

The Musical Expression of Witchcraft Accusations Among the Tsonga

Thomas F. Johnston

The expression of accusations of witchcraft (accusations which testify to interpersonal problems and conflicts in a society where privacy is almost unknown) among the Tsonga is a carefully regulated matter, and is surrounded by a number of cultural prescriptions and proscriptions such as the fact that they must be sung instead of spoken, and personal names should not be mentioned. Thirteen songs of witchcraft accusation are presented here. They were collected in their normal social context, documented, and the meanings verified with impromptu committees of local elders. A cultural explanation of the texts is undertaken, revealing such indigenous beliefs as the supernatural theft of cattle, the "eating" of children at night, magical theft of groundnuts, malicious souring of the beer, transfiguration into owls, clawing cats, and crocodiles in order to cause mischief or wreak bodily harm.

The author carried out field work during the period 1968-70 in Mozambique and the Northern Transvaal, under grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (2504) and the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Tsonga are a Bantu-speaking people numbering about 1'200'000 in Mozambique and 700'000 in the Northern Transvaal; this paper deals with a sample of songs belonging to the institution known as the Tsonga social beer-drink, wherein interpersonal problems and conflicts are sometimes resolved.

William Bascom, in discussing four functions of folklore, observes that one of these is to fulfill "the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behavior". Emphasizing the point that *special forms* exist in order to accomplish this, he states that "more than simply serving to validate or justify institutions, beliefs and attitudes, some forms of folklore are important as means of applying social pressure and exercising social control" (1965, 294). The

Tsonga songs collected by the author in 1968-70 and given here constitute such a form.

The reader will note that, within the following texts, various kinds of references are made to the mysterious *valoyi* - wizards sent in strange forms by one's enemy in order to cause crop failure, illness, or even death. The enemy is generally someone whose behavior is known to, and disliked or feared by, the singer of the song. Indictment is never *spoken*. Such an act would precipitate irremediable friction. Witchcraft accusations may however, be *sung* within the context of the "forum"-like social beer-drink, without violating social norms.

De Vanuna Va Na Nsele
 Chorus: Vanuna va na nsele
 Vanuna va na nsele
 Tshanga ra kona ri lunghile
 Tshanga ra kona ri lunghile
 Solo shout: A hi vanhu va kona
 Va nga na nsele wa vuloyi!

The Villagers Are Cruel
 Chorus: The villagers are cruel
 The villagers are cruel
 The kraal is in order
 The kraal is in order
 Solo shout: It is the people therein
 Who always accuse of witchcraft!

The singer of the above songs is protesting that the villagers have falsely accused him of enticing their cattle into his kraal by witchcraft. This form of complaint would bring severe repercussions if made openly in speech, but when couched in musical terms it is not only permissible but effective. The situation is complicated by the fact that kraals are located together for purposes of sociability.

Many villagers prefer to construct their huts away from the main tribal concentrations, locating them in small groups of two or three.

58

que
73a,
XIII
7ba.
XXI
du

Vanuna Va Na Nsele

♩ = 390
 Cycle: 32 ♩

(The Villagers Are Cruel)
 Transpos.: min 6th up

bow
 col 8ve
 basso

women
 32
 man
 bow Va-nhu va ko-na va na nse- le
 32

women
 tshanga ra ko-na ri lu-
 32
 man
 ngi-le
 wa vu-lo-yi
 32

In this manner they hope to avoid the antagonism and rivalry caused by accusations of witchcraft (but often incur *more*).

A Tsonga lament from Mwamitwa, Tzaneen district, bemoans the far-reaching power of these *valoyi*:

Hi na xirilo, ka Matebula
Waluyi la wuldya na tihosi
Wo nwi dlayela mahalo

We lament at Matebula
The wizard kills even chiefs
Chief Fofozu they would
kill for no reason

(Tracey 1963: recording)

A Pedi song from the neighboring Maupa (Tsaneng) location goes thus:

Take the witches and throw
them away
You stand with a person, she
is a witch

(Huskisson 1958, App. B: xv)

The following song, given to the writer who was inquiring after songs of witchcraft-accusation at a beer-drink, was described as being "mainly for children".

Gd Hi Xinoyani
Call: Vana va nga
Response: Hamakuluku! Java-java!
Call: Va nga helo
Response: Hamakuluku! Java-java!
Call: Hi xinoyani
Response: Hamakuluku! Java-java

Finished By The Valoyi
Call: My children
Response: Hamakuluku! Java-java!
Call: Have been finished
Response: Hamakuluku! Java-java!
Call: By the witches
Response: Hamakuluku! Java-java!

The singer has supposedly lost children and is here accusing persons (unknown) of causing their death (infant mortality during the first year is about 40%). Other women-singers were

heard to attribute the deaths of their offspring to theft by hyenas. These two supposed causes of death may be one and the same, for "hyenas" are the guise in which *valoyi* often appear, during their nighttime marauding around the village.

Here is a Chopi song which purports to identify the origin of the *valoyi*, and the means they use:

Ndikondela, you have troubled them
By killing their child
Who had done you no harm
Yet you poisoned him
With a toadstool

(Tracey: 1948a, 60)

There is a Tsonga saying which the singers say they direct towards *valoyi* suspects:

Loku u nga loyi, nkondzo wa noyi wa ku
landza
You are not a witch? But the witch's foot
dogs you

The following song was performed by participants in a beer-drink where a visiting *xigubu* competitive dance-team was accusing the local inhabitants (reputed to be responsible for crop-failure and other misfortune among their neighbors) of witchcraft.

Bd Va Ni Loyile
Call: Mhane va ni loyile
E-yo!
Response: O Mhane-e! O e-yo, e-ya
Mhane-e ya! O mhane
E-yo, e-yo!
Call: O mhane-e o-ya!
Mhane va ni loyile
Response: O Mhane-e! O e-yo, e-ya
Mhane-e ya! O mhane
E-yo, e-yo!
Call: O mhane-e o-ya
Mhane va ni kumile
Response: O Mhane-e! O e-yo, e-ya
Mhane-e ya! O mhane
E-yo, e-yo!

- They've Bewitched Me
Call: Mother! They've bewitched me
E-yo!
Response: Oh Mother
 Mother, Oh mother
E-yo, e-yo!
Call: Mother! *E-yo!* They've got me
 in their clutches
 Mother, they've got me
Response: Oh mother
 Mother, oh mother
E-yo!
Call: Mother! *Ee-yo!* They've got me
 in their clutches
 Mother, they've got me
Response: Oh mother
 Mother, oh mother
E-yo!

A male caller leads this performance, answered by a chorus of both sexes. He has apparently been bewitched by the *valoyi* (taking the form of "clutches" — perhaps the talons of an owl) and he is here accusing "they" (persons known to the hearers) of being the *valoyi* or sending them.

- Cf Wa Mina Tshiketa Ku Famba Vusiku!
Call: Khegu, khegu wa mina!
Response: Mina tshiketa ku famba vusiku!
Call: Khegu, khegu!
Response: Wa mina tshiketa ku famba vusiku!

Stop Wandering About In The Night!

- Call:* Woman, woman!
Response: Stop wandering about in the night!
Call: Woman, woman!
Response: Stop wandering about in the night!

The *valoyi* know each other, forming a secret society within the tribe. They assemble during the night in their spiritual bodies in order to eat human flesh in the desert. The woman to whom this song is addressed is being accused openly of witchcraft — an unpardonable act on the part of the accuser had he not sung the accusation. Songs of witchcraft indictment fulfill the social function of reducing

agonistic tension by providing a release for the singer and an opportunity for the accused to desist.

Henri Junod collected a similar song, as follows:

A u na tingana
 Famba b'sikwin?
 Are you not ashamed
 To go at night? (1927, 2: 288)

The same writer heard a suspected wizard declare "Yes! A am a walker in the night!"

Paul Radin published a Ba-Ronga tale in which a man is 'dommed' by his wife's relatives:

Then came her parents, brothers, sisters,
 One after another.
 The first one said:
 "You shall go through darkness!"
 The next:
 "You shall stumble through the night!"

It is possible that these Tsonga references to 'night-walking', in each of the four contexts we have quoted, are related to the following proverb:

Vusiku a byi fambiwi xikanwe
 One is not a night-walker once only
 (Jaques and Junod: 1957, 137)

The following song was recorded at the home of a diviner, being sung by his wives at a beer-drink.

- Fg Nghunghunyane
Call: O! Salani we mama, O salani,
 Nghunghunyane!
Response: O! Salani we mama, O salani
Call: Nghunghunyane! O salani we mama
Response: O salani
Call: Mhe ndzi Gavaza
Response: O! Salani we mama, O salani
Call: Me ndzi Gavaza
Response: O! Salani we mama, O salani
Call: Gavaza, n'wa-Misengi
Response: O! Salani we mama, O salani
Call: Me ndzi ya timangeni
Response: O! Salani we mama, O salani

Nghunghunyane

- Call:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye,
Nghunghunyane!
- Response:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye!
- Call:* Nghunghunyane! Goodbye, mother
- Response:* Oh goodbye!
- Call:* I am Gavaza
- Response:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye!
- Call:* I am Gavaza
- Response:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye!
- Call:* Gavaza, child of Misengi
- Response:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye!
- Call:* Gavaza, child of Misengi
- Response:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye!
- Call:* I'm going to the groundnut field
- Response:* Oh goodbye, mother, goodbye!

The historical name Chief Nghunghunyane is occasionally used during exorcism, as a kind of oath; the woman Gavaza who sings it here feels that she is about to be bewitched by the *valoyi*, for her reference to "the groundnut field" is an allusion to the *valoyi* who steal groundnuts from their shells by night.

The Venda sing of digging up both groundnuts and ancestral bones, all within the same song — this may help to explain our singer's reference to the "groundnut field" (*Blacking*: 1967, 114).

- Dg Vukali Bya Ntambhu
- Solo:* Lava tishungaka, i ku loyiwa, wa-a-a
Wa navela-i-i, wa navela mafela
Lava tishungaka i ku loyiwa, wa ma-
fela Joni. Wa navela
Wa navela mafela Joni, wa navela
Wa navela mafela Jo-o-ni
Wa navela mafela Jo — — —
Vukali bya ntambhu

For The Lack Of A Rope

- Solo:* Those who kill themselves are
bewitched
I wish I could die like my brother
Those who hang themselves are
bewitched
I wish I could die like my brother in
Johannesburg. But I cannot

I cannot die in Johannesburg
I cannot die
Because of the lack of a rope

Suicides are always bewitched people, and they become ancestor-spirits known as *xa xiviti* (gods of bitterness). The following song was performed at a beer-drink where a visiting *xigubu* competitive dance-team was somewhat apprehensive about appearing there, for the village was thought to be the origin of certain acts of witchcraft against other villages.

- Bc Ndzi Nyikeni Ntambu Ndzi Tisunga
- Call:* Mhani Mphephu
- Response:* Ndzi nyikeni ntambu ndzi tisunga
Ni ya wisa
- Call:* Mhani Mphephu
- Response:* Ndzi nyikeni ntambu ndzi tisunga
Ni ya wisa
- Call:* Ndzi na xirilo
- Response:* Ndzi nyikeni ntambu ndzi tisunga
Ni ya wisa
- Call:* A hi mukeni
- Response:* Ndzi nyikeni ntambu ndzi tisunga
Ni ya wisa

A Rope To Hang Myself

- Call:* Mother Mphephu
- Response:* Give me a rope to hang myself
That I may find rest
- Call:* Mother Mphephu
- Response:* Give me a rope to hang myself
That I may find rest
- Call:* Listen to my cry
- Response:* Give me a rope to hang myself
That I may find rest
- Call:* Listen to my cry
- Response:* Give me a rope to hang myself
That I may find rest

Both of the above songs refer to "the lack of a rope"; both performers sang that they "wished to die", perhaps to ascend into Heaven (though there is no mention of the sky). There is an ancient theme in Tsonga folklore, which, while it does not include hanging, tells of a rope in the sky by means of which one may ascend

into Heaven. *Henri Junod* gives a song to that effect, a song which he collected prior to 1897:

Ah! Si seulement j'avais de la ficelle!
J'irais au ciel et j'y trouverais du repos!
(1897, 237)

Note that *Junod's* ancient song, in its final line, states that after obtaining a rope and ascending into Heaven, one would "find repose". This seems to parallel the final line of our song, and both songs are probably related to the following Tsonga proverb, given by the singer of the first song:

Ku fa ku wisa
To die is to find rest

One version of the ancient Ronga tale goes on to find the rope-climbing woman asking the Heaven-people for a baby, as though that were the purpose of her mission. The version's publisher (*Geoffrey Parrinder*, in "African Mythology") comments that the tale might be a fusion of two other tales (1967, 65), but *Alice Werner*, in "Myths and Legends of the Bantu", states that she put a similar question to *Henri Junod* himself, and he maintained that the rope-climbing woman does indeed ask the Heaven-people for a baby, in *all* versions of the tale (1933, 62).

Bleek and Lloyd preserved a Bushman song which concerns, they state, a "string in the sky", and breaking of the string represents death:

Those were people
Who broke for me the string
(1911, 23)

Possibly, the hanging theme has diffused from the urban areas, for the South African execution rate (death by hanging) is one of the highest in the world; note that the first singer states that she wishes she could "die like my brother in Johannesburg".

Ae Va Ku Bya Bava
Solo: Va ku bya bava, E-ye-e
 Bya dzunga, E-ye-e
 Yi majaha haleni sivi

Bya dzunga, E-ye-e
Ndzo dlawela mahala mama
Ndzo dlawela timbyembye ta mkhisi

The Beer Is Sour

Solo: They say that the beer is sour
 They say it
 Yes, it's sour
 Listen, you fellows
 They say it's sour
 I shall be killed for nothing
 Killed "for the skin of a buck"

The villagers have found the beer sour, and its brewer fears an accusation of witchcraft. Beer is an important item in the economy, and the Tsonga would be upset at finding the beverage spoiled. Their first reaction would be to suspect bewitchment, and the singer gave a popular Tsonga saying in this respect:

Vusiwana i vuloyi
Poverty (i.e., loss of crops, beer, etc.)
is bewitchment

This type of bewitchment is known as *mitisa*, from the verb *mita*, to swallow, and an informant named Nkolele once described a beer-bewitching incident to *Henri Junod* thus: "There is the *noyi* (wizard), ready to come and steal the beer."

No informant could explain the line "killed for the skin of a buck"; there is a possibility of wordsubstitution where the original line read "killed by the skin of a toad". Tsonga diviners, when divining for witchcraft suspects, administer hallucinogenic potions made from toads' skins, which are poisonous and sometimes result in death.

Eg Manana Va N'wi Sivela Kaya
Chorus: Va sala va n'wi sivela kaya, he-mm
 Masevenzela mporosi
 Manana va n'wi sivela kaya
 Va ta dlaya le kaya

 They Threaten My Mother At Home
Chorus: They are threatening her at home,
 Hh-mm

Manana Va N'wi Sivela Kaya

♩ = 192
Cycle: 16

(They Threaten My Mother At Home)
Transpos.: min 6th up

The one who labors for the beer
My mother is threatened at home
They will kill her at home

Response: Yingwe!
Call: Yingwe!
Response: Yingwe ya mavala!
Yingwe!

This singer is far from home, whence has come news of a witchcraft accusation; he fears for the well-being of his accused aged mother whom he can no longer aid.

Preparing the large jugs of beer is an arduous task and is generally left to the village women-folk, young and old. They must perform a multitude of minor rites and observances in order to ensure a successful brew; failure to follow prescribed patterns is likely to incur a witchcraft-accusation.

The following song was recorded at a beer-drink held by a diviner and his wives.

Cf Yingwe!
Call: Yingwe!
Yingwe ziyaho-o-o!

Call: Yingwe wa hlasela nkosi
Response: Yingwe!
Call: Yingwe wa hlasela nkosi
Response: Yingwe ya mavala
Yingwe!
Call: Yingwe yi dle muntu baba
Response: Yingwe!
Call: Yingwe yi la phasa magoro baba
Response: Yingwe ya mavala
Yingwe!
Call: Yingwe ya jabula
Response: Yingwe!

Leopard!
Call: Leopard!
Leopard, Yah! Hoo!
Response: Leopard!

Call: Leopard, Yah! Hoo!
Response: Leopard with spots
 Leopard!
Call: The leopard invades
Response: Leopard!
Call: The leopard invades
Response: Leopard with spots
 Leopard!
Call: The leopard has killed a person
 eh! father
Response: Leopard!
Call: It was so pleased with itself
Response: Leopard with spots
 Leopard!
Call: They will offer it to the gods
Response: Leopard!

Leopards still appear in the Northern Transvaal, and there is a place-name in the Spelonken district — Mayingwe — meaning "Place-of-the-Leopards". *Pierre Cuénod* showed the present writer the skin of a specimen he had shot, after it had terrorized the neighborhood. It is doubtful that any Tsonga women participated in feasting at the occasion — Tsonga women are restricted to the flesh of hooved animals, species with paws being taboo. The Neuchâtel Ethnographical Museum possesses a 36-inch Tsonga wood-carving of a leopard devouring a European, perhaps representing an actual event.

Considering certain aspects of this song — particularly the personalization in such lines as "It was so pleased with itself" — one might come to the conclusion that, despite the evidence we have quoted regarding the prevalence in these parts of real leopards, this song pertains to disguised *valoyi*. The leopard of this song is perhaps not a real leopard, but a bewitched person in the guise of a leopard. *Henri Junod* relates the following:

One day the footprints of a leopard were seen in a mealie garden near the Shiluvane Mission station. People were convinced that his was nothing but a bewitched person, sent there during the night in the form of an animal.

(1927, 2: 515)

The final call of our song — "They will offer it to the gods" — could not be explained, but it may refer to the carrion-eating hyena-gods who supposedly inhabit the area and would devour the leopard if it were to be shot. *S. Eiselen*, in "Initiation Rites of the BaMasemola", gives the following song:

They come to smell out witches
 Man-eater make haste
 That I may put to flight
 The long-nosed leopard (1932, n.p.)

Hugh Tracey recorded the following Hlanganu song:

But I am a leopard
 An my home is at Mbulu (1955, recording)

J. H. Nketia preserved the following Akan song:

Stop, leopard
 We shall not sleep tonight (1963, 185)

I. Schapera gives the following Tswana praise-poem:

Can't you release, leopard of RaTshosa?
 You should have spared that man Tholo
 (1965, 159)

J. Torrend, with a primitive machine on February 11th, 1906, recorded the following from a Rhodesian Tonga informant:

Who art thou?
 I am the leopard
 I pursue you
 Learn to go away (1921, 176)

Ce Ximanga
Call: Xi ri ximanga
Response: Hoza duma na xona!
Call: Xi ni halaka
Response: Hoza duma na xona!
 A hi nga ngheni ekaya
 Hoza duma na xona

The Cat
Call: It is the cat
Response: Come with him!

Call: It is clawing at me
Response: Come with him!
 We will not enter the house
 Come with him!

This song describes a type of bewitchment known as the *rhuma*, meaning "to send". One's enemies are capable of inflicting much vengeance by the expedient of sending *valoyi* in the form of some bothersome animal — in this case a clawing cat, somewhat similar to the American concept of "a monkey on my back" (though it is doubtful that the song describes drug-addiction). It is possible that the text derives from the following Tsonga proverb, given by the singers:

I nhunzu ya ximanga yo tsama makatleni
 It's the burden of the cat, borne on the
 back

This proverb teaches that one must 'bear one's cross' through life.

In some areas the following song is limited to use within the girls' puberty school; in others it serves as a coming-out song for use at the "graduation" beer-drink when relatives bring bangles and fresh clothing to the initiates. At this time the whole of the local population celebrates the girls' marriage-eligibility by holding a large-scale beer-drink which may last two or three days, and to which distant relatives may be invited.

Bc He Valoye Aho Mi Nga Ni Dlayi Mpelo
Call: Lo N'wa-Ndanku wa loya ma
 rinhlokweni wa mina
 Lo N'wa-Jani wa loya ma rinhlok-
 weni wa mina
 Lo ma rhumbini ya vona va siye
 xikhova na swona
 Loko xi ni vona manwi'na xo hlamba
 mahlweni xiku pembu
Response: He valoye aho mi nga ni dlayi mpelo!
Call: He valoye aho mi nga ni dlayi mpelo!
Response: He valoye aho mi nga ni dlayi mpelo!
Call: Ndzi mi lorhile matolo mi ndzi
 tshame nhlokweni
Response: He valoye aho mi nga ni dlayi!

Call: Aho he vabvana va xitasi mi nga ni
 dlayi tshambelexlopi
Response: He valoye aho mi nga ni dlayi!

O Valoyi, Do Not Kill Me
Call: Child-of-Ndanku
 Child-of-Jani
 They have left an owl at their ruins
 When it sees me it washes its face
Response: O *valoyi*, do not kill me!
Call: O *valoyi*, do not kill me!
Response: O *valoyi*, do not kill me!
Call: I dreamt last night you were sitting
 on my face
Response: O *valoyi*, do not kill me!
Call: I dreamt it was sitting on my head
Response: O *valoyi*, do not kill me!

Line 8 above is a reference to the Tsonga belief that wizards (in the guise of owls) suck blood from the face and neck regions. *Valoyi* (wizards) are nocturnal, as the following Ronga song, collected by a Mrs. Audéoud for *Junod*, demonstrates:

Goodbye, wizard!
 You will kill people
 You come during the night (1927, 1: 149)

Owls are also nocturnal, hence they are associated with *valoyi* and feared. Sticks are inserted in the straw crown of Tsonga huts in order to prevent the screech-owl from settling there at night and frightening the occupants (2: 109). In Maputju the non-Christians once accused the Christians of "bewitching them by means of the owls which took shelter under the roof of the chapel" (1: 512).

In the case of the above song-text, the singer supposedly suspects "Nwa-Ndanku and N'wa-Jani of adulterous behavior, for we encountered a song, in our chapter on song-texts making reference to death, wherein owls hooted at the funeral of Nghwavava, an *adulteress*. When adultery is known to have occurred within the village, women use the following proverb, which was given by the singers of the song in question:

Manyana a chati muchatu wa ku
Chachela hi swikhova ni swisepula
She had a wedding celebration
Where owls were dancing

It is not known what is meant by the lines "They have left an owl at their ruins", and "When it sees me it washes its face". The ruins would refer to the many abandoned and roofless mud huts surrounding Tsonga villages (new homes are frequently erected — the roofs are saved and transferred, often surviving several moves). The face-washing may have some purifying significance, i.e., the owl must cleanse itself after seeing what it has seen.

Ae I Ngwenya!
Solo: I ngwenya (Ha marhumela!) yi lo
rhumeriwa
I ngwenya yi lo rhumeriwa
I ngwenya yi ta ndzi dlaya
Ha marhumela! Ha marhumela!
Yi lo rhumeriwa, yi lo rhumeriwa, yi
lo lo rhumele ngwenya
Ka manyi va ndzi rhumele ngwenya!
Ha marhumela! Ha marhumela!
Ka Gavaza va ndzi rhumele ngwenya!
Ha marhumela! Ha marhumela!

It Is A Crocodile!
Solo: It is a crocodile (it is sent) it has been
sent
It is a crocodile, it has been sent
It is a crocodile, and it will kill me
It has been sent, it has been sent
It will kill me, it will kill me
It is a crocodile that has been sent to-
ward me
Mother, they have sent a crocodile to
me
My Sister! A crocodile has been sent
toward me
It has been sent! It has been sent!

This is a classic *rhuma* accusation song — the distraught singer suspects that a *noyi* (singular of *valoyi*) in the form of a crocodile has been sent on its way to kill her, and she suffers the

suspense of waiting for it. In Khosen, half a century ago, the Christians were accused of having sent a crocodile from Nkomati River into Sokotiba Lake to kill the unconverted (*Junod*: 1927, 2: 512).

In former times, when fishermen of the Maluleke clan feared the presence of crocodiles, they employed a Ba-Nyai tribesman to say the following prayer of protection:

If you are here, crocodile, go away!
You, hyena, do not bite! (2: 88)

The tribesman is here alluding to the ancestor-spirits who, in the form of hyenas, will punish those with whom they are angry. One must not overlook the possibility, however, that our song of the crocodile who devours people is a survival from the times of the warring marauders of the late nineteenth century, some of whom observed crocodile totemism.

Another beer-drink setting in which this beer-song might occur is during the throwing of the divining-bones, for when the crocodile-stone falls in the negative position it indicates approaching harm. This harm might originate either from the *valoyi* or from the real crocodiles, which, of course, exist not far from where this song was recorded. *John Blacking* collected the following Venda song:

By the other bank of the Luvuvhu
There are two crocodiles
They churn the water (1967, 65)

The Luvuvhu River is just north of Elim Hospital, and a hospital employee named Elias Khuga told the present writer that he saw a friend lose a leg to a crocodile there in 1954. Sixty miles southeast of Elim is a place called Nwenyeni — Place-of-the-Crocodiles.

This examination and discussion of Tsonga witchcraft-accusation songs, then, reveals that the Tsonga believe that, via witchcraft initiated by human agents (usually hostile kinsmen and immediate associates), their cattle are stolen, their children are "eaten", their groundnuts are taken, and their beer is soured. People capable of witchcraft furthermore possess the possibili-

ty of transfiguration, usually at night, into owls, clawing cats, and crocodiles.

Tsonga belief in witchcraft is an *explanation* of phenomena which cannot be explained otherwise. Despite increasing acculturation and modernization in southeastern Africa, indigenous beliefs such as this persist — indeed a study by *Jahoda* (1970, 115–130) revealed that, among Ghanian university students, “a clear majority expressed at least a qualified belief” in witchcraft. The implication is that belief in witchcraft is not necessarily dissonant with Western-style education and detribalization.

References cited

- Bascom, William*: Four function of folklore. In: The study of folklore (ed. Alan Dundes). New Jersey 1965.
- Blacking, John*: Venda children's songs. Johannesburg 1967. Witwatersrand University Press.
- Bleek, W. H. J. and L. C. Lloyd*: Specimens of Bushman folklore. London 1911.
- Eiselen, W. M.*: Initiation rites of the Bamasemolo. In: *Annale va die Universiteit van Stellenbosch*, Jaargang x, Reeks B, Aft. 2 (Nov.), Kaapstad 1932.
- Huskisson, Yvonne*: The social and ceremonial music of the Pedi. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis for the University of the Witwatersrand, 1958.
- Jahoda, Gustav*: Supernatural beliefs and changing cognitive structures among Ghanian university students. In: *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1, 2 (June) 1970.
- Jaques, Alexandre A., and Henri-Philippe Junod*: The wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana people. Johannesburg 1957.
- Junod, Henri A.*: *Les chantes et les contes des Ba-Ronga*. Lausanne 1897.
- *The life of a South African tribe* (2 vols.). London 1927.
- Nketia, J. H. K.*: Folk songs of Ghana. Legon 1963.
- Parrinder, Geoffrey*: African mythology. London 1967.
- Schapera, Isaac*: Praise-poems of Tswana chiefs. Oxford 1965.
- Torrend, J.*: Bantu folklore from Northern Rhodesia. London 1921.
- Tracey, Hugh*: Chopi musicians. London 1948.
- Record Hlp-9 (1955), Record PIJ-7 (1963). International Library of African Music, Roodepoort 1955, 1963.
- Werner, Alice*: Myths and legends of the Bantu. London 1933.

Plates

- 1 Fernando Novela of Mozambique is widely known in the area as a 'smeller-out' of witches. He is a professional medicine-man, and the hut behind him is his office.
- 2 This Tsonga girl is a "medium" in a rite which protects girls from witchcraft which makes them barren. Sterility is high among Tsonga women, and the rite is thought to provide a measure of protection.
- 3 A Tsonga rite to protect girls from witchcraft which makes them sterile. Under the blanket, they perceive visions and hear voices. They are beaten with a switch made from sticks, to the accompaniment of loud, fast drumming.







Di
Mi
Pr
Ha
ku
di
gr
ge
Ha
Or
ist
ni
Mi
mi
Kr
de
Fe
un
pr
ge
hir
eir
sic
ge
mi
Ei
ab
zu
Me
ein
erf
(ci
ma
den
Ar
Sch