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Mmino wa setso: women's songs in a Lebowa village

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Every Sunday afternoon, on a piece of open ground next to the men's hostel in Alexandra township, a remarkable combination of music, dance and drama is played out by groups of men and women. The dramatis personae include a "monkey", men with bulls' horns strapped to their heads, mock "ngakas" (diviners) who carry mats and bags of divination bones, and fully uniformed "nurses", "speedcops" and "police" who administer medicines or fiercely enforce order among the participants and onlookers (even handcuffing them for "pass offences", and trying them in "court"). Besides these characters, men wear tartan kilts with white boxer shorts underneath. Women wear cotton embroidered smocks in a style thought of as Pedi although recognisably Victorian in its provenance. They carry torches and car numberplates, decorate their headdcarves with tinsel and coloured plastic pot-scourer rosettes, and wear white cotton gloves and plastic sunglasses.

Despite the modern trappings, an ethnomusicologist listening to the music of these groups would describe it as "traditional". The use of drums and leg-rattles is patently precolonial in origin. The scales, and the way in which notes are combined into melodies, seem to owe more to a typically Sotho-Tswana complex of musical practices, rather than to the 3-chord hymn structure so ubiquitous in much 20th-century black southern African music. And the style of improvising on and creating new tunes around a set harmonic progression is typical of much sub-Saharan indigenous music.(1) Performers of the music would agree with this way of classifying it: it falls into the category of mmino wa setso (traditional music), as distinct from such categories as mmino wa kereke (church music), and mmino wa sebialo-bialo (modern music).

Rather than being an anachronism or a leftover from the primordial past, however, this music is best understood as a constantly changing expression of evolving group identities and of people's responses to the experiences of migrancy, impoverishment and rural transformation. Mmino wa setso owes much of its present popularity to a cultural revival which began in the middle to late 1970s, and which has ensured that a number of men and women who for years remained largely oblivious to or purposefully shielded by their parents from these traditional, "unChristian" forms have become newly acquainted with them, usually in an urban context.

Warnings have been sounded by a variety of scholars on the dangers of using the term "traditional" to denote timeless, apparently primordial, cultural forms and practices. Xhosa beer-drinks and Ndebele wall-paintings have all been shown to

1990

derive from specific sets of historical circumstances and thus to date from definite periods.(2) In the case of mmino wa setso, it is not outside observers but participants themselves who stress the unassailable and timeless nature of the music they perform. In this "invention of tradition", they seem to be engaged in a similar process to that experienced by the Sotho migrant poets and their audiences discussed by Coplan. Here,

> metaphors ... that incorporate and rework the images of praise poetry or war anthems cloak both the performer and his words in the symbolic authority of "tradition" and the precolonial Sotho state. ... These metaphors are the chief means for displaying the deep cultural knowledge considered indispensable to "eloquence" in Sesotho.(3)

It is in town - or, more accurately, in the dynamic interplay between town and country - that the real flowering of this migrant style has occurred. To illuminate this process, a brief account will be given of mmino wa setso in its urban manifestations in the section immediately following. The main focus of this paper, however, is a mmino wa setso group in a Trust area of Lebowa whose members are women depending upon (although not always receiving) migrant remittances for their livelihood but spending little if any of their time in town. Although undoubtedly influenced by the rural-urban interchange, their performance of mmino wa setso is expressive of a specifically rural, and primarily female, identity.

Mmino wa setso among migrants

On the Reef there are a number of Pedi men's groups which play dinaka (panpipes). In general outline, these resemble other migrant forms of music such as those documented by Clegg and Coplan:(4) they involve hostel-dwelling workers who perform in their free time, usually on Sundays, and whose performances have a competitive dimension. The competitions are fairly informal: a number of groups perform on the same piece of open ground, and the group attracting the biggest audience, or being paid by the audience to perform again, is deemed to have "won". The process is becoming more organised, however, with such events as the "Second Annual Traditional and Attire Competition" being organised by the "Sabikwa Arts Society incorporating Daveyton Cultural Foundation" with a first prize of R300. Apart from common residence in the same hostels, the members of these dinaka groups are connected via a number of other links: as kinsmen, as people from the same villages in Sekhukhuneland, Matlala or Molepo, and sometimes as members of the same burial societies.

In parallel with these male groups, and operating along similar lines, are urban-based women's singing groups.

HW S 194

performing a song/style called dipepetloane or, quite simply, lebowa. The group of which I have some knowledge is dependent on a man's dinaka group for access to drums, and it plays on the same piece of open ground next to the Alex men's hostel on Sundays, and travels to "away" performances using the same hired transport, as its partner-group.

Although to some extent bound by ties of kinship and common rural origin, this lebowa group is less closely-knit than its partner dinaka group. Several factors account for this. Rather than being hostel-dwellers sharing the same accommodation, they are domestic workers living in backyards in Johannesburg suburbs such as Randburg, Bramley and Mountainview. Because they live and work so far away from each other, they normally meet only on Sundays when they practise or perform together, unlike their male counterparts who interact at work and in the hostels on a daily basis. Then, because the rate of female migrancy from any area in Lebowa is far less than that of male migrancy, and because some women may work for only a few years before returning to the country to look after their children, an urban-based woman's singing group has a higher turnover than a dinaka group, and must cast its net wider in order to ensure a full complement of performers. The group I know has been having fierce arguments over what to call itself, since it would be most obvious to have a name denoting a common village of origin but the group's members come from a series of different, although broadly contiguous, villages. In contrast, in the hostels of Tembisa and Alex there are enough men from the single village of Mohlaletse, the seat of the Pedi paramountcy, to populate two dinaka groups.

If one asks a performer whether this music is something associated with town and with modern living, he or she will insist that it has been sung and danced by Pedi people since time immemorial. Nevertheless, it is clear from a close scrutiny of the groups and their performances that the experience of migrancy and of living on the Reef has played a crucial role in forging this style, in imparting to it a degree of uniformity, in making it popular, and, through the intense competition between different groups, in perfecting it. There is general acknowledgement, for example, that the men's group from a hostel in Benoni surpasses all others, and their performance could be regarded as the apotheosis of the style.

Most important of all, perhaps, migrancy has given this music a new significance in the lives of its performers. Here, there is an interesting contrast between men's and women's music. Groups of men have been playing dinaka on the Reef at least since the 1950s, and probably for several decades before that: it is feasible that dinaka has had a presence in town at least as long as other forms of migrant activity such as amalaita.(5) However, the female version of dinaka called

dipepetloane or lebowa has only been performed, in town or in the country, since the mid- to late 1970s. As I was told by an informant, "dinaka is not supposed to be sung by women. Now men have left it and women are trying to bring it back, that is why we call it lebowa".(6) The reason why it began so recently may be because of the relatively late entry of Pedi women into the migrant labour market, in about the 1960s.(7)

The only real difference between the two types is that dinaka is played on pipes, which are the preserve of men, whereas lebowa is sung. This means, as one performer pointed out to me, that men's music cannot really criticise or comment on anything, since it has no words. Women, on the other hand, have lyrics, and may compose new ones to suit new situations. Thus, whereas men's music provides a time-honoured idiom in which performers express themselves in this urban setting, women's music does so while at the same time allowing for the freedom of overt comment on the specificities of this setting.

The study of both men's and women's singing groups on the Reef, of their relative status, of their interactions with each other, of the dynamics operating within each group, and of the life histories of individual members, is one which must yield crucial understandings about the historical and contemporary experience of migrancy, and about the interactions between town and country from which this experience constitutes itself. It is a study with which I am presently occupied.(8)

My concern in this paper, however, is with the way in which this fully-fledged Pedi migrant music has spread from the areas where it was initially forged - in urban settings closely linked to heartland communities - to other parts of the Homeland of Lebowa. In the case described here, the style has taken root in a Trust village which originally had its own set of musical practices deriving from experiences of migrancy and dispossession similar to, but nonetheless distinct from, those affecting heartland communities. Although its diffusion to such remote Trust areas might be seen as resulting merely from a "craze" for a new style, or as a cultural revival partly engineered by elites in order to engender a sense of Homeland unity, its performers in the Trust have, in fact, imbued it with a new set of local and rural significances.

Mmino wa setso in a Trust village

The village of Morotse is situated on the peripheries of Lebowa, on one of a group of Trust farms bought from White owners after 1936 to add to the existing Homeland area. It is populated mainly by ex-labour tenants - both Pedi- and Ndebele-speaking - who have since the late 1930s been moving

to this area from the White farms of the southeastern Transvaal where they once lived and worked. Almost all villagers are reliant on migrant labour for a living, but this reliance is tempered by access to land and networks of support. Both these resources are possessed by families who have lived in the Trust for about twenty-five years or more, whereas neither is available to the more recently-resettled people living on the peripheries of the village.(9)

Although situated within Lebowa, the majority of the area's inhabitants are Ndebele-speaking, and its officially-constituted Tribal Authority is an Ndebele chief. Pedi and Ndebele sections of the village are geographically and socially separate, and although their oldest families have for many years interacted harmoniously across the ethnic divide, the shortage of resources in recent years, in combination with the machinations of Homeland politicians, has led to distinct tensions between the Pedi and Ndebele sections of the village.(10)

Both before and after moving to the Trust, Pedi members of this community have had links to people in the heartland villages of Sekhukhuneland, especially through the practice of sending youths to initiation-schools at the chief's place.(11) Nevertheless, in some respects this farm-dwelling community evolved a culture - and a music - distinct from that of the heartland. Vital and popular during the 1940s and 1950s, the music had its constituency gradually whittled away as numbers of villagers began to migrate on a more full-time basis, joined mainstream or independent churches during the 1960s and 1970s, or simply lost interest. It was only in 1981, with the revival, and the import to Morotse, of the women's migrant music which had begun to be performed on the Reef and in the heartland, that <u>mmino wa setso</u> became a significant feature of life in the village again.

From informants' accounts, a fairly comprehensive picture can be built up of musical practices in Morotse village about 40 years ago. There were specific songs, often linked to social occasions, for people at different stages of the life-cycle; and in most cases these were further differentiated by gender. A number of writers have documented this musical demarcation of life-stages, but most of these accounts imply a static view of the societies concerned: an individual may move through different statusses, but the statusses and their cultural trappings remain the same.(12) This proves inaccurate in the case of a song/style for adolescent girls called <u>mararankodi</u> which was sung in Morotse. For women among my informants, perhaps the most memorable musical activity in their lives occurred during the period between initiation and marriage when they got together in groups to sing and dance this music, and to compete with other groups from nearby who sang the same song/style. But it was not an unchanging denoter of the status of adolescent girls: my

informants could pinpoint the time, towards the end of the war, when it became current. Proof of its historical specificity can be seen in the lyrics, which refer to masole (soldiers), mojeremane (the Germans) and tell of events like these:

> Unlucky homes, we with unlucky homes
> We have lost our homes because of these new times.
> O train, you are so bad
> A lorry is better than you.
> You, train, who took our brothers away to Makgowene (town)
> Our brothers who have been captured and put in jail.
> You, train, with small feet
> Whose doors are always closed.(13)

Even the times of performance were specific, and were determined by the work situation of these migrant/tenant families: mararankodi was sung and played on certain holidays when people were allowed to rest from their work on the farmer's land.

For women, the event of marriage often involved a move away from home or, even if this were not so, a change from membership of a group of agemates to a more limited allegiance - to husband's family, and more specifically to his mother. This circumscribing of a young woman's area of operation was parallelled by her adopting a new set of musical practices. Again, these were not static denoters of a married woman's status, but changed over time: the songs/styles included mmantshegele, mokankanyane and chuchu. But the involvement in music of a woman who married became far less intense and more sporadic than when she was single and an adolescent. She would sing, together with other mature women, at events like weddings, but would no longer move around with a specially-constituted group of initiates competing in song with other like groups.

This musical background reconstructed from informants' accounts is in stark contrast to the contemporary situation. The people who recounted to me these details about the past all now belong to a singing group consisting of married women; they have a name - Dipalela tlala, a special uniform, a banner, a leader and a composer. The group was started in 1981 by its malokwane (leader), Magolake Makua, and a group of her friends after they had heard similar groups singing in Pedi heartland villages and in other Trust villages. The songs sung by this group include chuchu (which was sung in this area all along), and makgakgasa and the new dipepetloane or lebowa, which are both imports from the heartland.

The Lebowa-wide craze for, and revival of, mmino wa setso, beginning in the mid-1970s, has thus reached this Trust village and has overlaid a local, autonomously-evolving - although flagging - musical style. But it is only women who

are caught up in this revival. Although boys and men, like girls and women, were involved in group musical activities during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, there is currently no public forum in which Morotse men perform mmino wa setso.

Women claim that the reason for the demise of men's music is that they are all at work. There is a marked difference between this case and that of the heartland communities, for which the experience of migrancy acted as a spur to, rather than a damper on, musical performance, with men from the same village playing together on the Reef and returning home frequently to perform at village weddings and festivities. Coming from cohesive communities, heartland migrants established monopolies over jobs with particular "firms" and so laid the basis for group activities such as music in the urban setting.(14) In contrast, the migration of men domiciled in Morotse today began when most were still farm-dwellers living in comparatively scattered groupings on different farms and with relatively little control over when to leave for town and when to return.

If, then, the revival of traditional song/dance has "caught on" among Morotse women, one must ask what specifically local significance the music has acquired in the lives of its performers and audience. There are several dimensions to be investigated here: the import for the group's members of their interrelations and frequent meetings; the extent to which they "stand for" their village in the wider arena; and the role of lyrics and dance actions in expressing these.

I will deal first with the sociology of the group's membership. The founder members are five women who are closely bound by ties of marriage and neighbourhood. During all my visits to the village between 1983 and 1989, they were to be found together: visiting and chatting together at each other's houses, helping each other prepare for a forthcoming wedding, making mats together, and the like.

All have been initiated, which sets them apart from a number of village women from families which have adhered to Christianity from early on, and which thus did not initiate their daughters. Studies of male migrancy reveal that young men initiated together have a focus of strong group attachment in subsequent years, both in their home villages and on subsequent trips to town.(15) In the case of women, the group ties formed by growing up together and by common initiation are frequently broken when they leave home to marry in other villages. The founder members of Dipalela Tlala were born either on the white farms where their parents were tenants, or in other Trust villages, and so their bonds with each other, now so strong, were formed not by initiation but when coming to Morotse to marry. Their friendships as neighbours were contingent upon the residential sites where they lived, and these depended in

turn upon which men they married.

Members who joined the group subsequently did not alter this basic pattern of tightly-knit links, as most were enlisted or became attracted through a connection by marriage to one of the core members. Even the most recent recruit - she has not yet been able to afford a uniform - who moved from a white farm in the Middelburg district as recently as 1980, and who might thus be thought of as belonging to the newly-resettled and socially-rootless village periphery, joined the group through a marriage-tie with the family of another member which dated back to a time in the 1960s when both families were farm-dwellers.

The group presently comprises 15 members. Almost all of them are extremely poor. Among the six widows, several have been unable to get a pension and so cannot afford to send children or grandchildren to school, or to pay for important things like burial-society contributions. Even where husbands are still alive, many are unemployed, leaving the household unit dependent on sporadic contributions from children.

It is suggested by Murray that there is often a correlation between the failure of migrant remittances and the disintegration of what he calls an "orthodox" family unit: women receiving no money from town frequently return to their parents' homes.(16) In Morotse village, there is a large preponderance in the Pedi community of such "unorthodox" households, including some which are small and female-headed, and some in which unmarried or separated women live with their parents.(17) Members of Dipalela Tlala, however, despite their general level of poverty, all live according to the expected norms of Pedi society, that is, at their husbands' place, and maintaining links to his people. Those married to youngest sons help their in-laws with work in the fields and the home. Those widowed retain close links to their affines.

It might appear, then, that the members of this group, in the face of onslaughts by migrancy and poverty, display a tenacity greater than that of many of their peers in holding on to the customary codes of patriarchy. If this were so, it might seem that their performance of mmino wa setso is no more than an expression of their determined clinging to these orthodox values which many other village women have abandoned. Certainly, a comparison with female music from Lesotho, which is sung by women often marginal in society or by prostitutes, and which frequently expresses a disdain for the customary ideal of married life, seems to point to Morotse's singers as bastions of conservatism and traditional morality.(18)

But although these women, and others like them in the village, ostensibly live under the rubric of patriarchal

domination, their role has changed considerably, and thus it is not an area of custom which they are defending with this music, but a new realm of rural responsibilities and duties into which they are feeling their way.

Evidence, both from my own work in Morotse and from a broader set of sources, points to the ever-growing importance of women in agricultural and household management, in the care of the older generation and other duties associated with heirship, and in a number of other areas.(19) Sometimes these tasks are performed by women without husbands or informal male partners of any kind, but even when married women's migrant husbands return frequently to the village, or are non-migrants and so are present all the time, there are many cases in which men and women seem to inhabit different worlds and compete bitterly for the same - and very scarce - resources, rather than pooling these to further the interests of a common household unit.

To speak of this trend of increasingly separated male and female worlds is not necessarily to imply that women have acquired a greater degree of power in the context of the rural domain in which they outnumber men as permanent residents. Within individual households, their capacity as managers may be severly circumscribed.(20) And within the broader context of village affairs, they are still subject to the authority of Homeland government structures, many of which enshrine anachronistic aspects of patriarchal custom.(21)

Nevertheless, it is women who are physically present in the countryside and who contribute most fully to community life there, on the level both of household and of village. That their symbolic identification with the broader community has originated or at least intensified in recent times is suggested by a comparison between the texts of women's songs from about fifty years ago and those more recently composed. Maraarankodi songs for initiated girls, and mmantshegele songs for married women, were primarily concerned with family and household issues. Even though, as in the text quoted earlier, they expressed sorrow, anger or anxiety about the evils of migrancy and town life, this was articulated in terms of particular family relationships. The text of Morotse's new makgakgasa song, in contrast, tells of area- rather than household-related issues. It sings of the local chief and his fame and power, and of local features like the clouds and frequent rain. (One old woman, not a member of the group and seemingly out of step with current developments, commented on how inappropriate it is that women should now be singing about chiefs and politics rather than concerning themselves with cattle, crops and children.)

Here one must bear in mind that the revival of mmino wa setso is one in which women have begun to perform music

traditionally associated with men. In an urban context, this development confirmed that women had established a firm foothold in the migrant labour market previously dominated by men. In a Trust area like Morotse, this development suggests that in the absence of men as significant actors in the local arena, women singers have "taken over" the function of praise singing and expressing a pride in local identity vis-a-vis other equivalent local communities. This view may have some truth, but one must, in interpreting the changing set of concerns sung about by women, take account of a number of complicating factors.

The first concerns the theme of pride of place ostensibly expressed in these songs. There are two levels here: that of the village and that of the Homeland as a whole, whose most remote areas show evidence of this Pedi migrant style. On both these levels, the sense of local identity has been in some measure imposed from above. Lebowa is an artificial creation of the S A Government, and Morotse village is subject to the lowest, most local, and often most gratuitously authoritarian level of Lebowa's government structure, the Tribal Authority and its chief.

It will be remembered from an earlier section of this paper that Morotse's chief is an Ndebele, who rules over a predominantly Ndebele constituency but within a unit designated for and largely controlled by the Pedi authorities. Given such a background of ethnic duality, and of a degree of ethnic tension, it may seem like an anomaly that it is a Pedi singing group which is most often called upon to represent this village in the broader arena: in competitions, at important chiefly or ministerial occasions, and the like. (There is Ndebele musical activity in the village, but it is tied to ritual contexts rather than being performed by a specially-constituted group of women with a specific uniform.)

There are in fact three group members who have links in the Ndebele community. The group's two "police", who do not sing or dance but engage in a pantomime of law-enforcement and authoritarian behaviour during the performance, are Pedi women married to a pair of Ndebele brothers. The third member has a more tenuous but more significant link. She is the malokwane (leader), Magolake Makua. Despite being one of the founder members of the group, she does not behave with the decorum or customary dignity befitting a Pedi matron: she is a habitual drunkard who is rarely to be found at home, and who shows scant concern for such duties as tending her fields or caring for her grandchildren. And despite being a married woman like the other members, she is widely known in the village to be the mistress of the Ndebele chief, Mphezulu Jack Mahlangu.

This woman and several of her co-members claim that the reason why they started Dipalela Tlala was because they had heard other groups competing and wanted to imitate them. However, other members stressed that the occasion of their first main performance, and thus one of the spurs to the group's founding, was the installation of this chief. In subsequent years he has certainly tried to exercise considerable control over the group. He has designating a man as foromane (foreman) to travel with them to competitions, and he frequently summons them to his kraal, to the capital Lebowakgomo, and to other venues to perform. Thus, both informally through his liaison with the malokwane and in more direct ways, he has attempted to co-opt the group and make it one of the outward and visible signs of his status and power in the community. If one looks in more detail at the words of dipalela tlala's main song, from which the group takes its name, one may gain some insight into the precise nature of the praises of area and of the chief which the composer, Magophasela Hlakola, has devised:

> Defeaters of hunger, let us return home,
> Children of Mahlangu,
> Children of Jack, let us return home,
> Defeaters of hunger.
> Remember Morotse the place of the Ndebele:
> Morotse; give way, let me see the mist,
> Let me see the chiefs who wear the leopardskin,
> When I see the chiefs, I see my own chief,
> I see the chiefs who wear the leopardskin.
> My chief, even if they say bad things about him
> My chief is accepted even in Cape Town
> My chief is accepted even in Pretoria.(22)

These lyrics appear to be in praise of the village and of the chief. I was told by all the members individually, however, that the song is critical of him. The most obvious statement indicating this is "even if they say bad things about him". While it is followed immediately by two phrases which seem to contradict or qualify it, it nevertheless suggests that discontent has been voiced about the chief's behaviour.

Less apparent, but more indicative of the reasons for this discontent, is the phrase "defeaters of hunger". This is a reference, masked for those not acquainted with the area, but clear in its meaning to the group's members and to its audience, to an agricultural "Co-op" which the chief and his henchmen introduced into the area at roughly the time of the group's formation. Although this was allegedly designed to enable better crop production, its main effect was to plunge all the village's plotholders deep into debt for the Co-op's ploughing, spraying and harvesting of their fields. By vastly improving yields, but taking most or all of these in payment for the debt, the Co-op and its representative the chief are seen as having brought deprivation to the area.

Being able to "defeat hunger", it is implied, became necessary only after the chief's interference with farming.(23)

Another ambiguous statement, which could be read either as a praise or as a criticism, is the phrase about the chief's being known as far away as Pretoria and Cape Town. While on the one hand testifying to his renown in a sphere far wider than the local one, it also implies a judgement on him for being a chief who - unlike many in the heartland of Lebowa - was ready to accept the yoke of the S A Government's Bantu Authority system, and thus for being "accepted in Pretoria".(24)

Moving away from the local arena to look at the Homeland as a whole; the Lebowa-wide popularity of these groups, and the fact that much of their paraphenalia, lyrics, and contexts of performance seem concerned with expressing an allegiance to the Homeland as a political unit, should not necessarily be taken as an indication that the members of these groups have an elaborate sense of national pride. An observer of mmino wa setso performances might easily conclude that the popularity of this musical form has as much to do with the sense of enjoyment engendered in participants and onlookers by its performance as with its carrying of a message of patriotism. Its rapid spreading from the heartland groups outwards to more peripheral villages could be seen, from participants' point of view, as a sort of "rage" or "fashion" which has caught on because of the desire of village women to participate in a pleasing and group-oriented activity, and to take part in the ensuing competitions. In this respect, there is a strong parallel between a mmino wa setso group and a sports team: one singer actually had the photographs of her group and her husband's soccer team displayed side-by-side on the wall.

This pleasurable - even aesthetic - dimension might be thought of as giving mmino wa setso a kind of neutrality. It is performed, not only at weddings and competitions, but also on all kinds of political occasions, and although the majority of these are tied in with the structures of Homeland government, others are organised by oppositional groups. So, for example, the women's singing group from Tafelkop, about 20kms from Morotse, recently played and sang at the FEDSAW rally in Johannesburg.

How may one best understand this indiscriminateness? The answer may lie in a consideration of the specific qualities of music and dance as means of expression. An anthropologist like Bloch considers singing and dancing to be highly structured and formalised activities, with an unambiguous language which thus lends itself to an unquestioning support of political authority and the status quo. The dance anthropologist Hanna holds the conflicting view that music

and dance use a variety of different channels of expression, and because only a very few of these are directly meaningful or can be literally translated or rendered into rational speech, a singer/dancer has the freedom to explore ambivalent, even contradictory sentiments. Many of the "meanings" of music and dance may be unknown even to the performer him/herself.(25)

How do these insights apply to the case of a mmino wa setso group like Dipalela Tlala? The position taken by Bloch would lead one to conclude that mmino wa setso provides an unquestioning affirmation of political authority. That this should be the authority, on some occasions, of the Homeland government, and, on others, of the leaders of oppositional groups, indeed suggests that the music is being used indiscrimately and expediently.

An acceptance of Hanna's stance would lead to somewhat different conclusions, and directs one's attention to the variety of situations in which the performances take place, and to the differing ways in which the songs may be received. Morotse women singers are called upon to perform, both at home in the village, and in places far afield. Local audiences understand the allusions to the chief's mismanagement of local affairs, while audiences elsewhere will hear only the messages about his renown and the way in which he protects his "children". As an overall validation of both these sets of meanings, and of the new roles which these rural women are forging for themselves and evolving ways of expressing, there is the notion that the performance is taking place within the accepted tenets of time-honoured tradition.

Notes

1. A Tracey, personal communication, March 1989; J M Chernoff, African Rhythm and African Sensibility (Chicago, 1979) pp101-112.

2. P McAllister, "Beasts to Beer Pots - Migrant Labour and Ritual Change in Willowvale District, Transkei" African Studies 44,2 (1985); E A Schneider, "Paint, Pride and Politics: Aesthetic and Meaning in Transvaal Ndebele Wall Art" unpublished PhD dissertation, Witwatersrand University (1986).

3. D Coplan, "Eloquent Knowledge: Lesotho migrants' song and the anthropology of experience" American Ethnologist 14,3 (1987), p415.

4. J Clegg, "The music of Zulu immigrant workers in Johannesburg - a focus on concertina and guitar" Papers presented at the 1st symposium on ethnomusicology, ILAM, (Grahamstown, 1980); J Clegg, "Towards an understanding of African dance: the Zulu isishameni dance style" Papers presented at the 2nd symposium on ethnomusicology, ILAM, (Grahamstown, 1981); D Coplan & G Zantzinger, The Songs of the Adventurers (film - 1987).

5. Y Husskisson, "The Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi", unpublished PhD dissertation, Witwatersrand University (1958), chart 4; P Delius, "Sebatakgomo" Journal of Southern African Studies 15,4 (1989).

6. Interview with Lucas Kgole, 3/11/1989.

7. P Delius, "Dikgomo ditswele: the changing context of resistance in Sekhukhuneland, 1950-1986" mimeo, Witwatersrand University History Workshop (1990).

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10. D James, "A question of ethnicity: Ndzundza Ndebele in a Lebowa village", Journal of Southern African Studies (1990 - in press)

11. James, "Kinship and Land" p193.

12. See for example J Blacking, The Role of Music among the Venda of the Northern Transvaal, International Library of African Music (Roodepoort, 1956); "Songs, Dances, Mimes and Symbolism of Venda Girls' Initiation Schools" African Studies 28 (1969).

13. Sung by Thapedi Lerobane in an interview on 26/1/1989.

14. Delius, "Sebatakgomo"

15. ibid.

16. C Murray, Families Divided (Johannesburg, 1981) p155.

17. D James, "Family and Household in a Lebowa Village" African Studies 44,2 (1985), pp173-8.

18. Coplan, "Eloquent Knowledge", p424.

19. D James, "Family and Household" pp168-170, 173-180; D James, "Land Shortage and Inheritance in a Lebowa Village" Social Dynamics 14,2 (1988), pp45-9; Murray, Families, pp153-164.

20. Murray, Families, pp155-6, 159.

21. See for example D James, "Land Shortage" pp48-9.

22. Sung by Magophasela Hlakola in an interview on 24/1/1989.

23. See D James, "Kinship and Land", pp62-94, 186-8, 214-6 for more details about the Co-op.

24. See D James, "Ethnicity" for more details on Pedi attitudes to the Ndebele chief.

25. M Bloch, "Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: is religion an extreme form of traditional authority?" Archives europeenes sociologiques, XV (1974); J L Hanna, "Toward a cross-cultural conceptualisation of dance and some correlate considerations" in J Blacking and J Kealiinohomuku (eds) The Performing Arts (The Hague, 1979).