

A Thematic Analysis of Selected Tingabisa Songs

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KEYWORDS Adventures. Dehumanization. Regiments. Rhythm. Ululation

ABSTRACT This research work intends to categorize, classify and analyze the themes of selected *Tingabisa* songs that are sung by various families, clans and nations groupings during national ceremonies. *Tingabisa* are the regiments of girls that are known for cultural dance, game and mimic songs. The domains of history, love, nature, politics or dissatisfaction and education are reflected in their songs. The dramatic, rhythmic lyrics, rhyming combinations are enhanced in most songs. Despite the specific thematic groupings of songs in this paper, they encompass the totality of values, norms, and culture of people. The participants are able to create and present their songs in an art form. They reflect creatively and critically on artistic and cultural styles, processes and products. The thematic and interpretive analyses are employed to explore the explicit and implicit, rational and irrational phenomena which exist as potential guides for the life and behaviour of the people.

INTRODUCTION

The selected indigenous songs are classified according to various themes. A theme is defined by Schefflers (2015: 175) as follows:

The central idea or focus underlying a literary text. It may be stated directly or implied. It expresses a special thought about character, society and the world we live in.

Songs are however, aesthetic art and creative flair that are entirely articulate, informative and communicative in nature. They express life, culture and values of the people in a musical and philosophical manner. This category includes poetry, chant and other verse forms. They reflect traditions and customs. The form and contents are considered to be of creative and artistic value in the society. They give aesthetic quality to listeners because of their diction and rhythm.

Songs are traceable records of the times. Their composers are relatively at liberty to include statements of social criticisms and appreciations. Their perceptions are viewed and reflected in thematic techniques and categories. Songs are oral expressions that are intended to be sung by human voices with repeated distinct pitches and patterns. *Tingabisa* songs are reflecting the cultural and folk identities. Mthethwa (2014: 132) defined *tingoma* (songs) as follows:

Tingoma tiligugu lesive. Tiluphawu sive lesitigcabha ngalo. Sive kuba sive ngebugagu baso.

(Songs are prestige of the nation. They are signs of nation's pride. A nation becomes a proud nation through its singing skills)

The songs of *Tingabisa* regiments are not solely confined to *umhlanga* (reed dance ceremony) occasion, but to a wide spectrum of life. They cover various themes, rhyming and rhythmic techniques. *Tingabisa* are the girls' regiment that plays a major role during nation's rituals. It is also called *timbali* (flowers). The verb, *gabisa* means to be filled with self-confidence, or pride oneself over. The prefix in-, changes it to be a noun *ingabisa*, a pride girl. *Tingabisa* is a plural word, which has semantically shifted its meaning to the pride girls' regiment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research study which is based on selected songs that are thematically collected for analysis. The selected songs are used as primary source. Badenhorst (2008: 83) says the following about qualitative research:

Qualitative research relies on data in the form of words. Qualitative researchers seek meaning of human action. These researchers depend on description to express their data. A variety of research methods are used. The guide-

line is the project itself. The key question is: what does this mean?

Bailey (1994: 14) states the following about a qualitative research method:

It is concerned with individual's own accounts of their attitudes, motivations and behavior. It offers richly description reports of individual's perceptions, attitude, beliefs, view and feelings, the meaning and interpretations given to events and things, as well as their behaviour.

It is a field of study that crosscuts disciplines and perspective. It reflects on people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, norms, motivations, aspirations, cultures and life-styles. In this method, the information is extracted from various relevant sources on songs. The approaches that are relevant for this study are the following:

- ♦ Thematic approach – various songs are grouped together according to their themes and meanings.
- ♦ Interpretive approach – each song is interpreted according to its message and connotative meanings.

History

The songs that are based on history reflect and interpret thoughts, experience and feelings about the selected historical figures. They are the oral compositions that are not a universal art creation, but a pure form of national art which is limited to a specific nation and milieu. The historical figures are not looked at in a historical manner, but the theme is explored in a rhythmical way as to how it delights and excites the singers and the audience. The song on the king is recited as follows:

Ingwenyama	(A King
Uyingwenyama yesive,	You are a nation's king,
Ungangelive lakho,	You are great like your country,
Bayethe!	
Bayethe!	
Mlomo longacamb' emanga,	A mouth that does not speak lies,
Uyingwenyama yetive tonkhe.	You are the king of all nations.)

The king is frequently identified with the *ingwenyama* (the lion), an animal that has power, strength, bravery and aggressiveness. It is also

an animal that is associated with respect and kingship. *Bayethe* is an interjective for salutation of the king only. The sacred place called *Kabayethe* (a national shrine), is solely used for ancestral communications. It is where the rituals for rain control are performed. A person entering a national shrine takes off his shoes and hat before he is allowed to do so. The king is the central figure around whom political activity revolves. He is an executive ruler with absolute power. The song praises the king and highlights his dominant qualities, achievements and adventures. It depicts the life of the king, times and the cultural set-up of the society.

The song on the Queen Mother is extolled as follows:

Make Wesive	(Mother of the Nation
Make wesive,	Mother of the nation,
Munyisa bantfwabakho,	Breadfeed your children,
Yelulek' ingwenyama,	Guide the king,
Yeluleka sive,	Guide the nation,
Emadloti atokubusisa.	The ancestors will bless you.)

In his kingly duties, the *ingwenyama* (King) is supported and assisted by many officials, the most important being the *indlovukazi* (Queen Mother). The mother of the King, whether real or ritual, is the most important person in the kingdom, next to the King. She has her own establishment with her own estate. She plays an important part as the King's chief adviser and she automatically becomes the Head of state when the King is away or dies. The Queen Mother is able to influence the King independently and sometimes acts as a check on him. The Queen Mother is part and parcel of Emaswati kingship and when she dies, another one is appointed. What makes the Queen Mother noticeable is *ematinta* (head-band). It is worn by the Queen Mother all her life and is passed from one to another. It is believed that when a Queen Mother is sick and is about to die it is removed because it is believed that if she dies wearing it, it would rain endlessly for many days and the rain would destroy property, human and animal life.

The song on King Sobhuza II is lauded as follows:

Vuka	(Wake Up
Vuka Bhuza,	Wake up Bhuza,
Uhole sive sakho,	And lead your nation,

The song on nature is tunefully sung as follows:

Ngiyafunga	(I Swear
Ngifunga Ngwane	
aseMbilaneni,	I swear Ngwane at
	Mbilaneni,
Ngifunga Ndvun-	I swear Ndvungunye
gunye aseMlokotfwa,	at Mlokotfwa,
Ngifunga Sobhuza	I swear Sobhuza at
aseMdzimba.	Mdzimba.)

The song highlights swearing the monarchs of Emaswati and the mountains. Our focus is on the mountains that are used as burial places of the nation. The repeated swearing words are emphasized, chanted and accompanied by bodily movement. When King Ngwane III died he was put to rest in a cave in Mbilaneni Mountain. Since then, it became the 'resting place' of the prominent members of the royal family. King Ndvungunye was put to rest in the Mlokotfwa mountains and since then these mountains, too, have been resting places for members of the royal family and sacred places for the whole nation. These mountains are of great significance. During crises, such as drought, epidemic or any other catastrophe, the King visits the mountains to intercede with the ancestors on behalf of the nation. King Sobhuza I settled near Mdzimba Mountain and since then members of the royal family use the caves as their 'resting place'.

Love

Love is the binding factor between two individuals. It becomes a true, proper and real love when it is coupled with sincerity, respect and faith. Its truthfulness is presupposed by a healthy atmosphere brought about by human nature and a good sense of responsibility. Most songs on love are lyrics. A lyric is defined by Cuddon (1979: 372) as follows:

A lyric is usually fairly short, not often longer than fifty or sixty lines. ...it usually expresses the feelings and thoughts of a single speaker in a personal and subjective fashion.

The singer manages to turn many things to loveliness through her song. She exalts the beauty of that which is deformed. Each song marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, agitation and calmness as well as tragedy and comedy. Msimang (1990: 81) concurs with Cuddon's definition by saying the following about lyrics:

Mandulo ilirikhi kwabe kuyinkondlo emfishanyana esamculo edingida indikimba yothando.

(Ancient times a lyric was a short musical poem which is based on the theme of love ...)

Kunene (1970: 17) gives his opinion about love as follows:

Love is not as an idea, but as an outcome of social actions and considerations by two individuals in direct relation to the requirements of their social groups.

The song on love is melodiously sung as follows:

Ngiyakutsandza	(I Love You
Ngiyakutsandza	I love you my
soka lami,	sweetheart,
Siyohlukaniswa	Death will set us apart,
kufa,	Kufa lisela
	Death is a thief,
Ngiyakutsandza!	I love you! I love you!)
Ngiyakutsandza!	

The above song is based on the utterances of a girl to her boyfriend. The girl decides to accept the lover after receiving a formal permission from the older girls. A special ceremony is observed by means of which the boy thanks the girls. The procedure is as follows: The boy, accompanied by his friends, arrives in the chosen vicinity where the girl and her friends will meet them. The parties simply proceed to places traditionally used for this purpose, and the girls seat themselves and wait for the boys. The girls provide beer, having surreptitiously made it at home and carried it to the meeting place, while the boys, and more especially the bridegroom, have brought presents for the girls. When the parties meet, the young men address the girls, thanking them for having chosen on of their party, and the girls will return the compliment, asking that they be treated well and not deceived by the boys.

The song on love is emotionally sung as follows:

Lutsandvo	(Love
Umnandzi	You are so sweet like
njengashukela,	a sugar,
Ngiyakutsandza.	I love you.
Ukhutsele	You are so diligent
njengentfutfwane,	like an ant,
Umhlophe	You are white as a
njengelubisi,	milk,
Ngiyakutsandza,	I love you.)

The expression of love reveals thoughts and perceptions. It is likened to the sweetness of sugar. The diligence of the lover is associated

with that of an ant. The white color is likened to that of milk. The refrain, *ngiyakutsandza* (I love you) is used for emphasis, rhythmic endorsement and to put across the message. It is prevalent that love goes with appeal to various senses. The sweetness of sugar is associated with the sense of taste. Diligence goes with kinetic effort. The white color of milk goes with the sense of sight. The formative simile, *njenga* (like) dominates in the song to bring about beauty and joy. The song on bride party is lyrically sung as follows:

Umtsimba	(A Bridal Party
Nawu umtsimba,	Here is a bridal party,
Siwukhomba bucalu,	Approaching nearer,
Sitombon' umakoti	We shall see the
	bride,
Sitombon'	We shall see the
umkhwenyana,	bridegroom,
Kuhle ketfu	It is a good
	occasion!)

The bridal party is met by the elders of the bridegroom's party. The bride accompanied by some of the female members of her party, steps forward to greet the elders. She kneels in front of them and says: 'I am sent by my father', mentioning her father's first and last names. This is the first and last time in her life she mentions her father's first name. The bride gives a strand of white beads which was presented at the time of courtship back to the grandfather of the husband to be. The bride then returns to her group where singing continues. A bridal party is then given a place to sleep for the night.

Early in the morning, the following day, the bridal party goes to the river with all their belongings. It is at the river that breakfast and lunch are prepared and taken. The group slaughters *sahhukulu*, the beast which is given to them by the bridegroom's father, is taken for lunch.

Politics

There are various songs that reveal protest, conflicts, dissatisfaction, dehumanization and segregation. The political context is evident in most of the songs as it manifests human relevance and social realities. Vershoor in Mngadi (1993: 9) sums up by expressing displeasure with political conditions and practices by revealing the aim of protest as follows:

...is to arouse feelings of distaste, indignation, scorn, contempt and even for some state of

affair, some aspect of society in which he finds himself.

The song on spear is euphoniously sung as follows:

Umkhonto	(A Spear
Ngiph' umkhonto	Give me a spear,
babe,	father
Ngiyewugwaza titsa	To stab and kill my
ngitibulale,	enemies,
Ngiyewuhlula tive	To conquer the
	nations of the
	country,
Alibuye lalabadzala,	Let the forefather's
alibuye.	country be repeatedly
	reclaimed,
Alibuye laNgwane,	Let the Ngwane's
alibuye.	country be repeatedly
	reclaimed.)

The song depicts a request for a spear to kill the enemies. That spear can be figuratively viewed as a symbol of education or something else. It appears that the song is about the protest against colonial ruler. The first words in the two successive lines depict the initial rhyme, *ngi-* (-I) for rhythmic effect. The word, *alibuye* (let it be reclaimed) is repeatedly used in both lines four and five as initial and terminative linking. The creative talent and aesthetic art are evident as the song is sung with the alliterative sounds and rhythmic body movements. They are used as constituents of the song, but not as ornaments. The song depicts protest, dissatisfaction and complaints.

The song on meat is musically sung as follows:

Inyama	(Meat
Bats' asiyidl' inyama,	They say we are not
	eating the meat,
Sidla timbambo,	We eat the ribs,
Sidle sibindzi	We eat the liver,
Sidle ematfumbu,	We eat the bowels,
Inhloko siyishiyele	The head we leave for
bobabe.	the males.)

It is believed that meat is commonly eaten by males; therefore, the song is composed as a counter to that belief. It stresses that women are indiscriminately eating all types of meat, with the exception of the head. The meat that is reserved for males is eaten after following specific regulations. The vertical line verb, *sidla* (we eat), depicts enforcement, emphasis and rhythmical linkage. In the song, the ribs, liver and bowels are mentioned as a meat that is eaten.

The song is expressively sung as follows:

Unencobodvo	(You Are Moody
Makoti phekel'	Cook for your
indvodza,	husband, bride
Makoti phekela	Cook for family, bride
bemtini,	
Unencobodvo	You are a moody bride,
makoti,	
Uhlalela tindzaba,	You spent too much
	time babbling
Unencobodvo	You are always
njalo.	moody).

It is a complaint song that instructs the bride to cook for her husband and for the whole family. The first two lines highlights the positive things that must be done, while the last three lines denounce negative things. Moral values are strongly emphasized as they are vital for communal existence. The messages that are imparted are dissatisfaction and condemnation of specific deeds and instructions on what to be done. Diction is vital in this song because it depicts description and narration. Vertical linking is brought about by the repetition of the words, *makoti* (bride) at initial position and *phekela* (cook for) at middle position. The selected words are used for rhythmic pattern, structure and meaning. They enrich and reinforce imagery which is advocated by Scheffler (2015: 167) as follows:

The language for objects, feelings, thought, actors or any sensory experience or abstraction. Many images are conveyed by figurative language. It is used to heighten the audience's awareness.

It is noted that most songs are more communal and spontaneous in nature. They share the structural techniques and stylistic devices with poetry. The language used is connotative and emotive at various levels.

Education

Educative value is seen from various domains in all the selected songs. The song is emphatically sung as follows:

Sila	(Grind
Sila mbokodvo,	Grind grinder,
Live likubukile,	The country looks at
	you,
Tive tikubukile,	The nations look at
	you,
Sila! Sila!	Grind! Grind!
Sila make	Grind mother

Kudliw' ekhaya. And feed the family
at home.)

It is commonly known that the word, *imbokodvo* (grinder) is figuratively used to mean females. The word, *sila* (grind) is repeatedly used to encourage the females to pursue their rightful duties. This is a song of co-operative encouragement and an endorsement of Emaswati characteristics of being humane, sociable and unity. The singers pretend to be grinding and mimic how the country and nations are looking at them.

The song on encouragement is articulately sung as follows:

Vuka Dzado	(My Sister, Wake Up
Lakhala	The lourie is weeping
ligwalagwala,	
Lakhala lihlokohloko,	The yellow weaver –bird
	is weeping,
Wakhala jolobela.	The long tailed -finch is
	weeping
Vuka dzadze	My sister, wake up,
Uyewuhlakul'	And weed the fields.)
emasimini.	

This song is usually sung by *lilima* (communal cultivating groups). The birds that are mentioned in the song are commonly seen during working time. Their voices are associated with work. The song insists on waking up and weeding the fields. The appearance of these birds and their voices are a wake-up call to *lut-sango* (woman regiment). The repeated word, *lakhala* (it weeps) emphasizes the voices of the lourie, yellow –weaver and long-tailed finches that are heard. The singers use their hands to imitate both weeping and wake-up actions.

The song is evocatively sung as follows:

Liphumile	(Sunrise
Liphumile Mswati,	The sun raises Mswati,
Liphumele sive	It has risen for the
sonkhe,	whole nation,
Letsameleni	Bask in it Emaswati
boNgwane	nation,
Niyewubhul'	You will applaud
emaphiko	
Nibe tingcu-	And become the
lungculu.	bateleur eagle.
Liphumile mshiya	It rose in this end,
loyi,	
Liphumile mshiya	It rose in that end.)
lowa.	

The song is literary based on the sunrise. Emaswati are made aware that it rose at various ends; therefore their involvement to bask in it is

needed. Figuratively, the nation is instructed to pursue education. The sun is used as a symbol of light, progress and prosperity. To clap the wings means to master and be a bateleur eagle means to achieve the highest honour and to be a mastermind in a specific domain. It is a song of encouragement. The singers point at the sun when they sing, *liphumile* (the sunrise), imitate the clapping of wings by using two points *mshiya loyi* (this end) and *mshiya lowa* (that end).

RESULTS

Findings from Tustin et al. (2005: 102) argue that data exploration assists the determination of deducing and construing conclusions from the data to fulfill the purposes, significance and all-inclusiveness. In this paper, the researcher employs thematic analysis for identifying, evaluating and reporting patterns within the collected data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 79), the central ideas are used to highlight vital features of the collected data in comparison with the research questions. It is used for its advantage of breaking down the interview on themes into clear sections which make the researcher's work easier.

To all *tingabisa* songs the voice ranges, namely, soprano, altos, tenors and basses are evident. Their songs are characterized by crepitating or scraping, rattling sound made in the back of the mouth and throat for mouth drumming and vocalic lilting. Ululations as a high-pitched and quavering cry are also apparent. Most *tingabisa* songs depict the rhyming lyrics that consist of repeated verses and chorus. It is observed that most songs reflect the element of drama as an art form, namely; plot, characters, dialogue, spectacle (visual notion) and music (oral notion). The songs depict symbolic representation, dramatic tension, theatrical performance and thematic messages. *Tingabisa* regiment is a culturally homogeneous group which is characterized by skills, knowledge and ideas. It is more cohesive and integrated in behaviour. Its interaction is close and personal and the members seldom interact with other heterogeneous groups. Its total behaviour is established according to the integrative cultural and social systems.

Kasenene (1993: 35) gives this information about the songs:

The Swazis are singing people and much of their music has religious content. There are several occasions when people sing and dance. Family, clan and national rituals, especially those occasions such as incwala (first-fruit ceremony) and umhlanga (reed dance) which bring the whole nation together, are accompanied by singing and dancing.

Most of the songs that are sung by Swazi groups reflect the beliefs and values of the people. It is noted that most songs have a strong moral content which is closely linked with the cultural trends of the nation. The songs operate in a broader frame of reference as they highlight various themes. Their communal experiences are embedded in messages within their lyrics.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation of the central meaning and their influence are recognized after the selected examples are scrutinized. The songs and their effect to recipient's attitude, emotional state and feelings uphold the required customs, beliefs and values. Historical accounts are noted in the following songs: *Ingwenyama* (King), *Make Wesive* (Mother of the nation) and *Vuka* (Wake Up). Nature is highlighted in the following songs: *Titsetelo* (Fruits), *Ngiphe* (Give Me) and *Ngiyafunga* (I Swear). The songs on love are the following: *Ngiyakutsandza* (I Love You), *Lutsandvo* (Love), *Umtsimba* (A Bridal Party). They are all characterized by cheerfulness, joy and satisfaction. The songs on politics are the following: *Umkhonto* (A Spear), *Inyama* (Meat) and *Unencobodvo* (You are moody). Education is evident in the following songs: *Sila* (Grind), *Vuka Dzadzze* (My Sister, Wake Up) and *Liphumile* (The Sunrise). The theme of education is approached using the cultural activity, instruction, behaviour of the individuals and natural phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

Songs are regarded as a voice of the nation. Each theme is looked at through polarities true and false, good and bad, explicit and implicit. Themes are referred to as central or dominating ideas, subject of discourse and the central messages. Songs share the following poetic devices: refrain, rhyme scheme, rhythm pattern and central message. The words, lines and phrases

are repeated for musical effect and emphasis. They depict linking, parallelism and onomatopoeia. Most songs make use of emotional, musical and highly concise charged language. The symbolic language expresses the anticipated and projected thoughts and meanings. Their glorious rhythmic effect coupled with vigorous dance performances are dispelling the contemporary problems to the nation and bring back the glorious past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that more research work on rituals, tales and work songs are needed to explore themes, meanings and stylistic techniques. The categorization of songs according to their types, singers and performers should be explicit. The differences and similarities in *Tingabisa*, girl's regiments need to be looked at. The songs of *Lutsango*, (woman regiments), *umtsimba* (wedding), *butimba* (hunting regiment) and *incwala* (first-fruit ceremony) need quality research. It is imperative that songs should reflect the organization of communities, age regiments, culture, history, norms, values, good morals and collective mode operations.

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Paper received for publication on January 2016
Paper accepted for publicaion on December 2016