: desirable ambiguity and undesirable ambiguity. As just discussed, leaving the meaning of your lyric open to interpretation can enrich the listener's enjoyment. That is desirable ambiguity conversely, the plot of your lyric - its attitude, or situation, or story, should be clear.

"In Who -Will Answer" for example, I presented clear vignettes on divorce, suicide, war, drugs, and the bomb. Similarly to "Blowing in the wind" the meaning of who Will Answer" was left to the listeners to interpret: God Will Answer" no one will answer, we each must answer, there is no answer.

These types of ambiguity make up the structure and meaning of the African traditional songs.

#### **2.2.12 Watch your "You"**

This means that the singer talks with a person who is present or a person who is absent but of course depending on his or her mind when singing. The person who is spoken to is the 'you' of the song - for the entire song. The song will continue taking the 'you' into consideration. To support this Davis (1988:50) says:

... the emphasis is on you. In other words, if your singer is talking to someone present ("Hey Big Spender"), or addressing in his or her mind some absent person ("Take Me Home, Country Roads"), or a person or thing addressed becomes the you of the lyric - for the whole lyric.

The “you” makes up the structure and the meaning in African traditional songs. When the “you” is repeated giving the listeners the structure, the very same “you” will give them the meaning of that traditional song.

### 2.2.13 Surprise

This is when the singers surprise those who are listening to the song. In order to surprise the listeners, there are ways to be used. They are the turnaround, the *discovery* and the *twist*. In the turnaround the last line with its effect is brought about when the key word in the title is reversed with its own antonym. In the *discovery*, the dramatic technique of the truth about the song is not revealed until the song comes to an end.

The *twist* is like the *discovery*. It does not reveal the truth until the song comes to an end, although the song haunts the listeners with the conclusion which is not expected.

To support this Davis (1988:15) says:

Surprising your listeners can be achieved in three ways - through The *turnaround*, The *discovery* and the *Twist*. The *turnaround* is the last - line effect that's often accompanied by reversing a key word in the title with its antonym: “I got lost in His Arms ... but look what I found” (Berlin), This is the End of the Beautiful Friendship ... but just the beginning of love ... “(Kahn / Styne), “I fell in love with love ... but love fell out with me” (Rodger/Hart).

Discovery is the dramatic technique by which the truth of the drama is not revealed until the end. The *Twist*, in much the same way 'as the *discovery*, withholds the truth until the song's end - but with a difference. It jolts the listeners with an unexpected conclusion.

All these aspects, viz. *turnaround*, *discovery* and *twist* brings about the structure that will ultimately give the people the meaning of African traditional songs.

#### **2.2.14 A strong start**

A strong start means that the starting of the song must stimulate the listener's interests. The person who is listening to the song must feel attracted to the song. The song must also involve the people, what they did or what they do, when did they do such things. The opening few lines must capture the listener's interests. It must be very intricate for the listener to ignore the song. Davis (1988:10) observes:

You need a start that: pulls the listener into the song. Establish the who, when and where in the first few lines like effective advertising copy, a well - wrought lyric grabs the listener's attention and holds it. Your first objective is to pull the audience right into the center of action.

The African traditional songs have this strong start in their structures. When the structure is obtained this way, the listeners will get a fruitful meaning at the end when these songs are analyzed.

Most of the African traditional songs start very strongly. *Nephawe* (personal interview) says:

The start of the song must be very motivating. For an example, when *Tshikona* is performed, people will hear the sound of the small windpipe (*phala*), then the sound of many reedpipes simultaneously. This makes people pay attention to the song. The *davha* songs start very strongly and the ancestor worship songs as well. In the *domba* songs a strong start is also caused by the beat of the master drum.

#### 2.2.15 A genuine idea

The “genuine idea” means that the song must take genuine people, real people in real - life situations into consideration. Songs express the people’s emotions. There must be ideas in the song. In African traditional songs this is the case. Songs express the emotions of the listeners. They are all about real - life situations. This genuine idea forms structures. Structures give the listeners meaning. About a “genuine idea” Davis (1988:2) says:

Your genuine idea should, be about believable people in recognizable situations. Express a clear attitude or emotions. Be substantial enough to be set to music, strike a common chord. Put the singer in a favourable light. Have its “situations” built in, Make Millions of people want to hear it over and over.

Although African traditional songs have genuine idea, believable people, recognizable situations, express a clear attitude or emotions, they cannot put the singer in a



favourable light, because they are not man made songs. We do not know who made them. In their structures and meanings, they are what they are in this aspect and they do not compromise their structure and meaning to suit individuals or people. People had to listen to their structure and get the meaning. When it comes to dealing with believable people and expressing people's emotions, they do not cater for these aspects. About this *Zuma* (personal interview) says:

Ideas must be practical or realistic.

#### **2.2.16 Go Somewhere**

Here it means that there must be sequence of events in the song. Singers must not only repeat the same words haphazardly. Words must also be followed by meaningful ones.

In the African traditional songs the structure is made up of words that are well arranged that give the listeners good and proper meanings. Davis (1988:12) says:

It is like hello of recognizing an old acquaintance on the street. But you don't just keep saying hello, hello, hello. After hello, comes the brief exchange: "How's - the - family - are - you- still - living - in - Scarsdale ?" And then comes wrap-up: "It's - been - good - to - see you - let's - have - lunch" Hello / conversational / goodbye.



### 2.2.17 Conclusion as an aspect of Non-Instrumental Songs

This is where the meaning of the song is mentioned, the meaning of the song can be implied, the song may be left to the listeners to interpret for themselves. People are just given the points and they themselves interpret the song. When the message of the song is implied to get the conclusion, people find the so-called direct approach. All these aspects give the people the structure that carries the meaning in African traditional songs. Davis (1988) says:

There are three ways to produce a lyric with a satisfying emotional experience. You can state the meaning, or you can leave its interpretation to your listener.

Many pop songs contain a particular line that says, in effect, "Here's the point of my song".

The implied message stating the conclusion, in the direct approach to a payoff, and the most common one. Some songs are more subtle: They let the listener infer what the writer has implied. A simple illustration is Dan Fogelberg's "Same Old Lang Syne" -that chance meeting of two former high school lovers on Christmas eve. After the reminiscence in her car, the married singer drives away leaving the (unmarried) recording artist gazing after her. His feelings - obviously wistful - are left unidentified. To one listener the song's meaning might be: life was simple back in high school, to another, every love affair must come to an end, to someone else: to gain success we must sometimes forego an intimate relationship. The lyric states none of those things, but implies them all.

But in the structure and meaning of African traditional songs, one does not sit down and say, he or she wants to produce or write a traditional song that will give this message or that one. The Africans found them as they are.

Even if they want to add new phrases or words, the basic foundation is the same. This is being said to differ a little bit with Davis as she talks about producing songs. She is referring to the man-made ones but when she talks about the implied message, stating the meaning, leaving interpretation to the listener - all these are found in the structure and meaning of African traditional songs. As far as the origin of the song is concerned, it may be said that they are 'of great antiquity, and the "composers" are not known.

According to *Nephawe* (personal interview); African traditional songs have no conclusion.

This is true. People may conclude what the song is all about but that does not mean that the song has ended.

About this *Mugovhani* the choir master and a composer (personal interview) says:

There is no conclusion because of the Ostinato pattern (repetition) and the cyclic form (going on). These brings about "a piacere" singing i.e there is no limit to the length of the singing song. It depends on the interest and the energy.

## 2.3 STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN INSTRUMENTAL AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SONGS

In as far as African traditional songs are concerned, structure and meaning can also be discerned by means of instruments that African people play. This will be shown as follows:

### 2.3.1 The 'Imitshingo' instrument played by the *Zulus*.

This is an instrument played by the *Zulus* when looking after their cattle. This instrument has its own structure that makes it different from other instruments. In other words, it is the way it is made up. The sound is unique. When the instrument is played, people get the meaning out of it. When an *imitshingo* instrument is played, the cattle know the meaning. This is the effect brought about by the instrument. Kirby (1968:116) says:

Among the *Zulu* the '*imitshingo*' is played by the cattle herd, who play to the cattle, and also signal to each other from hill to hill. The cattle recognize their herd's call and follow him, since cattle are led, not driven. The people formerly believed that the cattle would graze better when the *umutshingo* was played.

Besides the cattle following the one looking after them, after an *umutshingo* is played, the cattle – herds signal each other from different hills. This is one of the uses of African traditional songs. The song sung when an "*imitshingo*" instrument is played is as follows:

An example of the song played by an instrument *Imitshingo*, as sung by *Phathela*<sup>^</sup> (personal communication) is as follows:

*Mhlambi we zinkonyane*

Herds of calves

*Ngek' azidl'e zamandl'ethu*

He will never consume them as they are the  
result of our toil

*Kush' adelusi*

The herdmen of the family say so

*Ngi khalel' izinkonyane*

We are complaining about the calves.

The meaning of the song is expressed in a complaint. A person sent his or her cattle to a relative to be looked after. When these cattle calf, the calves are no longer given to the owner. They are hidden somewhere. The relatives are cheating the owner of the cattle. The owner of these cattle swears that he will get them back. The one who is cheating will never eat them because they are not his or hers.

Another song sung when *imitshingo* instrument is played is as follows (sung by *Phathela*<sup>^</sup> personal communication):

*Sikhala ngozalo*

We complain about relatives

*Uzalo luphehl' amanz amnyama*

They are causing us bad luck

*Luphehl' amanz amnyama*

They are causing us bad luck.

The meaning of the song is about family problems. The family members are accusing each other that some members are causing misfortunes to the others by preparing a mixture of medicine. This medicine brings bad luck to other members of that family. They were told this by a traditional healer. Usually the misfortunes are infertility or death.

Another meaning of *imitshingo* is when the instrument is played when the cattle are grazing. When the people hear the instrument they know that the purpose is to make cattle graze better. The meaning to the cattle is that the cattle will know the meaning of the song played by this instrument.

There were times in *Zululand* especially in the olden days when '*imitshingo*' instrument was not to be played. It was played in the time of *Umkosi* of the *Zulu* king. This took place at Christmas time while everybody was present. This was done to praise the ancestors. Therefore this is an indication that the instrument when played, brings about the plot which make up the structure of the song. The entire *Zulu* nation get the meaning of the instrument when played. These people know that the song played by the instrument is praising the ancestors. Kirby (1968:116) says:

In olden days in *Zululand* the instrument might not be played until the time of *Umkosi*, or annual festival of the *Zulu* king. This was held at Christmas time, and the whole of the *Zulu* king, including everyone of the rank and the entire army, assembled in court dress at the Royal kraal.

During this festival the king himself was 'charmed' by the doctors, special songs were sung in praise of the ancestors, new laws were proclaimed and the people were formally given permission to partake of the new season's crops.

After '*umutshingo*' was played in the festival, the people knew that they were allowed to eat crops without being punished. But before the festival even if a person eat these crops clandestinely, heavy penalties were inflicted. In this case proper punishment was death.

This is an indication that in African traditional Songs instruments also play an important role in bringing the structure and meaning of the song to the African people. Musical instruments thus played a significant role in regulating the life and the customs of the people of Africa.

### 2.3.2 '*Ixilongo*' instrument played by the *Xhosa* people

The *Xhosa* play an instrument known as the '*Ixilongo*'. This instrument is made in a special way. It is made up of reeds.

When played, it has its meaning even to the cattle as well. The one who introduced it (*ixilongo*) used to play it and then the cattle followed him. Kirby (1968:116 – 117) observes:

Among the *Xhosa* the instrument which is known as *Ixilongo*, is said to have been introduced' by a shepherd whose cattle followed him to the field as soon as he blew on.



In this case it is very interesting to find the domestic animals like cattle also enjoying the meaning of the sound of African traditional songs together with people.

The song sung when an *Ixilongo* instrument is played is as follows: An example of the song sung by an instrument *Ixilongo* by Dorgie (1988:20) is as follows:

*Igqirha lendlela ngugqongqothwane*

The doctor of the road is the dung – beetle

*Igqirha lendlela ngugqongqothwane*

The doctor of the road is the dung – beetle

*Ebeqabel' egqith' apha Ugqongqothwane*

He has just passed by here the dung-beetle

The meaning of the song is an expression of the need for love. *Ugqongqothwane* is a dung-beetle. He was seen passing by looking for his loved one. The meaning of the song is an expression of love. Dorgie (1988:21) says:

The beetle is called *Ugqongqothwane* because the click sounds (underlined) imitate the sound it makes knocking on hard surfaces with the underside of its body (presumably to summon its lady – love).

Sometimes instruments like whistles, flutes, and vibrating reeds are associated with witchcraft. When they are played people think of them in terms of death or misfortunes that will befall them because the instruments were played. Here the instruments have their structure i.e. the way in which they were made up. The sound people hear is unique. This is the structure as well. This sound brings about



the meaning to the people. When it comes to making the cattle understand the meaning of the instrument, the *Ixilongo* does the same work as the Zulu 'imitshingo'.

### 2.3.3 'Umtshingosi' played by Swazis

The Swazi people have their own instrument known as 'Umtshingosi'. Its structure is made of reed-flute. When this instrument is played, there is a unique sound. When played the listeners get the meaning of the African traditional songs. Kirby (1968:126) says:

The transverse flute of the Swazi is called by them *Umtshingosi*, the name of their flute of their harvest time.

When it comes to the meaning, this instrument when played, conveys to the swazi that it is harvest time. Therefore the meaning is clear.

The song sung when an "Umtshingosi" instrument is played is as follows, although it is not talking about harvest time. Dorgie (1988:83):

*Wangiphatsa kwaze kwasa*

*Ye mlam'am' Ung'phatsa kanjan'*

He made love to me all night till dawn.

The meaning of the song sung by this instrument is an expression of love.

#### 2.3.4 The '*Ndjele*' instrument of the *Thonga* people

The *Thonga* speaking people have their own instrument known as '*ndjele*'. Its structure consists of an oval calabash and it is about six inches long. There are holes burned through top and bottom, and a tapered stick is put through to enable the players to handle this instrument. There are few stones that are placed inside the calabash. Small holes are also burned in the inside of the calabash to bring about a continuing clearness of sound. Kirby (1968:8) says:

The *Thonga* instrument is called '*ndjele*'. It consists of an oval calabash, about six inches long, with holes burned through top and bottom, through which a tapered stick, about a foot in length, is thrust to serve as a handle. Through a hole on the protruding tip of the stick a thin peg of wood is pushed, to prevent the calabash from working loose. A few small stones are placed before the instrument is assembled and small holes are burned in the sides of the calabash to secure greater resonance, these usually being some fairly definite pattern.

The meaning of '*ndjele*' in African traditional songs is that it is used with *Mantshomane* which is a *Thonga* drum. When people hear *ndjele* played, the meaning is that the evil spirits are being driven out by magic charms. These evil spirits are believed to have possessed the unlucky individuals.

Kirby (1968:8) says:

The '*ndjele*' is used with *Mantshomane*, in the exorcism of evil spirits which are supposed to possess certain unfortunate individuals.

An example of the song by *Mathosi* (personal communication) is as follows:

It is the song sung when ‘*ndjele*’ instrument is played.

*Ngirimela ho ngirimela kayoo!*

Let us rush home.

*Kaya ka hina hi dya matimba kayoo!*

At our homes we eat sugarcane

*Kaya ka hina hi dya tindluwa kayoo!*

At our homes we eat nuts.

*Kaya ka hina hi dya makwembe kayoo!*

At our homes we eat pumpkins.

The meaning of the song when a ‘*ndjele*’ instrument is played, is in communication with the ancestors. The singers are saying that if the ancestors want to take them to where they are, by way of making them die, they (singers) will rush there because they are going to enjoy themselves. They are going to get everything, such as ‘*matimba*’ (sugarcane), ‘*tindluwa*’ (nuts), ‘*makwembe*’ (pumpkins) and many more.

### **2.3.5 ‘*Tshitiringo*’ instrument played by the *Vhavenda***

This instrument is made up of reed. Four holes are made from it. One hole is where the person’s mouth will be placed and the other three holes will be used by the fingers when the instrument is being played. An example of the song is as follows:

*Vhakalanga a ni na maano*  
*Vhakalanga you are not wise*  
*Ni dzhia mulisa wa khomu*  
You take a herdboy  
*Na dzhia na tamba ngae*  
You ill-treat him.  
*Ndi do livha nadzo Vhutonga*  
I will run away to *Vhutonga* with them.  
*Vhutonga vhu sa nga swikwi*  
*Vhutonga will never be reached.*  
*Vhu sa nga swikwi nga muthu*  
This place will never be reached by anyone.

The meaning is a complaint by the herdboy who was ill-treated by the members of the family. They did this because he was an orphan. He was singing telling them that because of their cruelty, he will run away with the herd of cattle to *Vhutonga*. They will never reach him again. This song is also found in the folktale. He finally ran away with the cattle. The family never found him again.

#### **2.4 SUMMARY (CONCLUSION)**

This chapter has indicated the importance of the following structures of non – instrumental African traditional songs, viz: melody, harmony, dynamics, rhythm, the question plot, the return, foreshadowing, conflict, ironic tension, ambiguous meaning, watch your ‘you’, surprise, strong start, genuine idea, go somewhere, and the conclusion.

It has also revealed that structure and meaning exists in African traditional songs other than those of *Tshivenda*. This chapter also emphasized that structure and meaning do not work in isolation. They work together. After each structure of the song the meaning will follow. Therefore the two aspects are not disjointed but work together. In this part, the structure and meaning in instrumental African traditional songs have been shown as follows:

*Imitshingo* instrument played by the Zulus, *ixilongo* instrument played by the Xhosa people, *umtshingosi* instrument played by the Swazis, the *ndjele* instrument of the Thonga people, *tshitiringo* instrument played by the *Vhavenda*.

All these instruments also have meanings that they reveal to people. The meanings of the instrumental songs were revealed by means of the songs given. These are songs that are sung when an instrument is played.

## CHAPTER 3

### A SURVEY OF *TSHIVENDA* TRADITIONAL SONGS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter will investigate the types of traditional songs that are found in *Tshivenda*. It will examine and make an elucidation on the different types of songs. The chapter makes a survey of *Tshivenda* traditional songs.

#### 3.2 MALOMBO

Malombo are the possession dances accompanied by the relevant traditional songs. There are people such as the master drummer (*matsige*), the membraphones players, the percussion players, the possessed by the ancestral spirits as well as those who help by singing songs that will enable people to be possessed by the ancestral spirits.

##### 3.2.1 The time when *malombo* songs are sung

The *malombo* is also performed when a person is ill. This is done to request the ancestor spirits to heal a person concerned.

About *malombo* Van warmelo (1937:140) says:

*Malombo* 6 spirits of departed ancestors, which are supposed to take possession of a descendant usually a female. Before taking possession, such spirits causes illness, and after taking possession (which is brought on by singing and rattling *tshela* for many days) the spirit delights in dancing, which is a prominent feature of *malombo* proceedings.

Therefore the person involved here is a person who is ill. The rest of the people are also involved to make sure that the spirit of the ancestors comes down to heal that person who is ill. About this B. *Makwarela* of *Mbilwi* (personal interview) says:

When a person cannot be healed after being treated by different traditional healers, the family members will decide that *malombo* be performed for that particular person. They believe that the illness is caused by the ancestors who are complaining that they are not taken good care of.

Through *malombo* the *Vhavenda* make their ancestors happy and not bring illness to them. Stayt (1968:302) says:

The spirit, *tshilombo* (pl. *zwilombo*), which is supposed to enter the host, is usually the spirit of some offended ancestor, sometimes absurdly remote. This spirit will cause its victims illness and subsequent death if it is not pacified.

The people who are involved are often women. These are the people who are generally possessed by the ancestral spirits. About these Kruger (1994:61) says:



However, members of possession groups are mostly female, and possession dances may be considered vehicles of female protest against male domination.

Other people involved are the community at large. The reason being that they want to start ploughing. Hence they resort to the ancestors to give them strength, as well as good rains and enough crops. *Livhebe* of *Mbilwi* (personal interview).

The people involved include those who are possessed by the ancestral spirits. They therefore take part in the possession dances. To emphasize this *Ndou* (1994:63) says:

These are *tshela* and *malombo* and the performers are only those being possessed by ancestor spirits. It is only after the *nanga* (witch-doctor) has directed that a person is in possession of the ancestor's spirits that *tshela* and *malombo* can be performed.

In the quotation by *Ndou* it is not proper to say witch-doctor because this word was used by the Whites in the olden days. They were insulting Blacks while promoting their doctors.

### 3.2.2 Other identifying features

Malombo are identified by the following:

### 3.2.2.1 *Tshele* (percussion),membraphone,(*mirumba* and *ngoma*)

*Tshele* is an instrument made up of a small calabash. Seeds are put inside the calabash. A stick is also stuck on and it has the handle that the people dancing *malombo* songs handle when shaking the instrument to produce sound by means of the seeds inside the calabash. About this Van Warmelo (1937:264) says:

hand-rattle, used by *malombo* dancers, made of a small calabash filled with hard seeds, and stuck on stick which serves as a handle.

*Ngoma* is a big wooden drum. Its shape is like that of a pot. It is used when *malombo* and its songs are performed. Van Warmelo (1937:200) says:

very large pot-shaped wooden drum which is beaten on all important occasions...

*Murumba* (membraphone) is a long wooden drum used also when *malombo* (ancestor worship) songs are being performed. Van Warmelo (1937:175) says:

Long drum, much resembling a milk-pail (*khamelo*) in shape.

When people are singing and dancing the *malombo* songs, all the instruments indicated above make the people more content with the entire situation. They become more motivated. It is then that the ancestor spirits will come to the people concerned.

### 3.2.2.2 *Matsige*, (master drummer)

This is the man who plays the big drum of *malombo*. He is also called the master drummer. It is not every Tom, Dick and Harry who can play this very big and important membraphone. They choose a person who would be able to produce the sound suitable for the occasion. About this Blacking (1973:46) maintains:

The ability of a master drummer (*matsige*) at a possession dance is assessed by the sounds he produces, and not by the extent to which he rolls his eyes and throws his body about. The *Venda* may suggest that exceptional musical ability is biologically inherited, but in practice they recognize that social factors play the most important part in realizing, or suppressing it.

This *matsige* plays this big drum (*ngoma*) up until the *malombo* dancing period comes to an end. As the most important part of the body to be used is the elbow, it gets hurt because of its continuous contact with the skin covering the big drum. The elbow might even start bleeding but *matsige* will never stop playing it until the end of this process. The way he plays, causes the ancestral's spirit to come down to the people concerned.

### 3.2.2.3 *Matongo* (clothing)

*Matongo* are a type of clothing with red, green and sky blue colours. They are worn by the people who are possessed by the ancestor's spirit. *Milubi* (1994:133) says:

Zwiambaro zwi no ambarwa hu tshi tshinwa malombo zwi pfi ma<sup>^</sup>tongo (Clothes that are worn when people are performing *malombo* are called *ma<sup>^</sup>tongo*).

This clothing makes the *malombo* dancing songs suitable for that occasion. About this clothing Stayt (1968:305) says:

These are four particular types of cloth that find favour with the *tshilombo* a black cloth described by the spirit as *lutombo* (stones), a red one, *tshilemba*, a white, *mutshena* and a spotted black and white, *palu*.

These are the colours favoured by the people who are possessed by the ancestor's spirits. They had to dance the *malombo* songs.

#### 3.2.2.4 Language

Another identifying feature is the language used by the people who are possessed in the *malombo* songs dancing process. The language they use is *Tshikalanga*. *Tshikalanga* is the language spoken by *vhakalanga* people as well as their customs. To emphasize this van Warmelo (1937:273) says:

*Tshikalanga*, language, customs and manners of the *Vhakalanga*.

The reason why they speak *Tshikalanga* is because it is believed by the *Vhavenda<sup>^</sup>* people that they came from *Vhukalanga* before coming to *Dzata<sup>^</sup>* at *Nzhelele*. About the *Tshikalanga* language Stayt (1968:302) says:

People in the first of these two centres, when possessed, always speak Tshikalanga, the language spoken by the tribes, among whom the *Vhavenda* first encountered the cult. The second centre is at *Mutale*, and its votaries speak in a mixture of *Tshikalanga* and *Tshivenda*, this language is becoming rapidly more *Venda-ized*, most of the songs sung during the ceremonies being to - day in pure *Tshivenda*.

Considering the above information it is not surprising to find the possessed *Muvenda malombo* song dancer speaking through the *Tshikalanga* language.

### 3.2.2.5 Lamentation

This is when the people express themselves showing feelings of grief. In other words when people lament other people may see that those people who are lamenting are not happy at all. Hornby (1975:478) says:

Expression of grief.

In the *malombo* songs people sing in the form of lamentation. They show sorrow and at the same time they seem to be pleading with the ancestors to have mercy on them as they may sometimes cause people to be ill or even to die if the necessary precautions are not taken. If well pleaded with, blessings will come the people's way.

### 3.2.2.6 Time

The time when the *malombo* and their songs are performed is during August. By this time there is plenty of food to eat. They get permission first from the chief. About this Blacking (1973:76) says:

Together with the possession dances (*ngoma dza midzimu*) which are held by the family cult groups with the permission of rulers, each of these institution is regarded very seriously and called (literally) drum.

## 3.3 MALENDE (BEER DRINKING SESSIONS)

### 3.3.1 Introduction

*Malende* are songs that are sung when people are seated and drinking beer or after drinking beer. To emphasize this van Warmelo (1968:140) says:

*Malende* songs are sung to accompany dancing after beer has been drunk.

### 3.3.2 The time when *malende* songs are performed

*Malende* songs are performed after people have harvested their crops. They are having a rest after working very hard in their fields. During this time, they have all the necessary ingredients to brew the beer as crops are enough for that purpose. About this *Makwarela* (personal interview) says:

*Malende* takes place when people have harvested their crops and when there are no problems either.

To emphasize this B.Mutsila of *Khubvi* (personal interview) says:

*Malende* is when people sing and drink beer after they have harvested their crops and brought them home.

*Malende* songs are performed when people are happy when there are no problems like *tshiila* (when people must not sing and rejoice because somebody has died or passed away). When a person has died around a certain area, people do not perform *malende* songs. When the chief has passed away, *u dzama*, people do not perform *malende* until the period of mourning is over. When there is *murundu* (initiation school for the boys) people are not allowed to perform *malende*.

At the end of *tshiila*, as at the end of *murundu* (initiation school for boys) people are happy and they may perform *malende* songs to the fullest. On Christmas Eve people perform *malende* when they are happy. During this time people are more happy because it is the time when they are being reunited with their people who have come back from the Urban areas where they work. It is the same situation on Good Friday when firms in the Urban areas close for a few days to mark the death of Christ and people come back home and are happy with their families. The same applies to New Year's Eve where people also brew beer to drink on this day they call *Minidzhara* (New Year's Eve).



Malende songs are also performed when there is *thevhula*. *Thevhula* is when the chief and his family yearly go to the graves of their ancestors to pour beer called *mpambo*, (libation of beer). Van Warmelo (1937:255) says:

*Thevhula* is the sacrificial rites in which a chief and his family once a year pour a libation of beer (*mpambo* q.v) on the graves of their ancestors, i.e a form of firsts ceremony.

In this case *malende* songs play an important role in all of the *Vhavenda*<sup>Λ</sup> festivities. They are a symbol of happiness. *Malende* songs are also performed when women as a group take beer to the places where their daughters got married. When drinking that beer, because of happiness the people will start singing *malende* songs. If they have gone there to see the son-in-law, they will sing the *malende* songs to show that they are happy with their relationship with this other family that has taken their daughter as a wife in their family. The *malende* songs are also sung when the group of women and the old ones go to visit the son-in-law if there is a new born baby. They organize what is called *murula*. This *murula* is when a group of women carry beer to see their in-laws .i.e where their daughters got married. About *murula* Van Warmelo (1937:175) says:

*Murula* :3 file of women transporting beer.

Here they will sing *malende* songs in their happiness. They go to their in-laws with one man who will make this *malende* songs more impressive. This man is called *tshiviambudzi*. This is the man who accompanies women when they carry or transport beer to their in-laws. About this *Milubi* (1984:86) observes:

*Muthu wa munna a no tshimbila na murula a vha ene a no thavha mbudzi u pfi tshiviambudzi.*

(A man who travels with women transporting beer to their in-laws, will also slaughter a goat; he is called *tshiviambudzi*).

On this occasion, *malende* songs will be very well performed as this *tshiviambudzi* will also participate fully. Usually they choose a man as *tshiviambudzi* who will dance very well and represent the rest of the men back at home to show that they are also good at performing *malende* songs.

These *malende* songs are performed during the day i.e in the afternoon as well as in the evening up until after midnight. It is like this because participants will be having a lot on their minds to express by means of singing. For example if there is anybody who has committed an offence or behaved badly his name will be mentioned. The *malende* songs caters for situational occurrences, i.e. they are situational when it comes to creating new words to suit the situation. The tune will be the same but there will be new words created to suit the offence that the people are not happy about. In this case *malende* songs are not restricted to time factor. About this T.E Sivhabu of *Tshitereke* (personal interview) says:

When it comes to *malende*, people are not restricted to singing the very same words that originated with the song in the past only. They are also at liberty to insert whatever words they find necessary to chastise a person who has wronged the community.

### 3.3.3 Who is involved in the *malende* songs

Every member of the community is involved. *Malende* songs are shared by everybody who wants to participate. It is not a question of saying this person is good at singing *malende* songs and this one is not good at all, and therefore he or she must not participate. *Malende* songs do not discriminate against people. Women, men and youth are all at liberty to take part in the *malende* songs. Blacking (1973:4) says:

If, for example, all members of an African Society are able to perform and listen intelligently to their own indigenous music, and if this unwritten music, when analyzed in its social and cultural context, can be shown to have a similar range of effects on people and to be based on intellectual and musical processes that are found in the so-called “art” music of Europe, we must ask why apparently general music abilities should be restricted to a chosen few in societies supposed to be culturally more advanced. Does cultural development represent a real advance in human sensivity and technical ability, or is it chiefly a diversion for elites and a weapon of class exploitation? Must the majority to be made “Unmusical” so that a few may become more “musical”?

This shows that the *malende* songs do not discriminate against anybody in the society, but belong to all the members of the community.

### 3.3.4 The types of *malende* songs

#### 3.3.4.1 Protest (political protest)

Political protest songs refer to songs which protest against a certain political system /set up/ or event of the country. e.g. the old political system of South Africa. In the *malende* songs there are those that are of political protest. An example is the following song:

*Hu na Madzhapane*

There are the Japanese

*Thi lali ndo dzula*

I must not sleep seated (literal translation.)

(True meaning: I must not be forced not to sleep)

*Hu na Madzhapane*

There are the Japanese

*Ndi lala ndo ima*

I sleep standing (Literal translation)

(True meaning: I am forced not to sleep)

This *malende* song was sung during the Second World War. The *Vhavenda* people were forced to go to fight in the War against the Japanese and the Germans on the side of Britain and her allies. In the war the *Vhavenda* were forced to watch for torpedos of the Japanese in the ships at the sea. They therefore had to spend sleepless nights watching these Japanese torpedos. When a torpedo is sighted, the sentry had to awaken his superiors so

that they would retaliate or do whatever was necessary. Prof. V. *Ralushai*:(personal interview).

Still on these *malende* political protest songs, it is remembered that in 1948 the Nationalist Party took office. Dr.Malan became the Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa. He also emphasized racial segregation laws making the Blacks suffer under the Apartheid system. The *Vhavenda* in the *malende* songs sung the song called *Ri yo vhona Malane* (We are going to see Malan).

Again when the name Malan is looked at,it is clear that the *Vhavenda* pronounce it as *Malane* because in *Tshivenda* there is no word that ends with a consonant. All ends up with vowels. Therefore the song is as follows:

*Ri yo vhona Malane*

We are going to see Malan

*Malane wee*

Malan yoo!

*Ri yo vhona Malane*

We are going to see Malan.

*Malane*

Malan

This *malende* song no doubt is very political expressing the feeling of the *Vhavenda* during the era of Malan. It suited the time or era. About this the *Venda* journal *Luvhone* (1992:18) maintains:

Protest songs and songs of derision are archives and chronicles in themselves. They preserve historical incidents - true in detail - because they are based on facts. The scope of "traditional" or "folk songs" stretches far back in history. What the singer presents has a cultural significance for yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

When they sing this song, they were protesting saying that they want to go to see this Malan who is introducing Apartheid laws that are burdensome for the *Vhavenda*. Prof. *Ralushai*: (personal interview).

#### 3.3.4.2 The protest of women against male domination

These are malende songs that women sing to protest against male domination. An example is: *Vho vhuya vha tonga* (He was once showing off). The song was sung by the women of *Makwarani* at *malende* competition, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997.

*Vho vhuya vha tonga nga mufarekano*

He was once showing off because of his concubine

*Helele vho vhuya vha tonga nga mufarekano*

He was once showing off because of his concubine

*Musadzi wa murwe mutuka ha tongiswi*

The wife of another man must not make one show off.

The women are complaining that when men get their concubines they treat their wives badly by showing off. Another protesting song by the women is as follows :

*Vha mmbulahiselani nga muhadzinga*

Why do you make the co-wife kill me ?

*Vha vho todou sala vha tshi funana*

You want to remain in love

This song is indicating that a man gets married to two women (they are his wives ). He ends up backbiting another one. Therefore the women are complaining that it should not be done that way. This must come to an end because the other woman who is favoured, will end up killing the one who is not being favoured.

#### 3.3.4.3 *Malende* songs for sarcasm

Sarcasm is when one says something in a way that hurts, without saying it explicitly. This also happens with songs. One may sing putting his words in a sarcastic manner . If a listener is not listening attentively , he or she will not think that there is something wrong whereas something is wrong. An example of such *malende* song is called *Vho-Muzila*. This *Muzila* was a brother of Chief *Rasimphi* 'alias' *Mphaya Tshivhase* of *Mukumbani* .*Rasimphi* did not want to be ruled by the Afrikaners . Because of this , *Muzila* connived with the Afrikaners so that *Rasimphi* must be arrested. He was then arrested and *Muzila* was installed as a chief of *Mukumbani*. The community was not happy with the situation. They therefore started a song called '*Vho-Muzila*' and it goes as follows:

*Vho u la vha takale nga shango*

Eat and rejoice in the world

*Vho-Muzila*

Mr *Muzila*



*Muṭhannga o wisa belevhele*  
The young men's belt has fallen  
Vho-Muzila  
Mr *Muzila*  
*Musidzana o gidima a doba*  
A girl ran to pick it up  
Vho-Muzila  
Mr *Muzila*

*Vho u la vha takale nga shango*  
Eat and rejoice in the world  
Vho-Muzila  
Mr *Muzila*

*Muṭhannga o wisa belevhele*  
The young men's belt has fallen  
Vho-Muzila  
Mr *Muzila*  
*Musidzana o gidima a doba*  
A girl ran to pick it up  
Vho-Muzila  
Mr *Muzila*

The song is saying to *Muzila* that now that his brother is in jail , he better eat and enjoy life to the fullest while *Rasimphi* his brother , is suffering in jail for nothing. Prof. *Ralushai* (personal interview).

#### 3.3.4.4 Joyous songs

*Malende* of this kind are performed when women as a group take beer to their places where their daughters got married. When drinking that beer, because of happiness the people will start singing these *malende* songs. If they have gone there to see the son-in-law, they will sing the song called ' *Vho-Makhulu vho da*' meaning the mothers-in-law have come. It goes on as follows:

*Vho-Makhulu vho da*  
The mothers-in-law have come  
*Vho da u tola mukwasha*  
They have to visit the son-in-law

Here someone will start the song and the rest will respond and the song goes on like that. About this Blacking (1973 :70) says:

The form of the melodies can be divided into call and response sections, reflecting a social situation in which someone "saw" (-*sima*) a song, and others "thunder" (-*bvumela*)-a metaphor derived from horticulture.

Other *malende* songs are also performed when people rejoice for a new born baby. It happens when a group of women have taken beer to their son-in-law to celebrate the birth of a baby. They will sing the following *malende* song.

*Matakadza mbiluni !*  
What makes the heart happy

*Ndi n̄wana*

It is the child

*Matakadza mbiluni*

What makes the heart happy

*Ndi n̄wana*

It is the child

Again the most important thing here is happiness.

#### 3.3.4.5 *Malende* songs against ritual murder

*Malende* songs are sung to chastise a person who did something wrong. In order to show him or her that the community knows about the offence committed, they will put some words in the song to make the particular person aware of the fact that they know about what happened. About this Blacking (1973:50) says:

... a musical framework can ritualize communication in such a way that messages may be conveyed but no counteraction is taken. You do not "go to prison" if you say it in music, and something may be done about your complaint because it may be a warning of growing public feeling.

The following is an example of *malende* songs used to chastise a person :

*Lo kovhela n̄dilani vha a viya*

In the evening on the way they commit ritual murder

*Bileni vha a viya vho viya Nkhumeleni*

At Bileni they commit ritual murder , they killed *Nkhumeleni*

*Vhannani n̄wana wa vho- Tshivhenga*

Shame ! *Tshivhenga*'s child.

The song was sung by the *malende* group from *Bileni ha Tshivhenga*, under Salphina Ramuhulu, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997.

The song is chastising a person who committed this ritual murder on *Nkhumeleni, Tshivhenga*'s child . The singers want the responsible person for the murder to know that the people know that he stays right at *Bileni* with them. Another song by the *Shayandima* Block 12 people ,under Violet Mutswari at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997 says:

*Vha a lila Vho-Tshinakaho*

*Tshinakaho* is crying

*Nduni yanga thi funi mun̄we*

In my house I do not want anybody

*O vhulayaho Tshikwela ndi nnyi?*

Who killed *Tshikwela* ?

*O tuwa nga vhoramabindu*

He was killed by the businessmen.

*Vha tshi toḁa yone tshelede*

They wanted money

When people sing this kind of *malende* song ,people responsible for the death of *Tshikwela* are never free. They will realize that the people know that *Tshikwela* was not murdered by an ordinary person but by the businessmen.

### 3.3.4.6 Malende songs for Thevhula

*Malende* songs are also performed when people are happy after they have performed their *thevhula*, *u lugisa zwitungulo* or *u tevhula* (to pour out). This starts at the chief's kraal first.

About this Stayt (1968:254) says :

The *thevhula* of the chief and his lineage must always be performed before the ceremonies of the headman and the commoners; it is an occasion of national thanksgiving and festivity, and after the completion of the religious ceremonies which take place in the yard of the chief's private hut, and are confined to members of his lineage, all the people from far and near may come to the chief's village and rejoice with him.

After beer has been poured on the spears, *malende* songs become very important after this important occasion. The pouring of beer on the spears indicates that we would be continuing to share food with our ancestors if they were still alive. *Livhebe* of *Mbilwi* (personal interview).

The song for the *thevhula* occasion is called *Ro ngo tamba ri tshi la manganakana!* (we did play eating *manganakana*). *Manganakana* are found underground. They are like *muthobi*. They are dug under the soil like we do with sweet potatoes. The *malende* song is as follows:

*Lo tsha*

The sun has arisen

*Ro ngo tamba ri tshi la manganakana*

We did play eating *manganakana*

*Lo tsha*  
^  
The sun has arisen  
*Ro ngo tamba ri tshi la manganakana*  
^  
We did play eating *manganakana*

This *malende* song shows happiness after giving food to the ancestors. The song is saying that things will go well for the people. About this *Livhebe* (personal interview) says:

It means that the sun has risen and things will be good for us.

Another *malende* song that is sung when this task of *u tevhula* (pouring out) has been completed is the following:

*Tsiwana i la u lale*  
^  
Orphan eat and sleep

*U late vhulevhalevha*  
^  
Do not cause troubles

*Tsiwana i la u lale*  
^  
Orphan eat and sleep

*U late vhulevhalevha*  
^  
Do not cause troubles

This is the *malende* song they will sing when they are dancing. They will even stamp on the ground and make a thud that will shake the ground. The song is saying after eating and drinking in this *tevhula* ceremony, an orphan must go to sleep and not cause troubles as there will be nobody to stand by him or her. This is how *malende* songs are performed.



### 3.3.4.7 *Malende* songs for ambiguity

Ambiguity is when a *malende* song has two meanings. An example of the song is one about a conflict between *Phaswana* and *Madadzhe* at *Gaba*. They were fighting for the leadership in that area. Conflict began. *Phaswana* therefore went to seek help from the Whites (the Afrikaners). When the fight was on, there were people who were supporting *Phaswana* and there were people who were in favour of *Madadzhe*. These two groups of people did not want to say it openly. What they did was to express their feelings through singing a *malende* song which is as follows:

*U ome Madadzhe u ome*  
Stand firm Madadzhe stand firm  
*U ome Phaswana u ome*  
Stand firm Phaswana stand firm

In this *malende* song it becomes very difficult to discern who is being favoured. They did not say precisely where they belonged. This is an ambiguity because there is no one real answer.

### 3.3.4.8 *Malende* songs in which people's names are mentioned

About *malende* songs it is learnt that *Vhavenda* are not afraid to mention a person's name if his or her way of living is not good for them. The following song is an example:

*Mandela tshigevhenga*



*Nne ndi a dzhena mulindini sa nowa tshelede yanga yo  
lovha*

I may get inside the hole like a snake, my money is gone.

*Ahe yowe vho ro da Mandela tshigevhenga kha vha de*

Alas! You have come Mandela the notorious

*Nne ndi a dzhena mulindini sa nowa tshelede yanga yo  
lovha*

I may get inside the hole like a snake my money is gone

*Ahe yowe vho ro da Mandela tshigevhenga nga vha de*

Well you just came Mandela the criminal let them come

This *Mandela* is not the State President of South Africa. His real name was Mendell. He was French and the commissioner in the *Sibasa* area. He used to arrest many people around the *Sibasa* area. He was therefore regarded as a very bad man. In *Tshivenda* there is no name that ends in a consonant. It must end in a vowel. Therefore the name Mendell was then changed into *Mandela*. Prof. *Ralushai* (personal interview).

#### 3.3.4.9 Bidding farewell to the people

*Malende* songs also express a sense of bidding farewell to the people. During the Second World War, *Vhavenda* also died in large numbers. When people around *Venda* heard that people who used to recruit *Vhavenda* people to go to the army were coming, they knew that there was a possibility of not coming back again. They were going to die in the war.

Therefore a song was sung at the *malende* dance. The name of the song was '*Salani zwanu*' and it goes as follows:

*Salani zwanu*  
Fare you well  
*Ri ya Dzheremane*  
We are leaving for Germany  
*Kana ri do vhuya kana a ri nga vhuyi*  
We may come back or we may not come back  
*Salani zwanu*  
Fare you well  
*Ri ya Dzheremane*  
We are leaving for Germany.

Prof. *Ralushai*(personal interview)

#### 3.3.4.10 *Malende* songs during competition

*Malende* songs also encourage competition. An example of the song is '*Haya manya*' meaning these feet(*dzinayo*). The song is as follows:

*Haya manya*  
These feet  
*A a dina*  
They trouble  
*Ha dini*  
They do not trouble  
*A a dina*

They trouble  
*Ha vha vhathu*  
 These people  
*Vha a dina*  
 They trouble  
*A vha dini*  
 They do not trouble  
*Vha a dina*  
 They trouble  
*Haya manya*  
 These feet  
*A a tuwa*  
 They are going  
*Ha tuwi*  
 They are not going

This *malende* song is sung when people from different places have met when they are drinking beer. They will start the *malende* dance and compete. When they say '*haya manya a a tuwa*' (these foot prints are going). This means that we are going home with the title. They also say *ha tuwi* (They are not going). This means that they are going nowhere because we are going to defeat these visitors who are saying they are going away with the title. P. Netshidzivhe (personal interview).

#### 3.3.4.11 Retaliatory *Malende* songs

If something bad happens, there is retaliation of some sort. The retaliation is shown by the dog called *Tshamato*. *Tshamato* ate big locusts, *magerere*. The owner of these big

locusts retaliated by killing that dog. This concurs with the *Tshivenda* proverb that says: *Mulifho wa mmbwa ndi phoho yayo*. This means that the payment of the dog is by its head because it has nothing to pay back by. Therefore it has to be killed. So this is what happened. The owner of the dog complained about the dog's death, but the answer is it was killed because it ate up these locusts.

At *Tshidzivhe* when Mr. Phillemon *Netshidzivhe*, Nyawasedza *Netshilungwi*, Mutshekwa *Ramudzingane*, *Tshisikhawe Nembulu* and *Vele Nyamutshavhi* sung this song for us, we complained saying that this has never been heard of to find a person killing a dog for eating locusts. The answer was that in the olden days *magerere* (big locusts) represented meat, and therefore they were of great importance. The song is as follows:

*Mmbwa yanga Tshamato yo fa*  
My dog *Tshamato* is dead  
*Yo vhulawa yo lani hee*  
What did it eat for it to be killed?  
*Mmbwa yanga Tshamato yo fa*  
My dog *Tshamato* is dead  
*Yo vhulawa yo la magerere*  
It was killed because it ate big locust (magerere)

The owner of these big locusts (*magerere*) had to get even with the dog by killing it.

#### 3.3.4.12 Reward

*Malende* songs have a song as a reward for doing good. The song is called "*Tshigoma nduu*". This song indicates that a man had played his drum well and he gets a reward by

being followed by a woman. The woman is prepared to go wherever he goes because he is good at playing the drum. The song is as follows:

*Tshigoma nduu!*  
*Membraphone nduu!*  
*Ndi nga vha tevhelela*  
I may follow you  
*Tshigoma nduu*  
*Membraphone nduu*  
*Ndi nga vha tevhelela*  
I may follow you

Taking all the aspects indicated above viz. protest, sarcasm, joyous, chastisement, *thevhula* (pouring out) ambiguity, competition, retaliation, and reward, it is clear that malende songs are very important to the *Vhavenda*.

### 3.4 **MAFHUWE ( STAMPING SONGS )**

#### 3.4.1 **What are *mafhuwe*? ( stamping songs )**

*Mafhuwe* (stamping songs) are songs that are sung by women when they are stamping mealies. About this *Mafenya* (1988:16) says:

While grinding or stamping mealies women sing. These kind of songs are known as *mafhuwe*. Sometimes these songs are sung in a talking manner.

*Mafhuwe* are a sort of protest song for women. When stamping mealies they sing of the ill-treatment they are getting from the people they got married to or their problems of life in general . When women sing these *mafhuwe* songs they are also trying to ease the pains of grinding mealies as it is difficult and painful. *Murwamphida* ( 1994 :15 ) says:

When a woman is performing a strenuous job of pounding maize she sings .

When a woman is stamping mealies and at the same time singing *mafhuwe* songs ,it happens that she enjoys her work. It would be difficult if she was quiet. About this *Makwarela* (personal interview ) says:

*Mafhuwe* songs makes the mortar and the pestle easier to work with by women , as stamping mealies is very difficult.

About *Mafhuwe* Kruger ( 1994:61) says:

Pounding songs ( *mafhuwe*) are performed by women who pound maize into flour , using mortar and pestle.

Therefore *mafhuwe* helped women very much in the olden days as they were subject to harsh conditions of working for their families.

### 3.4.2 Examining the *mafhuwe* songs

What is learnt from *mafhuwe* songs is that they regulate the pounding sound produced by the mortar and the pestle. About this *Livhebe* (personal interview) says :



The sound of the mortar and the pestle, goes together with the sound of the *mafhuwe* song.

This means that the sound of the *mafhuwe* songs controls the sound of the mortar and the pestle. Kruger (1994:61) says:

Pounding songs regulate pestle strokes, especially when two women are pounding in the same mortar.

What is indicated here is that there are times when women arrange to pound the mealies using one mortar. Therefore their pounding strokes will be controlled by the *mafhuwe* songs. Pounding songs are used as a means to criticise what women think is not fair to them especially the treatment by their in-laws. Kruger (1994:61) says:

However, pounding songs are also a means of social criticism, which allows women to air their views freely. They often complain about their families.

If the women complain in the form of singing these *mafhuwe* songs nothing is done to them, whereas if they complain or voice their opinion while not pounding mealies, they may get into trouble. Blacking (1973:50) says:

As in women's pounding songs, certain children songs, and songs of protest, a musical framework can ritualize communication in such a way that messages may be conveyed but no counteraction is taken. You do not "go to prison" if you say it in music, and something may be done about your complaint because it may be a warning of growing public feeling.



This is also relevant to the present situation where people make the governments change some of the laws that are not in line with what the people want. They organize strikes and marches singing songs. The government officials listen to the songs and decide to correct what needs to be corrected but they will not arrest people who are singing. You do not get into trouble if you say it in music. Here are some of the songs that women sing to protest when they are pounding mealies.

This example is of the song that is protesting against the immorality of men against women. The song is called 'Galaha' a silly old man. It is sung by *Vho-Masindi Masikhwa* (the song from Radio *Venda* cassette). It is as follows:

*Ha ndi ya Ntshavheni yo mela*  
Hey I am saying *Ntshavheni* has conceived  
*Ha ndi ya Ntshavheni yo mela*  
Hey I am saying *Ntshavheni* has conceived  
*Ndi amba yo mela ngomu dombani*  
I am saying she conceived at the *domba* (initiation school)  
*Hu do bebwa n̄wana a no pfi madomba*  
A baby called *Madomba* will be born  
*Hu do bebwa n̄wana a no pfi Madomba shone*  
A baby will be born called *Madomba* (shame on you)  
*Ndo hangwa vhula vhutolo*  
I have forgot that magic  
*Ndi amba ya Ntshavheni yo mela*  
I say *Ntshavheni* has conceived  
*Hu na vho Tshivvehetele*  
There are philanderers

*Galaha tshivhevhetele shone*

Shame on you silly philandering old man.

From this pounding song this woman is complaining about a philandering silly old man who impregnated a young girl in the *domba* initiation school which is a bad thing, considering his age. She feels that women are being exploited by men. She even says the child to be born will be called *Madomba* so that the incident must remain as a reminder to the community.

When a woman sings the song indicated above, she will vent her anger to the mealies she is pounding because of her emotions. She will therefore finish the work load unaware of the effort involved.

Some *mafhuwe* songs indicate self-pity when life is not going a woman's way. An example is of the song by *Masindi Masikhwa* (Radio *Venda* cassette)

*U vha vhubva hanga ndi hani*

Why am I so lazy ?

*Vhubva hanga ndi vhulungwani*

Why am I living when I am so lazy ?

*N<sup>h</sup>e ndi bvafha na u ko<sup>a</sup> thanga*

I am so lazy that I cannot grind the peanuts.

*Vulamathshini a si u naka* x2

An aeroplane is very beautiful

*Vulamathshini a si u naka*

An aeroplane is very beautiful

*Ndi ganunu ya Maisimane*

It is the Englishman's cannon

By this song the woman is saying that she is a lazy person and why should she be preserved? She says she cannot even stamp the peanuts to mix with green vegetables(*miroho*) to produce a delicious dish. She says a flying machine is very beautiful. It is an Englishman's cannon. This shows competence or the ability to perform well on the part of the British but it is not the case with her.

Stamping songs express the emotions of love affairs. An example of the song is the following by *Vho-Masindi Masikhwa*.

*Vho funana vho funana*

If they are in love they are.

*Ha aha vhañwe vha a funana*

Some people love each other

*Hee ndo vha funa nga tsha khole*

I have deliberately loved him

*Ahe vhañwe vha a funana*

Ahe! Some people love each other

*Hafhu ndo vha funa nga tsha swili Tshavhungwe*

I loved him intentionally *Tshavhungwe*

*He aha vhañwe vha funana*

He aha some love each other

The woman in this *mafhuwe* song is expressing dissatisfaction concerning her love affair. She has loved a man and some people are making an issue out of it. They are

disapproving her decision for loving that man. Now she is saying she loves that man and she is doing it deliberately for those who do not approve of her decision. She says some people love each other.

Sometimes when women sing, they sing softly at first but as they continue pounding, their tones will rise high to such an extent that the message will be heard by their neighbours  
Blacking (1964: 30)

There are *mafhuwe* songs that praise people and some places. An example by the *Thengwe* tribe (Radio cassette from Radio *Venda*) is as follows:

*Mafhuwe a naka ngomani*  
*Mafhuwe* song is nice at the grinding area  
*Vhalemba ni do vhona vhulinganyika*  
*Vhalemba!* you will see danger  
*Mulemba ro tenda Ngwanika*  
*Mulemba* we know is *Ngwanika*  
*Mulemba ro tenda Ngwanika*  
*Mulemba* we know is *Ngwanika*  
*Tshifulanani tsha Gelebe*  
*Tshifulanani* belongs to Gelebe  
*Hai Tshifulani tsha Gelebe*  
*Alas! Tshifulanani* belongs to *Gelebe*

The women who is stamping mealies is praising *Ngwanika* as well as *Tshifulanani* that belongs to Gelebe.

In the olden days there was the time when these *mafhuwe* songs were sung. It was at dawn (*maḍautsha*) Women used to wake up at dawn and go to a hut called *Goha*. About *Goha* Van Warmelo (1937:77) says:

hut in which the mortars stand and in which stamping of grain is done.

In the olden days the mortars were not like those that we see today. In the olden days *Vhavenda* dug some holes and placed these mortars in these holes. Half of it was buried in the ground and half of it remained on the surface. The mortars that *Vhavenda* use today were inherited from the Shangaans. The ones that we see today are called 'mutuli wa muime' by the *Vhavenda*. Van Warmelo(1937:164) says:

*Muime* 3 in *mutuli wa* - a mortar that can stand by itself like those of the Tsonga (the original *Venda* mortar being such in the ground).

When women are stamping mealies, they also drive fear away, especially if a woman is alone at dawn. She will sing these *mafhuwe* song. When she is emotionally charged people will only hear the sound of the pestle on the mortar and a humming of the song.

### 3.5 DAVHA (COMMUNAL WORK GROUP)

#### 3.5.1 Introduction

*Davha* communal work groups, operate when the owner of the field wants his field to be ploughed and be finished quickly. He therefore calls the people together to come to help



him plough that field. Van Warmelo (1937:50) says:

*davha* is a work party held by one who wants to have his land hoed quickly, and to which he invites all his neighbours, who are rewarded by being regaled on beer, porridge and sometimes meat.

Here people work together. They are helping each other. *Makwarela* (personal interview) says:

*Davha* is when people come together to help a certain person to plough his land. Sometimes they bring along their span of oxen to plough that one field so that it must be finished quickly.

What must be borne in mind is that here people help each other. As long as people will get beer to drink when they are tired of working, everybody is at liberty to invite the people if he wants his field to be ploughed quickly and get finished. *Vho-Mutsila* (personal interview) says:

*Davha* is not necessarily for ploughing only. It may be for rooting out weeds from mealies. In this case we find that there is *davha* for harvest. Before the people start ploughing, they are given *tshiksha*, which is the calabash of beer given to the people of *davha* before they start working.

Van Warmelo (1937:273) says:

(*tshiksha-malembe*, of *-ksha*) small calabash of beer drunk before starting hoeing at *davha*.

### 3.5.2 Examining *davha*

#### 3.5.2.1 Assurance to the owner of the field

When investigating these *davha* songs it is found that they are also sung to tell the owner of the field that he or she should not worry about the job. If he or she is thinking that the *davha* people will not do their job properly, it is not true, the job will be excellent. The song about this is as follows:

*Tsimu yawe*

His field

*Ahee hee tsimu yawe*

*Ahee hee* his field

*Tsimu ya n̄wana*

The child`s field

*A i fheli ngani tsimu yawe*

Why doesnt it get finished

*I d̄o fhela*

It will be finished

*Ahee hee tsimu yawe*

*Ahee hee* his field

*Tsimu ya n̄wana*

The child`s field



When the people who have attended this *davha*, seem to be getting tired or lazy, this song *tsimu yawe* (his or her field) is started so that everybody must know that he or she is expected to work very hard as the work is not progressing well. *Livhebe* (personal interview).

In the song when they say 'i *do fhela*' (it will be completed), they are giving an assurance to the owner of the field that they will not disappoint him or her.

### 3.5.2.2 *Davha* songs asking for food to eat

The *davha* again when investigated, have songs that ask for food to eat instead of going directly to the owner and asking for food. It is done by singing. An example is the song called "*kula kudimana*" and it goes as follows:

*Kula kudimana*

That small patch

*Ku a vulela*

It is getting finished

*Kha vha ri fhe ri le*

Give us something to eat

*Ku a vulela*

It is getting finished

This song indicates that we are about to finish that patch and therefore you must give us something to eat. Van Warmelo (1937:108) says:

*Kudimana* 20 ( cF.Ndimma ) small garden, patch.

When they sing this *davha* song , even the one who invited these people for this job ,knows that they must be given beer to drink. He or she will therefore prepare the beer.

### 3.5.2.3 Influencing people to work very hard

Investigation has shown that there are *davha* songs that influence people to work very hard. An example is the song called '*Liwela wee*' and it goes as follows:

*Hee liwela wee!*  
^

Hey attacker yoo!

*Li a wela , li a wela , ndima li a wela*  
^ ^ ^

It attacks ,it attacks the patch, it attacks !

*Ahaa, li a wedza , li a wedza ndima ,li a wedza !*  
^ ^ ^

*Ahaa, it finishes ,it finishes the patch, it finishes !*

The song indicates that the people are saying that they have come to work.They say they are working hard on a patch in order to finish it quickly.

### 3.5.2.4 Indication of surprise

*Davha* has songs that show surprise. One such song is called '*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n'wana*' (We have seen the buck babysitting).It goes as follows:

*Hophu hophu langanda*

Jump ! jump ! land !

*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n̂wana*

We have seen a buck babysitting

*Vhamusanda n̂ne ri a tuwa*

Chief ,we are leaving

*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n̂wana*

We have seen a buck babysitting.

What is being said here is that we have seen things that are difficult to believe. This message is being directed to the ruler, the chief, telling him that there are things that are not acceptable to the community. When they sing, they are saying they have seen a buck babysitting which is impossible.

#### 3.5.2.5 Protest

*Davha* also has protest songs of the highest notch. An example is the song called 'mahayani'. This song is included in the Video cassette of Mr. *Ratshitanga Rashaka* called The two Rivers . It goes as follows:

*Mahayani ndi kale ro vha ro dzula*

In the olden days we were happy in our families

*Bvumelani zwi tou naka*

Sing with me let this song be beautiful

*Mufhululu u tou lila*

... Let ululation be heard

*Ndi imba na nnyi nda kona?*

Who will sing this song with me?

*Nanwaha<sup>e</sup> ndo tswuka na mato*

This year my eyes are red

*Ndo tshelukwa ndi songo lima*

The whole year I did not plough the fields

*Ndo tshelukwa ndo lima ndila*

I ploughed the road instead

*Zwa vhuṅambi zwi tou bebelwa*

Great musicians are born in this world

*Mufunzi wanga Nyatshinavha*

My pastor Mr. Nyatshinavha

*Mufunzi a no lima davha*

The pastor who takes part in the communal working group.

This *davha* song is protesting about the treatment given to the *Vhavenda* people by the Whites who treated them badly. They were removed from their original homes and settled in the place they do not like. In these places, they had plenty of lands on which to plough. Now that they were under the autocratic rule of the Whiteman, they were forced to abandon their original places to go to some places not of their choice.

In these new places, the song says, there is no place in which to plough their fields. Instead of getting space to plough the fields, they are forced to clean along side the roads as if they are ploughing their fields. The song also ridicules Christianity which was also forced on the people by the Whites.

The song says '*Mufunzi wanga Nyatshinavha*' (My Pastor *Nyatshinavha*) *Mufunzi a no lima davha* (The pastor who takes part in the *davha*). This *Nyatshinavha* is a pastor, a

Christian. When he cannot cope with the demands of Christianity, *Nyatshinavha* comes back to his own culture by taking part in the communal working group.

### 3.5.3 Who perform *davha* song

*Davha* songs are sung by different categories of the *Vhavenda* people. It goes according to age groupings in the *Vhavenda* people. There are different groups of people, as follows:

#### 3.5.3.1 *Davha* for older youth, both boys and girls

These youth sing the same song that are sung in the *davha* by the adults. This kind of *davha* is not meant for ploughing the fields only. It can be any kind of a job that the parents want to be done by these youth according to *Nengovhela of Tshivhilwi* (personal interview).

#### 3.5.3.2 *Davha* for adults (*vhavhera na vhabvana*)

This category of people would sing the *davha* songs sung by the older people and the young ones in their own *davha*. This category is the one that is dealing with serious jobs because they are very strong. They are the pillars of the nation. The reason why these people are grouped together is because they understand each other very well. Their experiences are more or less the same.

### 3.5.3.3 *Davha* for old men and women (*vhakegulu na vhakalaha*)

These people understand each other very well because they are of the same era. They know the events that took place in their younger days. R. Masango of Makwarela (personal interview).

### 3.5.4 Kinds of *davha*

*Davha* has different kinds and they are as follows:

#### 3.5.4.1 *Davha la mawela* (*Davha* for inviting people across the river)

This *davha* is *mawela* because the owner of this *davha* crosses the river to get some people there. This happens when the owner knows someone across the river. He invites that person. The invited person brings along his friends. From here friendship starts. About this Makwarela of Mbilwi (personal interview) says:

*Davha la mawela* is when the owner of this *davha* crosses the river and get some people who are his friends, who will also bring along their friends. They will plough the field. After harvesting time, this person who invited these people when they were ploughing the field will brew beer and call them again to enjoy the crops they have cultivated. This is where even marriages are arranged.

This type of *davha* is of great importance when it comes to the cultivation of friendships.

About this Vho-Nengovhela of Tshivhilwi (personal interview) says :



You just entrust the work to somebody across the river to see to it that he gets his friends to come and do the job. He will bring people to come and do the job.

This is the so-called *davha la mawela*, the crossing communal group work. Usually the people who attend are the invited ones. If one is not invited but decides to attend, his action is called *u lovha davha*. This means that person is offering to help in the work but his main motive is to eat whatever will be given to those who are invited.

#### 3.5.4.2 *Mufungwi*

This is the type of *davha* that the people work after they have drunk the beer some time.

#### 3.5.4.3 *Gorosi*

This is where people will go and work for the chief. They sing the same songs as in other types of *davha* mentioned earlier on.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

When having a look at *malombo* songs mentioned above, it is evident that a survey of *Tshivenda* traditional songs has been made. An elucidation of these songs has been given. It has been indicated that *malombo* songs include even *Tshikalanga* words because *Vhavenda* are related to *Vhakalanga* people. The *malombo* songs are sung when requesting the ancestors to give the people their blessings.



With regard to malende songs, it has been indicated that these are songs that are sung when people are happy. This takes place when people are drinking beer. The Vhavenda people perform malende after they have harvested their crops. The songs have different meanings. Someone will start a song and the rest will respond. When the spectators are tired of the song as well as the person who is dancing (*u tshina*) the song, they will say masha (stop dancing).

Mafhuwe songs are sung by women when they are stamping mielies. They protest by means of mafhuwe songs.

The davha songs are the working songs of Vhavenda people. This takes place when a person wants his field to be ploughed and finished quickly. There is a davha for the strong people, men and women (*vhavhera na vhabvana*), there is davha for mature boys and girls. There is also davha for old men and women. All these people sing davha songs when they are working.

A table is included below in order to give an overview of the people involved in the Tshivenda traditional songs that are focused in this study as well as the places where these songs are performed.

**WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE TSHIVENDA TRADITIONAL SONGS AND THE PLACE WHERE THEY ARE PERFORMED.**

TYPES OF SONGS	MEN	WOMEN	GIRLS	BOYS	CHIEF'S KRAAL	WORK SITUATION	MARRIAGES
MALOMBO	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
MALENDE	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
DAVHA	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
MAFHUWE	-	+	-	-	+	+	-

## CHAPTER 4

### THE STRUCTURE OF *TSHIVENDA* TRADITIONAL SONGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate as to whether there is any structure in *Tshivenda* Traditional songs. *Tshivenda* traditional songs are structured in a call and response form. One person starts a song and the rest of the people respond.

It takes tone colouring into consideration. Tone colouring is the mixture of male and female voices as well as voices of the youth. About this *Mugovhani* (personal interview) says:

Voices are not the same. We have voices for males, as well as voices for females, and for the youth. An example is a song sung by a young man who has rendered several women pregnant.

The song starts with a young man telling his mother what he did and she responds by scolding him in the song as follows:

*Ndi nga ni fha lutale na runga ngalwo.* (I can give you a sinew to sew with). His mother sings with a voice which is not gruff. The sewing of the penis will make it impossible for him to produce sperms that will make women pregnant. These two voices are not the same. One is male and the other one is female. These are voice-combinations or tone colouring.

At the same time there is also the clapping of hands. This will also be accompanied by ululation. The praising of the performer's *mutupo* as well as his or her origin is taken into consideration. Instruments like percussion, *tshela*, are also part of the structure. Membraphones, *mirumba*, are also instruments of great importance. All in all, people end up having a combination of voices and instruments. This structure is the way in which all parts of the whole are organized or fitted together. Parts are organized to form a whole. The structure gives listeners meaning. Therefore, structure and meaning work together. What is being expressed in structure must have meaning.

## 4.2 MALOMBO SONGS

### 4.2.1 Structure of *Malombo*

#### 4.2.1.1 Melody

This is where the listeners hear a succession of sounds. The voice goes up and down producing different sounds. In chapter 2, there is more information about melody. An example of melody in the *Malombo* songs is in the following song called "*maiwangu garayi muchichema*" meaning "my mother stay crying". This is a song by M.E. <sup>^</sup>*Livhebe* and Lanny *Dararenyama* from *Zimbabwe* but presently employed at *Haggai* Private School. (Personal interview). The song giving listeners melody is as follows:

*Maiwangu garayi muchichema! in Tshikalanga.*

*Mme anga dzulani ni tshi lila! in Tshivenda.*

My mother stay crying! in English.

*Kufa kwangu kuva hutekateka! in Tshikalanga.*

*U fani hanga ndo vha wa u tekateka! in*

*Tshivenda.*

After death I become a wanderer! in English.

*Dungudzivha nda kapinda ndi si nganwi mvura! in*

*Tshikalanga.*

*Dungudzivha ndo fhira ndi songo nwa maḽi! in*

*Tshivenda.*

I passed *Dungudzivha* without drinking water

(English)

*Maguvhuni nda sungwa nemheni - Tshikalanga.*

*Maguvhuni nda lingwa nga ndadzi - Tshivenda.*

At *Maguvhuni* an attempt was made on my life!

in English.

*Ndo tou tshila nga kunanga kwanga - Tshikalanga.*

*Ndo tou tshila nga kunanga kwanga - Tshivenda.*

I was saved by my small windpipe - English.

*Kunanga kwa mutungapasi - Tshikalanga.*

*Kunanga kwa ḽhodzi nga fhasi - Tshivenda.*

A small windpipe with a sharp point at

the end - English.

*Zhunguvhaya mupera u ripo - Tshikalanga.*

*Dodo ḽi no fhedzelwa makandani ḽi henefho -*

*Tshivenda.*

Stupid people who do not understand when one is

talking sense - English.

In the *malombo* song given above, there is a succession of sounds and the voice goes up and down. The listener's ears experience the pleasantness of the melody. The tones are generally different when it comes to the pitch but the sounds are well selected. The listeners find this melody more convincing. The listeners are convinced that what is sung is of great importance. They would like to know why must mother stay crying.

The melody discussed above gives a succession of tones in a meaningful way. It is not disjointed as it gives a sense of continuity of the song. This melody has a definite beginning and ending. From the beginning to the end, it has a link. That is why it gives the listeners the meaning of the song. This will be proved when the meaning of the song is discussed.

#### 4.2.2 Harmony

Harmony as a structure in *Tshivenda* traditional songs is when the voice goes up and down giving out different sounds. Two tones are sounded together. There is more information in chapter 2 on harmony as a structure of *Tshivenda* traditional songs. In this case the differences in sound among intervals become the basis of the harmony. The effects are created when the two tones are being sounded together. An example of the harmony in the song '*maiwangu garayi muchichema*' is as follows:

*Hee, heeie, hae ee iee, hee!*



This is the harmony that harmonizes the melody. This harmony continues like this until the end of the song. As the structure it has no other words but only humming. What is being brought to the listeners by this harmony is a sense of lamentation. That is why even before the ancestor spirit arrives, a person to be possessed shall have started crying. This is because of this harmony in the form of lamentation harmonizing the melody.

#### 4.2.3 Dynamics

This is the strength of the tone. In the *malombo* songs, the caller does not depend very much on the strength of the tone totally as he or she will be pleading. The people here are pleading with the ancestors to get more blessings or that the evil spirits be driven away from them. Dynamics is the basic to all musical expressions. It may be from soft to loud or from loud to soft depending on the meaning of the song. In the *malombo* songs, the dynamics may be from soft to loud if the master drum is played. People will be inspired and the tone will be from soft to loud coupled with serious dancing. An example is as follows:

*Maiwangu garayi muchichema!*

My mother stay crying!

As the song starts, the tone will be soft. When the master drummer, *matsige* together with respondent get inspired, the tone will move from soft to loud.

#### 4.2.4 Rhythm

This is the way in which songs go on. This is the song's movement. In *Tshivenda* traditional songs, rhythm as structure implies the movement of the sound. The movement of the song contributes to the rhythmical flow of the song. This can be noticed by looking at the call and the responds of the song called *Ndi Vho-Madevha* (It is Mr *Madevha*)

The song goes on as follows:

*U ya lila Vho-Madevha*

There is a cry Mr *Madevha*

*U ya lila Vho-Madevha*

There is a cry Mr *Madevha*

*Ahee, hee, hee, hee, haa!*

*Vho-Madevha thoho ndi ludongo*

*Madevha's head is bald*

*Ahee, hee, hee, hee, haa!*

*Ndi ludongo nga u la govhole*

It is bald because of eating *mafula* fruits.

*Vho-Madevha tsindi ndi lukwati*

*Madevha's loin dress is extremely hard with dry mafula juice.*

*Mutswiriri u na malingela*

*Mutswiriri* (a species of tree) is tempting fate

*Wo tswuka matari a nga sa tshilemba*

It has red flowers like the colour of *tshilemba*



(*Tshilemba* is a red cloth belonging to the ancestral spirits).

As rhythm is the song's movement, in the song '*Ndi Vho-Madevha*' (It is Mr *Madevha*), the movement is slow. Its pace is slow because it is accompanied by the sound of the percussion instrument, *tshela*. The rhythm is associated with the heartbeat. The way *tshela* is played, it is also associated with the heartbeat. This instrument has an impulse that resembles the heartbeat of a person. This in a way, resembles life itself because without the heartbeat, there is no life at all. The rhythm of this song also involves the flow of the feelings, the body and the mind. It involves a balance between the conscious and the unconscious movement.

When the above song starts, a person to whom the ancestor spirit will come, is aware of what is happening. As it involves the moving of the head in circles, a person becomes dizzy and becomes unconscious. When the ancestor spirit arrives, a person does not feel anything until the process is over. This is brought about by the rhythm when the song is sung. Rhythm as structure is just like life itself. In the *malombo* songs, people are also in need of life itself. They are pleading with the ancestors to drive away the evil spirits from their bodies. To suit their requests rhythm helps them to reach their goal. Rhythm as structure in the *malombo* songs is more physical than intellectual. One does not ask many questions about the ancestors and why these songs are performed the way they are. People believe in what they are doing. If one has to play *tshela*, a person has to do it. If one has to move his or her head in a vicious circle, it has to be done.

#### 4.2.5 The Return

In this structure, the first line of the song is repeated. The reason why it comes back is because of the important information that is given to the people. Here is an example of the song to show the return as structure:

*U ya lila Vho-Madevha*  
There is a cry Mr *Madevha*  
*Ahee, hee, hee, hee, haa!*  
*U ya lila Vho-Madevha*  
There is a cry Mr *Madevha*  
*Ahee, hee, hee, hee, haa!*

The opening line *Ndi Vho-Madevha* (It is Mr *Madevha*), keeps on being repeated. The reason why it keeps on returning is because the emphasis is put on Mr *Madevha*, who is not taking part in the ancestor worship being performed by others. This is what the structure is putting more emphasis on.

#### 4.2.6 Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing as a structure hints the development of the plot before it is known by the listeners. The first line is of great significance. When the song commences by saying *U ya lila Vho-Madevha* (There is a cry Mr *Madevha*), the listeners immediately think that there is a problem. If there is a cry things are not in order. Of course as the song progresses, it is found that there is a problem caused by Mr *Madevha* who does not toe the line when others are worshiping the ancestors.

#### 4.2.7 Conflict

In conflict, the person's heart is not at peace in itself. The people who are singing the song are blaming the other person. Even the society can be blamed in this case.

The song says:

*U ya lila Vho-Madevha*

There is a cry Mr *Madevha*

Madevha is blamed for not doing his work with others to worship the ancestors. In this way the singers are not at peace with Mr *Madevha*. They are blaming him together with all the other people who behave like him (*Madevha*). Conflict as structure of *Tshivenda* traditional songs plays an important role.

#### 4.2.8 Scene method

In *Tshivenda* traditional songs the scene method is also a structure. This is the way in which the scene method is created when songs are formed. Names are also given to make people understand the song more easily. Usually it is the names of places that are given to evoke a scene. An example is the following song called '*Vho-Maine*'.

*Vho-Maine ri a fa ra fhela*  
 Hey, healer we are getting finished.  
*Vho-Maine ri a fa nga ndala*  
 Maine (healer) we are starving  
*Ndi mushonga wa mukondeleli*  
 This is the medicine of a tolerant person.  
*Tshidzivhani ndi ha Vho-Ratombo*  
*Tshidzivhani belongs to Ratombo*

To emphasize this scene method as structure in the song indicated above, there is the name of a place as follows in the song:

*Tshidzivhani ndi ha Vho-Ratombo*  
*Tshidzivhani belongs to Ratombo*

This indicates that the name of the place which is *Tshidzivhani*, belongs to *Ratombo*.

#### 4.2.9 Ambiguous meaning

This has more than one meaning. In the song the structure gives two meanings. The song says:

*Vho-Maine ri a fa nga ndala*  
 Healer we are starving

The first meaning is that people are telling *Vho-Maine* (healer) that they are starving. They may be reporting to *Maine* so that he may provide them with food if he has any.

The second meaning is that people are requesting *Maine* to make arrangements with the ancestors so that *malombo* songs may start. After worshipping the ancestors, people will be blessed with powers to cultivate their lands and good rains that will bring them plenty of crops.

#### 4.2.10 Watch your 'You'

In this structure the singer talks to a person who is present or absent. In the song 'Vho-Maine' (healer), the 'You' is this *Vhomaine* (Healer). He is being spoken to, so that he will do something about worshipping the ancestors so that the blessings will come to the people and not miseries that come to the people because they are not worshipping the ancestors.

An example of this song in the staff notation is found in Appendix 1, Song No. 1.

#### 4.2.11 Surprise

Surprise is when those who are listening to the song are surprised. There are ways to be used in this regard viz. the turnaround, the discovery and the twist. An example is found in the following song called *Vho-Hangwani* (It is *Hangwani*). It goes as follows:



*Vho-Hangwani vha do zwi kona naa?*

Will *Hangwani* be able to make it?

*Vho-Hangwani hae haa!*

Alas! *Vho-Hangwani*

*Vho-Hangwani vha do zwi kona naa?*

Will *Hangwani* be able to make it?

The discovery is when the dramatic technique by which the truth of the drama in the song is not revealed, until we come to the end of the song. In the song *Vho-Hangwani*, surprise as structure does not reveal the truth of the song until the end. From the first line of the song to the last there is no revealing of what exactly is meant by the song. Therefore the listeners are surprised because sometimes they go to an extent of saying that there is no meaning in the song while the meaning is very strong.

The twist is the same as the discovery. The truth of the song is not revealed until the end of the song. When the listeners start searching for the meaning of the song, the structure 'Surprise' becomes more surprising when the meaning has been found.

#### 4.2.12 A strong start

This is how the listener's interest is stimulated by the start of a song. Their interest is aroused. This structure involves the people in the song, viz: what they do, what they did as well as when they did such things. An example is the song '*Vho-Hangwani*' as follows:

*Vho-Hangwani vha do zwi kona?*

Will *Hangwani* be able to cope with the situations?

When the name is mentioned, it becomes a strong start as structure because people are involved in the song. As human beings, when a name of a person is mentioned in a song, listeners become more curious. They want to know what that person did as well as what he or she is doing.

#### 4.2.13 A genuine idea

A genuine idea as structure is when the song takes real people into consideration. Real people are taken into consideration with real life situations. People's emotions are expressed.

When the song says *Vho-Hangwani vha do zwi kona naa?* Will *Hangwani* be able to cope with the situation?, they are expressing their emotions. They doubt as to whether *Hangwani* will cope with the pressure from the ancestors if she is not doing what the ancestors want.

#### 4.2.14 Go somewhere

“Go somewhere” as a structure is when the events of the song follow each other chronologically. Here words are not just repeated for the sake of singing.



Meaningful words must be followed by meaningful ones. Words must be well arranged to give the listeners the meaning of the song.

An example is the song called *Ro tevhela ngoma*. (We have followed the drum and the ancestor worship songs). It goes as follows:

*Ro tevhela khulu ya malombo nne ri a tuwa.*

We have followed a big *malombo* drum, we are going.

*Ro tevhela ngoma*

We have followed the drum

*Ro tevhela khulu ya malombo nne ri a tuwa.*

We have followed a big *malombo* drum, we are going.

The words are well arranged leading somewhere. The song says we have followed a big *malombo* drum, now we are leaving. It means that now that the mission is completed, we are leaving. There is a meaning in the way in which words are arranged.

#### 4.2.15 Timbre

This is where the listeners get voice combination together with instrument combinations. Most of the ancestor worship songs are accompanied by drums viz: master drum and the membraphone (*mirumba*), together with percussions (*tshela*).

In other words there are voices of males, females and youth, as well as the sound of the master drum, membraphones and percussions. It is believed that the master drum and the membraphones also sing their songs when the ancestor worship songs are performed. It is believed that the master drum sings as follows:

*Hu da na vha si no ngo da*  
Those who do not usually come, have come  
*Hu da na vha si no ngo da*  
Those who do not usually come, have come

It is also believed that the membraphone sings as follows:

*Muduba ntsholi*  
They come in single file  
*Muduba ntsholi*  
They come in single file

When I was growing up, we were made to believe that the membraphone when played is saying the following:

*Tshitumbu tsho fura madi*  
My little stomach is full of water  
*Ndi do nwa ngani mabundu*  
How will I drink *mabundu* (mageu)  
*Tshitumbu tsho fura madi*  
My little stomach is full of water  
*Ndi do nwa ngani mabundu*  
How will I drink *mabundu* (mageu)

The master drum and the membraphone do not sing in isolation. They all function together. They are accompanied by the voices of the old people and the youth as well as with percussions (*tshele*). Because of all these, timbre is a structure of *malombo* songs.

#### 4.2.16 Conclusion as an aspect of structure in *Tshivenda* traditional songs

This is when the meaning of the song is mentioned. The listeners are also at liberty to interpret the meaning of the song to suit their understanding. From all the songs indicated above, listeners may interpret them according to their understanding of these songs.

### 4.3 MALENDE SONGS

#### 4.3.1 Structure of *Malende*

##### 4.3.1.1 Melody

As indicated already, melody is the succession of sounds. The people's voices go up and down giving different sounds. Here is an example of a song to show melody as structure in the *malende* songs. It is the song sung by the people of *Thengwe Thondoni*. It goes as Follows:

*Hafha nduni ho lala nnyi?* (Melody)

Who is sleeping in this house?

*Ho lala musadzi wa kholomo* (Harmony)

It is a woman to whom the cattle were paid to marry her, who is sleeping in the house.

*vha vha munna vho lala fhi?*

Where is the man sleeping?

*Ho lala musadzi wa kholomo* (Harmony)

It is a woman to whom the cattle were paid to marry her, who is sleeping in the house.

This melody as structure of *malende* song is so attractive to the listeners. It is so pleasant and meaningful. It says *Hafha nduni ho lala nnyi?* Who is sleeping in this house? This makes listeners want to know what is happening in this house. The melody gives the listeners direction. It is leading the song and a response is required. It is very interesting when the melody goes on as follows:

*Avha vha munna vho lala fhi?* Where has the husband slept? Again the listeners would like to know what is going on in this house between a husband and a wife. It therefore gives the listeners a sense of continuity. When it says *Hafha nduni ho lala nnyi?* Who is sleeping in this house? and *Avha munna vho lala fhi?* Where is the husband sleeping?, it is showing the beginning and the ending although to be more meaningful it needs harmony. On its own the melody as a structure of this song is well understood. It tells the listeners about *Muvenda* man who is selfish. Who will leave his wife behind in the house and go to sleep somewhere without satisfying her in his house. Therefore the melody is the succession of tones used in a meaningful way.



### 4.3.2 Harmony

This is the structure in the *malende* songs that supports the melody. It is a response to a call which is the melody. In this case the harmony harmonizes the melody as follows in the song:

*Ho lala musadzi wa kholomo!*

It is a woman to whom the cattle were paid to  
marry her, who is sleeping in the house.

Harmony gives the listeners experience. In the song an experience is that of *Vhavenda* men who take women for granted. They ill-treat these women and when they complain, men go to an extent of saying '*ni musadzi no da nga kholomo*' (You are a woman for whom cattle were paid). Now what the harmony is doing is to suggest the ill-treatment given to women by their husbands in the *Venda* culture. It says *Ho lala musadzi wa kholomo* (It is a woman to whom the cattle were paid to marry her, who is sleeping in the house). As harmony gives the listeners the meaning: here it means that the woman who is sleeping alone in the house is not that important because cattle for *lumalo* or *lobola* have been paid. Therefore it is not wrong or bad for a husband to leave her sleeping alone in the house and to sleep with another woman somewhere else. At the same time this harmony gives the listeners another meaning.

When the harmony says '*Ho lala musadzi wa kholomo*' it may mean 'it is a woman like that of a bull (male cattle) sleeping in the house'. The bull does not

mind jumping over the kraal, leaving the cow behind and going out in search of other cows somewhere else. Therefore the harmony as structure is ridiculing the *Vhavenda* men for their treatment of their wives. It is women who usually sing this song protesting against this ill-treatment.

### 4.3.3 Dynamics

This is the power of the tone produced when people sing. The people talk in terms of strength of the tone. An example to show dynamics as structure is in the song called "*Tshibado*" (Small axe). It goes as follows:

*Tshibado!*

Small axe!

*Tsha maakhatho!*

For the shrubs or buds!

When the song is sung, the strength of the tone is very high. In the song the rapid cleche of the tone is not from soft to loud or from loud to soft. It is just loud. The caller here is very emphatic, emphasizing the importance of *Tshibado!* (Small axe). He wants the listeners to know its usage. The respondents repond by saying '*Tsha maakhatho!*' (For shrubs or buds). The tonal strength is very high in this song. The one who dances this song also, because of its dynamics, hits the ground



very hard with his feet. The reason is that people must know that *Tshibado* (small axe) is for cutting shrubs. It is not meant for big trees as it will get broken. Therefore people must get this message into their heads.

Dynamics is the basic to all musical expressions. Whatever one wants to express through singing, one would use dynamics, which is the tone from soft to loud depending on what one wants to convey to the nation.

#### 4.3.4 Rhythm

This is how the *malende* songs go on. It is all about movement of sound. The people therefore get what is called rhythmical flow of the song. An example to show rhythm as structure is as follows:

*Tshi tsho tsha madekwe*  
Since last night  
*Musadzi o tuwa na iwana*  
My wife went away with the child  
*Tshi tsho tsha madekwe*  
Since last night  
*Musadzi o tuwa na iwana*  
My wife went away with the child  
*Nda pfa ndala nda lila*  
I felt hungry and cried

*Tshi tsho tsha madekwe*  
Since last night

Rhythm as structure involves the flow of the feelings and the body as well as the mind. When the caller says 'Tshi tsho tsha madekwe' (Since last night) *Musadzi o tuwa na n'wana* (My wife went away with the child), *Nda pfa ndala nda lila* (I felt hungry and cried), this involves the feelings because loneliness is killing him. The man is also expressing a feeling of regret to what he did to his wife that made her take her child and leave her husband. He is suffering from a sense of guilt.

Rhythm is said to be associated with the heart beat. It is associated with life itself. In this song, when a man who is a caller, starts this song, he represents a deeply hurt person. The pains that the man feels affects the heart as well. When the heart beat is not right, life is no longer good for an individual. The rhythm of the song above is slow to show the difficulty of life for the man in trouble. A person who is dancing (*u tshina*) this song will also be controlled by rhythm of the song, which is a slow one.

#### 4.3.5 The question plot

In this structure the question is asked by the caller. The respondents respond. An example to emphasize this question plot as structure is the song as follows:

*Mukwasha onoyu?*

This son-in-law?

*Tolelani!*

Check!

*Kana ndi ene naa?*

Is he the one?

*Tolelani!*

^  
Check!

The question plot together with the response of those who are participating in the *malende* songs give the listeners the clue about the plot of the song. The question 'Mukhasha onoyu?' (This son-in-law?) is a plot itself. This question is the start of the story that the caller wants the people to be aware of. The question plot reveals the story that the -in-laws are not very certain as to whether the son-in-law who has arrived is the one that they know. They do not want another man except the one that they have agreed should marry their daughter.

#### 4.3.6 The Return

This is when the first line of the song returns again in the lines of the song. An example is the following song by the *Damani* coffee Estate people, at the malende competition, at *Tshilamba*, on 18.10.1997.

*A thi tsha penga ndo no hula.*

I no longer run around with men, I am old.

*Ahee ahee Vho-Alilali ndo humbula muniwe muthu.*

*Alilali*, I have thought about someone else.

*A thi tsha penga ndo no hula.*

I no longer run around with men, I am old.

*Ahee ahee Vho-Alilali ndo humbula muniwe muthu.*

Hey, hey *Alilali*, I have thought about someone  
else.

The line '*A thi tsha penga ndo no hula*' (I no longer run around with men, I am old) keeps on being repeated. Even the one that says '*Ahee ahee Vho-Alilali ndo humbula murwe muthu*' (Hey, hey *Alilali*, I have thought about someone else) keeps on being repeated.

The first one that says '*A thi tsha penga ndo no hula*' (I no longer run around with men) is putting more emphasis on the fact that the lady has abandoned her way of flirting with men. That is why the line of the song keeps on returning.

Another one that says '*Ahee ahee Vho-Alilali ndo humbula murwe muthu*' (Hey, hey *Alilali*, I have thought about someone else). This one puts more emphasis on the fact that the lady is now paying attention to only one person.

#### 4.3.7 Foreshadowing

Here the development of the plot is hinted at before it becomes known by the listeners. An example of foreshadowing as structure of *malende* songs is shown by the song as follows:

*Vha a tuwa nga muthihi*

They go one by one

*Vhula vhudenga ho fhela*

When the remains of the beer is finished

*Vha a vhuya nga muthihi*

They come back one by one

*Vhula* *vhudenga ho sala*

When the remains of the beer is still there.

An opening line is very significant in this structure. An opening line is “*Vha a tuwa nga muthihi*” (They go one by one). It makes the listeners want to know why they are leaving one by one. The listeners have already hinted that there is a problem. When the listeners get down to the line that follows that says ‘*Vhula* *vhudenga ho fhela*’ (When the remains of the beer is finished), they are getting the plot of the song. They are therefore not surprised to see the people leaving one by one.

When the song goes on to say ‘*Vha a vhuya nga muthihi*’ (They come back one by one). *Vhula* *vhudenga ho sala* (When there are remains left), still the listeners have the hint that they are coming back because they want to drink. That is what they are coming back for.

#### 4.3.8 The Scene method

This is the way in which songs create the scene. If there are names of places which the song is attached to, such names are mentioned. An example by the *malende* people of *Pile* under *Nyamukamadi* *Muthelo* at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997, is as follows:

*Ndi a lwala ndi na mphigela*

I am ill I have flu

*Ndi a lwala ndi na luhotola*

I am ill I am coughing

*Lo kovhela Thengwe vha via*

At sunset at *Thengwe* they commit ritual murder.

In this structure the scene is created where the listeners see a person who is suffering from flu and from coughing. Again another scene is created which is at *Thengwe* where people commit ritual murder. When these two scenes are compared, the one at *Thengwe* is more serious than the one where a person is just sick from flu. The scene makes the listeners understand the song more easily as the names of the places are mentioned. Sometimes these are the names of places that they know, like *Thengwe*.

#### 4.3.9 Conflict

The conflict is when the people blame each other: Someone's heart is not at peace with its owner. An example is the song by *malende* people of *Vondwe* under Johannes *Netshifhefhe*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. It goes as follows:

*Ri tshimbila nga makobodo*

We walk with crutches

*Ri tshimbila nga makobodo*

We walk with crutches

*U kegula a si u vhavha*

Growing old is painful



*Ndo vhona nga mazwale wanga*

I experienced this through my mother-in-law

*Tshikhuwa vha bikela nduni*

Delicious foods of the whites are cooked in the house.

*Ri tshi pfa nga u nukhelela*

We feel it through the sense of smell

*Muka madi u a fhinduwa*

The one who goes to fetch water must be early

*Musalela u ka madzikwa*

The late comer fetches dirty water.

The singer is not happy at all. She says growing old is painful as one uses crutches to walk with. She is blaming the young people for the way they treat old people. Even when they eat food inherited from the whites, they eat alone. Old people are not given these foods. The young people are blamed in this song.

To serve as an example of the *malende* song is the one given in staff notation in Appendix 1, song No.2.

#### 4.3.10 Ironic tension

This is where the listeners find a surprise as well as the conflict. Here is the following song as the example: The song was sung by the *malende* people of *Matangari* under Reginah Nyamande, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997.

*Mutondi!*

The one who is generous.

*La vha zhakaṭila!*

Great problems came!

Listeners are surprised when the song starts by saying 'Mutondi' (one who is generous). Their interest is stimulated because they want to know who is this generous person; What did he or she do? When those who are responding say 'La vha zhakaṭila' (big problems came), the conflict comes into existence. There is a conflict even though a person is generous. That is why the listeners get ironic tension as a structure of the song.

#### 4.3.11 Strong start

This is when the song attracts the listeners by talking about real people. An example is of the song by the *malende* people of *Mudunungu* under *Vho-Nyavheani Rambuda*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. The song is as follows:

*Vho-Alilali ndi nga ita hani, Vho-Alilali.*

*Alilali what can I do, Alilali.*

*Vho-Alilali vhusiwana hanga, Vho-Alilali.*

*Alilali my poverty! Alilali.*

*Vho-Alilali vha khou nkakhela, Vho-Alilali.*

*Alilali you are ill-treating me, Alilali.*

*Vho-Alilali na Vho-Nyavheani, Vho-Alilali.*

*Vho-Alilali and Vho-Nyavheani, Alilali.*

*Ri kha di ya Biaba ri yo nwa movanya.*

We are going to *Biaba* to drink *movanya*.

The start of the song is very strong because it starts by giving the listeners the name of a person called *Vho-Alilali*. Listeners therefore want to know what *Alilali* did because as human beings people want to know what other people are doing. The song goes on to talk about *Vho-Alilali* and *Vho-Nyavheani* who are real people.

#### 4.3.12 Genuine idea

This structure talks about real life situations. It takes also real people into consideration. A song as an example is the song sung by the *malende* people of the *Makwarani* under Samuel *Mbadi*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. The song is as follows:

*Ndi takala ndi Makwarani*  
I feel happy when I am at *Makwarani*  
*Mbilu yanga i a vhavha*  
My heart is painful  
*I vhavhela muhodo*  
It is painful for ordering goods.

There is a genuine idea in the song: because of the Western way of life, the *Vhavenda* people ended up depending on buying things like bags of mealie meal and other goods like clothing. They had to brew beer for selling so that they will get profit to pay for what they ordered from the shops. When there were no profits, they landed in trouble with the shop owners. That is why the song says '*Mbilu yanga i a vhavha*' (My heart is painful). The heart is painful because there is a problem of not paying back the debts. Therefore the idea is genuine as the structure indicates.

#### 4.3.13 Ambiguous meaning

This is where the song has double meanings. An example of the song by the *malende* people of *Mavunde* under Joyce *Tshibakela*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997 is as follows:

*Nduni yanga*  
^  
In my house  
*A thi funi munwe muthu*  
I do not want another person.

The first meaning in this song is that the woman is saying she does not want any other person because there will be problems. She wants to stay alone, this is her desire.

The second meaning is that she is saying that in her house she does not want her husband to marry another woman who would stay with her. She does not want it that way.

#### 4.3.14 Go somewhere

In this structure there is a sequence of events. The words that are used follow each other in a meaningful way. The following song by the *malende* people called '*Isiya muinga i ya fhi, Thembaluvhilo*' under Samson *Ramaswiela*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997, is as example:

*A ni ntsedzi nani?*  
 Why don't you look at me?  
*Malitsha*  
*A vha ri litshe ri ye* (Let me go)  
*Malitsha*  
*Musadzi mungafhangafha*  
*Malitsha*  
*Malitsha*  
*A vha nditshi nda nala?*  
 Why don't you let me get angry?  
*Malitsha*  
*Malitsha*  
*A vha zwi ambi ngani?*  
 Why don't you say it?

Here words follow each other meaningfully. What is being said is understood. The woman is complaining about her husband who seems not to love her. She is saying that this man must say it openly then she will pack and go. Listeners receive this clear message because of the structure: good words arranged in a meaningful way.

#### 4.3.15 Timbre

This is where the listeners find tone colouring. The people talk in terms of voices of the youth, voices of women, voices of men, clapping of hands, ululation, the beating of membraphone (*mirumba*) together with the praising of a person's *mutupo*. The praising takes place when a person is dancing these *malende* songs. When any of the above songs is sung, timbre takes place.

#### 4.3.16 Conclusion as structure

This is where the listeners find the meanings of the songs mentioned. People may interpret the songs the way they want. This will suit their understanding. All the songs indicated above may mean different things depending on the understanding of the listeners.

### 4.4 THE STRUCTURE OF MAFHUWE SONGS

#### 4.4.1 Melody

For the *mafhuwe* songs melody is also the same as that of *malombo* and *malende*. People listen for this melody first. The melody of the *mafhuwe* song can be shown by means of a song sung by the *Thengwe* Tribe singing *mafhuwe Mutshanzhala*. The song is as follows:

*Nyanda u vhone madembe*  
Come and see the miracles  
*Thovhela vhusiwana vhu lidza nzhivha*  
*Thovhela* misery causes even doves to cry  
*Thovhela vhusiwana vhu lidza nzhivha*  
*Thovhela* misery causes even doves to cry  
*Vhu lidza na khwali shangoni*  
It makes even the *Chaetops natalensis* cry.  
*Tshinakaho a tshi yi thambo*

Beautiful things do not last long  
*Thovhela tshi no ya thambo ndi mutshinyalo*  
*Thovhela* what last long is poverty.



The caller in the melody of the *mafhuwe* songs is alone. She calls and responds to her own calls. This is where the differences are between *mafhuwe*, Malende, and *davha* songs. The melody above expresses the miseries of women when they are ill-treated by their in-laws together with their husbands. The caller is saying ‘*Tshinakaho a tshi yi thambo, tshi no ya thambo ndi mutshinyalo*’ (Beautiful things do not last long, what last long is miseries). It means that by the time she got married, things were going on very well but unfortunately now things have changed. The miseries seem to be continuing forever.

#### 4.4.2 Harmony

This supports the melody like in other *Tshivenda* songs. The harmony of the song indicated above is as follows:

*Nhi nhi haa, haa or haa, hee, hii, hoo.*

This is the response from the caller herself because usually, she may be alone pounding mealies. This is the harmony as a structure.

#### 4.4.3 Dynamics

This song in the **mafhuwe** songs has a rapid clash of tones from soft to loud and from loud to soft. The reason is that gradually as the song progresses, the caller becomes emotional because of the problems created for her by the in-laws. An example of the *mafhuwe* song that provokes emotions is as follows:

*Murwamphida* (1994:18) says:

*Fhumulani nwananga Matodzi*  
Keep quiet my child *Matodzi*  
*Azwidivhiwi u dzula vuhadzi*  
To stay in a place where you got married is  
not known.  
*Ndi kondelela zwivhi na zwivhuya*  
I tolerate bad things and good things  
*Maitele itani zwanu*  
*Maitele* do your own things  
*Litshani nne ndi ite zwanga*  
Let me do my own things.

As the woman is complaining, she becomes emotional. That is why the strength of the tone is from soft to loud.

#### 4.4.4 Rhythm

As this is the song's movement, it implies the movement of the sound of the *mafhuwe* songs. The rhythmical flow that the listeners get is slow, based on the sound of the mortar and the pestle. It is also very difficult to stamp the mielies very fast as this process is too long to complete quickly. An example of this rhythm is of the song mentioned earlier called '*Fhumulani nwananga Matodzi*' (Keep quiet my child *Matodzi*).

#### 4.4.5 The Return

The return as structure in the *mashuwe* song is also when the first line of the song returns again in the following lines of the song. An example is of the following song by *Vho-Masindi Masikhwa*.

*Zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo haa!*  
Spread mischievous talk has given me miseries  
*Ndi a lwala nda dovha*  
I will be ill repeatedly  
*Ha nyatsitsa-ñwana*  
At *Hanyatsitsa-ñwana*  
*Ndi a lwala nda dovha*  
I will be ill repeatedly  
*Ndi zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo haa!*  
Spread mischievous talk has given me miseries  
*Ndi a tuwa vha do sala zwavho*  
I am leaving she will remain.  
*Zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo haa!*  
Spread mischievous talk has given me miseries.

The line '*Zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo haa!* (Spread mischievous talk has given me miseries) keeps on returning. The reason why it keeps on returning is because the singer wants the people to know that the bad rumour about her has destroyed her family. Her husband seem to have got himself another woman who is a *Ndebele* for that matter. This is noticed as the song continues. She says '*Mundevhele vha do sala zwavho*' (A *Ndebele* will remain). In other words she is intending to leave.

#### 4.4.6 Foreshadowing

As structure, foreshadowing in the *mafhuwe* songs hints at the development of the plot even though it is known. The first line is very significant. An example is the song ‘*Ndi zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo haa!*’ (Spread mischievous talk has given me miseries). The first line is of great importance as it makes the listeners guess what they are going to get as the song goes on. In this case the first line gave them the right information because as the song goes on, they find the woman suffering, which is what they hinted at in the first line of the *mafhuwe* song.

#### 4.4.7 Conflict

The conflict as structure of the *mafhuwe* song is when a person’s heart is not at peace with itself. She is blaming another person for the miseries she is suffering. An example is the very same song called ‘*Ndi zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo haa!*’ (Spread mischievous talk has given me miseries). It suits this structure best because the woman is blaming those who spread the bad rumour about her. She also blames that *Ndebele* woman who is now loved by her husband. She says that *Ndebele* woman will remain behind when she herself leaves.

An example of the song in staff notation is found in Appendix 1, song No. 3.

#### 4.4.8 Ironic tension

This is when the song have conflict in the *mafhuwe* songs. The following *mafhuwe* song is an example. It is a song by *Vho-Masindi Masikhwa*.

*Ha vuwa lihanya*  
 Troubles erupted  
*Ndo vha ndi Ngwenani*  
 I was at Ngwenani  
*Ha vuwa lihanya*  
 Troubles erupted  
*Vho-Nyamutshagole ndi dabadaba la riwana*  
*Ha vuwa lihanya*  
 Trouble erupted.

In this song, there is also a conflict. When the song commences by saying ‘*Ha vuwa lihanya*’ (Problems erupted), those who are listening are surprised. They would like to listen more to the song. The song has a conflict which the singer experienced when she was at *Ngwenani*. This conflict was created by *Nyamutshagole* who is a fool. She is the one (*Nyamutshagole*) who caused all the troubles.

#### 4.4.9 Strong start

Here the *mafhuwe* songs attract those who are listening. The song when coming to this structure, talks about real people. A good example is this song ‘*Ha vuwa lihanya*’ (Havoc erupted). It emphasizes the havoc brought by *Vho-Nyamutshagole*.

#### 4.4.10 Ambiguous meaning

As structure of *mafhuwe* songs, ambiguous meaning gives the listeners double meanings. This can be best indicated in the *mafhuwe* song called ‘*Zevhezevhe lo mpha vhulombo*’ (Spread mischievous talk brought me miseries). The line that shows

this structure is as follows:

*Ndi a tuwa vha do sala zwavho*  
          <sup>^</sup>                  <sup>^</sup>

I shall leave and they will remain behind.

The first meaning is that the woman is saying she will leave and her husband will remain behind. The second meaning is that the woman will leave and other woman (a *Ndebele*) will remain behind. Sometimes this is done purposefully to attack both people viz: a husband and that other woman who is a *Ndebele*.

#### 4.4.11 Go somewhere

This structure of *mafhuwe* songs indicates that there must be a sequence of events. The words used produce a meaning; an example by the *Thengwe* Tribe is as follows:

*Tshihwana hu lila tsha khombe*

*Tshihwana* instrument that produces the best sound is that  
of a bachelor

*Nahone vhomme anga vha nnyitani?*

What are my mothers doing to me?

*Vhasadzi vho beba vho wela thavha*

If women have given birth they have descended  
a mountain.



The words give us the meaning of the song because they are well co-ordinated. The words are saying that the best sound produced by the *tshihwana*, is produced by the *tshihwana* that belongs to the bachelor. The song says if women have given birth to children, they have descended a mountain.

Listeners can understand what is being said. Therefore this means that words are well arranged in the structures of *Tshivenda* traditional songs.

#### 4.4.12 Timbre

Timbre as a structure of *mafhuwe* songs, is a combination of voices, thunder that roars from a woman's hands when stamping called *matya*, as well as the sound produced by mortar and the pestle. An example may be of any other song of the songs indicated above because this timbre happens all the time when women are pounding mealies, singing *mafhuwe* songs at the same time.

#### 4.4.13 Watch your 'You'

In this structure the singer of *mafhuwe* songs talks to a person who is present as well as a person who is absent. An example to illustrate this, is the song as follows by *Masindi Masikhwa*. It is called '*Ha vuwa lihanya*' (Havoc emerged).

*Ndo vha ndi Ngwenani*  
I was at *Ngwenani*  
*Ndo vha ndi Ngwenani*

I was at *Ngwenani*  
*Vho-Nyamutshagole ndi dabadaba la riwana*  
*Nyamutshagole is a numbskull*

The structure here talks about *Nyamutshagole* who is absent. What she did at *Ngwenani* was bad. This is what this structure is putting more emphasis on.

#### 4.4.14 Conclusion as a structure

Conclusion as a structure of *mafhuwe* songs is when the meaning of the song is mentioned. People may also interpret the *mafhuwe* songs according to their understanding of the song. In the *mafhuwe* song called '*Tshihwana hu lila tsha khombe*' (*Tshihwana* that sounds good is that of a bachelor), the listeners are at liberty to interpret the meaning of the song. The song may be interpreted to mean that the reason why the bachelor is playing *tshihwana* well is to aim at getting a woman someday. It is a woman who would be interested in the way a bachelor plays this *tshihwana* instrument.

### 4.5 THE STRUCTURE OF *DAVHA* SONGS

#### 4.5.1 Melody

The melody as structure of *davha* songs is the same as that of *malende* and *malombo* because the caller comes with a linear succession of sound. In the *davha* songs the melody is found in Mr *Ratshifanga Rashaka*'s Video Cassette known as *The Two Rivers*. It is as follows:

*Mahayani ndi kale ro vha ro dzula*

In the olden days we were happy in our families

*Bvumelani zwi tou naka*

Sing with me let this song be beautiful

*Mufhululu u tou lila*

... let ullulations be heard

*Ndi imba na nnyi nda kona?*

Who will sing this song with me?

*Naniwaha ndo tswuka na mato*

This year my eyes are red

*Ndo tshelukwa ndi songo lima*

The whole year I did not plough the fields

*Ndo tshelukwa ndo lima ndila*

I ploughed the road instead

*Zwa vhu<sup>^</sup>nambi zwi tou bebelwa*

Great musicians are born in this world.

The melody in this *davha* song signals to the people that they are all to start ploughing at the same time. Therefore they will all start as the caller will start the song and the rest of the people will respond by doing the job. What they have in mind when this melody is started, is to work hard without feeling pain. Another motive is to finish the work as soon as possible. This structure of *davha* songs is not sung when people are using a span of oxen. The song is sung when people are using hoes. When this melody has been started, it reminds people of their good old days when they were not under the control of Whites.

This is the time when they had plenty of fields on which to plough. Thinking about these good old days, their anger will be vented on the field they are ploughing. The song says 'This year my eyes are red, because instead of ploughing the fields, I ploughed the road'. This indicates that people do not have the land they used to have in the olden days, before the Whites came to *Venda*.

#### 4.5.2 Harmony

This structure harmonizes the melody. In the song above harmony is as follows:

*Hae, ahaa, ro vha ro dzula*  
Yes we were living in peace  
*Hae, ahaa, ro vha ro dzula*  
Yes we were living in peace.

When the response is like this harmony gives the listeners experience because it is supporting the melody. They think of what used to take place in the past and the experience they are having now.

Therefore this structure deals with effects created when two tones are being sounded together. It again deals with the usage of effects for sound movement and arrival. The result will be meaning.

### 4.5.3 Dynamics

Dynamics as structure of *davha* songs, has strong tones. The people sing very loud also. The reason why they do this is because they do not want to feel the pain of working. An example to illustrate this is the song above. When they sing it, they sing it loudly and they also want the people to know what is happening now compared to what the situation was in the olden days. They are appealing to the people.

### 4.5.4 Rhythm

This structure is the way in which the *davha* song moves taking into consideration its pace, regularity, and articulation as well as its intensity of movement. The rhythmical flow of the song mentioned above as an example, brings about the meaning of the *davha* song. In this case the meaning that the listeners get is one of protest.

As indicated earlier in other songs, rhythm as structure of the *davha* songs, is also associated with the heart beat. The way this song “*Ro vha ro dzula mahaya*” (We were living in peace in our homes) is sung, as it goes with the sound of the hoes, digging the ground, resembles the heartbeat. The sound of the hoes together with the rhythmical flow of the song resembles the beat of the heart. It includes the speed at which the music is played, and in this case it goes together with the sound of the hoes hitting the ground.



#### 4.5.5 The Return

As in other songs, the return as structure of *davha* songs, is when the first line of the song is repeated in the line of the song. This is to say that the *davha* songs happen to show habitualness of the action. The following song illustrates this:

*Ku<sup>^</sup>la kudimana*  
That small patch  
*Ku a vulela*  
It is getting finished  
*Kha vha ri fhe ri le<sup>^</sup>*  
Give us something to eat  
*Ku a vulela*  
It is getting finished  
*Ku<sup>^</sup>la kudimana*  
That small patch.

The first line of the song '*Ku<sup>^</sup>la kudimana*' (That small patch) is repeated in the first line. This denotes the habitualness of the action based on this small patch (*kudimana*). This song is sung when people want beer to drink and then continue with the work again.

#### 4.5.6 Foreshadowing

This is when the development of the plot of the *davha* song is hinted before it is known by the listeners. The listeners are given the hint by the first line of the song as it is very important. This is illustrated by the song as follows:



*Ndala ya Magweni i a vhavha*  
The hunger of *Magweni* is painful  
*Ro lindela vhone*  
We are waiting for you  
*Ro lindela vhone Vho-Mphaya*  
We are waiting for you *Vho-Mphaya*

The plot of this *davha* song is hinted before it becomes known as it starts saying '*Ndala ya Magweni i a vhavha*' (The hunger of *Magweni* is painful). Listeners come to the conclusion that the *davha* song is talking about hunger. It is of course not surprising to conclude that the song is talking about hunger because when *davha* is in place, everything is about driving hunger away. The singers are saying just because there is starvation at *Magweni*, they are waiting for *Mphaya* to come to their rescue.

#### 4.5.7 The scene method

This is the structure that shows the way in which the songs create the scene. In this case, the above mentioned song '*Ndala ya Magweni i a vhavha*' (The hunger of *Magweni* is painful), is an example, as follows:

*Ndala ya Magweni i a vhavha*  
The hunger of *Magweni* is painful  
*Ro lindela vhone Vho-Mphaya*  
We are waiting for you *Vho-Mphaya*.

*Magweni* is the name of the place. There is a scene here showing the people dying of hunger at *Magweni*. Because of the starvation, people think of *Mphaya* as their saviour. This scene will be impressed upon the listener's mind. People will see this starvation as well as *Mphaya*, who was a brilliant chief, in their minds coming to rescue his people.

#### 4.5.8 Conflict

In the *davha* song, the conflict is also a structure. Here a person may be blaming another person for bad things that are taking place. The person may even blame the society for bad things that are happening. An example of the song is the following:

*Hophu! hophu! langanda!*

Jump! jump! land!

*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n'wana*

We have seen the buck babysitting

*Vhamusanda nne ri a tuwa*

Chief, we are leaving.

*Nga ri yeni ri ye Tshidzivhe*

Let us leave for *Tshidzivhe*

*Tsha Mashangomavhi na Thathe*

Belonging to *Mashangomavhi* and *Thathe*.

In this song it is the chief who is blamed for not looking after his people properly. When we were at *Tshidzivhe* Mr. Phillemon *Netshidzivhe* sang this *davha* song for us inserting some lines added by the people of *Tshidzivhe*. The lines are as follows:

*Nga ri yeni ri ye Tshidzivhe*  
Let us leave for *Tshidzivhe*  
*Tsha Mashangomavhi na Thathe*  
Belonging to *Mashangomavhi* and *Thathe*.

What is being indicated here is that now that this chief cannot run this country well, we had better leave for *Tshidzivhe* belonging to *Mashangomavhi* and *Thathe*. It means that the people have seen things that are impossible to believe and they are blaming this leader.

#### 4.5.9 Ironic tension

Here songs have a surprise. In the song above, there is a surprise that captures the listener's interest. The surprise is seen in the *davha* song indicated above. It says:

*Hophu! hophu! langanda!*  
Jump! jump! land!

Listeners are surprised by this line indicated above. They would like to know what this 'Jump! jump! land!' is for. Therefore they would like to hear more about what is taking place in the song. Again when they hear '*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela*

*nwana*' (We have seen the buck babysitting, they become more surprised. They would like to continue listening to the song until the end.

An example of the song in staff notation is found in Appendix I, song No. 3.

#### 4.5.10 Ambiguous meaning

This is when the song has two meanings. In the structure (ambiguous meaning), there is a desirable ambiguity and an undesirable ambiguity. In the desirable ambiguity, the listener enjoys interpreting the song in different ways. His or her interpretation of the song is clear. The listener knows precisely what he or she is talking about.

In the undesirable ambiguity, the listener has no proper answer. The following song is an example to show the ambiguous meaning.

*Vhomundende*

*Mundende people*

*Mundende Mundende nwananga*

*Mundende Mundende my child*

*Ahe! Vhomundende*

*Yes Mundende people*

*Mundende Mundende nwananga*

*Mundende people Mundende people my child*

*Ahe! Vhomundende*

*Yes Mundende people*

In the desirable ambiguity which is easy to interpret, the listener may say that the interpretation of the song is that *Mundende* is good (*Mundende* is money given to the old people by the government).

The undesirable ambiguity which of course gives the listeners the proper meaning, is that at *davha* people are struggling to get mealies. Therefore mealies are not like *mundende* that people get without sweating for it. For mealies, one has to plough, root out weeds, harvest them and carry them home. It is a difficult job compared to money given to the aged by the government because they do not have to work first. This is the ambiguous meaning as structure of *davha* songs.

#### 4.5.11 Watch your 'You'

In this structure the singer talks with a person who is present or absent. In the song *Vhomundende* old age pensioners the 'you' of the song are the *mundende* people. The 'you' is about the people who do not work hard when it comes to ploughing the fields. They think they would get the maize (*mavhele*) like when people get *mundende* from the whites. Therefore when the singers sing they watch this 'you', which is you *mundende* people.

#### 4.5.12 Strong start

This is when the *davha* song attracts the listeners because of the way it has been started. It deals with real-life situations with real people. That is why this structure will include who, what and when. It therefore attracts people's interests as it is



human nature for people to want to know what other people do who they are and when. In the strong start as structure of the *davha* songs, *Nowa mulambo* (a river snake) is a very good example of this aspect. It is as follows:

*Nowa mulambo*

^  
The river snake

*Vhāñwe vha i vhona vha shavha*

Some people run away if they see it.

When the song starts by saying *Nowa-mulambo*, people are attracted to the song as they are surprised. To prove that this structure deals with real people, the listeners ask themselves the question who? An answer will be some people. They will again ask themselves the question what? An answer will be they run away. The last question will be when? An answer will be when they see a snake which stays in the river. This is the structure known as a strong start.

#### 4.5.13 A Genuine Idea

This is where *davha* songs take genuine people into consideration. A genuine idea as structure of *davha* songs is very important because there are ideas in these songs. An example of the song is the very same *Nowa-mulambo* (the river snake). When it says *nowa-mulambo* (the river snake), *Vhāñwe vha i vhona vha shavha* (Some people run away if they see it), it is talking about real people. The idea is also understandable and genuine.



#### 4.5.14 Go Somewhere

Here *davha* songs must have a sequence of events. In the song *Nowa mulambo*,  
(river snake), there is a sequence of events:

*Nowa mulambo*

The river snake

*hanwe vha i vhona vha a shavha*

Some people run away if they see it.

This shows that there is sequence of ideas because people run away after seeing this river snake. The listeners do not hear the song telling them that some people just run away without cause.

#### 4.5.15 Timbre

This is the combination of voices. This is what is called tone colouring. In these *davha* songs the listeners get male voices, female voices, the sound of the hoes falling on the ground together, ululations together with the praising of either a chief or any other person who does good for the community. Praise may be given to the person who has invited these people to help him plough his field.

#### 4.5.16 Conclusion as structure

This is the structure where the meaning of *davha* songs may be mentioned. The meaning of the song may also be left to the listeners to interpret for themselves.

In the conclusion of the song mentioned above called '*Nowa-mulambo*', (the river snake), the meaning of the song is mentioned. But in the *davha* songs like *Vhomundende* (pension collectors), the meaning is not mentioned. The listeners have to interpret the song for themselves.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE MEANING OF TSHIVENDA TRADITIONAL SONGS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how meaning is revealed in *Tshivenda* Traditional songs. As indicated earlier on, the meaning is what is meant.

#### 5.2 THE MEANING OF *MALOMBO* SONGS

##### 5.2.1 Expression of grief

The meaning of *malombo* songs express grief. This is the case because sometimes when people are ill, *ñanga* (traditional healer) will tell them that it is the ancestors who are making them ill. In this case when they sing these songs and dance, they express grief. They want the ancestors to have mercy on them. They want them to drive the evil spirits away. An example of a song that expresses grief is the one mentioned earlier on. It is as follows:

*U ya lila Vho-Madevha*  
There is a cry Mr *Madevha*  
*Ahee hee hee hee haa!*  
*Vho-Madevha thoho ndi ludongo*  
*Madevha's head is like an earthenware dish*  
*Ahee hee hee hee haa!*

The singers of this ancestor-worship song are expressing their grief through *Madevha*. *Madevha* is the centre of attraction because he does not worship the ancestors with others when they perform *malombo* songs. Instead he goes and enjoys *mafula* juice with women. Now the accusation is levelled at him but at the same time, the expression of grief is meant for the ancestors. The people want the ancestors to know that they are against anybody who does not support them when they worship these ancestors and so the ancestors must feel pity for them.

### 5.2.2 Request

Another meaning of *malombo* song is expressed in the form of a request. Here people want their ancestors to bless them with good rains that will result in good crops.

Another request is asking the ancestors to give people more strength before they start ploughing. That is why before the people start ploughing, they perform *malombo*. An example of the song is the song called *Vho-Maine*. It goes as follows:

*Vho-Maine ri a fa ra fhela*  
*Vho-Maine ri a fa ra fhela*  
*Ndi mushonga wa mukondeleli*  
*Vho-Maine ri a fa nga ndala*

Healer we will get finished by starvation  
Healer we are dying of hunger  
It is the medicine of a tolerant person  
Healer we are dying of hunger

This means that *Maine* (healer) must request the ancestors for permission to perform *malombo* songs because the people will end up starving. If people are tolerant to perform *malombo* songs, everything will be fine.

### 5.2.3 Lead a good life/advice

The meaning of *malombo* songs lies in advising people to lead a good life in this world. The reason is that if people do not lead a good life, they are going to encounter problems after death. Their spirits will never be free. An example is the following song:

*Maiwangu garayi muchichema*

Mother stay crying

*Kufa kwangu kuva hutekateka*

After death I become a wanderer.

This means that if the listeners are not leading a good life in this world, mothers must stay crying because after death people will suffer. The ancestor spirit through the possessed person is also saying that after death it had to wander around. It is just moving from place to place. This is what happens to the spirit of a person who was not leading a good life in this world.

The song goes on to say *Dungudzivha nda ka pinda ndi si nga rwi mvura* - (At *Dungudzivha* I was not permitted to drink water). This means that when the ancestor spirit was thirsty, it came across *Dungudzivha* which is a lake full of water. But when the ancestor talking wanted to drink water, the permission was not granted.



The miseries therefore continued. It means that the people who do not lead a good life here will never be allowed to drink water at *Dungudzivha*.

#### 5.2.4 Sinners have no place to hide

The song indicates that when the people are condemned by the gods, they will have nowhere to run to. This is emphasized by the song when it says:

*Maguvhuni nda lingwa nemheni*  
At *Maguvhuni* I was nearly struck by the  
lightning  
*Ndo tou tshila nga kunanga kwanga*  
I was saved by my small windpipe  
*Kunanga kwa mutungapasi*  
A small windpipe with a sharp point at the end

The ancestor spirit is saying that because of the miseries that he or she was facing, he or she wandered up to *Maguvhuni*. Here he was nearly struck by the lightning. He was saved by his small windpipe with a sharp point at the end.

But still the problem was not solved. This means that wherever the people go, they will not save themselves. Therefore we had better do good. If we were to compare this with Christianity, it is the same as what is required by our gods. In Christianity the Bible says (Luka 16:19-31) that after death, Lazarus was taken care of by Abraham up there in Heaven because he was suffering here on earth but doing good. When the rich man died, he went to hell where there is gnashing of teeth. He asked Abraham for water. Abraham refused. The ancestor at *Dungudzivha* asked for water but was never given any.



This is the same situation as the one in Christianity. Although the *Vhavenda* people knew nothing about Christianity, their life was following what Christianity is doing to a certain extent, namely, doing good and enjoying life after death or doing bad and suffering after death.

#### 5.2.5 Time wasted is never regained

The very same song goes on to say *Zhunguvhuya mupera u ripo*. (Stupid people will never understand important advice). The meaning of the song here is that the people waste their time by not listening to the advice given to them by their ancestral spirits. The ancestral spirit is talking through the possessed person that at *Dungudzivha*, no permission was granted for drinking water. After death he or she is wandering about. If we were to interpret this meaning to suit Christianity, when the rich man was enjoying himself, he ignored the word of God. As we are living, we lead bad lives and ignore our gods and our ancestors. At the end we will not

drink water at *Dungudzivha*. We will be like the rich man who requested Abraham to give him water even if only a drop of water on the finger nail.

This was refused also. He further requested that Lazarus be sent to the earth to his brothers to tell them that they must repent before it is too late. The answer was that they have Moses and the prophets to warn them.

## 5.3.6 Conclusion

The structure of the songs give the listeners the meaning of the song. That is why the listeners got the meanings of these *malombo* songs namely: expression of grief, request, and advice. The advice is that people must do good when they are living in this world because if they do not, they will suffer after death. This is what is preached by the word of God (If we were to compare the meaning of *Tshivenda* Traditional song with Christianity). But one cannot claim that they are exactly the same because they are not. They can be interpreted the same to a certain extent, as was indicated above.

## 5.3 THE MEANING OF *MALENDE* SONGS

### 5.3.1 Protest

The meaning of *malende* songs may be protest in nature. The protest is twofold. That is:

#### 5.3.1.1 Social protest

#### 5.3.1.2 Political protest

This is where people sing *malende* songs protesting against the government. Here is an example: The song was sung by the *malende* people of *Tshifudzi Thondoni* under Elisa Madili, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. The song says:

*Vho vhulaha Chris Hani*  
They have killed Chris Hani  
*Mandela kha vhuye*  
Mandela must come back  
*Ahee ndi ya na shango*  
I am going astray.

The people are protesting against the killing of their hero Chris Hani who was gunned down at his Boksburg home by a foreigner, Janus Walus. Chris Hani was the leader of the South African Communist Party. Therefore Whites, like CP leader Clive Derby Lewis, organized the murder for political reasons. The people are protesting against this brutal killing of Hani.

### 5.3.2 The protest of women against male domination

The meaning of *malende* songs is also a protest by women against male domination. An example is the song by the *malende* group called *Maitazwitoma (Ha Lambani Pfukoni)*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. The song is as follows to reinforce the meaning:

*Vhu ya swa ngeno wee!*  
I am drinking beer heavily  
*Vho vhuyelani makhuwani?*  
Why did you come back from Urban Areas?  
*Ahe vho vhuyelani makhuwani?*  
Alas! why did you come back from Urban Areas?

The woman was drinking beer (*mahafhe*). Her husband does not want her to drink beer. Now she says that he must stop this male domination by leaving her alone.

She asks why he came back from Urban areas in the first place. She is protesting. This is the meaning of *malende* songs.

### 5.3.3 Sarcasm

Another meaning of *malende* song is sarcasm. An example is the following song by the group of *malende* known as *Makuya Tshikalange* under *Vhonani Mukhudi*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. The song is as follows:

*Kha vha de vha mmbonele-vho.*

Come and see what is happening.

*Ndi lihule mutani wa mme alo.*

I am a prostitute at my mother's house.

*Na zwino kha vha de vha li vhone kheli.*

Come and see her, here she is.

*Ndi dabadaba mutani wa mme alo.*

I am a numbskull but at my mother's courtyard.

Someone told the lady who is complaining that she is a prostitute. When she responds she just puts these bitter remark intending to wound the feelings of the one who started scolding her. This is also the meaning of *malende* songs.

### 5.3.4 Chastisement

*Malende* songs have the meaning that chastises people who have done something wrong to the community. It may also be something that someone wants to do

which is bad. If the people have found out beforehand, they may sing a song to chastise that person. An example of the song is the following by *Maitazwitoma* <sup>^</sup>*malende* group, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997.

*Havha muhali vha songo vhulawa*

This chief must not be murdered.

*Havha muhali vha songo vhulawa*

This chief must not be murdered.

*He yowe vha songo vhulawa*

Hey, he must not be killed.

A person who is intending to kill the chief, will never plan to do it again because he knows that the people know about the plot.

### 5.3.5 Praise

Another meaning of *malende* songs is to praise the chief who is doing good to his people. An example is the song by the *Dopeni* people singing under Rosina *Ramabulana*, at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. The song is as follows:

*Ndi hone hone*

It is that place

*Dopeni shango la Vho-Ralin<sup>^</sup>ala*

*Dopeni belongs to Vho-Ralin<sup>^</sup>ala*

*Nda humbula Dopeni*

If I think of *Dopeni*



*Ndi hone hone yo tangana.*  
It is then that we are busy.

### 5.3.6 Joy

The meaning of *malende* songs is also happiness. Here is an example by the *malende* group of *Tshitereke* under the leadership of *Tshikhudo Nyawasedza* and *T. Mutshekwa* at *Tshilamba* on 18.10.1997. It is as follows:

*Ndi vho nga khovhe I madini*  
I am just like a fish in the river  
*Namusi ndo takala*  
Today I am happy  
*Ndi vho nga khovhe I madini*  
I am just like a fish in the river.

This is the meaning of *malende* songs as well.

### 5.3.7 Conclusion

The structure of *malende* songs goes hand in hand with the meaning of these songs. Therefore after the structure of these songs the listeners understood what is meant by these songs, like protest which is divided into two categories namely: Political protest and protest by women against male domination. The listeners also have sarcasm where people use bitter remarks to discipline a person who meddles in affairs that are not his or her own. The listeners also have chastisement as a meaning of *malende* songs where people are chastised not to do things that will



offend the community. There is also praise as a meaning of *malende* songs to praise good leaders like chiefs or any other person who does good things for the community. There are also *malende* songs that have joy as their theme. Therefore the structure and meaning of *malende* songs go hand in hand.

## 5.4 THE MEANING OF *MAFHUWE* SONGS

### 5.4.1 Protest against male domination

The meaning of *mafhuwe* songs is to protest against male domination over women. An example is the song indicated earlier by *Masindi Masikhwa*. The song is called 'Galaha' (Silly old man). The song is as follows:

*Ha ndi ya Ntshavheni yo mela*  
*Ntshavheni has conceived*  
*Yo mela ngomu Dombani*  
She conceived at the *Domba* initiation school  
*Hu do bebwa n'wana a no pfi Madomba*  
The child to be born will be named *Madomba*  
*Galaha tshivhevhetele shone*  
A philandering silly old man.

The woman is protesting against the way in which women are treated by men. They (women) are not respected by men. This old man made a little girl pregnant at the *Domba* initiation school which is very unfair as girls go there to learn how to take care of their families, when they get married. This silly old man has ill-treated this girl.

#### 5.4.2 To show tolerance

Women sing *mashuwe* songs that have meaning for tolerating different situations.

The following song by *Murwamphida* illustrates that.

*Fhumulani nwananga Matodzi*  
*A zwi divhiwi u dzula vhuhadzi*  
*Maitele itani zwanu*  
*Litshani nne ndi ite zwanga*  
*Zwa vha zwivhi ri do seana.*

The song is to be translated as follows:

Keep quiet my child *Matodzi*  
To stay where you have got married is not  
known  
It is to tolerate the good and the bad  
*Maitele* do your own things  
Let me do my own things  
If things become bad, we will laugh at each  
other.

This singer is saying that in order for a woman to stay at the place where she got married, she must tolerate the bad things that take place.

#### 5.4.3 Enjoyment by praising

The meaning of the *mashuwe* songs may be that of enjoyment brought about by praising. An example is the song by *Ngwana*.

*Ri tshi ya Duthuni la muri wa dzunga*  
*Muri wa dzunga hu si na dumbu*  
*Ha Vho-Nyaphophi Mamilasigidi*  
*A no pfi o mila pfumo la vhulungu.*

The song is interpreted as follows:

We go to *Duthuni* at the *dzunga* tree  
*Dzunga* tree without storm  
For *Phophi Mamilasigidi*  
The one who said to have swallowed a spear  
of bracelets.

The *mafhuwe* song of this kind is praising the place called *Duthuni* in *Venda*. The place that belongs to *Phophi Mamilasigidi*.

#### 5.4.4 Advice

The *mafhuwe* songs advise the nation. An example is the song by *Vho-Vele Nyamutshavhi* of *Tshidzivhe*. The song is as follows:

*Nyandani ni do vhona-vho*  
Come and see also  
*Ipfani muvhona thengu a vhone*  
Listen, the one who sees *thengu* bird must be  
careful  
Matshelo thengu i a fhufha  
Tomorrow *thengu* bird flies away.

*Hu pfi Alidzulwi Nyatshinovhea*

It is said *Alidzulwi Nyatshinovhea*

*Tshi vheaho mudi ndi khana*

What builds a family is one's heart

*I pfani mafhufha a fhaladza midi*

Rumours destroy families

Advice that the listeners get here is that if one has got a golden opportunity to get something, one must use that opportunity because one will never get that chance again. In *Tshivenda* we have a proverb that says: *Muvhona thengu sima u vhone, matshelo thengu i a fhufha*. *Thengu* is a black cuckoo shrike bird. About this Van Warmelo (1937:255) says:

Prov: *Muvhona - thengu, sima u vhone; matshelo thengu i a fhufha* "If you see a *thengu*, look at it carefully, for tomorrow it is gone", i.e. take opportunity when it offers.

Again the *mafhuwe* song advises listeners that if they want their families to survive, they must have strong hearts. They must not listen to rumours as they are very destructive to families.

An example of the song in staff notation is given in Appendix 1, song No. 4.

#### 5.4.5 Self - pity

The meaning of the *mafhuwe* songs is also to express self-pity concerning the miseries that people suffer in this world. An example is the song by *Thengwe* Tribe, to illustrate this is as follows:

*Nyanda u vhone madembe*  
Come and see miracles  
*Thovhela vhusiwana vhu lidza nzhivha*  
Miseries makes doves cry  
*Tshinakaho a tshi yi thambo*  
Beautiful things do not last long  
*Tshi no ya thambo ndi mutshinyalo*  
What lasts longer is misery.

This means that when people are living in this world, they are faced with the miseries that are not self inflicted. They are just there and what has been realized is that good things do not last long. They are of the short duration but miseries last longer.

#### 5.4.6 Love

Another meaning of the *mafhuwe* song is the expression of love. The song by Vho-Masindi *Masikhwa* is the following:

*Vho funana vho funana*  
If they love each other, they did.  
*Vhanwe vha a funana*  
Some people love each other

*Hafhu ndo vha funa nga tsha swili*

I loved him deliberately

*He aha vhañwe vha a funana*

Hey! Some people love each other.

The song indicates that if people love each other, they do. They will continue loving each other even if there are some people who will try to stop them.

#### 5.4.7 Conclusion

The structure of *mafhuwe* songs give out what is meant by *mafhuwe* songs, namely: protest by women against male domination, showing tolerance, advice, self-pity as well as love. This is very important in as far as *mafhuwe* songs are concerned.

### 5.5 THE MEANING OF *DAVHA* SONGS

#### 5.5.1 Protest (social protest)

The meaning of *davha* song is one of political protest. An example of the political protest *davha* songs is the one called 'Mahayani ro vha ro dzula' (We were living peacefully at our homes). The song is protesting politically about the Whites who defeated the *Vhavenda* and other Blacks and started removing them from their wonderful fertile places into some bad or dry areas against their will. To protest against this ill-treatment by whites, they sang this song when they performed *davha*.



### 5.5.2 For Request

The meaning of *davha* songs is also to request food. When people are working, when they feel hungry, they do not call the owner of this *davha* and tell him that they are hungry. They just start the song called '*Kula kudimana*' (That small patch) and it is as follows:

*Kula kudimana*  
That small patch  
*Ku a vulela*  
It is about to get finished  
*Kha vha ri fhe ri le*  
Give us something to eat.

By means of this song, they tell the owner of *davha* that they are feeling hungry and they want something to drink or to eat.

### 5.5.3 Assurance

*Davha* songs also mean assurance to the owner of the field. When these people realise that they are becoming lazy and the owner of the field is also aware, they sing this assurance song. The song is called '*Tsimu yawe*' (his or her field). It is as follows:

*Tsimu yawe*  
His or her field  
*Tsimu ya n'wana*

The child's field  
*A i fheli ngani tsimu yawe*  
Why doesn't it get finished?  
*I do fhela*  
It will be finished.

When singing this song, they end up by assuring the owner of the field when they say '*I do fhela*' (It will be finished). Therefore the owner of the field must never get worried, because the job will be well completed.

#### 5.5.4 Complaint

The meaning of *davha* songs is also to lodge a complaint to the leaders of the community, i.e. the chief. When there are things that are very bad, such things will be expressed by means of a *davha* song as a complaint. An example is the following song:

*Hophu! hophu! langanda!*  
Jump! jump! land!  
*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n'wana*  
We have seen the buck babysitting  
*Vhamusanda nhe ri a tuwa*  
Chief, we are leaving.

The meaning here is that we have seen things that should not be done by our community. Therefore *Vhamusanda* (chief) must see to it that such things should not occur again.

### 5.5.5 Consolidation of the folklore

The meaning of the *davha* songs is also to consolidate the importance of *Tshivenda* folklore. An example is the song indicated above. When the song says: ‘*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n̄wana*’ (We have seen a buck babysitting), this refers to a story from Folklore. The story is about a certain woman who was ploughing her field. She had a small baby that was delaying her because it was crying all the time. The buck asked her as to whether it could babysit the child. The woman agreed but unfortunately, the buck ended up eating the child and the lady was horrified.

What the people are singing at *davha*, has a link with what took place between the buck and the woman. Now the people are saying, what we are seeing is not normal and at the end, we will see the situation which is like the one found in the folktale. The relevance of this meaning of this song to the folklore is that two situations take place in the field. The woman was ploughing her field when the buck babysat the child. Now the people who are performing this *davha* song, are also ploughing. About this *Madima* (personal interview) says:

*Davha* songs also consolidate the meaning of *ngano* (folklore). An example is that of the song ‘*Ro vhona ntsa i tshi lela n̄wana*’ (We have seen the buck babysitting).

### 5.5.6 Starvation

*Davha* songs also mean starvation. An example of this is the song called *Ndala ya Magweni* (The starvation of *Magweni*). The song says *Ndala ya Magweni i a vhavha* (The starvation of *Magweni* is painful). This means that starvation is very painful.

### 5.5.7 Tolerance

The meaning of *davha* songs is also about tolerance. An example is the song *Vhomundende* (pension collectors). What is meant by the song is that if one wants to get mealies one has to work very hard when ploughing the field as the *davha* people are doing. The reason is that *mavhele* (mealies) do not come free to the people like *mundende* (pension for the old people). About this *Dima* (personal interview) says:

Mealies are not easy to get like *mundende*.

The song is as follows:

*Vhomundende*

Pension collectors

*Mundende mundende nwananga*

Pension! Pension! My child.

Therefore people must be tolerant and plough their fields and at end they will get these mealies.

#### 5.5.8 Driving away pains

The meaning of *davha* songs is also to drive away pains of working. An example of the song is the one called '*Liwela wee*' (The attacker). It is as follows:

*Liwela wee!*

Attacker yoo!

*Li a wela, li a wela, ndima lia wela.*

It attacks, it attacks, the patch, it attacks!

The meaning here is an expression of the desire to do away with pains so that these people must do their work easily.

#### 5.5.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, *davha* songs have structure as follows: melody, harmony, dynamics, rhythm, the return, timbre, foreshadowing, scene method, ironic tension, ambiguous meaning, watch your 'you', strong start, a genuine idea, go somewhere, as well as conclusion. These different structures end up giving meanings of the *davha* songs as follows: protest, request, assurance, complaint, consolidation of folklore, starvation, tolerance, driving away pains of working, as well as conclusion.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 gives a summary of the information or issues worked on in earlier Chapters. It will thereafter give the conclusion. After the conclusion the chapter will make recommendations based on the research as a whole.

### 6.2 CONCLUSION

Structure and meaning also exists in African Traditional songs other than those of *Tshivenda*. The structure and meaning work together i.e they do not work in isolation. (See p.47-46). After the structure of any song there will be meaning. It is therefore important to note that these two aspects are not disjointed. It is also very important to note that in cases of where instruments are played, there are songs that are sung verbally. One may stop playing an instrument and sing verbally or play an instrument without singing verbally.

In the case of *Tshivenda* traditional songs, structure and meaning also work together. Structure ends up giving the meaning of the song. In the *malombo* songs although there are *Tshikalanga* words in their structures but at the end the meaning will be found that will advise the *Vhavenda* people on how they must conduct their day to day lives. In the *malombo* songs, the structure will give the meaning which is that of asking the ancestors to give *Vhavenda* their blessings or heal a person who is ill.



The *mafhuwe* songs have structures that give a meaning whereby women protest against male domination, i.e. the ill-treatment that women get from their husbands.

The structure of *davha* songs give the meaning of encouraging each other to work very hard in the fields. The meaning brought about by the structure is that of working together as a group. Another effect is to consolidate *davha* songs with folktales (See page 147:par. 8).

In the case of *Tshivenda* traditional songs such as *malende*, the structure of the songs gives the meanings of advising the *Vhavenda* to lead a good life. The meaning is originally that of happiness. Another *malende* meaning is that of women complaining about their ill-treatment by their husbands. The meaning of *malende* songs as indicated earlier on is to consolidate the relationship between proverbs and songs. The *Vhavenda* are also advised not to commit ritual murder, steal, gossip about others, and many other things. This is possible because the structure gives the meaning to the people.

In *Tshivenda* traditional songs, it is a call and response in structure that give meanings. This happens when the melody is enhanced by harmony. The dynamics as structure which is the strength of the tone for all musical expressions, also expresses meaning (See p.143. par.1). Rhythm as structure has meanings to be understood by the *Vhavenda* community. Good advice is obtained from this structure (rhythm) as it is just like life itself.

There is also the so-called 'return' where the lines of the song keep on returning. This is the structure that evokes meanings of *Tshivenda* traditional songs (See p.143.par.2). Foreshadowing is also a structure that gives a meaning of the song to the listeners. The 'conflict' also gives the meaning which is to complain to the community at large that one is not happy about what is taking place in that community.

An 'ambiguous meaning' as structure gives two meanings for the sake of security on the side of the singer. There is a 'Scene Method' which brings about the structure by mentioning people's names. Such names have meanings attached to them. 'Watch your 'You' as structure gives a meaning. The singer sings about a person who is absent or present but the meaning is affecting the community at large. A 'Surprise' is when the listeners are surprised by the way the song starts. This is the structure that will give its meaning to the listeners also. It does this by surprising them.

A 'strong start' as structure motivates the listeners. It gives out a meaning that attracts the attention of the listeners so as to motivate them. By listening, the message is obtained. These *Tshivenda* Traditional songs have a genuine idea as structure.

Songs here talk about real life situations (See p.144 par.2). Acceptable meanings of the song are based on real life situations, i.e genuine situations. There is also 'go somewhere' as structure which ends up giving listeners meanings of the songs. In this case words are arranged in a proper manner in order to give out proper meanings, i.e meanings that help the community as a whole.

Timbre is also a structure which combines instrument and voices of males and females. It ends up bringing about meanings.

### 6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

A lot about *Tshivenda* Traditional songs are not recorded. These songs are sung by word of mouth only. In this regard stakeholders such as business men, professors of the African Languages Departments, Non-governmental structures and government must encourage the youth to compete in African traditional songs contests. e.g *Tshivenda*. In the Folklore, an attempt has been made to preserve the culture by creating (The Folklore Society) The Southern African Folklore Society, but this is not enough if the youth are not involved.

Conferences must be held especially for the youth to explain to them the importance of their *Tshivenda* traditional songs when it comes to structure and meaning and even other aspects of these (*Tshivenda* traditional songs). Youth must be encouraged to compose music based on *Tshivenda* traditional songs. This would help to make the *Vhavenda* culture remain strong in this multicultural South-Africa. An example of this is the singer composer Daniel *Tshanda* who is winning music awards for singing *Tshivenda* traditional songs. One of his song is “Potilo” meaning counting, starting with the thumb of the right hand. (Blacking 1967:54). The *Vhavenda* artists must come together to help their fellow countrymen to sing their traditional songs. There are people who are not encouraged to go on singing these songs like *Vho-Ntshengedzeni Nemuṁṁṁani*. When a person sings *Tshivenda* traditional songs, he is regarded as a “Heathen”. People dissociate themselves from

such a person. Therefore, people must be encouraged to buy songs (*Tshivenda* traditional songs) composed by the *Vhavenda* people. Future generations must find these songs well preserved for them to listen to, read and know.

Educators must include *Tshivenda* Traditional songs in their School Syllabi, from Primary to Tertiary level. The government, non-governmental structures and other Stakeholders must fund serious competitions for the *Muvenda* youth to compete amongst themselves. This would promote *Tshivenda* traditional songs. The vice President *Thabo Mbeki* talks about “The African Renaissance” which is the reawakening of Africa. This wonderful dream could be realised through these competitions as well as exams based on the *Tshivenda* traditional songs. In this case, such songs could be used for entertainment at school as well as outside the classroom. The *Chibuku* beer brewery encouraged this vision through the then Radio *Thohoyandou* Station. In this case *Phalaphala* FM is being requested to continue with this project.

The *Vhavenda* people must be made aware that before Christianity came to this part of the continent, *Tshivenda* Traditional songs were their guiding light in life. Their structures and meanings (*Tshivenda* Traditional songs) guided the *Vhavenda* people as they worked hand in hand with the proverbs and the folktales.



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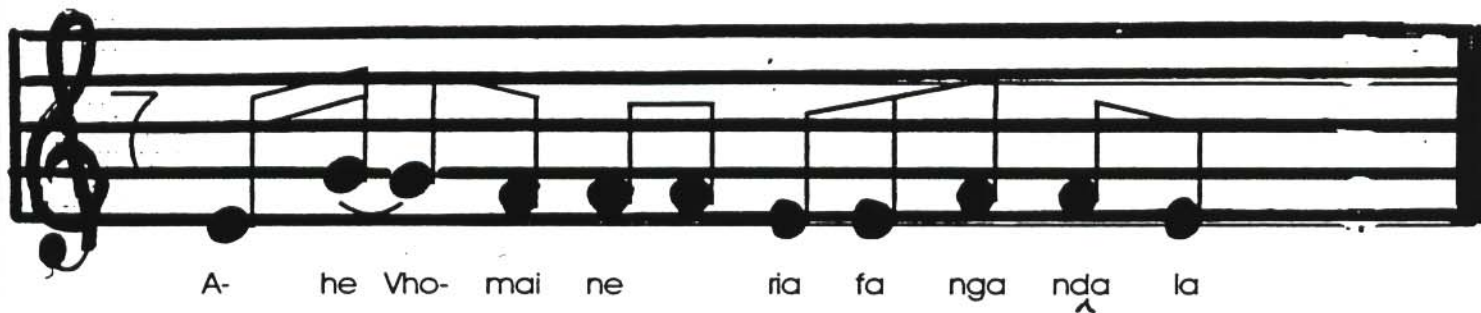


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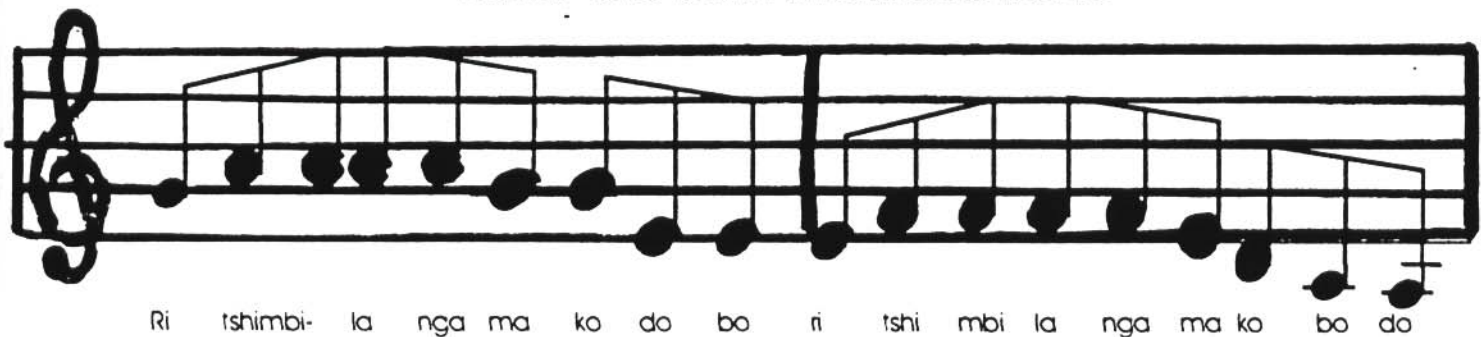
# APPENDIX 1

## MALOMBO - SONG NO 1 VHO MAINE



A- he Vho- mai ne ria fa nga nda la

## MALENDE- SONG NO 2 : RI TSHIMBILA NGA MAKODOBO



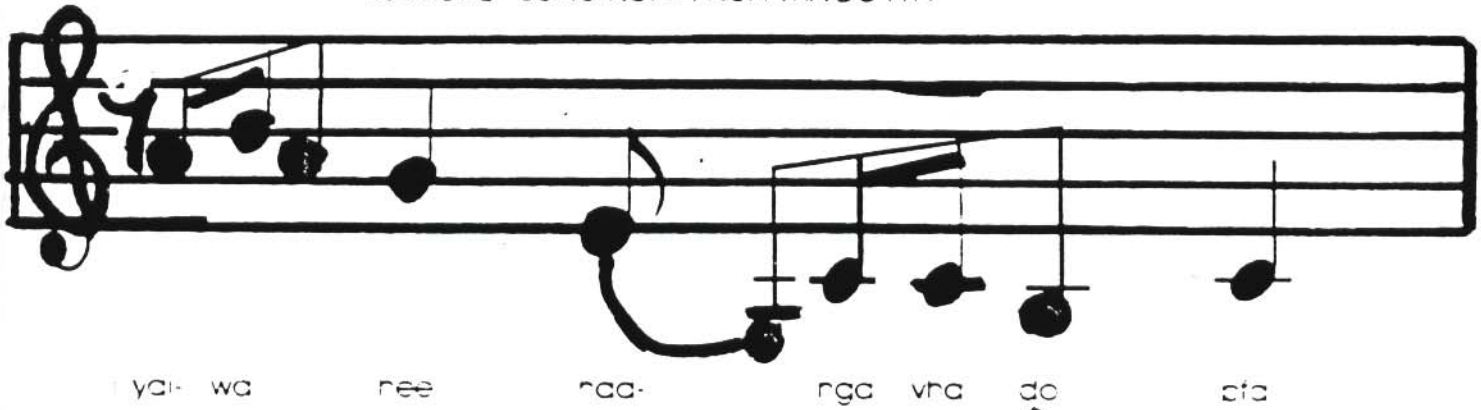
Ri tshimbi- la nga ma ko do bo ri tshi mbi la nga ma ko bo do

## DAVHA - SONG NO. 3 : NDO VHONA N TSA ITSHI LELA N'WANA



Hoph hoph langanda rov hona ntsa itshi lela n'wana vhamusanda rine ri a  
tu wa

## MAFHUWE - SONG NO. 4 : NGA VHA DO PFA



ya- wa nee naa- nga vha do pfa