

## SONGS OF THE NGONI PEOPLE

By MARGARET READ

## INTRODUCTION

Nearly 120 years ago the Ngoni left their homeland in the South during the upheavals of Chaka's wars. In Nyasaland where the majority of them settled, they began to mix with the local tribes, preserving certain Ngoni institutions which they had brought from the south, to which they clung tenaciously as proof of their political and social superiority over their neighbours.<sup>1</sup> Predominant among these exclusive Ngoni institutions were their songs and dances. The musician listening to the phrasing, rhythm and harmonies of Ngoni music knows that here is something of rare and distinctive beauty. The linguist studying the words of songs recognises the old Ngoni language, closely akin to old Zulu and Swazi. The social anthropologist watching the dancing and singing can see an expression of the "national" spirit of the Ngoni, and watch how social distinctions mark off the true aristocrats from the former slaves, the latter being excluded from taking part in the dance.

Not being either a musician or a linguist but a mere social anthropologist, I have made a selection of Ngoni songs to show how they are interwoven with the great events of their life, both in their historic past and in the crises of their life today. I hope that this selection may evoke criticism and comment from scholars in South Africa who are familiar with old Zulu and Swazi songs of the same type in the early part of the 19th century. It may be of course that the departure of the Ngoni proved a means of preserving their heritage of music and song, and that in spite of mixing with other tribes for 120 years, they have kept some songs which have been lost in the changes that have been taken place in the south during those years. That is one of the reasons which has prompted me to put forward this selection—as a test, as it were, of continuity of culture, and the means by which that continuity is maintained. One interesting fact bearing on this question of continuity has come out during the process of collecting songs. There are in Nyasaland two distinct groups of Ngoni, one

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Africa*, Vol. IX, No. 4, Oct 1936, on "Tradition and prestige among the Ngoni" by the author.

under the leadership of the Jere clan, the other under the Maseko clan, known today as Mwambara's and Gomani's people. These two groups left for the south independently, and except for two fights on the way north, never intermingled either in their journeyings or in their subsequent settlement. I have already found among them however a small group of songs, varying very slightly in words though not in music, which as both groups possess them in common must, I think, be proof that these songs were known to them before leaving the south. The recorded number of these songs held in common is small at present, but I think further research would reveal a number more.

On the linguistic side I am well aware of the deficiencies in the recording of these songs. When taking them down a number of varying renderings were given, some alleged to suit the music, others just "We say this *or* this." In the recording I have had the invaluable help of Rev. Yesaya Mlonyeni Chibambo, an Ngoni of Mwambara's people. I have accepted his spelling of the songs in his area, and have tried to record myself the songs in Gomani's area.\* For translation purposes I have used a Zulu dictionary (Colenso), checking Rev. Y. M. Chibambo's English version in his area and getting, where I could, a Nyanja equivalent in Gomani's area to assist translation. I am not at all satisfied either with the recording or the translating, and can only plead that an anthropologist working with three languages expects to be attacked by the real linguists for any texts he dares to put forward.

#### *The selection and arrangement of songs*

The musician studying Ngoni music would begin to classify the songs under two heads; those sung by groups and those sung by individuals. Among the latter are the only Ngoni songs sung to an instrumental accompaniment, namely those sung to the *igubu* or *uhlanga*.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless some of these *igubu* songs are sometimes sung by groups at marriages or initiation rites, and vice versa. The group songs of the Ngoni have no instrumental accompaniment, and the absence of all drums in Ngoni music is one of the outstanding characteristics, in comparison with the music of the local tribes. There is however usually accompaniment of some kind to Ngoni group songs. The men stamp their feet, or knock their shields, or whistle shrilly through their teeth. The women clap their hands, or trill by stroking their cheek

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\*We have revised the Ngoni spelling in accord with the new Zulu orthography —[Ed. *Bantu Studies*].

<sup>2</sup>An instrument shaped like a bow with a gourd pressed against the body. The string is struck with a stick.

with the thumb or pinching the lips together with the finger and thumb, or hum in harmonies. This humming and the rhythmical stamping of the men's feet which reverberates in the dry dung of the cattle kraal or the newly softened earth of the first rains, are the most characteristic, as well as the most aesthetically beautiful, forms of accompaniment.

The Ngoni themselves in old days divided their dances into two kinds, those for pleasure or pastime, and those for serious purposes such as war and religion. In these days however they say the distinction no longer exists as all are now really dances for pastime.

I have chosen a third form of grouping for the songs : those which are related to different stages in the life cycle of the Ngoni, and those which draw together people and recall their past. To the first group belong lullabies, initiation rite songs, marriage songs, mourning songs, and songs of the *izanusi* when people went to them for divining in times of trouble or sickness. To the second group belong war songs, praise songs of chiefs, *ingoma* songs, and a few fragments of *inqwala* songs.

A word should be added here on the composition of Ngoni songs as the people themselves explain it. Songs are never composed separately, words and music. It is always a single inspiration which leads the composer to find the right words and the right music. This applies both to songs which one man sings, such as praise songs, songs for the *igubu*, or songs of an *isanusi*; and equally to songs such as *ingoma*, *umgubu*, *mthimba* for group singing. Such inspiration for composing songs is recognised as a special gift, possessed only by a few individuals. These people have *isifua*, which is literally the chest, said to be the seat of inspiration and eloquence. Thanks to *isifua* a man or a woman can compose on the spur of the moment a song for a wedding or about the deed of a hero, and also today a Christian hymn. Such inspiration fortunately does not appear to be dying out, and the competitive visits of groups for singing and dancing from village to village after the harvest are a means of spreading these modern songs as they spread the old.

SECTION I

A. Lullabies :

As might be expected songs in Ngoni relating to women's work were very few, because in the course of time all the true Ngoni women assumed the role of aristocrats and had a number of attendant women who did all their work for them. I once asked a Maseko woman if there

were any Ngoni songs sung while pounding maize. She looked at me with great scorn and replied "As if the Angoni women ever pounded!" The same is true to a lesser extent of lullabies, for nursemaids were always employed in Ngoni households, and though some of them learned Ngoni lullabies, most of them sang their own lullabies to the children. These are two illustrations of Ngoni lullabies which have persisted and are widely known in Mwambara's country.

## (1) Ngoni :

*Binda mntanami*  
*Eya eya*  
*Binda mntanami*  
*Eya eya*  
*Maguqa nazo oyiye*  
*Maguqa nazo oyiye*  
*Ho tivun' umumbu.*

## English :

Hush my child  
 Never mind, never mind.  
 Hush my child  
 Never mind, never mind.  
 There is a busy-body gossiping  
 There is a busy-body gossiping  
 Ho ! we reap the maize.

## (2) Ngoni :

*UKholwane, Kholwane kaMakhwaphuna*  
*UKholwane, Kholwane kaMakhwaphuna*  
*Amasi omtakababa*  
*Uhamba uyawakhwaphuna*  
*Uyawafafaza*  
*Ngezindlela zaboyihlo*  
*Zathi ngci ngci.*

*UKholwane, Kholwane kaMakhwaphuna*  
*UKholwane, Kholwane kaMakhwaphuna*  
*Uthweleni na ?*  
*Ngithwele 'kudla komtwana*  
*Uhamba ukuchoboza*  
*Ngezindlela somtwana*

English :

Kholwane, Kholwane, son of Makhwaphuna  
 The curds belonging to the child of my father  
 You go about dipping from them (the curds)  
 You are sprinkling them<sup>3</sup> (the curds)  
 So that the paths of your fathers  
 Have completely become shut.<sup>4</sup>

Kholwane, Kholwane, son of Makhwaphuna.  
 What are you carrying ?  
 I am carrying the food of the baby  
 For he goes about defiling it<sup>5</sup>  
 On the dark paths.

B. *Umsindo* songs :

*Umsindo* or *umgonxo* was the girls' initiation ceremony which took place, not at puberty, but several years later as a preliminary to marriage. It was only celebrated for the daughters of important people and was an occasion for a great gathering with much feasting and dancing. The songs sung at this time belonged chiefly to the older women (*umsindo* songs are only sung by adults), though men joined in them too. They show a wide variety of subjects, ranging from warnings against jealousy in women to songs about historical events. Formerly as well as today *umsindo* songs are sung on other occasions, such as funerals for example, and many of them are sung as solos to the accompaniment of the *igubu*. They seem with the *ingoma* songs and *mthimbu* to be songs of civil life as opposed to the periods of warfare, times when the people gathered together for song and dance with no thoughts of fighting to trouble them. The *umsindo* ceremony of the daughter of an important man provided such an occasion, and songs of many kinds originated round that gathering, some with no reference at all to the particular nature of the rites performed. There were however some *umsindo* songs referring to sexual intercourse sung only at *umsindo* ceremonies, in which the terms and allusions were frankly obscene. These are seldom heard today, and were apparently discouraged by the real Ngoni in the past, as they inflamed the passions, and the Ngoni had

<sup>3</sup> i.e. wasting them—*amasi* (curds) is always plural in its pronoun like the Scotch porridge.

<sup>4</sup> The expression *zathi ngci ngci* is used of the ears being shut so that gossip cannot be heard.

<sup>5</sup> Defiling—i.e. dipping into it with a dirty hand. The whole song is a reproach to someone who has brought food for a child and been careless with it.

a firm belief that sexual licence and lack of control was detrimental to the qualities needed in warfare.

The first three songs are warnings to the girl to be married against giving way to jealousy when living among the other wives.

(1) Ngoni :

*Yo ! mfaz' wobukhwele*  
*Zhi-ha-a-wo !*  
*Kuyahela zhi-ha-a-wo !*  
*Yo ! luvalo lwakhe*  
*Yo ! bukwele bakhe.*

English :

Behold thou woman who art jealous  
 Thou art torn with pain<sup>6</sup>  
 Alas her panic<sup>7</sup>  
 Alas her jealousy.

(2) Ngoni :

*Seuyakhonkotha*  
*Seuyakhonkotha*  
*Yo ! mfazi wobukhwele*  
*Uyingwe !*  
*Uyingwe !*

English :

Now thou art barking  
 Now thou art barking  
 Behold, woman of jealousy  
 Thou art a leopard.<sup>8</sup>

(3) Ngoni :

*Hoyayiyoyo indoda ilalepi ?*  
*Ngiyamsuna*  
*He ngiyamsuna ngezinyawo ho*  
*Ngiyamsuna.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ukuhela*—lit. to cut grass and is used figuratively to express a sharp cutting pain in the bowels—the bowels are the seat of sympathy and there a woman feels pain if her child is in trouble or if her husband goes to sleep in another home.

<sup>7</sup> *Uluvalo* is used both for madness and for great fear.

*Hoyayiyoye ha*  
*Indoda ilale endlini*  
*Aye kwamayimkhuyu<sup>9</sup>*  
*Hau mkhuyu*  
*Hau mkhuyu mkhuyu*  
*Indoda ilale endlini.*

English :

Woe is me ! Where has my husband been sleeping ?  
 I am looking for him  
 I am looking for him with my feet, ho !  
 Woe is me ! My husband is sleeping in the house  
 He went to the big mother  
 Alas to the big one  
 My husband has been sleeping in the house.

The following song is very popular in Mwambersa's country. It is said to be a lament of the women against the difficulties of polygamous households, and was so used by two Ngoni ministers in a recent campaign among the churches. They were speaking against polygamy and used this song which was well known as an illustration. The language of the song must be figurative for the Ngoni were continuously successful in war until the Europeans came, and long before their advent this song was known. This explanation of its meaning therefore may be correct. It is often sung as a solo to the *igubu*.

- |                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (4) <i>Zizwe zonke</i>       | All the nations                      |
| <i>Zimemelene thina</i>      | Are called together against us       |
| <i>Zizwe zonke</i>           | All the nations                      |
| <i>Zimemelene thina-nje</i>  | Are just called together against us  |
| <i>Siyakuyibuza kubani ?</i> | Whom shall we ask about this ?       |
| <i>Siyakulwa sithini</i>     | How shall we fight                   |
| <i>Zimemelene thina</i>      | They are called together against us  |
| <i>Siyakuyimemaphi ?</i>     | Whence shall we summon help ?        |
| <i>Amagananda ho</i>         | The big husky ones, ho !             |
| <i>Zimemelene thina</i>      | They are called together against us  |
| <i>Sothelelwa ngubani</i>    | We are reinforced by whom ?          |
| <i>Mhlaba uyemuka</i>        | The earth is departing <sup>10</sup> |
| <i>Zimemelene thina</i>      | They are called together against us  |
| <i>Zingongo zonke</i>        | We are in disfavour with everything  |

<sup>9</sup>This song is from Bomani's country and Chinyanja expressions have crept in. L and Y are sometimes interchangeable here, especially in songs.

<sup>10</sup> e. everything has gone from us—goods, glory, happiness.

|                         |                                       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Sihlalukelwe-e-e</i> | We are deserted                       |
| <i>Zimemelene thina</i> | They are called together against us   |
| <i>Mhlaba uyafutha</i>  | The earth breathes fire <sup>11</sup> |

This song refers to the approaching marriage of the girl, speaking of her as a victim to be killed, and her family as a fort to be entered. The "one who is selected" is the man whom the girl or boy could take the initiative in choosing a mate.

(5) Ngoni :

*Sithi ngubani ozakubulawa lonyaka ?*  
*Makhonjwa sivulele inqaba*  
*Singene*  
*Sithi ngubani ozakubulawa lonyaka ?*

English :

We say who will be killed this year ?  
 Thou chosen one open the fort for us  
 Let us enter  
 We say who will be killed this year ?

The next three songs (6, 7, 8) are examples of historical songs sung on occasions of *umsindo*. They are three out of a large collection of such songs, and are also sung as solos to the *igubu*. The first two both refer to the departure of the Ngoni from the south. Zide or Zwide was chief of the Ndwandwe people among whom were most of the Ngoni. On his defeat by Chaka they left to begin their march northwards. The third song is said to have been composed on the journey. It contains the refrain "Let us return to Swaziland where the people die fat," which is also found in several other songs. It is suggested that the last six lines may be a veiled attack on the leader, Zwangendaba, because he seemed to be attempting the impossible.

(6) Ngoni :

*Uzide Mankosi kuSoshangane*  
*Ngilele ngingalalanga (repat)*  
*Mnaye UZide Mankosi kuSoshangane*  
*Ngilele ngingalalanga*

<sup>11</sup>*Ukufuta* has the idea of something going on continuously, as a man gasping or steam issuing from a boiling pot. I have taken the simile here from a dragon breathing fire.



*Hayi UShaka usichitha<sup>12</sup> ngamahluthi kuSoshangane  
Ngilele ngingalalanga.*

English :

It is because of Zide, chief of the Soshangane people  
That though I lie down I cannot sleep  
O Zide chief of the Soshangane people  
Though I lie down I cannot sleep.  
Chaka scatters us among the forests of Soshangane land.

(7) Ngoni :

*O gholosh' intanga (repeat  
Ubondinda ngale phansi kwentaba  
ENdabula-luvalo.  
Ngolwani kuShaka?  
Abantu baphelile phansi kwentaba  
Elele Lohaya! (repeat)  
Oyahoyo yahoyo yoya (repeat  
O gholosh' intanga (repeat).*

English :

The man of our age-grade struts before us,  
He wanders on the other side of the mountain  
In the land of Panic.  
Why should we fear Shaka ?  
The people are finished beneath the mountain  
Alas! Lohaya  
The man of our age-grade struts before us.

(8) Ngoni :

*Oya yi yayo qobo yeya ! (repeat)  
Yo magcigca egumeni kwanazala  
Yo Mnguni wakithi yowaliwayo  
Owanyathel' udaka kwabathakathi  
Ubomuke simuke siy' eSwazini  
Laph' abantu bafa yokhuluphala  
Bayimis' uluthi lomkhonto  
Usuk' ungcange uhlal' ephezulu  
Yo Magwaza ngomunwe waqhuqhumba*

<sup>12</sup> This an example which occurs constantly in Ngoni songs of the use of the historic present into a past meaning.

*Isandla sokudlela ngesokungcongca  
Ivila elidl' amabel' okulimelwa  
Eathi kananyongo kanamhlelo  
Zi zi ntshe entshi (repeat).*

English :

*Oya yi yayo, what does it matter!  
Thou who joyest thine head in the entrance court of  
thy mother-in-law.  
O Mnguni of our people who art rejected,  
And hast walked on the mud of the wizards:  
Come, let us go to Swaziland  
Where the people die fat.  
Where they set up the shafts of the spears  
Which rise up and walk with their bodies erect.  
Thou who stabbest with the finger and it swells up,  
Take care, the hand which is for eating also destroys.  
The idle man eats grain hoed for him.  
While he boasts that he has no bile, nor fat round his stomach.  
*Zi, zi, ntshe, entshi.**

*C. Mthimba songs:*

The *mthimba* or marriage ceremony of the Ngoni was a lengthy series of rites each of which had its appropriate songs. There were also some general *mthimba* songs which were interspersed with the special songs for each rite. Many of these general *mthimba* songs were sung at other times, and often as solos to the *igubu*. As in the *umsindo* songs some are historical and seem to bear no reference to marriage.

The first five songs refer to some event in the sequence of marriage rites. The general tone is that of sadness at giving up the girl to another family village, and the next two songs (6 and 7), sung by the bride herself, reflect the same feeling of exile from her family and friends. These songs can also be sung to the *igubu*.

(1) Ngoni: "*Ukucongca umntwana.*"

*Niwunzulane unzulane  
Yobaba ungidelile  
Ngiyakundinda kus' ebaleni  
Yobaba ungidelile.*

English: "The preparing of the girl (before she goes to her husband.)"

I am a stray, a stray  
Behold my father has given me up  
I shall wander to the wild country  
My father has given me up<sup>13</sup>.

(2) Ngoni: "*Ukuqandisa umlobokazi.*"

*Hoya yi yoya*  
*Yo mntwana wenzulane kowami*  
*Hoya yi yoya*  
*Yo mntwana ongenayise kowami na?*  
*Hoya yi yoya*  
*Yo maqanda nge Gundane zimswelekile*  
*Sengiqandile bayiso kowami.*

English: "The bringing of the bride's gift."

*Hoya yi yoya*  
Thou child of a wanderer, thou art mine.  
Thou child without a father, thou art mine.  
*Hoya yi yoya.*  
Thou who bringest a present like a house rat because thou  
hast no cattle.  
I have now brought a present to my comrades.<sup>14</sup>

(3) Ngoni: "*Umbedlo.*"

*Zikuya yombedlo bayisa*  
*Zikuya*  
*Yombedlo bayisa*  
*Ngazakithi wayimemez' inkondlo*  
*Zikuya*  
*Wayimemez' inkondlo.*

English: "The song sung sitting."<sup>15</sup>

You lads<sup>16</sup> it is the dancing time my comrades  
O comrades, a dance!

<sup>13</sup> This song is sung by the girl herself with her companions joining in. She is still in her own village waiting to go with the gift to give her husband-to-be.

<sup>14</sup> This song is sung by the older women of the village who stand in relation to the girl as her mother. It is the song of a poor girl, perhaps with no father, as she brings a small present, though it is also Ngoni etiquette to belittle any gift before the donor.

<sup>15</sup> *Ukubedla* is to sing while sitting after the bride's gift is given.

<sup>16</sup> *Zikuya* = the grown ones—i.e. ready for inclusion in a new regiment.

With the lads from our home he has called for the dance  
 My comrades  
 He has called for the dance.<sup>17</sup>

(4) Ngoni: "Umbedlo."

*Uyangena*  
*Haye*  
*Mayingene*  
*Haye*  
*Ntandane yangena*  
*Uyangena haye*  
*Siyangena haye*  
*Ntandane yangena.*

English: "The song sung sitting."

She is entering  
*Haye*  
 Let us make her enter  
*Haye*  
 The orphan is entering  
 She is entering—*haye*  
 We are entering—*haye*  
 The orphan is entering.

(5) Ngoni: "Ummkezo"

*Sikhon' isilo sid'abantu*  
*Ngomnyama yomntwana uyakhala*  
*Sikhon' isilo*  
*Uyakhala yena yo mntwana*  
*Sikhon' isilo.*

English: "The deflowering."<sup>18</sup>

There is a lion eating the people  
 In the darkness a child is mourning  
 There is a lion  
 She is mourning that child  
 There is a lion.

<sup>17</sup> *Inkondlo* is used by the Ngoni with the same meaning as *ingoma*—i.e. dance and song.

<sup>18</sup> This is one of the songs sung after the girl has slept with her husband for the first time.

(6) Ngoni :

*Baba ngonile ngonile baba ngonile  
Kadi ungichel' ubaba ngaphik' inkani  
Seiyadlal' imiyoni ngaphik' inkani.*

English :

Father I have done wrong, I have done wrong father  
I have done wrong  
You did tell me, my father, I have made a quarrel  
(or) I have been disobedient  
The birds' feathers are now playing<sup>19</sup> I have been disobedient.

(7) Ngoni :

*Ngaphel' umoya  
Hoyayiyoyo ngaphel' umoya  
Zas' eNgucwini ziyehla ngaphesheya  
Ngaphel' umoyo.*

English :

My breath is finished  
My breath is finished  
The cattle of eNgucwini<sup>20</sup> have descended on the other side  
My breath is finished.

The following song is a very old *mthimba* song, but is sung today chiefly as an *igubu* song. Ngoni ministers have told me they use it in church meetings, because all the people know it and it reflects their old philosophy, and as such is made the basis for Christian teaching about death.

(8) Ngoni :

*Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' indlu kuya nkuyu  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni. Nhi hi hi hi ! (in sobbing tones and  
nasally)  
Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' amakawu kawu  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi !*

<sup>19</sup> The bride-to-be sometimes put feathers on her head when going to her husband's village. Now she sees the feathers shaking in the hut and is reminded by them of what her father told her.

<sup>20</sup> A reference to the cattle given by the boy's father to the girl's family. On the completion of handing over the cattle the girl had to go to her husband.

## Refrain :

*Uyezwa mhlaba, sokulilel' uyezwa mhlaba!  
Sonke siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!*

*Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' amakhosi-khosi  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!  
Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' amakhosikazi  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!*

## Refrain :

*Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' abalumuzana  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!  
Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' amakhosazana  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!*

## Refrain :

*Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' abafokazana  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!  
Umhlaba kawunoni. Uqed' nezilwanyana  
Siyakufel' emhlabeni na? Nhi hi hi hi!*

*Uyezwa zilale wena wosalelizweni, ngci!  
Sonke soshony' emhlabeni na? Ho ho ho ho!  
Uyezwa mhlaba liyashon' iyangana, ngci!  
Sonke songen' emhlabeni.*

## English :

The earth does not get fat<sup>21</sup>. It makes an end of those who wear the head plumes<sup>22</sup>

We shall die on the earth.

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of those who act swiftly as heroes.

Shall we die on the earth ?

Listen O earth. We shall mourn because of you.

Listen O earth. Shall we all die on the earth ?

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of the chiefs.  
Shall we all die on the earth ?

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of the women chiefs.

Shall we die on the earth ?

<sup>21</sup> *Ukunona* = never to be satisfied, because the earth is always receiving the dead.

<sup>22</sup> *Indlunkulu* is used for older men entitled to wear tall head feathers.

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of the nobles.  
Shall we die on the earth ?

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of the royal women.  
Shall we die on the earth ?

The earth does not get fat. It makes the end of the common  
people.

Shall we die on the earth ?

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of all the beasts.  
Shall we die on the earth ?

Listen you who are asleep, who are left tightly closed in  
the land.

Shall we all sink into the earth ?

Listen O earth the sun is setting tightly.

We shall all enter into the earth.

The next two songs (9 and 10) though called *mtimba* are usually sung to the *igubu*, and contain historical references. The first song refers to the fights on the road between Zwangendaba and two other leaders. Nqaba is said by some to be the same as Mzilikazi, and Soshangane was the founder of the Ngoni kingdom near Mozambique. The second song is one of many telling of the famous crossing of the Zambezi during a solar eclipse in November 1835. It was after the fights with Nqaba and Soshangane that Zwangendaba was forced to flee across the Zambezi.

(9) Ngoni :

*Ngihlangane ngentombi kaMahamba*

*Uzenz' uhlanya njeng' oyise*

*Ngihlangane ngentombi kaMahamba*

*Uzenz' uhlanya njeng' oyise*

*Musani kungihlek'*

*Mu:ani kungihlek'*

*Sengahlul' uNqaba*

*Ngahlul' USoshangane kaZigodo.*

English :

Let me meet with the daughter of Mahamba

She acts the madman like her father.

I have met with the daughter of Mahamba

She acts the madman like her father.

Do not laugh at me  
 Do not laugh at me  
 Now I have conquered Nqaba  
 Now I have conquered Soshangane son of Zigodo.

(10) Ngoni :

*Sivel' uZembezi<sup>23</sup> sawela ngentambo*  
*Samwela ngentambo*  
*Samwela ngentambo*  
*Mnawo yayoya*  
*Sekwahlw' emini*  
*Mnawo yayoya*  
*Se kwash' ubani ?*

English :

When crossing the Zambezi we crossed with a rope  
 We crossed it with a rope  
 We crossed it with a rope  
 The sky darkened at day time  
 The lightning flashed.

#### D. Mourning songs.

There are no real mourning songs of the Ngoni as singing and dancing were not part of the burial rites except at the death of a chief, though at subsequent funeral rites, some months later, it is customary to dance *ingoma*. The first one is sung to the *igubu* and is obviously a woman's mourning for her husband. The second I heard a woman sing at the burial of her grandmother, and she said her grandmother had taught it to her. Many other *igubu* songs are in reality mourning songs.

(1) Ngoni :

*Ngagolozela lashon' umyeni* (repeat)  
*Bathi ngitshengis' isizið' esinengwenya*  
*Ngizilahle*  
*Ngingokwenzan' elele na ?* (repeat)

English :

I have stared at the setting (death) of my husband.  
 They say, show me the pool that has a crocodile.  
 Let me throw myself away.  
 What can I do ? Alas !

<sup>23</sup>The Ngoni always say Zembezi and not Zambezi.



## (2) Ngoni :

*Namuhla ngiyakuloya*  
*Nang' umthakathi*  
*Wena wafa njani ?*  
*Muyanihleka, hlekani, ngingodingayo mina.*  
*Ngithum' ubani ?*  
*Mwena muyatuma 'bantwana*  
*Ngindinda nginje ngithum' endlini*  
*Niyandinda nelidolo ngihamb' ematsheni*  
*Ngingedwa ngithath' izigodo ngingedwa*  
*Ha ! niyakhalel' umtakomama.*  
*Wasa wangishiya phalubalala*  
*Ngihlalela yena. Nizothini ?*

## English :

Today I shall bewitch<sup>24</sup>  
 Here is the witch.  
 You, how did you die ?  
 You are laughing at me, laugh. I am poor, I.  
 Whom can I send ?  
 You folk you are sending children.  
 I wander about by myself. I send to the house.  
 I wander about on my knees. I go on the stones<sup>25</sup>.  
 Alone I carry branches, I alone.  
 Ha ! I am crying for your child, mother.  
 She has gone. She has left me in a lonely place.<sup>26</sup>  
 I stayed for her. What shall I say ?

E. Songs of *izanusu*.

When trouble or sickness attacked the Ngoni their first act was to go to the *isanusi* and ask him to divine for them the cause of the trouble. There were several grades of *izanusu*, from those in "private practice" to those consulted by the chiefs in big state affairs and in time of war.

The first of these songs is an initiation song of an *isanusi*. The second refers to a very old prophecy among the Ngoni that their final downfall would "by way of the sea," and which they interpreted as the

<sup>24</sup>The grandmother actually died in alarming circumstances and there was talk of witchcraft for weeks afterwards.

<sup>25</sup>The stones at the women's washing place.

<sup>26</sup>That is reading *ebaleni* for *phalubalala*.

coming of the Europeans. The next two songs (3 and 4) are those of a famous *isanusi* called Manyonkolo Camango, and the second one reflects the general despair at his death. The last two (5 and 6) I took from an old *isanusi* who still practises his art.

## (1) Ngoni :

*O uthwasile*  
*He he*  
*O ngomso nguwe*  
*Hoya yi hoya.*

## English :

You are initiated  
 Tomorrow it is you.

## (2) Ngoni :

*Mhany' unamandla, Mhanya, O!*  
*Mhany' unamandla*  
*Mhany' unamandla, Mhanya, O!*  
*Luzay' oluandle Mhanya, O!*  
*Uza ngokwandle*  
*Uza ngokwandle Mhanya O!*

## English :

Mhanya thou art the strong one  
 It comes, it of the sea  
 He comes by the sea.

## (3) Ngoni :

*Sibingelelwa ngubani?*  
*Sambon' UManyonkolo.*  
*Sibingelelwa ngubani?*  
*Elele! Camango.*

## English :

We are saluted by whom?  
 Behold we see Manyonkolo.  
 We are saluted by whom?  
 Alas? Camango.

## (4) Ngoni :

*Hoya yi yawoyo*  
*Hoya yi hoya*

*Siyekele sindinde sihambe*  
*Ilizwe liphelile kuManyonkolo*  
*Siyekele sindinde sihambe*  
*Siyekel' amabel' adliw' izindlovu*  
*Siyekele sindinde sihambe*  
*Ilizwe liphelile kuManyonkolo*  
*Siyekele sindinde sihambe.*

English :

Let us alone that we may wander, let us go,  
 The land is finished with Manyonkolo.  
 Let us alone that we may wander, let us go,  
 Let us alone, the grain is eaten by elephants.  
 Let us alone that we may wander, let us go,  
 The land is finished with Manyonkolo.  
 Let us alone that we may wander, let us go.

(5) Ngoni :

*Ubaba uyangibiza*  
*Hamba ekhaya*  
*Hamba ekhaya*  
*Inda'a zikuyandele.*

English :

My father is calling me  
 Go home  
 Go home  
 Things have turned against you.

(6) Ngoni :

*Uyezwa 'mihlolo ?*  
*O ha o.*  
*Uyezwa 'mihlolo ?*  
*O ha o.*

English :

Do you understand the omens ?

*Another version :*

Ngoni :

*Uyezwa 'mihlolo ?*  
*Eya e*

*Uyezwa 'mihlolo?*

*Eya e*

*Inkanyezi eye hoyo woyo*

*Ipuma e*

*Impumayanga.*

English :

Do you understand the omens ?

The star

Comes out

In the East.

## SECTION II.

### A. *Songs of inqwala.*

When describing their songs and dances the Ngoni say " We had many beautiful dances but the best of all were those of *inqwala*." This took place in February at the time of the first ripening of certain crops, and seems to have a first fruit and fertility ceremony, as well as a general gathering of the tribe. These *inqwala* songs could be sung only at the time of the ceremony which lasted about one month. Before the *inqwala* was announced, and after it had been declared closed, no one could sing *inqwala* songs on pain of death. The ceremony was abandoned so long ago that most of the songs are forgotten, and the meanings of the fragments which are remembered are not at all clear. In this selection the third song refers to the invasion by the Ngoni of the Bemba country, and the fourth to the village of the father of Zwangendaba where the *inqwala* was danced.

(1) Ngoni :

*Nang' ozonda inkosi*

*Awumbonanga*

*UmuBonile*

*Zi Zi.*

English :

He comes the one who hates the chief.

Did you not see him ?

You have seen him.

(2) Ngoni :

*O ho ho*  
*O ho ho*  
*Wen'abakwalayo*  
*O zi ya*  
*Bayamyoyisa*  
*Ukumungongoma*  
*Untamo lukhuni.*

English :

You who are rejected  
 They are carrying him lightly  
 To thrash him  
 He, the stiff necked one.

(3) Ngoni :

*Oho ho ho*  
*Sadabula sathini?*  
*Oho ho ho*  
*Ilizwe kuMangwe*  
*O ho ho*  
*Sadabula sathini?*  
*O ho ho*  
*UZwangendaba inkosi.*

English :

How did we break away ?  
 The country of the Mangwe.  
 How did we break away ?  
 Zwangendaba the chief.

(4) Ngoni :

*Kangitshel' uWadana na?*  
*Henyi, henyi, henyi, i.*  
*Wadana*  
*Inkosi ikithi eLangeni*  
*Ihenyi, henyi, henyi, i.*  
*Mayi baba.*  
*Namuhla udanile*  
*Elangeni kithi kwamkhulu*  
*Zenyi, zenyi, i.*

English :

Let me tell Wadana  
 Hey, hey, Wadana  
 The chief is at our home at eLangeni.  
 Alas ! my father  
 Today you are bereaved  
 At eLangeni our great home.

B. *Praise songs.*

Praise songs of chiefs and great men are so well known in South Africa that it is unnecessary to explain them at length here. In Nyasaland the Ngoni are unique in possessing praise songs, some of which go back seven or eight generations. These praise songs are today "chanted" on state occasions before the chiefs, and the tradition persists of handing them on. The *izibongo*, or praise songs proper, belong to a group of songs which have no music but which are "chanted" in a kind of recitative, which only a few people know how to do. Other songs in this group are the *izithokozo* or thanking names, and the *izigiyo* which the warrior shouts when coming forward in his own solo dance during the *umgubo* dance. All people who have any claim to distinction possess *izithokozo* and *izigiyo*, but the *izibongo* appear to be only for chiefs of the royal house and a few other distinguished nobles whose houses in the past were near to, if not actually, royalty.

There are certain features in these praise songs to which it is worth calling attention in order to make comparisons with the similar group of songs in the south. In the first place, the phrasing and the words of the praise songs of the line of Paramount Chiefs vary in different districts. In Mwambara's country for example, one "pattern" of praise song is heard in Ekwendeni, another in Elangeni, in each the pattern being standardised unless a very brilliant *umbongi* or praiser added a phrase from his own *isifua*. In the second place sarcastic or even insulting remarks are sometimes found in praise songs. I am told they were permitted because no one could possibly believe them, "that is, it was a form of high praise to say ludicrous things about a chief which could not be true. In the third place, some of the praise songs were "telescoped," praises of an earlier chief being included in those of a later one. As however this is the first time any of these praises have been recorded in writing, this "telescoping" may be a fault of the recorder.

I am including here four sets of praise songs, in three of which there are alternative forms. It is interesting to see what a degree of

variation was reached, and it may be possible in comparison with praise songs in the south to find out some principles of composition of these praise songs with their variations. It may be on the other hand that "the spirit bloweth where it listeth," and *isifua* must have its way, and eloquence its own poetic licence.

The arrangement of the sentences will be familiar to anyone who has listened to praise songs. The beginning of each sentence (marked with a capital letter) is on a high note, generally *rallentando*, and the notes descend to the end of the sentence, and are held again on the last note.

(1) Ngoni : " *Izibongo zikaNgwana*<sup>27</sup> *kaGoqweni* "

*Bayethe Baba !*

*Bayethe Nkosi !*

*Bayethe Gumethe !*

*Inkosi yelizwe lonke*

*Wena umzukhulu kaNgwana, kaGoqweni*

*Wena kaSongobe zamakhanda, kuyambatha amashoba ezinyamazana.*

*Wena wadabuka kwaShaka ebenkundla zitha, amachamani ngesidaba soluthuli.*<sup>28</sup>

*Wena wakwaMdladla uBanjwa, obanjwa ngaMasokani.*

*Umzukhulu kaNaNqongwane*<sup>29</sup> *kaGoqweni.*

*Wena okwenda okumnyama.*

*Wena osilo sabantu.*

*Wena ingudlangudla*<sup>30</sup> *inkunzi yamalanga.*

*Owaphuza ubende lwezinkomo.*

*Owabekwa ndawonye nezintaba.*

*Liyasha, liyasha ungenampendulo.*

English : " *Praise of Ngwana son of Goqweni.* "

Hail father !

Hail Chief !

Hail Gumethe !

<sup>27</sup> *uNgwana* was leader of the Maseko group of Ngoni when they left the South. He is the great-great grandfather of the present Paramount Gomani. *Museveni*

<sup>28</sup> The meaning of this phrase is very obscure and is just a guess.

<sup>29</sup> *Na* is the honorific prefix for important women in Gomani's country, taken from Chewa. *Clare*

<sup>30</sup> This is obscure too but the meaning is said to be "grazing."

Chief of the whole country.  
 You the grandchild of Ngwana son of Goqweni.  
 You the son of Songobe of the military villages, clothed with  
 armlets of wild animals.  
 You who came from among Shaka's people. Shaka who was  
 the milking place of his enemies, the calf skin for the kilt  
 of Lutuli.  
 You of the Mdladla who was captured, who was captured of  
 Masokana.  
 The grandchild of Na-Nqongwane daughter of Goqweni.  
 You whose marriage had sad omens.  
 You the wild beast of the people.  
 You the biggest of all other bulls.  
 You who drink the blood of cattle.  
 You who wast placed together with the mountains.  
 The sun is blazing, is blazing, and you do not answer.

(2) Ngoni : " *Izibongo kaNgwana, kaGoqweni noGoqweni.*"

*Wena owajub' imithi wajub' imiyomo*<sup>31</sup>

*Wena ontethe vuyana wahlom' izinsiba zezintethe.*

*Owaya phansi wakhwela phezulu, wayokuthabath' inkwenkwezi  
 yokusa.*

*Hamba wena lokhu fakwalakho, uyokuthabatha amashoba  
 ezinyamazana : ezinkomo anombeyebeye.*<sup>32</sup>

*Wena ukumbuyana umyandana wakadeni.*

*Kuyehla wayehla ndawonye nezintaba.*

*Wena wasel' u'ende*<sup>33</sup> *bezinkomo.*

*Wena waqhamukana naboShaka, uShaka kaMbelebele.*

*Wena waqhamukana naboNyathi ekaMashobane : eladuma  
 lasibekela.*

*Izinkomo ezapheya ngumaganyazana.*

*Wena wadabukana*<sup>34</sup> *naboMzilikazi*

*Wena wadabukana naboMpakana kaLidunga*

*Wena wadabukana naboNdwandwa.*

<sup>31</sup> Probably *imiyomo yempi* = advance guard of the army.

<sup>32</sup> Armlets of cattle would involve taking cattle, someone's property, and would cause dispute. Wild animals no one can lay claim to.

<sup>33</sup> *U'ende* is really cooked blood, but I am told that it is used here poetically for uncooked blood *igazi*.

<sup>34</sup> I am not sure whether *ukudabuka* is used here in its meaning of "to originate" or "to break away." Either is common usage.



English : " *Praises of Ngwana son of Goqweni and of Goqweni.*"

You who cut the trees and who cut the mouths,  
 You the locust, the grasshopper who fixed in your hair the  
 feathers of the locust.  
 Who went below, and climbed up, and went to bring the  
 morning star of the dawn.  
 You go, since you are rejected ; you go and bring the armlets  
 of wild animals ; those of cattle will be much disputed.  
 You who remember the fault of long ago.  
 In descending, you descend together with the mountains.  
 You who drank the blood of cattle.  
 You who separated from the people of Shaka, Shaka of  
 Mbelebele kraal.  
 You who separated from the people of Nyathi the son of  
 Mashobane ; it thundered, it was cloudy.  
 Thou resemblest cattle which were finished by wolves.  
 You who originated with the people of Mzilikazi.  
 You who originated with the people of Mpakana son of Lidonga.  
 You who originated with the people of Ndwandwa.

(3) Ngoni : " *Izibongo zikaGomani kaTshikusi.*"

*Bayeth' nkosi*

*Wena umzukulana kaGwaya*

*Wena umzukulana kaNgwana*

*Umabanda tshembuzi tshenkomo tshinombalo*

*Wena owadla muntu lapha kuboNgala.*

English : " *Praises of Gomani<sup>35</sup> son of Tshikusi.*"

Hail Chief

You the grandchild of Gwaya

You the grandchild of Ngwana

One who carries a goatskin shield, because he knows a  
 shield of cow skin brings envy<sup>36</sup>

You who ate a man there among the Ngala people.

<sup>35</sup> This was the father of the present Paramount Gomani.

<sup>36</sup> In dividing a cowskin for making shields a more honoured person receives the right hand side. Hence disputes arose when chiefs gave skins for shields. A goat skin is not divided.

(3) Ngoni: "Izibongo zikaZwangendaba<sup>37</sup> kaHlatshwayo."

*UZwangendaba omnyama ngabomu ophik' exiyakhanya  
 Obej' amehlo wabej' iniyomo  
 Ophuz' ingazi zamanye madoda  
 Indima azilingani nashakwazi kulima  
 Ivila elidl' amabele okulinyelwa  
 UMcethuli wexigodo nasekhaya uyacethula nakubafo uyacethula  
 Owel' UZembezi ngezinyawo  
 Bath' UZembezi aluwelwa luwelwa ngezinkonjane zimadada  
 Ohlangane ngengwe emahlabeyeni  
 Wat'hi ingwe izongiyamuyeya kanti ingwe izith' ezinye  
 Nango, nango, umbonaphi?  
 Umbon' emagumeni abonina.*

English: Praises of Zwangendaba son of Hlatshwayo.

Zwangendaba whose intention it is to be black, whose wings  
 are shining

Red as to the eyes<sup>38</sup> and red as to the lips.

Who drinks the blood of the other men.

The plots (which he hoes) are not equal to those of the people  
 who know how to hoe.

An idle man who eats grain which is hoed for him.

Clearer of the stumps (which are in his way); at home he is  
 clearing them<sup>39</sup>, and in the enemy country.

Who crossed the Zambezi by foot.

They say the Zambezi is not crossed, it is crossed by swallows  
 like ducks.

Who has encountered a leopard on his left side<sup>40</sup>.

He said: the leopard will help me; whereas the leopard is  
 some enemies<sup>41</sup>.

There he is, there he is, where do you see him?

You see him in the fences of his mothers.

<sup>37</sup> Leader of the Jere group when leaving the south. Great grandfather of the present Paramount Mwambara.

<sup>38</sup> He was said to have blazing eyes like a man who smokes hemp.

<sup>39</sup> Refers to his way of getting rid of rivals and those suspected of witchcraft.

<sup>40</sup> The vulnerable side.

<sup>41</sup> A possible reference to Basa who killed Zwangendaba's wives.

(4) Ngoni: " *Izibongo zikaZwangendaba kuHlatshwayo.*"

*U Zwangendaba omnyama ngabomu ophike kwakhanya.*  
*Muka simuke wena owalirwayo.*  
*SingaNtungwa siyihashazi lapha abantu bafa ngokhuluphaya.*  
*Ngqaba dlan' abantu shiy' izinkomo.*  
*Ngqaba kuLushwana kwaba uluthuli.*  
*Nango, nango bambonaphi? Bambon' emagumeni abonina.*  
*Mathukuthela zaluke namathole.*  
*Iqili elikhulu eleqa amaseko ezinyanga.*  
*Ngenyuko ngaza ngazazu ulubombo.*  
*Siyenzwa ngenkani inkulu yaManqumayo.*  
*Uyabona amalemba akuhlalele amalemba angalembel' ukulinywa.*  
*Wakubon' inkotha wadladlama.*  
*Wakubon' udonga wafaka unyawo.*  
*Yena owashaya amanzi ngomshiza kuZembezi.*  
*Owakhumbul' inkomo zabalunjana.*

English: "Praises of Zwangendaba son of Hlatshwayo."

Zwangendaba whose intention it is to be black<sup>42</sup> who denies it to be light.

Go away, let us go, you the rejected one.

We are like a man of the Ntungwa<sup>43</sup>, a fat one; there the people die as fat ones.

Ngqaba you must eat people. Leave the cattle.

Ngqaba son of Lushwana there was confusion.

There he is, there he is, where do they see him? They see him in the fences of his mothers.

One who is angry because the cattle have gone with the calves. His great cunning overcomes the magic stones of the doctors.

I have gone away until I have seen Lubombo Mountains.<sup>44</sup>

We are suffering on account of the great dispute with the Nqumaya<sup>45</sup> people.

You are seeing the hoes which are waiting for you, the hoes which cannot be used for hoeing.

He saw it, the short grass, he was biting it hastily.

<sup>42</sup> This may be a reference to the well-known black skin of the Jeris, sometimes jeered at by certain lighter skinned families.

<sup>43</sup> Considered to be a superior people.

<sup>44</sup> Meaning quite obscure *uLubombo* (= Lubombo Mts.) is said to be fontanel

<sup>45</sup> Zwidi Nqumayo was Paramount Chief of the Ndwandwe; even the Jeres were under him.

He saw it, the ditch, his foot slipped into it.  
 He who divided the water with a stick at the Zambezi.  
 He who remembered the cattle of the Balunjana.

(5) "Ngoni: *Izibongo zikaHlatshwayo*<sup>46</sup> *kaMagangatha*"

*UGubazi ngokwambath' ingubo enzima*  
*Umanunk' onjengokaLongqola*  
*Umkhulana ngokubiz' ezizweni*  
*'Sandla saphath' inkomo zaphalala*  
*EzikaNdlembe ngezikaNdlembe wakuboMfekane*  
*Bathi ubuhlulu kabulingani entanyeni*  
*Ingani kobodade babo buyalingana*

English: "Praises of Hlatshwayo son of Magangata."

Gubazi by putting on a black robe  
 Who smells like the son of Longqola  
 Who is great by calling the tribes  
 'The hand that touched cattle and they multiplied  
 'Those (cattle) of Ndlembe, they belong to Ndlembe of Mfekane  
 'They say the beads do not fit on his neck  
 Whereas on the necks of his sisters they are fitting.

(6) Ngoni: "*Izibongo zikaHlatshwayo kaMagangatha.*"

*UHlatshwayo omfishane anganyatheli ingubo*  
*Ingani abade layazinyathela*  
*Inyama idliwa ngemikwa yamazembe*  
*Ingadliwa ngezinsungulo ibolile*  
*Hlatshwayo isihlahla esibenyana kuHlatshwayo waMandulo*  
*Utshani wentongoza awushi nokusha, usha nyasisitheka usha*  
*using' intonteya.*

English: "Praises of Hlatshwayo son of Magangata."

Hlatshwayo the dwarf one<sup>47</sup> who cannot trail his cloth  
 Whereas the tall people trail their cloths  
 Meat eaten with knives of axes  
 If it is not eaten with forks it is rotten  
 Hlatshwayo whose bodily vigour is finished off compared  
 with Hlatshwayo of former times<sup>48</sup>  
 Grass of deep red colour is not burned with burning; it  
 burns very slowly; it burns drop by drop.

<sup>46</sup> Was father of Zwangendaŋa.

<sup>47</sup> He was known to have been a dwarf.

<sup>48</sup> A reference to his alleged impotence.

C. *War songs* :

To the Ngoni war was man's work. Throughout their history as a separate people they were a nation under arms, and on the success of their arms depended their existence as conquerors. Their life was organised in every detail to make them efficient as warriors, and in the preparations for war, songs and dances played an essential part. There was one group of war songs, *imigubo*, sung before going out to fight, another, *imihubo*, sung on the return from the war. The *imigubo* are danced today in Gomani's country in full war dress with shields and spears, and only in the Paramount's village, the place of mobilisation of the army in old days. The Ngoni women join in the dance, some inside the circle of men, some outside, and the *tempo* of the dance works up and up as it did in old days to inspire men with the lust of battle.

It is in the group of war songs that I have found those which are common both to Gomani's and to Mwambara's country, and which therefore point to a common source in the south. Though the songs appear brief in their wording, much of the tune is sung to "sounds" such as *inyo ho, zi, oya ye yayo*, and the accompaniment is varied with stamping the feet and knocking the shields either with spears or against the knees.

The following five songs are those common to both Ngoni areas. The next five songs (6 to 10) are selected as typical of this group of songs.

## (1) Ngoni:

*Ay' inkosi yadinga ngomkhonto*  
*Mbayekeyani na?*  
*Hay' inkosi yadinga yomkhonto*  
*Mbayekeyani na?*

English: No chief can be poor because of the spear<sup>49</sup>  
 Then why are you running away?

## (2) Ngoni:

*Uyezwa?*  
*Umngoni uvela enzansi*<sup>50</sup>  
*Uyezwa?*  
*Uyezwa zi*  
*Zi.*

<sup>49</sup> A reference to the probable loss of warriors in the coming fight.

<sup>50</sup> Alternative reading: *Lomngoni owaye enzansi.*

English :

Do you hear ?

The Ngoni comes from the south-east.

(3) Ngoni :

Alternative version :

*Inkomo yami na*

*Ye Somfuya*

*Inkomo yami na*

*Ye Somfuya*

*Wadl' inkomo zabayeka*

*Ye ye Somfuya.*

*May' inkomo yami na*

*E kuboNdleya*

*Owadl' inkomo zabayeka*

English :

Is it my beast ?

Yes Somfuya

He ate the cattle. They ran away.

(4) Ngoni :

Alternative version :

*I i i*

*Sibangani ?*

*Sibangani ?*

*Njenje phezulu ?*

*I i i*

*Oyi oyi oyi!*

*Lilanga liyashona*

*I i i*

*Sibangani ?*

*Sibangani ?*

*Njenje phezulu ?*

*I i i*

*Oyi oyi oyi!*

*Kubangwani ? Ho*

*Kubangwani ? Ho*

*Kubangw' ilang' eliphezulu*

*Ho yoya*

*Inyo inyo inyo i*

*Hoyawonje liyashona*

*A ho a ho*

*Kubangwani ?*

*Kubangwani ?*

*Kubangw' ilang' eliphezulu.*

English :

What are we contending for ?

In this way in the sky

The sun is setting.

What is contended for ?

For the sun is in the sky

It is setting.

(5) Ngoni :

*O may' inkosi zi ha ho*

*O sibangel' inkosi yethu nje.*

English :

O alas ! the chief

We fight for our chief, only that.

## (6) Ngoni :

*Ngagoba ngagoba ngigobele UZwidi*  
*Kunjani-nje, Kunjani-nje ?*  
*Ngibengigobel' UZwidi kaLanga*  
*Inyo i inyo i*  
*Kunjani nje, kunjani nje ?*  
*Ngibengijiyel' ukulala*  
*Inyo i inyo i*  
*Kunjani-nje, kunjani-nje ?*  
*Izidikalala zemizi yabo*  
*Inyo i inyo i*  
*Kunjani-nje, kunjani-nje ?*  
*Manxeba emikhonto*  
*Enyi i enyi i*  
*Kunjani nje kunjani nje ?*

## English :

I have waited, I have waited, I am waiting for Zwidi.  
 How ? just how ?  
 I have been waiting for Zwidi son of Langa.  
 I have been longing to sleep.  
 The tremendous size of their villages<sup>51</sup>.  
 The wounds of the spears.

## (7) Ngoni :

*Bayakhuluma bayakhuluma*  
*Izwe lonke*  
*Muyezwa muthule muthi du*  
*Bayakhuluma*  
*Kuyakhulunywa kuyakhulunywa*  
*Izwe lonke*  
*Longiyeka uhlale uthi du*  
*Kuyakhulunywa bantu.*<sup>52</sup>

## English :

They are talking they are talking  
 Throughout the land  
 Listen keep silent be still  
 They are talking

<sup>51</sup> *Isidakolala* is a very big village with many *izigawa* or hamlets contained in it.

<sup>52</sup> This is one of best known songs in Mwambara's country. The tune is used as a hymn tune, as are also many others.

It will be spoken it will be spoken  
 Throughout the land  
 Longiyeka you keep silent you be still  
 People are being talked about.

(8) Ngoni :

*Zemuka inkomo magwala-ndini*  
*Naziya zemuka magwala-ndini*  
*Inkomana zemuka na ? zemuka magwala-ndini*  
*Ubujaha buphelile na, zemuka hi ha o ho*  
*Nihlala nemijingathi zemuka e he he*  
*Hayi nkomo zemuka na zemuka hi ho*  
*Nilifele namabele, zemuka o ho ho.*<sup>53</sup>

English :

The cattle run away, you cowards.  
 Those yonder ; they run, you cowards.  
 The cattle, see, do they run ? They run, you cowards.  
 Is your young manhood over ? They run,  
 You are left with the carriers. They run,  
 Look the cattle run, they run,  
 You have eyes only for the food stuffs. They run.

(9) Ngoni :

*Asazi asazi*  
*Asazi asazi ezweni lomfo*  
*Asazi thina.*  
*Ingani uyazishuka ?*  
*Asazi thina.*  
*Ulibele uyazishuka*  
*Ulibele uyazishuka ezweni lomfo*  
*Asazi thina.*

English :

We do not know  
 We do not know in the land of the serfs  
 We do not know, we ourselves  
 Why do you trouble yourself ?  
 You are troubled for nothing  
 You are troubled for nothing in the land of the serfs,  
 We do not know even we.

<sup>53</sup> This is a war song sung by women, deriding the men to do great deeds. They would see herds of cattle being driven away hastily in villages passed on the march, and would sing this song to persuade the army to go after them.



## (10) Ngoni :

*Hayo hayo hayo*  
*Thina siyanda lizwe*  
*Elele zi a ho*  
*Siyabuya kuneBonga*  
*O uhlaya uMaphikenkani<sup>54</sup>*  
*Sabuya kuneBonga*  
*O kusale amaphik' inkani<sup>54</sup>*  
*Elele zi a ho.*

## English :

We follow the country  
 We are returning from Bonga  
 You remain you do not yield  
 We have returned from Bonga  
 There remain those who have not yielded.

D. *Ingoma* songs :

*Ingoma* means just song or dance but is used for a kind of dance which is distinct from other dances. When the Ngoni say "We are going to dance *ingoma*" it may be to end a mourning period, to celebrate a good harvest, to make merry over beer, or to compete between villages in dancing, or for many other reasons. Some songs of *ingoma* are old, others modern, and most refer to some incident which has happened either in the remote or immediate past, and which is enshrined in a song to keep its memory green. *Ingoma* is danced by the men without weapons, that is without spears and shields, but with knobkerries, small axes, sticks, or tails of animals in their hands. The women hold spears in their hands upside down, grasping the blade, or long sticks. To anyone who has listened for some time to Ngoni music, there is a big difference between the rhythm and *tempo* of *ingoma* songs and war songs. The former were songs of civil life, the latter of war-time, and the *ingoma* songs have a leisurely rhythm and work up less to *crescendos* than the war songs.

The following selection of four songs are fairly typical of *ingoma* songs, each referring to some event.

## (1) Ngoni :

*Se ngaz' onela*  
*Kushona kweyanga*

<sup>54</sup> Used by warriors to express their determination to die rather than yield to the enemy.

*Sengizakuyona mina*  
*Yo mntaka \ndunduma*  
*Hayi yi yo yo (repeat).<sup>56</sup>*

English :

I have brought shame on my name  
 At the setting of the sun.  
 I shall bring shame on my name, even I  
 Woe is me, the son of Ndunduma.

(2) Ngoni :

*Siyaku'heth' izulu yeyahe*  
*!godleni siyababaza.*  
*Satheth' izulu yeyahe*  
*Egodleni*  
*Ku Shitunga yeyahe*  
*KuMabalawo y.yahe*  
*Kuyababazwa.*

English :

We shall pray for rain  
 At Egodleni we are praising.  
 We did pray for rain  
 At Egodleni  
 At Shitunga's  
 At Mabalawo's  
 Praises are being spoken.

(3) Ngoni :

*Ilizwe liyahlokoma Ntabeni<sup>56</sup>*  
*Ho UKamiya<sup>57</sup>*  
*Ilizwe liyahlokoma Ntabeni*  
*Ho UKamiya*  
*Benza ngabomu*  
*Benza ngabomu*  
*Ho UKamiya*  
*Ha sibonile*  
*Ho UKamiya.*

<sup>56</sup> This is a song in praise of Nyumbane Chibambo (brother of Yesaya Mlonyeni Chibambo) who was such a famous dancer that others were put to shame before him.

<sup>56</sup> This is one of the most popular songs in Gomanis' country.

<sup>57</sup> UKamiya and UNtabeni are people whose identity is now forgotten.

English:

The country is singing to Ntabeni  
They are doing it with intent  
We saw it (the country).<sup>58</sup>

(4) Ngoni:

*USomfuya*  
*hi a ho* (repeat)  
*Uaabula lizwe*  
*ho ya ho*  
*USomfuya.*

English:

Somfuya  
He breaks the country.<sup>59</sup>

*Conclusion:*

This small collection of songs, recorded only in words, is like a skeleton compared with the full beauty of the human form. It is their music which clothes them with form and life, and it is music of a quality that deserves recording and studying as an aspect of African music by the Western trained musician. Here and there missionaries have taken Ngoni songs as hymns or as songs in schools, but that is rare, and the music is still "of the people" untouched by Western influences. It should be evident from this collection that Ngoni music is of the stuff that life is made of, reminding them of crying babies and jealous women as well as of heroism and philosophy, ranging from the plaintive melody of the *igubu* to the stately rolling harmonies of the *ingoma*. Gramophones with music-hall tunes and modern jazz are rare as yet here, and not popular except with the sophisticated few. The natural expression of the people in joy and in sorrow is their own music, and it is as a mirror of their life, of today as of the past, that I hope it may one day be recorded adequately.

<sup>58</sup> UKamiya and UNtabeni are people whose identity is now forgotten.

<sup>59</sup> Used of someone leaving a big chief and going away with his followers to found a new chieftainship.