

[12:06pt 04-15-93]

Copy request

From NYCG (LI) to PAUG

Forward to: CTYG, IAUG, FLUG, NYCX

Mississippi folklore register. — [Hattiesburg, Miss., Mississippi Folklore Society]

— 87, NO.4, PP.215-20, 1974

JOHNSTON, THOMAS F. "TSONGA EXORCISM SONG TEXTS"

Borrower: Interlibrary Loans Section
 Columbia University Libraries
 535 West 114th Street
 New York, NY 10027

SENT 4-16-93

Patron: CARVALHO

Verified: RLIN ID: PAUG86-S1395; RLIN ID: CTYG88-S3109; RLIN ID: IAUG88-S867;

RLIN ID: FLUGABQ2318-S; RLIN ID: NYCX2438621-S

Call: (PAUG) GR1.M56; (VPL) \\Current.\rec'd\

Call: (CTYG) GR1.M57 (LC); (S)

Call: (NYCX) (OLIN) GR1.M67

LCCN: 76216681 ISSN: 0026-6248

ID: NYCG93-I3296 L/C: C CR: CCL PST: O

[12:06pt 04-15-93]

Copy request

From NYCG (LI) to PAUG

Forward to: CTYG, IAUG, FLUG, NYCX

Mississippi folklore register. — [Hattiesburg, Miss., Mississippi Folklore Society]

— 87, NO.4, PP.215-20, 1974

JOHNSTON, THOMAS F. "TSONGA EXORCISM SONG TEXTS"

Borrower: Interlibrary Loans Section
 Columbia University Libraries
 535 West 114th Street
 New York, NY 10027

SENT 4-16-93

Patron: CARVALHO

Verified: RLIN ID: PAUG86-S1395; RLIN ID: CTYG88-S3109; RLIN ID: IAUG88-S867;

RLIN ID: FLUGABQ2318-S; RLIN ID: NYCX2438621-S

Call: (PAUG) GR1.M56; (VPL) \\Current.\rec'd\

Call: (CTYG) GR1.M57 (LC); (S)

Call: (NYCX) (OLIN) GR1.M67

LCCN: 76216681 ISSN: 0026-6248

ID: NYCG93-I3296 L/C: C CR: CCL PST: O

Mississippi Folklore Register 87/4 (1974): 215-20.

305

**Notice: This material may be
protected by copyright law.
(Title 17 U.S. Code)**

TSONGA EXORCISM SONGTEXTS

Thomas F. Johnston

The Essay below, of which this is the first of two parts, is a presentation of field work carried out over the years 1968-1970 in Mozambique and the Northern Transvaal, under a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. So far as I was able to discern, it was the only musical study ever made of the Tsonga up to that date.

Part I is a brief discussion of some Tsonga exorcism song-texts collected in Mozambique and the Northern Transvaal. Tsonga exorcists consider foreign terms and non-Tsonga melodies and rhythmic characteristics suitable for the exorcizing of undesirable foreign spirits. The terms and the music, therefore, are spirit-specific. The instruments required for the exorcism are four shallow, round drums called *man-comane*.

In Part II, which will be published in a later issue, I will place the music of the friction-bow in a social context and illustrate the distinctive features of the music.

The following song-text is partly in Rotse language, and was used to exorcize an undesirable Ndaу spirit. The Rotse live far to the north of the Tsonga, while the Ndaу live to the east.

We Nyambo

Call: Mukaci wa knaya we nyambo we-e-e nyambo,
hiya!

Response: We, nyambawe, hiya, hiya!

Call: Mukaci wa knaya we nyambo we-e-e nyambo,
hiya!

- Response: We, nyambawe, hiya, hiya!
 Call: Nsati wa hamba a ndzi nga swi koti
 Leswi ndzi swi tshungula
 Response: We, nyambawe, hiya, hiya!

Before the Gods

- Call: Your wife speaks untruths before the gods
 Response: The gods are supreme!
 Call: Your wife speaks untruths before the gods
 Response: The gods are supreme!
 Call: It is not certain that these charms will
 expel the evil spirit
 Oh! Someone is lying, my children
 Response: Hey! Hi yah! Yay gods!

Drums, hand-clapping, dancing, and the sound of maronge leg-rattles accompanied the above song; the rhythmic aspects of the exorcism ceremony are called *gongondzela*, meaning 'a drumming-out-of'.

We Nyambe

- Call: Mukaci wa kanya we Nyambe we-e
 Response: Nyambe we Nyambe we!
 Call: We Nyambe hu ya-ya
 Response: Nyambe we Nyambe we!
 Call: A Nyambe nguvu yana n'wa-Zwanga
 Wenyamusoro we a-he
 Response: Wayi ha wayi!
 Call: Ye mukaci wa kanya we Nyambe we
 Response: Wayi ha wayi!

Before the Gods

- Call: Your wife speaks untruths before the gods
 Response: The gods are supreme!
 Call: Your wife speaks untruths before the gods

- Response: The gods are supreme!
 Call: The exorcist smells the garments
 Of the Daughter-of-Zwanga
 Response: Way! Yee!
 Call: Your wife speaks untruths before the gods
 Response: Wah! Yee!

This alternative version of the *nyamusoro's* ('smeller-out') song was performed by a group of forty elderly women; it was again accompanied by drums, hand-clapping, dancing, and the sound of *maronge* leg-rattles. The term *Nyambe*, in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and eighth lines, is not a Tsonga word, but a word designating 'god' in certain other African languages, such as Rotse. Exorcism songs are often in a foreign or archaic tongue, and officiants at exorcism rites often employ secret phrases. The employment, here, of the term *Nyambe* is of interest because it suggests a unity of terminology right across the continent. *Nzame* among the Fan, *Nyame* in Ghana, and *Nyambe* among the Luyi of the Zambezi, and from Botswana to the Congo, all mean 'god' and may stem from a common origin.

YA NYAMUSORO

(1 = 82) Cycle: 18 J. (w 7 bars in ♩ meter)

(solo woman)
 Va - Nya-mi-so - ro va pfu-la khwi - ri Ma - dye - la ri - diwi - ri

(Xizambi)
 col. 8th basso
 ku dya ku tea-na-na Va tot' ma-khwi - ri

Chorus:
 (chorus of women) Ha vu ma-ma - za! Ha vu ma-ma - za!
 (solo woman) (solo woman)

Va Nyamusoro

Solo: Va-Nyamusoro va pfula khwiri
 Madyela ndlwini ku dya ku tsonana
 Va tata makhwiri

Chorus: Ha vu mamaza!
 Ha vu mamaza!
 Ha vu mamaza!
 Ha vu mamaza!

The Exorcists

Solo: The exorcists stay with their
 stomachs outside
 They eat within the house and offer
 none to others
 Their stomachs remain full

Chorus: We guzzle beer!
 We guzzle beer!
 We guzzle beer!
 We guzzle beer!

The Tsonga are a hospitable people and observe strict codes of etiquette with regard to eating. To eat alone and offer none around is presented here as the custom of exorcists (who are often aliens living amidst the Tsonga) and thus the epitome of foreignness. To eat alone is unpardonable and leads to social ostracism, as the following Tsonga proverb suggests:

Madya swaku, ku nga khamba
 Eat-by-himself is a bandit

The nyamusoros often acquire considerable wealth and property by means of successful exorcism and thus do not lack food and drink. Henri Junod, author of *The Life of a*

South African Tribe (London: Macmillan, 1927), witnessed an exorcism during which the nyamusoro overheard certain secrets and demanded that he be paid one or two oxen and he would keep silent. On another occasion the relatives of the bewitched came to the xinusa, paid him one pound, and asked him to find out the murderer.

The chorus lines of our song employ the word *mamaza*, a derivative of *mama*, which Cuénod translates as "to suck, as a baby from the breast." This represents an allegorical use of the term, for they are 'sucking' or 'guzzling' beer.

Dzelela Moya

Call: Dzelela moya
 Response: Dzelela moya, dzelela moya-a
 Hayi ayi-ayi

Scold The Spirit

Call: Scold the spirit
 Response: Scold the spirit, scold the spirit
 Hayi ayi-ayi

Note the use of the Zulu term *dzelela* instead of the expected *holovela*; this song is prominently featured during the rites to exorcize undesirable *mandhlozi* (Zulu) spirits.

Helele Zulu!

Call: Ye hayi, ye hayi hayi
 Ye-ya
 Response: Helele Zulu, helele Zulu!
 Sengilele

Oh, Zulu!

Call: Ye hayi, ye hayi hayi
 Ye-ya
 Response: Oh, Zulu, oh Zulu!
 Now I sleep

In accord with the common Tsonga principle of association of like phenomena, exorcism songs which mention the Zulu by name or sing of the Zulu are considered particularly efficacious for the expelling of undesirable *mandhlozi* (Zulu) spirits. Among the Tsonga, there is still a degree of awe and hatred for the Zulu, who in the nineteenth century overran Tsongaland, carrying off the women and children and inducting the men into Zulu regiments.

Tsonga exorcism song-texts give a clue to the many psychohistorical factors which have gone into forming what is today recognized as Tsonga culture: the diffusion of possession cults from that area in the north which once constituted the great Monomotapa Empire, the social and economic role of exorcists now living among the Tsonga, and the great southern uprisings resulting from Shaka's ascendancy to power.

-University of Alaska

MUMBLETY PEG, ANYONE?

Theron Collins

When you and I were young, Maggie, in the day when the horse was still competitor to the machine, and one's time was more enjoyed than spent, "peg" was one of the diversions for entertainment. There were two separate games of peg, greatly differing in that one, stick peg, was physically demanding of coordination and speed and strength, and the milder game, mumblety peg, was more for fun and joke.

Mumblety is only one of several dialectal renditions of the name of the game, **mumble-the-peg** and **mumble peg** being two other common ones. The game itself is quite old. There are references to it that date as far back as the early seventeenth century. A game similar to this was called **knifie** in Scotland,¹ and a still more formal game in England having some rules characteristic of mumblety peg was known as **trap ball**. The latter game, however, was played with conventional apparatus of a cup shaped trap which had a ball attached by a cord and a bat to eject the ball from the trap.² It is typical of children's games, as well as other types of folklore, that one aspect of a folk item will be detached from its source and applied to a different item, a fact which makes variations of a popular game the rule rather than the exception.

A game of stick peg was started when one found an unbroken mop handle and had the time, energy, an open field, and a competitor. An approximate eight-inch piece of the handle was whittled to a point much as a pencil is sharpened. This piece was called the peg. The remaining portion of the handle was called the stick, and was used much as a