



MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND MUSICOLOGY

**RESEARCH TOPIC: In search of meaning; An analysis of VaRemba songs in the
context of their Komba rite of passage ceremony**

BY

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**This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelor
of Science in Music and Musicology Honors Degree at Midlands State University,
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Declaration

I, Rusero Leah, declare that this dissertation for the award of the Bachelor of Science degree in Music and Musicology is an outcome of my effort and that it has not been submitted in any college or University. With all due respect, all sources used in coming up with this work were acknowledged accordingly.

Signature.....

Date...../...../.....

Dedication

The dissertation is a special dedication to my beloved husband Dube Batanai for inspiring me and for his unwavering support towards my study. I also dedicate it to my children Kelly and Kevin for the challenges they were exposed to while pursuing my study.

Abstract

The main aim of this study was to analyse *VaRemba Komba* songs in Mahohoma village in Mberengwa. The qualitative study employed different data collection instruments like interviews and observation to gather much needed data in the compilation of this research. Information gathered using the mentioned data collection tools yielded the success of this research where data was analysed and presented accordingly. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and these were directed to the *Komba* initiates. *Komba* songs were gathered from the culture bearers and were transcribed so that readers understand. The study revealed the meaning of the songs used by *VaRemba Komba* during their ritual ceremony. *Komba* is an initiation school for girls in which every *Remba* woman attends. This initiation school is meant to prepare women hood and it also serve to pass their tradition from one generation to the other. I found out that *Komba* songs have got some hidden meanings because they want to keep privacy of their cultural practice. I also discovered that the majority of these initiates rush into marriage because of this practice. The study therefore recommends that *Komba* leaders should also have songs that inculcate disadvantages of early marriages in these girls.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Background to the study

Cultural groups across the world have norms and values based on their day to day lives. Each cultural group adheres to its cultural traits depending on what it believes in. The differences in what people do makes differences in cultures. I was born and bred in Bazeley Bridge area in the Eastern part of Zimbabwe where other cultural ceremonies such as *kurova guva*, (bringing back ceremony) whereby the spirit of the dead is brought back home to look after the living ones. *Mukwerera* (rainmaking ceremony) where people brew beer and ask for the rains from *Musikavanhu* (God) is also carried out. During my teaching practice, as a student teacher from Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Polytechnic College at Mavorovondo Primary School in Mberengwa in 2004, I noticed that many children did not attend school during the months of June and July. This worried me and I made an effort to find out why? That is when I was told about the *VaRemba* rite of passage ceremony where the girls would go to attend this initiation school and thus missed school. In 2008, I got married into a family which practice the *VaRemba* rituals. I then got more interested in finding out more about this *VaRemba* ceremony and its songs.

VaRemba is a cultural group also known as Balemba, Basena, Basoni, Vamwenye, Lemba and Balepa and according to their oral tradition, they consider themselves to be Israelites who migrated to Africa after the Babylonian exile and settled in Southern Africa, Shoko (2009). Other scholars like Mabuwa (1993), Maringira and Charlote (2010), Davies (1995) concur that *VaRemba* people claim to have a strong Jewish traditional background. As a result *VaRemba* people follow Jewish customs such as *Komba* and circumcision. *Komba* as defined by Hannan (1961) cited in Shoko (2009) means *kuibva* which means ripe. *Komba* therefore means that a girl is mature enough to get into marriage.

Scholars such as Mabuwa (1993), Chigwedere (1982) and Le Roux (1999) concur that various groups of the *VaRemba* people originally constituted one group that eventually dispersed in different directions such as South Africa, Malawi and then Zimbabwe. As a result, these dispersed groups were identified as *VaRemba* or *Amwenye* (Shoko 2009). Shoko also purports that *VaRemba* people came from Sena in Egypt and travelled through Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, South Africa and eventually Zimbabwe in Mberengwa district. However, the origins of *VaRemba* ethnic group is complex to trace as viewed by Le Roux (2009) who laments that it is a complex process occurring over many centuries that cannot be explained by simplistic views, such as the view that they either derived directly from a 'lost tribe' of ancient Israel or that they simply made some sort of religious shift along the way.

Because of cultural diffusion and intermarriages, the Sena people migrated southwards into Zanzibar Tanzania, the *Guruuswa* area where the Shona originated, it lead to the birth of the *Zhou* totem of the *VaShona* which are referred to as *VaRemba*. Kwabena Nketia (1974) asserts that acculturation lead to the birth of different tribes in particular the *VaRemba* a by-product of Judaism and Shona (ATR). Although *VaRemba* people are found in such areas as Northern South Africa, Southern Zimbabwe, Gutu, Masvingo in Zimbabwe (Le Roux 1999), this study is focused on the music of *VaRemba* in Mberengwa district under Midlands Province.

Like any other cultural group that adhere to its cultural traits, *VaRemba* people in Mberengwa uphold different ceremonies like, rainmaking and *kurova guva* (bringing back the spirit of the dead back home) showing the common aspect among the religions of the world that there is life after death. They also follow religious practices like animal sacrifices whereby they have

their way of killing animals by making it bleed to death, ritual slaughter whereby they only eat meat which is slaughtered by a *Remba* men. They regard non *VaRemba* to be unclean hence eating something slaughtered by a non *VaRemba* would also be considered to be unclean as well. *VaRemba* also refrain from eating foods such as pork and meat from certain animals that do not have cloven hooves. These are regarded as unclean by God as stated in Leviticus (11verses 1-6) on the rules that were given to the Israelites. They are only allowed to eat animals that chew the cud amongst the beasts. They also have customs which are similar to Jewish ones. Doyle (2005) cited in Shumba (2014, p.7) supports this when he says, “The Lemba are generally selective and observe a strict dietary requirement which largely compares with that of their Ethiopian and Yemenite Jewish counterparts.” Circumcision rite is also practised among *VaRemba* ethnic group whereby the foreskin on the private part of the males is removed using a razor blade. These people also lead an endogamous way of life in which one is not allowed to marry outside their tribe. They practice this in order to keep their cultural practice a secretive one and to preserve it, (Le Roux 1999). Mandivenga (1989) cited in Shoko (2009) purports that their first indication was in the Zambezi region with Islamic characteristics, now identified as Muslims. He refers to Senor Ferao, captain of Sena in Mozambique, who in 1810 observed people in the south-east of Sofala, without names but with cultural characteristics that resemble the people now identified as the *VaRemba*.

In addition to the mentioned ceremonies, they uphold other secretive ceremonies which are circumcision and *Komba* ceremonies and they mark their identity. Circumcision is done as a rite of passage for boys into manhood and *Komba* girls’ ceremonies is done to fight against divorces and to curb the spreading of sexually transmitted diseases. They also carry out traditional marriage ceremonies to test virginity and the most element of Ubuntu which satisfies a man. Maringira and Charllote (2010) in support of the above posit that the

VaRemba people practice boys' and girls' initiations where they are taught how to handle their partners in marriage. For girls' ceremony, *VaRemba* practice the *Komba* initiation rite which is meant to graduate young girls to become women. In this regard, they are taught how to look after their husbands, that is satisfying them sexually as well as cooking for them and many other chores expected of a wife. This type of initiation helps in reducing the breaking up of marriages and promotes the concept of faithfulness among partners. Thus faithfulness among partners in marriage reduces the spreading out of sexually transmitted diseases. Virginity testing is also carried out and the girls are deprived of their right to choose their own spouses if they fail this. Their parents will hand them in marriage with people who are already married. During the *Komba* initiation ceremony, the initiates sing different songs, for example *Toda mutemo* and *Mahindikindi* songs to enhance proceedings being done. I have noticed that these songs have a deep meaning, but very few people have bothered to find out the meanings of these songs. In short, I have not come across any scholar who has analysed the meaning of these songs for the benefit of other people especially those who are from outside the *Remba* community. This therefore motivated me to look into this area of study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study is to analyse the meaning of *Komba VaRemba* ritual songs in the context of their rite of passage ceremony.¹

1.3 Research questions

1. What are *VaRemba* rite of passage ceremonies?
2. What type of songs are used during *VaRemba Komba* rite of passage ceremonies?
3. How can the songs be analysed?

4. What is the meaning of *VaRemba Komba* ritual songs and what do they generally talk about?

1.4 Justification of the study

This study is worth being carried out for I have not yet come across a research which was carried out focussing on the meanings of *VaRemba* songs. The study is going to unveil the hidden meanings of some of *VaRemba* songs thereby contributing to the body of knowledge on *VaRemba* culture since music is in culture and culture is in music. It will help in the preservation of *VaRemba* music and safeguard the *VaRemba* culture for future generation as culture preservation leads to identity. This study is of utmost importance as it will contribute to the research literature in the field of music for other researchers will benefit from the information gathered as well as recommendations for further study to other researchers. *VaRemba* ethnic group is regarded as a minority culture as Maposa (2011) laments. The research will also help the *VaRemba* cultural group to be recognised as what is done to other minority cultural groups in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Delimitations

This study was carried out in Mberengwa district in Mahohoma village. I chose to undertake my research in this village because it is the area where I am married and there is already good rapport between the villagers and myself. Furthermore, I chose Mahohoma village as it is now my home area and this is where my in-laws stay. I frequent this place as I visit my in-laws. This saves time and money as I frequently visit and will not have to look for further financial assistance. There are some areas I know in Mberengwa such as Mposi, Mavorovondo and Rengwe where this cultural practice is performed, but I chose Mahohoma village because I am more like an insider as I am now part of them and would approach this study from an insider perspective. The villagers trust me with their information concerning

VaRemba practices. I am also now familiar with some of the activities they do as some of them are done during my presence.

Another reason for delimiting myself to this area is that I am a full time classroom practitioner in Chirumanzu and I would be committed at work most of the time. I had access of gathering needed information easier moving from one place to another as I visit my in-laws. I also delimited myself because of financial constraints and time since the geographical area where this cultural practice is done is big. The study also made use of women only as it is a ritual ceremony for women hence views from the male counterparts were not going to be solicited for. This made me to delimit myself to information gathered from women only.

1.6 Definition of terms

For the purpose of this research the following terms will refer to the meanings given.

1. *Komba* – noun derived from the verb *kukomba* literally meaning that a girl is ripe (*aibva*) for initiation into womanhood and marriage.
2. Initiates- *VaRemba* people who went through *Komba* rituals
3. Ceremony- a ritual with religious significance
4. Culture bearer- *VaRemba* people who have the much needed information on *VaRemba* Culture.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter put the study into perspective by giving a general background of how the study is worth being carried out. It looked at the foundation of the study and its importance and this helps the reader to have an idea of what I will be studying. I also gave an account of the geographical area where the study was carried out for it also gives the reader a picture of the environment dealt with. Due to acculturation, cultural determinism and diffusion which lead

to the birth of the *VaRemba* cultural group their practices need to be protected as culture is part of life and life is part of culture. This gives the researcher the desire to study the cultural songs of the *VaRemba* when they are performing different activities in life either ritual or secular songs. In short, this chapter helped in setting up the scene.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on literature related to the topic under study. (Skills Development Team, 2013) view literature review as a summary, analysis and evaluation of the literature and an explanation of what research has already been performed for a research area. This would provide background information on the research question, and to identify what others have said and/ or discovered about the question. Therefore literature review is an analysis of information related to the subject under discussion which has been put across by other authorities. Global overview of ceremonies, researches made on *VaRemba* people, *Komba* as a rite of passage ceremony, impact of *VaRemba* songs to the initiates and lastly the structure of African songs are the aspects to be looked at.

2.2 Some researches made on VaRemba people

Bula Bula (2014) gave an account of *VaRemba* practices and how they violate children's rights, for example, girls can be forced into marriage with an old man in exchange for food in times of economic hardships because they still practise ancient practices. The circumcision practice, *Komba* initiation rite, virginity testing, early or child marriages, appeasement of avenging spirits disputable by settling with a virgin girl among others violates children's rights in one way or the other in Mberengwa District. In her research, Bula Bula (2014) mentions that the practices have negative impacts on the social lives of *VaRemba* children for they are not allowed to deny what has been said by their elders. She argues that her research focused on children for they are the most vulnerable and affected by cultural

practices. The decision over them is passed by their elders and children's voices are not heard under the *VaRemba* ethnic group.

Shumba (2014, p. 16) based his research on the rite of passage for *VaRemba* males in Mberengwa which is also a transition from boyhood to manhood. His research explored the Traditional Male Circumcision of Lemba man (*VaRemba*) and how it exposes initiates to HIV risk for they use unsterilized traditional instruments for circumcision. A single cutting instrument may be used on a number of initiates. Little or no effort may be made to sterilise the cutting instrument, resulting in increased chances of passing on the infection among the initiates. This rite of passage is similar to *Komba* in that it is also a bridge that separates childhood and adulthood in an individual's lifetime. Though Shumba (2014) looked at the negative side of the practices, they also have positive effects such as prevention of sexually transmitted diseases as reflected in 'pinda musmart' program of today whereby males are circumcised. The program is encouraged for the removal of the foreskin makes one reduces the chances of contracting sexually transmitted infections.

Mabuwa (1993) looked at *Komba* girls' initiation rite and enculturation among *VaRemba*. Maringira and Charlote (2010) looked at *Komba* initiation ceremony and how it violates women rights for they are trained to be child bearers and are deprived of their right to education.

2.3 Komba as a rite of passage

Komba is a rite of passage ceremony which is observed by different cultural groups such as *VaRemba*, *Vamwenyi* from Tanzania, Shangani and the Venda to mention a few. It is a rite of passage that marks a person's life from childhood to adulthood. Richards (1956) and Mabuwa (1993) streams along the same lines as they assert that menarche is the initiation of girls into

adulthood. Shoko (2009) concurs with the above sentiments as he asserts that menarche is a tribal secret that has been observed across *VaRemba* generations. In support of this Nkateko (2010, p. 18) posits that "...it is during this phase that young girls and boys become 'a person', and become autonomous and they try to determine their position in the world". Nkateko (ibid) went on to say that the rite is seen as puberty stage when one presents a potential transformation, to be seen, heard and recognised as an important member of society. This implies that for one to be recognised to be someone in *VaRemba* society he/she needs to go through this process. During the process, songs will be order of the day.

2.4 Global overview of ceremonies

Arinze (1970) gave an account of a Nigerian naming ceremony where the child is welcomed after birth into the world and dedicated to the gods who will protect and guide him throughout his life on earth. The child is brought before the shrines with some offerings which maybe a cock (in case of a male child) or a hen (female child). The Nigerian naming ceremony value the significance and beauty of names given to the child and the names characterise poetry. In the society, poetry importantly deals with life. It is viewed as containing its past, present and future contents. Similarly, in Zimbabwe we have birthday ceremonies to mark the arrival of a newly born baby.

On the other hand, Uchedu (1965) relates a ceremony that marks the passage from adolescence to adulthood in Nigeria. The males are subjected to a series of masquerade activities in which candidates do a daily race. He went on to say that the initiates are subjected to very trying tasks for months that maybe being trained vigorously in the art of war as well as hunting. Uchedu (ibid) went on to describe the puberty ritual in Nigeria where girls are involved in confinement, fattening and practice in home management. The aim is to

prepare them effectively for the precarious life of continuous struggle and endurance in life and this ceremony normally ends in a wedding of the girl.

Nkateko (2010) researched on Venda women of the Limpopo Province of South Africa who also practice the *domba* rite of passage which marks the transition from girlhood to womanhood. These ceremonies provide instructions such as respect and dignity to females on what the society will expect of them as responsible adults. The girls are taught about sexuality, femininity and also the responsibilities that come with being a grown matured woman. The women are deprived to raise their voices for they will be rejected, insulted and also humiliated. The main reason being that they should not talk back to their husbands and in-laws. Furthermore this training is also done so that they do not share their experiences of the initiation with the uninitiated. Her thesis explored on how these women are denied sharing their experiences of the initiation to the uninitiated. They view it as a taboo to disclose the information to uninitiated people. Janzen (1992) further supports that various rituals are particular to Venda people and certain aspects are kept secret and not discussed. They keep the ritual practices to themselves.

Janzen (1992) posits that there is a ceremony called *Ngoma* which is also a rite of passage for the young Venda girls into motherhood and concludes that Venda girls sing songs during their initiation. This reflects that songs are part of the culture which drives the day to day running of life. They sing sexually suggestive songs to portray what they would do when married in order to satisfy their husbands. From Janzen (1992)'s perspective it can be deduced that the ceremony was meant to combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and to avoid divorce.

2.5 The impact of *VaRemba* songs to the initiates

Music is an important aspect in our day to day lives in African culture. Music as pointed above has several functions on culture building. Hassan (2012) who carried out a research on the importance of music in African cultures and alludes that songs are more crucial in any society as they are used in times of happiness and sorrow as these are two components of life. Hassan (2012) also went on to say that music is designed to be practical rather than just being attractive without carrying any meaning.

In every *Komba* ritual ceremony conducted, songs are sung to enhance the ritual normally conducted at night. Shoko (2009) indicates that the *Komba* girls sing explicit sexually suggestive songs which they dance to. This is done to prepare the *Komba* to become good mothers when they get married. The songs and dances have social meaning which is going to be discussed in chapter four of this research. The songs set the mood for the action, that is to say they motivate participants to take part in the initiatives. This is supported by Mapuwei (2013) when he says that music is used for communicating, entertaining and educating a certain targeted group. *Komba* rite is meant to impart knowledge and life skills to the initiates through songs and rigorous training, (Shoko 2009) as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Peresuh (1996) also supports the above idea by mentioning that if a society neglects to impart education on its people, this will have negative impact on culture maintenance. The songs help them to endure hardship such as being made to wake up early in the morning, bathe in cold water, dance and perform rigorous exercises.

Van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1969) say that the *Komba* rite of passage comprises of three fold phases. These are the separation, transition and the re-incorporation. Separation is when the girls leave their respective homes for the bush camps, transition is attained when

the girls are being initiated into motherhood and the last phase is when they are re-incorporated into the society through home bringing ceremony. All these phases are marked by different songs and dances (Van Gennep, and Victor Turnor, *ibid*). This means that songs sung depends on the phase being performed. From the literature gathered, it reflects that no discussions have been put across on the meanings of the songs attached to the rituals performed to mark adulthood. Mabuwa (1993) advocates that some of the songs and dances praise the initiates and some teach them what to do in their future marriages. This implies that the *Komba* leaders use music to impart their knowledge to the initiates. The meanings attached to this have not been discussed.

2.6 VaRemba songs as an aspect of African songs

Most African traditional songs are characterised by a call and response. There is no notation aspect. This also implies on the *VaRemba* songs which are under discussion. Most African songs are uniformly structured. Dance cannot be separated from African songs. Organisation of the songs depend on the context of performance and the interpretation of the performers themselves as supported by Nketia (1974). African songs are orally transmitted from one generation to the next generation hence there is great flexibility of structure (Chernoff 1979). Nettle (2005) purports that African songs may not be the property of any one individual, they have a shared method of composition which encourages an elastic formal structure allowing individual room to deviate from the music constructed. This implies that the songs are communally composed that is to say they are made by people of the particular society. This element of call and response organisation among African songs is reflected when one or a group of people lead whilst others respond. All this is noted in *VaRemba* songs.

2.7 Analysis of African songs

It can be noted that when analysing African songs one has to consider the context in which the song is used. The meaning is derived from the context and it can best be given by culture bearers of the song. For example when analysing *VaRemba* songs, one has to look for the *VaRemba* people in order to interpret the meanings of the songs. This is so because each and every society has its songs that are used by its people in their day to day lives and this characterise their culture.

CHAPTER 3

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to gather, present and analyse data for this study. Ethnographic research design, population and sample sizes, research instruments such as interviews, video recorder and observation will be discussed as the main methods used for data collection. Data presentation and analysis procedures will also be discussed a in this chapter.

3.2 Research design

For an investigation to be successful, a research design is necessary. Magwa and Magwa (2015) define research as a systematic, controlled, imperial and critical investigation of hypothetical proportions about presumed relations among natural phenomena. Goddard and Melville (2014) stream along the lines as they observe research as a systematic quest for undiscovered knowledge. Closer look to the definitions of research given, elements featuring are systematic, organised and finding results. This shows that a research is a set of procedures and steps which one has to follow in order to get accurate results. Therefore, research can also be defined as an organised and systematic way of finding answers or a blue print that enables the investigator to come up with solution to problems under study and guides the researcher in various stages of research Patton (2002) defines a research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance while Hopkins (2002) views it as a logical task undertaken to ensure that the evidence collected enables the researcher to answer questions or to test theories as unambiguously as possible.

I found it important to use an ethnographic study because it is the best way of acquiring required information about *Komba* songs as it involves both emic and etic approach on gathering information to address the problem under study. The greatest advantage of an ethnography is that the researcher has a longer and more intimate association with the respondents. It also fosters a positive relationship with the participants, confidentiality and informed consent Hancock et al (2007) say that the ethnographer participates in people's daily lives for an extended period of time watching what happens and collecting data available as well as interpreting data from the perspective of the participant (phenomenological approach)

I carried out extensive fieldwork, that is spending long period of time collecting data required in line with the focus of the study. According to Flink (2002), the qualitative approach is a logical independent approach used to describe life practices and give them meaning. He also added that qualitative research describes an event in its natural setting. Basing on Flink (2002)'s views towards qualitative approach it implies that this approach addresses non numerical issues such as feelings, meaning behind the research questions. I therefore used interviews, video recording and observation in gathering data on the *VaRemba Komba* songs.

3.3 Population

Creswell, (2009) defines a target population as the entire group of individuals or objects in which researchers are interested in generalising the conclusion. The target population must be defined with characteristics that are relevant to the problem. My population for this study comprises of *VaRemba* people of Mahohoma village. Amongst them are *Nyamukangas*, elderly *Komba* initiates and young *Komba* initiates. These people were targeted by the researcher because they are the ones who perform the *Komba* ritual ceremonies. Moreover,

these are also the people who have knowledge about how the songs that are sung as well as their meanings.

3.4 Sampling and sampling procedures

Sampling refers to the practice of picking units (e.g. people, organisations) from a population of interest such that we may fairly generalise the outcomes to the population from which they were chosen (Troachim, 2006). This ethnographic study made use of purposive and snowball sampling.

3.4.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling according to Haque (2013, p. 4) is a non-random sampling method which involves the selection of the sample arbitrarily by the researcher choosing the people considered important for the research and believes is representative of a population. Babbie (2011) and Troachim (2006) defines purposive sampling as selecting a sample from the whole population with a purpose in mind. This type of sampling was selected on the basis of the researchers' judgment through handpicking *VaRemba komba* people to be included in the study. In this study, the purpose in mind was that of collecting *VaRemba* songs and analyse them to deduce their meaning. As a result, I selected *VaRemba* people who have the information I needed.

3.4.2 Snowball sampling

Des Raj (1972) says that snowball sampling is when one identifies someone who meets the criteria for the inclusion in the study. These recommend others they know who also meet the criteria. Snowball sampling was used when I had the chance to talk to *Komba* initiates at a graduation ceremony and they had to refer me to other *Komba* people. I used this technique

to find initiates for the interviews. I was also referred to the key informants of the cultural group. Key informant as defined by Bernard (2002) is the observant figure and a reflective member of a community with much knowledge of a culture and is willing to share the knowledge. These were selected by virtue of them being elderly and also being the trainers of *Komba* initiates for a long period of time. This helped me to gather comprehensive information for the topic under study.

3.5 Research instruments

In order to collect and analyse data for this study, I used different research instruments such as semi structured interviews, participant observation and observation.

3.5.1 Semi structured interviews

Semi structured interviews were used in order to collect the much needed data for this study. Also, semi – structured interviews can be tailored to fit the specifics of a phenomenon in question. This helped the researcher to clearly analyse the *komba* songs after the interviews. This also helped me to explain the reason behind a behaviour during the ceremony. Best and Khan (2006) views the purpose of interviewing as that of finding out what would be in someone’s mind while Tuckman (1994) is of the view that each person’s answer reflect his or her perceptions and interest “This technique follows a framework in order to address key themes rather than specific questions”, Macdonald and Headlam (1986, p. 40). Ibid went on to elaborate that this interview style allows a certain degree of flexibility to the researcher to respond to answers of the interviewee thereby developing themes and issues as they arise. Semi- structured interview was favoured because it allows depth of a research to be achieved by providing an opportunity on the part of the interviewee’s responses (Cresswell (2000)).

I conducted interviews with culture bearers of *VaRemba* who include key informants of the *VaRemba* cultural group which encompasses *Nyamukangas* who initiate *Komba*, elderly *Komba* initiates who went through the initiation and young *Komba* initiates to gather information on *Komba* rituals with the main thrust on the *Komba* songs. I interviewed them at their respective homes after making appointments with them. I found this technique to be flexible because it allowed me to probe deeper into the informants. The interviews were conducted in their vernacular language and I later translated it into English thus did not restrict the respondents in giving out answers because they used the language they understood. I recorded the interviews using a tape recorder as well as writing down some notes during the course of the interviews.

Tuckman (1994) stated that semi – structured interviews give a clear picture of what has actually occurred at a setting when a researcher specifically describes behaviours of people.

3.5.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is another instrument that I used to gather data in this research. Corbetta (2003) alludes that participant observation takes the involvement of the researcher in the social situation studied and his interaction with the subjects involved as the fundamental technique. She further states that participant observation has advantages in that there is direct involvement by the researcher hence little chances of losing data. Participant observation was of paramount importance in this research in that I interacted with my informants during the ceremony and that fear of being observed was eliminated as I was amongst them. This also helped me formulate meaningful questions and observing what happens on the ground in an interactive manner.

3.6 Data presentation and analysis

Data in this research was presented in the qualitative form. Sapson and Jupp, (2008) stipulated that data analysis and presentation is the process of transforming raw data variables that can be analysed to produce the information found in results. In order to facilitate the drawing of meaningful conclusions, several steps were taken in preparing data for analysis. Songs collected were transcribed and analysed. Meanings of these songs was also gathered through interviews. Interview responses were analysed to get the view of respondents concerning the *Komba* ceremony. This did not dissuade the researcher from using the descriptive analysis. The researcher also analysed the findings by relating to secondary data, answers from interviews, conceptual framework and personal information.

3.7 Ethical issues

Magwa and Magwa (2015) define ethics as rules of conduct of researchers carrying out research. I discovered that for a good research to be achieved, there are some ethical considerations to be made. Informed consent is the major ethical issue in conducting research. Informed consent is one of the means by which a patient's right to autonomy is protected. It seeks to incorporate the rights of autonomous individuals through self-determination, Chiromo (2009). Informed consent also seeks to prevent assaults on the integrity of the participants and protect personal liberty and veracity, Cresswell (2013), Cohen (2007). There was need to get consent from all participants and this was easy as Mahohoma village is my home area. Before conducting the study, I explained the aim and objectives of the study to the *VaRemba* leaders in the area and seek permission to carry out the study in the village and this was granted to me

Permission to tape record the interviews was also granted. However, I was not allowed to capture videos of the songs during the real ceremony, but allowed to stage while I capture the videos which I adhered to.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology and procedures used to collect data for this study. The use of the qualitative design employed allowed me to get an in depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Data collection was done through interviews, participant observation, observation and video recording.

CHAPTER 4

Data presentation and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses data that was collected on the topic under study. It focuses on the analysed *VaRemba* songs and their meanings.

4.2 VaRemba Komba ceremony

It was very interesting to learn that *VaRemba* songs which are used to enhance the *VaRemba Komba* ceremony have a lot of hidden meanings. The hidden meaning is only known by people of this ethnic group. *Komba* leaders (*Mbuya Nyamukanga*), who are regarded as the wise women compose the songs during the ceremony depending on the activity or stage being carried out. There are three stages a *Komba* girl goes through to be regarded as a fully graduated *Komba*. Each stage is accompanied by songs that have meanings related to it. The stages run as soon as *Komba* set out from home for the ritual until she comes back home. In this study I will refer to the first stage as ‘Teachings on *Komba* rite’, the second one as ‘At the river’ and the last one as ‘Celebration ceremony.’ I will give a detailed account of each stage and analyse the meaning of the songs for the benefit of those who are not from the *Remba* community in an effort to answer my research questions.

4.2.1 Teachings on Komba rite

Like any other group of people which has some set norms and values which should be observed, *VaRemba*, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, have their norms and values that are passed from one generation to the next through oral transmission. In each and

every society they live, are elderly women who know the norms and values of their culture. These women are called *Mbuya Nyamukanga* and are regarded as wise women in their society for they impart knowledge to the young women and girls of their cultural group. Jennifer Zhou (interview, 12 August 2017) mentions that when a *Komba* girl experiences her first menstrual cycle, her parents buy her a white cloth long enough to cover herself. The white cloth symbolises the virginity and innocence of the *Komba*. The white cloth is taken as a valuable asset from the parents to the girl and the girl is expected to do well in her future marriage and cherish the meaning of the white cloth.

The parents present her to *Mbuya Nyamukanga* from another village because they regard those from the same village with the girl as the girls' mothers. They believe that the girl's mother cannot teach her what to do in her future marriage. They also believe that it is a duty that should be done by an aunt or grandmother to the girl. The girl joins the *Mbuya Nyamukanga* family and stays as a family member there acquiring all the knowledge a *Remba* woman is expected to have. *Mbuya Nyamukanga* conducts some daily lessons on the expectations of a married *Remba* woman at home. This normally takes a period of a month. She teaches the girls basic roles of a woman in a *Remba* society. Athline Zhou (interview, 13 July 2017) mentions that the girls do some household chores like fetching firewood, fetching water and brewing beer. This is done to equip them with adequate knowledge to manage their womanhood as well as being taught the life skills to deal with challenges waiting ahead in their marriage life. *Komba* are also taught good morals they should display to their husbands and in laws. Serina Mahohoma (interview, 14 July 2017) mentions that *Komba* is expected to be quite and humble before her husband. If ever there is a misunderstanding between them, she is expected to be quite regardless of her being right or wrong. During this period *Komba* is not allowed to talk to anyone they meet except *Mbuya Nyamukanga*. In the event of meeting

someone, they are expected to hide or to lie down. This is a training done so that the girl learn to be quite. Athline Zhou (interview, 13 July 2017) mentions that a punishment is attached to a girl who does not adhere to this. She is made to bite a hot clay pot for some minutes and this makes someone to develop some sores on the mouth. This will take time to heal and thereby experiencing some difficulty in speaking as well. Above all this, they dwelt much in how to handle their husbands in bed. *Komba* are expected to satisfy their husbands in their future marriages in as far as sexual conduct is concerned. This is done in order to preserve their marriages. In the above instance, *Mbuya Nyamukanga's* home is regarded as a school hence during this period the girl does not go to her usual formal school.

The lessons (discussed above), conducted by *Mbuya Nyamukanga* are accompanied by songs. These songs reinforce what *Mbuya Nyamukanga* would be teaching. The songs have a hidden meaning which is only understood by the culture bearers. One of the songs they sing is *Toda mutemo* translated to English as 'We need the rules.' Below is the song *Toda Mutemo*

TODA MUTEMO

♩ = 108

Mushauri

Vadairi

mu te mo ibwe u no_re ma

i ye-e ho i ye i ye ho i ye

5

zve mu te mo zvi no re ma

to da mu te mo i ye - ho i ye i he ho i ye

9

mu te mo ibwe u no_re ma

to da mu te mo i ye - e ho

12

i ye i ye ho i ye to da mu te mo

Song 1 (transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

I also transcribed the song from tape to word and conducted a literal analysis so that readers who do not understand Shona language would also be able to read it in English.

Lyrical Content of the song *Toda mutemo* (transcribed from tape to words by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English translation |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Call | <i>Mutemo ibwe unorema</i> | The rules are hard like a rock |
| Response | <i>Iye hoo iye iye hoo iye toda mutemo</i> | <i>Iye hoo iye iye hoo</i> <i>iye(vocables) we need the rules</i> |
| Call | <i>Zvomutemo zvinorema</i> | The rules are tough |
| Response | <i>Iye hoo iye iye hoo iye toda mutemo</i> | <i>Iye hoo iye iye hoo iye</i> need the rules |

In the above song lyrics, *Komba* initiates sing to their leader, *Mbuya Nyamukanga* asking for rules on how they should live the *Remba* way. It passes a message so that the leader teaches them the rules and regulations on how to live the *Remba* way. The rules are regarded to be hard as a stone. From the above lyrics, the line *Mutemo ibwe unorema*, (the rules are hard like a stone) stresses how the *VaRemba* rules are difficult to follow. But regardless of the rules being hard to follow, they have to go through it for they go on to sing *Toda mutemo* (we need the rules). They relate the rules to the hardness of a stone, which means that it is very hard to attain them. From a layman's perspective, the rules might be of a country, rules from the bible, political rules only to mention a few. However, from *VaRemba* perspective, the rules are on how to live an acceptable *Remba* way of life as expected by the *Remba* society. For example, one of the rule entails that a wife should always keep quiet when an argument erupts between her and her husband as discussed above. It is a difficult task to follow but

women should adhere to it. A woman is expected to be quite before her husband regardless of being right or wrong. The *VaRemba* do not consider the modern day laws of equal rights where men and women are regarded as equal in the eyes of the law. *VaRemba* cultural rules do not allow a woman's voice to be heard, but the husband is the one who makes decisions because he is the head of the house.

VaRemba people are not allowed to eat meat that had been slaughtered by (*vashenji*) non *VaRemba* people for they believe it to be unclean. *VaRemba* men who have been circumcised should slaughter for them be it chicken, goat, beef and other animals they eat. They believe that when one goes out for *Komba* and also circumcision for males, it is a cleansing exercise therefore they would be clean when they come back. They have to look for a *VaRemba* man in the village if ever they want to slaughter something if there is no man found in their home. This is a difficult rule to observe because one has to look for an alternative relish in the event that *VaRemba* men are unavailable.

Nyaga mutemo is another song (See song 2 below) sung at this stage also. It emphasises the issue of rules that should be followed by *VaRemba* people. *Komba* sing the song to show that the rules of *VaRemba* people are difficult to follow.

Nyaga Mutemo

108 ♩ = 108

Mushauri

Vabvumiri

o i ye i ye nya ga mu te mo zvi no re ma o i ye

o i ye i ye o zvi no re ma o i ye o i ye

6

i ye nya ga mu te mo we chi mwe nye o i ye i ye nya ga mu

i ye o we chi mwe nye o i ye o i ye i ye

11

te mo we va Re mba o i ye i ye nya ga mu te mo zvi no re ma

o we va Re mba o i ye o i ye i ye o zvi no re ma

Song 2 (song transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

Lyrical Content of the song Nyaga Mutemo (song transcribed by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English translation |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Call | <i>Nyaga mutemo zvinorema</i> | People the rules are difficult |
| Response | <i>Aiye o-iyeye</i> | <i>Aiye o-iyeye</i> |

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Call | <i>Nyaga mutemo weChimwenye</i> | People the rules for <i>Vamwenye</i> |
| Response | <i>Aiye o-iye iyee</i> | <i>Aiye o-iye iyee</i> |
| Call | <i>Nyaga mutemo waVaRemba</i> | People the rules for <i>VaRemba</i> |
| Response | <i>Aiye o-iye iyee</i> | <i>Aiye o-iye iyee</i> |

The song above is also a song that denotes that *VaRemba* rules are difficult to follow. The song is sung to the audience who would have gathered to witness the coming back of *Komba* from the initiation. It is sung so that the audience know and respect them for the process they would have gone through. As they sing *Nyaga mutemo zvinorema* translated to English version as (people the rules are difficult) they would be telling people the difficulty they would have gone through. The lyrics *Nyaga mutemo waVaRemba* translated as (people rules for *VaRemba*) means the rules are specifically for their culture bearers and not *Vashenji*. They are only taught to *VaRemba* people only. *Nyaga mutemo weChimwenye* translated to English as (people the rules for *Vamwenye*) means the rules are for *Vamwenye* people and not outsiders. Emilia Zhou (interview 13 August 2017) mentions that *Vamwenye* is a totem (*chidawo*) normally used on *VaRemba* males. Ordinary people just have an imagination in their minds on how difficult the rules are. It was interesting to know that only the *VaRemba* people know the rules being referred to-the rules on how to live the *Remba* way. Emilia Zhou (interview 13 August 2017) went on to say as they sing this song they would be passing a message to non-*VaRemba*, instilling fear so that non *VaRemba* people do not attempt to marry *VaRemba* people for they encourage marriages among their ethnic group. They believe

that non-*VaRemba* people do not know how to handle their partners in marriage the *Remba* way. Hence discourage intermarriages.

4.2.2 At the river

At this stage, *Komba* goes to the river for the actual initiation into womanhood. Athline Zhou (interview 13 July 2017) mentions that *Komba* girls go to the river around 3:00 am, three times a week and are made to get into the water for about two hours and dance concentrating on their waist line. This is an exercise on what they are expected to do during sexual intercourse with their future husbands. They go this early so that they are not to be seen by non *VaRemba* people and also to find the water still very cold. As this is done during the coldest season of the year, winter, they believe cold water makes them endure hardships of life and also makes the virginal passage tighter for the satisfaction of the husband. At the river the *Komba* stretch their *lebia minora* to make it long enough to a size that the husband will be able to hold without any difficulty whilst standing in the water. They believe that this private part of a woman satisfies a man during fore play. Cecilia Zhou (interview, 11 August 2017) mentions that stretching of the *lebia minora* is done to entice the man during sexual conduct as well as to direct the penis into the virginal passage. She went on to say that *VaRemba* people have a belief that a woman who has not gone through this has a *hari isina huro* (pot without a neck). *Komba* do this under the supervision of *Mbuya Nyamukanga* who would be holding a whip to instil discipline to those not following instructions.

Virginity is also tested at the river by *Mbuya Nyamukanga*. Letiwe Mpofu, one of the initiates (interview, 15 July 2017) mentions that *Mbuya Nyamukanga* inserts two fingers into the initiate's vagina to see whether she has slept with a man yet. It will be a shame to those not

found to be virgins for there are songs that are sung to them for such a mishap. One of the songs they sing is *Kutenga mucheka* (buying a cloth) which follows.

Kutenga Mucheka

♩ = 110

Mushauri

Vabvumiri

ku tenga mu che ka ku te nge ra pfe nde

a hu we - a ma u we

6

ku te nga mu che ka ku te nge ra pfe nde

le le u we le le a - hu we

11

a hu we - a ma u we le le nha iwe ko mba a - hu we

Song 3 (song transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

I also translated the Shona song to English version. Below is the table showing the song *Kutenga mucheka* in English and Shona version.

Lyrical Content of the song *Kutenga Mucheka* (song transcribed by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English translation |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Call | <i>Kutenga mucheka kutengera pfende</i> | Buying cloth for an untidy person |
| Response | <i>Auweee amauw elele nhaiwe Komba Auwe</i> | <i>Auweee amauwelele nhaiwe Komba auwee</i> |
| Call | <i>Kutenga mucheka kutengera pfende</i> | Buying cloth for an untidy person |
| Response | <i>Auweee amauwelele uwelele ahuwe</i> | <i>Auwee amauwelele uwelele ahuwee</i> |

Upon hearing the song, non VaRemba people I asked in the village thought that it was the buying of an actual cloth for someone who is unclean or dirty. But, VaRemba refer to buying a cloth for someone who commit adultery. They went on to talk about body smartness, home smartness and so on. People outside VaRemba society think that *pfende* means someone who is unclean. But in VaRemba context *pfende* refers to anyone who commits adultery. To fornicate is regarded as being untidy or unclean. *Kutenga* is to purchase, therefore in this context, this refers to the parents who would have used their money to buy the cloth for their daughter. The cloth being referred is the one that the parents would have bought for the girl before going out for the initiation. As they sing *kutenga mucheka, kutengera pfende* they would be referring to the girl who would have failed to keep her virginity up to this stage.

The following song *Kutenga mucheka* is sung to compliment teachings on the importance of maintaining virginity

Komba are also taught songs asking for sex from the husband in a way that is not understood by *Vashenji* (non *VaRemba*). In *VaRemba* culture they believe that the man should be the one who has the right to ask for whatever he needs in as far as bedroom issues are concerned and not the woman. Hence the women are taught some songs to sing whenever they are in need of the husband in the bedroom. Emilia Zhou (interview, 13 August 2017) mentions that amongst *VaRemba* people, it is regarded to be improper for a woman to say out her voice in as far as bedroom concerns are considered. However they request in the form of some songs, for example '*VaMushavi ndoridawo*' (see song 4) translated to English as 'VaMushavi I also need it'.

VaMushavi Ndoridawo

♩ = 112

Mushauri

Vabvumiri

Va Mu sha vi nha si ndo rida wo

i ye ha ye nha si ndo rida wo

5

Va Mu sha vi nha si ndo rida wo

ndo ri da wo do ro

i ye ha ye_ nha si ndo rida wo

10

ndo rida wo

ndo ri da wo do ro

i ye ha ye nha si ndo rida wo

14

ndo rida wo

i ye ha ye_ nha si ndo rida wo

Song 4 (song transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

The song was also transcribed from tape to words and also translated to English in order to cater for those who do not understand Shona. Below is the Lyrical Content of the song *VaMushavi ndoridawo* (VaMushavi today I need it) and also its English translation

Lyrical Content of the song VaMushavi ndoridawo (Transcribed from tape to words by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English version |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Call | <i>VaMushavi nhasi ndoridawo</i> | <i>VaMushavi today I need it</i> |
| Response | <i>Iye haye nhasi ndoridawo</i> | <i>Iye haye today I need it</i> |
| Call | <i>Ndoridawo doro ndoridawo</i> | <i>I need the beer</i> |
| Response | <i>Iye haye nhasi ndoridawo</i> | <i>Iye haye today I need it</i> |
| Call | <i>VaMushavi doro ndoridawo</i> | <i>VaMushavi I need the beer</i> |
| Response | <i>Iye haye nhasi ndoridawo</i> | <i>Iye haye today I need it</i> |

When hearing this song, non *VaRemba* people think the woman would be asking for beer to drink. However in *VaRemba* perspective, women sing this song to their husband during the course of the day so that the husband will be aware and gets prepared for his wife that night. Emilia Zhou (interview, 13 August 2017) mentions that the couple would have spent some days without meeting their sexual needs because of certain circumstances among them, disagreements. But, because the woman also has some feelings, she will be having sexual desire. They regard sexual act as something that should be properly done as Emilia laments. *Mushavi* is a noun derived from the verb *kushava* meaning working to earn a living. *VaRemba* men are called *Mushavi* in the sense that they go out to work for the family. He is the breadwinner and looks for food for the family.

4.2.3 Celebration ceremony

After the girl has acquired all the knowledge expected, a celebration ceremony is conducted at the girl's home welcoming her back. The girl's parents are advised of the date when the girl would return home. This ceremony is marked by singing, dancing as well as celebrating. Emilia Zhou (interview, 13 August 2017) mentions that the ceremony also symbolises success achieved by *Komba* because some of them fail to achieve the goal. This might be due to the reasons that some may die as a result of parents practicing black magic and sorcery. Friends and relatives are invited and some preparations such as beer brewing are done. People gather to witness the coming back of the girl. At this stage non-*VaRemba* people are also welcome.

Led by Mbuya Nyamukanga, the girl is accompanied by other girls and boys initiates from that village as *Vaperekedzi* like what is done on modern day weddings. They leave Mbuya Nyamukanga's home around sunset of the day prior to the celebration day. Jennifer Zhou (interview, 12 August 2017) laments that they walk in the evening so that they will not interact with many people along their way especially non-*VaRemba*.

They sing all the way and upon reaching the gate of *Komba* homestead, they sing louder blowing the horn to alert those at home who will be waiting for their arrival. Those at home welcome them by singing and dancing at the gate. One of the songs they sing is *Harieni* (see song 5)

Hariyeni

105 ♩ = 105

Mushauri

hari ye ni hari ye ni va re mba hari ye ni

Vabvumiri

hu we ha ri yeni hu ya uo ne va re mba hu

6

hari ye ni va re mba hari ye ni

we ha ri yeni hu ya uo ne va re mba hu we ha ri

11

hari ye ni

yeni hu ya uo ne va re mba

Song 5 (Song transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

The song *Harieni* was also transcribed from tape to words below

Lyrical Content of the song *Harieni* (song transcribed from tape to words by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English version |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Call | <i>Harieni</i> | Let's go |
| Response | <i>Huwee harieni</i> | <i>Huwee</i> let's go |
| Call | <i>Harieni</i> | Let's go |

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Response | <i>Uya uone VaRemba</i> | Come and see <i>VaRemba</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|

Emilia Zhou (interview, 13 August 2017) said *Harieni* is a Shangani word which means *Handei*. *VaRemba* people adopted this word from the Shangani people because these two cultural groups practice *Komba* ritual ceremony. Upon hearing the song *Harieni*, other people think of going to see *VaRemba* people singing and dancing at the ceremony. However, according to *VaRemba* people there is something special behind seeing them singing and dancing. Athline Zhou (interview, 13 July 2017) mentions that this song is sung so that *VaRemba* boys who would have gone through circumcision ceremony see girls who are ready for marriage. It will be an invitation to come and see how they perform on the following day which will be the celebration day. The *VaRemba* will be proud of sailing through the ritual procession successfully so they would need people to see what they were doing during the training period. Most of their dances will portray what they are expected to do as *VaRemba* women, especially to the husband as they concentrate on the flexibility of the pelvic area. So, when they sing *Harieni uya uone VaRemba* (meaning Lets go, come and see *VaRemba*), the secret behind is to see the girls showing their flexibility through their performances.

The girls (*Komba*) crawl from the gate while some songs are sung for them as a welcome. Crawling is a sign to show humbleness, Jennifer Zhou (interview, 12 August 2017). One of the songs they sing while crawling from the gate is a song called *Mahindikindi*.

mahindikindi

97

Mushauri



ma hi ndi ki ndi va mu sa nde

Vabvumiri



a u ya ma hi ndi ki ndi Va Mu sa nde a u ya

5



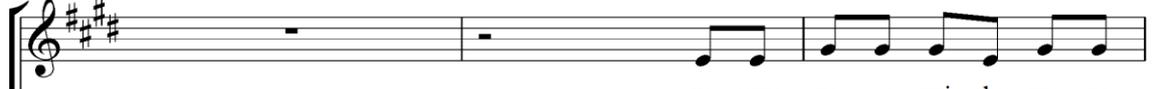
ma hi ndi ki ndi va mu sa nde



a u ya ma hi ndi ki ndi Va Mu sa nde a u ya

a u ya ma hi ndi

10



va mwe va ne zvi nhu zva vo



ki ndi Va Mu sa nde a u ya

13



a u ya ma hi ndi ki ndi Va Mu sa nde a u ya



a u ya ma hi ndi ki ndi Va Mu sa nde a u ya

Song 6 (song transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

In order for those who do not understand Shona, I transcribed the song from Shona to English version. Below is song Mahindikindi

Lyrical Content of the song Mahindikindi (song transcribed from tape to words by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English translation |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Call | <i>Mahindikindi VaMusande</i> | <i>Mahindikindi VaMusande</i> |
| Response | <i>Auya Mahindikindi VaMusande</i> | <i>Mahindikindi have come</i> |
| Call | <i>Vamwe vane zvinhu zvavo</i> | Some people have their things |
| Response | <i>Auya Mahindikindi VaMusande</i> | <i>Mahindikindi have come</i> |

They sing this while crawling from the gate until they get in a room. *Mahindikindi* is a word they use meaning that the *Komba* is ripe and ready for marriage. From the informants *VaRemba* believe that when someone gets married without going to *Komba* initiation, she is regarded as *haana kuibva* (being raw). She does not know what is expected of a woman especially when it comes to please her husband during sexual intercourse. *Vashenji* expect the husband to teach his wife what to do but and in this case, she would have been taught everything practically a woman is expected to do when married. So when they sing *mahindikindi*, it means everything has been done for the husband concerning the teachings. *Musande* is a Saint and is someone who do righteous things. *Musande* does good things all

the time. According to what I gathered from my informants *VaMusande* refers to the parents of *Komba*. The parents would have done the best by sending their daughter for *Komba* training for they will give the *Mbuya Nyamukanga* money to thank her for the job she would have done. *Auya mahindikindi* means the girl would have come home from the initiation and she is qualified for marriage.

Vamwe vane zvinhu zvavo- other people have their belongings. When the girl goes for *Komba* training the parents are expected to give the trainer some money and a goat as a token of appreciation. So when they sing *Vamwe vane zvinhu zvavo* they will be referring to the parents who have some money and a goat to give the *Mbuya nyamukanga* as it is an expectation from the parents.

VaRemba people spent the whole night singing and dancing celebrating the coming back of *Komba* home. *VaRemba* people are encouraged to marry from their ethnic group. There are songs that are sung to rebuke those who would have married outside their ethnic group especially *Vashenji* (non *VaRemba* males). One of the songs they sing is *Mushenji waba nyama*. (see song 7)

Mushenji Waba Nyama

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Mushauri

mshe njiwa ba nya ma mga pura va re mba

7abvumiri

hu we hu we hu we hu we hu we u

5

mshe njiwa ba nya ma mga pura va re mba ha u nya ri

we hu we hu we hu we hu we hu we hu we hu

10

ha u nya ri ku dya zva va re mba

we hu we hu we hu we hu we hu we hu we hu

Song 7 (song transcribed by Takudzwa Matata and Leah Rusero)

Lyrical Content of the song (song transcribed from tape to words by Leah Rusero)

| | Shona version | English translation |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Call | <i>Mushenji waba nyama</i> | <i>Mushenji have stolen meat</i> |
| Response | <i>Huwee huwee huwee</i> | <i>Huwee huwee huwee</i> |
| Call | <i>Mugapu raVaRemba</i> | From VaRemba's claypot |
| Response | <i>Huwee huwee huwee</i> | <i>Huwee huwee huwee</i> |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Call | <i>Haunyarii, haunyari kudya</i> <i>zvaVaRemba</i> | You are not ashamed to eat what belongs to VaRemba |
| Response | <i>Huwee huwee huwee</i> | <i>Huwee huwee huwee</i> |

Mushenji waba nyama is a song which is sung to non VaRemba males for marrying komba girls. Vashenji literally meaning unclean. The song passes a message of rebuke for non VaRemba to marry VaRemba women.

4.3 The ritual dance and its symbolic structure.

Having done the analysis of *VaRemba Komba* ritual songs, I also saw it necessary to look at the symbolic structure of the dance as it is unrealistic to separate the music from dance or from bodily movement. Their dance also helps in revealing the hidden meanings of the songs. I observed that their dance falls under two categories which I will refer to crawling and circulation in this study.

4.3.1 Crawling

This is a dance they perform when arriving from the training camp. They dance crawling on their knees and hands from the gate until they get in a prepared room for them. Whilst they crawl, their waist move up and down just like what a worm does. This dance signifies humbleness of a bride (*muroora*). Culturally every bride crawls when arriving at her in laws homestead for the first time.

4.3.2 Circulation

They perform the circulation dance during the celebrations which is the third stage of their ritual ceremony. The dancers dance forming a circle whilst the hips move back and forth emphasising on the movement of the waist. Dancing forming a circle resembles the cyclic nature of life. That is from birth, childhood, manhood or womanhood and death. Movement of the waist signifies the exercise done by a woman during sexual intercourse with her husband.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter presented and analysed the data collected during the course of the study. It can be noted that *VaRemba Komba* songs generally dwell much on how women should handle their husbands in marriage. The Shona customs ensure that women should be under their husband in whatever they do, they do not make decisions on their own, so the songs also talk about women being submissive to their husbands. Culture bearers explained the meanings of the songs in their different stages. The songs were also transcribed and their contextual meaning was given. It was also revealed that specific songs are sung at their different stages of the ceremony.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

The chapter focusses on the summation of the study that was carried out. Conclusion and recommendations which should be taken into consideration are also to be looked at. These recommendations will be provided in line with information that has been provided in the previous chapter.

5.2 Summary

The study was carried out in order to make an analysis of *VaRemba Komba* songs. Thus, it needed to reveal the meanings of different songs used by *VaRemba Komba* during their *Komba* ritual ceremony. The first part of the research focused on providing the background to the study focussing on the main area that gave rise to the study. The chapter highlights the statement of the problem which is to analysis the meaning of *VaRemba Komba* songs. The main objectives were to transcribe the songs and reveal the hidden meanings of the songs they use during their rituals. The research was carried out in Mberengwa and the information was collected from the culture bearers in Mahohoma village which is one of the villages where *VaRemba* people are found.

The second chapter of the research focussed on what other researchers have written which is related to the topic. Ceremonies done by *VaRemba* people and also other ethnic groups across the world were looked at. Available literature showed that different angles on *VaRemba* people were looked at but not much has been done as far as analysis of their music is concerned.

The third part of the research focused on the methodology that was used in the study. Qualitative research design was employed in gathering relevant data. Unstructured interviews, participant observation and observation were used as the chief research tools. The research instruments were very effective in gathering the required information. Different songs were gathered from culture bearers using a video recorder. Interviews were conducted with key informants having an understanding that they are knowledgeable judging by their old age. These were elderly *Komba* initiates called *Mbuya Nyamukanga*.

The fourth part of the research focused on data presentation, analysis and discussion. The collected *VaRemba* songs were transcribed to staff notation and literal analysis was also done for the benefit of those who do not understand *VaRemba* native language. Meanings of the songs were also given from the interviews made with the culture bearers.

5.3 Findings

I found out that *VaRemba* people do not disclose their cultural practices to non *VaRemba*. They achieve this is by using songs with hidden meanings during their ritual ceremonies. The *Komba* ritual ceremony enables the girl to be recognised fully and respected and by the society of *VaRemba* in Mberengwa. Without their explanations, an outsider will not be in a position to understand the contextual meaning of the songs. *VaRemba* teachings which are conducted by the leaders train the girls to prepare for marriage. To enhance these teachings, they sing songs which are categorised in three stages. The first stage is when a girl sets out for *Mbuya Nyamukanga*'s home. Lessons are conducted to prepare the girl for marriage. The second stage is when they conduct their rituals at the river. Virginity testing is conducted at the river by *Mbuya Nyamukanga*. The final stage is when the girl re-joins her family as they celebrate the coming back of *Komba* home. The study established that *Komba VaRemba*

songs are categorised in three stages, their main aim is on how *VaRemba* women should behave in their marriage especially on the issue of satisfying their husbands sexually. Interviews were conducted from the elderly women of this ethnic group in order to get the meanings of these songs.

5.4 Conclusion

The study looked at the analysis of *Komba* songs. *Komba* is an initiation practice performed by *VaRemba* women. It is done with the hope of teaching *VaRemba* girls to satisfy their future husbands. Songs are sung to enhance the teachings during the ceremony. Thus, the study needed to reveal the meanings of songs that are used by *VaRemba Komba* people during their rituals. I discovered that these songs are sung on different stages of their ceremony. The songs are sung in order to impart knowledge of their culture to the young ones. These are passed on orally from one generation to the next. *VaRemba* people try by all means to keep privacy of their culture, thus they try to sing songs that have hidden meanings. The songs have got hidden meaning only understood by the culture bearers only. So, this study was worth carrying because many researches I came across on *VaRemba* did not bother much on the analysis of their songs.

5.5 Recommendations

Basing on the conclusions done, I managed to come up with some recommendations so as to make *VaRemba komba* songs known to other people. I recommend that *VaRemba* people should write down their songs unlike transmitting them orally from one generation to the next. As *VaRemba* people are not allowed to disclose their cultural practice I suggest that other people should carry out a research from *Komba* to see whether these apply to other ethnic groups. Another recommendation is that *VaRemba* people should conduct their ritual

ceremonies during school holidays so that learners do not absent themselves from formal school.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 : Interview guide questions for *VaRemba* culture bearers

1. What is the origin of VaRemba?
2. What do you think are the advantages of keeping your culture as a secret?
3. Who composes VaRemba songs?
4. What is the significance of using songs during the ceremony?
5. What is the meaning behind the songs that you sing during the ceremony?
6. Why do you keep the ceremony as a secret especially to non-*VaRemba*?
7. How do you manage not to disclose the secrecy even if one is no longer part of your group. For example, if one gets married to *Mushenji*?
8. What are the activities done during the ceremony stages?
9. Does everyone put all the rules into practise when they are married?
10. What are the challenges that you encounter during the ceremony?
11. Do the initiates go for *komba* willingly or they are forced?

Thank you for your participation

Appendix 2: Observation guide

1. How they conduct their welcome ceremony
2. Who leads during the ceremony
3. The activities they do on the ceremony day

Appendix 3 introductory letter



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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
MUSIC AND MUSICOLOGY

10/05/2017 (date)

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT RESEARCH

The bearer RUSERO LEAH Registration
Number R150780 is a student at Midlands State University. He/ She is studying for
a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Music and Musicology and is conducting a research
entitled:

IN SEARCH OF MEANING; AN ANALYSIS
OF VAREMBA SONGS IN CONTEXT OF THEIR
KOMBA RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY

He /She is visiting you in person/your company/your institution for the purpose of data
collection. Please assist him/her in every possible way.

Dr P. Matiure
CHAIRPERSON

