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*Plantation Protest: The History of a Mozambican Song*¹

LEROY VAIL and LANDEG WHITE

'José de Paiva Raposo . . . just and generous, high-spirited, speaking accurate chiSena and Maganja . . . possessing a special knack of dealing with the Africans who adored him.'²

'Then on Sundays when they stopped work, they used to say Paiva was only an ordinary stupid man. We got his money for him, yet we get paid so little. So they made a song about him.'³

Since 1890, the lower reaches of the Zambesi River from the Shire mouth to the coast have been in varying degrees dominated by a single sugar company, known since 1920 as Sena Sugar Estates Ltd. This essay combines oral and archival sources to trace the development over a corresponding period of a satiric protest song directed against the company. The examples were collected in Moçambique from the Zambesi delta in July–September 1975 and November 1976. Sena Sugar Estates Ltd now operates on opposite banks of the river at Luabo and Marromeu, some forty miles from the sea, but the first plantations were further upstream at Mopeia and Caia where the company still retains land rights. From the number of widely-scattered villages and compounds where examples were recorded and from oral testimony about where it has been sung, it is clear that the song is well-

¹ This paper is based on research carried out in the Public Record Office, London; the libraries of the Geographical Society of Lisbon and of the University of Zambia; the archives of Sena Sugar Estates Ltd at their head office for Moçambique in Luabo; and the Obras Publicas of Quelimane. Field work was undertaken in 1975 and 1976 in the Quelimane district of Moçambique, particularly in the areas of Luabo, Marromeu, Mopeia and Chinde.

We are grateful to the Rector of the University of Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo who approved the work; to the University of Zambia who partly supported it with two small grants; to the Governor of Beira and the Administrators of Mopeia, Chinde and Luabo who, together with the local representatives of FRELIMO, were exceedingly anxious to assist; to Sena Sugar Estates Ltd who granted every facility; to members of a University of Zambia staff seminar in Literature and Languages who criticized an earlier version; and most of all to Manoel Sabão of the Grupo Dinimizador, Luabo, who organized the collection of material, and to Alice White who conducted the interviews and made the translations.

² João de Azevedo Coutinho; *Memorias de um Velho Marinheiro e Soldado de Africa*, Lisboa 1941; p. 440.

³ OT Group Interview, Mopeia, 20 September 1975.

known throughout this whole area and, despite its ribald content, regarded with some reverence as 'a map' of the people's whole experience:

This song can't be forgotten. Even our children will have to know it. Because Paiva was the one who made the people suffer. This song, whatever may happen, we have to know it. Because it's about what people suffered. All the children will have to be told of the suffering we went through here on earth, and this is the song we used to sing.⁴

Of one hundred and twenty work songs collected at the same time, none other is spoken of in such terms.

I

The simplest and apparently oldest version was sung by a group of men who had worked for the company as field labourers in Mopeia. The lines were divided as indicated between a lead singer and the remainder of the group who, grinning with anticipation through the long *Wo — o — o, Wos*, shouted the final two words with tremendous emphasis:

Paiva — ay	Paiva
<i>Wo — o — o, Wo</i>	
Paiva — ay	
<i>Wo — o — o, Wo</i>	
Paiva — ay	
Paiva ndampera dinyero ache	Paiva, I've killed his money for him
<i>Nsondo wache!</i>	<i>His penis!</i> ⁵

On this, as on five similar occasions, the lines were sung only once in the context of a formal interview, so it is hard to be certain how the men would originally have performed it in the canefields or on those Sundays when they stopped work. Something can, however, be concluded from the actual form of the song, which is very common on the lower Zambesi. Over one-third of the chiSena work songs collected shared this structure—a topic, usually a name, announced three times by the lead singer and followed by an epigrammatic choral comment. In the following example, José Guillerme, one of Sena Sugar Estates Ltd's agents in the compulsory cotton growing scheme (of which more below), is being mocked by the women growers for his bullying behaviour. The nickname 'Makwiri' refers to his boast that he could not be harmed by witchcraft:

Makwiri	Makwiri
<i>Ay — ay — o — ay</i>	
Makwiri mwanawe	Makwiri, young man
<i>Ay — ay — ay — ay</i>	

⁴ OT Group Interview, Pirira Village, Luabo, 25 October 1976.

⁵ Sung by Charlie Bicente and men of Chimbazo Village, near Mopeia, 13 August 1975. Other examples of the song not used in this paper were recorded at Missongue, Murriwa, Cocorico and Madumo Villages, and at Muidi, Checanyama, Enhaterre and Caoxe Village Compounds, of Sena Sugar Estates Ltd Luabo, and also at the Luabo *gombe*.

Makwiri mwanawe
Nafuna ndibale mwana
Ndivale ndanda yanga
Nkongo wa mbuyako zololo!

Makwiri, young man
Can I pick my child up?
Can I pull my knickers up?
You grandmother's cunt, standing
there!⁶

The epigram is sacrosanct, but the lead singer can as here modify the earlier lines, even dropping the name altogether to substitute appropriate comments. It seems a reasonable guess that those early Mopeia performances would have been expanded in the same way, with additional remarks about the Paiva of the period.

Songs of this kind, being concerned with particular individuals, are necessarily ephemeral, losing their relevance when their object disappears from the scene. The survival of *Paiva* over such a long period is due to an unusual combination of events which have extended its life by broadening its meaning. There are three reasons for believing it to be some eighty years old. Sena Sugar Estates Ltd began life as the Companhia do Assucar de Moçambique in 1890, with plantations at Mopeia, a factory, and a labour force of two thousand recruited from the Sena villages in the immediate neighbourhood. In 1905, some of these labourers were despatched across the river to open up new canefields at Caia, where production began in 1908, and two years later an offshoot of the same company took over the plantations downstream at Marromeu which had been run since 1902 by the French Sociedade Açucareira de Africa Oriental Portuguesa. Finally, in 1922, field labourers from Marromeu were transferred to build flood defences and plant the new canefields at Luabo. Four plantations belonging to the same company, each opened or expanded in turn by a transfer of labourers. Starting in Mopeia, the oral testimony declares, they carried the song with them, 'teaching others . . . until it came to Luabo'.⁷ This, if taken quite literally, gives us a date pre-1905, with this chiSena song moving downstream in partial fulfilment of Torrend's prediction in 1900 that chiSena would soon replace the old chiPodzo language of the delta.⁸

Secondly, the singers' own testimony that this is 'a very old song' is reinforced by the content of other songs offered by the same informants and described as equally old:

Shamwale ngawona!
O — ay — ay — ay
Shamwale ngawona!
O — ay — ay — ay

My friend, look at this!

⁶ Sung by Mikayera Jasse and Minoria Gwengwe with women of Chimbazo Village, near Mopeia, 13 August 1975. A slight variation ('Can I pull my knickers down') was recorded at Madumo Village, 17 August 1975.

⁷ OT, Interview with Jiwa Todo, Madumo Village, 2 November 1976.

⁸ J. Torrend, SJ, *Grammatica do Chisena*, Chupanga 1900, p.2.

Shamwale ngawona!
 O — ay — ay — ay
 Shi!
 Yalu!
 Shamwale ngawona!
 Shi!
 Yalu!⁹

Shamwale ngawona was the name given to a four-pronged 'hoe' introduced by the company in 1890 for planting the first cane in Mopeia. *Shi* and *Yalu* are ideophones expressing the sound of the hoe piercing the earth and the soil being turned over, the rhythm of the whole song imitating the regimented movements of the labourers to numbers chanted by the overseer.

Thirdly, there is the content of the *Paiva* song itself. Informants about the retired field labourers who once worked in Mopeia are unanimous in identifying Paiva with José de Paiva Raposo who was appointed administrator of Prazo Maganja Aquem Chire, the company prazo, in 1889, and who left Moçambique for good in 1900 to marry an heiress from the Alemtêjo.

José de Paiva Raposo was nineteen years old. He was the second son of Ignacio José de Paiva Raposo who had made a fortune as the biggest ivory trader in Lourenço Marques in the early 1860s. In 1874, having gambled away his wealth in Lisbon and fathered five sons (thus giving additional point to the later curse on Paiva's penis), he was granted a concession of 20,000 hectares in Prazo Maganja Aquem Chire to grow and manufacture opium. One other *Paiva* song, known only to a single aging informant, may just possibly refer to this Paiva Raposo *velho* who introduced on his poppy plantations the first irrigation machinery ever used on the lower Zambesi:

Paiva
 O — ay
 O — ay — ay
Watekenya makina

He has set the machine shaking.¹⁰

Whether this does refer to the father or to one of the sons, there is a pleasant irony in the use of the verb *ku-tekenya*, 'to start shaking'. In the 1850s, the same area known then as Bororo had been the base of Paul Marianno Vas dos Anjos, a slave-trader of Goan origin whose private army of *achikunda* devastated the whole Shire valley and whose activities were publicized by Livingstone in 1860. He was twice dislodged by Portuguese forces, helped by rival slavers, in 1858 and 1861, and eventually re-established his kingdom near the Ruo. But his successors were strong enough to raid and effectually destroy the Opium Company in the

⁹ Sung by Charlie Bicente and men of Chimbazo Village, near Mopeia, 13 August 1975.

¹⁰ Sung by Maria Fashe, Anna Tennis, and Laurinia Nicolos at Madumo Village, 17 August 1975. The girls had first to be taught the song by Jiwa Todo.

Massingiri uprising of 1884. Paul Marianno's African name was 'Matekenya', 'causer of trembling'.¹¹

Before Ignacio de Paiva Raposo died in 1887, his Opium Company defunct, he secured a renewal of his concession for a further thirty years. Two men arrived to take it up: his son José, and his son-in-law John Peter Hornung, an Englishman of Hungarian descent who had married Laura de Paiva Raposo in 1884. After attempting to revive the opium scheme with the short-lived Mozambique Produce Company, they secured Portuguese capital for the Companhia do Assucar de Moçambique in 1890. Hornung was the driving force behind the sugar company, and he had a number of advantages which had been denied to his father-in-law. He came into Zambesia at a time when, after fifty years of warfare, the Portuguese were at last establishing military control. His crop was more suited both to the climate and to the labour available. The opening up of the Chinde mouth of the Zambesi gave him a handy port. The Enes Prazo Reforms of 1890 granted to companies prepared to invest capital in the area a monopoly of the labour supply in their prazos, and had the effect of stifling competition from peasant agriculture which had benefited in the 1880s from the stimulus of itinerant Indian traders.¹² The growth of the super-companies, the Companhia de Moçambique south of the river and the Companhia da Zambesia to the north, made it impossible for villagers to escape the labour laws by migrating within Moçambique. The net had finally tightened.

Equally important, however, were his Portuguese family connections. At a time when the Portuguese government was hyper-sensitive about British activities in the south and in Nyasaland, Hornung was able to work behind the Paiva Raposo name, already well-known and officially accepted as having a claim on the district. The appointment of José de Paiva Raposo as administrator of the sugar company prazo in 1889 is a case in point. The principal duty of the administrator then was to collect an annual headtax of 800 reis which could only be earned by working for the company. In rapid succession in 1890 and 1891, he became administrator of the newly subdued Prazo Massingiri (a dead-end this: the prazo was already sublet by Carl Wiese, one of Hornung's main rivals), and then of Prazos Caia, Inhamunho and Chupanga across the river where the company was later to expand. When other members of the family arrived to join the company, Hornung continued to employ this advantage. The first 10,000 hectares at Luabo, where the new factory was to be opened in 1924, were first ceded in 1911 to Tomas de Paiva Raposo, who passed them to the company when he became general manager in 1927. Ignacio de Paiva Raposo, José's elder brother, had a tobacco plantation in Angonia. In 1914, he transferred his rights to the sugar company which from then on, until the prazo system was

¹¹ See M. D. Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement on the Zambesi*, Longman's 1973, pps. 175-86.

¹² See 'Prazos, Peasants and International Capitalism', unpublished seminar paper by Leroy Vail and Landeg White.

abolished in 1930, employed large numbers of Ngoni contract labourers. Ignacio himself was general manager from 1915 to 1925. As late as 1926, when more land was required for expansion at Mopeia, the extra hectares were first secured in the names of Artur, Tomas and Ignacio.

Hornung was immensely successful. Cashing in at first on the liquor trade to the Rand, he profited from the repressive labour regulations and from a dramatic rise of 900 per cent in the price of sugar between 1914 and 1919. But he operated more and more from a distance, living in the Nash house he purchased at West Grinstead in Sussex where he established a racehorse stud and became master of the hounds. He visited the Zambesi only every three years, coming for the last time in 1912, when he distributed 'cast-off pink hunting coats' which were 'much appreciated' by the natives.¹³ To the people on the spot, the company remained Paiva Raposo's:

When Hornung came out here, he came as an employee of Paiva Raposo. Nobody here knew that this company was an English company. We all thought it was a Portuguese company. Hornung worked just like an employee and he started having his own children . . . but the name which was famous was Paiva Raposo.¹⁴

This not very accurate statement throws a good deal of light on the complaint embodied in the song. For although those oral historians who can distinguish between Ignacio, José, Artur and Tomas insist on José as the Paiva of the song, thus giving us a starting date in the 1890s, Paiva is clearly more than an individual. Paiva from the very beginning is the company itself, the name under which it has alienated the land and commandeered the labour. The song is an attack on the inequalities brought to the area by the monopolist company system, a satire on the disproportion between wages and profits. Those other Paivas, as we shall see, keep the song alive by maintaining its direct relevance, giving exploitation for each successive generation of workers a fresh human face. But the reference goes beyond them to the system itself. If the actual words seem a little meagre compared to the more recent elaborations we are about to consider, it must be remembered that what we have discussed so far is no more than a memory, the skeleton of a performance, an echo of protest.

II

Nowadays, every village throughout the area under discussion has its own preferred version of the *Paiva* song, versions which all preserve the rhymed epigram, which 'has to stay like that' because 'it came from our fathers',¹⁵ but which expand on the meaning to suit local circumstances. The following example was recorded at Pirira, a village ten kilometres downstream from

¹³ B. M. Collin, *J. P. Hornung, a Family Portrait*, privately printed, Forward dated May 1970, p. 79.

¹⁴ OT Group Interview, Mopeia, 10 September 1975.

¹⁵ OT Interview with Jiwa Todo, Madumo Village, 2 November 1976.

Luabo and outside the company's present concession area. The lead singer was dressed for dancing, with amulets and anklets, a grass skirt and goatskin cap with a squirrel's tail attached, and a flywhisk in his right hand. He was accompanied by two small hour-glass drums called *njene* and *sugula*, and by women clapping or shaking tin rattles called *machacha*. Normally, we were later informed, there would have been dancing too—'We imitate the way Paiva was walking or the way he talked, just to make people laugh'¹⁶—but on this occasion, five weeks after those independence speeches, the lure of the microphone was too strong:

Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndachipata	Paiva, I've felt it
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndadungunya	Paiva, I've complained
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndadungunya	Paiva, I've complained
Paiva	Paiva,
Mbira ndi yinadumbira	The mbira is my witness
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva baba ndalira	Paiva, father, I've wept
Paiva	Paiva
Paiva enda mbalira	Paiva, going weeping
Paiva	Paiva
Paiva enda mbalira	Paiva, going weeping
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva dungunya	Paiva, complained
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndagwa pamoto	Paiva, I've fallen on a fire
LUABO!	LUABO!
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndadungunya	Paiva, I've complained
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndamatama	Paiva, I'm speechless
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndamatama	Paiva, I'm speechless
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndalira lero	Paiva, I've wept today
Paiva	Paiva
Paiva ndadungunya	Paiva, I've complained
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndagwa pamoto	Paiva, I've fallen on a fire
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva enda mbalira	Paiva, going weeping
Paiva	Paiva,
Paiva ndagwa pamoto	Paiva, I've fallen on a fire
PAIVA LUABO!	PAIVA LUABO!

It may not be immediately apparent that this is the same song, but after a repetition of the above lines with many of the words replaced by

¹⁶ OT Group Interview, Pirira Village, 25 October 1976.

vocalizations, the following emerged, repeated some twenty-odd times:

O—o—o
 O—o—o
 O—o—o
 O—o—o
 O—o—o

*Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache*¹⁷

The triple denunciation of the original song, those three 'Paiva's' by the lead singer before the choral epigram, has been expanded into a long introductory solo with a response of its own, a solo which imitates the original version in three ways. It retains that denunciatory repetition of Paiva's name. The response still comes after each group of three lines. Finally, the rhyme of the epigram, that rare device which gives it its punch, is reflected in a virtuoso exhibition of sound patterning and verbal play—the splendid pun of 'Mbira ndi yinadumbira', echoed in the rhymes and half-rhymes of 'Paiva baba ndalira' and 'Paiva enda mbalira', and later the manipulation of the consonants in:

Paiva ndamatama
Paiva ndagwa pamoto

The singer described how he learned this version from his father, who came up from the Cuama coast to work in the Luabo canefields:

When he went to the garden to dig, he'll be digging and he'll be singing at the same time, and I used to come and stand beside him. Whatever he was singing about, or whatever he said, I used to listen.¹⁸

It may well be that the reference to the *mbira* or handpiano is a clue to his father's performance of the song as a solo. Certainly, the handling of the language in these devices which are described as 'making the words stronger' and 'making the song flow faster' shows his father to have been a skilled poet.¹⁹

Most striking of all, however, is a distinct shift in the song's meaning. Obviously, that Paiva whose speech and walk would be imitated in the dance cannot be the Paiva of the 1890s or indeed any Paiva of the Mopeia days, and the song is located very firmly in Luabo. At the same time, the emphasis of the words is less on the economic inequalities castigated in the epigram than on an intensely personal suffering—grief, pain, endurance—for which an individual Paiva is held responsible. Satire implies a certain buoyancy, but at this performance nobody was laughing. The extra words take the song beyond satire to lament, and it was this version of the song

¹⁷ Sung by Fernando Nicolos with women of Pirira Village, 5 August 1975.

¹⁸ OT Group Interview, Pirira Village, Luabo, 25 October 1976.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

which was described as 'a map' of suffering which 'our children will have to know.'

The first of the Paiva Raposos to have an interest in the Luabo area was, as we have seen, Tomas, a nephew of José, who was ceded land at the modern Luabo in 1911. Ostensibly, he was to grow sugar-cane there himself, but there is no record of any being planted until Hornung moved downstream in 1924. By this stage, Hornung's empire was enormous. The area over which he exerted economic control in one form or another—land ceded directly to the company, land under his administration, and land to which he had monopoly labour rights—comprised some 16,000 square miles. His labour force on the four plantations reached 30,000, made up of the local Sena and Podzo peoples, but also including Ngonis from the north-west and from Nyasaland, and Lomwes and Chuabos from the north-east. He had a chain of company stores staffed by Indian employees and stretching from Chinde to Tambara, owned a 50 per cent share in all river transport, and *de facto* was the only market for cash crops grown by peasant farmers in the area. His power persisted on this scale until 1930 when the Enes 'Reforms' were finally revoked and a Portuguese administration established in Zambesia. Until then, not surprisingly since Sena Sugar Estates Ltd was by now fully English-capitalized, Hornung found it convenient to continue to operate behind the Paiva Raposo name—this, despite the fact that Ignacio, general manager from 1915 to 1925, was embezzling company money, and that Tomas, general manager from 1927 to 1930, was as a sideline stealing labour to work on the Zambesi bridge.²⁰

Thus, what descended on Luabo in 1922–24 was a company administration with near absolute power acting under the name of Paiva Raposo, the actual authority being delegated to Artur, another brother, who was responsible for marking out the new cane-fields. Charles Speller, an Englishman who worked for the company in Luabo very briefly in 1923, gives a graphic account of how that power was exercised:

The youthful labour clerk (Portuguese) was resident magistrate and inflicted with the assistance of a band of cut-throat retainers—'Raposo's men'—what seemed to me a terrible punishment with an instrument called a 'Palmaterio'. This thing was the shape and size of a ping-pong bat but much thicker and was perforated with holes like the colander. The hand of the victim was seized and many blows were struck on the palm; then the other palm and then the buttocks. On one occasion I saw the instrument handed over to a second retainer to carry on. The result of this treatment is to leave the victim in agony which must endure for a considerable time and renders him completely collapsed. The action of the instrument is that when a blow is struck the skin is drawn up into the many holes and a certain amount of force appears necessary to pull or twist the thing away from the flesh.²¹

²⁰ Thurnheer to Hornung: 27 December 1930 and 3 January 1931, SSE archives File 133, Recruiting: Quelimane and Angonia.

²¹ Speller to John Harris: 26 February 1927, PRO FO 371/11989.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the *Paiva* song should have found a receptive audience in the new area, or that its meaning should have become modified in the manner already noted.

III

There is one other detail of the Pirira performance which has not yet been discussed, but which is present in all our remaining examples of the song:

Paiva,	
<i>Ay — ay</i>	
Paiva,	
<i>Ay — ay</i>	
Paiva ndi Mama	Paiva is mother
<i>Ay — ay</i>	
<i>Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache</i> ²²	

This version was recorded in the same village as the original example, but from the women, including wives of the retired labourers. The differences seem slight, but are worth attention. As at Pirira, the last line has been flattened into a single statement, sung entirely by the chorus and no longer divided, as the words would seem to require, between lead singer and chorus. An extra chorus line has been added. Thirdly, the extra words 'Paiva ndi Mama' are a bitter comment by the lead singer on Paiva's self-assumed role as patron or guardian.

These changes seem to be linked to the demands of performance. The song was sung this time with many repetitions as the accompaniment to dancing, the extra chorus line and the flattened epigram making *Paiva* more exactly similar to other women's dance songs, such as *Makwiri* quoted above. The women stood in a circle, bending forward from the waist and clapping or clacking pieces of wood or shaking tin *machacha*. One at a time they performed brief solos, dancing on the spot or backing slowly round the circle, eyes fixed on the ground slightly to their left and elbows crooked, shaking their buttocks to the rhythm. This dance has no particular name²³ and apparently makes no special reference to the words of the song, other songs being danced in an identical manner. The verses are repeated as long as the supply of individual performers lasted, in this instance for about twelve minutes, while the lead singer introduced further variations:

Verse 2: Paiva ndi Baba	Paiva is father
Verse 3: Paiva tabusa	Paiva makes us suffer
Verse 4: Paiva dinyero	Paiva money

From this point onwards, while the song continued, members of the group

²² Sung by Minoria Joaquim and women of Chimbazo Village, near Mopeia, 13 August 1975.

²³ In its original context as a work song, it has of course no dance or drumming accompaniment. It is taken to the village for the sake of its words and is there referred to as *Nyimbo de Paiva*, the 'Paiva Song.'

including the male audience began shouting their own allegations against Paiva:

Women: Kutitabusa iwe
You are making us suffer
Nakundimenya
Beating me up
Nakundimenya iwe
You, beating me up
Nyamachende iwe
You, Mr balls-owner
Mboli yako
Your penis
Kutitabusa peze
You are making us suffer for nothing
Ine trabayare peze
Me, working for nothing
Mbatiwona nyatwa na misale
We've seen hardship with the sugar
Ona tambira mbondo ziwiri basi
Look we're getting just two hundred only
Tambira mikuruzado mitato basi mboli yako
Getting three small cruzados only, your penis!

Men: Ngamala dinyero ache nkabe kuyiona tai
After everything, you can't see your money at all
Ndimba ziwiri zanyankwira
Two whole tasks of earthing-up
Kotoka kotoka antu mbasiyale
People knocking off, knocking off at supertime
Kotoka na midiya ya masiku
Knocking off in the middle of the night
Ngamala tempo yache nkabe kuyiona tai
After everything, you can't see your time at all
Paiva. Mpika chita Paiva.
Paiva. That's what Paiva did.

It will be seen that the women are complaining mainly about ill-treatment and the men about poor pay and long work hours. When the song re-emerged from the shouting, some interchange of words had taken place between the lead singer and the chorus:

Paiva
Tampera dinyero ache We've killed his money for him
Paiva
Tampera dinyero ache
Paiva
Tampera dinyero ache
Tampera dinyero ache nsondo wache
Nsondo wache
Paiva ndi Baba — ay
Nsondo wache

Paiva ndi Baba — ay
 Nsondo wache
Paiva ndi Mama — ay
Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache.

It is in this form as a women's extended dance song that we collected the majority of our examples and that the song now seems to be most popular. Since the mid-fifties, in fact, *Paiva* has become a women's song—the takeover being illustrated in one performance when an old man sang the original version, breaking the epigram, only to be forced to change from the second verse by the women who insisted on joining in. To understand this development, we must look again at the area's history.

With the end of the prazo system and the advent of Portuguese administration in 1930, the Paiva Raposo connection was gradually broken off. Tomas left in 1930 when Thurnheer began his long reign as general manager, and since Artur's death in 1932 no Paiva Raposo has held a managerial position within the company. There were no more advantages to be wrung from the name. However, the changes of 1930 also altered the labour problem. The old prazos had been in effect labour pools. From 1930 onwards, labour became competitive, applications being channelled through the new district administrators and *chefes do posto*. Sena Sugar Estates Ltd immediately lost its best Ngoni labour to the Rhodesias but—using a newly instituted bribery allowance—was for the time being able to recoup in Lomwe territory. But then came two fresh crises. In 1936, following the collapse in world sugar prices, the company was forced as part of a policy of retrenchment to close down its operations at Caia and Mopeia, and two years later with the advent of the Cotton Export Board, instructions went out to all district administrators to give priority to cotton growing for the Portuguese textile industry.²⁴ Anticipating this move, Hornung had in 1936 acquired the cotton concession for the whole area between Luabo and the Shire. The point of securing this concession was not to diversify production and emphatically not to give Africans an alternative means of livelihood. General Manager Thurnheer explained the company's thinking in 1942:

Contrary to the system established and observed by us within our concession area (where only the women receive the seed but never the men), seed is in all other sections also distributed to the male population, making them cotton growers and as such giving them a legal reason not to work, notwithstanding the fact that it is always the woman that grows the cotton, even in respect of the seed distributed to men. One naturally hopes for an improvement of the deplorable labour situation that has arisen . . . However, one thing is sure and that is that this company must retain its present cotton concession while there is a government controlled cotton

²⁴ For a fuller treatment of the history of the Cotton Concession, see Leroy Vail and Landeg White 'Tawane Machambero: Forced Cotton and Rice Cultivation on the Zambesi', Volume XIX, No 2, pp 239-264, *Journal of African History*.

scheme—profit or no profit—because on its retention depends the control of the now so much needed local labour for our sugar plantations.²⁵

The company ran the cotton concession to stop anyone else running it and thereby poaching the male labour. While some labour continued to be available from other districts, Hornung's old empire had in effect shrunk to the borders of the cotton concession, within which he retained monopoly rights. The effects of this policy on the African population were disastrous. Under the cotton regulations, seed was distributed free, the cotton was bought at a fixed price, was transported at fixed rates in Portuguese ships, and was sold in Lisbon at fixed depressed prices. The only substantial variable—that is, the only means by which the concession holder could increase his profit—was the amount of cotton wrung from the African growers, and in the case of Sena Sugar Estates Ltd out of women and children whose husbands and fathers were already forced to work on the sugar plantations. The sufferings of this period, including famine and sexual assault, are recorded in a number of songs about the cotton scheme, including the following in which Paiva is again mentioned in two of the ten verses:

Paiva—Mama ndagopa
Ine Paiva ndamangiwa
Ine Paiva ndiri perezo
Mama tamangwa ife
Paiva ndagona
Paiva ndagopa
Paiva ndagopa
Mama tamangwa ife

Paiva—mother, I'm scared
I, Paiva, I've been tied up
I, Paiva, I'm in prison
Mother, we've been beaten up
Paiva, I'm worn out
Paiva, I'm scared
Paiva, I'm scared
*Mother, we've been beaten up*²⁶

The new dependence on local labour in the cane-fields and the use of women as cotton growers affected the original *Paiva* song in two ways. For by this stage, a new Paiva Raposo had appeared on the scene. This was Alberto, a nephew of José and brother of Tomas, who had worked in the labour office in Mopeia until, following a riot provoked by his brutal treatment of the field labourers, extreme even by the standards of those days, he followed uncle Ignacio into the Zambesi bridge project. In 1940, he came back to Sena Sugar Estates Ltd, to be employed in Luabo as general factotum and trouble-shooter, beginning with the labour office. His return to the cane-fields was the signal for a revival of the *Paiva* song which, while still of general relevance to the company as a whole, had had no specific human target since 1932:

They used to get excited when Paiva was coming to the field, because Paiva used to go on a motor trolley to the field. When they saw he was coming, they would all

²⁵ *Final Cotton Report for 1942*, SSE archives File 440, Final Cotton Reports.

²⁶ Sung by Virginia João at Mapangane Village Compound, Luabo, 10 August 1975.

start singing. With these things he didn't get cross. You could swear at him and he just smiled.²⁷

Stories about his activities are legion—of beatings and cheatings, of his embezzlement of cotton money, of three-day orgies on the company paddle steamers moving slowly downstream to Chinde and stopping occasionally to take on fresh women.²⁸ His nickname '*Chibeket*', meaning 'bucket', referred to his toothless and pendant lower jaw, and it is his mannerisms which would have been imitated in the dance accompanying the Pirira version of the song.

Meanwhile, the cotton concession continued its operations. Responsibility for seeing that the women cultivated their obligatory half-hectare lay not with the concession holder but with the local authorities—the administrator in Mopeia and the chefe do posto in Luabo. It was another of the company's complaints about the whole business. So long as cotton growing had the backing of the authorities, the company could rely on a small annual profit, usually averaging some £7,000. By the early 1950s, however, when Moçambique as a whole was producing 32,000 tons per year or 95 per cent of Portugal's needs,²⁹ the pressure began to relax and Sena Sugar Estates Ltd found itself facing a series of substantial losses, estimated by 1954 as between sixty and seventy thousand pounds—too heavy a price for the labour monopoly, which nevertheless could not be given up. The man given responsibility for cancelling these losses by re-organizing the cotton venture was Alberto de Paiva Raposo. Portuguese officialdom turned a blind eye while *Chibeket*, re-employing men like *Makwiri* who had earlier worked for the Mopeia administration, succeeded as a last fling in recreating in the cotton fields the atmosphere of the early 1940s. It is at this time that *Paiva* becomes what it is today, a women's song placing special emphasis on beatings and arrests and the hardships of famine.

Thus, as a consequence, it became adapted in yet another way, for to speak of women's songs is not only to speak of words and music for dancing. One of the most popular forms on the lower Zambesi is the song which breaks off half-way through while an improvised drama is performed, enacting its main themes. This happens most frequently in songs which satirize particular individuals—a policeman, a cotton capitão, a chefe do posto, a state-appointed village headman. The stage is the circle of singers which remains unbroken, and anyone it seems can perform, the actors frequently being replaced half-way through by women who feel they can do better. The audience is the remaining women, who scream with laughter at the caricature of rapes and bribery and beatings. The subjects vary—the administrator drunk in his *machila*, police brutality during a

²⁷ OT Group Interview, Pirira Village, 25 October 1976.

²⁸ Personal communication from José Nogueira da Silva, August 1975.

²⁹ *Boletim Geral das Colonias*, No. 341-2 November-December 1953, p. 52.

kachasu raid, the cotton overseer illtreating the women under his charge. In the following example, unusual in that the women are playing the parts of men and that no one is directly subjected to violence, the *Paiva* song is temporarily halted while a scene from the cane-fields is enacted:

Ay — ay
 Paiva ndi Mbuya Paiva's the master
 Ay — ay
 Paiva ndawona nyatwa Paiva, I've seen hardship
 Ay — ay
 Paiva — ay
Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache
 Ay — ay
 Paiva — ay
 Ay — ay
 Paiva ndinamangiwa Paiva, I'm being arrested
 Ay — ay
 Paiva — ay
Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache
 Ay — ay
 Paiva — ay
 Ay — ay
 Paiva ndi Mama
 Ay — ay
 Kumanga pika chitwa Arrests used to be made
Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache

1st Man: Nzungo anatinganya Nzungo
 The white man's always harassing us, the white man
 Asakuti mala Horsi. Asakuti mala—Hair.
 He's finishing us, Horst. He's finishing us—Hair.
 Missali uyu nyansondo wa mache. Uyu wakuchena uyu.
 Sugar—this one, Mr mother's cunt! That one is all right.
 Anatipasa nyatwa maningi uyu
 He gave us a lot of trouble, that one
 Ono nyankongo wa mache dona uyu
 That one, Mr lady-mother's-cunt
 Ninyi mache anatisanya ono nyankongo wa mache ono
 His mother's cunt, he's harassing us, that one
 Uwi! Uwi! Uwi!
 Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!
 Ndatemeka ine na supada
 I've cut myself with the cane-knife
 Capitão! Ali kupi capitão?
 Capitão! Where's the capitão?

2nd Man: Hedi! Hedi!
 Head! Head!
 Iwe capitão. Iwe capitão. Iwe! Iwe! Iwe!
 You, capitão. You capitão. You! You! You!

Capitão: Nkongo wamako uyu

This, your mother's cunt
 Unakala mbutisanya
 You're always causing trouble for us
 Mwachita tane tenepo?
 How did you do that?
 Mwachita tane nsali?
 How were you chopping the cane?
 Agora imwe musagopa
 Now you're scared
 Azungo nkabe kugopa
 White men don't get scared
 Kuti chinchino anabwera nkabe
 He won't come now just for that
 Agora iwe unasiya nsali kwenda katema mwendo
 Now you're leaving the cane to go and cut your leg
 Koberi zinatambirewe pamwezi brinkadera iwe?
 With the money you get in a month, do you think it's just a game?
 Usastragari tai?
 You're spoiling things, aren't you?

2nd Man: Kinyentu zishanu bas!
 Only five shillings!

1st Man: Kinyentu ziwiri
 Two shillings!
 Apima ndima kumi na zinai
 He measured out fourteen tasks
 Muntu mbodzi ine kapaji kuzitema?
 Can one person like me cut all that?

2nd Man: Koberi sache. Koberi sache mbisikala kinyento zishanu bas.
 The money. The money comes to only five shillings.

Capitão: Agora iwe waziwa koberi sache kinyento zishanu
 Now you know his money is five shillings
 Tenkitema utome langana misali dretu
 To cut it, you must first look at the cane properly
 Não podi jombesa ife macapitão tai
 Don't make us pay for it, the capitões
 Poso inadyefe nkinapaswa nayiwe tai
 The ration we eat isn't supplied by any of you.

1st Man: Terefache njene idapangiswa
 This is the task I've been given
 Ndinachitatane ine pano?
 How can I do it here myself?
 Ndapangiwa tenepa konta ya ndima ndi zenezi
 I've been told the size of the task is like this!

Capitão: Nkazi tenkiteme tenepa tenepa
 Woman, you must cut it this way, this way.

(Chopping sounds)

Ay — ay	
Paiva — ay	
Ay — ay	
Paiva ndawona nyatwa	Paiva, I've seen hardship
Ay — ay	
Chokera na machibesi	Starting from morning
Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache	
Ay — ay	
Paiva — ay	
Ay — ay	
Kudya nkabe	Without food
Ay — ay	
Paiva ndinamangiwa	Paiva, I'm being arrested
Paiva ndampera dinyero nache nsondo wache ¹⁰	

It should now be apparent how complete is the cycle of meanings invoked by this performance. The complaints in the drama about conditions of work in the cane-fields (about poor pay and large tasks, about the attitudes of the plantation managers and the black capitões, revealed in the lack of concern over an accident) are supplemented by the complaints in the song itself about forced labour, hunger, beatings and arrests.¹¹ All these meanings are contained in 'Paiva', a man described as *Mbuya* because, though briefly reincarnated in the 1940s and 1950s, he is more than an ordinary man. Alberto de Paiva Raposo died in 1957, and there are now no Paiva Raposos working for Sena Sugar Estates Ltd in Moçambique. Yet *Paiva* was being sung in 1975 and 1976, and sung not only by older women who recalled the cotton songs like *Makwiri* at our special request, but by newly married girls with young babies, to whom questions about Paiva's physical identity were questions without meaning. The name has become a symbol, the different strands of experience under José, Ignacio, Tomas, Artur and Alberto uniting in a single word which has come to stand for the system as a whole under which the people have suffered.

Hence, in our final example, sung by a young woman in her twenties, Paiva's defeat is a recent occurrence:

Ay — ay	
Paiva para — ay	Paiva, stop!
Ay — ay	
Paiva Baba—ndine Julia	Paiva father, it's me, Julia
Ay — ay	
Nyatwa nyatwa kweyiwa	Suffering, suffering, being pushed around

¹⁰ Sung by Vittoria Camacho with women of Muanavina Village Compound, Luabo, 24 August 1975.

¹¹ The plantation managers mentioned are Gerard Horst and his successor Robert Hair. The speaker hesitates before mentioning Hair, and then immediately withdraws her criticism of him.

<i>Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache</i>	
Ay — ay	
Paiva — ay	
Ay — ay	
Paiva mwanawe	Paiva, young man
Ay — ay	
Paramatoria	Palmatoria
<i>Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache</i>	
Zona Forença	Forença zone
Zona Machuane	Machuane zone
Secretario Jolijo	Secretary George
Secretario Luis Gomes	Secretary Luis Gomes
Ay — ay	
Paiva mwanawe	Paiva, young man
Ay — ay	
Paiva ndioyipa	Paiva is diabolical
Ay — ay	
Chinchino tapulumuka	Now we have escaped
Takamangwa na nkabala kunduli	We used to be tied behind with rope
<i>Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache</i>	
Ay — ay	
Baba — ay	Father
Ay — ay	
Ndalezera — ay	I'm drunk
Ay — ay	
Baba ndamwa koropu	Father I've drunk koropu
Ndalezera — ay	I'm drunk
<i>Paiva ndampera dinyero ache nsondo wache</i>	
Zona Forença	Forença Zone
Zona Machuane	Machuane Zone
Secretario Jolijo	Secretary George
Secretario Luis Basto	Secretary Luis Basto ³²

The *zonas* to which the singer refers are the new administrative subdivisions, and the *secretaries* the new Party officials. 'Paiva is diabolical' but 'now we have escaped': in this version of the song, Paiva has been overthrown by Frelimo.

IV

We began by describing *Paiva* as a satiric protest song directed at Sena Sugar Estates Ltd, noting later that it modulates in at least one version into a lament. The problem remains of trying to understand why these words have such a strong hold on the imagination of the people of the area, which in turn raises the larger question of what kind of song we are dealing with. Clearly, in spite of the verbal felicity of the Pirira version or the comic vitality of the drama, this is not a song which is cherished for primarily artistic reasons. The words, meaning in practice the epigram, are preserved

³² Sung by Julia Manica of Mapangane Village Compound, Luabo, 10 August 1975.

because 'they came from our fathers' and 'say what they suffered'.³³ Without this explicit reference outside the text to the social and economic background, they say very little. There is no attempt to portray the social injustice as a whole in a work which is autonomous and self-explanatory. Thus, instead of using the song to throw light on the history of the region, one has to use a fairly detailed knowledge of the history to make much sense of the song. This applies not only to the epigram itself, and to those generalized metaphors for suffering ('I've fallen on a fire' or 'I've seen hardship'), but even to the drama version where, though the cane-field incident is complete in itself, the song of which it is a part speaks of beatings and arrests and hunger—complaints by the women which cannot be fully understood without some footnote about the compulsory cotton scheme.

At the same time, the song is clearly critical. It is not, as so many African songs are, a mnemonic code incorporating a wide range of complex symbolism, but ultimately concerned with perpetuating the values of a society. Though at first glance the oldest version of the song seems little more than a jeer, it is a jeer which springs from an intellectual rejection of economic injustice; and though the later women's versions may seem only complaints, they are complaints which refer back to a vision of an ordered village society where the people will be allowed to grow their own crops, tend their own children, brew their own drink and earn their own money without the interference of the company as policeman, magistrate, capitão or cotton overseer. These images are not established within any version of the song itself, but they emerge naturally from the attempt to relate it to known historical circumstances. It is in this sense that we have used the words satire, protest, and lament.

But there are difficulties. The versions of the song considered so far are the five most interesting out of fourteen examples recorded. Yet even in these, the proportion of boring repetitive obscenity is very high. It is hard to share the conviction that *nsondo wache* is effective no matter how often it is sung, or to find much interest in these performances which spend eight or ten minutes cataloguing Paiva's two private parts. Even the protest element has its dubious aspects. When the men's version was being sung for Paiva's benefit in the Luabo cane-fields, we are told he 'just smiled'. The quotation continues:

You could swear at him and he just smiled. Because people are working. You can sing what you want. When he comes he just smiles and after a while he goes away . . . From there it went to the village. And when they used to sing their dance, Paiva had to be sung, to show it to the women and children. To say that this is the song we sing for Paiva at the cane field.³⁴

³³ OT Interview with Jiwa Todo, 2 November 1976.

³⁴ OT Group Interview, Pirira Village, 25 October 1976.

The complaint was laughed off by a labour overseer who knew the men would work with better heart now they had insulted him. In the words of another informant, 'We like (the song) so much that we do the work with strength'.³⁵ Work song and protest song, in the context of forced labour, would seem close to being contradictions in terms, and there are in fact other work songs in which the 'protest' is directed against fellow workers for not pulling their weight. A final difficulty is that last comment, about taking *Paiva* home to the village for the women and children to hear, as though some kind of victory had been gained!

It is a problem faced by all writers on Mozambique. In the short stories of Bernardo Honwana, a recurring theme is the impatience of the young at the apparent futility of the old. One story 'Dina' describes a situation which, though set in the extreme south in Ronga territory closely parallels that on the sugar estates in Zambesia. Madala, a field labourer, seems incapable of revolt. His work is long and hard, the overseer is a sadistic bully, his daughter is assaulted before his eyes. But when the young leader of the neighbouring labour gang urges him to take the lead in violent protest, Madala shrugs his shoulders, accepts a bottle of wine from the overseer as payment for his daughter's prostitution, and goes meekly back to work—while the young man spits and calls him 'Dog!'. In other stories, the problem is taken into the family, with fathers desperately trying to conceal from their sons the brutal facts of the colonial world, and sons losing affection and respect for their fathers who often curse—but never to the white man's face. Honwana pursues the consequences for the younger generation—a loneliness and a cruelty, born of frustration and bordering on sadism, expressed most often in the ill-treatment of animals.³⁶

What are we to make of *Paiva* in this context? The song has apparently been cherished for eighty years. During this time, it has been constantly recreated in new forms. Even today, the children are expected to learn it for its record of past hardship. But its protest against economic injustice has never been expanded into strikes or open rebellion, and its only practical effect seems to have been to make the labourers do the company's business more efficiently.

Part of an answer seems to lie in the origins of the form of the song. We have taken *Paiva* back to the 1890s, but obviously it did not appear without some precedent. A form presumably existed, to control the idea to be expressed, and assumptions presumably existed about the kind of expression appropriate to the genre. Unfortunately, very little material is available from the nineteenth century to substantiate the point. No Portuguese travellers, for whom the area we are dealing with lies on the direct route from Quelimane to Sena, ever bothered to say more than that 'the indigenas

³⁵ OT Interview with Jiwa Todo, 2 November 1976.

³⁶ Bernardo Honwana, *We Killed Mangy Dog and Other Mozambique Stories*, trans. Dorothy Gudes, Heineman AWS no. 60, 1969.

are fond of music'; and while British missionaries and administrators en route to Nyasaland were usually more curious, often noting down fragments of canoe or *machila* songs, their records are of limited value. Most of them, on their first arrival in Africa, were ill-equipped to understand what they were hearing, and they seem capable of believing anything. The famous canoe song 'Sina Mama, sina Baba, sina Mama wakulewa naye, Mame ndiwe Mariya' (I have no Mother, I have no Father, I have no Mother to nurse me, My Mother is Maria) was universally understood to be an old Jesuit hymn, a relic of the ruined mission at Zumbo which Livingstone had described in *Missionary Travels*. It became one of the tourist attractions of the journey to Nyasaland, rivalling the visit to Mary Livingstone's grave at Chupanga. In fact, the reference is to Senhora Maria at Chimuara, mother (or aunt) of Matekenya, and owner of a large contingent of slaves.³⁷ Even odder are some of the translations of the *machila* songs:

We travel by night, to court the moon,
Quickly, quickly trot.
The river has gone to find the sea—
Waters of salt, waters of salt.
The mudfish sleeps, he has no wings,
The birds are peeping to see us pass,
As the white man sleeps.³⁸

One can only speculate how many *nsondo waches* an embarrassed interpreter had to eliminate in order to produce that piece of decadent romanticism.

More helpful are comments from journals kept by members of Livingstone's Zambesi Expedition. Livingstone gives an example of a canoe song from Mazaro 'Uachingere kale', which he translates as 'You cheated me of old', explaining that it refers to the canoe-men's insistence on payment in advance.³⁹ Alice Werner heard the same song some forty years later as 'Wachenjera, Wachenjera, Wachenjera kale'.⁴⁰ The connection with *Paiva* is slight but suggestive. In both cases, the complaint is about pay and the full meaning emerges—as also in *Sina Mama*—after the initial topic has been stated three times. Another aspect of the form into which *Paiva* originally fitted is described in James Stewart's diary:

³⁷ For a musical transcription of *Sina Mama*, see Alice Werner, *The Natives of British Central Africa* 1906, p. 217. See also Duff MacDonald, *Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa*, Vol 11, p. 50, Azevedo Coutinho *op. cit.* p. 113–14, and M. D. Newitt *op. cit.* p. 279. Senhora Maria is mentioned in another song, originating on the Zambesi, published as No. 6 in 'Nyasa Folk Songs' by E. T. Chakanza, *African Affairs* 49, p. 158–61.

³⁸ Alfred J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave Hunters in Central Africa*, 1910, p. 151. Swann is describing his arrival in Africa in 1883.

³⁹ David and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries*, London 1865, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

The canoemen relieve the tedium of paddling by singing. There is little in their songs. Anything serves for a rhyme. Sometimes the songs are not remarkable for their purity. This morning as they were pulling they sang lustily at a song, the refrain of which was *Mkongo ako*. I put a stop to that.⁴¹

Stewart's canoe-men were also from Mazaro, close by what later became Mopeia, and his high-minded remark about the obscene content of some of the songs is supported by Thornton who again gives examples.⁴² The interesting point here is that many of the work songs used on the sugar plantations had their origin as canoe songs, and in some cases are still used both on the river and in the cane-fields, their rhythm being appropriate for both kinds of work:

Asikana mwe	You young girls
O	
Pankotamu	When bending over
<i>Pana ntombwe wanyini</i>	That's where balm of cunt is!
Kwewa kwewa	Heave! Heave!
O	
Pankotamu	
<i>Pana ntombwe wanyini</i>	
Kuba gareta	Push the trolley
O	
Pankotamu	
<i>Pana ntombwe wanyini</i>	
Kwewa mwadiya	Pull the canoe
O	
Pankotamu	
<i>Pana ntombwe wanyini</i> ⁴³	

There is nothing surprising about this association of obscenity with manual labour. The *machila* carriers on the Blantyre-Zomba road in 1890 sang songs of the 'smoking-room' variety,⁴⁴ and the same phenomenon has been noted in many other parts of east and southern Africa.⁴⁵ What matters is that the obscenity of the *Paiva* song is a normal and accepted feature of the form. The criticism of *Paiva*, given the worksong context in which the idea is expressed, more or less has to be obscene if it is to fulfil all the requirements of the genre. Those phrases which become a little tedious when carried over into the extended village versions of the song must be understood as part of a tradition which, not unnaturally, associates them with hard work.

⁴¹ James Stewart, *The Zambesi Journal of James Stewart* ed J. P. R. Wallis, 1854, p. 89.

⁴² Richard Thornton, *The Zambesi Papers of Richard Thornton*, ed. E. C. Tabler, 1963, Vol 11, p. 188-89. Tabler with the help of Dr Rita Ferreira merges two songs into one.

⁴³ Sung by Luis Dias at Caaxe Village Compound, Luabo, 31 August 1975.

⁴⁴ A. H. Maw, 'Transport and Travelling in British Central Africa 1899', *Nyasaland Journal*, July 1955, Vol viii, No. 2, p. 13. G. D. Hayes, editor, adds the comment that some of these songs later became marching songs of the KAR.

⁴⁵ See for example in E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa', *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies*, Oxford 1965.

This is not to say that the words are not obscene. Only within such songs is such language permissible. The form legitimizes the expression. There is a much larger point contained, here, however, than straightforward obscenity. In the example we have been considering, the complaint is aimed at an individual, or a series of individuals personifying the company in its various aspects. Once again, it is the form which legitimizes the criticism. 'You could swear at him and he just smiled': to say such things outside the song 'would be just insulting him . . . just provoking him', but so long as it is done through singing 'there will be no case'.⁴⁶ As before, comparisons with some other African societies are illuminating. Hugh Tracey quotes the case of Chopi musicians who are permitted to criticize the behaviour of chiefs in the songs of their annual *Migodo* but not elsewhere. He calls the practice 'poetic justice', a neat phrase which captures with more precision than in its normal English usage an important aspect of African song.⁴⁷ Francis Deng describes how among the Dinka a man may speak of his wealth in song, may accept his wife's praises in song, may discuss sexual experience in song, and may criticize his father in song, all of which topics would normally be proscribed. Deng calls this candour 'a medium of freedom of speech, which is viewed as an artistic skill and minimizes the violation of normal restrictions'.⁴⁸ A. P. Merriam gives an example which is an even closer parallel to *Paiva*. Collecting songs among the Bashi of Zaire, he visited a coffee and quinine plantation in the Kivu area, taking with him as interpreter the plantation owner who 'due to advances in prices had recently stopped giving the workers a ration of salt and particularly peanut or palm oil'. Responding to the request for songs, the girl workers sang a cycle of five, improvising a story to known tunes. The songs describe in turn the kind of work the girls do on the plantations, the eagerness with which they came to work, the reasons why they have chosen to work here rather than on the neighbouring plantation, their bewilderment that the headman's promise that they would get salt and oil with their pay is apparently not being fulfilled, and their threat that they will go and work elsewhere if they are not satisfied. Merriam comments:

The five songs, of course, represent a carefully organised plan to inform the plantation owner of the desires and intentions of the working girls. The discontent was unknown to the planter; while the girls were unwilling to express their doubts directly to him, they seized the opportunity which presented itself to inform him directly of the situation.⁴⁹

It has become normal in writing of protest with African societies under colonial rule to emphasize forms of protest understandable in European

⁴⁶ OT Interview with Jiwa Todo, Madumo Village, 2 November 1976.

⁴⁷ Hugh Tracey, *Chopi Musicians*, Oxford 1948, p. 68.

⁴⁸ Francis Deng, *The Dinka and their Songs*, Oxford 1973, p. 87-8.

⁴⁹ A. P. Merriam, 'Song Texts of the Bashi', *African Music Society Journal*, Vol 1 (1954) No. 1, p. 51-2.

terms—strikes, demonstrations, stone-throwings, letters to newspapers, resolutions from Native Associations, and finally armed rebellion. What we have in the *Paiva* song is a protest expressed in traditional terms, using an established form of etiquette, expressing criticism in what the people themselves conceive of as the legitimate channel.

There are, however, limits to the satisfaction to be gained from such anthropological explanations. The *Paiva* song has long transcended the form in which it was originally devised and, given the kind of regime prevailing on the lower Zambesi, one would have thought the etiquette it practises would long have come to seem irrelevant.

The reason we sang about Paiva was because of the suffering he made us go through. It's because of the work that he used to want us to do, going to work in the sugarcane. A long time ago there was no machinery and we used to carry the cane on our shoulders. Some were cutting it, some were carrying it to put on the truck. At the truck there used to be a capitão. The capitão would give you a cane-knife and then when you had filled the truck right up to the top . . . then the capitão would take the same knife, go up to the top of the cane-truck and start chopping the cane so that it would all sink down again. Then you would have to try and fill up the truck again. It would take some time before you finished. If he sees it's getting late, he'll write off your whole day's work. You've spent all that time and you wouldn't get your ticket . . . Then there were our friends who worked at the factory. The sugar used to be carried in the truck. It used to go from there to the *gombe* (beach) in a train. Now at the *gombe*, if one of the bags burst . . . you were supposed to carry that bag all the way back to the factory. Then you take a good bag, put it back on your shoulders, and carry it all the way back to the *gombe* . . . At that time many people died. That's why we started singing. The owner of the company was called Paiva.⁵⁰

It is this harassment and petty persecution which gives us our clue. In addition to the larger brutalities, mentioned in the earlier part of this essay, there is a ceaseless day to day pressure, exerted in the company's name, which allows people no residue of dignity, nothing which they can call their own or which is not in some respect subject to the company's intrusion. Paiva is 'the store, the factory, the railway-line, the compounds, the cane-fields'.⁵¹ Everything, in fact, is Paiva—not just in the physical sense but as an all-pervading essence, the framework of life itself. Those recurring phrases 'Paiva is father, Paiva is mother' with their disturbing echo of 'My mother is Maria' the slave-owner, have a double ring to them, hinting that, despite the protest, complete servitude is always a temptation. One might, as a final degradation, actually accept the company in its self-assumed role as mother and father.

The song achieves nothing positive, only occasionally becoming art as it never emerged into a strike or open rebellion. But at the very least, it preserves a sense of distance. Not, in the hackneyed metaphor, acting as a

⁵⁰ OT Group Interview, Pirira Village, Luabo, 25 October 1976.

⁵¹ Personal communication from Luiza Drennon, November 1976.

safety valve for social pressures, which might express the company's own view of the song but hardly explains its importance as an inheritance to the singers themselves, but defining a tiny area in which the labourers and their families have a separate identity. As one of the father's in Honwana's stories puts it:

'Do you know, my son,' Papa spoke ponderously, and gesticulated a long before every word. 'The most difficult thing to bear is that feeling of complete emptiness . . . and one suffers very much . . . very very very much. One grows with so much bottled up inside, but afterwards it is difficult to scream, you know . . .'

Mama was going to object, but Papa clutched her shoulder firmly. 'It's nothing, mother, but, you know, our son believes that people don't mount wild horses, and that they only make use of the hungry docile ones. Yet when a horse goes wild it gets shot down, and it's all finished. But tame horses die every day. Every day, d'you hear? Day and day, after day—as long as they can stand on their feet.'⁵²

There are circumstances in which the greater courage can be to go on from day to day, apparently docile, yet preserving in an image or slogan or even a curse one small region of the mind which refuses to capitulate completely. The song caters for this, and in a manner more than individual. We have been considering it as a text in order to achieve a historical perspective, but the emphasis in all descriptions is naturally on performance. The tune, the drumming, the clapping, the dancing, the technical devices which make the words 'stronger', are all necessary to bring the performance alive. The singer of *Paiva* belongs to a community of singers, both in the cane-fields where the lead-line demands a response, and at home with every village developing its own version of the song. But the community is not only of the living. When the words are sung to this tune with that rhythmic background, when the song appears in its true form, the link is established with those performances of the past when 'our fathers' expressed what 'they suffered'. What is secured in *Paiva* is not just a private rebellion but a whole tradition of rejection. It is in the song that the people's identity is preserved.

⁵² Honwana, *op. cit.*, p. 47-8.