

# **BATLOKWA WOMEN'S SONGS**

by

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## **SUMMARY**

This research describes Batlokwa women's songs as performed in current situations. Fieldwork was conducted in Tlokweg (Silwerkrans) which is located in the North West Region. The research depends mainly on fieldwork.

The dissertation describes the performance of various ceremonies and the crucial role of the Batlokwa women in these ceremonies.

The functions and messages conveyed through the songs, together with the performance and poetic features of these songs, are also discussed.

## **OPSOMMING**

The logo of the University of Johannesburg, featuring two stylized birds facing each other with a sunburst above them, and the text 'UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG' in a light grey font.

Die navorsingswerk wat hier weergegee word beskryf liedjies wat Batlokwa vrouens in kontemporêre situasies sing. Hierdie projek is in Tlokweg (Silwerkrans) in die Noord-Wes Streek uitgevoer. Die ondersoek steun hoofsaaklik op veldwerk.

Die skripsie fokus op die uitvoering van verskillende seremonies asook op die kritieke rol van vrouens in sulke seremonies.

Die funksies en boodskappe word ook uitgelig, asook hoe die liedere uitgevoer word. Die poëtiese kenmerke van die liedjies word ook beskryf.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In African society songs are regarded as an integral part of culture and social life. Songs are a very important medium of communication in performance. They are performed regularly in a wide diversity of social settings. The songs provide inspiration during various ceremonies, thereby enhancing excitement and, at times, deep spiritual feelings among the people.

#### 1.1 AIM OF STUDY

The aim of the research is to study the present role of Tswana songs with specific reference to the Batlokwa women's songs. The songs will be analysed as a form of (Tswana) oral art. The messages, functions, and structure of Batlokwa women's songs are also investigated. The researcher aims to examine the role played by the Batlokwa women in their community. The study consists of four chapters. The focus of chapter 2 is the traditional performance of songs during ceremonies including rainmaking and girls' initiation. Chapter 3 contains performances of ceremonies which include weddings, communal work, lullabies, play songs and political songs. Chapter 4 focuses on the functions and messages of the songs. Chapter 5 describes performance and poetic features of Batlokwa women's songs.

#### 1.2 ROLE OF WOMEN IN BATLOKWA SOCIETY

The Batlokwa is a Batswana tribe, descending from the Thakadu totem group, situated in the Madikwe circuit, between the Kgetleng and Tholwane rivers in the North-west region. For many years Batiokwa women have been under the domain of men, they have been marginalised and sidelined. They are allocated many domestic chores such as care of children, grinding and cooking, preparing beer, as well as farming.

They play a key role in many ceremonies. The inspiration to choose this topic arose out of reading the findings and views of various authors and researchers on traditional songs.

### 1.3 METHOD OF GATHERING DATA

Most of the information was gathered through interviews between October 1994 and February 1995 in Tlokweng. Appointments were made with the queen (Mohumagadi) to minimise suspicion as some songs are sung during secret lessons at initiation schools for girls (bojale). Careful attention was paid to confidentiality when initiates disclosed information about the songs, and the content of the initiation programme was kept a secret. Girls' initiation songs (dikoma tsa thupiso) are not exposed to outsiders (maswaile); only the initiates and trainees have access to the initiation rites and disclosures.

The collection of information concerning lullabies, action songs and other ceremonial songs, on the other hand, was quite acceptable and I also had the opportunity to perform through participation as there is no secrecy about these songs. I observed a rainmaking ceremony in which young girls danced to various songs for rain (dikoma tsa pula).

Interviews were recorded on a tape recorder and some information was written down. During the course of the interviews the group sang and danced on request, and I gained access to wonderful interpretations of various songs. Interviews were conducted in good spirit and in a relaxed atmosphere except for an interview with a few old ladies who were not very generous with information regarding graduation songs (dikoma tsa kalogo). Interviews helped the researcher to establish differences in the interpretation of various women's songs. Literature such as journals, theses and other appropriate sources of information related to the study, were consulted.



## 1.4 CEREMONIES AND OCCASIONS

In the Batlokwa community there are those ceremonies that are extinct and ceremonies that are still performed today. The study will concentrate on songs that are still remembered or performed today.

### 1.4.1 CEREMONIES AND OCCASIONS OF THE PAST

The ceremonies that were held in the past include girls' initiation and rainmaking:

#### a) Girls' initiation

Girls' initiation ceremonies (bojale) were attended by girls between the ages of 13 and 19, who had begun to menstruate and develop breasts. During this period girls were isolated for two to three months in winter-time and accommodated at the shelters (mephato) under the supervision of old ladies (balenkolo). The girls were educated in morality and offered secret lessons about sex and relationships with husbands, to enhance the quality of their womanhood. While staying at the shelters (mephato) their daily routine included swimming, collecting wood and fetching water. After they completed a period of initiation (go aloga) a graduation ceremony (thojane) was held and the graduands (dilogane) announced their new status publicly by means of songs.

During the graduation ceremony (thojane), their chief would be given an opportunity to betroth one girl as his wife (go tlhoma letlhokwa). Thojane was known as a ceremony where the graduates exposed their buttocks to the chief (go isa marago kgosing). The following day the graduates would disperse to their homes, proud of their achievement. They looked down upon the girls who had not undergone initiation (maswaile). Missionaries brought many changes to the social set-up of the Batswana and the initiation ceremony was replaced by confirmation.

## b) Rainmaking ceremony

Among the Tswana tribes the rainmaking ceremony occurred annually before ploughing. The chief assembled his people to ask for rain from the ancestors (badimo). The morning of that day, the women assemble the young girls between the ages of 9 and 12, who have not yet begun to menstruate and whose breasts are still undeveloped to perform at the ceremony. Each girl brings along her small clay pot (nkgwana), which she will use to bring water for the rain clay pot (setsaga). Girls walk in a queue led by uninitiated male youths (magwane) to the ancestors' fountain (nkgo ya badimo), to fetch water. When they bring water to the kraal, they may not talk to other people nor may they look behind them. At the kraal, the women dance and sing various songs for rain (dikoma tsa pula). It is believed that the noise of the songs is heard by the ancestors. On the girls' arrival at the kraal, they pour water into a large clay pot which contains a mixture of itching medicine (mogaga) and chyme (moswang) and shout: Pula! Pula! The mixture is prepared by the raindoctor (moroka), and he uses a whisk (seditse) to scatter the mixture in the kraal with the intention of 'scraping away dirt' (go gagaola naga). Women and girls continue to sing songs for rain until they disperse to their homes.

### **1.4.2 CEREMONIES AND OCCASIONS THAT ARE STILL PERFORMED TODAY**

#### a) Communal work (Letsema)

It is common among the Tswana tribes to form work groups to assist each other in the execution of certain duties. Among the Batlokwa women daily duties include ploughing, hoeing and decoration of walls. During the working activities women sing various communal work songs (dikoma tsa letsema) with an exciting rhythm. They are served home-made beer, corn rice (mosutlhane), samp and meat, and they work until the task is completed.

## b) Wedding ceremony

Marriage is an alliance between the bride and the bridegroom's families. According to Tswana custom, the boy's parents visit the girl's kraal to initiate an alliance. The boy's parents appoint an intermediary (mmaditsela) to arrange matters, and she conducts all subsequent communication between the groups.

Bride-wealth (bogadi) consisting of cattle and other gifts is passed from the boy's family to that of the girl. After some months, this negotiation culminates in the consummation of the marriage. The acceptance of bride-wealth (bogadi) indicates that an alliance is made, and is shown by the jubilation of women uttering yodelling sounds (go duduetsa). Nowadays cattle and gifts are substituted with a cash payment. This transaction is regarded as a gift for marriage and not bride-price, and it secures better treatment for the wife than if she were a concubine (nyatsi).

## c) Play songs and lullabies



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In the Batlokwa community it is the little girls' duty to rock the babies to sleep as their mothers are usually busy with household chores. The girl uses an animal skin (thari) to carry the baby on her back and inspires girls to play "house" (mantlwane) during the absence of their parents, and they refer to one another as Mmamoketekete (mother of somebody). Various lullabies are sung by the girls, not only for lulling babies to sleep but also for entertainment.

## d) Politics

Nowadays Batswana women are actively involved in politics, unlike the olden days where men were dominant. Back then, women were denied ownership right: the right to buy and own a house without the consent or approval of a man, furthermore they had no say over reproduction. Today, there are women's leagues such as the National Women's Coalition and the ANC Women's League which are fighting against sexism. Contemporary South Africa is non-sexist, and women are seen holding high portfolios in the political arena.

## CHAPTER 2

### PERFORMANCES (1)

Traditionally, initiation and the rain ceremony were the two most important ceremonies in Tswana tribal life. During these ceremonies women played a very significant role with the help of the ancestors, who possessed special powers to care for the community.

#### 2.1 RAINMAKING CEREMONY (KOPO YA PULA)

Informants explained that during severe drought, the chief, looked upon as father of the tribe, would assemble his people at his kraal and request rain from the ancestors (badimo). All the women, irrespective of age, would prepare themselves for the important ceremony. Other members of the society would be invited to the ceremony by means of songs.

On the morning of that day women would assemble young girls between the ages of 9 and 12, who had not yet begun to menstruate and whose breasts were still undeveloped to perform at the ceremony. Girls wore skirts made of loose threads (makgabe) with beads (dibaga) around the neck. Each girl brought along her small clay pot (nkgwana) or calabash (phafana) which was used for bringing water to pour into the rain claypot (setsaga). Before they left for the ancestors' fountain (nkgo ya badimo), the women and the girls, sang at the chief's kraal. The following is one of the songs performed before they departed:

Motlhabeletsi : Leru lele  
 Le le kwa lele  
 Khorase : Segamakwena !  
 Motlhabeletsi : Leru lele  
 Le le kwa lele !  
 Khorase : Segamakwena !  
 Le le kwa lele  
 Le le kwa lele  
 Segamakwena ka nkgwana ya bokone  
 Segamakwena ka nkgwana ya bokone.

*Leader* : *The cloud over there*  
*The one yonder*  
*Chorus* : *Crocodile milker !*  
*Leader* : *The cloud over there*  
*The one yonder*  
*Chorus* : *Crocodile milker !*  
*The one yonder*  
*The one yonder*  
*Crocodile milker with clay pot of the north,*  
*Crocodile milker with clay pot of the north.*

The women make an earnest request for rain from the clouds referred to as the crocodile milker (segamakwena). Two informants, Mmabethe Letsholo, interviewed on the 12th December 1994 and Motshabi Motshelanoka, interviewed on the 18th December 1994 agreed that this request was made to force the ancestors to deliver the rain they were withholding. This song is believed to arouse the ancestral spirits, to welcome girls to the ancestors' fountain and to provide fertilising showers.

From the kraal, girls walked in a queue led by two uninitiated male youths (magwane) to the ancestors' fountain (nkgo ya badimo). On their arrival at the fountain they filled

the pots with water. Other informants said that the girls carried the pots on their heads without using grassrings (dikgare) to balance them, in order to allow water to spill. The spilling of water, is said to be calling for the delivery of the rain. Schapera (1971:34) says that girls used metal bracelets (maseka) to support pots on their heads. On their way back home they were not allowed to talk to other people, nor to look behind them. This was regarded by other informants to be a token of respect to the ancestors. At the kraal, the women danced and sang various songs for rain (dikoma tsa pula). It is believed that the noise of the songs is heard by the ancestors.

Rain medicines (ditlhare tsa pula) were prepared in advance by the rainmaker (moroka) and put into a very large clay pot (setsaga). The water left in the pots when the girls reached the kraal was then poured into the rain-pot. This rain-pot contained a mixture of medicines, most of which were portions of various trees and other plants, including itching medicine (mogaga). While the women and girls shouted "Pula! Pula!", the rainmaker (moroka) used a whisk (seditse) to sprinkle the mixture in the kraal in order to scrape away dirt (go gagaola naga). After sprinkling the medicine on the ground a song like this was sung by the women:

Motlhabeletsi	:	A pula
Khorase	:	A e ne matsorotsoro
Motlhabeletsi	:	E ka na
Khorase	:	E ka na matsorotsoro
		Pula ! Pula ! Pula !
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Let the rain</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Let it rain heavily</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>It can rain</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It can rain heavily</i>
		<i>Rain ! Rain ! Rain !</i>

The performers of the above song make an earnest request for rain. The request is emphasised by the clapping of hands accompanied by drumming and the stamping of feet. They express their belief that the ancestors will respond to their plea as they rendered them sufficient honour by shouting Pula! Pula! Pula! The emphasis on the word 'Pula' and the phrase 'a e ne' highlights their request for rain and relief from famine. Traditionally the word 'Pula' is used among the Batswana to show admiration.

Dorman (1927:186) maintains that:

The word Rain! Rain! constantly occurs in the Dithoko or praise songs of the chiefs, and when they want to pay a great compliment to anyone they say Rain! Rain!

Unlike Swazi rainmaking ceremonies, Batlokwa rainmaking does not involve slaughtering of cattle.

The informant Dithothi Mogapi interviewed on the 10th November 1994 went on to tell the following: "Ka nako e nngwe moroka o retelelwa ke go fetlha pula, mme kgosi e dirise tsela e nngwe." Sometimes the rainmaker (moroka) fails to bring rain and the chief had to resort to other alternatives.

In this situation, the chief would resort to consult the missionaries and request them to pray to God for rain. In this regard the people looked primarily to God for relief and not to the chief and the ancestors. This is a reflection of the influence of the white man's civilisation on the African culture. The significance of the rainmaking ceremony is to unite the society in the attempt to force from the ancestors the rain that they were withholding by means of the noise (modumo) of the songs and strong smell of the medicines. The ceremony is a traditional channel of addressing and arousing the ancestors to respond to the scarcity of water.

## 2.2 GIRLS' INITIATION CEREMONY (BOJALE)

Among the Tswana tribes girls attended initiation schools when they reached puberty (14 to 18) and had begun to menstruate and develop breasts.

### 2.2.1 CONSENT OF CHIEF'S WIFE (MOHUMAGADI)

The informants said that when a daughter of the Batlokwa chief had reached puberty, the queen (Mohumagadi) would assemble the women and inform them to bring their daughters of a similar age to the chief's kraal (kgotleng) the following day. After she had confirmed that they were mature, she would give consent for the start of the initiation (thebolo ya bojale). The women would rejoice over the good news by uttering yodelling sounds (go tihaba moudu) and sing this song:

Uduu ! Uduu ! Uduu !  
 Mmantadi o timetse  
 Lenao la gagwe ke le  
 Ke le !  
 Ke le !

*Uduu ! Uduu ! Uduu !*  
*Mmantadi is lost*  
*Here is her foot step*  
*Here it is !*  
*Here it is !*

As they sing this song they stamp their feet and raise their arms like horns. The word 'Mmantadi' refers to the female ancestor believed to be the mother of the Batlokwa. 'Lenao la gagwe ke le' (Here is her footstep) in context, means that it is believed that it is only with her consent that the girls will be initiated as she has the power to withhold fertility.



### 2.2.2 PREPARATION FOR THE INITIATION

The informant Mmake Mogapi, interviewed on the 12th January 1995, said the uninitiated female youths (maswaile) who were about to undergo initiation were called up to participate in community functions in preparation for the initiation ceremony. They wore skirts made of loose threads. They spent a week at the chief's kraal practising initiation songs (dikoma tsa thupiso) in the evenings. During that period they visited their families and relatives to receive donations, either chickens or money for celebrating their departure.

### 2.2.3 THE INITIATION (THUPISO)

The ceremony took place during winter months. During that period the girls were isolated for two to three months, and accommodated in shelters (mephato) under the supervision of old ladies (balenkolo). Each clan had its own shelters led by the daughter of the kraal head (kgosana). According to the informants, the first step of the initiation occurred in the forest during the night, where the old ladies prepared them for intercourse *go kgola* (to pull off the membrane). In the forest on the threshing floor (seboana) they knelt and danced. They returned very early in the morning in the company of the women and initiation doctor. This process is known as *go tsoga monyo* - to wake up on the dew, which is the core of the initiation. The following day they were hidden in the shelters, it is said *ba jelwe ke tau* (they have been eaten by a lion) and they were not allowed to sing, to dance or to prepare food. Their mothers sing the following song in the chief's kraal:

*Ijoo ! Ijoo ! Ijoo !*

*Ka ga motho o suleng bosigo*

*Ijoo ! Ijoo ! Ijoo !*

*Ke lelela morwadiake*

*Oh ! Oh ! Oh !*

*About the person who died during the night*

*Oh ! Oh ! Oh!*

*I am crying for my daughter.*

The women sang this song to express their sorrow over what could happen to their daughters. The content of the initiation program remains a secret. Regarding the confidentiality of the initiation program, Breutz (1987:63) said:

The ritual and tuition of the initiation rites still are strictly secret for the Sotho-Tswana to any outsider or to the other sex.

The informants said that during the girl's stay indoors, their families gathered in the chief's kraal and prepared skirts made of mabele-corn stalks (matlhaka) and melon seeds (dithotse) for them. The girls wore these skirts with their bodies painted in white to symbolise the spiritworld. The mabele-corn stalks were an indication of fertility. It was interesting to learn that for their entire stay in the shelters they had to sleep sitting. Another informant, Mmaletshole, interviewed on the 30th November 1994, said that the girls were educated in morality and offered secret lessons about sex and their relationship with a husband to enhance the quality of their womanhood. While staying at the shelters (mephato) their daily routine included swimming, collecting wood and fetching water. They used back-doors whenever they left the shelters. When they went out to fetch wood or water they were not allowed to talk to other people, nor to look behind them. They used walking-sticks for protection against wild animals. This is one of the songs they sang as they returned from the forest:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Malata a ile sekgweng A lata mokgong a rwalela Ngwale wee !
Khorase	:	Hoo ho ! Boramaswaile Hoo ho !
Leader	:	<i>Slaves went to the forest To fetch some wood Hey girls !</i>

*Chorus* : *Hoo ho !*  
*Fathers of uninitiated girls*  
*Hoo ho !*

The young women were under the guard of old ladies (boradikgaratlhana/boramaswaile) who ill-treated them, and regarded them as slaves (malata). They express their grievance with the interjection 'Hoo ho !' According to the informants, a week before the girls' graduation they assembled at the chief's kraal and announced their new status publicly by means of songs (go leka letlhaka). They were given presents such as mabele-corn and beans for their graduation ceremony (thojana). The queen (Mohumagadi) then informed the chief that the young women had completed the initiation process. The day before attending the graduation ceremony, the young women burn their skirts (matlhaka) and walking-sticks and then the women prepare them for the ceremony. They wear skirts made of loose threads (makgabe) and their buttocks remained naked. Their bodies were painted in red ocre (letsoku) to symbolise fertility.

#### **2.2.4 THE FINAL CEREMONY (THOJANA)**

On their return from the initiation school (go aloga) the final ceremony (thojana) is held. All night long, the graduands (dialogane) dance and sing various songs (dikoma tsa thojana). During the ceremony, the chief is given an opportunity to betroth one graduand (sealogane) as his wife, this is called *go tlhoma letlhokwa* (to betroth). *Thojana* is regarded as a ceremony whereby the graduands expose their buttocks to the chief (go isa marago kgosong). Other circumcised men are also given a chance to betroth other graduands. The graduands are proud of their new status. The following song reflects their pride:

Motlhabeletsi : Hee tshweu  
 Khorase : Ahee !  
 Motlhabeletsi : Hee tshweu

Khorase : Ya bokolela  
 Tshweu wee !  
 A ke ke reke ka wena dilo tsa batho.

*Leader* : *Hey cow*

*Chorus* : *Yeah!*

*Leader* : *Hey white cow*

*Chorus* : *It moos*

*Cow hey*

*Let me buy people's possessions with you.*

In this song the graduands (dialogane) are referred to as a cow (tshweu) because of its provision of milk. They would bear children and increase the tribe. The interjection 'moo' signifies their rejoicing over their achievements. The phrase 'Ke reke ka wena' refers to the bride-wealth (bogadi). The song is accompanied by musical instruments such as drums (meropa) and reed instruments (mangope). The day after the graduation ceremony the graduates wear long skirts made of loose threads. Their buttocks are covered with sheep-skin (motlokolo) and they have beads (dibaga) around the neck. They disperse to their various homes, feeling proud of their achievement, and they look down upon the girls who have not undergone the initiation (maswaile). It should be noted that the initiation ceremony is gradually disappearing among the Batlokwa due to the influence of Christianity, which displaces it. In other parts of Africa many girls still undergo circumcision.

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it has been observed that the Batlokwa, like other Batswana communities, have cultural events that rely heavily on the participation of women. The women's traditional songs form an important basis for rainmaking and initiation ceremonies. The performances would not be complete or even possible without the songs.

During rainmaking the women acted as mediators between the chief and the ancestors, and they made their requisition by means of songs to enhance the moroka's power to make rain.

Participation in the initiation program needed a lot of dedication and sacrifice on the part of the women. Older women taught young women obedience, discipline and tolerance to help them fit into a male-centered culture.

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## CHAPTER 3

### PERFORMANCES (2)

Of all ceremonies, the wedding ceremony shows women's intense involvement most clearly. Lately, women have also become involved in politics and political songs illustrate some of this involvement. Less crucial but just as interesting is the singing of lullabies. These aspects are now dealt with.

#### 3.1 WEDDING CEREMONY

Among the Batlokwa monogamy is the norm nowadays. The informants said that polygamous marriages occur seldom, possibly only in the event of the woman being unable to have children. Her husband would marry another woman, *thatswadirope* (thigh washer), who would be expected to raise children. In the Batlokwa community sex before marriage is considered taboo.

In the olden days it was the duty of the boy's parents to find him a wife among the daughters of his father's sister (rakgadi) or his mother's brother (malome). He had no choice but to conform to the custom of the society. This is different from Padaruth's observation in India, where the suitable bridegroom was selected by the father of the girl.

(Sienaert et.al. 1994:132)

##### 3.1.1 THE PROPOSAL

Today, the boy takes full responsibility for the choice of his marriage partner. He proposes love to the girl of his choice, irrespective of whether she is his relative or not. The informants said that the girl would sing the following song to indicate her acceptance of the proposal:

Setlhaketlhakeng  
 sa pelo ya lerato Dali  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ijoo ke ya le wena Dali  
 Ke ya le wena Dali  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ijoo ke ya le wena Swithi  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ijoo ke ya le wena Swithi  
 Ke ya le wena Swithi  
 Ke ya le wena.

*To the Island*  
*Of the heart of love Darling*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh ! I go with you Darling*  
*I go with you Darling*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh ! I go with you Sweety*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh ! I go with you Sweety*  
*I go with you Sweety*  
 I go with you.

In this context, the locative 'setlhaketlhakeng' means the place where they will live together. Her acceptance of the proposal is indicated by the phrase 'Ke ya le wena'. The adopted words 'Dali' and 'Swithi' show foreign influence. Afterwards the boy would inform his parents about his intention to marry the girl. The following steps are to be followed before the wedding day.

### **3.1.2 MARRIAGE NEGOTIATIONS**

According to the Batlokwa custom, the boy's parents would visit the girl's kraal to initiate an alliance.

Two informants, Motshabi Moshelanoka, interviewed on the 10th January 1995 and Kgomonyane Sennelo, interviewed on the 13th January 1995 agreed that the boy's parents would appoint an intermediary (*mmaditsela*) to arrange matters, and she would conduct all subsequent communications between the groups.

The boy's *mmaditsela* would be sent to the girl's kraal to dispatch the message of the beginning of formal negotiations with the girl's 'mmaditsela'. On arrival at the girl's kraal, the boy's *mmaditsela* and her companions would sing a song like the one below:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Re bone sego sa metsi
Khorase	:	Seponono se dikoti Se dikoti marameng
Motlhabeletsi	:	Seponono se dikoti
Khorase	:	Se dikoti marameng.
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>We have seen the water calabash</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Pretty girl with dimples She has dimples in the cheeks</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Pretty girl with dimples</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>She has dimples in the cheeks.</i>

The women describe the girl's good looks, making her to be more attractive than other girls. The phrase 'Re bone sego sa metsi' is a metaphoric allusion to the girl's domestic role.

Both parties will report back to their respective families and the arrangements will be made for the handing over of the bride-wealth (*bogadi*) to the girl's family. On an appropriate date men will be sent from the boy's family to deliver the bride-wealth (*bogadi*) to the girl's family. They arrive very early in the morning before sunrise, to incorporate the ancestors' blessings in the marriage, and to mark the formal



integration of both families. The women belonging to the girl's lineage sing a song like the one below:

Re letse re sa robala  
 Re emetse dikgomo  
 Tse di tswang Botswana  
 Ga Mmangwato.

*We couldn't sleep last night  
 We were waiting for the cattle  
 Which come from Botswana  
 From the Mmangwato area.*

It is clear in this song that the singer has been looking forward to receiving the bride-wealth from the boy's family. This is an indication that it is the right of the girl's parents, with due regard for the requirements of custom, to ask for the delivery of such a gift. Without the delivery of the bride-wealth no progress could be made with the marriage transactions.

The men remain at the girl's kraal and wait for the women accompanying them to continue with negotiations (mabotsa). Special attire is worn by the women for the occasion. The women wear navy-blue printed apron suits (ditoina), red hats and white blankets around their waste. The women walk in a line, led by the boy's *mmaditsela* to the girl's kraal. They do not talk to each other or to other people they meet on the way. On their arrival at the girl's kraal the women sing this song:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Kokokoo
Khorase	:	Kokokoo Mmamosetsana
Motlhabeletsi	:	Re tlile
Khorase	:	Re tlile go kopa ngwetsi
Motlhabeletsi	:	Setimela
Khorase	:	Setimela se a re siya

Motlhabeletsi	:	Re tlile
Khorase	:	Re tlile go kopa ngwetsi.
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Knock, knock</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Knock, knock, girl's mother</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>We have come</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>We have come to request for a daughter-in-law</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>The train</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>The train is leaving us</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>We have come</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>We have come to request for a daughter-in-law.</i>

The performers state the purpose of their visit in the phrase 'Re tlile go kopa ngwetsi'. This request opens the commencement of the formal negotiations. They further express their wish for quick agreement between the two parties, by using the phrase 'setimela se a re siya'.

The women then sit on skin-mats and start negotiations with other women from the girl's lineage. Afterwards they utter a yodelling sound (moduduetso) to show the inauguration of the marriage.

The wedding ceremony normally occurs after the *bogadi* negotiations have been completed. Then they are served mabele-porridge, meat and home-made beer. The following is one of the songs sung by the women from the boy's lineage at the girl's kraal after bogadi negotiations have been completed:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Mogojwana o ko pele
Khorase	:	Hee a-hee !
Motlhabeletsi	:	Le seka la nwa teng
Khorase	:	Hee a-hee !
Motlhabeletsi	:	O tlapetse mokaloba

Khorase : Hee a-hee !  
 Golo mono ga re go itse  
 Re tswa ka tlhogo ya ngwana.

*Leader : Fountain is in front*

*Chorus : Oh yes !*

*Leader : Do not drink there*

*Chorus : Oh yes !*

*Leader : It has washed a strong man*

*Chorus : Oh yes !*

*We don't know this place*

*We go out with the head of a child.*

The women make an earnest request and warn the boys that they should not propose love to the girl referred to as 'mogojwana' because of her betrothal. The phrase 'Golo mono' refers to the girl's kraal, where they are sent to deliver the bride-wealth.

The song below is sung by the women from the boy's lineage when they return to the boy's kraal:

Motlhabeletsi : Kgomo tsa ntate  
 Khorase : Tse ntle tse tshwaana  
 Motlhabeletsi : Kgomo tsa ntate  
 Khorase : Tse ntle tse tshwaana  
 Tse nyetseng mosetsana yo montle  
 Tse nyetseng mosetsana yo montle.

*Leader : Cattle of my father*

*Chorus : Which are fat and white*

*Leader : Cattle of my father*

*Chorus : Which are fat and white*

*They married the pretty girl*

*They married the pretty girl.*

In this song the women are praising the boy for having chosen the pretty girl as his marriage partner. Reference to the white and fat cattle signifies prosperity in marriage, it is also a sign of affection.

### 3.1.3 THE PRE-WEDDING PREPARATIONS


Once the marriage has been practically settled, both parties start to make hectic preparations for the wedding ceremony. The informant Motshabi Motshelanoka interviewed on the 10th December 1994, said that on the eve of the wedding, the bride and the bridegroom and their lineages observe rituals involving the slaughtering of cattle, and making of home-made beer. It is believed that the blood of cattle is used to 'wash the ancestors' hands', and they are invited to the ceremony by means of beer. The bride and groom are the first to be given the opportunity to taste the meat (*go ja molomo* - to eat first meat), afterwards everybody is served roasted meat (*pesa*). The women perform these songs while they are busy with preparations:

Motlhabeletsi	:	E rile
Khorase	:	E rile fa le bua
Motlhabeletsi	:	Kgang
Khorase	:	Kgang tsa lerato
Motlhabeletsi	:	Go ne
Khorase	:	Go ne go le monate
Motlhabeletsi	:	Jaanong
Khorase	:	Jaanong go botlhoko
Motlhabeletsi	:	Tsamaya
Khorase	:	Tsamaya monyadiwa
		Tsamaya monyadiwa
		Tsamaya monyadiwa o ye ga matsale.
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>By the time</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>By the time you talked</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>News</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>News of love</i>

*Leader* : *It was*  
*Chorus* : *It was sweet*  
*Leader* : *And now*  
*Chorus* : *And now it is painfull*  
*Leader* : *Go*  
*Chorus* : *Go bride*  
*Go bride*  
*Go bride to your mother-in-law's home.*

In this song the women persuade the bride to depart to her future home in order to join her in-laws. She is informed to accept her integration into the groom's family as she accepted his love.

The bride is further informed to exercise a lot of patience:



**Motlhabeletsi** : **Wena mosadi**  
**Khorase** : **Siwelele**  
**Motlhabeletsi** : **Fa o le makoti**  
**Khorase** : **Siwelele**  
**Motlhabeletsi** : **Ngwetsi ya babina Kgabo**  
**Khorase** : **Siwelele**  
**Motlhabeletsi** : **O ba dumedise**  
**Khorase** : **Fa o fitlha teng**  
**Motlhabeletsi** : **Siwelele**  
**Khorase** : **Fa o sa ba itse**  
**Motlhabeletsi** : **Siwelele**  
**Khorase** : **O ba fe letsogo**  
**Motlhabeletsi** : **Siwelele**  
**Khorase** : **O ba dumedise.**

*Leader* : *You woman*

<i>Chores</i>	:	<i>Siwelele</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>When you are a daughter-in-law</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Siwelele</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Daughter-in-law of the monkey totem</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Siwelele</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You should greet them</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>When you arrive there</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Siwelele</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Even if you don't know them</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Siwelele</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Give them your hand</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Siwelele</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>And greet them.</i>

In this song, the bride is told that in marriage she will encounter many problems, and she should exercise a lot of patience, in order to make a success of it. The phrase 'o ba fe letsogo' in this context means that she is expected to express her obedience and be tolerant of her in-laws.

### **3.1.4 THE WEDDING CELEBRATION**

#### **3.1.4.1 AT THE BRIDE'S HOUSE**

The bride dresses in a white gown to signifying fertility and a new life. The bridegroom wears a black suit. The bride's mother, accompanied by women, sing in chorus to heighten the auspiciousness of the occasion. The following are some of the songs they sing during the ceremony:

Ke le le tihabile  
 Letsatsi la bofelo  
 Ngwanyana o a tsamaya  
 O ya go swela ditšhabeng

Go swela ditšhabeng  
 Go swela ditšhabeng  
 Go swela ditšhabeng  
 O ya go swela ditšhabeng.

*There it has risen*  
*The last day*  
*The girl is departing*  
*She is going to die among tribes*  
*To die among tribes*  
*To die among tribes*  
*To die among tribes*  
*She is going to die among tribes.*

The ancestors are informed that the bride, 'ngwanyana', is departing for her future home and they should shower her with blessings to ensure that all goes well in the couple's new life. The bride is informed that she will live among other tribes until she dies.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Mmamosetsana
Khorase	:	Sala o di bona tsa lapa la gago Se ile seponono
Motlhabeletsi	:	Mmamosetsana Sala o di bona tsa lapa la gago Se ile seponono
Motlhabeletsi	:	Se ile, se ile
Khorase	:	Se ile seponono
Motlhabeletsi	:	Se ile
Khorase	:	Se ile seponono
Motlhabeletsi	:	Se ile, se ile
Khorase	:	Se ile
Motlhabeletsi	:	Se ile

- Khorase : Se ile seponono.
- Leader* : *You, the bride's mother*
- Chorus* : *Remain performing your household chores*  
*She's gone the pretty girl*
- Leader* : *You the bride's mother*
- Chorus* : *Remain performing your household chores*  
*She's gone the pretty girl*
- Leader* : *She's gone, she's gone*
- Chorus* : *She's gone the pretty girl*
- Leader* : *She's gone*
- Chorus* : *She's gone the pretty girl*
- Leader* : *She's gone, she's gone*
- Chorus* : *She's gone*
- Leader* : *She is gone*
- Chorus* : *She is gone the pretty girl.*

The bride's mother, 'Mmamosetsana', is informed that her help-mate is departing for her future home, and she will bear the tribulations of doing the domestic chores alone. All the people at the ceremony, including the uninvited ones (bakopi) are offered a sumptuous feast. As the dinner is in progress, the women sing for the bridegroom's companions. They sing this song:

Mmago ngwanyana  
 Mosadi wa ditšhentšha setepe  
 Ba tsholele  
 Fa ba jele ba tsamaye  
 Ba tsholele, ba tsholele  
 Ba tsholele, ba tsholele  
 Ba tsholele, ba tsholele  
 Fa ba jele ba tsamaye.



*The bride's mother*  
*Mother who changes steps*  
*Dish out for them them*  
*When they have eaten they should go*  
*Dish out for them, dish out for them*  
*Dish out for them, dish out for them*  
*Dish out for them, dish out for them*  
*When they have eaten they should go.*

This song is meant to taunt the bridegroom's party. In this context it means that they have come to the bride's kraal just for food and beer. Boodhoo (Sienaert et.al., 1994:136) maintains that:

As these songs are an important medium of socialisation, no offence is meant to or taken by the bridegroom's party.

Although the bridegroom's party is subjected to the abusive songs, they take it lightly, since it is not meant seriously. At sunset six married couples including the father's sister (rakgadi) and the mother's brother (malome) are selected to accompany the bride to the bridegroom's kraal which is her future home. The women sing this song before the departure:

Motlhabeletsi:	Phutha
Khorase :	Phutha thoto re tsamaye
Motlhabeletsi:	O rile
Khorase :	O rile o a mo rata
Motlhabeletsi:	Phutha
Khorase :	Phutha thoto re tsamaye
Motlhabeletsi:	O rile
Khorase :	O rile o a mo rata
Motlhabeletsi:	O rile

Khorase	:	O rile o a mo rata
Motlhabeletsi:		O rile
Khorase	:	O rile o a mo rata.
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Gather</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Gather your belongings and go</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You said</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You said you love him</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Gather</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Gather your belongings and go</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You said</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You said you love him</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You said</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You said you love him</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You said</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You said you love him.</i>

In this song the women persuade the bride to collect her belongings (thoto) and depart to her future home, because she swore to be the man's wife: 'O rile o a mo rata' (you said you love him). The song is sung with emotional and pathetic refrains that illustrate the sadness of the separation of the bride from her family.

#### **3.1.4.2 AT THE BRIDEGROOM'S KRAAL**

On the second wedding day, the bride's companions are catered for (go nama maoto - to stretch out the legs) at the bridegroom's neighbour's home, where they are able to observe the occasion without going to the groom's kraal. The marrying partners, still wearing the same attire, lead the procession into the bridegroom's kraal. As the wedding procession enters the kraal, the bridegroom's aunt (rakgadi) recites the boy's totem praise poem (leboko le le tlotlomatsang seano sa monyadi) to welcome the

bride. Then this song is sung:

Motlhabeletsi	:	A-wee matsale
Khorase	:	Matsale tlogela dipitsana
Motlhabeletsi	:	Mong' a tsona
Khorase	:	Mong' a tsona ke yoo o etla
Motlhabeletsi	:	A-wee mo sutele
Khorase	:	Mo sutele, mo sutele, mo sutele
		Mo sutele, mo sutele
		Ke yoo o etla.

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Hey mother-in-law</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Mother-in-law leave the small pots</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>The owner</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>There the owner comes</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Hey give her way</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Give her way, give her way, give her way</i>
		<i>Give her way, give her way</i>
		<i>Here she comes.</i>

In this song, the interjection 'A wee' alerts the bridegroom's mother, referred to as 'matsale', to open the door and welcome her new help-mate. Her daughter-in-law will substitute for her in the execution of certain duties. The phrase 'mo sutele' indicates that she should welcome her and accept her with love. The newly weds spend the whole day dancing to the women singers' songs. Here is an example of such a song:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Se gatele mosese kwa morago
Khorase	:	Se gatele mosese kwa morago makoti
Motlhabeletsi	:	Se gatele mosese kwa morago
Khorase	:	Se gatele mosese kwa morago makoti
Motlhabeletsi	:	A tswe, a tswe, a tswe

- Khorase : A tswe, a tswe, a tswe makoti  
 Motlhabeletsi : A tswe, a tswe, a tswe  
 Khorase : A tswe, a tswe, a tswe makoti.
- Leader* : *Don't trample on the trail of the dress*  
*Chorus* : *Don't trample on the trail of the dress*  
*daughter-in-law*
- Leader* : *Don't trample on the trail of the dress*  
*Chorus* : *Don't trample on the trail of the dress*  
*daughter-in-law*
- Leader* : *Let her go out (3x)*
- Chorus* : *Let her, let her, let her go out, daughter-in-law*
- Leader* : *Let her go out (3x)*  
*Chorus* : *Let her, let her, let her go out daughter-in-law.*

The women encourage the bride not to hesitate when choosing her marriage partner. Their request is in the metaphor 'Se gatele mosese kwa morago' which means that she should not hesitate. She is encouraged to leave her home and join her parents-in-law. Some songs, like the one below, are performed by the women accompanying the bride, in order to admonish the groom's family:

- Motlhabeletsi : Ngwana yo ke wa sika la rona  
 Khorase : Ngwana yo ke wa sika la rona  
 Ngwana yo ke wa sika la rona
- Motlhabeletsi : Le seka la mo ruta boloi  
 Khorase : Le seka la mo ruta boloi  
 Le seka la mo ruta boloi
- Motlhabeletsi : Le seka la mo tshela ka metsi

Khorase	:	Le seka la mo tshela ka metsi Le seka la mo tshela ka metsi
Motlhabeletsi	:	Le seka la mo tlhapaola
Khorase	:	Le seka la mo tlhapaola Le seka la mo tlhapaola.
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>This child is our relative</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>This child is our relative This child is our relative</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You must not teach her witchcraft</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You must not teach her witchcraft You must not teach her witchcraft</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You must not pour water on her</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You must not pour water on her You must not pour water on her</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>You must not swear at her</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You must not swear at her You must not swear at her.</i>

The in-laws are warned to treat the daughter-in-law well in order to receive the greatest respect. They are also warned not to teach her witchcraft, to ill-treat her, or to say obscene and abusive words to her. If they do, misfortune will befall them. The bride's sacrificial love is indicated in this song:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Ngwana yo
Khorase	:	O siile mmaagwe
Motlhabeletsi	:	Bakeng sa
Khorase	:	Sa lerato
Motlhabeletsi	:	Pelo e
Khorase	:	E ja serati O rile o a mo rata.

*Leader* : *This child*  
*Chorus* : *Has left her mother*  
*Leader* : *Due to*  
*Chorus* : *The love*  
*Leader* : *The heart*  
*Leader* : *Makes its choice*  
*She said she loves him.*

In this song the groom's family is informed that the bride has left her mother and because she loves her husband, wishes to become part of their family. The family is requested to accept her with love since she has shown her love to them by accepting their son.

At noon, all the people at the wedding celebration are served food. The bridegroom's party also sing obscene and humorous songs to the bride's party, as mentioned earlier. Before the bride's companions' departure, the elderly people of both parties instruct (laya) the marrying partners to bear their tribulations with patience and stoicism. As the bride's party leaves the groom's kraal, the women sing this one:

**Matlhabeletsi** : **Mosadi ntlo ke eo**  
**Khorase** : **O sale le yona**  
**Matlhabeletsi** : **Rona re a tsamaya**  
**Khorase** : **O tla sala o di bona**  
**Matlhabeletsi** : **Dikuku di monate**  
**Khorase** : **Lenyalo le boima**  
**Matlhabeletsi** : **Rona re a tsamaya**  
**Khorase** : **O tla sala o di bona.**

*Leader* : *Woman there is the house*  
*Chorus* : *Remain in it*

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>We are leaving</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Remain with the responsibilities</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Cakes are delicious</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Marriage is difficult</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>We are leaving</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Remain with the responsibilities.</i>

The women belonging to the bride's lineage sing this song to bid farewell to the bride, who is now part of the groom's family. The word 'mosadi' denotes that she is the one who remains behind. The sentence 'o tla sala o di bona' means that she is going to experience many difficulties, and she should bear the tribulations with tolerance.

It should be noted that as the bride's party leaves the bridegroom's kraal, they are provided with meat called *seopapina* - song raiser, that symbolises the acceptance of their daughter by the boy's lineage. After marriage, the wife acquires her husband's surname and totem, and this will proceed to her legitimate children.

### 3.2 WORK SONGS (DIKOMA TSA LETSEMA)

The Batlokwa, like other Batswana communities, regard communal work as a means of socialisation. They also believe that they can make a better life together than any of them could make alone, and they value collective performance above personal action. The women often form work groups to assist each other in the execution of duties, since they are allocated most of domestic chores. This work group is traditionally known as 'letsema' or 'molaletsa' from a verb stem 'laletsa' to invite.

According to the informants, the woman who needs help to do a particular job, invites other women in her neighbourhood to come and assist her in that task voluntarily, a day before the work is to be done. Among the Batlokwa women, communal work is done mostly for ploughing, hoeing and decorating walls.

### 3.2.1 DECORATING OF WALLS (GO DILA)

At dawn the women collect clay from river banks and cow dung from the kraal, and mix it with water. As the women kneel down and decorate walls they often sing this song:

Tholobunyana  
 Tholobunyana e mo nkgwaneng  
 Hee tholobu e mo nkgwaneng  
 Fa o e batla  
 Fa o e batla itlhaganele  
 Hee tholobu e mo nkgwaneng.

#### *Bracelet*

*Bracelet is in the claypot*  
*Hey ! The bracelet is in the claypot*  
*If you want it*  
*If you want it come quickly*  
*Hey ! The bracelet is in the claypot.*

The word 'tholobunyana' refers to the bracelet 'leseka' which is believed to be hidden in the claypot by the ancestors. The sentence 'Fa o e batla itlhaganele' in this context means that the ancestors will shower the participants with blessings from the soil. They therefore encourage others to also participate in the task. The other song sung for the decoration of walls is the one below:

Ngwana mme kwa ileng teng  
 Ngwana mme kwa ileng teng  
 Ngwana mme kwa ileng teng  
 O yo apara kgetsana  
 O yo apara kgetsana  
 O yo apara kgetsana



O yo apara kgetsana.

*Mother's daughter where she has gone*

*Mother's daughter where she has gone*

*Mother's daughter where she has gone*

*She is going to wear a sack*

*She is going to wear a sack*

*She is going to wear a sack*

*She is going to wear a sack.*

The song is about the women's attire during the time when they decorate walls. The word 'kgetsana', sack, refers to material of poor quality which is used as an apron. The work is messy and that is why they wear clothes of poor quality while they are working. After the work they socialise and sing more songs.

### 3.2.2 PLOUGHING (GO LEMA)



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The women assemble at the field in the morning to plant seed. Their intention is to complete the work before sunset. They perform the work in good spirit and a relaxed atmosphere, and this mood encourages the group to sing together to the rhythm of their hoes.

This song is often sung by a group of women who are busy hoeing:

Mmanku mpelegele ngwana yo

Ke a lema

O a mpona ke a lema

Ke lema ke le nosi

Ga se pula monongwaga

Ke lema ke le nosi

Ke tlhoka le motho yo o ka ntemisang

Ke lema ke le nosi  
 Banna ba ile dikomponeng  
 Ke lema ke le nosi  
 Mmanku mpelegele ngwana yo  
 Ke a lema  
 O a mpona ke a lema  
 Ke lema ke le nosi.

*Mmanku carry this child on the back for me*

*I am ploughing*

*You see I am ploughing*

*I am ploughing alone*

*There is a lot of rain this year*

*I am ploughing alone*

*There is nobody who helps me in ploughing*

*I am ploughing alone*

*Men went to the compounds*

*I am ploughing alone*

*Mmanku carry that child on the back for me*

*I am ploughing*

*You see me I am ploughing*

*I am ploughing alone.*

In this song the word 'Mmanku' refers to a girl whose back is physically fit to carry a child. The person addressed uses a sheep skin 'thari' to carry the child on her back, hence the name Mmanku 'mother of sheep'. She is always available and willing to relieve the mother of her baby, to enable her to continue ploughing. In the phrase 'Ke lema ke le nosi' the mother provokes the girl's interest by explaining to her Mmanku why her help is urgently needed. The sentence 'Ga se pula monongwaga' speaks about a good harvest. The woman further explains the reason for her earnest request in the sentence 'Banna ba ile dikomponeng' (The men are at the mines). This song

is characterised by a light-hearted playing with words which are arranged in a rhythmic pattern.

The workers are served corn-rice (mosutlhane), meat, and beer which further stimulates the favourable atmosphere. The meal proceeds without songs, but rather with conversations about their past experiences. Members of the working group (letsema) work until the task is completed, then they disperse to their various homes. The communal work songs can be regarded as an aid to physical activity. They are instrumental in helping people to cope with exhausting labour.

### **3.3 CULTURAL GAMES (METSHAMEKO YA SETSO)**

In this section cultural games of the Batlokwa children will be classified into two categories, namely lullabies, and play songs. The importance of these games is to provide pleasure, excitement, challenges and relaxation. In addition, playing the games help to develop mental, physical and social skills. Even though Western civilisation brought many changes to the social set-up of the Batswana in general, and the Batlokwa in particular, cultural games still play a very significant role in the upbringing of children.

#### **3.3.1 LULLABIES (MEKIRIETSO)**

Traditionally in the distribution of labour, the little girl is allocated the work of rocking the baby to sleep (go tthaletsa), as its mother is busy with domestic chores. The informants said that the girl uses a supple sheep skin (thari) to carry the baby on her back (go belega). It is believed that she is physically fit to carry the child because her back is small and will not physical harm the legs (digoro) of the baby.

The melody and the rhythm of the lullabies are of such a nature that they calm the child and induce sleep. They can also be sung for entertainment. This is one of the

lullabies used for lulling the baby:

Kunkuru lele  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 O tla belegwa ke mang  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Mmaago o tima babelegi  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Babelegi koma  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Ba rekwa ka serope  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Serope sa namane  
 Kgaotsa nnaka.



*I am lulling you*

*Keep quiet baby*

*Who will carry you on the back*

*Keep quiet baby*

*Your mother is stingy*

*Keep quiet baby*

*To honourable nannies*

*Keep quiet baby*

*They are paid with a thigh*

*Keep quiet baby*

*The thigh of a calf*

*Keep quiet baby.*

The little girl is rocking the child to sleep. She orders the child to stop crying with the interjection 'Kgaotsa nnaka!' She further informs the child that there is nobody who is prepared to carry it on the back, because it's mother is stingy: 'Mmaago o tima

babelegi'. The sentence 'Ba rekwa ka serope' explains why she refers to the mother as a stingy person - it is because of her unwillingness to pay the honourable nannies with the thigh of the calf (serope sa namane). This girl regards the girls who carry the infants on their backs, 'babelegi', as honourable people, she gives them a special mark of honour, due to the importance of their occupation.

The informant Mmalebe Mannafela, interviewed on the 11th January 1995, said that this lullaby indicates that in the cultural life of the Batlokwa, the nanny has to be given food and presents in return for the job of looking after the infant. The rhythm and cadence in this lullaby are devices to rock the child to sleep.

There are some instances where the infant is left under the care of it's sister away from home. If the sister notices that the baby is crying a lot and she wishes to see her parents, she sings the lullaby to soothe her feelings and induce the baby to sleep.

Milubi (1988:24) sees lullabies in the following manner:

As in any other form of poetry, lullabies are able to evoke feeling.  
They evoke gentle and soothing feelings in one's ears.

This song is often sung by the sister in her attempt to control her emotion:

Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
lyee I-yee nnaka !  
Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
lyee I-yee nnaka  
Ke tlhoafaletse bomme kwa gae nnaka  
lyee I-yee nnaka.

*Horse shoe keep quiet baby*  
*Shame shame baby !*

*Horse shoe keep quiet baby*  
*Shame shame baby*  
*I am longing for my parents at home baby*  
*Shame shame baby.*

The girl regards the baby as 'Tlhako ya pitse' because it hugs her back like a horse shoe, as a result of restlessness. She is filled with the desire to induce the child to sleep. The sentence 'Ke tlhoafaletsa bomme kwa gae' speaks of home sickness. The singer's intention is to stop the small child from crying. Western civilisation brings change, whereby girls go to school and the grannies become full-time nannies, and they use songs to lull the children. They sing songs such as the following:

Ga o nke o lela Tsetsenyana-kgabe  
 Ga o nke o lela Tsetsenyana-kgabe  
 Ngwana wa 'tlhare sa Mopipi  
 Tsetsenyana-kgabe  
 Mopipi le motlopi  
 Tsetsenyana-kgabe.

*You never cry Tsetsenyana-kgabe*  
*You never cry Tsetsenyana-kgabe*  
*The child of Mopipi tree*  
*Tsetsenyana-kgabe*  
*Mopipi tree and Motlopi tree*  
*Tsetsenyana-kgabe.*

In this song the granny is praising her grandchild for not crying. The phrase 'Ga o nke lela' (you never cried), shows that the child is well cared for by the granny.

### **3.3.2 PLAY SONGS**

Traditionally, Batlokwa children enjoyed playing games in the evening. The games are seen as a means of socialisation, and are characterised by singing. Play songs

are an important medium of communication, expression and self-entertainment.

By custom, Batlokwa girls wore skirts made of loose threads (makgabe) with beads (dibaga) around the waist. Today's girls have learnt to love this attire and often they perform this song to show love for their culture:

Moeteledipele	:	Makgabe a a dirilwe ka eng?
Motsayakarolo	:	Ka ditlhale
Khorase	:	Mmamakgabe a ditlhale eya koo O ye ko gae o tlabetswe O tlabetswe nku tshwana Nku tshwana ngwana morena Wa morena wa Konyana Konyana ya bo Setshwene Setshwene wa magwaane Helee Helee tsa bomang gape? Tse dingwe gape tsa mang gape? O nnenne o itese O name nkoto Le lengwe nnaka.

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>What is this skirt made of?</i>
<i>Participant</i>	:	<i>With loose threads</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>The girl who wears the skirt go there Go home where they have slaughtered for you They have slaughtered a black ewe Black ewe for the chief's daughter Chief of the Konyana Konyana of the Setshwene clan Setshwene who is not circumcised Hey Hey who else? Others for whom else?</i>

*Sit down and relax*

*Stretch a leg*

*One another, baby.*

Informant Motshabi Motshelanoka, interviewed on the 13th January 1995, said that the girls play this game by forming a circle. The leader gets inside and chooses one girl from the group to answer the question. If she answers the question correctly, the members of the group start to sing the above song. The song is accompanied by the clapping of hands, dancing and drumbeat, and the girl performs the actions in the song. The girl is then given an opportunity to act as a leader. The song has two functions, namely education and entertainment.

The word 'Mmamakgabe' refers to the girl who answered the question. The term 'Setshwene' refers to the girl's totem (seano). Her graciousness is indicated by the phrase 'O tllhabetswe nku tshwana' which shows that she has the power to lead the group. This play is characterised by playing with words to enhance the rhythmic pattern.

### 3.4 POLITICAL SONGS

In the past, Batlokwa women had little say in public affairs, so they conveyed their messages by means of songs. They were denied ownership rights, that is, the right of a woman to own a house without the approval of a man, and they had no say in reproduction. This marginalisation caused a lot of frustration in women. They resorted to communicating their frustration through songs.

A certain informant said that in situations where the women feel oppressed, they assemble at the chief's kraal and sing songs which convey messages of struggle against oppression. For instance:

**Motsatsi re fe marumo**



Marumo re tlabane ntwā  
 Motsatsi re fe marumo  
 Marumo re tlabane ntwā  
 Aiye-le-le!  
 Rona re masole re lwa ka tshaka  
 Mono mo Tlokweng.

*Motsati give us spears  
 Spears to fight the war  
 Motsatsi give us spears  
 Spears to fight the war  
 Aiye-le-le (This is an appeal)  
 We are the soldiers we fight with assegai(s)  
 Here in Tlokweng.*

The women are appealing to chief Motsatsi to give them power to fight for freedom. They are sick and tired of oppression, and they are resolved to fight against men. Even though the chief is aware of the oppression, the women fail to get a sympathetic response from him, so they express their resentment to the world through songs.

The informant said that in most cases the women compose and perform political songs to communicate their feelings and views to the world around them. This idea is confirmed by Blacking (In James 1967:23) when he says:

... music expresses emotions and attitudes that have already been experienced and thereby enhances the social meaning of the gatherings which it serves.

It should be noted that some of the political songs are nationalistic. The women express their feelings of nationalism throughout songs, like this one below:

Bophuthatswana ke lefatshe  
 Re le filweng magosi a magolo  
 BoManyane 'a boMangope  
 Nkuke, nkuke, Mokalake  
 O nkise ko Mmabatho ke yo bona  
 BoManyane 'a boMangope.

*Bophuthatswana is the land  
 Which was given to use by honourable chiefs  
 The Manyane of the Mangope's  
 Lift me up, lift me up Mokalake  
 Take me to Mmabatho for me to see  
 The Manyane of the Mangopes.*

The women praise the former President of Bophuthatswana, his excellency Manyane Mangope for his opting for independence. The sentence 'Re le filwe ke magosi a magolo' in this context means that they (Batswana) obtained the land from the great kings, and that they therefore regard themselves as the rightful owners of the land. The women are appealing to their chief Mokalake to take them to the capital of Bophuthatswana, Mmabatho, to praise President Mangope for his achievement.

It should be noted that now-a-days Batlokwa women are actively involved in politics, unlike in the olden days when the men were dominant. The women are not in isolation. They mix with women from other societies and women's leagues, such as the National Coalition, and ANC Women's League which are fighting against sexism. The song below (not a Tswana song), reveals the women's attempt to escape the oppression imposed upon them by society:

Thabo Mbeki  
 Thabo Mbeki kholoma no Mandela

A yo kholola abafazi  
 Thabo Mbeki  
 Thabo Mbeki kholoma no Mandela  
 A yo kholola abafazi  
 Abafazi ba phile ngoxolo  
 Abafazi ba phile ngoxolo.

*Thabo Mbeki*  
*Thabo Mbeki speak to Mandela*  
*To go and release women*  
*Thabo Mbeki*  
*Thabo Mbeki speak to Mandela*  
*To go and release women*  
*Women must live in peace*  
*Women must live in peace.*

The women are appealing to Thabo Mbeki to talk to President Mandela about their release from oppression. The women expect Mandela to give them the right to live in peace.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it has become clear that the Batlokwa women are highly involved in various social activities. Nothing can be achieved by the community without the involvement of the women. They have experienced difficulties in life, and are therefore capable of encouraging others to exercise patience. Since they do most of the domestic chores, they help each other in the execution of certain tasks. They teach girls to behave according to their custom. Despite being denied freedom of speech, they struggled to challenge the culture and promote change. The women are forerunners in many social activities, which are mediated through songs. They have

succeeded in breaking the ties of sexism. Their performance is deeply appreciated in the community. Their presence and efficiency has contributed in no small way to the enhancement of their culture.

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## CHAPTER 4

### FUNCTIONS AND MESSAGES CONVEYED THROUGH BATLOKWA WOMEN'S SONGS

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to discuss the messages and functions of Batlokwa women's songs. When a woman composes a song, her aim is to communicate her feelings and views to the world around her. The songs are seen as poems revealing the composer's thoughts and feelings.

#### 4.1 MESSAGES

The social circumstances determine the performer's voice, gestures, facial expressions and body movements. All these help to express the messages to the audience. As the performer conveys the message, the audience interprets it and responds by laughing, ululating, clapping hands or even joining the performing group. In discussing the music of the Venda, Blacking (In James 1992:23) says:

... music expresses emotions and attitudes that have already been experienced and thereby enhances the social meaning of the gatherings which it serves.

The response of the audience endorses or denies the performer's intention in composing the song. This discussion will be based on Hugh Tracey's (1967:48-50) adaptation of the communication model. The model is made up of the addresser or performer, the message and the audience. Between the addresser and the audience lies a gap which represents purpose and direction. This gap should be crossed by the addresser by means of both the intention and the skill to convey the message. The skilful soul of the addresser and the responsive soul of the audience are seen as interactive complexes.

Concerning the artistic activity that lies between these two souls, Tracey says:

The artistic cause must have sufficient potential to flash across the gap like an electric spark and so stimulate sufficient interest without which the soul of the listener cannot expect to respond (1967:49).

Women's songs must be a powerful enough force to enable the Batlokwa woman and her audience to communicate with one another. Women are continually striving to gain freedom. The old mentality that a man is the undisputed head of the family has been the cause of the oppression of women. Even in married life a woman may be subjected to great suffering. Therefore, the only means of expressing her feelings, views, attitudes and wishes is through songs. The song can best be thought of as a process of communication between the composer and the audience. In this discussion various messages based on the old traditional life as well as those that express innovation in the Batlokwa women's songs, will be considered. During interviews it was discovered that Batlokwa women's songs speak of different topics. The study will illustrate these messages by selecting songs which were sung during the interviews; these messages are arranged under a number of headings:

#### ***4.1.1 ENDURANCE, SUFFERING AND FRUSTRATION***

When the girls attend initiation school they are subjected to endurance tests and they should bear the pain with patience. Their endurance is an indication that they will be able to bear their tribulations with patience and stoicism during married life. The songs that are performed by the women for this process have to do with endurance. The women communicate this endurance through songs like this one below:

Mosadi wee

Mosadi wee mosadi

Thupiso ke loso

Thupiso e boima

O nne pelo e thata  
Ijoo se lele.

*Hey woman,  
Hey woman, hey woman  
Initiation is death  
Initiation is difficult  
have a strong heart  
Oh don't cry.*

The girls are entering a crucial stage in their life. The performers' facial expression and body movements express their feelings. The Batlokwa women describe the main phase of initiation as being difficulty. This is illustrated by the use of the death metaphor 'loso' for initiation. Possibly this is because it is known that some women have lost their lives during initiation.

In marriage, the bride is subjected to the first test of endurance when she departs from her family to be integrated into her new family. Here she is expected to adjust herself very quickly to the right way of addressing her in-laws. For instance, in the song that follows the bride is told to listen to orders:

Ngwetsi  
O reetse molao  
Ngwetsi  
O reetse molao  
Fa matsale a bua o ikobele molao  
O ikobele molao  
Le fa go le boima o dire o re tuu  
O dire o re tuu.

*Daughter-in-law  
Obey orders*

*Daughter-in-law*

*Obey orders*

*When mother in-law speaks, conform to orders*

*Conform to orders*

*Even if it is difficult,*

*Work in silence.*

The message communicated is one of obedience and endurance. The bride is expected to show her obedience to her mother-in-law by conforming to orders. Her endurance will be an indication that she will make a success of her marriage.

It often occurs that, in married life, the wife encounters the problem of her husband having extramarital relations with another woman, who may be referred to as his concubine (nyatsi). He does not return to sleep at home, showing the withdrawal of his love from his wife. When she tries to put her case to the in-laws, they fail to give her any sympathetic response and start to ostracise her. As a result she experiences a lot of frustration which is caused by jealousy. Although she cannot change the situation she endures the suffering with stoicism. The only solution then, is to communicate her frustration through songs to the world around her. Her intention is to warn those who are still loved, that there is a possibility that one day love will diminish. She performs a song like the one below:

**Nkabo ke itsile**

**Nkabo ke sa nyalwa**

**Lenyalo ke moleko**

**Moleko wa Satane**

**Monna ke mathata**

**Mathata a Satane.**

*Had I known*

*I would not have been married*

*Marriage is a temptation*

*Temptation of Satan*

*A man is a problem*



*A problem of Satan.*

This song expresses the addresser's changed perception of marriage. The message conveyed is that men cannot be trusted. She warns other women about men. Dlamini (Sienaert et.al, 1994:94) summarises this stage in the woman's life as follows:

At this stage she has seen that the contextual meaning of marriage is totally different from the illusions she had during the courtship stage.

As the woman is not allowed to talk about her marriage problems to people outside her family, she resorts to expressing her experience in marriage through songs. The phrase 'Nkabo ke sa nyalwa' reflects the addresser's regret at accepting this man's love. The message communicated is that marriage is the worst experience in the addresser's life. She equates it with Satan. The song is used as a vehicle for obtaining a measure of relief from frustration.

#### **4.1.2 RELEASE AND PRIDE**

On completion of the initiation ceremony the young women celebrate their release by means of songs, when they meet with their families at the chief's kraal. During the initiation program, a strict taboo prevents men from coming near the shelters (mephato), thus their release is indicated by the presence of men who appreciate their achievements. The young women are proud of their achievements and they sing songs like the one below (that convey their release):

Mo gae ngwana'me ke boile  
 Mo gae ngwana'mme ke boile  
 Ke tswa ke le seboaneng  
 Seboaneng sa badimo  
 Ke kgwathilwe ka thupa tsa moretiwa  
 Ke mosadi ngwana'mme, ke boile.

*Home my mother's child I am back*  
*Home my mother's child I am back*  
*I come from the threshing floor*  
*The threshing floor of ancestors*  
*I was beaten with Moretliwa tree sticks*  
*I am a woman my mother's child, I'm back.*

In this song the women express a message of freedom which shows that they went through a test of endurance when they experienced the initiation program in the winter months. They inform their brothers and sisters that they are back 'Ke boile'. They reflect their pride with the words 'Ke mosadi' I am a woman. Their pride is also indicated in the song below:

Re basadi re tswa seboaneng  
 Re tswa seboaneng sa babina thakadu  
 Re bapetse bosadi  
 Ga re bue le maswaile  
 Motsatsi wee re amogele.


*We are women we come from the threshing floor*  
*Threshing floor of the anteater totem group*  
*We have learnt womanhood*  
*We don't talk to uninitiated girls*  
*Motsatsi please welcome us.*

In this song the young women are jubilant about the experiences of the endurance life during the initiation process. They look down upon the uninitiated girls, 'maswaile', and warn them not to talk to them. The device used to enhance the message is the performers' gestures, they raise their arms like horns to show their delight. Their facial expressions indicate their happy moods and intensify the meaning of the song. The confidence of the group has risen, and this results in the enthusiastic performance.

#### 4.1.3 COMPLAINT AND PROTEST

In traditional life it was the duty of the boy's parents to marry him off among his cousins. This process caused a lot of dissatisfaction and misunderstanding between marriage partners. This condition gave rise to the composition of songs lamenting this marrying-off system in order to challenge culture and promote change. This is an example of one such song:

Mmimiro, mmimiro  
 Mmaago Mmakgaje  
 Sele o gana banna  
 Mmaago Mmakgaje  
 O lala le pitse nageng  
 Mmaago Mmakgaje  
 Sele o gana banna.



*Mmimiro, mmimiro*  
*Mmakgaje's mother*  
*Sele refuses men's advances*  
*Mmakgaje's mother*  
*stays with the horse in the forest at night*  
*Mmakgaje's mother*  
*Sele refuses men's advances.*

This song contains motives of complaint against the marrying-off system. The addresser is protesting about the marry-off act which eventually leads to misunderstanding among marriage partners. This particular protest is directed at the girl's mother, 'Mmaago Mmakgaje', concerning her silence regarding the system. The phrase 'o gana banna' (she refuses men) emphasises the girl's refusal of men who are chosen for her. The girls resorted to staying away from home to express their dissatisfaction in the phrase 'O lala le pitse nageng!' In this case the woman exploits her position as a composer to criticise the system. The song can be seen as a vehicle

for protest.

The motif of protest is also evident in political songs. In the song below, the woman is dissatisfied with the ANC's intention to overthrow the government of Bophuthatswana. This created bitterness, also for women, who did not show any interest in political affairs. The women feel that the Bophuthatswana government should defy this act, hence songs like this one:

President Mangope  
 Puso ya menolwa  
 Rothisa, rothisa, rothisa  
 Rothisa keledi.

*President Mangope*  
*The government is over-thrown*  
*Shed, shed, shed*  
*Shed your tears.*

The song is directed to President Mangope telling him to disapprove of the action by 'shedding his tears'. In this case the addresser exploits her position as folk artist to force the President to defy the intended coup.

Since most of the Batlokwa are employed in industries in Rustenburg, they depend on busses as their means of transport to town. They go to town to buy groceries and clothing. Sometimes it happens that the bus is over loaded by passengers from Pella and fails to transport the Batlokwa people. The women become frustrated and express their feelings in this song:

Hoo bese  
 Ema re pagame  
 Hoo bese  
 Ema re pagame  
 Re ya tirong  
 Go direla bana  
 Hoo bese  
 Ema re pagame.

*Stop bus*  
*Stop and carry us*  
*Stop bus*  
*Stop and carry us*  
*We are going to work*  
*To support our children*  
*Stop bus*  
*Stop and carry us.*

In this song the addresser is worried because of the failure of the bus to carry her to town. Furthermore she is frustrated and inconvenienced because there is no transport to take her to town. The message is conveyed to the owner of the bus, who is informed that his bus service is necessary for people to get to town. Sometimes the bus is delayed and the woman expresses her frustration because she is late for work as a result. The song below expresses her feelings:

Teraeba tshela mafura  
 Nako e a re siya  
 Bese ke ya makgowa  
 Rona re tla tsena thari  
 Teraeba tshela mafura  
 Nako e a re siya.

*Driver accelerate*  
*We are losing time*  
*The bus is owned by whites*  
*We will arrive late*  
*Driver accelerate*  
*We are losing time.*

The message communicated is that the driver of the bus must speed to avoid everyone being late. The owner of the bus is informed that the bus is essential to people and he should take his responsibility more seriously and transport people in time.

#### **4.1.4 MIGRANT LABOUR**

The changed economy of the Batlokwa meant that the men had to leave their homes and become migrant workers. By doing this, a man shows love for his wife by buying her modern clothes and furniture. The woman then composes the song below to praise her husband:

Banna ba ile dimaeneng

Banna ba ile dimaeneng

Go setse bomatlhalela

Go tlhotlhwa kae?

Go setse bomatlhalela

Go tlhotlhwa kae?

*Men have gone to the mines*

*Men have gone to the mines*

*The work-shy remain*

*Where has the beer been strained?*

*The work-shy remain*

*Where has the beer been strained?*

In this song the addresser is praising her husband for working in the mines rather than staying home for beer. The addresser is proud of her husband, and she looks down upon the men who are not employed (bomatlhalela).

#### 4.1.5 LOVE

Since the primary requisite for marriage is falling in love, in the Batlokwa tradition the lovers may express their love for each other by exchanging small gifts such as necklaces, albums, etc. It is common that when a woman is in love, she sends out the message by means of songs. This is an example:

Dali wee!  
 Ke a go rata  
 Dali wee!  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Dali wee!  
 Nkuke  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Dali wee!  
 Nkuke  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ga matsale  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ga matsale.

*Hey Darling!*  
*I love you*  
*Hey Darling!*  
*I go with you*  
*Hey Darling!*  
*Carry me*  
*I am going with you*  
*Hey Darling!*  
*Carry me*



*I am going with you  
 I am going with you  
 To mother-in-law's house  
 I am going with you  
 To mother-in-law's house.*

## 4.2 FUNCTIONS

Since performance is a form of communication it fulfils certain functions. These functions pertain to mobilisation of people, sustaining of tradition, transmitting of messages, and entertainment. Furthermore, they are expressive. Nketia (In James, 1992:15) confirms that:

Music is played for purely recreational purpose, or it may enhance ceremonies or rites.

In this discussion the functions of songs, as performed during various ceremonies, will be discussed under the following headings:

### 4.2.1 TRANSMISSION OF MESSAGES

This function includes teaching, warning and justification. These are reflected by those songs that convey a message to the audience with regard to the history, custom, or moral issues of the society. For example, in the song that follows, the girl is advised to sweep the house in order to keep it tidy:

Feela, feela  
 Feela ngwanyana  
 Feela ngwanyana o se jele matlakaleng  
 Mmangwane ke tšhobolo  
 Tšhobolo ya mosadi



Feela ngwanyana o se jele matlakaleng.

*Sweep, sweep*

*Sweep girl*

*Sweep daughter don't eat amidst litter*

*Aunt is very strict*

*A very strict woman*

*Sweep daughter don't eat amidst litter.*

This song teaches the girl the lesson of keeping her home clean in order to be healthy. The tuition is offered as a base for doing domestic chores properly now and in the future. The following song educates the audience with regard to the history and custom of the Batlokwa community:

Gaetsho kwa Tlokweg

Motseng wa babina-thakadu

Thabeng tsa Motsatsi

Basimane botlhe ba disa dikgomo.

*At home in Tlokweg*

*The Village of the anteater totem group*

*Mountains of Motsatsi*

*All the boys herd cattle.*

The song conveys a message which can be seen as a lesson to other people who may not know that the Tlokweg village belongs to the descendants of Thakadu totem group. It also gives insight into customs in the sentence 'Basimane botlhe ba disa dikgomo' which indicated that the boys are allocated the labour of herding the cattle.

Some of the women's songs are used to warn and instruct the members to conform to the customs of the Batlokwa community. For example in the song below, the mother is entitled to reward the nanny for the good job she is doing:

Kunkuru lele!  
 Kgaotsa nnaka!  
 O tla belegwa ke mang  
 Kgaotsa nnaka!  
 Mmaago o tima babelegi  
 Kgaotsa nnaka!  
 Babelegi koma  
 Kgaotsa nnaka!  
 Ba rekwa ka serope  
 Kgaotsa nnaka!  
 Serope sa namane  
 Kgaotsa nnaka!

*Kunkuru lele!*

*Keep quiet baby*

*By whom will you be carried on the back?*

*Keep quiet baby!*

*Your mother stings the child-minders*

*Keep quiet baby!*

*The child-minders*

*Keep quiet baby!*

*They are paid with a thigh*

*Keep quiet baby!*

*The thigh of a calf*

*Keep quiet baby!*

The song reveals that in the cultural life of Batlokwa, the nanny has to be rewarded in return for the job of looking after the infant. If the mother fails, she is disciplined by the nanny's refusal to look after the child.

The women's songs explain and justify various ceremonies to the performers as well as the observers. For example, in the song that follows, the old women give a good

reason for initiating the girls:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Tsiroro Tsiroro
Khorase	:	Ngwana 'mme wee
Motlhabeletsi	:	Tsiroro Tsiroro
Khorase	:	Gore o nne mosadi
Motlhabeletsi	:	Tsiroro Tsiroro
Khorase	:	O tla rupiswa
Motlhabeletsi	:	Tsiroro Tsiroro
Khorase	:	Go baakanyetswa bosadi
Motlhabeletsi	:	Tsiroro Tsiroro
Khorase	:	Go ikobela monna.
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Tsiroro Tsiroro</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>My mother's daughter</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Tsiroro Tsiroro</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>To be a woman</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Tsiroro Tsiroro</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>You will be initiated</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Tsiroro Tsiroro</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>To be prepared for womanhood</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Tsiroro Tsiroro</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>To respect your husband.</i>

In this song the old women (basadi bagolo) explain that the girl should undergo initiation in order to be regarded as a woman. They further imply that the initiation program offers the girl secret lessons about sex and her relationship with her husband. In general, the initiation prepares her for the life of a socially grown-up person.

#### 4.2.2 EXPRESSIVE FUNCTION

The expressive function can be divided into: reflection of emotions and spiritual development, and appealing. The songs can be thought of as a register of people's emotions and spiritual development with regard to prevailing social conditions. For example in the song that follows, the addresser glorifies romantic love:

Lerato wee!  
 Lerato la monna  
 Ga le mphe sebaka  
 Ke lala ke thabile le bosigo  
 Ke lala wee!  
 Ke lala ke thabile  
 Ke lala ke thabile  
 Ke lala ke thabile le bosigo.

*Oh love!*

*The love for this man*

*It doesn't give me chance*

*I even rejoice during the night*

*The whole night, yea !*

*The whole night*

*The whole night*

*I even rejoice during the night.*

In this song the addresser explicitly says that she loves this man to the extent that she rejoices whenever she thinks of him. This reflects her response to the man's love. The woman sings about love because she loves this man from the bottom of her heart, and is also proud of her choice. She feels that love will lead to marriage.

#### 4.2.3 SUSTAINING OF TRADITION AND MOBILISATION OF PEOPLE

The songs are efficacious in helping to retain certain knowledge of culture. The song develops over a long period of time. One woman composes it, and other people hear the song and learn to sing it. These people, in return, perform the song for others, who also learn the words and melody. In this way, the song passes from generation to generation. The following song signifies the start of initiation:

Uduu! Uduu! Uduu!  
 Mmantadi o timetse  
 Lenao la gagwe ke le  
 Ke le!  
 Ke le!

*Uduu! Uduu! Uduu!*  
*Mmantadi is lost*  
*Here is her footstep*  
*Here it is!*  
*Here it is!*

Whenever this song is sung, both the men and women know that 'Mmantadi', the female ancestor believed to be the mother of the Batlokwa community, has given consent that the girl's should be initiated. They, in turn, prepare themselves for the ceremony, hence sustaining the tradition.

In the following song the women appeal to the chief to give them power to fight for freedom:

Motsatsi re fe marumo  
 Marumo re tllhabane ntwā  
 Motsatsi re fe marumo

Marumo re tlabane ntwā  
 Aiyelele  
 Rona re masole re lwa ka tšhaka  
 Mono mo Tlokweng.

*Motsatsi give us spears  
 Spears to fight the war  
 Motsatsi give us spears  
 Spears to fight the war  
 Aiyelele  
 We are the soldiers we fight with the assegai  
 Here in Tlokweng.*

The song reveals the women's attempt to escape the oppression imposed upon them by the men. They appeal to chief Motsatsi to address the oppressive act by giving them power to fight against men. The women's songs are instrumental in helping people to perform their work. For example, the following communal work song encourages the woman to exercise patience while they are busy with exhausting labour:

Mmamosimane  
 Re etelele pele  
 Ro tshele kae?  
 Noka e tletse metsi  
 Re dikile re tlhagola, re dikile  
 Re dikile re tlhagola ko masimong.

*Boy's mother  
 Lead us  
 Where are we going to cross?  
 The river is full of water*

*We have been ploughing, we have been  
We have been ploughing in the fields.*

Before farming became mechanised women had to perform difficult and tedious tasks by hand. They used communal work songs to make their work more enjoyable.

#### **4.2.4 ENTERTAINMENT**

The entertainment function pertains to the enjoyment of each other's company, and the enjoyment of defamiliarized language. Many women perform songs accompanied by musical instruments for their own satisfaction. The following song is sung by the women when they arrive home from communal work. It is sung because they have performed the work successfully and are satisfied:

Re bulele mo hekung  
Re bulele mo hekung  
Re bulele mo hekung  
Re tle re tsene mo gae  
Bana ba tshwerwe ke lenyora  
Bana ba tshwerwe ke lenyora  
Bana ba tshwerwe ke lenyora  
Re bulele mo hekung.

*Open the gate for us  
Open the gate for us  
Open the gate for us  
So that we enter the home  
Children are thirsty  
Children are thirsty  
Children are thirsty  
Open the gate for us.*

This song provides enjoyment, because it touches the feelings and emotions of the performers themselves as well as the audience. The enjoyment is evident in the dancing of the performers, the clapping of hands and the uttering of yodelling sounds.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the study that the woman does not compose the song ex nihilo but from her experiences and views of the world around her. The woman as composer has a knowledge of human nature and because she has experienced suffering she is able to express her burning passion. The discussion further reveals that the songs convey a variety of messages such as endurance, release, protest and love.

This chapter has shown that songs perform a number of vital social functions. Included in these are mobilisation of people, sustaining tradition, transmitting messages, entertainment and expression of feelings. The songs help the women to establish and strengthen their identities while the struggle against the oppressive system.



## CHAPTER 5

### PERFORMANCE AND TECHNIQUES

#### 5.1 CALL AND RESPONSE

It is important to note that most of the Batlokwa women's songs are in antiphonal form, in other words, there is always a person who leads in a song (motlhabeletsi) and the other members of the group respond in a chorus. The leader should be a person with courageous manner and a pleasant yet loud voice.

A number of symbols will be used to reflect how some songs are sung. Bold will indicate the overlap of the call and the response. A colon (:) after a syllable will show it's length which may correspond with a minim or half note, while a double colon (::) after a syllable will indicate a sustained semibreve, i.e. four beats. A long musical note equal to eight beats, that is a breve, will be indicated by a quadruple colon (::::) after a syllable. The underlined parts of a song will reflect the group response. These symbols will be applied in one of the graduation (thojana) songs. The song below is sung by the graduands on the termination of the initiation period at the chief 's kraal.

1 Tshwe:ne pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene:

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Tshwe:u pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene::

Se ke eng se Ke mosa:di wa tshwe::ne::

6 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Hee:: tshwe:u Ahee::::e::

Hee:: tshwe:u Ya bokolela

Ntshu Wee A ke ke reke ka:: we:na dilo tsa batho::

Tshwe: ne phatana ya yona e tse: na ka yona tshwene::

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

- 12 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa rtshwe::ne::  
 Tshwe:u phatana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene::  
 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::  
 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::  
 Hee::tshwe:u Ahee::::e::
- 17 Hee: tshweu Ya bokolela  
 Ntshu wee A ke reke ka:: we:na dilo tsa batho::  
 Tshwe:ne pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene::  
 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::  
 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa rshwe::ne::  
 Tshwe:u phatana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene::  
 23 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::  
 Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::  
 Hee:: tshwe:u Ahee::::e::  
 Hee:: tshwe:u Ya bokolela
- 27 Ntshu wee A ke ke reke ka::we:na dilo tsa batho:

- 1 *Baboon enter through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Baboon enter through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*
- 6 *What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Hey white cow*  
*Hey white cow*  
*Black cow can I buy with you people's goods*  
*Baboon enter through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*
- 12 *What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Baboon enter through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*

- What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Hey white cow*
- 17 *Hey white cow*  
*Black cow can I buy with you people's goods*  
*Baboon enter through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Baboon enter through its path*
- 23 *What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Hey white cow*  
*Hey white cow*
- 27 *Black cow can I buy with you people's goods?*

The graduands (dialogane) sing this song with cadence and vibrancy in their voices to express pride in their achievements. Most of these songs are characterised by repetition, the response is sung loudly and with strength, to show that the group accept the leader's call with confidence. The song is performed with the right hand on the right hip while the left hand is holding a walking-stick. As they dance, they stamp their feet in accordance with the exciting rhythm of the song, while cocoon instruments (matlhao) and drums (meropa) amplify the sound. There are other instances where the calls and their corresponding responses were repeated four times, thereafter the leader (motlhabeletsi) sang with the group in chorus. The song below is an example of this:

- Motlhabeletsi:      Sewe:ledi:: sewana: le la ljoo::  
                             Sewe:ledi:: sewana: le la ljoo::  
                             Sewe:ledi:: sewana: le la ljoo::  
                             Sewe:ledi:: sewana: le la ljoo::
- Khorase:              Ga le a re le nyalwa: ka kwa kgosing?

Tlheng mme: le tswele tsa maswai: le:::  
 Ga le a re le nyalwa: ka kwa kgosing?  
 Tlheng mme: le tswele tsa maswaile:::  
 Leader: Seweledi sewanalela ljo  
 Seweledi sewanalela ljo  
 Seweledi sewanalela ljo  
 Seweledi sewanalela ljo  
 (Yodelling sound)

Chorus: *Why do you say you are marrying the chief  
 While you wear clothes of an uninitiated female youth?  
 Why do you say you are marrying the chief  
 While you wear clothes of uninitiated female youth?*

The performers are encouraging those uninitiated girls (maswaile) to undergo initiation so as to be in position to being regarded as women. The response 'ljo' is sung in a very loud and forceful manner, i.e. fortissimo. The examples above illustrate the techniques of most of the ceremonial songs. There is an exception to this pattern of course, sometimes the reed instrument (lengope) substitutes for the caller and the whole group sings the corresponding response. In this case the 'call' appears in the beginning of the song and the group respond by expressing the words of the song:

Phalana: Hoo:ho: Hoo:ho: Hoo:ho::  
 Phetolo: Mma:mpuru wa gaabo Tsho:lo:felo:  
 Le fa pula e ka na ya komakoma:  
 Le fa pula e ka na ya komakoma:  
 Dikgomo tsa boela kwa marope:ng  
 Dikgomo tsa boela kwa marope:ng  
 Kwa marope:ng a rona le Bakwe:na  
 Kwa marope:ng a rona le Bakwe:na

Whistle: *Hooho:Hooho:Hooho*  
*(Whistle sound)*

Response: *Mmampuru of Tsholofelo's family*  
*Even if rain can fall heavily*  
*Even if rain can fall heavily*  
*Cattle would go back to graze*  
*Cattle would go back to graze*  
*The grazing we owned together with Bakwena*  
*The grazing we owned together with Bakwena.*

The women perform this song bare-feet, and they move forwards and backwards tip-toed (go matla).

## 5.2 REPETITION



The poetic device known as repetition is the common structure in many songs of the Batlokwa women. The following elements will be discussed under repetition:

- (I) Repetition of sounds
- (II) Repetition of words
- (III) Repetition of phrases and sentences

### 5.2.1 REPETITION OF SOUNDS

Repetition of sounds occurs when similar sounds appear more than once in a song. Repetition of vowel sounds in a sentence is known as assonance, and alliteration refers to repetition of consonant sounds in a sentence.

Assonance and alliteration are often found in songs or verses which convey a special emotional power, expressing itself in some rhythmic form. Assonance is found in this

song below:

Mme nthekele mosese  
Ke tetemise bokgarebe banyana!

*Mother buy me a dress  
I want to walk as a lady, girls!*

In this song the predominant vowel sound is e.

Moody (1968:25) argues that:

One of the chief effects of alliteration seems to be to bind words together in a kind of close, significant relationship, the exact significance of which, of course, is given to us by the sense of words.

The following song contains alliteration:

Mmamottlhottlho o bottlhale o tlhottlha ka mottlhottlho  
Bojalwa jwa manjakane  
ljelele, ljelele, ljelele, ljo!

The straining mother is clever  
She strains with a strainer  
Beer made of manjakane corn.

In the above example, the predominant sounds are tlh and j respectively.

### 5.2.2 REPETITION OF WORDS

Pabe ya mphisa molomo  
Ko re yele, pabe ke a swa

*Popcorn burns my lips*  
*I scream, popcorn I am burning up.*

In this song the word 'pabe' is repeated to enhance the rhythm.

Linking is a poetic device when a word at the end of the line is repeated in the beginning of the next line.

(a) Malome nkgala motlhatlha

Motlhatlha ke rupe hoho!

*Uncle undress me corn-reed*

*Corn-reed I am initiated!*

(b) Kgomo ka phura lesapo

Lesapo, lesapo

Ka tloha kgomo

Kgomo ka phura lesapo.

*Cow I chew bone*

*Bone, bone*

*I slaughter cow*

*Cow I chew bone.*

(c) Naledi, naledi, naledi wee, naledi

Ke bona naledi

Naledi, naledi, naledi, wee, naledi  
Ke bona naledi

*Star, star, star, hey star,*  
*I see the star,*  
*Star, star, star hey, star!*  
*I see the star.*

The word 'naledi' is repeated several times, in context it metaphorically refers to the bride.

Repetition of stems occurs when stems appear more than once in a song, for instance:

Mmangawengawe nkemele,  
Kgaleduedue nkemele!

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From the above example, the stems ngawe and due are repeated to add emphasis to the statement.

### 5.2.3 REPETITION OF PHRASES AND SENTENCES

Repetition of phrases or sentences:

- (a) Le fa pula e ka na ya komakoma  
Le fa pula e ka na ya komakoma  
Dikgomo tsa boela kwa maropeng  
Dikgolo tsa boela kwa maropeng.

*Even if rain can rain fall heavily*  
*Even if rain can rain fall heavily*



*Cattle would go back to the grazing*  
*Cattle would go back to the grazing.*

- (b) Uuu! Bomme ba etla  
 Uuu! Bomme ba etla  
 Ba tla le magwana  
 Ba tla le magwana.

*Uuu! Mothers are coming*  
*Uuu! Mothers are coming*  
*They are accompanied by uninitiated male youths*  
*They are accompanied by uninitiated male youths.*

Repetition as a poetic device can be seen as a source of rhythm. The basic functions of repetition in the women's songs are as follows:

- (a) to add emphasis to an important statement, (b) to give the song a humorous effect. This idea is confirmed by Mogapi (no date:40) when he says:

Mokgwa o, o ka diriswa go supa kgatelelo, go tlhapisa bokao jwa mafoko, kgotsa go natefisa puo le go e fa lenko la kopelo.

*This method can be used to add emphasis, to express the meaning of words, or to increase literary appreciation, and to make it suitable for singing.*

Repetition is of course a mnemonic device, that is, it is efficacious in helping to remember.

### 5.3 IMAGERY

Figurative language is used in some of the women's songs to create vivid images and increase literary appreciation. The following elements will be discussed under imagery:

- (a) Metaphor
- (b) Simile
- (c) Personification

#### 5.3.1 METAPHOR (TSHWANTSHISO)

Metaphor is an implicit comparison. The composer uses a metaphor to explain an idea by making a comparison with some other branch of her experience or knowledge, for instance:

Naledi, naledi, naledi wee, naledi!

Ke bona naledi.

Naledi, naledi, naledi wee, naledi!

Ke bona naledi

Mme matsale

Tlaya o bone

Naledi wee!

Ke bona naledi.

*Star, star, star hey, star!*

*I see the star.*

*Star, star, star hey, star!*

*I see the star*

*Mother-in-law*

*Please come and see,*

*Hey star!*

*I see the star.*

The addresser speaks of the amazing beauty of the bride (monyadiwa), and she invites the mother-in-law to get a look at of the bride. The word star (naledi) refers to the bride.

### 5.3.2 SIMILE (TSHWANTSHANYO)

Simile is a literary device which makes an explicit comparison between two things, by using the words 'like' (tshwana) or 'as' (jaaka).

- (a) Tlheng o a tshega  
Fa ke re o tshwana le segwagwa?

*Why are you laughing  
When I say you look like a frog?*

The person addressed is compared with a frog, because of his physical appearance.

- (b) O montle jaaka serurubele  
Mo tsatsing la selemo.

*She is as pretty as a butterfly  
On a summers day.*

### 5.3.3 APOSTROPHE AND PERSONIFICATION

Apostrophe is a type of figurative language in which inanimate objects are addressed as human-beings.

Bojalwa amogela babinathakadu  
O ba tlhatswe pelo go sweufala.

*Beer welcome people of Thakadu totem group  
Wash their hearts to be bright.*

In this song, beer (bojalwa) is addressed as if it is living.

#### 5.4 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that in many songs the caller starts the song and the chorus replies with repetitive motifs in drone-like fashion. In many songs there is an overlap between the call and the response. Rhythm is often the result of repetition. Repetition is one of many defamiliarization techniques which results in poetic language. Many songs contain images such as metaphor, simile, apostrophe and personification which increase literary appreciation.



## FINAL CONCLUSION

This work attempts to illustrate the various kinds of ceremonies observed in the Batlokwa community, and the crucial role of the women in these ceremonies.

Women's songs are a component of the cultural life of the Batlokwa community which enrich community life. They are used to grace important ceremonies and private family occasions and to strengthen public opinion. The songs give explicit directions as to how various functions are performed, and mirror the realities of life.

It is clear that the women never really reach a stage at which they are free. They are deprived of some public activities and are forbidden to socialise freely. For this reason, they use songs as a unique vehicle for discourses to establish their female identities, and to force their way into public gatherings.

The discussion has shown that the Batlokwa women compose songs which have a variety of themes. It is clear that a woman composes songs based on her life experiences, views and perception of the world around her. The audience admires the songs because of their authenticity. The woman, as the performer, is accountable to the audience for a display of her communicative competence, and the audience, in turn, respond in various ways. Thus, the role of songs as medium of communication cannot be underestimated.

Songs should be included in the school curriculum. If they are taught properly at school by self-motivated teachers, the pupils will appreciate them and develop their innate musical talents. The songs may also be used in physical training lessons to encourage pupils' participation.

Even if modernisation is becoming a threat to the preservation and advancement of the cultural heritage, ceremonies such as initiation and rainmaking should not be associated with satanic practices. The present generation should not disregard their culture, and they should realise and acknowledge the value of women's songs.

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