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THE HISTORY OF THE SHONA PROTEST SONG: A PRELIMINARY STUDY*

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THE HISTORY OF the modern protest song in Zimbabwe is clearly an account of the development of the traditional genre, the song, as it was sung and performed before a live and participating audience in the village before the coming of the White people. Nowadays it is sung to the accompaniment of Western musical instruments before a non-participating audience over the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Radio or before international audiences on Zimbabwe's national days.

The task of tracing the course of Southern Rhodesian colonial and imperial historical events and of relating them to the development of the protest song is not an easy one. This being so, I have divided the ninety-odd years into four stages which I think are connected with that development. The first is the period prior to 1890, which is fundamental. The second is 1890–1945, the third 1945–64, and the fourth 1965–80.

As the period I am called upon to cover is so long, it will be difficult to avoid rather vague generalizations, especially when I come to deal with the most sensitive period, 1965–80, when not only were more songs composed than at any previous period but also more leaders were competing for the people's support.

I have confined my study to that part of Zimbabwe—Mashonaland—best known to me, and most of the songs used as examples come from Shona composers, the majority of whom support the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by the Prime Minister, Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

The most important historical dates which, in one way or another, influenced the form of the song are as follows:

- 1890 The Occupation of Southern Rhodesia by the British South Africa Company operating under Royal Charter
- 1923 The assumption of Responsible Government
- 1931 The promulgation of the Land Apportionment Act
- 1953 The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
- 1961 The new Constitution for Southern Rhodesia
- 1965 The Unilateral Declaration of Independence

* Most of the songs dealt with are either in the printed sources indicated or on gramophone records, where the number of the recording and the name of the recording company are given. Some recordings are no longer available—the National Archives of Zimbabwe unfortunately has not kept recordings in their holdings. In the case of such recordings I have quoted from my own childhood memories, as indicated in the footnotes.

- 1978 The Smith–Muzorewa Government of National Unity
 1980 The year of the establishment of the people's Republic of Zimbabwe Government

This paper identifies six protest-song cycles which do not necessarily coincide with the historical–political periods mentioned above. These periods are like the morphological elements in the unfolding of the folktale. Each period has influenced the structure of the protest song and the song serves as a barometer in gauging the people's sensitivity and the tone and atmosphere of the situation or period. In the light of these findings, I have thus identified six types of traditional songs which will act as the major framework around which the theme and the development of the protest song is centred. My analysis and interpretations will be made in the light of the link between oral and literary traditions—the gestation period of ninety years made it possible for the traditional song to adopt new elements and adapt both new and old elements as it travelled along the dusty road.

THE PERIOD PRIOR TO 1890

The period prior to the Occupation is the most important as it forms the basis and nucleus of the modern protest song and, as it is central and germane to the entire issue of its development, it is imperative that we sketch the traditional situations in which it originated and from which it spread like wildfire during the war of liberation, assuming proportions unheard of before.

It is an accepted truism that the song is the newspaper of the non-literate societies of Africa.¹ It is a versatile genre capable of universal application. The song expresses sorrow when sung at burial ceremonies; makes people fight and work harder in war or at work; it is satirical when sung by an aggrieved daughter-in-law in her attempts to mould public opinion against her mother-in-law or her husband; ironic when sung by the father whose child he suspects to have been bewitched by his neighbour; it is an expression of extreme joy when sung by victorious soldiers and it relieves tensions and deepens the tragedy in the unfolding of the plot when sung by a narrator (*sarungano*) and his chorus as they try to portray characters in typical situations.

Song Type 1 Ribeiro, Roman Catholic priest and novelist, captures a dramatic and beautiful scene in *Muchadura*² where the daughter-in-law is singing a plaintive song obliquely directed towards her mother-in-law and her husband. In fact she is soliciting public opinion against them. The mother-in-law is obviously siding with her son, who beats his wife from time to time. The following excerpt illustrates the genre:

¹ R. Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 272–314.

² E. Ribeiro, *Muchadura* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1979), 11–12.

Zvavaishanda kudai vakanga vachiimba zvavo rwiyo rwavo vachiti:
 As she was working in this manner she was singing a song saying:
Vamwene vangu godo vanaro; Marianga, Marianga, Marianga.
 My mother-in-law holds a grudge [against me]; Marianga, Marianga,
 Marianga.

Ndati ndiende kuhuni kwanzi tutsotso.

I thought I brought [good] firewood and she said it was only twigs.

Ndati ndiende kumvura kwanzi mabvondwe.

I went to fetch [clear and clean] water and she said it was [murky and] unclean.

Ndati ndibike sadza kwanzi imbwezhu;

I cooked sadza³ and she said it was underdone;

Ndati ndikuye kwanzi mamazhu.

I ground [corn] and she said the product was poor.

Ndati ndiseke kwanzi inzenza.

I wanted to be cheerful and she said I was a flirt.

Ndati ndizorore kwanzi itsimbe;

I wanted to rest [after work] and she said I was lazy,

Ndati nditambe kwanzi imhandu.

I wanted to travel and she said I was an enemy.

Ndati ndidzurure kwanzi wasiya ndove.

I wanted to polish the floor and she said it was not done properly.

Ndati ndikweshe hari kwa . . .

I wanted to wash pots and [she said] . . .

The sentiments expressed in this complaint are commonplace, the language simple and the style economical. The verse states the lady's present condition unequivocally by placing in juxtaposition contrastive ideas, thus allowing her intentions and aspirations to emerge dramatically. She is on one side while her husband has the support of his mother. She is in an invidious position seeing that, by custom, she is unable to wage war against her *mwene* (owner; for that is the meaning of the term 'mother-in-law' in Shona). Her dignity and personality have been reduced to the lowest denominator, hence whatever good work she does, her mother-in-law thinks otherwise. She is therefore making a public but final appeal to the community to come to her rescue in this hour of desperation. For the appeal to succeed it must be done effectively. The young wife must demonstrate her eagerness to continue to work despite her mother-in-law's provocative actions.

The young wife's overall objectives and intentions are to try to persuade members of the community to sympathize with her and make them turn against her mother-in-law. The intentions of the modern singer of the song, although his owner (his *mwene*) is a different sort of creature, are the same.

Song Type 2 The genre of the traditional war song is the most important as its form was used throughout the struggle for political independence. Its form is

³ porridge.

slightly different from the first type of song—it has the solo-chorus/solo/solo-chorus structure.

- LEADER *Gwindingwi rine shumba inoruma kuza ngoma,*
The thick black forest has a killer lion—beat the drum.
- CHORUS *Vana vaPfumojena vachauya hezvo vaTonga woye*
muchaona.
The children of Pfumojena will come and the Tonga will see (they will be dealt with)
- LEADER *Hoye, hoye-e*
Hoye, hoye-e
Gwindingwi rine shumba inoruma—hezvo Makoni
The thick black forest has a killer lion [and we warn] you Makoni
- CHORUS *Vana vaPfumojena vachauya hezvo masango ose*
achaona
The children of Pfumojena will come and all the forest will witness
- LEADER *Hoye, hoye-e*
Hoye, hoye-e
- CHORUS *Gwindingwi rine shumba inoruma kuza ngoma.*
The thick black forest has a killer lion—beat the drum
Vana vaPfumojena vachauya hezvo vaTonga wove
muchaona
The children of Pfumojena will come and the Tonga [people] will be dealt with (defeated).

The images of this traditional war song have tremendous effect in a changed situation. The thick black forest now refers to the urban city and the killer lion is the oppressive police force and the other forces of an oppressive government. The children of Pfumojena are the allies while 'the Tonga' alludes to the Zambezi Valley people who, in this case, are the enemies. A veiled threat (or warning) comes out in the refrain—you will see—which means you will be dealt with, again you will be defeated. In the modern song this formula offered hope of a people's victory over the settlers.

One of the special functions of African bards was to accompany warriors to battle, singing of the glorious deeds of the past in order to arouse the fighters to emulate their ancestors. The music performed during preparations for major hunting expeditions was also of a ceremonial nature and similar in function to that performed in connection with war. A special kind of music was called for at victory celebrations, of course, whether in commemoration of the defeat of the enemy or a successful hunt.⁴

Song Type 3 There is a traditional type of religious song which is a forerunner of the modern use of hymns as protest songs. Its structure resembles the war song, that

⁴E. Southern, *The Music of Black America: A History* (New York, Norton, 1971), 7.

is, it revolves on the solo-chorus axis. Central to its theme is Mwari, the Supreme Being, and it would appear that it is only in desperate situations that reference is made directly to Mwari, otherwise all appeals are made to one's immediate ancestors who will, in turn, re-direct the supplication.

- SOLO *Mwari iwe ihe-e hiya hehahe*
You O God ihe-e hiya hehahe
- CHORUS *Mwari wakatonga zvakaipisa*
God judged wrongly
- SOLO *Ho ihe ihe-ho ihe-e*
Ho ihe ihe-ho ihe-e
- CHORUS *Ho ihe ihe wohe iho woye*
Ho ihe ihe wohe iho woye
- SOLO *Nhasi ndorusara nani pavamwe*
Today with whom do I throw away [this plight] in
the presence of others
Ho ihe ihe wohe ihe ihe wohe
Ho ihe ihe wohe ihe ihe wohe
- CHORUS *Ho pasi rakatonga zvakaipisa*
Ho the Earth judged very badly
- SOLO *Mwari iwe ihe-e hiya hehahe*
You, O God, ihe-e hiya hehahe
- CHORUS *Ho vakaifa vakasiya hwahwa nenyama*
The dead left beer and meat
Ho ye-e hiya hehahe
Amai vangu ndoendepiko vamwe
Mother where do I go to, please
Ho ihe ihe wonde
Chikara chakatonga zvisina vamwe.
God [the creator] judged in a way that has not
been experienced before.

The song is very simple. Its power to move is found in its rhythm, which is embodied in onomatopœic sounds (he ihe ihe-e ihe-e) which are so swelling and big and solemn. It does not contain many visual images as the sense has very little to do with the effect. One is brought in touch with the grandeur of Mwari (God) and His occasionally 'blunderous' judgement (for instance when one's relative is dead). Mwari emerges as the Earth (*pasi*) and as a creature (*Chikara*) emphasizing His nature. The half pathetic, half comic aspect of the dirge still lingers on in the modern protest song.

Song Type 4 The traditional genre called *bembera* ('exaggerated praise', a sort of ironic hyperbole) is a public denunciation of a person who is suspected of having bewitched one's child. The singer's objective is then to try to persuade the witch to undo what he has done. The speech is full of indirect allusions to and about the position and status of the person concerned:

Mese mese teerera munzwe,
Listen all ye and hear.

Ndini Charungwandicho murunga namabwe ose,
 I am Charungwandicho who cooks even stones.
Ndati ndikuzivisei kuti muroyi wangu ndakamuwana,
 I thought I should let you know that I have discovered the witch
Ndakamuudzwa nezita.
 His name was even given me.
Ndakaenda paviri kana kutoti patatu pese.
 I went to two or three places
Pokutanga ndakanga ndisina kutendeseke,
 At first I wasn't satisfied
Kuzoti pechipiri nepechitatu mabvi ndokubva atonhora.
 Then the second and third times my knees went cold
Zvino ndati mungati anongunondibaya handimuzivi,
 Then don't think I don't know who is killing me
Zvose zviri kuitika ndakazviwana pachena,
 All that is happening I discovered and it is quite clear,
Wangu akandikanda jecha mumeso ndava kumuziva,
 The one who threw sand into my eyes I now know [him]
Nechandiri kubayirwa ndakachipiwa.
 Including the reasons for my persecution.
Ndava kufira kurima.
 I am drying up for my ability to plough.

The intention of this passage is to draw the attention of the public to the plight of the father—'Listen and hear' is the beginning of an authoritative statement and there is no doubt also of the intimidating aspect of the speech as it tells us that he is capable of cooking stones. The culprit will have to do something about this situation. An account of the singer's travels to several diviners is given lest the community should accuse him of rash judgement—he knows the person who causes him this discomfort (threw sand into his eyes) and why he is suffering like this—he is a good farmer, that is why. In the modern protest song it is the White who has brought suffering to the land; the visits to the diviners can sometimes become the visits of the nationalist leaders to get help outside Zimbabwe. The struggle for land always has deep resonances in any modern protest song.

Song Type 5 The traditional folktale has a definite structure: the beginning (marked by a formulaic expression); the middle, which is the most important part; and the end, again marked by a formulaic expression. The middle part may be interlaced with songs, thus introducing an additional structure which can stand on its own. It is precisely for this reason that some of these songs have been used quite independently of the stories to which they belong, by modern politicians. In fact, songs have the ability to live longer than the stories which go with them. Sometimes both the name of the hero and the song outlive the folktale itself. The names Karikoga (the lonely-little-one) and Pimbirimano (the creator of clever plans) have influenced the *chimurenga* names. For instance, Teurairopa (Miss Spill-blood), Mabhunumuchapera (Mr. Boers-you-will-be-killed) are only a few of such

names. The solo-chorus structure is evidenced in the following folktale song:

- SOLO *Potsororo*
 I have thrown
Ndapotsa mukoma
 [And] I have missed brother
Potsoro
 I have thrown
Ndapotsa mukoma
 [And] I have missed brother.
De de de ndopfura
 De de de I shoot
- CHORUS *Pfura Karinge woye ndopfura, pfura*
 Shoot you Karinge, shoot, shoot
- SOLO *Dai ndiina amai, pfura Karinge mukoma ndopfura,*
pfura
 If I had a mother, shoot Karinge brother, shoot
- CHORUS *Pfura Karinge mukoma ndopfura, pfura*
 Shoot Karinge, brother I shoot, shoot
- SOLO *Vaidya vachindipawo pfura Karinge mukoma ndopfura,*
pfura.
 She would eat and give me also, shoot Karinge brother,
 I shoot, shoot.

This hunting song, with propagandist overtones, has its solo part divided into two parts—the first performed and sung by a young boy whose parents are living, the second by an orphan. The folktale's intention and objective is to demonstrate that boys from well-to-do homes are ne'er-do-wells, and boys who are despised by their community because they have no relatives often do better in life. The onomatopoeic and nonsensical word, *potsororo* (or *potsoro* in the second verse), is derived from the verb *kupotsera* to throw (stone, arrow or spear) and is obviously intended to show how the boy from a wealthy family is poor at hunting. The orphan's expertise is demonstrated by the ideophone 'de de de' which shows how accurate at shooting he was. Karikoga (the little, lonely and only child), was a sharpshooter. In the modern political context, the boy from a wealthy family is represented by the White soldier who lost the guerrilla war because he was a poor shooter. The 'lonely-and-only-child' (Karikoga) is the African child. Z.B.C. Television has filmed African boys' (children's) bands imitating the guerrillas fighting the Rhodesian army and when the band leader shouts 'Take cover' the band (which becomes the chorus) drops down with imitation Russian AK machine guns, 'killing' all the Rhodesian soldiers.⁵

Song Type 6 The dance form and genre of the song are compatible. There is hardly a dance that is not accompanied by a song and the song often goes with a

⁵ Jairos Jiri Kwela Band, *Take Cover* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, Disc ZIM 32, 1980).

performance of some kind. In this respect the dance is a very important aspect of life in Shona society. The dance is almost incomplete without the accompaniment of the drum, and anything that appeals to our sense of aesthetics is described as *zvitambo nengoma* (the dance and the drum), emphasizing the compatibility that exists between the two. The idiom further points out the subtle difference between the dance and the dancer. The dance is performed on both social and ritual ceremonial occasions and that explains why people dance at political rallies and during church services.

- SOLO *Nhai amai iwe-e nhamo yandaona Marondera*
Well, my dear mother, the trouble I encountered at
Marondera (Marandellas)
- CHORUS *Zviuya zviru mberiyu*
The good things are ahead
- SOLO *Vambuya vakandituka vachiti, 'Wapwererei mwana wako?'*
[My] mother-in-law scolded me saying, 'Why did you
allow your child to be weaned?'
- CHORUS *Zviuya zviru mberiyu*
The good things are ahead
- SOLO *Ndakati ndovabvunza ndikati, 'Ndatopwera mwana wemumwe.'*
I then asked her saying, 'I have weaned another man's
child.'
- CHORUS *Zviuya zviru mberiyu*
The good things are ahead
- SOLO *Ndashaya zvandaita kugara ndiri bhanditi kwavari*
I don't know what to do, I am a prisoner staying with her.
- CHORUS *Zviuya zviru mberiyu*
The good things are ahead
- SOLO *Vakazoti vabike derere ndikati, 'Mawanza mutyora.'*
She then cooked derere⁶ and I said 'You have put
too much soda.'
- CHORUS *Zviuya zviru mberiyu*
The good things are ahead
- SOLO *Kuzoti vabike sadza ndikati, 'Mawanza masefa.'*
Then she cooked sadza and I said, 'There is too
much roughage in it.'
- CHORUS *Zviuya zviru mberiyu.*
The good things are ahead.

This dance song demonstrates a person's endurance, courage and tenacity under extreme provocation. The husband is venting his grievances in a humorous way, just as he would reveal village gossip at a threshing party (*chihwerure*) without fear of being taken to court. This is one of the few occasions when the son-in-law can 'answer back' to his mother-in-law and actually pass uncomplimentary remarks

⁶okra.

about her general character and deportment. The chorus, which consists of village neighbours, responds by encouraging the young husband to have forbearance and patience, for 'the good things are ahead'. Patience and discretion are the better part of valour. Many modern political songs carry the message of pardon, condonation and endurance.

The Musical Instruments

The most important musical instruments of the period before the coming of the Whites were the drum and the *mbira* (the hand piano).⁷ The drum appears to have been more important than the *mbira* as there were few dances which were performed without it. There are three types of drums—the tall *nhumba*, the middle range *dandi*, and the small *mhito*. The *mbira* (or *njari*⁸) is usually placed inside a gourd which amplifies the sound. Both of these instruments are played during ritual ceremonies and on other social occasions. Traditionally these instruments were played only by men, the women playing both the hand and the leg percussions (with gourd shakers and anklets). The others, such as the *chipendani* and the *mukube* are not worth talking about as they are personal and individual instruments. They are regarded as anti-social instruments which require no audience participation.

THE PERIOD 1890–1945

The period between 1890 and 1945 witnessed a systematic and dramatic transformation of the lives of the people from rural to urban: from the lifestyle typified by virtue, peace, innocence and contentment to that of sophistication, industrialization, politics, ambition and discontent. This period brought with it an impressive range of African protest in the country. The following are significant dates in this era:

1896–8	The Shona and the Ndebele Risings
1900	Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference
1911	Shona Bible
1914–18	First World War
1925	Carter Land Commission
1934	Industrial Conciliation Act
1939–45	Second World War

The migration of African males, first to the mining centres, secondly to farming areas and then to the new urban centres in search of employment, disrupted their pattern of life. Hitherto work in the village community had been seasonal, but now it was perennial and they were no longer able to live with their wives. Above all,

⁷ P.F. Berliner, *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Rhodesia* (New York, Nonesuch Records, H-72054, stereo, 1978).

⁸ This is also the name for a type of dance or song.

they were forced to work in order to provide labour for which they were paid a pittance and from which they paid various taxes.

The following song, literally representing the introduction of the popular ox-wagon, is played by modern groups to evoke memories of the long political journey, for it reminds people of their enslavement:

- SOLO *Chomtengure*
Chomtengure
- CHORUS *Chomtengure*
Chomtengure
- SOLO *Mkadzi womutyairi kwira pangoro*
The wife of the ox-wagon driver gets onto the wagon
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Ugoti woburuka ngoro yachona*
And gets down when the wagon is stuck [in the mud]
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Wanditi mutyari wandionei?*
You call me 'the ox-wagon driver'—what have you
seen in me?
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Wandiona bhurukwa randakapsfeka*
You see the trousers I am in
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Mkadzi womutyairi usakumbire dovi*
Do not ask for peanut butter from the ox-wagon driver's
wife
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Dovi rake igirisi rengoro*
Her peanut butter is the ox-wagon grease
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Chomtengure*
Chomtengure
- CHORUS *Chomtengure*
Chomtengure

Missionaries deployed themselves at various strategic points in the country: the Jesuits at Chishawasha; the Anglicans at St. Augustine's; the American Board Mission at Chikore; the Dutch Reformed at Morgenster; the British Methodist Mission at Waddilove and Tegwani, the United Methodist at Old Umtali. The Protestant churches translated the Bible (1911) and hymns, both of which were soon used as protest in the fashion of traditional genres. Above all, a few

discontented Africans set up separatist movements which marked the beginning of Black Consciousness, in an attempt to find their true identity before God.

The new converts took naturally to harmonic singing since, in many ways, it was a carry-over of traditional chanting with fixed refrains and lines which were flexible to allow the retention of traditional formulaic expressions. The end result was the non-Western lengthening of words, phrases and verses to match the feelings of the singers. The soloist's performance and the participating responses he received from the chorus reinforced the traditional elements in the new Christian songs. This has since become a unique contribution to the modern protest song. This is the tone, spirit and feeling of the song composed by the Revd R.K. Sibambo, founder member of the 'Black Consciousness' religious movement, the African Reformed Church of Southern Rhodesia:

Hakuchina muManyika
No longer is there a Munyika,
Hakuchina muNdau
No longer is there a Ndau,
Ngatirege kuvengana
Let's not hate one another,
Tibate pamwe
Let's work together.

Tese vanhu veAfrica
All the peoples of Africa
Tiri rudzi rumwe
[We] are one nation
Tisazviparadzanisa
Let's not divide ourselves
Tiri rudzi rumwe
[We] are one nation.⁹

Factory and farm labourers who are mostly of Zambian, Malawian and Mozambiquan origin often sing in protest against being over-worked. They insult the foreman, who is the immediate symbol of the capitalist system:

SOLO *O taremba, O taremba*
O, we are tired, O we are tired;
CHORUS *Mbore [ya]maf[i]ko kapitau, taremba.*
Your mother's penis, Mr Foreman, were are tired O!¹⁰

This work song is a typical example of songs based on the traditional complaint song, and indeed it belongs to the genre of the modern protest song.

During the early part of the Second World War, in 1940, the missionary

⁹Quoted by N. Sithole, 'The interaction of Christianity and African political development', in University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, *Historians in Tropical Africa: Proceedings of the Leverhulme Inter-Collegiate History Conference Held at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, September 1960* (Salisbury, U.C.R.N., 1962), 357-8.

¹⁰Recalled from my childhood.

village schools, which were scattered all over the country, were in the forefront of disseminating dissension and sedition against the government of the day. The most important centres of subversion were in the heart of Zvimba Reserve at the British Methodist Chikaka School, at the Dutch Reformed Church School at Chibi (now Chivi) and at the Salvation Army Nzvimbo School in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land area. While the apparent intention and objectives were to conduct school concerts and annual shows to compete for shields, it soon became clear that the songs sung in the presence of the (Native) District Commissioners often criticized the powers that were. The songs were a serious indictment. In the Zvimba tribal area at Chikaka the choirs sang:

- CHORUS *Kwakatange chibharo*
 First there was forced labour
kukauya mambure
 Then we were forbidden the use of nets¹¹
Kukauya vemigwagwa
 Then came those of the roads¹²
Mombe dzedu dzapera.
 Our animals are finished.¹³
- SOLO *Rave gurugugu mbuya*
 We are suffering grandmother
- CHORUS *Rave gurugugu*
 We are suffering.¹⁴

while in the Chiweshe tribal area they sang as follows:

Tinonyarira mapurisa
 We chide the police
Zviranda zvaMakiwa
 The White men's underdog.

And down in the Chibi Tribal Trust Land, choirs protested about the same injustices they suffered:

Mombe dzapera naVarungu
 [Our] beasts have been destocked by the Europeans
Takangoti chena
 While we helplessly watch
Hatichaziwa chekuita
 We do not know what to do
Tongotamburawo.
 We are suffering too.

In Harava, the Seke Tribal Trust Land, choirs sang of political oppression and

¹¹ The use of nets was forbidden by law.

¹² People were forced to work on roads.

¹³ There was destocking of cattle to prevent soil erosion.

¹⁴ Recalled from my childhood.

humiliation from the 'Boers' (the Europeans):

- CHORUS *Mabhunu anoitambudza Mabhunu*
The Boers torture us, the Boers
- BASS *Anoitambudza*
They torture us
- CHORUS *Sadza ravo nderekoroniwe Mabhunu*
Their staple food is corn, the Boers
- BASS *Nderekoroni.*
It is corn.¹⁵

These Shona ethnic-group sentiments were similarly echoed and made to reverberate as far afield as Matabeleland, by the Hope Fountain School Choir, which was probably the earliest singing group to record on His Master's Voice gramophone records:

- Sifikile thina*
We have arrived (we, the people)
- Esivela elizweni*
Who come from the country (world)
- Singa bantu bokuhamba*
We are people who travel
- Bantu bokutshayela sithima*
People who drive the train (locomotive)
- Bantu bokuhamba*
People who travel
- Simenyiwe ludumo*
We have been called (attracted) by the sound
- Aiyi . . .*
*Aiyi . . .*¹⁶

The same choir during the war years recorded a song which focuses on the irony of Native Department propaganda that the Germans were 'the enemy'.

- Nanka Majelimani ayeza nemota*
Here come the Germans by car.¹⁷

The British South Africa Police Band played a propaganda piece similar to the above:

- Hondo, hondo yaHitira, YaHitira*
The war of Hitler, of Hitler
- Tinoibaya, baya*
We shall destroy it
- Tichiti bho bho bho*
Doing bang, bang, bang.

¹⁵ Quoted in B. Chidzero. *Nzvegamutsvairo* (Salisbury, Longman, 1957), 11.

¹⁶ Recalled from my childhood.

¹⁷ Recalled from my childhood.

Vakomana, vakomana
 Boys, oh boys,
Takabheja
 We sacrificed ourselves
Tinofira pamuwechete.
 We shall die together!

The same band still plays the 'Sweet Banana' song, once the 'signature tune' of the Rhodesian African Rifles:

SOLO *A B C D 'sweet banana'*
 A B C D 'sweet banana'
 CHORUS *Ndinokutengera 'sweet banana'*
 I will buy you 'sweet banana'
 Banana, banana,
 Banana, banana,
 Tinokutengera 'sweet banana'.
 I will buy you 'sweet banana'.

The political situation has changed: as the Shona proverb puts it, 'the pools have become fords', and the African people are making the most of new opportunities. They 'sacrificed themselves' and 'died together' in their efforts to defeat Hitler—now understood as the Rhodesian army. In the same manner 'sweet Banana' refers to the charming and highly regarded President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, the Revd Canaan Banana. The protest song has become a song of celebration.

THE PERIOD 1945-65

The period between the end of the Second World War and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence is the second most important in the development of the protest song. Both in form and content, the song became subtle and sophisticated, partly because the government was more alert to overt political statements and the language had to become highly metaphorical in consequence.

The focus of the song was sharpened by the fact that, after the end of the Second World War, there was a dramatic increase in immigration to Rhodesia from the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The rise in European population was matched by growth of the African population, prompted by increased hospitalization, Christianity and formal education. White supremacy was thus threatened, with the result that old laws were brought up to date and new ones introduced to deal effectively with African advancement—the Industrial Conciliation Act (1945), the Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation Act (1946), the Land Husbandry Act (1951), and the Apprenticeship Act in 1960, to mention only the most important ones. To these oppressive laws, the African people responded by abandoning quasi-political and élitist organizations such as the trade unions, which were concerned only to advance the interests of their own members, and in 1957 the African National Congress (A.N.C.) was born, only to be banned in

1959. The National Democratic Party (N.D.P.) was founded in 1960 and in 1961 the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) came into being. In 1963 the People's Caretaker Council (P.C.C.) was formed, after the formation of the breakaway party, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) from ZAPU. Again answering the African response, the Rhodesian Front (R.F.) came into power to introduce tougher measures to deal with the African people's objective: 'One man, one vote'. The pace and course of confrontation between Black and White was thus set, leading to the detention of many nationalists while many others went into exile, first in Tanzania, later in Mozambique.

The political mobility which ensued gave rise to a rededication and redefinition of the African people's identity. They asked themselves, 'What are we?' which led to, 'What do we want to be?' These questions were summed up in: 'What we want to be depends on our efforts to bring about what we have to become'. From this position was built the whole repertory of modern nationalism and individualism. The rebel made a strong personal commitment to certain social and political purposes, thus divorcing his ways from the ways of the capitalistic society. He was articulate and was either in gaol in Zimbabwe or in exile and he became the revolutionary leader. He was critical of the compromising behaviour of those political leaders¹⁸ who wanted to change the society from within. The rebel of revolutionary calibre has a relationship with his society which is one of declared opposition and struggle. He is in opposition in terms of the struggle for the establishment of a new society. The revolutionaries in exile fell into two categories. There was the true exile who was committed to waiting, as he was not involved in the actual process of change, and then the revolutionary fighter. But each in his own way contributed towards the downfall of Europeans and the protest song played a significant role towards that goal.

The one song which was composed in South Africa by Enock Sontonga in 1897 and which quickly assumed the tone of a political protest song is 'God Bless Africa'. The song was translated into Shona, Ndebele, Swahili and Bemba. Before the revolution its tone was one of determined resolution; during the war it became the song of resistance, and on Independence Day, the song of triumph. It is a typical example of the many songs that have assumed at least three tones in the course of its travel. The words are simple but its structure is based on the solo-chorus axis. To begin with it was sung without instrumental accompaniment, but in the mid-1940s, when it was played by the British South Africa Police Band, it was filled with hope and love for the country.

Ishe komborera Africa
 O God, bless Africa
Ngaitsimutsirwe zita rayo
 Let her name be exalted
Inzwai miteuro yedu

¹⁸ Bishop A.T. Muzorewa, Revd N. Sithole, and Chief Chirau.

Hear our prayers
Ishe komborera
 O God, bless us
Isu mhuri yayo.
 We, her family.
Uya mweya, Uya, uya komborera
 Come, O Spirit, come, come, give blessing
Uya, mweya, uya mweya Woutsvene
 Come, O Holy Spirit
Uji komborera
 O bless us
Isu mhuri yayo.
 [Upon us,] her family.

The publication of Mutswairo's *Feso*¹⁹ in 1956, Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*²⁰ in 1967, and Samkange's *On Trial for My Country*²¹ in 1966 and later his other two novels, *The Mourned One*²² in 1975 and *Year of the Uprising*²³ in 1978, helped to popularize heroines such as Mbuya Nehanda and also to intensify the African people's hatred for White rule. 'Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana'²⁴ appears in *Feso* as a genre of complaint but these days it is a popular tune heard over the Z.B.C. broadcasts as a song of praise.

O Nehanda Nyakasikana!
 How long shall we the Vanyai, groan and suffer?
 Holy tutelary spirit!
 How long shall we, the Vanyai, suffer oppression?
 We are weary of drinking our tears.
 How long shall we have forbearance?
 Even trees have a rest
 When their leaves are shed;
 Then when spring time comes,
 New leaves and blossoms sprout to adorn them
 To attract wild beasts and bees by their scent.
 As for us when will peace and plenty come our way?
 The young ones our women bear to us
 By you—Great Spirit—who should be the inheritors

¹⁹ S.M. Mutswairo, *Feso* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1956); the book was later translated into English and included in an anthology published as *Zimbabwe, Prose and Poetry* (Washington, Three Continents Press, 1974).

²⁰ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (London, Heinemann, 1967).

²¹ S. Samkange, *On Trial for My Country* (London, Heinemann, 1966).

²² S. Samkange, *The Mourned One* (London, Heinemann, 1975).

²³ S. Samkange, *Year of the Uprising* (London, Heinemann, 1978).

²⁴ Harare Mambos, *Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, Disc ZIM 29, 1980).

Of our hard-earned substance, all have uneasy time
 In their own land, and grope for a period of calm
 And happiness. Everywhere they stand as on hot ashes,
 Their feet with blisters are covered through hot oppression
 Of the forces of Pfumojena. How far will the tyrants go?
 In every house and every village
 Our people are being pulled out and punished;
 In every place and every court
 Where they are all accused, they are treated like flies,
 Killed without reason—without an honest trial.
 Where is our freedom, Nehanda?
 Won't you come down to help us?
 Our old men are treated like children
 In the land you gave them, Merciful Creator;
 They no longer have human dignity.
 They possess nothing
 The great calamity has befallen them.
 Holy Father, Merciful Mountain!
 Won't you hear our cry?
 What foul crime have we committed
 That you should abandon us like this?
 Nehanda Nyakasikana, how long shall it be
 That we, the Vanyai, must suffer?
 Holy Tutelary Lion Spirit! How long shall it be
 That we, the Vanyai, must suffer oppression
 By this cursed Pfumojena who is devouring our land?

Desperate situations call for desperate remedies. This is the essence of the cry which is 'a spontaneous outburst of powerful feeling' resembling the Shona traditional genre called *bembera*—a vicious attack on some person whom the speaker suspects of bewitching his child or some immediate member of his family. It is full of indirect allusions although the community is left in no doubt about who the speech is intended for, and towards whom it is directed. It speaks in general terms about specific issues recognized under the circumstances. The overall intention of the declaimer is to try to persuade the witchdoctor to have mercy and pity for the person he has thus bewitched so that he, the witchdoctor, can undo or take off the spell from the sick one.

The cry still has these indirect allusions to Pfumojena when in fact it is addressed to Nehanda Nyakasikana for abandoning the people in their hour of need—'How long shall we, the Vanyai, suffer oppression?'—and ends this poetic argument with the poetically powerful and unanswerable cry: 'We are weary of drinking our tears'. The poem moves from intolerance at the dispossession of the Vanyai subjects of their land through the unfair distribution of land by the despotic Pfumojena and culminates in: 'What crime have we committed, that you should abandon us like this?' The tone and feeling of the entire declamation is one of desperation and is directed towards bringing about a revolution.

THE PERIOD 1966-80

The people who went into exile in Tanzania, Zambia and Moçambique took with them the political song which assumed local colour. Over the radio stations were beamed songs which were open and direct in their condemnation of the Smith regime. In Jamaica Bob Marley joined the struggle and sang:

Every man gotta right
 To decide his own destiny
 And in his judgement
 There is no partiality
 So arm in arms, with arms
 We will fight this little struggle
 'cause that's the only way
 We can overcome our little trouble.

Natty dread it ina Zimbabwe
 Set it up in Zimbabwe
 Mash it up ina Zimbabwe
 Africans a-liberate Zimbabwe.²⁵

Internally the protest song went underground and, because they were so easily metaphoric they found their way onto the radio simply because the Government did not understand what was being sung. The protest song became so subtle as to avoid detection by the authorities and it was, as it were, the invisible newspaper 'read' by the Blacks in the country. The song carried the desired message of unity during the Pearce Commission (1972); the Nyadzona and Chimoia Massacres (1977-8) in Moçambique; the Mkushi Freedom Camp Massacres in Zambia (1978) and the establishment of the Government of National Unity in 1978, an historical event which the African people thought was a clever device to hijack the revolution. Following are some of the songs which expressed disapproval of the Africans who were used by the Whites to thwart the attainment of real and genuine independence for Zimbabwe:

- (1) **Mr Grandfather-yes-man**
Vanasekuru Dzepfunde
 Grandfather 'Yes-please'
Mabvoronga nyika yeZimbabwe
 You have spoiled the country of Zimbabwe
Zvese, zvese 'dzepfunde'
 Everything, 'Yes-please'
Imi ndimi vakuru vedu
 You are our leaders
Hapana kana chamunoramba
 There is nothing you refuse

²⁵ Bob Marley and the Wailers, 'Zimbabwe', in *Survival* (Kingston, Tuff Gong International, 1979).

Zvese, zvese, 'dzepfunde'
 Everything, 'Yes-please'
Zvikanzi vana vawanda
 You are told 'Your children are enough'
 '*Hongu mambo, dzepfunde*'
 'Yes master, yes please'
Zvikanzi garai sembeva
 You are told, live like mice
 '*Hongu mambo, dzepfunde*'
 'Yes master, yes please'
Zvikanzi garai senhika
 You are told, live like nhika²⁶
 '*Hongu mambo, dzepfunde*'
 'Yes master, yes please'
Zvikanzi mari muchaiwana
 You are promised [more] money
 '*Hongu mambo, dzepfunde*'
 'Yes master, yes please'.²⁷

In form, this song resembles the Type 5 song, but in content it resembles songs of Types 1 and 4. The lead guitarist plays the role of the traditional folktale narrator while the chorus plays the role of the audience. The participating audience responds to the narrator's tale by using the word *dzepfunde*, which means 'go on', or 'yes please'. The whole song is thus an appeal to the Shona community to regard with contempt men without a backbone, men who agree to everything they are told by the White authorities. There appears to be no limit to what the yes-men can agree to—even in cases which go against their traditional values such as being given orders to take part in birth control. Sometimes they are instructed to live like rats. They seem to take pride in submitting to stupid promises about salary rises. The song makes it clear that the *dzepfunde*, the yes-men, have spoiled or destroyed Zimbabwe.

(2) The Apparitions

Baba chii chinenge madhunamutuna?
 Father, what is it that looks like animals?
Ndiwayo madhunamutuna
 They are animals
Baba chii chinenge madzangaradzimu?
 Father, what is it that looks like apparitions?
Ndiwayo madzangaradzimu
 They are apparitions
Atishayisa rufaro.
 They bring us no happiness.²⁸

²⁶ edible mice.

²⁷ Susan and Boogallos, *Vanasekuru Dzepfunde* (Salisbury, Gallo Records, Farayi Farayi, Disc FYF 404, 1980).

²⁸ Green Arrows, *Chii Chinenge Madhunamutuna* (Salisbury, Gallo Records, Farayi Farayi, Disc FYF 403, 1980).

The subtlety of this song lies in its use of collocations in making composite ideas. *Madhunamutuna* and *madzangaradzimu* have four morphemes each. The two mean more or less the same thing although the first refers to wild animals or creatures; with the second, note that the morphemes can be transposed, *madzi-mudzangara* so that the nature of the creature would still be as puzzling as ever. The 'Green Arrows' are singing about the soldiers who were disliked by the public, and that is why they were referred to as the apparitions. This song resembles Type 6 in both form and content.

(3) **Our Relatives Have Been Killed**

Hama dzedu dzapera
Our relatives are killed
Nechinjiri[riri] chiri mugomo
By the warthog in the mountain
Imhosva yamadzitate
It's the fault of our ancestors
Ava vakatiparira.
Who started it all.
Makangamashavei tateguru'we
What is it you lacked
Kushamwaridzama nemhandu?
To befriend yourselves with an enemy?
Imhosva yamadzitateguru'we.
It's our ancestors' fault.
Ko inga kurima mairima remombe
Tell me, you used to use oxen for ploughing
Vana vopera
The children are killed
Ko inga kupfeka maipfeka wani
Tell me, you used to put on clothes,
Vana vopera
The children are killed
Imhosva yamadzitateguru
It's the fault of our ancestors,
Ava vakatiparira.
Who started it all.²⁹

This song is based on a traditional children's song. The children hold hands around the waist of their leader who defends them against the *chinjiri* (warthog), in this context, the White regime. The 'children' in the song are the guerrillas who were killed in the war of liberation. In form of sentiment, this song resembles Type 3.

CONCLUSION

The protest song proper ended with Independence for Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980.

²⁹Green Arrows, *Hama Dzedu Dzapera* (Salisbury, Gallo Records, Farayi Farayi, Disc FYF 134, 1978).

In many respects the artists were caught unawares and they had to use the same old songs and a few new ones to celebrate their hard-won independence. The political situation had changed to allow the mood to go along with it. However, the songs that we sang on D-Day and thereafter represent a number of themes, as follows:

- (i) **Political campaign** — *Pamsoroi Komoredhi* (We salute you, Comrade);³⁰ *Muchochororo wejongwe* (The crest of the cock).³¹
- (ii) **Gratitude to the leaders** — *Tinotenda* (We are grateful);³² *Mukoma Nhongo* (Brother Nhongo).³³
- (iii) **Gratitude to the Front-Line States** — *Ruzhinji rweAfrica* (All peoples of Africa).³⁴
- (iv) **Reminiscent** — *Ropa reZimbabwe rakaparara paChimoia* (Zimbabwe blood was spilt at Chimoia);³⁵ *Ndinofunga nezveropa* (I think of blood that was spilt).³⁶
- (v) **Celebratory** — *Zuva ranhasi izuva guru* (Today is a big day);³⁷ *Nyika yedu yeZimbabwe* (Our country, Zimbabwe);³⁸ *Vatema Tavekutonga* (The Blacks, we are ruling);³⁹ *Peace has come to Zimbabwe*.⁴⁰
- (vi) **Ideological** — *Nzira dzemasoja* (The Soldiers' Code of Conduct).⁴¹ This song is modelled after a Methodist hymn. This suggests Christian influence.
- (vii) **Historical** — *Vakomana vaye vehondo vakauya* (The guerrillas are back).⁴²

³⁰ Four Brothers, *Pamsoroi Komoredhi* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, Disc ZIM 85, 1980).

³¹ The Blacks Unlimited, *Muchochororo wejongwe* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, Disc ZIM 1, 1980).

³² Searchi Brothers, *Tinotenda* (Salisbury, Gallo Records, Disc KDZ 157, 1980).

³³ Green Arrows, *Mukoma Nhongo* (Salisbury, Gallo Records, Disc FYF 407, 1980).

³⁴ Zimbabwe Clear Sound, *Ruzhinji rweAfrica* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, Disc ZIM 80, 1980).

³⁵ Flavian Nyathi, *Ropa reZimbabwe rakaparara paChimoia* (Salisbury, Gallo Records, Disc KK 13, 1980).

³⁶ OK Success, *Ndinofunga nezveropa* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, PC 86, 1981).

³⁷ ZANU PF Choir, *Zuva ranhasi izuva guru* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, Jongwe, 104, 1980).

³⁸ Oliver and The Black Spirits, *Nyika yedu yeZimbabwe* (Salisbury, Gallo Record Company, BL 241, 1980).

³⁹ Green Arrows, *Vatema Tavekutonga* (Salisbury, Mavuthela Productions, BL 277, 1980).

⁴⁰ Stevie Wonder, *Peace Has Come to Zimbabwe* (Los Angeles, Tamla Motown, TMC 5415, 1980).

⁴¹ ZANU PF Choir, *Nzira dzemasoja* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, 1980).

⁴² Sithole and The Blacks Unlimited, *Vakomana Vaye Vehondo Vakauya* (Salisbury, Teal Record Company, ZIM 128, 1980).

- (viii) **Ridiculing the Whites** — *Hapana chavo* (Nothing is theirs);⁴³
Maruza Vepambe, Vepfumi (You have lost, exploiters).⁴⁴
- (ix) **Ridicule and reconciliation** — *Shoti Ndinomuvengereiko ndehaheha* (Why I hate Shorty [Muzorewa]):⁴⁵
- SOLO *Shoti ndinomuvengereiko—ndehaheha*
 Shorty why do I hate him—ndehaheha
Akauraya vana paNyadzonya
 He killed children at Nyadzonya
- CHORUS *Pasi naye*
 Down with him
- SOLO *Akauraya vana paChimoyo*
 He killed children at Chimoya
- CHORUS *Pasi naye*
 Down with him
- SOLO *Akauraya vana paNgoroma*
 He killed children at Ngoroma
- CHORUS *Pasi naye*
 Down with him
- SOLO *Akauraya vana paTengwe*
 He killed children at Tengwe
- CHORUS *Pasi naye*
 Down with him
- SOLO *Achakwira kudenga nemakumbo—wohaheha*
 He will ascend into heaven on foot—wohaheha
- SOLO *Chasara chii povo yeZimbabwe?*
 What is left [now] for the masses of Zimbabwe?
Pamberi neruzhinji rwevanhu
 Forward with the masses of Zimbabwe
- CHORUS *Pamberi*
 Forward
- SOLO *Pamberi nekunzwisisisa*
 Forward with understanding (harmonious living)
- CHORUS *Pamberi*
 Forward
- SOLO *Pamberi nechimurenga chebadza*
 Forward with the war of the plough (agriculture)
- CHORUS *Pamberi.*
 Forward.

The protest song has travelled a long way—ninety years—from a rural and primitive environment to the urban and industrial conditions of today. Along its journey it

⁴³ ZANU PF Choir, *Hapana Chavo* (Salisbury. Teal Record Company. Jongwe. 106. 1980).

⁴⁴ Hot Springs, *Maruza Vepambe, Vepfumi* (Salisbury. Teal Record Company. PC 79. 1981).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* The song consists of two parts, each with its own structure, but both built on the solo-chorus axis (cf. Song Type 5). The first part ridicules a member of the Government of National Unity, referring to Bishop Muzorewa as 'Shorty'. The second part advocates reconciliation by urging the people (*povo*) to take part in the economic development of the country.

has gathered new elements from the vicissitudes of political intrigues which have given it a new and unique form. I have tried to suggest some possible areas of research, and I should like to think that study of the subject may be further considered and improved. And I should like to think that what I mainly offer is the sense of the process which I sincerely hope will be carried forward by future researchers until the quest for human knowledge is fully realized.