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Humanized Animal and Bird Figures  
in Tsonga Songtexts

Thomas F. Johnston

The Tsonga of Mozambique and the Northern Transvaal possess a remarkably extensive body of mythology and folklore, consisting of proverbs, riddles, tales, and songtexts. I made a study of aspects of this heritage, during a two-year stay with the Tsonga, under a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

Animal and bird figures are particularly prominent in Tsonga songtexts, clearly dividing into two groups: (i) humanized; and (ii) non-humanized. In the group of songtexts where animals and birds are strongly humanized, we note the following:

- (a) The figures are imbued with human emotional and behavioral qualities.
- (b) These qualities are sometimes derived from observed fauna behavior, such as the cunning of the jackal, or the tendency of the *dronao* bird to steal and conceal objects.
- (c) The Tsonga concept of the fauna in question is sometimes of a totemic nature.
- (d) Songtexts containing humanized animal and bird figures are frequently associated with a children's game.
- (e) There is generally a group of proverbs associated with such a songtext, corroborating its central message.
- (f) The song often occurs within a long Tsonga folktale.
- (g) Within that tale, it often serves a magical overcoming function.
- (h) The humanized cunning hero abounds in Tsonga folklore. The Tsonga are largely a classless society. It is noteworthy that in those African societies where myth-tellers serve a ruler, accounting for the latter's supernatural origin and his privileged existence, the cunning hero folktale has largely disappeared.

In the group of songtexts where animal and bird figures are not humanized, we note the following:

- (a) The animal or bird is used in an analogy where the observed characteristics of the creature are alluded to. Such instance included the "jumping of the ante-lope" when the infant kicks in the womb, and the "wriggling of the snake" for sexual intercourse.
- (b) The songtext merely reflects use of the animal or bird as a common source of Tsonga food. Such instances include "Eat The Termites!", and "Goat, We Sleep With Hunger!"
- (c) Such songs generally belong to the category or class known as *tinsimu nta le byalweni* (beer-drink songs). In the social and ritual context where such songs are used, food and drink are of special importance.

The following list contains a representative sample of Tsonga songtexts featuring strongly humanized animal and bird figures.

*N'wa-Mpfundla na N'wa-Mhunti riha tinyawa ta nga mayo!*  
(Master Hare and Master Duiker, replace my beans!).

*N'wa-Mpfundla, hi ya dla tinyarhi na timhunti na tinghala*  
(Master Hare, hunting buffaloes, duikers, and lions).

*Xinenga xa N'wa-Mpfundla* (Little leg of Master Hare).

*A va n'wi voni N'wa-Gwela* (They don't see Old Buffalo).

*Vutlhari byi dlaya whe N'wa-Phunqubye* (Too much cunning will be the undoing of Master Jackal).

*Teka ta wena u funengeta hi mbita Ntengu!* (Take your deeds and cover them with a pot, Master Drongo Bird!).

*Ha xi vutla mintsenge N'wa-Mangatlwani* (We tear out its feathers, this Master Kite).

*Nyenyenyana tilo!* (Bird-of-Heaven!).



*N'wana wa xikavakava!* (Master Goshawk!).

*Ndziko-ndziko xinyenyana, n'wana N'wa-Xinana!* (Ogre-bird,  
Master Frog!).

*N'wa-Madlayisani bokota!* (Master Bulbul the Destroyer!).

*Kanya-kanya N'wa-Rimpfana!* (Step, step, Master Chameleon!).

*N'wa-Hlarhu!* (Master Python!).

The first song on the list is rather long; to conserve space we give only the English translation.

Master Hare and Master Duiker

- Unison song: Duiker, duiker, replace my beans!  
The beans which I cultivated during drought!  
During drought when we ate *madungu felemete-e!*
- Solo speech: The duiker, however, offered him a hoe.  
Off went Master Hare until he met some clay-diggers. He told them that, for clay-digging, a hoe was better than a stick. When they borrowed the hoe it quickly broke.
- Unison song: Clay-diggers, clay-diggers, replace my hoe!  
The hoe the duiker gave me!  
The one he gave me in exchange for my beans!  
The beans I cultivated during drought  
During drought when we ate *madungu felemete-e!*
- Solo speech: The clay diggers offered him a clay plate.  
Off went Master Hare with the clay plate, until he met some honey-gatherers. He told them that honey is best collected on a clay plate, not on leaves. They borrowed it from him, but it soon broke.
- Unison song: Honey-gatherers, honey-gatherers, replace my clay plate!  
The clay plate the clay-gatherers gave me!  
The one they gave me in place of my hoe!  
The hoe the duiker gave me!  
The one he gave me in exchange for my beans!  
The beans I cultivated during drought!  
During drought when we ate *madungu felemete-e!*
- Solo speech: The honey-gatherers offered him some honey.  
Off went Master Hare with his honey, until he met some peanut-grinders. He told the peanut-grinders that it is best to add honey when making peanut butter, so they

took it and poured it all into their  
peanuts.

- Unison song: Peanut-grinders, peanut-grinders, replace  
my honey.  
The honey the honey-gatherers gave me!  
The honey they gave me in place of my clay  
plate!  
The clay plate the clay-gatherers gave me!  
The one they gave me in place of my hoe!  
The hoe the duiker gave me!  
The one he gave me in exchange for my beans!  
The beans I cultivated during drought!  
During drought when we ate *madungu felemete-e!*
- Solo speech: The peanut-grinders offered him some peanut  
butter. Off went Master Hare with the peanut  
butter!

The length of Tsonga songs and tales varies according to the storyteller -- I have heard a two-hundred-line version of this Master Hare tale. It is told to children by old women during the winter after sunset. Tsonga children found recounting folktales before sunset are warned that horns might grow from their heads.

The migrant, acephalous, and largely classless Tsonga possess fifty or sixty folktales featuring Master Hare. When emphasizing a man's skill or cunning they use of the following saying:

*Munhu lo i Nwa'mpfungla*

This man is another Master Hare

The song given tells us much of Tsonga subsistence, and the call-and-response structure ensures that Tsonga children likewise learn of the basic dietary items, tools, and utensils.

When hunting hare on the South African veld, the Tsonga form a line and advance with sticks, beating the bush. However, the hare is evasive, and thought by the Tsonga to be clever, as the following proverb shows:

*Va bile xihlahla,*

*A va banga mpfundla*

They have beaten the bush,  
But not the hare

Many Tsonga say "Xinengana xa mpfundla xi nandziha ngopfu wa chela viri-viri!", which means "the little leg of the hare is very sweet with hot chile!" As an example of Tsonga analogous thinking, we note that there is a taboo on married girls eating the hare during courtship lest they become too cunning.

*N'wa Mfundla, Hi Ya Dla Tinyarhi Na  
Timhunti Na Tinghala*

- (Spoken) Call: *Garingani wa garingani*  
Response: *Garingani!*  
Call: *Ko na swipfuketana/Ko va N'wa-Mpfundla na N'wa-Mhunti/O a hi longeni timbuva/Hi ya kule/Hi ya ku hloteni/Hi ya dla tinyarhi/Na timhunti/Na tinghala/*  
(Sung) Call: *Mi vulavule yini vamanani*  
Response: *Guru mantsengele!*  
Call: *Niri tindondolodzini/No hlangana na vhimba mukhwana/A ni hoxa ndzeni ka mukhwana/Mafele ya nga guru/Se n'to yini guru/Madlaya manani guru/*

(diagonal strokes indicate interpolation of response)

*Master Hare, Hunting Buffaloes,  
Duikers, and Lions*

- (Spoken) Call: *Once upon a time*  
Response: *Garingani!*  
Call: *'Twas said of yore/Master Hare and Master Duiker/Prepared their rations/And set off hunting/Hunting for buffaloes/Hunting for duikers/Hunting for lions/*  
(Sung) Call: *Why are your heads together, you women?*  
Response: *Guru mantsengele!*



Call: We are gathering wild peas/We met an  
ogre with a knife/Woe, it is my death/  
What shall I say?/You kill my mother/

The previous Master Hare story-song (No. 1) consisted of unison song alternating with solo speech. This (No. 2) Master Hare story-song consists of a long spoken call-and-response section during which the cantor relates the story step-by-step and is punctuated by the audience's "garingani!", followed by a long sung call-and-response section during which the cantor digresses from the story and is punctuated by the audience's "guru mantsengele!".

Occasionally the Tsonga story-song serves a 'supernatural' purpose within the story, being sung to effect some miraculous event. In this connection Rycroft has commented that "the (Xhosa) song within the folktale often has magical power."

Humanized animals who divulge secrets and who communicate prophecies are common in Tsonga folklore. The cat is considered a mysterious animal, and in the following song the singer claims that it "reveals astonishing things" to her. We also give another version of this song, in which our Tsonga translated the same line as "shows me miracles." Use of the word "miracles" reflects the presence nearby of the Swiss mission church.

#### *Ximanga*

Solo: He ximanga xi ndzi komba mihlolo!  
Ho-ha! Mhane  
Hi yiri ngoma ya mahuwelele  
He ximanga xi ndzi komba mihlolo!  
He ximanga xi ndzi komba mihlolo!  
Ho-ha! Mhane  
Hi yiri ngoma ya mahuwelele  
He ximanga xi ndzi komba mihlolo!

#### The Cat

Solo: The cat reveals astonishing things to me!  
Ho! Ha! Mother!  
O song of the wailing shouters  
The cat reveals astonishing things to me!

The cat reveals astonishing things to me!  
Ho! Ha! Mother!  
O song of the wailing shouters  
The cat reveals astonishing things to me!

Songs containing 'cat' themes similar to the above frequently appear within the context of Tsonga folktales. P.D. Cole-Beuchat mentions an episode wherein "a young bride, whose sole companion is a little cat, will, when she wants to call the cat to help her perform household duties, sing the magic words which her mother has taught her." Prior to 1897 Henri Junod collected a Ba-Ronga story in which a cat dons war regalia, sings, and dances. Here is another version of the same song.

#### *Ximanga*

Call: *Ndzi file mina, yi ri ngoma ya  
Ma-huwelele o-ya!*

Response: *O-ya! Ndzi tekerile nyama*

Call: *O xo ndzi khomba mihlolo, O xi ndzi  
tekerile nyama*

Response: *O-ya! Ndzi tekerile nyama  
Yi ri ngoma ya Ma-huwelele  
He ximanga xi ndzi tekerile nyama*

#### The Cat

Call: I am dead, says the song of the howlers

Response: Oh, ya! It took my meat away

Call: It shows me miracles, it took my meat away

Response: O-ha! It took my meat away  
Says the song of the howlers  
The cat took my meat away

A similar theme occurs in an episode reported by R.S. Rattray in Akan-Ashanti Folktales, wherein a cat and a dog were admonished not to devour the meat, but could not resist doing so. E. Dayrell also, in Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, tells of an Efik-Ibibio tale in which a cat "picked up the remains of the cock



and ran off with it to the bush".

*N'wa-Ximanga Na N'wa-Phungubye*

Three-part chorus: *I xirilo xa yena n'wa-Phungubye*  
*Swi vuriwa hi yena N'wa-Ximanga*  
*Vutlari byi dlaya whe N'wa-Phungubye*  
*Vutlhari byi dlaya n'winyi wa byona*  
*Hi mina, hi mina, hi mina! N'wa-*  
*Ximanga*  
*Hi mina, hi mina, hi mina! N'wa-*  
*Ximanga*  
*Hi mina, hi mina, hi mina! N'wa-*  
*phungubye*  
*Hi mina nghena hansi mugodini*

Child-of-the-Cat and Child-of-the-Jackal

Three part chorus: *It's the wailing of the Child-of-*  
*the-Jackal*  
*Said Child-of-the-Cat*  
*Too much cleverness will be the undoing*  
*Of Child-of-the-Jackal*  
*My name is Child-of-the-Cat*  
*My name is Child-of-the-Cat*  
*My name is Child-of-the-Jackal*  
*From far within the cave*

The wailing of a jackal pack will carry long distances in the African night air, and the Swahili term for this animal -- *bweha* -- derives from the characteristic sound made by these animals. Their favorite pastime is to take turns in luring a female wildebeest into charging one of them, while another attacks its young. This manoeuvre often proves fatal to the jackal which has overstepped itself, and the result is summed up in the following Tsonga proverb:

*Vutlhari a byi heti lembe*  
Cunning does not last for a year

At Njaka-njaka the following alternative rendition of this song was obtained:

*N'wa-Ximanga Na N'wa-Phungubye*

Three-part chorus: *I xirilo*  
*Xa yena N'wa-Phungubye*  
*Swi vuriwa hi yena N'wa-Ximanga*  
*Vutlhari*  
*Byi dlaya n'winyi wa byona*  
*Vutisani*  
*Makholwa hi ku vona*

Child-of-the-Cat and Child-of-the-Jackal

Three-part-chorus: *It's the wailing*  
*Of the Child-of-the-Jackal*  
*Said Child-of-the-Cat*  
*Too much cleverness*  
*Will be his undoing*  
*Ask the One*  
*Who only believes after seeing*

The final two lines of this song are related to the Tsonga proverb which follows:

*Mativona-ha-yexe i khombo*  
Mr. Seeing-for-himself falls into misfortune

There is another Tsonga saying which conveys a similar message:

*I makholwa-ku-vona*  
It is the one who believes what he sees

The jackal is a hero for the Hottentots, as it is for the Somali and the Galla of north-eastern Africa, but the Basuto have apparently confused the characters of the jackal and the hare, attributing to the former certain roles belonging to the latter. The Dogon of the western Sudan believe that the jackal is the defective son of their one God, Amma. The defect arose from a barred passage during conception, in the form of a red termite hill -- a myth which is used to justify female excision.

There are various other jackal songs. The Bushmen, according to Dorothea Bleek, sing the following:

Canter for me, little jackal  
O little jackal, little jackal

C.T.D. Marivate published a jackal song entitled *Mhakanyana* in the Bantu Education Journal of August, 1959, together with other songs of the Tsonga. This tribe was formerly a neighbor of the Chopi, of whom Hugh Tracey wrote that "still today the fine young men of the Chopi tribe turn out in all their finery of jackal skins to dance ..." and it is possible that an occasional jackal song was directed against them in jest.

Regarding the fact that the jackal is sometimes a totem animal, Yvonne Huskisson, in The Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi, cites a women's song which goes thus:

Go to Matlala's where the jackal  
Is the totem animal to Mmadibata  
(Mother of Animals)

*Ntengu!*

Solo: *A hi yeni Mantengula  
Teka ta wena u funengeta hi mbita  
A hi fambi Mantengula  
Ntengu, Ntengula n'wananga*

Child-of-the-Drongo Bird!

Solo: Let us go to the place of the Drongo Bird  
Take your misdeeds and cover them with a pot  
Let us walk to the place of the Drongo Bird  
Drongo, Drongo my child

*Ntengu*, the Tsonga name of the drongo bird, possibly comes from the verb *tengula*, to meddle in the affairs of others, and it may identify the tale-telling bird of children's stories.

In Venda Children's Songs (p. 124) John Blacking gives "the best known and most popular of all children's songs" with this line:

When they run away from the *thengu* bird



J. Torrend, in Bantu Folklore from Northern Rhodesia, informs us that this bird appears in a tale of the Tonga (no connection with Tsonga):

She had already become a *ntengwa* bird. The father, from the bank, was looking fixedly ... "There is the *ntengwa*, mates", say the children, "there is the *ntengwa*. It has gone into the hole".

*Ntengu!*

- Call: *Ntengu, Ntengule n'wana wanga*  
Response: *Ha manana mantengule wa teka ta vona va  
Va funengeta hi tshuri manana mantengule*  
Call: *Ntengu, Ntengule n'wana wanga*  
Response: *Ha manana mantengule wa teka ta vona va  
Va funengeta hi tshuri manana mantengule*  
Call: *Le ka mina ndzi kumekile na mina*  
Response: *Ha manana mantengule wa teka ta vona va  
Va funengeta hi tshuri manana mantengule*  
Call: *Ntengu, Ntengu! Va funengeta hi mbita*  
Response: *Ha manana mantengule wa teka ta vona va  
Va funengeta hi tshuri manana mantengule*

Child-of-the-Drongo Bird!

- Call: *Drongo, my Child-of-the-Drongo!*  
Response: *You reveal all my misdeeds  
You keep yours under the grinding-block!*  
Call: *Drongo, my Child-of-the-Drongo!*  
Response: *You reveal all my misdeeds  
You keep yours under the grinding-block!*  
Call: *Tell, tell! Keep yours under the grinding-block!*  
Response: *Your reveal all my misdeeds  
You keep yours under the grinding-block!*  
Call: *Tell, tell! Keep yours under the grinding-block!*  
Response: *You reveal all my misdeeds  
You keep yours under the grinding block!*

This is another version of the same song, and it adds the information that, while keeping its own misdeeds concealed, the

Drongo Bird tells the misdoings of others -- thus this song-text is a saying applied to busybodies. An ornithologist comments of this bird that "it becomes very noisy towards the mating season". The Pedi, neighbors of the Tsonga, know of a bird "which keeps secrets" -- there is a song, given by Yvonne Huskisson in The Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi, which runs "I am a wise man like a bird, I am a wise man who can keep a secret".

The *drongo* bird in Tsonga territory is thought to take objects such as herdboys' whistles, snuff pouches, combs, and rings, and hide them underneath shrubs and rocks. It is also thought to change forms, and become a witch or a human. Its noisy cry is believed to broadcast the covert acts of villagers, such as taking pumpkin from neighboring gardens at night. But its own equally mischievous acts remain concealed, under some heavy object such as the grinding block, where they cannot easily be discovered.

The humanized acts of these animal and bird figures are a projection of Tsonga social life with all its anxieties, stress, conflict, and uncertainty. They also serve as a safety valve for hostility -- by directing accusations away from kin and other community members they reduce catastrophic social conflict while still permitting grievances to be aired.

In other songs the humanized acts are a parody of eccentric villagers, or a social commentary on nonconforming behavior, or merely a satire on the monotonous daily chores which are Tsonga women's lot (Tsonga men's work is spasmodic and interesting). In other cases they reflect Tsonga moral precepts. A "jackal" is a villager who breaks Tsonga norms concerning moderation, modesty, inconspicuousness, and group identity, by being too "clever" -- growing more than he needs, hoarding, or currying too much favour with administrators. These folklore figures thus regulate social behavior.

In Tsonga folklore there exists a much broader range of songtexts utilizing animal and bird figures, but in a non-

humanized form. Villagers have many songs concerning owls, pigeons, ants, locusts, worms, fish, snakes, beetles, baboons, antelopes, leopards, elephants, crocodiles, hyenas, and goats. Typical songs are listed below.

*Ximbutana ahi tlheha hi ngi* (Goat, we sleep with hunger).

*Hon'wil Wa kanganyisa* (The hyena howls! You deceive me).

*Yiku tluka mbhee* (The calf jumps).

*I ngwenya yi lo rhumeriwa* (The crocodile sent as a curse).

*Tindyandhaye ya tindlopfu tile ku Chauke* (Men, elephants destroy corn at Chauke's).

*Yingwe ya mavala* (The leopard has spots).

*Ku tlula ka mhala* (The jumping of the antelope).

*Va teka byalwa va nyika nfene* (They offered beer to the baboon).

*Xifufununu xi rhwele xi na masingita* (The beetle carries miracles on its back).

*Xifufununu vuka vuka!* (Beetle, wake up!).

*Hayi nyoka leyo vimba mlomo* (I fear the snake which blocks my mouth).

*I nhlampfi baku mabomu* (The fish twists like this).

*Va ya dya masonja* (To go to eat worms).

*Lomnya tinjiya mi ta dya Exitimeleni* (Catch the locusts so that we may eat in the train).

*Hoza u nga dyiwa nhloko hi majenje* (The ants will eat your head).

*Mavuluvulu nghondzo yi sukile* (Tadpoles, the hammerkop has gone).



*Tuva lanqutani Ma-Changana* (Regard the pigeon, Shangaans).

*Dlayani xikhova!* (Kill the owl!).

*Nhongani N'inin'ini makoti dluva-dluva* (A fly buzzes, the vultures flutter for meat).

Most of these songs belong to the Tsonga *tinsimu nta le byalweni* class (social beer-drink music). They are sung for the *muchongolo* dancing of adult men and women at social beer-drinks, where the drumming accompaniment is performed by middle-aged women with babies tied to their backs. The Tsonga beer-drink is a formal social occasion serving as the forum for the airing of complaints, or as the market-place for a transaction (such as payment of bride-price), or the celebration of a rite of passage. Such celebrations often last through the night, the entertainment consists of improvisation upon song lines. The Tsonga have a way of speaking indirectly. During a beer drink which lasts until dawn, a singer may spontaneously sing "the pigeon does not sleep or rest!"

*Tuva! Ri Hamba Nga Lali*

Solo: *Hi-yoo! Wo-yi-yoo!*  
*Wo-yi-ya! Wo-yi-ya! Yaa-ha!*  
*I ya-ya! Tuva*  
*Tuva langutani Machangano-ol*  
*I ye! Tuva! Ri hamba ri nga lali*  
*I ye! Tuva! He-he! I-ya-le-ho-he! Tuva!*

The Pigeon Does Not Sleep or Rest

Solo: *Whee! Yoo!*  
*Whee! Yoo! Whee! Yoo!*  
*Hee! Yay! The pigeon!*  
*Look at the pigeon, you Tsonga people*  
*Hee! Yay! The pigeon does not sleep*  
*or rest*  
*Hee! Yay! the pigeon!*

Machangan' is the term applied by the Tsonga to themselves, and it derives from the place-name Ntshangane, in the Lower Limpopo Valley, Mozambique. The name was taken as a surname by the Nguni chief Manukosi, who ruled in Ntshangane in 1825. Henri Junod reports the existence of an old historical song which runs thus:

*Ndji wela, ndji wela, Nwatembe!*  
*Ndji ya tlhasa ka Ntshangane*  
*Sala muti wa Muhari*

I cross the river, O Tembe!  
I fly away as far as Ntshangane  
Goodbye, village of Muhari

Chief Muhari ruled the Tembe clan in 1750, a point which may help to establish the age of the term Shangaan. Continuing our examination of the song, we find that the final lines attribute wakefulness to the pigeon, and it is a quality which the Bantu associate with message-carrying abilities. Alice Werner tells of a Nyasaland tale in which a pigeon successfully completes an errand to bring back a *mpande* shell, and Rattray reports an Ashanti tale in which a pigeon informs villagers that it is really a bewitched chief. A Bilene boy once told Henri Junod that "when someone dies the headman must gather together all the pigeons and tell them about the death".

*Tuva*

Call: *Se tuva-a*  
Response: *E-yo! Ra Muhlava a ri dyi*  
Call: *Se tuva ra muhlava a ri dyi mavela*  
Response: *E-yo! Ra muhlava a ri dyi mavele*  
Call: *Se tuva-a*  
Response: *E-yo! Ra Muhlava a ri dyi*  
Call: *Se tuva ra Muhlava a ri dyi mavele*  
Response: *E-yo! Ra Muhlava a ri dyi mavele*

### This Pigeon

Call: This pigeon  
Response: Hee-yoo! It doesn't eat maize  
Call: Muhlava's pigeon doesn't eat maize  
Response: Hee-yoo! It doesn't eat maize  
Call: His pigeon  
Response: Hee-yoo! It doesn't eat maize  
Call: Muhlava's pigeon doesn't eat maize  
Response: Hee-yoo! It doesn't eat maize

This singer has drawn attention to the pigeon's eating habits, and the song may or may not be making reference to one of the many taboos for Tsonga women -- taboos which severely restrict diet at certain points on the ritual calendar. Songs composed by the Tsonga frequently travel across neighboring tribes and become widely popular, and vice versa. In Venda Children's Songs (p. 121) John Blacking gives what he describes as a very old Venda song, which is in turn related to one sung by the Shona of Southern Rhodesia. Its text parallels ours but is presented in question and answer form:

What do you want here, Tsonga?

I want a bird

That doesn't eat maize

Among the Tsonga, Venda and Shona of Southern Africa, much havoc is wrought among crops preceding harvest time, by flocks of birds which descend on the fields in large numbers. Teams of women and children organise themselves to keep day and night vigil, armed with thin-can rattles. Special songs and dances are performed to deter the marauders, and dozens of the loud rattles are shaken simultaneously, in intricate Tsonga rhythms.

Songtexts of the Tsonga reflect rural life close to nature, and acute familiarity with the flora and fauna or the region -- there are over fifty different terms for cattle, according to whether young, old, in groups, single, spotted, fat, thin, etc.



They also reflect a projective system which attempts to explain the events of life -- crop failure, social antagonism. At the same time they serve a musical system which is among the most vigorous, meaningful, rich, and varied in Africa.

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## SUMMARY

This is a brief study of cultural meaning and social function in Tsonga songtexts. The sample was collected in Mozambique during a two-year stay with the Shangana-Tsonga. The research was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

In the songtexts examined, humanized animal and bird figures serve a projection system whereby Tsonga anxieties and aspirations are solved or fulfilled magically. Behavioral attributes are assigned by analogy (the cunning jackal, the thieving bird). The songs are associated with and corroborated by sets of proverbs, both being taught to the young, thus serving a didactic function for enculturation. The figures are sometimes totemic, frequently associated with a game but also found within long stories, where they serve a magical overcoming function as they sing an 'enabling' song.

## RESUME

Dans cet article nous avons étudié la fonction sociale des textes-chantés Tsonga ainsi que leur signification culturelle. Les matériaux ont été recueillis au Mozambique lors d'un séjour de deux ans financé par la fondation Wenner-Gren pour la Recherche Anthropologique.

Dans les textes examinés, on voit que les animaux anthropomorphes et les représentations d'oiseaux servent de système de projection par lesquels les angoisses et les aspirations des Tsonga sont magiquement résolues et satisfaites. Les conduites sont assignées par analogie (le chacal rasé, l'oiseau voleur). Des proverbes sont associés aux chants pour les étayer tous deux étant enseignés aux jeunes dans un but didactique. Les représentations sont quelquefois totémiques, souvent associées à un jeu, mais aussi intégrés à de longs récits, dans lesquels elles ont une fonction magique, de les chants assurant un pouvoir de dépassement.

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