

**GAMES, GESTURES AND LEARNING IN BASOTHO
CHILDREN'S PLAY SONGS**

by

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“It should be noted that children at play are not merely playing;
their games should be seen as their most serious actions.”

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)

[*Essais* (1580)]

"I declare that 'Games, Gestures and Learning in Basotho Children's Play Songs' is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references".

John R. L. L. L.

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Summary:

Colonialism in Africa had an impact on the indigenous peoples of Africa and this is shown in some of their games. The purpose of this study is to gain deeper insight into Basotho children's games and to demonstrate that the Western ideas of music and games are not necessarily the same as Basotho folk children's conceptions. The literature on Basotho children's games is reviewed though not much has been contributed by early and present Basotho writers who have generally approached it from the angle of literature without transcribing the songs. The Sesotho word for games (*lipapali*) embraces entertainment but a further investigation of it shows that aspects of learning of which the children were aware in some cases and in others they were not aware, are present. These are supported by musical examples and texts. The definition of play versus games is treated (with regard to infants and children) and these two concepts are still receiving constant attention and investigation by scholars and researchers as the words are synonymous and can be misleading. Infants' play is unorganised and spontaneous while games are organised structures. Furthermore, play

and games are important in child development education. In this study, they are given attention in order to lay the foundation for the understanding and interpretation of games used in both cultures.

It is a misconception that African children's games are accompanied with music in the Western sense. Hence, the word 'music' in Sesotho children's games takes on a different connotation from those in the West. Music' in Sesotho children's games embraces not only tunes that are sung, but game verses chanted in a rhythmic manner as opposed to spoken verse. Yet, *mino* (music) exists in Sesotho and is equivalent to the Western idea. These chanted rhythms and games are analysed against the backdrop of specific cultural dimensions for children depending on the function of the game played. The results of this study indicated that though the idea of music in children's games is not the same, games are an educational in character building and learning. Recommendations are made for educationists and music educators.

Key terms: African music; Basotho; Basotho folk music; child development; children's games; children's music; children's rhymes; folk music education; games with chanting; primary school music; traditional music education and learning.

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Preface

My interest in Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" goes back some years ago during the 1980s when I became fascinated with their song texts, their folklore, philosophy and what they implied about Basotho children's world view. Some games or "*lipapali* (play songs)" described the elements of nature, such as the sun, the moon, the rainbow, etc. The original "poetry" of their "*lipapali* (play songs)," their traditional and original counting games and the gestures behind them fascinated me. I also became interested in what the children regarded as 'music' and what was not in their "*lipapali* (play songs)." As I played most of them in my childhood, it was also interesting to discover the changes or adaptations that children made from some adult songs.

The collection of these "*lipapali* (play songs)", traditional and semitraditional, not only sparked an interest in me, but led me to discover some other aspects of my culture. They broadened and deepened some aspects of oral and material culture of which I was not previously aware. Basotho children have their own traditional way of counting, memorising, playing, learning, etc. I felt a need to collect, video and record these "*lipapali* (play songs)" and some of their accompanying songs for posterity before they are completely overtaken by the radio playing Western children's nursery rhymes and game songs, and the influences of non-Basotho children singing and playing their native games.

It cannot be denied that the African child learns by imitation. At times, it becomes somewhat difficult to categorise Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)", for example, work songs give children a perfect opportunity for emulation and imitation. Hence, it is not surprising to find that children have taken and changed

them as they please. Consequently, it was not easy to classify these “*lipapali* (play songs)” in watertight compartments.

The title of my dissertation ‘Games, Gestures and Learning in Basotho Children’s Play Songs’ stems from the fact that the analysis examines and reveals the multifaceted nature of children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” and the role that these play in the educational development of the Mosotho child. Note, some work songs can be classed as children’s as well as adults’ songs by the very fact that children are prone to imitate.

This study comprises three parts, namely, Part A, Part B and Part C. Part A, comprises two chapters: Chapter 1 which deals with the Introduction and a brief discussion of the Sesotho concept of “*lipapali* (play songs)” This discussion was necessary, at the onset, to establish firmly in the mind of the reader these multi-dimensional concepts from an African as well as the Western point of view. In addition, a brief historical background to the study and of the formation of the Basotho nation and a brief survey of their adult music which acts as a backdrop to the appreciation and understanding of the children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)”, is highlighted. Chapter 2 discusses the specific purposes of Basotho children’s folk games as a force of socialisation or acculturation.

Part B, entitled “Basotho ‘Music’ in Games (play songs)”, comprises three chapters, namely, Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Chapter 3 discusses the Western idea of ‘music’ and music in children’s games. Here, selected genres are discussed with some musical examples though the majority do not contain the latter. This is contrasted with the Sesotho idea of ‘music’ in Basotho children’s folk games in Chapter 5. A selection of different genres supports this view. Hence, the

need for Chapter 4 which discusses a representative and typical Basotho children's "*papali* (play song)" (game) to prepare the reader for an understanding of Chapter 5. As Blacking noted among the Bavenda (1967: 16) "all tunes that are sung and words recited to a given regular rhythm are conceived as "songs", and this applies to some of the "*lipapali* (play songs)" of Basotho children.

Part C, entitled "*Lipapali* (play songs)" in Child Development/Education in Sesotho", comprises ten chapters (Chapter 6-15). Chapter 6 surveys the place of the Mosotho child in the home, family and community. A brief discussion deals with the education of boys and girls and the place and importance of music in the child's traditional and modern education. The relevance of this chapter in Part C is a conscious one. It prepares the reader for an understanding of the following chapters 7 to 15 where he or she is taken on a survey showing how these "*lipapali* (play songs)" play an important role in the child's development and education. Beginning with the simplest one for infants in Chapter 7, these *generally* progress in grades of complexity. Additional reference works are suggested from time to time. It will be observed that key signatures have been deliberately excluded. The reason being that one who is accustomed to the Western or European musical system would be inclined to interpret the songs in terms of major and minor tonalities, and think in terms of resolutions or certain tones as centers of rests.

There are two Appendices at the end of the thesis which comprise a brief discussion of Sesotho speech-tones used in melody, rhythm and chant and a Selected Discography precedes the Bibliography. Thereafter, follows an index comprising eight Western children's games (play songs) and fifty Sesotho

children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" with their page numbers.

Finally, I would like to agree with Sutton-Smith (1972: 15) that the 'classifying of play and games into appropriate categories has presented serious difficulties because games are complex group behaviours deriving their nature from many sources . . . there is bound to be a certain arbitrariness in any approach, as well as a great deal of overlapping between categories.' However, the majority of these Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" are from my childhood experiences. The categories and classification are mine and are mainly based on the main objective, the behaviour to obtain a certain goal, the Sesotho culture from which I grew up and the way we played them. Hence, one would find that a game could be classified under more than one category, but the specific characteristic under scrutiny for this study led me to classify these "*lipapali* (play songs)" under the specific headings found here.

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In Lesotho, mention should be made of the assistance given me by Mr. Stephen Gill, the curator of the Morija Museum and Archives and his staff; the staff of the Morija Book shop; those of the Institute for Southern African Studies (ISAS), Roma and the library staff of the National University of Lesotho. I am also grateful to the Principal of the Montessori School in Maseru in allowing me to observe the activities of the children which broadened my appreciation of the Montessori and Piaget educational philosophies. Discussions with Drs. Malie and Masechele Khaketla, Prof. F.Z.A Matsela, Messrs. E. Lekhanya, a retired music teacher and musician of the former National Teachers Training College (NTTC), and Bill Mphuthing were very fruitful. My thanks go to Mr. Thabo

Pitso, the thesaurian, who shared light on some aspects of archaic Sesotho words and expressions found in the children's "*lipapali* (play songs)." My deepest appreciation goes to the teachers who were willing to set aside their time for discussions. My appreciation for the little learners did not go unnoticed. With glee, they looked forward to my recording sessions that offered them some reprieve from the classroom. Their unflagging patience during the repetition of some games and game songs was not taken as a hindrance for they looked forward for the playback sessions. My deep gratitude also goes to some of my relatives in the villages who opened their homes during my visits and made it possible for me to traverse some of the rugged roads and rocky terrain of the country side. I would be failing in my duty if I did not mention the willingness of the aged who took me down memory lane, shedding valuable knowledge about some of the tales and games they played in their youth and which contributed immensely to a deeper understanding of the games, my customs and culture.

Lastly, I thank my family, my brothers-in-law, namely, Mr. Thabo Leanya and Dr. A.D. Lebona who freely allowed their wives to give of their time to escort me to places unknown to me. They were always ready to put up with my comings and goings at odd times and made it possible for me to meet relevant people with regard to my research. For this, I was very grateful..

Terminology and orthography

From the country's cessation to Queen Victoria in 1868 until its independence from Britain in 1966, Lesotho was known as Basutoland. British colonial rule and preindependence literature referred to the peoples of Lesotho as Basuto or BaSuto, Ba-suto, Bassouto (Fr.) and a national as Basuto. The country was called Basutoland or Lesuto and the language as Sesuto or SeSuto and nationals as Basuto. An earlier orthography spelt *sotho* as *suto* and the Morija Book Depot in Lesotho as the Morija Sesuto Book Depot. There may have been other variations to the above but that was the orthography used. Where the Basotho themselves, authors and official records have used the old orthography, for example, the Morija Sesuto Book Depot, I have retained it.

Ethnographers generally use the term *Sotho* or its stem *sotho* to include groups that speak Setswana (spoken in Botswana and South Africa), Sepedi (or North Sotho spoken in Limpopo (formerly the Northern Province) and Serotse or Lozi (spoken in the western province of Zambia). Other dialects of Sesotho are Sekgolokwe and Sephuthing, to name a few. These groups constitute a group with a similar culture and are determined mainly on social and regional grounds. The people of Lesotho have always referred to themselves as Basotho and their country as Lesotho; the language as Sesotho and an individual or a citizen as a Mosotho. According to the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Southern Sotho is now referred to as Sesotho; Sesotho, being a fully-fledged language.

The Lesotho orthography has been used in the printing press, in administrative departments, official records and schools up to the present time. In the Republic of South Africa, a new Sesotho orthography has been adopted by the Basotho people, who, historically, geographically, linguistically and culturally were one with the people of Lesotho. In 1957, the Department of Native Affairs published its first rules regarding the terminology and orthography of Sesotho spelling for use in Bantu Schools throughout the then Union of South Africa. The languages affected at that time were Sepedi and Setswana. The enforcement of the new orthography in South Africa resulted in Basotho authors' works in Lesotho being reprinted for use in South African schools.

Throughout my work, I have retained the terms as used by the people of Lesotho themselves in their everyday speech before and after the country's independence. I have also maintained their orthography because that is the country where my research was undertaken. However, discussions are underway among linguists at different levels to change from the Lesotho orthography to that of the South African one.

Abbreviations and acronyms

abbr.	abbreviation
adj.	adjective
adj. con.	adjectival concord
adv.	adverb
Afrik.	Afrikaans
aux.	auxiliary
cl.	class
conj.	conjunction
dem.	demonstrative
dim.	diminutive
Eng.	English
etc.	etcetera
fem.	feminine
fig.	figurative
Fr.	French
ideoph.	ideophone
inf.	infinitive
interj.	interjection
interr.	interrogative
lit.	literally
loc.	locative
masc.	masculine
n.	noun
nd.	no date
pers.	personal

plur.	plural
pp.	pages
poss.	possessive
pref.	prefix
prep.	preposition
pron.	pronoun
refl.	reflexive
rel.	relative
sing.	singular
subj.	subject
sub.sc.	subjectival concord
suff.	suffix
trans.	transitive
UP	University Press
v.	verb
voc.	vocative
vol.	volume (s)

Acronyms

FS	Free State
OFS	Orange Free State
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Mission Society

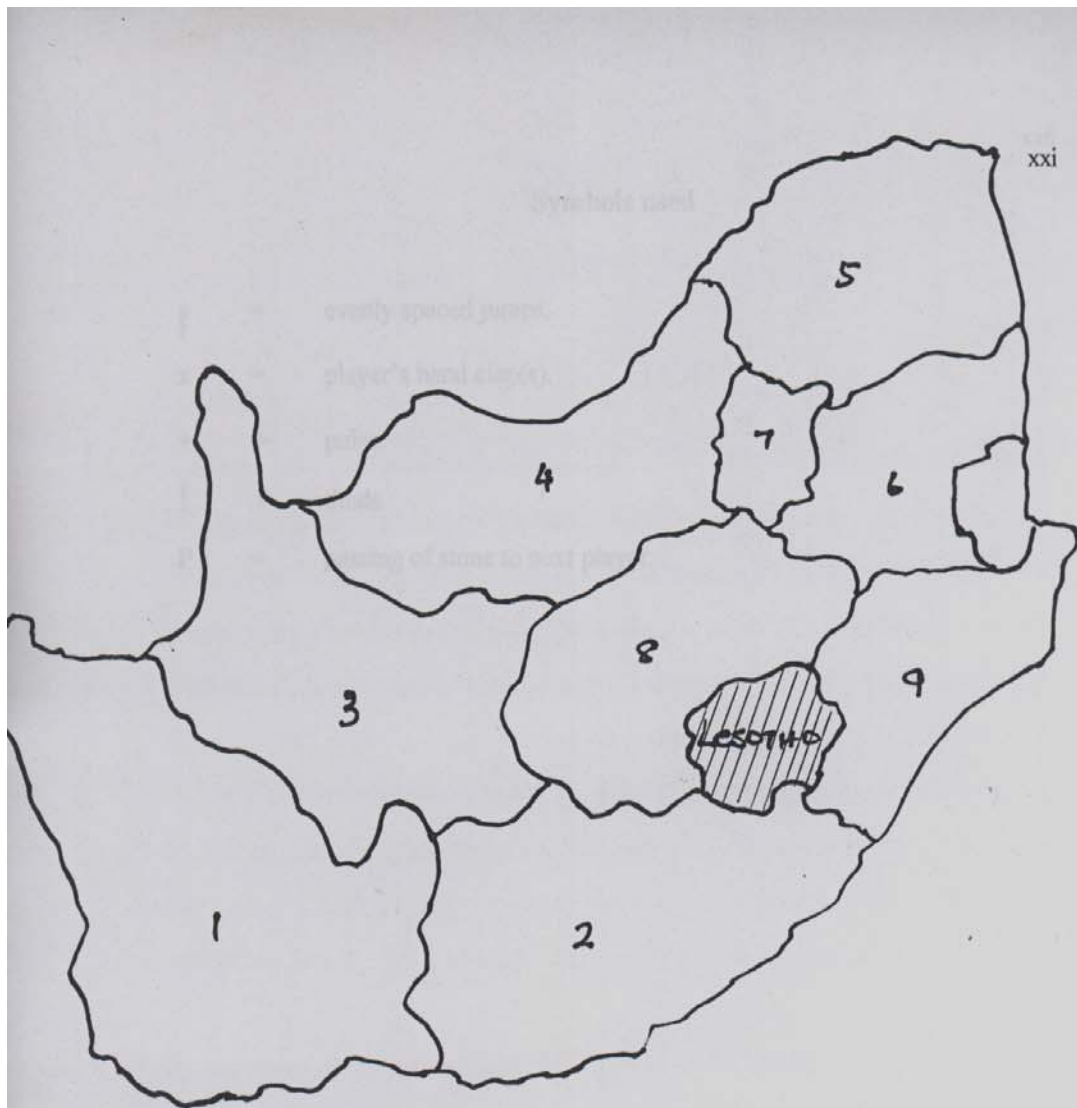
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The nine provinces of the new South Africa:

1. Western Cape Province.
2. Eastern Cape Province.
3. Northern Cape Province.
4. Northwest Province.
5. Limpopo Province.
6. Mpumalanga Province.
7. Gauteng Province.
8. Free State Province.
9. KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Map: Lesotho: showing geographical location in relation to the Republic of South Africa.

Symbols used

$\frac{x}{1}$	=	evenly spaced jumps.
x	=	player's hand clap(s).
+	=	pulse.
!	=	thuds.
P	=	passing of stone to next player.

PART A

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY

Independence in Lesotho (1966), once called Basutoland, was a gradual process since the arrival of the first European missionaries in Lesotho in 1833. As a result, many changes in the political, social, economic and religious spheres were affected. This small land-locked country that kept its culture intact is fast losing the traditions and customs it once cherished. The singing and playing of children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" are gradually receding into the background and being gradually superseded by Western ones. With the advent of keeping the Arts and Culture programmes alive in Lesotho and South Africa, it is imperative that the Sesotho language, its arts and customs receive attention.

By the term 'Basotho' is generally referred to the people or an ethnic group whose language is Sesotho. As the greater part of my research was conducted amongst this group, it is the children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" of the Basotho people of Lesotho that my research is focussed. At the outset, it is necessary to define (i) the Sesotho concept of "*lipapali* (play songs);" (ii) the Western idea of games and (iii) the concept of 'play' *verses* 'games' in order to lay the foundation for the understanding and interpretation of "*lipapali* (play songs)" or games.

(i) The Sesotho concept of "*lipapali* (play songs)" : According to Rev.

Mabille and H. Dieterlen (1974: 12), the word *lipapali* is derived from *ho bapala* (inf. to play, move about, to drill). Its noun derivative, *papali* (sing.) means trifle, performance, game, drama, comedy entertainment and sport and its verb, *bapala* denotes ‘to amuse oneself’ in a pleasurable activity that one can be engaged with or without any extrinsic goals or rewards in mind. Therefore, in its broadest sense, “*lipapali* (play songs)” includes any activity in the domain of children’s games. In addition, “*lipapali* (play songs)” may include children’s chants recited on a monotone; actions or gestures may or may not be present; dialogues and recited African chain-rhymes. “*Lipapali* (play songs)” could also encompass *mantloane* (lit. little houses) which are make-believe actions of children imitating adult activities such as cooking with miniature pots. They are a form of amusement and are clearly useful in education for they are primarily meant to teach a child. Therefore, it is important to note that not all “*lipapali* (play songs)” involve the notion of entertainment or amusement. On its own, *lipapali* broadly means entertainment or recreation, but a careful examination of it reveals that the concept also embraces learning with reference to Basotho children.

When these “*lipapali* (play songs)” are strictly confined to children, they are designated as *lipapali tsa bana* (lit. games of, for or about children). Basotho children’s repertoire of songs form an integral part of their “*lipapali* (play songs)”. See Adams (1974: 93-97) for a further meaning of the term *lipapali*. He (1974: 160) states:

Schematically, games are the actualizations
(expressions/explanations) of personal and collective

experiential understandings (*kutlo*). The close relation between concept, process and product is illustrated by the apparently circular definition of songs (*lipina*) as ‘things which are sung or things which are composed/created/ constructed by people’ (*ke lintho tse binoang kapa li tse qapjoang ke batho*) . . . In this way, games both stand for and communicate cultural ideas.

In most African societies, because of the division of labour, there are separate games for girls, boys and those for special occasions or activities. The “*lipapali* (play songs)” I have chosen do not include boy’s and girl’s initiation songs, for the Basotho do not conceive these as belonging to the category of *lipapali tsa bana* (children’s games). However, the element of song, performance or action, a bouncing rhythmic pattern (which is conceived as ‘music’) generally form part of Basotho children’s *lipapali* (games). For the purpose of this study, I shall use the phrase “*lipapali* (play songs)” (for short) to connote *lipapali tsa bana ba Basotho* (Basotho children’s folk games and those that are recited to a regular rhythm), as it best describes the genre in all its characteristics in the culture of the Basotho.

Gomme (1894, 1898) believed that ‘children’s games originated in adult customs; that children imitated the games from the adults and then maintained them intact over the centuries by virtue of their “dramatic faculty.” This supports the idea that Sesotho traditional songs are an integral part of Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” and are passed on by adults to children and deliberately taught from simplifications of adult music making. Whether the songs are made by children or adults, the texts and underlying myth usually emphasise the behaviour the song-maker or song-teacher expects of the song-learner. There are also modern songs composed by children in traditional form

but recount contemporary events. These are, in most cases, associated with some kind of physical movement in the form of mime or dance.

Basotho children's singing, dance and "*lipapali* (play songs)" are generally communal in performance and the process of socialisation partly takes place through singing, dancing and the playing of these genres. Through socialisation and folklore, their customs and culture are learnt. The essence of most "*lipapali* (play songs)" is the cultural and traditional principle of cooperation. They are often integrated with music, are, for the most part used as a vehicle for bringing about solidarity and have some underlying educational aspect (See PART C). Though the children themselves perceive their activities which they regard as "*lipapali* (play songs)" to be recreational, these are, in fact, valuable aids in developing skills needed in adult life.

(ii) The Western idea of *games*: According to Funk and Wagnalls (1945: 479) the term game denotes:

- a contest for recreation or amusement, a jest, joke, sport, a point in certain games of cards, added to the score of the leading player;
- athletic contests, especially those held at stated times, for example, the Olympic Games;
- the number of points that must be scored to win a match, as, '100 is the *game*'; and
- success in any match, as, 'the *game* is yours.'

In addition to Funk's definition, Collins English dictionary (1992: 633) defines a *game* as:

- a contest with rules, the result being determined by skill, strength or chance;
- a style or ability in playing a game, for example, 'he is a keen player but his game is not good.'

Figuratively, *game* also denotes any object of pursuit or a person or thing aimed at. Yet, linguistically, the word resembles *gambol*, denoting a 'skipping about in sport or to caper playfully' which embraces the idea of amusement. Furthermore, there is a common aspect in that both adults and children use the same term *game* to denote some degree of recreation on the part of the participant(s). The West distinguishes the term *games* which may be played by children and adults, for example, game songs, (those games accompanied with music); play songs (a collective Western term to embrace children's folk games/game songs and action songs (songs accompanying an action such as *Here we go round the mulberry bush* (No. 6) and action chants like the number-learning recitation, *One, two, buckle my shoe* (No. 7). These have 'built-in instructions for the actions required' (Opie 1997: 215), but the latter does not contain any music. Some children's games in the West contain an element of competition in which a reward is given to the winner whereas in Sesotho culture, this is not the case.

(iii) The concept of 'play' *versus* 'games': As *play* can be synonymous with

game (as a form of recreation), this section will elucidate the concept of game. Children the world over engage in *play* which is a pleasurable activity that is generally devoid of extrinsic goals. Its concept is universal as both man and animals engage in *play*. Kittens, lion cubs and puppies play, chase one another and sometimes fight in jest as a form of recreation. Hence, the purpose and quality of *little* children's *play* is that it is unharmful but there are no rules that govern it as found in games, for their *play* is an activity that is spontaneous, voluntary and recreational. Prim (1995: 150) observes that ' . . . games rule out the ambiguity and spontaneity of *play* (i.e., there is a contrast between the rigidity of games and the flexibility of play.' It is, therefore not surprising, that the phrase "It's just child's *play*," conjures up the notion that the activity is easy and should not be taken seriously.

Regarding the function of children's play in learning, *play* is an important preparation for many aspects of adult life. It may be educational in that children can emulate adult activities such as adult household chores. The essence of children's *play* is that '*play* is considered to be devoid of organised structure and contrasted with serious thought, which is always ordered' (Piaget 1951: 147). His investigation into *symbolic play* has laid the foundation for further scholarly investigation into the various kinds of children's *play*. Herron and Sutton-Smith's (1971: vii) notion, as early as the seventies, was that 'The study of children's play . . . has never been an organised focus of attention in science.'

However, later scholars took a vigorous interest in children's *play*, for example, Bretherton's (1984: 213) discussion on *play* provides a 'window into the otherwise invisible inner worlds of children'; Bjørkvold (1989: 22-24) sees *play* in three ways, namely, traditional (children's rules are scarcely changed

over a period of time); open (play is fantasised and improvised) and original (where play is individualistic and needing no company). Slade's (1995: 2-3) theory of Projected Play and Personal Play is that the latter 'is going to be for all future forms of learning and study'. Sawyer's (1997: 174) theory of Metapragmatic Negotiation is that 'play contributes to development through collective improvisational process.' Johnson (1999: 1) has come with different view points that conceptualising *play* is difficult to define. With regard to early childhood development, he states that 'play makes important contributions to all aspects of child development . . . but it remains subordinate to work.' Mans, Dzansi-McPalm and Agak (2003: 195) note that 'Within the broad African context, many music and dance activities are referred to in local languages as 'play'. . . play in Africa is not only an activity for children, but for adults as well.'

In terms of concepts Keil (1979: 26-27) said: "There are at least two obvious reasons for studying the musical terminology of another culture . First, the exercise serves to move some of the biases . . . and second, it opens the door to communication and plunges one into the problematic worlds of translation, semantics, concept-definition, aesthetics."

European scholarship has tried to understand the aesthetic experience of certain non-Western terminology, both musical and otherwise, in the context of their European cultural values. A case in point is the Akan word *agro* for play and for music 'which are one and the same' (Addo 1996: 14) and Stone's description of the Kpelle term *pêle* which she says: 'glosses certain music events as well as . . . human behavior including games. Music may be *pêle*, but not all music is *pêle* nor, as in the case of games, is all *pêle*, music' (1982: 1).

Bebey (1975: 8) commenting on the role of children's musical games as a form of musical training, shows that 'every conceivable sound has its place in traditional African music whether in its natural form as it is produced by the object or animal in question or reproduced by an instrument that imitates them as faithful as possible.'

Like most languages and cultures, the meaning of a word or phrase should be viewed in its cultural context. The Sesotho concept of to *play* (lit. *ho bapala*) can have its focus on music. The sentence 'I *play* the guitar' (*Ke bapala kitara*) denotes that the person can perform on the specific musical instrument. The same expression in Sesotho would be: "*Ke letsa kitara*" (I cause the guitar to sound) and this will have its focus on music because of the object, guitar. However, the verb *ho letsa* differs from *ho bapala* (to play) because it has that inherent meaning of "causing to resound/playing a musical instrument". In music, *seletsa* (n. sing.) denotes *any* musical instrument and *liletsa* (n. plur.) but in the context of *tsepe*, *letsa* means strike, ring a bell or instrument (*letsa tsepe*) means 'to strike or ring the bell or instrument'. This best describes the Sesotho notion of *letsa*.

The nearest Sesotho translation of 'to *play* in this context, "Do you *play* music?" (lit. *Na, u bapala 'mino?*) suggests in English the playing of a musical instrument in this context *Letsa pina* (lit. play a song) usually instrumentally. Yet, in the field of Western music, one does not say: "I play the *music* of Bach;" rather, in musical jargon, it is: "I play Bach" (*Ke bapala Bach*) which has the inherent meaning of playing the music of Bach.' Outside the context of music, *liletsa* means any instrument as in *Ngoana o bapala le seletsa se bohale* (the child *plays* with a sharp instrument). *Bapala le lese* (lit. *Play with*

the baby). Here, *bapala* is derived from *papali* (game), amusement/entertainment.

The reader will note that the concept of ‘to play’ or ‘play’ and to ‘strike an instrument/musical instrument’, depends on the object of the sentence to give meaning and clarity to the action.

A. Statement of the Problem

The research problem underlying this project is that very little in-depth study has been undertaken with regard to Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs).” Up until now, no major ethnomusicological work has been produced on Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” that consists of its recording, notation and analysis. One would have no idea of how the game songs are sung. As Lesznai (1961: 54) recalls Bartók’s words that the ‘ideal collector of folksong must be a true historian . . . He needs to be a sociologist . . . and above all, he must be a musician, with a good ear and a talent for observation.’

Very often, people tend to take Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” as games primarily meant to entertain children, but a serious study of them may reveal historical data as well. Hence, my purpose was to research by whom they are sung perhaps.

There are special songs for boys and/or girls or for very young children and why they were sung; when they are sung (for this depended upon the cycle of seasons, for example, winter, summer, harvesting, etc.) or some games are played to the accompaniment of songs. Finally, regarding the importance of the text(s), there could be some phrase(s) or expression(s) that referred to

some custom or belief.

B. Aim of the study

The purpose of folk music studies, especially children's songs and games is three-fold: (1) they are collected, recorded and systematised for purely ethnomusicological studies. (2) Following the examples of prominent and internationally renowned educationists such as Zoltan Kodaly and Carl Orff, folk music studies are used for music education programs. (3) Therefore, in recording and analysing the texts and music they could give us a deeper insight into the patterns of culture, behaviour and history.

Sesotho researchers such as Segoete (1915, repr. 2001), Motsatse (1950), Tladi (1972), Tsiu (1977) and Sekese (1983), to name a few, approached Sesotho children's songs and *lipapali tsa bana* (lit. children's games) from the angle of literature. They did not record (tape) or provide musical transcriptions and analyses of the games and their songs. Hence, the reader had no inkling of how the songs were to be sung (or played on a musical instrument) despite references made to the two genres in their writings. One had to rely on the notated musical collections of some of the early twentieth century European missionaries in Lesotho, for example, Norton (1963). Cf. B. Aim of the study. Besides placing the children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" in their cultural setting, it is my aim to record, notate and analyse them for future posterity. This dissertation is three-fold:

Firstly, it aims at making a scientific contribution to Southern African

ethnomusicological research. In this regard, it is acknowledged that many studies were undertaken to collect and systematise indigenous southern African folk music. Some ready examples of such collections, to cite a few, include Huskisson's *Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi* (1950); Blacking's *Venda Children's Songs* (1967); *Sangbundel* (1979), (a collection of Afrikaans folk music by the Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging (FAK)); Weinberg's *Zulu Children's Songs* (1980); Joseph's *Zulu Women's Music* (1983); Dargie's *Xhosa Music* (1988) and Wells's *An Introduction to the Music of the Basotho* (1994).

Secondly, the dissertation aims at showing that the idea of music in Western children's games and game songs, is foreign to Sesotho culture. The idea of Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" does not only include songs (plur. *lipina*), it includes games and recitation games (or speech songs) with or without gestures.

Thirdly, this dissertation aims at showing that these children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" are not only meant to entertain or amuse children; they are valuable aids for learning and developing skills needed in adult life.

C. Scope

The scope of this study does not include all Basotho music but primarily focusses on the traditional genres of games (*lipapali*) that Basotho children play. The reason for this is that African children are not only good participants but good imitators as well. Hence, it is not surprising to find some of their songs and games being culled from adult music and work songs to suit their

fancy.

D. Methodology

Initially, my focus was only on Basotho children's songs which I collected in the 1980s but as I discovered that the games (which formed part of some songs), had more substance than the songs, it was then that I changed to Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)." The material for my thesis was collected and written down between the years 1995 and 2002, with the majority of the material emanating from my childhood experiences. Visits were made to Lesotho especially during university vacations (July and/or December) and during my sabbatical leave in 1999.

The main research methodology was by personal interviews. My knowledge of the customs and orthography immensely facilitated my field research in obtaining data. Furthermore, I had the advantage of having a background that was helpful in the understanding of the content and meaning of certain things as the people understood it since Sesotho is my mother tongue and Lesotho is a country that has one national language, Sesotho. My analyses were both from an emic as well as an etic point of view and wherever I went, I was not treated as an outsider because of my ancestral roots in Lesotho. Therefore, an interpreter was not necessary. However, one should be mindful of the fact that one cannot claim to know all about one's customs and culture because there are certain things that are never revealed to women in African culture. Finer nuances of meanings were always double-checked. Some Primary and secondary sources were obtained on early Sesotho literature, grammar books and dictionaries by missionaries. As the materials are mainly oral, written texts

were extremely few.

Some of the children's "*lipapali* play songs" that were collected, were filmed on video which were indispensable tools in facilitating the recordings, conversations and songs that very often aided my respondents and me in detecting what were variants or aspects of folklore and customs. Discussions, especially with the aged, were tape-recorded. By their age and time-span, they were able to give the relevant information and historical background of some of the games they played. They were able to guarantee the authenticity of this genre where necessary. By interviewing these people, one was able to find different styles and/or texts of songs and games that were influenced by the time factor. However, those respondents who did not wish to sing, were not compelled to do so. Respondents who were interviewed also comprised little children and youths as well in both rural and urban settings such as schools and homes. As children were not used to being tape-recorded, initially, it was often problematic to arrive at a good recording. So attempts had to be made a number of times until I was satisfied. There were occasions when performances of children were not exactly as the first rendition but with a little coaxing by the older children or parents, they were instructed to be natural without any desires to impress us. Though variants in texts were a natural phenomenon, this did not perturb me for they gave me a better insight for purposes of comparing renditions between one village and the other.

Some school principals and teachers (some retired) who shape the destiny of school music and the school curriculum; academics and linguists; childhood friends and relatives were extremely helpful and always ready to assist for they also played and knew some of these "*lipapali* (play songs) which brought back

many memories of our childhood. The research methodology also included the transcription of the game songs and analysis and classification of the repertoire.

Visits were also made to urban areas such as Maseru and Teyateyaneng, (to name a few), and institutions such as the National Teachers Training College and the Montessori School in Maseru; the Morija Museum and Archives in Morija and the libraries of the National University of Lesotho and the Institute for Southern African Studies (ISAS) which are both situated at Roma, Lesotho.

Problems encountered in the field: As some roads are not tarred in the rural areas, it was often problematic to reach certain areas due to the rocky terrain in most parts of Lesotho. To minimise these transport problems, I had to hire 4 by 4 vehicles from local peoples and seek assistance from those who were in a position to accompany me to places and homes suggested by them.

During winter, in areas where snow prevailed, it was necessary for me to research those cultural games which were meant to be played in doors after chores were done. Some respondents were not keen to be taped when asked to sing because of shyness.

Ideas and concepts suggested in Blacking's two articles (1967: 16, 17) and (1976: 33), are incorporated in my study with regard to the definition of "songs" and music. Readers who are acquainted with his definitions are in a better position to understand the Mosotho child's concept of 'music'.

It would assist readers whose mother-tongue is not-Sesotho, to examine the Introductions to Mabile and Dieterlen's (1974) and (1988) editions which

discuss the Lesotho and South African orthographies and phonetics, respectively. To obtain the correct pronunciation of the Sesotho language, readers are advised to approach a native speaker of the language. Phonetic symbols have been omitted but diacritics used in Appendix 1 which are relevant to that section regarding Sesotho tones.

E. Background to the study.

The Basotho are found in the kingdom of Lesotho which is a young country compared to the developing nations, yet, at the same time, it is centuries old. They are a patrilineal, patriarchal and virilocal people who belonged to a preliterate and preindustrial society whose contact with the missionaries from Europe, especially France and Canada, changed some of their traditions, customs and laws which have been developed over many centuries. Coplan (1994: 3) states that ‘by Sesotho they (the Basotho) meant far more than their “language and culture.

The geographical characteristics of Lesotho, then Basutoland, contributed a great deal in the historical development of the country. The mountains silently played a role in sheltering the Basotho people in times of war. *Thaba Bosiu*, (lit. Mountain at Night) which the Basotho formerly called *Qiloane*, played an important role in their history. Legend and belief amongst them surrounds the origin of this mountain, for not only is it revered as a shrine, it is the ‘burial place of great Basotho chiefs’ (Becker 1982: 18).

The modern Lesotho, which is located in the south-central part of the Republic of South Africa, shares borders with the following provinces namely, the Free State (formerly known as the Orange Free State) in the north west, KwaZulu-

Natal in the north east and the Eastern Cape in the south. Along the eastern side are the picturesque stretch of the Drakensberg mountains which set a boundary with KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape Province.

Lesotho is an economically poor country and with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley (1867) and gold on the Witwatersrand (1886), a new industrial era for South Africa had ushered in. Through the establishment of the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) of Johannesburg in 1911, many Basotho adult male workers could not resist being recruited to work mostly underground in these two rich mines as migrant workers. For the disastrous effects on Basotho family life, see Coplan (1980).

Lesotho is a ‘small kingdom in the sky’. Because of this, it is known as the “mountain kingdom”; the “mountain in the sky” or the “magic mountain kingdom.” According to the Lesotho Review (1988: 3-5), this tiny kingdom is unique in some respect and boasts of some distinctive features:

- “It is the only country in the world with all its land more than 1000 m above sea-level, its lowest point being 1388 m.
- It has the highest average altitude in the world,
- the highest landing strip (over 3000 m) at *Letseng-la-Terae*,
- the highest sandstone formations at *Sehlabathebe*, . . .
- has one of the largest dam structures south of the Limpopo, the *Katse*

Dam.

- The remote rugged ranges of *Maluti* are well over 200 million years old . . . imprinted with the fossilised steps of dinosaurs, with prehistoric skeletons abounding. Dinosaurs' footprints can clearly be seen at *Qalo*.
- The *Libihan Falls* on the Maletsunyane River in central Lesotho . . . has the highest straight drop fall (193 m) in southern Africa.
- Southern Africa's highest mountain is *Thabana-Ntlenyana* (3482 m)".

Lastly, Lesotho 'shares with the republic of San Marino, the distinction of being one of the only two countries in the world to be entirely enveloped by another country, to have no access to the exterior except through that country, and thus by that country's grace and favor'. Coates (1966: 1)

It was only between 1815-1820 when Moshoeshoe, the founder of the Basotho nation, played an important role in moulding his nation from the remnant clans who crossed his paths. that the Basotho nation was born in 1829. On the advice of a Griqua hunter, Adam Kok, Moshoeshoe enlisted the help of the peace-making protestant missionaries from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) who taught the Basotho to read and write. The missionaries also made it possible for the Basotho to read Christian literature such as Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' which was translated into Sesotho with the title *Leeto la Mokreste* ('The Journey of a Christian'). The PEMS newspaper called *Leselinyana la Lesotho* ('The Little Star of Lesotho') was established and appeared in Lesotho making it the first of its kind in southern Africa. Both

Protestant and Catholic missionaries provided the Basotho with institutions of learning, hymns in Sesotho and the structure of the Sesotho orthography.

Moshoeshoe requested British protection against Boer advances from South Africa. In 1868, Queen Victoria of England annexed Basutoland. In response to the nation's request for Independence in 1965, Basutoland became the Kingdom of Lesotho on 4 October 1966 under Moshoeshoe's great, great, great great grandson, Moshoeshoe 11.

For more information on the history of this group, readers are advised to read some of the following works: Casalis (1861), Lagden (1909), Ellenberger (1912) (repr. 1992), Kunene (1971), Sanders (1975), Coplan (1980), Sekese (1983) and Gill (1993) to name a few.

F. Brief survey of Basotho music

First, I will give a brief survey of Basotho music as a backdrop to Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" from which the latter has, in some instances, drawn from some Basotho adult songs. It should be noted that in Sesotho and in most traditional African societies, 'the approach to music making as social and aesthetic experience is not confined to recreational contexts . . . but as social occasions on which a community or its members in some kind of kinship or associative relationship come together for the purpose of recreation, communal, about, celebrations of the life cycle, and other events, public ceremonies and rituals or community festivals' (Nketia, 1990: 15). The following Sesotho genres will also substantiate this:

One may find a brief song called a *lengae* (sing. an initiation song) which is

interspersed with the *lithoko* (Sesotho praise poems usually in poetry form). *Lithoko tsa makoloane* embrace some songs related to initiation schools. The *likoma* best illustrate the secretive songs sung by boys and girls undergoing initiation and this is aptly described by Guma (1980: 116) and his *Likoma* (1966).

Ceremonial songs include the *mekorotlo* (or men's war songs which were sung by warriors while marching to battle and the *mehobelo* (men's dance song) which are still danced to this day. These two genres are sung in recitative style with no defined regular rhythm. The *mokhibo* (from *khiba*, to sing while dancing on one's knees), though a recreational dance, is accompanied by songs sung by the *bale* (girl initiates) at the initiation school. These songs generally include reference made to duties and the preparation or expectation of marriage and motherhood. The *moqoqopelo*, a girl's dance song, is performed to the accompaniment of song. Girls or women now perform these two at ceremonial occasions and for competitions. (Note, *qoqo* is a dance of the Xhosa bearing no resemblance to the *moqoqopelo*).

Female traditional songs were the following: *Koli-ea-malla* (a plaintive song of death). Kunene (1971: 9) states:

There were times when the loss of a warrior by death was mourned by the women of the community in dirges in which they dwelt upon a forlorn state and bewailed their diminished protection.

This type of genre is also sung by a woman after the passing away of her husband, her loved male relative or male sibling who died, for example, in the South African mines. According to Pitso's (1997 175) definition, the deceased is a *mohale* or *leqhaoe* (warrior) who has died in the line of duty. Mohapeloa has composed a *Koli ea malla* (elegy) in which he captures the grave, sombre

atmosphere of this dirge in song, cf. His *Koli ea malla* (no. 53) from his second volume, *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (lit. beautiful things to hear and beautiful songs of Africa) (1980). This is witnessed in the widows of Basotho miners who die yearly in the mines of South Africa and mourn for their men folk in song.

In olden times, girls sang *lipina tsa mekopu* (lit. pumpkin songs) when the pumpkin harvest was plentiful. These were amusement songs for girls. Briefly, a group of girls from village A would visit the host group in village B where the former were entertained with dishes of pumpkins and mealies prepared for them by the host group. Each group sang its songs in the open field. The leader of the group would suggest a group to be visited and the same process continued. This genre has lost its appeal and is no longer performed as in days of old, although some of the songs are still kept alive in schools.

Work songs include, for example, the following age-old male activities of *ho pola mabele* (to thresh corn). See Mohapelo's corn-threshing song *U ea kae?* (Where are you going?) from his *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (Melodies and beautiful songs of Africa), (vol. 1, no. 1, 1953) in which he captures the slow rhythm and traditional Sesotho harmonies. *Ho sua mokhahla* (to stretch a cowhide) is found in his song *Chabana sa khomo* (from dim. *sechabana*, symbolising the small Basotho nation whereby the cow plays an important role in rituals and ceremonies), (vol. 1, no. 2 1953) also from this volume of songs. Other male work songs include *tsa ho tsoma* (about hunting); *tsa ho khoasa litali* (about hunting, especially field mice). Female work songs include some of the following: *tsa ho hlaola* (about weeding, hoeing); *tsa ho lema* (about planting); *tsa ho kotula* (about harvesting); *tsa ho sila* (about grinding, for example corn) and *tsa ho koeetsa ngoana* (about cradle songs or lullabies).

Lipina tsa mathuela (songs of healing by witchdoctors) are applied to both sexes, as men and women may indulge in these.

Litsomo (folk-tales) which were characterised by singing and audience participation and *lilothe* (riddles) were two genres, according to Casalis' (1861: 337) account, that 'entered largely into the education of the children.' See his musical transcription of the Sesotho folktale entitled '*Nale, Naletsana*' (lit. 'Star, little star') (1861: 344-353).

It is not surprising that some Basotho composers like Mohapeloa were inspired to base their composition on Sesotho folktales found in Jacottet's collection entitled 'The Treasury of Basuto lore', vol. 1, (1908). Ready examples are's *Tselane* (no. 19) and '*Mutlanyana* (no. 25) both found in his vol.1 (1953) and *Obe* (no. 63) in vol. 2, (1980) which is found in his collection of choral works entitled *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (Beautiful things to hear and beautiful songs of Africa). In his two collections, namely, *Khalima-Nosi tsa Mino oa Kajeno* (1951) and *Meluluetsa* (1976), Mohapeloa depicts his native Lesotho. *Lipina tsa Likolo tse Phahameng* (1895, reprinted 1938) a collection of European songs translated into Sesotho for the special use of schools. These could also be added to the literature of Sesotho songs.

Scully's 'Native Tunes Heard and Collected in Basutoland' (1931: 247-251) is a small collection of a number of miscellaneous Basotho tunes that were 'overheard from labourers in stores, gardens, stables, etc.' These tunes are written in staff notation with English titles but contain no texts. Some titles are: *A Call While Working*, *A Song in Honour of Chief Ma-Ma*, etc. Norton (1910: 310-16) in his commentary of twenty-three Sesotho songs he collected

in Lesotho, then Basutoland, does not give the reader a musical transcription of them. This collection entitled ‘Sesuto Songs and Music’ are mostly adult songs such as threshing, warrior songs, topical songs, etc.

Lifela tsa litsamaea-naha (lit. Songs of the migrant workers or inveterate travellers as they are sometimes called), is a genre distinct from *lithoko* and needs mention. These *lifela* (or chants) are oral literary genres depicting the Basotho male migrant workers’ inner thoughts and feelings that are expressed in poetry and song. Love and protest are some of the themes contained in *lifela*. A few studies that have been undertaken since the 1980's, we have the following writers who have admirably analysed this genre. They are Mokitimi (1982); Moletsane (1982); Mbekinyane (1992); Wells (1994) and Coplan (1987, 1994). Swanepoel (1993: 51) commenting on the difficulties encountered by a researcher when researching the *lifela*, (see his *Sefela sa Mphahasa Raboleka Kgosi*: “When praise becomes song”), states:

one has to deal with both music and words . . . i.e. music and poetry, each having developed not only its own interest, but also its own terminology even for features they may be sharing.

G. Literature review

As there are very few published and unpublished works on Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs),” it is not surprising that my review of Basotho literature on this genre is rather brief. Most authors have written very little on them and in most cases, they are treated in a passing manner. As I mentioned earlier,

Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" are sometimes integrated with song or may consist of just tunes. Casalis (1861: 344-353), as far back as the nineteenth century, managed to collect and musically transcribe two Basotho children's folktales (plur. *litsomo*) besides giving us the background of each tale. Segoete (2001: 19) does not give the reader a full description of the games he mentions but admits that 'Bana ke bona ba nang le papali tse ngata' (children are the ones possessing the many games).

He mentions the girls playing *mantloane* (lit. 'little houses') whereby they emulate adult activities in a make-believe fashion). In the evening, they entertain themselves with a game called *malalu* (games played by girls in the evening). Boys' engaged themselves in such pastimes of making "cows, goats, dogs and people with clay" as *lipapali* because boys found these pastimes very entertaining. Motsatse (1950) briefly describes the games Tau played with his play mates. Norton (1963) gives a brief background of a small selection of Sesotho and Zulu melodies which he recorded and notated in tonic solfa with English translations. Amongst this collection is a lullaby and a threshing song which 'is also used in a children's game with stones' and entitled "Khoashi". His fieldwork was undertaken in the then Basutoland. *Binang ka thabo* (1963) is a collection of Sesotho songs by various contributors in which there are seven traditional Sesotho songs (which are notated in tonic-solfa) and *lipapali* for little children. The songs are not treated in a scholarly way.

In his short novel, Tladi (1972) devotes one page to "*Lipapali*" in which he briefly describes three traditional Sesotho children's games. They are, *Se-qata-majoana*, a herdboys' stone-throwing game; *Ho neana liboko*, a girl's game to play at touch; *Senthee* (lit. give way/let me through). It is a circle game with a

player in the middle who has to escape). Masiea's (1974) work concentrates more on the linguistic side of *lipapali tsa bana* (lit. children's games) and makes no attempt to notate tunes that accompany the games.

Adams (1974) investigates the applicability and use of the structured play for fostering pre-cognitive and pre-linguistic skills of Basotho pre-primary children in Lesotho. He does not describe any "*lipapali* (play songs)". Tsiu (1977) devotes a section to Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" which are, for the most part, in the form of a dialogue between two children or two groups of children - one asks and the other replies. The dialogues are mostly recited in a rhythmic manner, thus conveying the concept of a speech song. Sekese (1983) attempts to devote a complete section to *lipapali tsa bana* (lit. games of/about children) but does not attempt to notate songs that accompany the children's games. He merely places and describes them in their cultural setting. In these few games, the reader is given insight into Basotho children's folklore and customs. Matsela's (1987) short work is simply a collection of Sesotho games and dances described in their cultural settings which are performed by children, youths and adults. Like the other Sesotho writers, he does not include the songs accompanying some of the games or dances such as *mohobelo*, *mokhibo* and *moqoqopelo*.

Wells (1994) gives a very brief account of Basotho children's song repertoire. He devotes a chapter entitled *Lipina tsa Bana* (Children's Songs) which mainly include dance songs of Basotho youths such as the following girls' dance songs: *moqoqopelo*, *mothonthonyane* and *lipina tsa mokopu* (lit. 'pumpkin songs'). Finally, *liphotha* (to wind something round the legs) are boys and girls' dance songs. He concludes with a *tsomo* (a folk tale song). It will be observed that

games accompanying songs for children are absent in this source.

H. Definition of terms that could be misunderstood:

- **Basotho** (plur.): The peoples of Lesotho, Free State, the Gauteng area and in some parts of the Eastern Cape who speak Sesotho and refer to themselves as Basotho. (My thesis concentrates on the Basotho of Lesotho). See ‘Sesotho’ below.
- **child development:** is a function of both maturation and environmental experience.
- **children’s games:** in the Western sense denotes any object of pursuit, measurement of skill or winning or losing and this applies to adult games as well.
- **children’s play:** is a non-game without any competitive interaction. Its goals are open-ended.
- **folk games:** like folk songs are those which have ‘originated anonymously among unlettered folk in times past and which have remained in currency for a considerable time, as a rule for centuries’ (Krappe 1965: 153). Lack of authorship is the essence.

- **folk lore:** that part of culture which is disseminated through time and space by many processes including visual or oral transmission, imitation and repetition.
- **game songs:** a term only applicable to children. They are songs that merely accompany games but are subsidiary to the game while not affecting its structure, that is, of the game.
- **learning:** to acquire knowledge of or skill in something by observation, study or instruction, but not to teach. It implies a change in behaviour.
- ***lipapali* (play songs):** (plur. games/the games; sing. *papali*). Generally, they embrace children's games, entertainment, amusements or a recreational activity. With reference to Basotho children's games (lit. *lipapali tsa bana*), they embrace chants, melodies that are sung and/or recited in a rhythmic manner (speech songs) and *learning* as well.
- **oral transmission:** is information that is deemed necessary by a group of people, the folk, to be communally preserved and handed down orally from generation to generation. Lack of authorship is the ingredient.
- **play songs:** a collective Western term to embrace children's folk games that are sometimes integrated with music.
- **Sesotho:** also embraces the customs and characteristics of the Basotho and one may sometimes hear the following phrase or expression, *Ka Sesotho . . .* (In Sesotho . . .). Sometimes, the expressions *ka tloaele ea*

rona (as it is our custom or habit to say or do) or *mekhoa le meetlo ea Basotho* mean the ‘habits and customs of the Basotho.’ See ‘Basotho’ above.

- **traditional:** such as traditional songs, games and play songs are those handed down from generation to generation. (See oral transmission.)

Summary: This chapter has attempted to indicate that there is a need for further research into Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” that would include the recording, transcribing and analyses of this genre because some early Basotho writers and collectors were writing for readers of traditional Sesotho literature while others focussed on the customs of the Basotho. Probably, this is why they did not *focus* much attention on this genre. However, they laid its foundation for future investigation. One had to rely on the notated musical collections of some of the early twentieth century European missionaries in Lesotho.

In studying Basotho children’s folk games and the terminology used in the context of music, we discover that words and concepts applied in Sesotho take on a different meaning in the cultural context in which they are used. They are not translatable without distorting or losing their meanings and concepts. The difference lies with the terminologies used to describe certain cultural concepts concerning the phrases ‘to play,’ ‘to play music’ and ‘to play a musical instrument.’ As some of the comparisons are mine and are drawn from the culture of the Basotho, these terminologies need further musicological

investigation into other sub-Saharan cultures considering that ‘to strike’ and ‘to play’ each denote totally different things in the West.

Chapter 2

PURPOSES OF BASOTHO CHILDREN’S FOLK GAMES

Having discussed the Sesotho and Western concepts of “*lipapali* (play songs)” (or folk games) and ‘play’ in the previous chapter, the reader is in a position to understand the purposes of Basotho children’s folk games which are indigenous to their culture. These folk games reflect the cultural norms and values of the society, the cultural environment, Basotho children’s folklore, kinship structures, their cultural modes of telling us who they are, their gender roles and their oral ‘poetry’.

The styles of some of the “*lipapali* (play songs)” are indigenous to many sub-Saharan, African people, though some may have recognisable foreign influence which the Basotho have conceived as belonging to the Sesotho culture, hence, falling under the classification of *lipapali tsa bana ba Basotho* (lit. games of Basotho children).

A study of the collection of these children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” in my thesis will reveal that each genre has a distinctive purpose. By purposes, I mean the particular activity to be effected or attained and these can be found in the three processes of learning which comprise the cognitive, affective and

sensory or psychomotor domains. The cognitive briefly includes the symbolic, figural, semantic, memory and content qualities; the affective, the semiotic factors stimulating emotions, such as joy, disgust, hate, etc. and the sensory or psychomotor level includes bodily movements such as hand and eye coordination, sequential patterns of movements and endurance factors, to name a few.

Most of the “*lipapali* (play songs)” display some principles of learning (which I have briefly discussed above) with the involvement of the senses of taste, sound, sight, touch with the exception of smell. For example, ‘to smell’ or ‘smell’ (n.) in the game *Ea phintseng* (No. 21) is not a requirement on the part of each child. Granted, that when a child emits air, the sense of smell (aided by the nostrils) takes place but not as a rule of the game. It is in this sense that the author excludes the fifth sense of ‘smell’ on the basis of the sensory or psychomotor domains.

The child’s learning is usually associated with what one has previously known; the “*lipapali* (play songs)” offer participants a platform for discovering their self-worth, confidence and success. Repetition reinforces aspects of a “*papali* (play song)” to be played several times in order to gain the participants’ attention and store them in long-term-memory. The latter point can be achieved if the choice of an appropriate and selected game could aid in the acquisition of a skill.

The important objectives of these “*lipapali* (play songs)” (or children’s games) are to give children an opportunity to participate and bond, very often, in a good spirit of camaraderie. They:

- help develop discipline by bringing out the bad and the good in children for one either obeys or is out;
- call for physical gestures to give a clearer meaning of some aspect of a game;
- call for responsorial structures in the form of dialogues;
- require the participants' intellectual use of their faculties, skills, endurance and awareness of their surroundings by being exposed to the natural elements which are related to the seasons;
- allow children to exercise good judgment with regard to the spatial outlay of the place which will determine when, where and how the game is to be played; who joins, whether boys and girls or separate sexes, various age sets and the number of participants to play, etc.
- help children to perceive, imitate and fantasise. Piaget's (1929, 1930) observations of children's concept acquisition of space, time and causality in their world of fantasy and make-believe, is an important aspect in their games.
- are generally single focussed, brief and demonstrate a specific goal. Because little children have a brief retention span, so are their games which are participative and generally not dangerous;

- of which some lend themselves to modification and adaptation thus display children's ability to show their creativity without losing sight of the essence of the game.

Summary: The purposes of Basotho children's folk games showed, besides other factors, that they are valuable aids in developing skill; they are character-building and have a formative influence on child development in later childhood.

PART B

BASOTHO ‘MUSIC’ IN GAMES (play songs)

Cultures whose traditions are orally transmitted, for example, many African cultures, do not have a precise meaning for the word music. The Westerner is at a dilemma in comprehending the African’s idea of what it is and what it is not because its interpretation is foreign to the former.

Part B, attempts to illustrate broadly (with selected games and song games) what is understood and interpreted as music in Basotho children’s games. Firstly, Chapter 3 will be necessary to put in perspective the Western idea of ‘music’ with special reference to children’s games as non-Sesotho readers are generally acquainted with the Western idea.

Secondly, Chapter 4 will focus on describing a representative Sesotho game song which will allow the understanding of Chapter 5 with a discussion of the Sesotho idea of children’s ‘music’ in their games.

Furthermore, Chapters 3 and 5 will also allow the reader to make comparisons with examples between the Western and Sesotho ideas of music in children’s games.

Chapter 3.

THE WESTERN IDEA OF ‘MUSIC’ IN CHILDREN’S GAMES

The concept ‘music’ is difficult to define in most cultures. This chapter briefly describes the actions of children’s games though not what music in the West is. The word ‘music’ is derived from the Greek words *musike techne*, “that is, the ‘technique of the Muses.’” The Ancient Greeks well understood its value. In Grecian mythology, Orpheus, a legendary musician and inventor of the lyre, saw the power of music. With his lyre he charmed wild beasts and moved trees. In other words, ‘Music could alter the disposition of those who hear it. They (the Greeks) acknowledged its power to soothe, to distract, to cheer, to excel, inflame, to madden’ (West 1994: 31) and Sachs (1943: 324) notes the ‘consciousness of the medicinal and psychologically permeative powers of music’ in the ancient world, East and West.’

In the Middle Ages, music was subdivided into several categories within an Harmony of the Spheres such as *musica mundana* (“music of the universe”), *musica humana* (“harmony of body and soul”) and *musica instrumentalis* (“music as it is played”) etc. Only the last two categories were heard sounds.

Music in the West does not, in practice, permeate the whole course of human life as it does in Africa. A person reared in the European and North American tradition would not necessarily find the ‘song of a bird, the murmur of a stream and the peeling of the church bell as signifying beauty. Yet, such English metaphors as: ‘she sings like a bird’, or ‘her singing was as clear as a bell’, denote culturally accepted aesthetic expressions. The sound that emanates from these two metaphors, evokes in the listener’s ear pleasant and agreeable

sounds. The rhythmic clatter of the blacksmith's anvil and the unorganised peeling of the church bells, are deemed cacophonous. Musicians, for whom Charles Ives (1874-1954) occasionally played his compositions, commented: "It is not music", "It makes no sense," or "How can you like horrible sounds like that?" (Kamien 1988: 496). His music did not communicate very pleasantly to his listeners. In the West, the *acceptance* of a piece of music is not uniform to all who hear it; some sounds may be agreeable; others cacophonous. For this reason, 'music' in the Western sense is aesthetically evaluated and is generally understood to embrace pleasing sounds. In their games, Western children have the same idea as adults in their notion of what music is and what it is not (in their games), because the former have been reared in the same culture.

A few characteristics will assist the reader to observe that Western children's folk games and game songs, especially in British and North American traditions, *generally* exhibit the following characteristics: The music generally exhibits a four, eight or sixteen bar phrasing with simple and compound meters.

The speech rhythms are generally subordinate to the rhythm of the chant which exhibit a regular recurring pattern of sound, for example, all the verse rhymes except Nos. 4, 5 and 6 below. Textures are simple with very little dotted rhythms; text(s) may be simple with or without a melody which may be recited on a monotone.¹ Scale patterns are, for the most part, pentatonic and their ranges are generally not more than an octave.

Though other modes may be prevalent in children's game songs, for the most

part major and very few minor modes may be experienced, for example, *Three Sisters*, (Opie 1985: 263) and *This Way Hen-er-y* (1985: 402) show both minor. The form is generally divided into two parts with the second acting as a response to the first - or in an eight bar phrase, the third and fourth act as a response to the first and second bar. See *Romans and English* (No. 4).

Stanzas are generally short, clear-cut and written in a poetry-like style similar to the stanzas of the English and Scottish ballads. Most of them generally consist of four or five lines though five and six-lined stanzas do occur. They are mostly characterised by rhyme,² for example, *Eeny, meeny, miney mo* (No. 1) and *One, two, buckle my shoe* (No. 7). Rhyme is absent in *In Liverpool there is a school* (No. 2); *Thread the needle* (No. 3); *Romans and English* (No. 4); *Old man in the well* (No. 5) and *Here we go round the mulberry bush* (No. 6).

Repetition of words, notes and lines are a common feature, for example, *Thread the needle* (No. 3); *Romans and English* (No 4) and *Here we go round the mulberry bush* (No. 6). Meaningless or nonsense syllables in *Eeny, meeny miney mo* (No. 1) are ways in which children may lengthen the game for the sheer enjoyment a particular game gives.

These games like other children's games in the West, are accompanied by gestures which give meaning to their games. With this background, the reader can make a comparison with Sesotho children's *lipapali* (play songs) and what characteristics are evident in them. We begin with the first Western children's game with music.

MEANINGLESS-RHYME GAME

Game of counting-out:

1. Eeny, meeny, miney, mo.

Ee-ny, mee-ny, mi-ney, mo,
 Catch a bad thief by the toe,
 If he sque-als, let him go,
 Ee-ny, mee-ny, mi-ney, mo.
 And O-U-T spells out.

The above children's game is chosen for the meaningless syllables or "sound play" as Jakobson (1968: 69, 85-86) would describe it. It also displays British and North American children's love for duplication and assonance of words, for example, the first and fourth lines. Although, the Western child does not regard the verse as music for the simple reason that it lacks a melody (or tune), its catchy rhythm and non-sense syllables evoke some kind of musical language. In the context of a British or North American child, the above verse is one of many common and popular dipping³ verse rhymes to decide which player is to begin the unpopular task of starting the game. Many versions depend on the dipper (n.) such as *Eeny meeny* (No. 1). The dipping gesture is done in the following manner:

The game:

Children form a line or circle and count along the line the number of counts prescribed by the accented syllables such as the verse rhyme above. The last count in "OUT" that falls on the player, starts the game. This phrase "And O-U-T spells out" may be included or left out, thus, leaving a four-lined stanza.

However, this type of dipping is not sung but the rhyme, like the previous

examples, is chanted very quickly and rhythmically. For the sake of the reader, I have hyphenated the words to show the metrical accents. In this rhyme, there are seven syllables in each line of the stanza except the last and fifth line and accented at the same place in each line. The last line may be omitted depending on the dipper if she (or he) has secretly calculated on which line the verse will end and so avoid beginning the game.

RECITATION GAMES

Long-skipping rope game:

2. In Liverpool there is a school.

In Li-ver-pool
 There is a school
 And in that school
 There is a room
 And in that room
 There is a desk
 And in that desk
 There is a book
 And in that book
 There is A B C D . . .

This is a long-skipping rope game which could stand on its own as a recitation. The text is very simple. It is appropriate for the jumper who must not stop during the game until the end of the last line when the letters A, B, C, D are spelt, or counting 1, 2, 3, 4 is substituted. Then a special emphasis which is given to the last letter D or number 4 of the bump,⁴ when the jumper will exit. This gesture is logical for if the jumper falters, he or she is eliminated from the

game. So, the turners swings act as a metronomic gesture to maintain a march-like rhythm.

If the verse were set to music as an action game song , the first words of each line would act as an anacrusis, while the second and fourth words (in each line) will be accented and correspond to the turners' downward swings of the rope.

The downward swings will begin on the first and third beats, which correspond to the second and fourth words in each line.

Note, "Li-ver-pool" (the hyphens are mine), though being the second word in the first line, is regarded in this context as having three syllables. From a visual point of view, the words "Liverpool" and "school" rhyme but thereafter, there are no rhyming words. This does not perturb them as long as the regular rhythm and the purpose for which the game is intended are maintained.

3. Thread the needle.

Thread the needle, thread the needle,
 Eye, eye, eye;
 Thread the needle, thread the needle,
 Eye, eye, eye.

This is a very old fourteenth century Italian peasant dance which found its way to the British isle where children adopted it as a game. The Western child does not regard this children's game as 'music' simply because of the absence of a melody. Opie notes this adaptation in British children's games when she states: "Since the games are their own, they can play them with affectionate disrespect.

They can play with the games . . . making witty alterations in the word” (1985: 33).

The game:

Briefly, the players stand in a line and hold one another’s hands in a crisscross fashion. ‘The two players at one end of the line made an arch by each raising the hand with which they were linked, and, without anyone letting go of his neighbour, the player at the other end of the line ran through the arch and kept running until everyone in the line had been drawn through after him and the two players who made the arch were forced to twist round and follow. The two players in the lead now made an arch themselves, and the player in the rear, who formerly made part of the arch, doubled up to the front, bringing after him the rest of the line, which had momentarily been checked; and everyone passed under the new arch which in turn was pulled along at the end of the line until the new leaders who had first formed an arch, decided to make another one, and the tail once again raced forward to lead the way under it.’

Opie (1985: 33)

The verse is recited to a definite and boisterous rhythm while the children, in a gesture-like manner, ‘thread their way’ through the criss-crossed hands. Though the verse does not contain any rhyme (so prevalent in many British children’s verses), the brief repetitions, in alternate lines, give it a ‘dance-like’ rhythm. Furthermore, the children do not find the repetitions monotonous because the whole essence of the gestures is that every child should have a turn-the more the merrier.

CALL-AND-RESPONSE GAMES

The following two children's games, namely *Romans and English* (No. 4) and *Old man in a well* (No. 5) from Opie (1985: 280), serve to illustrate a Western children's call-and-response game, the first in stanza form with music and the other, not. It will be observed that Sesotho children's call-and-response games lack clear-cut stanzas which are prevalent in the West. My use of the term 'call-and-response' refers to the *structure* where the leader (or group) gives the call and the other (or chorus) replies. Both groups are engaged in dialogue.

Some Eastern folk musics are structured in the call-and-response style. With most African children's games, this form is prevalent where the soloist(s) (or lead singer(s) gives or give the call and the chorus responds, in some cases with the two parts overlapping. It is beyond the scope of this section to discuss the variants. [See Call-and-Response Games: as 'music' in Chapter 5.]

Beginning with *Romans and English*, it is a dramatic British children's game song in the form of a contest in which two groups of girls are engaged in dialogue. The game takes the form of pairs of stanzas containing four lines each in which, according to Opie (1985: 281), the girls 'advance and retreat as they sing alternate verses' that are neatly balanced throughout by a responsorial stanza and rhythm in the same vein.

4. Romans and English.

Dramatic game-song:

Romans:

English:



Have you an- y bread and wine, For we are the Ro - mans,
Yes, we have some bread and wine, For we are the Eng-lish,

Have you an- y bread and wine, For we are the Ro- man sol-diers.
Yes, we have some bread and wine, For we are the Eng-lish, sol-diers.

Fig.

1. A

song of contest in the form of a dialogue.

Romans: Have you any bread and wine,
For we are the Romans,
Have you any bread and wine,
For we are the Roman soldiers.

English: Yes, we have some bread and wine,
For we are the English,
Yes, we have some bread and wine,
For we are the English soldiers, etc.

Opie (1985: 280)

These gestures give the atmosphere of a contest of two opposing factions. The end lines in each of these two games are devoid of rhyme which is so prevalent in Western children's games. Repetition, for example, in the first and third

lines, so popular a device in children's games or game songs, is the main feature in each of these stanzas. As the verses are not recited but sung, Western children consider this game under the category of a game song or singing game.

5. Old Man in the Well.

Dramatic game:

Mother seeing the Old Man in the Well:

Mother:	‘What are you doing here?’
Old man:	‘Picking up sand.’
Mother:	‘What do you want sand for?’
Old man:	‘To sharpen my needles.’
Mother:	‘What do you want needles for?’
Old man:	‘To make a bag.’
Mother:	‘What do you want a bag for?’
Old man:	‘To keep my knives in.’
Mother:	‘What do you want knives for?’
Old man:	‘To cut off your heads.’
Mother:	‘Then catch us if you can.’

Opie (1969: 306)

This dramatic and sinister game which does not contain any stanzas, rhymes or music, is chosen to illustrate that some Western children’s games can take the form of a dialogue of a different kind in the call-and response style and in not containing any stanzas, rhymes or music. *Old Man in the Well* is an example. It is an old traditional game found in Britain and is a favourite with young children. Like the previous game, *Romans and English*, this game also comprises two opposing sides, namely, the Mother and her children (representing the ‘call’) and the Old Man (the ‘response’). It is characteristic of most chasing and catching games in which the person who is caught, replaces the role of the previous player. Whoever is caught becomes the next Old Man!

In this game, the dialogue is structured in the Mother's persistent questions: "What do you want . . . ?" which eventually infuriates the old man who answers her challenge: "Then catch us if you can." In such games, no props are needed but the old man's incremental gestures and dramatisation which culminate in the chase. Of importance are his dramatic replies which require the memorisation of his sequential responses to the mother's incessant questions, imagery and make-believe on the actors.

DIDACTIC GAMES

Imitating adult life in most cultures of the world, carries through into children's games. As Ault (1977: 183) contends, 'imitation and repetition are important aspects of learning' and Campbell's (1998) research also emphasises this aspect that children's learning is based on imitating their peers by observation.

Graham's (1911: 3, 11) version *Here we go gathering nuts* and *Here we go round the mulberry bush*, respectively, are from his forty-three traditional English nursery rhymes collected during the early nineteen hundreds. Like Opie's (1985: 286) version, *The Mulberry Bush* and Graham's *Here we go round the mulberry bush*, both are founded on the same tunes while exhibiting various adult domestic skills.

The skills enacted in the form of a Western children's game-song, instill the art of cleanliness in children and so becoming an educational tool of learning in their hands. Other skills may be added. The various game gestures are effective in displaying how each skill is performed with care. They are simple enough for those younger than the singers to grasp the fact that, for example, cleanliness is utterly important. Some of the gestures and skills are contained in the following lines: 'This is the way we clap our hands; . . . wash our clothes; dry our clothes; scrub the floors; wash one's face, hands, clean the room, etc.' Graham's *Here we go round the mulberry bush* (No. 15) is given below to show a gesture of imitation:

6. Here we go round the mulberry bush.

VOICE.

Key F. || d : d : d ld :- m | s : s : m ld :- d | r : r : r lr :- d | t, : s, : s, | s, :- :- }

Here we go round the mul-ber-ry bush, the mul-ber-ry bush, the mul-ber-ry bush,

PIANO:

p

|| d : d : d ld :- m | s : s : m ld :- m | r : m : r ld : t, : l, | s, :- :- | s, :- :- ||

Here we go round the mul-ber-ry bush, All on a sum-mer morn-ing.

|| r : r : r lr :- m | r :- t, | s, :- :- | s : s : s | s :- l | s :- m ld :- :- }

This is the way we clap our hands, This is the way we clap our hands,

|| f : f : m lf :- s | l :- t ld' :- l | s : l : s lf : m : r | d :- :- ld :- :- ||

This is the way we clap our hands, All on a sum-mer morn-ing.

cresc.

The tune is almost as well known by the name of the old English song "Nancy Dawson." The music is repeated to the words "This is the way we wash our clothes" (instead of "clap our hands"). For the third verse, sing "dry our clothes;" Fourth verse, "scrub the floors," adding suitable actions.

Fig. 2. An action song of mimicry.

7. One, two, buckle my shoe.

Game of number-counting:

<i>Participants:</i>	<i>Verse:</i>	<i>Number-counting:</i>	
Child A:	One, two ,	1	2
Child B:	Buckle my shoe .		
Child A:	Three, four ,	3	4
Child B:	Knock at the door .		
Child A:	Five, six ,	5	6
Child B:	Pick up sticks .		
Child A:	Seven, eight ,	7	8
Child B:	Lay them straight .		
Child A:	Nine, ten ,	9	10
Child B:	A big fat hen !		

In English and North American children's play songs, rhyme, as was observed in *Eeny, meeny, miney, mo* (No.1), is an important tool. In counting rhyme or number-learning verses, rhyming words and a regular rhythm often act as mnemonic tools in assisting a child to remember the sequence of rhyming lines.

First and foremost, the above verse can be recited either in unison or in dialogue fashion as shown without any melody to consolidate first the child's learning of the sequence pattern of the numbers. This can be more adequately achieved if the verse is chanted rhythmically from beginning to end, than if the verse were prose-like.

One, two, buckle my shoe has been included for the following reasons: (a) that the words at the end of each line rhyme; (b) memorisation, accompanied by the

child's (or children's) gestures, could be effected as a *dialogue* by Child A (or Group A) reciting the number sequence which regulates the rhythm of the verse while Child B (or Group B) carries out the gestures and instructions.

Although the two or four beat rhythm is the driving force in the verse, Western children would not consider it as music but simply a number-counting game to facilitate easy recollection and counting in the process of learning. Hear the Basotho children's 'rhyme' verse in *Mokali 'a thole* (Example 3, Appendix 1) where this lengthy narrative is recited in rhythmical fashion from beginning to end and without a break. The musical rhythm is considered by the children as music thus, assisting them in the memorisation of the sequence of events.

The reader should also compare *One, two, buckle my shoe* with the traditional Sesotho number counting games in *Ho bala menoana* (No. 27) and *Tlosa eo* (No. 28) where numbers in the Sesotho language clearly express the counting gestures.

CLAPPING-RHYME GAME

Game of accuracy:

8. Three, Six, Nine.



Fig. 3. Clapping-rhyme game recited on a monotone

Three, six, **nine**, the goose drank **wine**,
 The monkey chewed tobacco on the street car **line**.
 The line **broke**, the monkey got **choked**,
 And they all went to heaven in a little row **boat**.

Clapping games are games that most of us have played at some time or the other during our childhood or youth but not as a game song. It is still played today by young children, mostly girls as a form of whiling away the time or

gauging how fast they can perform it without faltering. I have seen girls at bus stops engaged in this game to while away the time until the bus arrives or during school break

in play grounds. One may conjecture that the reason for the game being chanted on a monotone and not sung to a melody, may be due to the fact that its performance requires a great deal of mental concentration, energy and speed.

Three, Six, Nine (collected by Opie, 1986: 449) is a humorous English children's clapping-rhyme game for two players. It is included here because of its peculiar features in that it is chanted on a monotone rather than being sung; it belongs to the domain of game songs. Its catchy quadruple metres are so reminiscent of most of the metres found in their games and game songs.

An interesting feature about this game is the sounds of the handclaps which, with a little imagination, could be substituted with sticks, stones or a percussive instrument thus heightening the 'musical' result which makes the game all the more challenging. Generally, claps as gestures not only lend meaning to children's games, they assist dancers or players in marking time and are a kind of metronome. See also Jones's (1959: 4) clapping game song.

Clapping patterns, according to Temperley (2000: 86), do not always indicate strong beats. Westerners would generally regard the first column in Fig. 5 as the strong beat while African-American and Africans would regard the first as an anacrusis and the second as the strong beat. The performance of the cross (+) in the first column may be left to the discretion of the players in deciding which is the strong beat.

1, 2, 3, 4	-	single strong beats.
RH (1)	-	right hands touch each other in crisscross (X) fashion.
LH (2)	-	left hands touch each other in crisscross (X) fashion.
BH (3, 4)	-	both hands touch partner's but facing outwards.
X	-	player's own hand-clap with palms facing each other.
+	-	pulses.

Fig. 4. Symbols of clapping game gestures.

+	1	+	2	+	3	+	4
	RH		LH		BH		BH
X		X		X		X	

Fig. 5. Basic clapping rhythmic pattern:

The game and its gestures:

This type of game is generally restricted to two players though it could be performed with more than two players, paired and seated or standing in a circle. Two children stand opposite each other and clap while they chant this verse. In groups of fours and beginning on an anacrusis +, player's clap their own hands at X. At beat **1**, with RH's, they tap each other's palms in a crisscross fashion; at the second +, they return and clap as before in a vertical position; at beat **2**, LH's tap each other's palms in a crisscross fashion; at beat **3** both hands touch partner's but facing outwards; at X they clap their own hands

and finally, at beat **4**, both hands touch partner's and face outwards again.

The x claps may start on **1** in which case the RH, LH and BH will shift to the + pulses. If this is the case, the claps will appear exactly under the numbers throughout the game while the rhythmic accents may change depending on the taste of the players. One should note that the players' gestures are synchronised with the rhythm of the claps which should be played quite quick while requiring the co-ordination of eyes and hands.

This is the basic design which many of us went through our paces in our youth and it is one of many variations that is played by children even to this day. Thereafter, variations may be invented. Some clap on their shoulders and then twice on each other's palms in a vertical position; or the hips or parts of the body depending on the whims and creativity of the players. But the claps remain constant throughout.

Summary: From the foregoing examples, Chapter 3 has indicated that not all Western children's games contain music; some are recited in a rhythmic fashion; or lend themselves to be chanted on a monotone rather than be sung. Hence, it is not surprising that such games are regarded by children as game-songs or singing games because of the musical and dramatic effects evoked by the speech rhythms, claps, accents and meaningless syllables. Verses with rhymes did not *necessarily* form the underlying basis on which the games were constructed. Be they non-sense, clapping-rhymes, dialogue or counting games, all are accompanied by appropriate gestures (created by the children

themselves) which are not only educative but are meaningful as well to those who perform them.

Endnotes:

- ¹ monotone : playing or singing one and the same note; unchanging.
- ² rhyme : In the English language, 'rhymeless' means 'without rhyme or reason', that is, without sound or sense and is neither pleasant to the mind nor to the ear. It also denotes the recurrence of similar sounds or words at certain intervals found in poetry in this case the children's verses.
- ³ dipping : is the method by which children, in a game, decide who is to begin.
- ⁴ bump(s) : these are letters or numbers which children utter at the end of the last swing in a long-skipping rope game to indicate to the jumper to exit.

Chapter 4.

A REPRESENTATIVE BASOTHO CHILDREN'S FOLK GAME

1. Malatalian'-a-tsela.

(A puzzle)

Children, the world over, sing, they cry, they laugh, they play. Games played in the form of circles, line games, games played with objects or things, are found in most cultures of the world and this is also true of Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)."

Many games found among the Bantu-speaking children are similar to those played by Western children. van der Vliet (1974: 223) notes that among the Bantu, hopscotch, hockey, hide-and-seek, cat-and-mouse, clap hands, Ring-O-Roses, all exist in varied form and seem to be found around the world. However, one cannot ignore that Basotho children have their own traditional and indigenous games peculiar to their culture. One will now be discussed.

Of all the games in Sesotho, *Malatalian'*¹-*a-tsela* ² (or as it is sometimes colloquially called *Malataliana* for the sake of brevity), is the most popular and therefore a representative game-song. It is known throughout Lesotho by young and old, though slight regional variations in words and notes may occur.

However, the rhythm of the song is the same throughout the entire country except for very slight variations, and the melody I have transcribed is representative. *Malataliana* is presumably devoid of any foreign influence regarding its structure and melody and is practically known for its complexity and educational value in testing and training a child's memory. It is not surprising that the Basotho have adapted this game-song both as a children's counting song and as a circle game with the same melody. The latter two will be discussed later.

(a) Origin of Malatalian'-a-tsela:

There have been various interpretations to the origin of *Malatalian'-a-tsela* which uses a number of metaphors. Sekese (1983: 122-123) observes that this ancient game started when the title of respect for "rree" meaning *ntate* (Sesotho for father or sir) had not yet been used by the originators of the game. Hence, the reader will notice the ancient use of the word "rree" or "rree-moholo" to mean *ntate* or *ntate-moholo* (grandfather) respectively in Sesotho. In Setswana, *Ra* also denotes 'father'. Sekese notes that the Sesotho language that is spoken today by the Basotho, is derived from the Bafokeng group; it is not the language of the Bakoena.

According to Mabile and Dieterlen (1974: 198), *malataliana* (n. plur.) is a "riddle, puzzle"; also *malataliana-tsela* or *malataliana-thole*.³ Another possibility of its origin could be the Sesotho word *malelate* (n.) meaning a "second person in a game; one following another in a game (from *ho latela*)" (Mabile and Dieterlen, 1974: 198).

The Sepedi version titled *Mmanthadile-a-tsela* also means a puzzle and 'a

crooked path' (Kgobe, 1997: 44). It shows great similarity with the Sesotho version in that the Sepedi phrase and action "*Khurumolla o bee fase* ("uncover and put down") in the game, are the same with its Sesotho counterpart, "*Tlhatlolla⁴ u re qiti!*"⁵ (Undo and place aside!). See also van Zyl's (1939: 293-305) version of the Sepedi game also entitled *Mmanthadile-a-tsela* (lit. 'Mother of the one who leads the way'). According to his account, this version was played with *matseke* (which are Bapedi women's wire bangles worn round their ankles) and pebbles or stones. It is likely that this ancient game could have been shared with the Sotho groups at one stage in history.

(b) The social importance of Malatalian' -a-tsela:

It is a well known fact that music is *generally* an integral part of African and Basotho children's folk games. *Malatalian' -a-tsela*, was a memory game-song that was often indulged in by older children. Children acting as 'referees' formed part of the audience because the game required intense surveillance of the two players. This game was generally played to while away the time in the courtyard, a large open space or while herding animals. Due to the influence of schools, the game is played in the school grounds because these offer wider spaces than the confines of the home. A larger space also contributed to the popularity of the game in that the child as contestant was put to the test in the presence of spectators who acted as judge.

When the harvest of mealies was done, mealies were used by children as counting objects, for example, in *Malatalian' -a-tsela*. The game was usually played during the season of winter and spring when mealies were plenty. Outside these seasons, stones, pebbles or seeds from trees were generally used though this did not necessarily mean that these were not used. It simply meant

that these objects could be substitutes for mealies or grains. Nowadays, the game is not restricted to any particular season but may be played at all times during the year.

I could not establish when *Malatalian'-a-tsela* as a memory game became a children's counting game-song. Due to the brevity of the counting game-song, the home and court yard served its purpose for little children to indulge in this “*papali* (play song)” when their parents or caretakers were free from their chores.

(c) Objectives of Malatalian'-a-tsela:

As Basotho children grew a little older, parents required of them to observe, recall and report events in a chronological manner as if they were little messengers. To give a haphazard report was not received kindly without some admonition. In order to carry out this effectively, children needed to have a sharp memory and one way to instill this was in the game of *Malatalian'-a-tsela* whereby they were taught to count with the aid of mealie cobs or pebbles.

Basically, this game had two main objectives, namely, to sharpen the child's memory and practice in subtracting and adding. *Subtraction* is necessary where the game tests the child's mental skill in sequentially *recalling*, each time, the number of spaces left when a stone has been removed. *Addition* is needed in knowing at various stages of the game how many stones have been put aside or collected in order to arrive at the command: “*Tlhatlolla, u re qiti!*”. This presumed that one should have a mental picture of the empty spaces and has mentally added the X number of stones.

The line denoting the *Pitsana*⁸ *ha e na khobe*⁹ (lit. the little pot without a grain) are mere symbols and names that assist the child to associate these with a situation she or he sees in everyday domestic life. *Malatalian'-a-tsela* can be played in three ways, as a memory game, a counting game as well as a stone-passing game; each of these will be discussed:

(d) Malatalian'-a-tsela: as a memory game.

Parents or tutors' used mealie cobs or little stones (because of their accessibility) as teaching aids. As it would be cumbersome to use pots, stones were and are generally used. cf. Krige's (1985: 78) version of the Zulu children's game song where mealie grains are 'supposed to represent different birds'. The child must be able to think of as many birds as will get him through the whole row of mealies.' However, a tune is mentioned but not given.

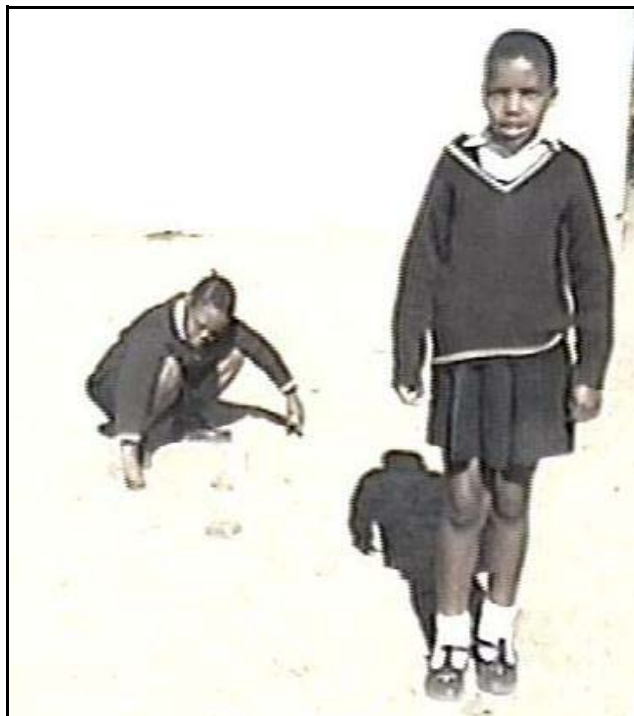


Plate 1. A game to test the player's memory.

Stones	Auxiliary stone	Description	Gestures
O		1st stone is named Malatalian'-a-tsela.	
O		2nd stone is named Ngoan'a Ra'e e moholo.	
O	O	3rd stone partnered by small one on right.	
O	O	4th stone same as above pair.	
O	O	5th stone with partner until the ninth pair is placed, etc.	

Fig. 6. Arrangement of stones.

Assuming the players have agreed on twenty stones, then the arrangement would

be as follows: cf. Moeletsi (1995: 50) and Sekese's (1983: 123) arrangement of the stones. The first and second stones are *never* paired and each has a name. Alongside the remaining nine stones on the left (which symbolise pots) is another row placed parallel to them on the right and each symbolises a maize grain (*khobe*). Each *khobe* in the little pot (*pitsana*) (represented by the smaller circle) symbolically represents a mate or partner for each pot on the left. An empty space denotes a grain that has been removed and is designated as *Pitsana ha e na khobe* (lit. the little pot has no grain). This means that a stone has no partner. Below is a graphic arrangement of the stones with gestures which correspond with the lines of the verses. The song text is given below. For the sake of clarity, the two players are designated Child A and Child B.

Papali:

Twenty stones (if agreed upon by the players) are arranged in a line on the ground by two older children who take part in this game. See Plate 1. (If five to six year olds are seen playing this game, they do so just for fun and in imitation of their older participants.)

When the game begins, Child B has to go through the whole counting process blind-folded or with his back to the stones. Child A gestures by pointing at the first and second stones to which Child B responds each time. Both players sing their parts. At Child B's command *Tlhatlolla, u re qiti!* (lit. Undo and (you) say: *qiti!*, this symbolically means 'to remove the pot containing the grain from the fire and place it aside with a thud!' The inversive suff. *-olla* in *Tlhatlolla*, denotes to undo an action. Hence, to 'remove the pot . . .' By this gesture, this will leave the third stone without its partner and *Pitsana ha e na khobe* is uttered thus indicating that Child B has succeeded in the first round. They both start afresh and Child B is asked again: "*Eo ke mang?*" (Who is it? or Who is this one?), etc. The farther Child B goes down the line, the more nerve-racking it becomes to remember each time how many have been removed and how many are still to go. In other words, a mental count has to be kept in order to be able to say this is the final one when the words *Tlhatlolla, u re qiti!* are uttered.

Sometimes, the counting is done in reverse starting from a given number and taking off one grain or pebble at a time and going through the counting process. Here, the fun of the game is still to give the right sequence while ensuring a correct count without

looking! In the meanwhile, the spectators watch with abated breath to see if Child B will reach the final round when all the stones (in the right lane) have been recalled without him/her faltering. If so, Child B becomes a winner and one endowed with an exceptional memory. If Child B falters along the way, he/she is eliminated and falls out of the game and the stones are arranged as before. The two players may swap roles or another pair commences the game. Now follows part of the game proper with its accompanying game gestures beginning with Round 1:

Stones	Auxiliary stone	Description	Gesture
O		1st stone (Malatalian'-a-tsela).	
O		2nd stone (Ngoan'a Ra'e e moholo).	
O	∅	3rd stone on right	is removed.

Fig. 7. Round 1 and its game gestures.

Child A points at **1st** stone and sings: “Eo ke mang?” (Who is this?)

Child B responds: “Ke Malatalian'-a-tsela.” (It's Malatalian'-a-tsela).

Child A points at **2nd** stone and sings: “Eo eena?” (And this one?)

Child B responds: “Ngoan'a Ra'e e moholo.” (older sibling).

Child A points at **3rd** stone and sings: “Eo eena?”

Child B responds: “**Tlhatlolla, u re qiti!**” (Remove stone and place aside).

Child B has won the first round and they begin Round 2 below:

Stones	Auxiliary stone	Description	Gesture
O		1st stone.	
O		2nd stone.	
O		3rd stone without a mate.	
O	Ø	4th stone on right	removed if Child B remembered that 3rd stone was removed.

Fig. 8. Round 2 and its game gesture.

They begin as before until:

Child A points at **4th** stone and sings: “Eo ke mang?”

Child B responds: “Tlhatlolla, u re qiti!” only if he/she could recall that the 3rd stone was removed.

Child B has succeeded again and proceeds to the 3rd round below:

Stone	Auxiliary stone	Description	Gesture
O		1st stone.	
O		2nd stone.	
O		3rd stone without a mate.	
O		4th stone without a mate.	

Stone	Auxiliary stone	Description	Gesture
O	Ø	5th stone on right	only removed if Child B remembered that two stones were removed so far.

Fig. 9. Round 3 and its game gesture .

They begin as before:

Child A: points at **1st** stone and sings: “Eo ke mang?”

Child B replies: “Malatalian’-a-tsela.”

Child A: points at **2nd** stone and sings: “Eo eena?”

Child B: replies: “Ngoan’a Ra’e e moholo.”

Child A: points at **3rd** stone and sings: “Eo eena?”

Child B: replies: “**Pitsana ha e na khobe.**” (The little pot has no grain)

Child A: points at **4th** stone and sings: “Eo eena?”

Child B: replies: “**E ’ngoe ha e na khobe.**” (Another has no grain)

Child A: points at **5th** stone and sings: “Eo eena?”

Child B: replies and says: “Tlhatlolla, u re qiti!!” then this stone is removed.

Child B has won the third round and proceeds to the fourth round. If Child B accurately recalled how many stones have been previously removed, the game continues until he/she faults and the game comes to an end.

It will be observed that the third, fourth and fifth stones do not each have a mate and the response would always be: “E ’ngoe ha e na khobe” (Another has no grain). The reader will have noticed also that visually the length of the various lines of the verses have increased as the child recalls the number of

stones that have been subtracted. The function of the repetitive question “Eo ke mang?” not only punctuates the lines but also has a distracting influence on contestant B. who has to try and recall the number of stones that are removed each time. If the player can cope with this, the greater the advantage it would be for him or her in sharpening his or her memory.

(e) Children’s adaptation of Malatalian’-a-tsela:

Like Western children, Basotho children are fond of adapting games from existing melodies and other games to suit their needs, age group and their capabilities without any qualms. An adaptation of *Malatalian’-a-tsela* as (i) a children’s counting game song and (ii) a stone-passing game will follow. This will be followed by their adaptational measures taken with regard to *Malatalian’-a-tsela* which will be discussed under (e).

(i) As a counting game song:

The objective of this game song is to teach little children (whose ages range between three to five years old) to associate and identify each line of the song text with that of the children’s five fingers which act as mnemonic devices. This song forms the basis for further counting songs that a child will encounter during the early years of its development.

Papali:

Only two people are engaged, namely, an older sibling or child, a

grandmother, mother or childminder (acting as a tutor) singing Part A, the Call section. The child (acting as the respondent) sings in Part B, the Response. Where responses may be difficult for very small children to sing at this stage, the tutor, generally, sings both sections.

The tutor begins by pointing to the child's first finger which is the thumb or little finger while singing the first line. She continues in like fashion while moving to the next finger. The child will have noticed that the thumb coincides with the first line of the song and the second finger with the second line until the fifth or little finger is reached.

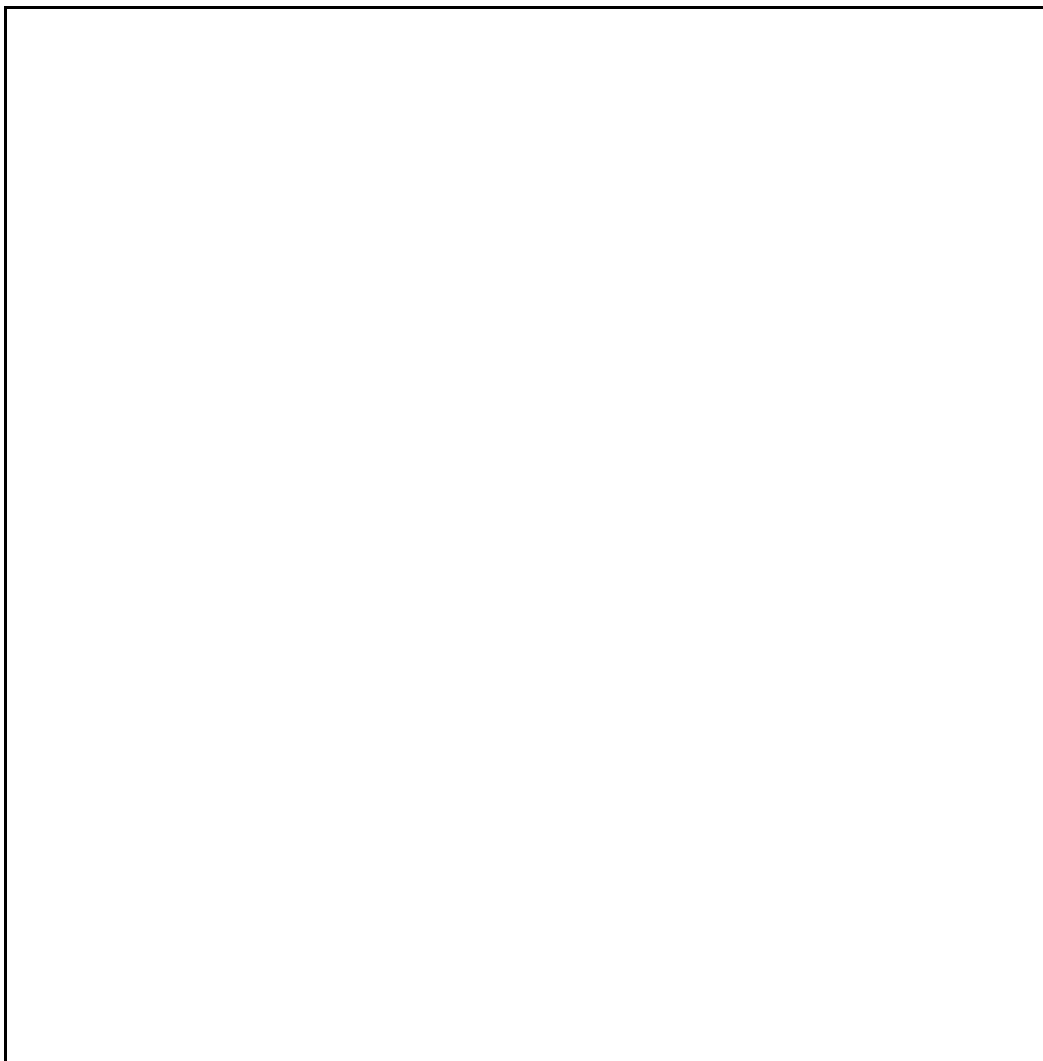
The child then associates the end of the counting with the last line of the song when the tutor gesticulates by shaking or squeezing its finger

at the word *qiti!*. With a dramatic shift in her voice quality at *qiti!*, this is, in itself, a descriptive ideophone and a mnemonic gesture to suggest that the counting has come to an end in the one hand. When the tutor has crossed over to the child's other hand and repeats the whole process, the child will have discovered that the counting just goes up to the last finger in each hand. The child will think at this stage that the gestures, the utterances, the body language and melody are just a game. After some repetitions, the child will consciously identify that the melody of each line corresponds with each finger and the change in the singer's voice quality brings the game to an

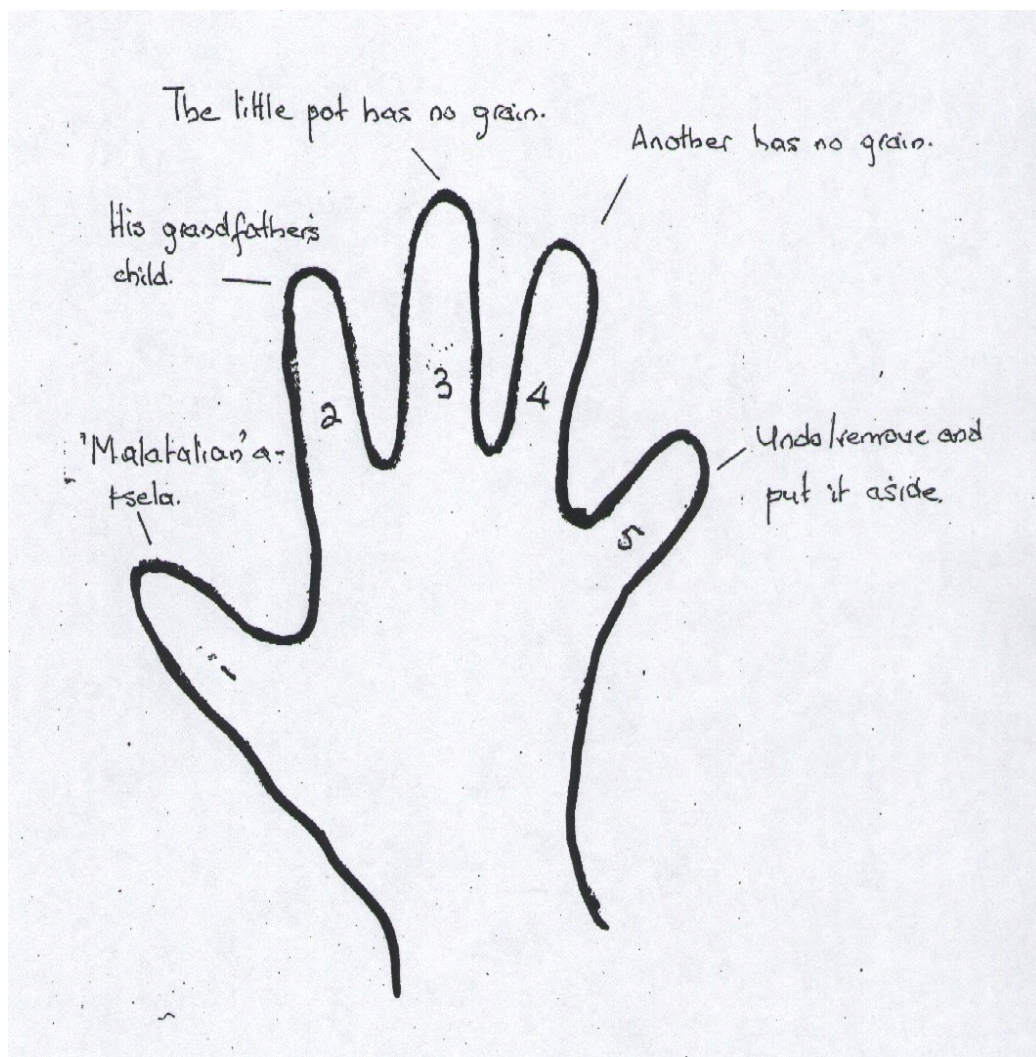
end!

The *fermata* would be absent if the song were sung in the context of the memory game song described in (e). Fig. 10 merely illustrates the finger gestures of the child's hands which will later form an introduction to the learning of Sesotho numerals and their relation to finger counting. For the English translation of Fig. 10, see the accompanying game description of Figs. 7 and 9, Round 1 and 3, respectively.

At a later stage when the child grows a little older and becomes aware that the song is repeated for each hand, she or he would be introduced gradually to associate fingers with numbers. She or he will begin to know that each hand has five fingers and added together they now make ten (*leshome*) as exemplified in the arithmetical games in Chapter 9, namely, *Ho bala menoana* (No. 27) and *Tlosa eo* (No. 28).



track1



Fingers:	Call:	Response:
1.	Eo ke mang?	Malatalian'-a-tsela.
2.	Eo eena?	Ngoan'a Ra'e e moholo.
3.	Eo eena?	Pitsana ha e na khobe.
4.	Eo eena?	E 'ngoe ha e na khobe.
5.	Eo eena?	Tlhatlolla u re qiti.

Fig. 10. Finger-counting gestures.

(ii) As a stone-passing game:

Once again, we see the nature of children adapting games as they can ‘... and making witty alterations in the words’ (Opie 1985: 30). *Malataliana*, (which is sung to the tune of *Malatalian’a-tsela* described in Appendix 1), is played as a circle or stone-passing game. It is very popular with Basotho children whose ages range between six to 12 years old (approximately). *Malatalian’a-tsela* is undoubtedly a girl’s game which does not share the same objectives as the above two versions, yet its educational value of inculcating alertness and concentration in the child, cannot be ignored. This game also develops a sense of independence and rhythm in a child and is also popular because they induce a feeling of sociability, solidarity and camaraderie in children.

With regard to these games and similar ones, it is imperative that players maintain a constant metrical rhythm throughout, for the essence of the games is, whoever accidentally falters, falls out. The song text is the same as that for the children’s counting game-song and need not be written again. The principle of passing the stone to the player on one’s right is the same as that performed in *Reti, Reti* (No. 33), Chapter 11.

-
- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 1, 2, 3, 4 | - | regular recurring accents/rhythmic beats. |
| → | - | player’s direction to pass stone. |
| p | - | point where stone is passed. |
| ! | - | thuds representing metronomic gesture as stone is passed to neighbour on the right. |
| R / L | - | Right / Left, respectively. |

1, 2, 3, 4 - beats:	1	2	3	4
! - thuds (stones):		!		!
p - passing stone:	p		p	
→ - direction:				
R - Right, L - Left:	L	R	L	R

—

Fig. 11. Stone-passing game symbols.

Players sing:

Eo ke mang? Ma--la----ta – li-a- n'a **tse--la.**

Eo eena? Ngoa -----n'a Ra'e em' **ho-- lo.**

Eo eena? Pi----tsa- na hae na **kho-be.**

Eo eena? E----- 'ngoe hae na **kho-be.**

Eo eena? Tlha--tlo -lla u re **qi---ti!**

Stone passed from **L** to **R**Next player receives it from **R.**Thuds on **R:****!**

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. Eo | → | 2. ke mang? |
| 3. Malata - lia - n'a | → | 4. tse-la. |
| 1. Eo | → | 2. ee- na? |
| 3. Ngoan'a Ra'e e m' | → | 4. ho--lo. |
| 1. Eo | → | 2. ee—na? |
| 3. Pitsana hae na | → | 4. kho-be. |
| 1. Eo | → | 2. ee---na? |
| 3. E 'ngoe hae na | → | 4. kho-be. |
| 1. Eo | → | 2. ee---na? |
| 3. Tlhatholla u re | → | 4. qi---ti! |
-

Fig. 12. Stone-passing game gestures.

One will notice that in Fig. 12 above, the receiving of the stones fall on even beats and at identical places each time, namely, beats 2 and 4, etc. while the stones are passed on the uneven beats, namely, 1 and 3, etc. The thuds fall neatly on every alternate beat with the counts felt in every line, thus, resulting in the texts being metrical.

Scansion:

With the Mosotho child, it is not the aesthetic that is of importance, but the rhythm. Each line above fits in with a simple quadruple metre that is maintained throughout. The syllables in each of the lines above are: 3 + 8; 3 + 6; 3 + 7; 3 + 6 and 3 + 7, respectively. The second and fourth lines and the third and last lines have, respectively, six and seven syllables except the first which has eight. The end lines in Fig. 12 each have two syllables. In normal speech, *Eo ke mang?* has three syllables, but to maintain the rhythm, the phrase is squeezed into two beats, thus maintaining two syllables in Fig. 12.

For the sake of euphony, the elisions caused by the apostrophe's in lines one and two in the phrase *e moholo*, (lit. that which is or who is great, old or big) has four syllables in all. In order to maintain a strict metronomic rhythm, an apostrophe is needed in *e m'holo* thus, reducing it to three syllables. Note that the *e-* of *e m'holo* is elided to form one syllable *em'* and one beat with the consonant *m'*. The *e mo* is a prefix because it occurs before *-holo*. This also applies to *ha e na* which is contracted to form two syllables instead of three in

ha e na (negative present of ‘it does not have’). The adj. conc. *e* and the prefix *m’* and its root *-holo* and *ha e na*, each count as two beats and so does *Ngoan’a* and *E ’ngoe*. These are compelled by the strict rhythmic demands of the game that these words be contracted to fit in with the quaver beats. The words in lines two and four in *Ngoan’a* instead of *Ngoana oa* and *E ’ngoe* instead of *E le’ngoe*, are elided and are protracted to fit in with the quaver beats and the regular rhythm. This is done for the sake of euphony. Here, we see what Nettl alludes to when he states: “... musical requirements demand alterations in the patterns of normal speech” (1990: 142). For a fuller discussion of these elisions, see endnotes 6, 7 and 13. Other features are already alluded to and Fig. 12 shows a different graphic picture of the movements of the players as each receives a stone from the left and passes it to the player on her right.

Papali:

The greater the number of children, the greater the concentration and alertness which are combined with the enjoyment. About five to eight children sit cross-legged or kneel in a circle while each holds a small stone in the hand. With a firm introductory gesture, the leader simultaneously stamps the ground four times with her stone while each thud implants the rhythm in their minds. Thereafter, they begin to sing: *Eo ke mang?* At the word *mang?* the leader passes her stone in an anti-clockwise direction to the player on her right at number 2 who passes it to the next person on her right and so on while receiving another from her neighbour on the left at every thud of the stone. Each player must be alert to receive her stone from the one on

the left at the last word of each line, namely, *ke mang? tsela; eena? 'holo; eena? khobe; eena? khobe* and *eena? qiti!* The children must always

adhere to a strict quadruple metre with metronomic precision throughout the basic rhythmic pattern of 1, 2, 3, 4. They continue in this fashion until the phrase, *Tlhatlolla u re qiti!* The verse may be repeated until a child falters by not being attentive and so missing the receiving of her stone. She is then presumed disqualified and leaves the ring. The rest of the children then start from the beginning until one player remains who then is the winner.

It is not unusual for Basotho children to increase the speed which not only makes the game enjoyable but sharpens their alertness all the more. One will observe the regular metre is not present in the memory and counting game song. The introductory questions *Eo ke mang?* (Who is this?) has a purpose in helping to regulate the game before every response. By so doing, the attention of the players is kept alive.

(e) Children's adaptive measures:

The reader will note that I have not used the phrase 'adaptive procedures'. This is for the simple reason that the word conjures up a well-defined methodology that regard children being capable of *rationally* employing logical

rules. Although this may be true to some extent, Basotho children, like most children, contrive their ‘own rules’ which are made or broken at the slightest compunction to suit their whims and fancies.

The reader will note that the verse lines of *Malataliana* as a counting game-song are culled from the memory game discussed earlier. I cannot say with certainty if this game-song originated of children or an adult or older child, since children were cared for by their mothers and generally, tutors, caretakers or older children of the household. Undoubtedly, children were responsible for the adaptation of *Malataliana* as a stone-passing circle game as it was always played by children and associated with them.

A brief description follows of the measures by which Basotho children adapt an existing “*papali* (play song)” taking *Malataliana* as an example. Whereas, the *fermata*’s specific purpose in the counting game is to allow the little child to take its time before responding in order to associate its finger with each verse line before proceeding to the next.

- children may adapt a game from a didactic one, for example, (a) a memory game in *Malatalian’-a-tsela* (No. 1) to (b) a circle and stone-passing game; (a) from an adult work song in *’Mamakoane* to that of (b) a game for recreation in *’Mangakane* (No. 5).
- children may alter the length of the game to meet their needs when being taught because their mental retention span is very brief and they tire

easily, for example, '*Mangakane* which was originally culled from a narrative of this name.

- their chants or song texts generally show elisions in such game gestures as stone-passing, long rope skipping and circle games which require strict metronomical precision in their playing. Yet, children are not aware of these dynamics for these come naturally through usage of their mother tongue, the Sesotho language.
- children generally use onomatopoeia or ideophones for effective devices, for example, the last word in the last line of the game, *qiti!* This word indicates that the player has 'hit the nail on the head' or he or she has it right! Thus, the Sesotho phrase, *u nephile* (lit. you are correct) is not so effective as the ideophone.
- clear examples of little children's dialogues and fantasies are displayed in Chapter 9, 'Didactic Games' (Nos. 22-26) where the elements of nature are personified. The sun, the moon, the little cloud, the rainbow and the mist are brought alive.
- symbolism sometimes acts as aids to learning, for example, the maize grain (*khobe*) is symbolised as a mate or partner to enable them to understand a thing that is being put across.
- illogical verse lines and thoughts are found acceptable with little

children, for example, the phrase ‘the little pot has no maize grain’ (*Pitsana ha e na khobe*) rather than its plural, ‘the little pot has no maize grains’ (*Pitsana ha e na likhobe*). Yet, for the sake of the rhythm, *khobe* and not *likhobe* is used.

- phrases or texts sometimes make mention of cultural foodstuffs like maize, maize grains (plur. *likhobe*) that grow in their environment or household utensils that they use, such as a pot (*pitsa*; dim. *pitsana*).
- repetition is a common feature which comes easily because for lack of ideas or words, a word or phrase already employed may be repeated to lengthen or make their game interesting. It is also another way of extending their verse lines for the sheer enjoyment of the game. See ‘*Runyana* (No. 24). Note also the repetitive text in Brahms’s *Children’s Songs* (Book 169), 19 --: (pp. 10-12).
- children’s song texts and games may reveal some data about themselves, their history, beliefs, customs and folklore of the Basotho as in *Mankokosane* (No. 3) and ‘*Mankholi-kholi* (No. 20).

Having discussed the three types and functions of *Malatalian’-a-tsela*, a brief structural analysis of the game follows to enable the reader to have a better understanding of them. These will be discussed under the following headings viz. form, song text, scales, melodic structure and rhythm. The tonal semantics and rhythmic structure of four “*lipapali* (play songs)” appear under Appendix 1.

Form:

In Appendix 1, Ex. 1, the musical transcription of *Malatalian'-a- tsela* employs a call-and-response or dialogue pattern which is clearly divided into a two-part structure, namely, Part A, the Call section with a stereotyped pithy phrase in the form of a question. This is supplied by the tutor and Part B, the Response, by the child. At the end of each introductory phrase in Part A is a very brief *fermata* after which the song ends with a short *coda* a perfect fourth below with the words: *Tlhatlolla, u re: qiti!* which do not detract from the game.

Song text:

The text of the melody of this game is, on the whole, retained and is simple. The game song opens with a dialogue between two participants where one asks the question *Eo ke mang?* (“Who is this?”) and the other responds with the reply: *Malatalian'-a-tsela. Eo ke mang?* is repeated throughout. Certain words are replaced to suit the nature of the counting game-song, for example, in lines 2, 3 and 4 *Eo ke mang?* is sometimes replaced by *Eo eena?* (“And this one?”) or “And he or she?”. The replies in the third and fourth phrases, *Pitsana ha e na khobe* and *E 'ngoe ha e na khobe*, respectively, have no importance to the little child except to associate its fingers with each line of the song. After all, this is only a counting game-song which is often indulged in by little children whose ages range between three to five, approximately. It is, therefore, not surprising that this counting game song should employ the same melody as that sung for the memory game. See also Fig. 10 and Appendix 1, Ex. 1.

Scale:

Fig. 13. Illustrates scale pattern.

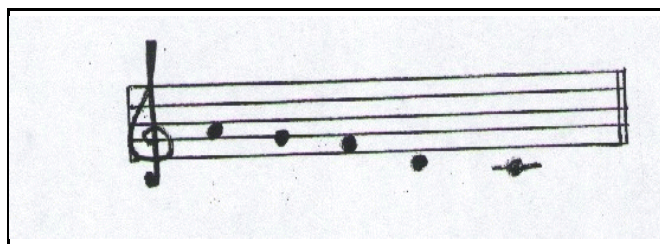
The scale of this game-song is based on a five-tone pentatonic scale that is very characteristic of Basotho traditional songs. It consists of the first, second, third, fifth and sixth tones of the seven-tone diatonic scale which correspond to the tonic, supertonic, mediant, dominant and submediant degrees of the diatonic scale. These, in turn, each correspond to the tonic solfa note names, namely, *do*,

ré me, *so* and *la* degrees of the diatonic scale. The range is very small being made up of a major sixth from low C (*so*₁) to A (*la*) above the tonic. Repeated notes are quite characteristic of Basotho children's songs, for example, the F's (*do*'s); G's (*ré*'s) and C's (*so*'s).

Melodic structure:

Malataliana as a little child's counting song has a simple melodic line quite characteristic of Basotho children's melodies. (See Appendix 1, Ex. 1.) Part

A forms a
small half
c u r v e
beginning on a
middle tone



and ending with a falling tone. Part B, a longer section, begins with a lower

tone and moves to a fairly higher level and returns with a falling phrase which, is not only characteristic of African folk music in general but forms an arch in each line. The melodic voice of the Call sections dwell on a falling major second from A (*me*) to G (*ré*) in each line while the Responses in Part B always begin on the tonic F (*do*), then rises a major third A (*me*) and falls a major second G (*ré*) to rest on the tonic F (*do*). Bars 4, 6 and 8 in Part B, are sung as variants of bar 2. In bar 10, the pattern is broken and the melody drops from G (*ré*) in the previous bar to C (*so*), a perfect fifth below. The ‘coda’ rises a perfect fourth from C to F (*do*) before falling a minor third D (*la*) only to rest on the dominant C (*so*). Finally, pitch does not rise with repetitions.

Rhythm:

A very metronomic rhythm is displayed from beginning to end in the stone-passing version while singing where rhythm is the driving force. These gestures help to keep the movement and rhythm going while the thuds take the place of a metronome accentuating the time-line. This song is apt for the tender child who would not be able to stand a vigorous rhythm that demands a lot of energy and mental vigour. Although the rhythm in *Malataliana*, the memory game, is constant, it has a specific purpose in distracting the player in putting him or her off-guard. Whereas the rhythm of the child’s counting song is free and unrestrained to suit the purpose of the game-song.

Summary: This chapter has shown how the Basotho of yore, coming from an oral tradition, devised their own methods of teaching children to count and

counting games offered them that medium. Concepts of addition and subtraction are of educational value in sharpening a child's memory. Mnemonic gestures which included singing (for music generally formed an integral part) in the lowering of the participant's voice and the removal of stones, were traditional indications of correct answers. Creativity and adaptation in *Malatalian'-a-tsela* are adapted to suit the child's level of development in learning. *Malatalian'-a-tsela*, as an ancient Basotho children's game, was not only meant to offer entertainment because its main traditional and educational value was that of sharpening the child's memory. The cultural philosophy expressed behind this game, also helped to train a child to recall a number of objects or details of an incident or narrative in a logical and orderly manner without faltering and leaving important details. Hence, this is symbolised in the orderly and successive arrangement of the stones.

Endnotes:

¹ malataliana : meaning a puzzle; (lit. the one who refuses to fetch or bring.)

² tsela : a path, journey or road.

³ *malatalian'* thole : shortened form for *malatalian' a sethole*, a feminine version of *malataliana-thole*.

⁴ Tlhatlolla : that is, to remove the pot from the fire and place it aside.

This word is appropriate because the pot contains a grain of maize. It denotes a reversal of an action; to undo.

Whereas, *Tlhatleha* means to put the pot on the fire, also *Qhatholla*, to undo something or reverse the action.

⁵ qiti! : (ideoph.) *ho re qiti!* to resound sharply or fall with a thud

or bang! cf. *qete* below.

- ⁶ Ngoan'a : shortened form for *Ngoana oa* (the child of). The possessive particle *oa* has become 'a' as in *Ngoan'a* and *Ra'a*. The apostrophe is used to mark the place of the vowel which has been elided between *Ngoana* and *oa*.
- ⁷ Ra'e : Elision is an aspect of language and very important in Sesotho words. In Sesotho, most nouns with reference to the family, as in *Ra'e*, are shortened in the possessive, for example, *Ra'e*. Note the elision in *Ra'e* (the contracted form of *Re oa hae* meaning 'his or her father'). The *Ra* denotes 'father' and the *-e*, for *ena*. Thus, *Ra'e* both signify 'his or her father'. When the short possessive pronoun *e* follows the short possessive particle *a*, it is added directly to it as in *R'ae*, third person singular. Likewise, in Setswana, *rragwe* signifies 'his or her father'. See the use of elisions on pp. 69 under Scansion.
- ⁸ Pitsana : (dim.) for *pitsa* (pot).
- ⁹ khobe : cooked corn or maize grain. In the context of the game, it denotes a mate or partner, for each stone is paired from the third row. (See under 'Arrangement of stones')
- ¹⁰ thuhlu! : *Ho re thuhlu!* to 'put aside on the ground'.
- ¹² qethu! : (ideoph.) *Ho re qethu!* or *ho re qēthē!* both denote 'to put aside on the ground'. Note, (ideoph.) *qete!* means 'to drop heavily on the ground!' cf. *qiti!* above. All suggest a dramatic effect. An alternative meaning of *qete* is the last, but in the context of a game, it is the last person. and *qethe* denotes craftiness or deceit.
- ¹³ 'ngoe : 'a certain one' or preferably, 'another' in which case *le* is

omitted, *E 'ngoe ha e na khobe* (Another has no grain).

Chapter 5

THE SESOTHO IDEA OF 'MUSIC' IN BASOTHO CHILDREN'S FOLK GAMES

In the previous chapter, the reader was introduced to a representative and ancient Sesotho game that is still played throughout Lesotho and remembered by young and old. It has stood the test of time. It was the author's intention to place it between Chapters 3 and 5 so that it enables the reader to have an idea of Basotho children's folk games and to act as a backdrop to the understanding of the Sesotho idea of 'music' in Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" or folk games. It will be necessary to give a broad idea of what music is to the African.

I have focused on "*lipapali* (play songs)" or folk games that are played by

Basotho children and are indigenous to their culture because all of them, both educational and otherwise, are in the Sesotho language. These “*lipapali* (play songs)” reflect their values, cultural environment, Basotho children’s folklore, kinship structures, their cultural modes of telling us who they are, the gender roles, their oral ‘poetry’ in the form of chants and the cultural norms of the society. The styles of some of the “*lipapali* (play songs)” are indigenous to many sub-Saharan, African people, though some may have recognisable foreign influence which the Basotho have conceived as belonging to the Sesotho culture, hence falling under the classification of *lipapali tsa bana ba Basotho* (lit. games of Basotho children).

Music permeates virtually every aspect of Sesotho life as with most African societies. It is used to mark the events of birth, puberty, marriage and death. The Mosotho’s manual labour, such as digging and harvesting, is accompanied by it and neither can healing situations be performed without it. Because these aspects are interwoven into the life of the Basotho, it is not surprising that the term ‘music’ (as conceived and not concerned by the West), is absent from the former’s vocabulary but song and dance are not absent. A Westerner hitting a drum rhythmically does not consider this as ‘music’ but an African conceives this as such even though this might not be accompanied by musical sounds.

Though the word “song” (sing. *pina*) exists in Sesotho, music in African cultures embraces the expression of their emotions. It mirrors the sex distinctions in Sesotho traditional activities. Some songs are reserved for men, some for women and some for children whose “*lipapali* (play songs)” are generally supported by it amongst which selected genres will form the focus

of this chapter. First the following two subsections, namely, (i) and (ii) to enable the reader to obtain an understanding of the African's conception of 'music'.

(i) The African's idea of 'music'

A person reared in the African tradition is moved by the rhythm that is emphasised rather than the melody. This is so, because the music is performed mainly with percussion instruments that are less varied than musical instruments producing different tones such as the Western orchestra. Rhythm to the African is also viewed as 'music' for as Meki (2003: 29) states: 'Rhythm is felt in the body, not as an abstract-one dimensional clap, or counted as a disembodied mathematical jingle.'

As the Basotho belong to the Bantu-speaking peoples, on the whole, they share the ideas and sentiments expressed by the following African writers. It will also be necessary to mention some observations of White ethnomusicologists with regard to their notion of how they perceive the African's idea of music :

Nketia (1963: 316) sees music comforting the African 'when bereaved, to keep up his morale at the battle front and to assist him in the worship of the gods.' He also sees music as 'the communication of social and cultural values' (1999: 14). To understand the African mind in the arts, Sowande (1972: 66) says 'to the African, the proper standards of evaluation are the psychological and the

symbolical, not the formal, or structural or technical.’ In other words, the African thinks of music in emotional terms. Regarding the African idea of ‘music’, Bebey (1975: 16) best sums it as ‘expressing life in all of its aspects through the medium of sound . . . and is one of the most revealing forms of expressions of the black soul’. The traditional African did not concern himself with written musical signs such as time signatures, bar lines, etc. because his is an oral tradition. Senghor’s philosophy is that the traditional African, who came from an oral tradition, was moved by the rhythm which could stand alone in his musical culture *rather* than the melody. Note Kebede’s statement which follows Kebede (1982: 105) derides European scholarship in their attempt to use a comparative approach to explain ‘African concepts that do not have European equivalents’. Notably, some are ‘music’, “to hear” and “to play”. In the context of the children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)”, ‘music’ embraces all chanted verses recited to a regular rhythm.

(ii) Some Westerner’s ideas of African ‘music’.

Western ethnomusicologists, such as Hornbostel (1928: 59) observed from afar that African ‘music and dance have quite a different and comparably greater significance than with us. They serve neither as mere pastimes nor recreations . . . Music is neither reproduction (of a ‘piece of music’ as an existing object) nor production (of a new object); it is the life of a living spirit working within those who dance and sing it.’ Sharing the same opinion is Stayt (1963: 31). Merriam (1964: 64) observes that the Basongye of the Congo do not have a word for ‘music’; it is simply described with aphoristic statements: “When you

are content, you sing . . . A song is tranquil; a noise is not . . .” Discussing the concept of ‘music’ amongst the Bavenda of the Northern Province in South Africa, and characteristic of the Basotho, Blacking (1967: 16, 17) notes that “songs” include all tunes that ‘are sung’ or ‘played on instruments’, as well as patterns of words that are recited to a given regular metre . . . comes into the Venda category of music”. For him, music is ‘humanly organised sounds’. To find out what music is, he goes on to say: “We need to find out who listens and who plays and sings in any given society, and why” (1976: 33). Chernoff (1979: 28) states that African music is ‘admired mostly as a spontaneous and emotional creation, an uninhibited, dynamic expression of vitality.’ Rycroft (1982: 317) describing Swazi and Zulu music, states that music plays an important part in the life of the individual, the community and that there are “songs for different age-groups.” Joseph (1983: 53), in her statement corroborates that ‘there are no direct Zulu equivalents of the Western concept of music, song and dance’. Brandel (1984: 21) observes the role that music plays in some Central African societies. It is an indispensable tool in marriage, ancestral worship, initiation, burial ceremonies and other rituals. As Wells (1994: 5) notes, ‘The closest term in Sesotho to describe the European word ‘music’ is *’mino*. This term, he states, is “translatable as singing, (and) is an abbreviation of *mobino*, derived from the verb to *ho bina*, sing.”

In conclusion, the reader will note from the above that the Western ethnomusicologists’ ideas of African ‘music’ are not far removed from those of their African counterparts. Comparatively speaking, music not only plays a more significant role in the daily lives of the African than in the lives of

Westerners; it is an indispensable tool in most spheres of African life. It is emotional, spontaneous and uninhibited in the hands of the performer or group.

(iii) ‘Music’ and gestures in Basotho children’s folk games (*lipapali*):

Having observed the African’s idea of ‘music’, it is important to discuss briefly the concept of ‘music’ with regard to Basotho children’s folk games. In some cases, the word music (as understood in the West) is an integral part of some Basotho children’s games. Though in many cultures of the world, dance, song and musical accompaniment are virtually inseparable, this need not necessarily be the case with the Basotho and in their children’s games. What the West calls music in children’s games, does not pertain to Sesotho culture since similar words, games, activities and the terminology also do not distinguish them in ones that Westerners would call songs and ones they would call nonmusical recitation.

Here, we saw a clear distinction between what is regarded as song in the Western singing game *Here we go gathering nuts* (No. 6) and what was regarded as a nonmusical recitation in the counting game *One, two . . .* (No. 7). A discussion of some Sesotho “*lipapali* (play songs)” will follow:

RECITATION GAMES: AS ‘MUSIC’

The reader should note in the following Sesotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” that not all conform to the Western idea of games and neither do they conform to the Western idea of recitation. Beginning with Recitation Games, most Basotho children’s verse rhymes in their games, are characterised by a kind of rap that is quite common in their dialogue and chain-rhyme games of which the latter will be discussed under ‘Chain-rhyme Games’. This is similar to Husskison’s (1982: 375) observations that ‘The tempo of the Sotho-Tswana languages, moreover, is rapid in comparison to those of the Nguni group’ and this heightens it.

The Basotho have no word for chants, speech songs or recitation with regard to children's verse rhymes but refer to these as *lipina* (lit. songs). *Lithothokiso*, which are adult modern poetry usually in stanza form, are not classed in this category of chants. The reason being that these children's chants, etc. do not have the characteristics of ordinary spoken speech but fall under the Bavenda's and most Bantu-speaking groups concept of 'music' to include '... patterns of words that are recited to a regular metre' (Blacking, 1967: 16). It is this idea that recited Basotho children's games are easily remembered as 'music' because they are recited to a regular meter. The following two Sesotho "*lipapali* (play songs)" indicate the speech characteristic as 'music'.

2. Seotsanyana

(The sparrow-hawk)

Recitation game as 'music':

Children chant:

Seotsanyana, ¹ nkopele, ²

Le na ke u opele! ³

Seotsanyana, nkopele,

Le na ke u opele!

Repeated many times.

Translation:

Seotsanyana, flap (your wings) for me, (that)

I clap (my hands) for you.

Seotsanyana, flap (your wings) for me, (that)

I clap (my hands) for you.

Repeated many times.

The *Seotsanyana* is a kind of bird such as the sparrow-hawk or kestrel. Sometimes it is referred to as a windhover because it has a tendency to hover at the same spot in the air. Segoete (repr. 2001: 27) also likens it to a hawk (*phakoe*). Regarded as a “*papali* (play song),” *Seotsanyana* is generally indulged in by Basotho children whose ages range between 10 to about 14, while they are in the open veld either herding or whiling away the time. Strangely, he seems to associate the sighting of this bird with girls (*banana*) when he says: “ . . . *ha se paka-pakasela sebakeng, banana ba re:*”(lit. ‘when it hovers in space, girls say: . . .’ (ibid.: 27).

Norton (1963: 125) describes his *Seotsanyana* as a ‘kind of Lob-lie-by-the-fire of the Basuto children. He does not lie on his side, like one really tired, but idly lolls on his back.’ Lob also means ‘a dull lout’ and this could depict the dullness of the bird hovering in one place. From Norton’s version (which has a melody), one is not certain if the *Seotsanyana* is a bird or an animal. It is evident that Norton merely collected and transcribed the song without any reference to children’s gestures as the title of his song collection suggests “African Melodies”.

For the sake of the reader, I have quoted below the song text of his version which does not fall under Basotho children’s Recitation Games for the simple reason that it is devoid of any *regular* rhythmic pattern:

Norton’s version

Seotsanyana ha a robale,

Ka sakaneng la manamane⁴

Oa qethoha⁵ O etsisa Nkhekhenene.⁶

Repeat last 2 lines.

Norton's translation:

The Seotsanyana does not sleep,

In the kraal of the calves

He just lies on his back (and) pretends sleep.

Repeat last 2 lines.

Papali:

Traditionally, when Basotho children or herdboys always saw this bird flapping its wings in the air, they would clap their hands or flap their arms in imitation of it to attract its attention while chanting the above verse. While this was done, the bird would reciprocate this gesture by spreading its wings as though to say: "I would flap mine for you, too." The gestures displayed in the fluttering of the bird's wings and the clapping of the children's hands would continue until the bird flies away.

Children all over the world love to imitate and as As Ault (1977: 181) states: "The purpose of imitation is not to create similarity among children. Rather, it is to foster the learning skills that is accomplished . . . by the individual himself." The didactic element contained in *Seotsanyana* (The sparrow hawk) opens Basotho children to the awareness of nature and birds. Thus, the flapping of a bird's wings, such as the *Seotsanyana* hovering in the air, provides

a realistic model for the children to imitate as imitation is as an important tool in their learning process.

3. 'Mankokosane, pula ea na

('Mankokosane, it is raining)

Recitation game as 'music':

Children chant: **'Mankokosane,⁷ pula⁸ ea na.**

Re tla hola⁹ neng? Ka Sontaha.

Repeated at lib.

Translation: 'Mankokosane, it is raining.

When will we grow taller? 'On a Sunday.

Repeated ad lib.

'*Mankokosane* is a traditional "*papali* (play song)" known by young and old whereby little Basotho children played in the rain. Its original version is the most representative one since my childhood days. It is recited by children of Iketsetseng School in Maseru, Lesotho and was recorded in July 2001.

I had found that children have added such phrases as 'ha letsatsi le chaba' (lit. 'when the sun shines') or 'ka Sontaha' ('on a Sunday' or 'on Sunday') to conclude the verse with the

latter phrase showing some modern influence. It is as though they are preempting her by stipulating the time or day. The children have no sense of time or the season due to the urgency of their wishes.



track2

In olden times, little Basotho children between the ages of three to six, (and some do today) believed and fantasised that '*Mankokosane*, a certain fictitious female spirit in the sky, had the power of making little children grow quicker and taller. It is somehow natural that she should be associated with rain. Nowadays, some very young children still take advantage of the rain when it drizzles with the hope that they would grow a little taller. This indulgence is sometimes done in the name of fun.

From the above, one can only conjecture that the name '*Mankokosane* probably comes from *nkonko!* a Sesotho ideophone describing the noise made by hammering nails into a plank. The name could be analogous to the drops of rain falling, for example, *nkonko! nkonko!* Hence, the name '*Mankokosane*, which literally means 'Mother of the one who can make us grow taller'.

Papali:

Children between the ages of three to five would dash out of their huts naked into the rain 'dancing' (jumping) and 'singing' (chanting) rhythmically so that every little rain drop should fall on their tender bodies. They believed that if they did not, '*Mankokosane* would deprive them of their requests to grow taller. So the harder it rained, the more vigorous were their gestures. After this energetic exercise, they would all retreat indoors extremely satisfied that she would answer their pleas.

The idea of 'music' (chanting) and their rhythmic jumping is conceived by the

Basotho as music and “*lipapali* (play songs).” Hence, it is not unusual for one to hear mothers say: “Ke pina ea ’*Mankokosane*” (“It is the song of ’*Mankokosane* ”) which denotes that both adults and children conceive chanting as ‘music’. (See also Appendix 1, Ex. 2). So, a child’s world of fantasy must be enjoyed because the years of innocence will soon fade away into the harsh realities of life. Regarding the place of fantasy and play in a child’s life, Vandenberg (1986: 117) states that ‘fantasy is used to develop skills . . . that will have some concrete payoff in the culture’ and regarding play, ‘children are constructing a basis for hope that changes their lives’. It is this fantasy filled with hope that ’*Mankokosane* will make little Basotho children grow taller if they danced harder in the rain.

Krige (1985: 78) quotes Bryant’s account of how Zulu children express their enjoyment in song in the rain and how they will ‘turn up their posteriors towards the sky, saying, “Let it clear up, I am last born of our family.’ Not only do Zulu children regard these playful gestures as a game, their love for rain is not different from Basotho children.

Children hear and experience their parent’s anxiety and urgency for rain when rain is not forthcoming after the planting season. It is not surprising that they should become aware that rain is needed to make things grow and that a *good* harvest signifies abundant crops which could be possible if rain were plenty.’ They observe the significance of rain in the national greeting of the Basotho: “Khotso! Nala! Pula!” (“Peace! Plenty! Rain!”) which are interjective folk words used as expressions of acclamation and goodwill and are now used as

the country's national motto. These greetings are also frequently used to close speeches on important occasions.

A healthy cow always has a dewy wet nose, whereas a dry nose does not augur well for its continuing existence. Hence, the saying: “*Molimo o nko e metsi*” (lit. the god with a wet nose) referring to the wet nose of a cow that symbolises rain, dew or vapour which is the Basotho nation's symbols of “Peace! Plenty! and Prosperity!” (or “Rain!”).

Rain also signifies prosperity in the Sesotho idiomatic expression, “*Ha li tle le pula*” (lit. Let them bring rain) which denotes prosperity! Children also observe their parents' clan pleas for rain when hope is gone, for example, see Guma's (1980: 114) account of the Bakwena clan's prayer (*thapelo*) for rain:

Tsholwane wee, re batla pula!

Helele! Pula e kae?

Morena re fe pula, etc.

Translation:	Tsholwane, we want rain.
	Hail! Where is rain?
	Chief, please give us rain, etc.

The people's prayer for rain to chief Tsholwane (Tsoloane) approximates to the children's pleas to *'Mankokosane*. Note the interjectives *wee (oe)* alas! pray! and the interj. *Helele!* (denoting surprise and a salutation to a chief) all denoting some urgency in the people's prayer for rain. The Lobedu people

under the late Queen Modjadji, saw her as the “rain queen”, the bringer of rain and all that is good and prosperous. Besides the sun, moon and stars, rain is closely associated with little Basotho children in the *kuruetso ea pula* ceremony, whereby the baby, in its second month, is exposed to the rain. For a brief description of this rite, see games Nos. 12 and 13. It is, therefore, not surprising that little Basotho children see rain and *'Mankokosane* in a positive light in having their wishes fulfilled.

CALL-AND-RESPONSE GAMES: AS ‘MUSIC’

Most Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” are in the form of a call-and-response metrical pattern in which a characteristic rhythm is maintained. These dialogues are performed by girls and boys at any time of the day or the evening when chores are done. Generally, two groups or two children take part whereby the phrase of the soloist (who is the leader) is repeatedly answered by that of another singer (or a chorus) who responds. This feature is the main component that makes the Basotho regard this type of verse rhyme as ‘music’ despite the Sesotho term *mino* which means music in the Western sense and *pina*, song. Some of these dialogues may contain a melody, for example,

Malatalian'-a-tsela (No. 1), although the following dialogues in this chapter do not. Though these six dialogues are not sung, the leader's questions have a certain purpose in helping to regulate the chant before every response. To the children, this rhythmic feature evokes the idea of 'music' in all the dialogues.

The dialogues as play songs are not only pastimes, they have an educational aspect. They inculcate memorisation on the part of the respondent(s) to recount events in a sequential order and to 'ensure that the children are paying attention for they must answer with the correct response' (Johnston, 1987: 132).

The chants of these dialogues often begin with an introducing question or formula which is a characteristic feature. These generally begin with: *U tsoa kae?* (Where do you come from? or Where do you originate?); *U mang?* (Who are you?); *Sehamela poli* (sometimes referred to as *Eo ke mang?* (Who is she/he?)) inquires about the child's identity. The exceptions to these formulae are '*Mangakane* (No. 5), *Kokoko* (No. 6) and *Senyamo* (Choose the one you like?) (No. 9) which are in dialogue form. Johnston (1981: 25) argues that Tsonga children's games containing the call-and-response structure ensures that the 'performance is generally an organised, structured social act'.

Another peculiar feature of these children's dialogues in this section is that they are narrative in content with the exception of *Senyamo* (No. 9). The Basotho, coming from an oral tradition, had to devise some ways to train and sharpen the intellect of their children as we have seen in *Malatalian'-a-tsela*

(No. 1), the memory game. However, according to my informants and my personal experience, the essence of these narratives was to train the child to recall and relate events in a logical and sequential manner. So that when it was sent by its superiors, the training stood them in good stead. The narratives are lengthy, mentally taxing and required a great deal of memorisation and concentration on the part of older children who performed them standing. Perhaps, this was meant to make the two participants stand out amongst their peers who often sat and watched with great enthusiasm. It is probable that the shorter dialogues, in those days, were suited for little children for they did not require a vast amount of memorisation; these are *Sehamela-poli* (No. 7) and *Bohobe, u tsoa kae?* (No. 8) and *Senyamo*.

Another feature is that these dialogues are not divided into stanzas but run continuously to the end because of their narrative structure. One will note that at times there are run-on lines which are interrupted by the leader's questions "U mang?" before the sentence is completed, for example, '*Mangakane* (No. 5).

These chants have stood the test of time. Presently, Basotho children do not compose their individual answers in narrative chants, they have retained the texts which have scarcely changed throughout the years. The dialogues do not contain any body movements such as clapping or dance steps to accompany them for they are not classed as action games. The first of these narrative dialogues appears below:

4. Mokali 'a thole

(Mokali 'a thole)

Dialogue game as 'music':

The name *Mokali* signifies beads strung on the hair or flesh both hanging on the forehead and 'a (of) and -*thole* (a full grown female animal). Therefore, *Mokali 'a thole* is a woman with a string of beads hanging from her head. This is a dialogue in the form of a narrative which tested the child in responding in a quick manner. An important feature of the following dialogues is that they are rhythmically chanted and not sung.

Papali:

It is important that the reader be made aware of the discrepancies in the narration of this version and the one in Appendix 1, Ex. 3, beginning from the second line.

The spatial arrangement requires that two participants whom we shall call Child A, the leader whose duty is to pose the questions and Child B, the respondent, face each other standing while their peers may circle them or be seated behind them. The first line immediately introduces us to the teller of the tale who is *Mokali 'a thole*. The leader's constant introducing question is "U mang?" (Who are you?) and the respondent immediately replies without a break until the end. Traditionally, the essence of this gesture was to distract the challenger, Child B, who had to show his or her skill in supplying logical answers in a sequential manner to form a narrative. This was

done without hesitation and prior thought. It should be noted too that in most instances, “U mang?” punctuates incomplete replies to spur the respondent to continue and to maintain the flow. It were as though the leader is jogging the memory of the respondent. If the latter hesitated, then he or she fell out and was replaced by the next contestant or they would swop places. This showed that the respondent lacked skill in recalling the events up to that point and hesitated for ideas. Nowadays, two groups take part because these are now generally recited in the school yard where many learners participate. Note: Q represents Question and A, the Answer (or respondent).

Group A :

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

Q: Umang?

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

(Variant: . . . ha ho batho.)

Q: U mang?

Q: U mang?

Group B:

A: Ke Mokali 'a thole.

A: Ke fumane litsoene

A: Li e-ja meroloane.

A: Ka re ke re li mphe.

A: Tsa mphupela thamo.¹⁰

A: Thangoana, ngoan'a ke,

A: Kutla-kutla litsela.

A: U ee koana ha Shokhoe.¹¹

A: Ha Shokhoe ha ho uoe,

A: Ho tsibana li peli. (Variant:

Ke sioana li peli.)

A: Khomo e ntso mohala



track3

- Q: U mang?** **A: e tlola e katika,** (Variant: E tlola e katikoa)
- Q: U mang?** **A: e epa khalabetloa,** ¹²
- Q: U mang?** **A: khalabetloa, monoko mofala khopo,** ¹³
- morokolo,** ¹⁴ **tsuololo-tsuo!** ¹⁵

Translation:

- Q Who are you? A: I am Mokali 'a thole.
- Q: Who are you? A: I found monkeys
- Q: Who are you? A: eating wild seeds.
- Q: Who are you? A: I asked them to give me.
- Q: Who are you A: They became angry with me
- Q: Who are you? A: A little mouthful, my child.
- Q: Who are you? A: The one who travels often on the same road.
- Q: Who are you? A: Go there to Shokhoe's home.
- (Variant: Let's go to Shokhoe's home)
- Q: Who are you? A: At Shokhoe's one is forbidden to go,
- (Variant: At Shokhoe's there is no one.)
- Q: Who are you? A: There are two small feathers
- Q: Who are you? A: on the black ox's mane.
- Q: Who are you? A: Jumping and flirting about
- Q: Who are you? A: it digs up veld roots.
- Q: Who are you? A: The budding of wild roots, twisted stick,
- the dung of goats, throw them away! far, far
- away!

Note that the question "U mang?" begins and ends the narrative question and does not follow the logic of the replies but has a distracting role as was mentioned earlier. Although the English translation loses its meaning, there

are passages which show that this narrative chant could have been the invention of children in the remote past. This is substantiated by the first few lines of the child's conversation with the monkeys who are personified:

Ke fumane litsoene
Li e-ja meroloane.
Ka re ke re li mphe,
Tsa mphupela thamo.

Translation: I have found monkeys
 eating wild seeds.
 I said they should give me,
 (but) they became angry with me, etc.

Nowadays, these dialogues are kept alive by children in being recited as they are and not requiring any composition on the part of the respondent. See Appendix 1, chanted rhythmically by the children of Leseli Primary School, Maseru..

5. 'Mangakane

(The mother of the little doctor)

Dialogue game as 'music':

'*Mangakane* was originally a narrative or folktale which may have been culled from the first two lines of '*Mangakane*, an old, popular and traditional tale.

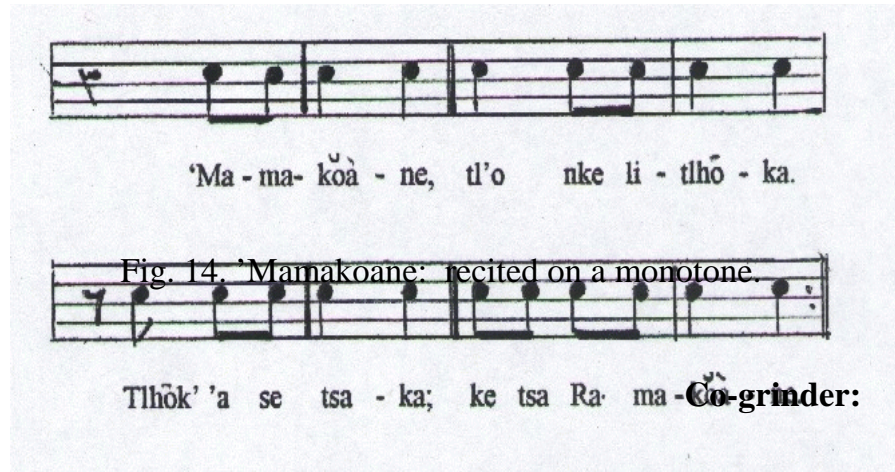


'*Ma-ngak-ane* is derived from the (dim. *ngakane*, a little doctor). '*MaNgakane* denotes the wife of *Ngakane* and is a mark of respect, while '*mangakane* is somewhat derogatory and suggests a quack or a false thing.

'Mamakoane:

It is not certain which came first, the grinding chant '*Mamakoane* or '*Mangakane*, the tale. The dialogue opens with two women in conversation about *Rangakane*, husband of '*Mangakane*, who has gone on a hunting expedition. This grinding chant was performed by 'Mè Francina on 26th June, 1997 at the village of Butha Buthe, Lesotho.

One will notice that the first two lines are the same in '*Mangakane* except that some words are contracted to accommodate the strict movement of the grinder's stone in '*Mamakoane*'s reply: '*Tlhok'ase tsa... ka* instead of *Litlhoka ha se tsa ka* (in *Rangakane*'s reply). Also *Ke tsa mang?* is omitted.



Mam

akoa . . ne, tl'o nke litlho . . ka.¹⁶

'Mamakoane: 'Tlhok'ase tsa . . ka; ke tsa Ramakoane.¹⁷

Translation:

Co-grinder: 'Mamako . . ane, come take the cha . . ffs.

'Mamakoane: The chaffs are not mi . . ne; they are Ramakoa . . ne's.

Papali:

'*Mangakane* is traditionally narrated between two children in the form of a dialogue. Nowadays, two groups generally take part through the influence of school where more than two children are allowed to participate. Note the children's partial questions and run-on lines in the replies. This chant carries the same dialogue structure, the leader being referred to as Child A and the respondent, as Child B. The illogicality of Molapo (in the tale) responding when dead cannot be overlooked as children are prone to change situations or words to suit

their fancy.

Child A:	Child B:
Q: 'Mangakane, mphe lithloka!	A: Litlhoka ha se tsa ka.
Q: Ke tsa mang?	A: Ke tsa Rangakane.
Q: O ile kae?	A: O ile tsolong.¹⁹
Q: O il'o etsang?	A: O il'o bolaea mafukuthoana.²⁰ (Variant: O bolaile mahukuthoane).
Q: A le makae?	A: A le mabeli.
Q: Le leng la re:	A: "Molapo²¹ tsoha!"
Q: Ke tsohè joang?	A: ke bolailoe ke balisana.
Q: Ba ha mang?	A: ba ha Rasethithi?²²

From this point, the variation occurs:

Q: A bolailoe ke mang?	A: Ke balisana.
Q: Ba ha mang?	A: ba ha Sethithi.²³
Q: Sethithibòea²⁴	A: Tsotsa lehare.
Q: U nyanyabetse lesapo	A: la tsoene²⁵
Q: le la tsoenyana,	A: le thata-thata.

Translation:

Q: 'Mangakane, give me the chaffs!	A: The chaffs are not mine.
Q: To whom do they belong?	A: They are Rangakane's
Q: Where has he gone?	A: He has gone to the hunt.
Q: What has he gone to do?	A: He has gone to kill doves.
Q: How many?	A: Two.
Q: The one said:	A: "Molapo, wake up!
Q: How should I wake up?	A: when I'm killed by the herdboys
Q: Belonging to whom?	A: of Rasethithi's village."

From this point, the variation occurs:

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|--------------------|
| Q: | And killed by whom? | A: | By the herdboys |
| Q: | Belonging to whom? | A: | of the Sethithi's. |
| Q: | the brown-haired caterpillar. | A: | Sharpen the blade |
| Q: | You must cut deep into the
bone | A: | of the monkey. |
| Q: | and of the little monkey. | A: | that is very hard. |

Papali:

Very old respondents informed me that one should ignore the illogical replies of the narrative because this was a children's game.

Traditionally, the essence of such a narrative as *Mangakane* was to test the respondent's skill and memory in swiftly weaving sensible answers without any hesitation in readiness for the leader's probing and unexpected directions.

If the respondent hesitated, he or she fell out and another took his or her place or they swopped roles. Because the lines vary in length in both the caller's questions and the respondent's replies, this made the chant all the more hard. This was so because the aim of the caller was to off-set the respondent who had to focus on the leader's questions or statements in order that the latter showed up his or her mental skills and memorisation in supplying logical replies. Like *Mokali'a thole*, *'Mangakane* is recited nowadays as it stands without

the respondent coming up with original answers.

Children are known to recite this lengthy dialogue from beginning to end. Though the lines are of varying length and lack the *strict* metronomic rhythmic character of *Mokali 'a thole* in Appendix 1, nevertheless, some children adopt the rhythm shown above in *'Mamakoane*.

6. Kokoko

(Kokoko)

Dialogue game as 'music':

This is another very old traditional narrative tale regarded as a “*papali* (play song)” and related to the two previous dialogues in this chapter. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘Tale of *Rakoko*’ (lit. ‘Tsomo ea Rakoko’). The name *Rakoko* either denotes the ‘father of *Koko* or *Rakoko*. They are proper nouns denoting the name of a man. The aims of the game are the same as the previous dialogues but the only difference is that the leader’s repetitive utterances are not framed in the form of a question as in *Mokali 'a thole* (No. 4), but punctuate the respondent’s replies throughout. For convenience, leader and respondent are referred to as Child A and Child B, respectively.

A description of the dialogue follows:

Child A:	Child B:
Kokoko	: E ile ea re ke lutse khotla, ²⁶

Kokoko : ka utloa mokhosi ²⁷ o lla.
Kokoko : Ka nka thebe, ²⁸ ka phalla,
Kokoko : ka teana le Rakoko
Kokoko : a nkile naman'a maleoana.²⁹
Kokoko : Ka re ke re a mphe.
Kokoko : A nkoma-nkoma ³⁰ ka seletsoana;³¹
Kokoko : ka seletsoana se mahlènhlana.³²
Kokoko : Ka re: “Khomó eso ea lusa.
Kokoko : Ke tla ja mohlana ke u time.
Kokoko : Khatsele ke e ise liroala,³³
Kokoko : liroala tsa bahlankana,
Kokoko : bahlankana ba Barolong.³⁴
Kokoko : 'Me, mofoka ³⁵ ha a o je;
Kokoko : o ja lebele lefubelu.
Kokoko : Morokolo, tsuololo-tsuo.

Translation: Kokoko : It happened when I was seated in court,
 Kokoko : I heard the siren ring.
 Kokoko : I took a shield, and ran.
 Kokoko : I met Rakoko
 Kokoko : carrying a piece of meat given to the person who
 has skinned a calf.
 Kokoko : I said that he should give it to me.
 Kokoko : He grumbled at me carrying a small axe, with
 Kokoko : a small axe that is uneven.
 Kokoko : I said: “Our family’s cow is preparing to calve
 Kokoko : I will eat the rump and deprive you of it,
 Kokoko : the load of the young boys,
 Kokoko : young boys belonging to the Barolong.

Kokoko : Mother, does not eat tares,
 Kokoko : she eats the red corn.
 Kokoko : The dung of sheep or goats.

Unlike *Mokali 'a thole*, the leader sets the rhythmic pace with the words *Kokoko* instead of 'U mang?' punctuating the respondent's replies until the very end of the chant.

7. Sehamela-poli

(The milker of the goat)

Dialogue game as 'music':

According to Mabile and Dieterlen, a *Sehamela-poli* is the Sesotho botanical name for the plant *Parapodium costatum* (1974: 78), but in the context of the game, *Sehamela-poli* is used as a deverbative noun meaning 'milker-of-the-goat'. *Hamela* (from the word *Sehamela-poli*) denotes 'to milk for or in' and *poli*, a goat. This is another "papali (play song)" in the form of a dialogue which is played by both girls and boys or either sex usually during their leisure time. The difference lies here that the first portion is recited rhythmically and the latter recited in recitative after the third reply. Two players or two groups are only needed. Child A (or Group A) questions and Child B (or Group B) responds rhythmically in a chanted manner:

Child A:

Child B:

Q: Eo ke ma . . ng?

A: Ke Bula . . ne

Q: O nkile . . 'ng?

A: Likhali . . na.³⁶

Q: Li le ka . . e?

A: Li le pe . . li.

Recitative:

**Tsa tsela molapo, tsa rurela
nonyana tsa bo-Mahlasi' a
puleng.³⁷ Ea tsehang, re tla
mo ja ka linala puleng; Se-
hamela-poli,³⁸ le sa potsanyane,
gaphi!³⁹**

Translation: Q. Who is he?

A. It is Bulane.

Q. What is she carrying?

A. Small pieces of roasted fat.

Q. How many?

A. Two.

Recitative:

They (the fat turned into birds)
crossed the river, they attacked
the bird belonging to Mahlasi
and company in the rain.
Whoever laughs, we shall attack
him with nails in the rain; the-
milker-of-the-goat and that of
little goat, *gaphi!*

the

Papali:

This dialogue is mixed with deep Sesotho metaphors that are not easily translatable in English, hence, the problematic nature of my not rendering a clear translation of the text. In the text, it would imply that *likhalika* (the hard fried pieces of fat meat) turned into

birds, crossed a stream (*molapo*) and provided feathers or other material for making nests. As birds, they are personified and referred to as *tsa bo-Mahlasi'a puleng* (lit. belonging to *Mahlasi* and company) because they make nests out of vegetable matter brought about by rain. The word *mahlasi* is used here to mean *makhasi* (that is, leaves) while *gaphi!* (or sometimes *gapho!*) is an ideophone just like *rapho!* or *tlepho!* etc to describe the tearing of flesh.

As the rhythm is not effective in the English translation, I have just given its translation. This very short dialogue ends in an unusual manner with a recitative. It shares with the other dialogues in inquiring about the narrator's identity at the onset to set the tone of this very short tale.

8. Bohobe, u tsoa kae?

(Bohobe, from where do you originate?)

Dialogue game as 'music':

This popular short dialogue is played by girls and/ or boys at any time of the day when children are free from their chores. It does not fall under the category of Games of Identity which is found in '*Mantlatilane* (No. 17), Chapter 8, although both ask the question: "U tsoa kae?" (From where do you originate?).

This dialogue bears the principles of parallelism, a common technique in Sesotho poetry writing where the end words are wrapped around and repeated

in the next line. (See also under Chain-Rhyme Games as ‘Music’. Due to the brevity of the lines and dialogue structure in *Bohobe, u tsoa kae?*, it is included here under Dialogue Games because of the characteristics it shares with other dialogues in this subsection. Comparatively speaking, this dialogue is fairly short like the previous one:

Papal:

In Sesotho, when children are given *senkhoana* (dim. bread made of green corn) for the first time, they take small pieces of it from the pot and rub it with their hands before shaping it. The bread personified as *Bohobe* (n. bread) is addressed and held high with their hands. With this gesture, the *senkhoana* is continually eaten while the “*papali* (play song)” is played.

Child A:

Q: Bohobe, u tsoa kae? ⁴⁰

Q: Thitheng hokae?

Q: Ka mor’a lefika hokae?

Child B:

A: Ke tsoa thiteng. ⁴¹

A: Ka mor’a lefika ⁴²

A: Ha ntetenene, ⁴³ **ha nkamo-kamo.** ⁴⁴

Translation:

Q: Bohobe, from where do you hail? **A: I come from the unploughed ground.**

Q: Where at the unploughed ground? **A: Behind the rock.**

Q: Where, behind the rock? **A: At the very big thing, that eats a lot.**

9. Senyamo?

(Declare the one you love?)

Dialogue game as ‘music’:

Senyamo?, employed as an interjective, is simply a game of amusement for older children who have reached the age of calf love. It is devoid of any competition and played at any time of the day, season and anywhere when all work is done.

	Child A:	Child B:
Introductory question:	Senyamo? ⁴⁵	Se-mang? ⁴⁶
	Se-Limpho?	Tlhotse! ⁴⁷
	Se-Teboho?	Tlhotse!
	Se-Palesa?	Tlhotse!
	Se-Lineo?	Tlhotse!
		E liboko! ⁴⁸
Recitative:	Se-Naleli?	Ka shoa ⁴⁹ ka ba ka re phutho! ⁵⁰
Translation:	Child A.	Child B.
Introductory question:	Whom do you love?	Somebody? (So-and-so?)
	I suggest Limpho?	I do not like! (that is, her or him)
	I suggest Teboho?	I do not like!
	I suggest Palesa?	I do not like!
	I suggest Lineo?	I do not like!
		It is full of worms!
Recitative:	I suggest Naleli?	I die for her/him that I am speechless!

Papali:

Two players (who may be of the same gender or not) stand opposite each other while onlookers watch with anxiety to see who is the chosen one. Although the inquirer asks a question, it is not a question in the true sense of the word but a word to elicit a response from the respondent. The inquirer and respondent may exchange roles at the end of the game. In this dialogue, the inquirer performs a witch-hunt to discover the respondent's lover by mentioning some possible female admirers. If the lover is detested and is not the one at all, the disdained lover is likened to worms with these words: "Tlhotse! E liboko!" (I don't like! It is full of worms!). This disdain is further shown by the use of the Sesotho linguistic classification of cl. 5 sing. pron. *E* (It's) instead of the polite form *O* (She or he). If the respondent acknowledges the lover, then the response is: "Ka shoa ka ba ka re phutho!" (I die for her or him that I am speechless!). The ideophone *phutho!* is effective in describing the lover's figurative loss of strength.

The musical and regular rhythms of the verse lines *Se-* are maintained until we reach the last two lines of the respondent's dramatic replies in recitative where it is broken to declare his (or her) love. Note the dramatic effect of the ideophone *phutho!* which, in Sesotho, is generally employed after *-re*, for example, in the last line of the dialogue: "Ka shoa ka ba ka *re phutho!*" (I die for her/him that I am speechless!). Though *phutho!* expresses the particular

action of being ‘speechless’, its gesture represents the action more vividly.

CHAIN-RHYME GAMES AS ‘MUSIC’

Rhyme in the Western sense is defined as the recurrence of similar sounds or words at certain intervals and these are found in poetry. It also denotes a short poem or verse. Cf. *Romans and English* (No. 4) and *One, two . . .* (No. 7).

There is a difference between the rhyme patterns of children’s verse in games of the West (viz. European and North American) and those of black Africa. From the point of view of the Westerner, the use of chain-rhymes (or parallelism) in poetry writing does not exist in the culture because they have had a long tradition of children’s rhymes following ballad tradition where the rhyming of end words is an important feature. Tracey (1963: 19) writing many decades ago stated that ‘It is fortunate perhaps that African languages, with the single exception of Swahili, do not demand rhyme at the end of their stanzas.’ Is it perhaps rhyme, in Sesotho and in some African children’s verses, takes on an entirely different meaning and structure which is found in the technique of parallelism (which will be discussed below) so prevalent in African verse and which is aesthetically pleasing to the ears of the African child? Perhaps alliteration takes the form of rhyme in Sesotho with regard to the use of the grammatical concord in the sentence: ‘*Bana ba batle ba batla batho ba baholo.*’ (The pretty children want the adults.) This kind of alliteration also heightens the beauty of the language.

Some characteristics of Sesotho and African techniques of parallelism:

The use of parallelism (or chain-rhymes) generally follows a certain pattern in that the last word (or phrase) in a line is generally repeated in the next line and becomes the first word (or phrase). The second line commences with the last word (or phrase) of the first line, the third with the last one of the second, thus wrapping themselves to make a 'chain'. Not only is this technique unique to black sub-Saharan Africa, the poetry is recited to a regular rhythm until the end where the verse might be broken to form a very brief recitative which gives the whole performance the idea of the verse being 'sung'. Very often the last line forms, as it were, a *coda* to round off the text. Hence, the notion of these rhymes being conceived as 'music'. The essence of parallelism is to outwit one's opponent and to 'remember the right sequence of words quickly enough, and those who get it wrong are ridiculed.' See Finnegan's *Sudanese* (1970: 306) example.

It is necessary to bring to the reader's attention that *ancient* use of parallelism (or chain-rhymes) in Sesotho poetry was, according to Guma (1980: 118), recited at circumcision lodges for boys and later appeared in stanzas of historical accounts. Children at these lodges may have carried this stylistic technique and used it in their games to while away their leisure. See Guma's (1980: 118) version below:

.....
Tshakajwe tsa lata,
Tsa lata kgweshu,
Kgweshu morokolo.

Translation:

The boy initiates fetched,

(They) fetched the teacher,

(The) teacher is the fire-maker.

Guma (1980: 118)

The reader should also examine and compare Guma's example and the following *secular* "*lipapali* (play songs)", namely, *Bohobe, u tsoa kae?* (No. 8, *Nqokolotsane* (No. 10) and *Matsollopeli* (No. 11) with regard to the use of parallelism which is still practised to this day.

10. Nqokolotsane

(A tiny object)

Chain-rhyme game as 'music':

Nqokolotsane is the first of two Sesotho "*lipapali* (play songs)" in the form of a dialogue which is considered as a game. It was performed in January by the Iketsetseng Primary School, Maseru, Lesotho. Although the chant is to be chanted quickly, the children have performed it rather slowly. Note the repetition of the underlined words and how they wrap around the next lines. For the sake of clarity, Q represents the older child who begins with an introductory question which is answered by the little child represented by A (Answer). The older child begins by pointing at the child's nose and says:



track5

Q: Hoo nkong ke'ng?'

A: Ke nqokolotsane⁵¹

Recitation begins:

Q: Ea tla . .'a?

A: Ea tla ea soetsa.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Q: <u>Soetsa</u> . . a? | A: Soetsana <u>maee</u> . |
| Q: <u>Mae</u> . . e? | A: Mae <u>ka chaa</u> . |
| Q: <u>Ka cha</u> . . a? | A: Ka chela <u>nonii</u> . ⁵² |
| Q: <u>Noni</u> . . i? | A: Nonii a <u>qhoaea</u> . |
| Q: <u>Qhoaea</u> . . a? | A: Qhoaeana <u>kutsuu</u> . ⁵³ |
| Q: <u>Kutsu</u> . . u? | A: Kutsuu le <u>shophaa</u> . ⁵⁴ |
| Q: <u>Shopha</u> . . a? | A: Shophaa <u>isaa</u> . |
| Q: <u>Isa</u> . . a? | A: Isa morokolo ⁵⁵ tsuololo-tsuo! ⁵⁶ |

The rhythm is broken in the final Answer and uttered in recitative.

Translation:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Q: What is on your nose? | A: It is a tiny object. |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|

Rhythmic recitation begins:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Q: What does it do? | A: It hurts so much! |
| Q: Hurts how? | A: (It) hurts painfully. |
| Q: How painfully? | A: A burning pain. |
| Q: How burning? | A: Burnt for nothing. |
| Q: Really for nothing? | A: Throw off the tiny object. |
| Q: Throw how? | A: Throw (it) from the elbow. |
| Q: The elbow? | A: The elbow turns in. |
| Q: Turns in how? | A: Turns in and throws away. |
| Q: Throws away how? | A: Throws very far away. |

The rhythm is broken in the final Answer and uttered in recitative.

Papali:

Nqokolotsane is a didactic traditional “*papali* (play song)” to teach

little children to be conscious of unwanted ‘tiny objects’ on their faces such as dried snot in or around the nose. This observance is inculcated at a very tender age. Usually, they are unaware of their facial appearance and, in most cases, are not capable of cleaning such ‘objects’. It was left to the older children to make the former aware of this which was done in a subtle way in the form of a game which was recited. This chant was more effective than telling the child in private to clean its nose. This public gesture of warning a child was also a way of saying to the others that ‘you will be ridiculed if you do not take note’.

Two children (or two groups) stand opposite each other. The dialogue opens with the leader inquiring what is on the nose of the other child who is unaware of the *true* object and replies: “It is a tiny object.” Thereafter, the game proper begins.

Nqokolotsane has maintained the characteristics pertaining to most African children’s chain-rhymes and the wrapping around of words. The reader will have noticed in *Nqokolotsane* that the last letter of each of the questioner’s word is extended with each word forming two syllables thus creating an interesting onomatopoeic language and rhythm aided by parallelism.

11. Matsollopeli

(Deceptive appearance)

Chain-rhyme game as ‘music’:

Note the structure of this rhyme which is devoid of dialogue. It will be observed that its brief narrative stanza still maintains the characteristics of parallelism performed in a regular rhythmic fashion. The rhyme culminates in a brief line uttered in a recitative-like manner, thus breaking the rhythm.

Papali:

This rhyme could be played by girls or boys or both in the homestead when chores are done either during the day or by the evening fireside. The title of the game, *Matsollopeli* is self-explanatory and filled with metaphors. The word *Matsollopeli* denotes treachery hidden under a deceitful appearance which is seen in Child A’s actions. Two players, namely, Child A and Child B face each other. Child A (the treacherous participant) holds Child’s B’s hand whose fingers are clenched tightly and counts the latter’s fingers while deceptively trying to force her’s between them. While counting, Child A recites or sings this verse:

Matsollopeli

A bo-Molethi.

Matlobolokoane.

E n'e re ke ile ha eno,

Ka fumana khomo li tsoile;

Li tsoile ka Mahaoa-haoane,⁵⁷

Mahaoa-haoane a Ntseli.

Ntseli ke mofuma-loli,⁵⁸

Mofuma-loli-le-khaohe;⁵⁹

monoanyana tlee-tee!⁶⁰

(Variant: Katana tlee! 2x.)

Translation:

Treacherous hidden deceit

Belong to Molethi and company.

It happened while I had gone to your home,

I found the cattle gone;

Gone through the spell,

(the) spell of Ntseli.

Ntseli is a charm;

(a) charm that can tear the little fingers of an enemy apart.

(Variant: *Katana tlee!* 2x.)

At the words *monoanyana tlee-tee!* or *Katana tlee!* Child A, with her fingers, suddenly and forcibly tries to penetrate or metaphorically 'tears' Child B's clenched fingers. The aim behind this game is that Child B has to be alert during the counting of her fingers. The moment when her fingers are to be 'torn' or separated, she should swiftly pull her hand away to avoid pain. The game teaches one to be prudent, clever and intelligent at all times.

The line, *Mahaoa-haoane a Ntseli*, occurs in a number of praise poems and traditional songs. It probably refers to *Ntseli*, a person who is like a *mofumaloli* (a charm or spell) that can tear the fingers of the enemy apart. *Mahaba-haba* is sometimes employed and is derived from the expression *ho tsoa ka mahaba-haba*, meaning ‘to go to the grazing grounds without having been milked’. In the context of the game, *Mahaba-haba* denotes the spaces between the fingers.

Summary: Chapter 5 attempts to illustrate that ‘music’ to the Mosotho child need not be regarded as music in the Western sense. The common characteristic in all the games in this chapter is the element of rhythm which the children conceive as ‘music’ in Sesotho. The imitative, clapping and jumping gestures in the recitation games, for example, *Seotsanyana*, the repetitive leaders’ questions in the narrative dialogues and the technique of parallelism, all help to regulate the rhythms before every response, thus keeping the attention of the players and the ‘music’ alive. The Sesotho regular, rhythmic character of the verse rhymes becomes ‘music’ even though the texts were ‘not easy to translate. They are full of illusions and hidden meanings’ (Jones, 1959: 16).

The purposes of the tales is to train children to relate an incident or events in a logical manner and without hesitation. Hence, a constant regular and metrical rhythm was an indispensable aid in helping children to focus on the matter in hand, which would be much more difficult if the chain-rhymes and the rhythms

were uttered in prose or ordinary speech.

The stylistic characteristic and structure of the narrative dialogues would form an interesting comparison with dilemma tales which are not:

brought to a conclusion by the narrator, but end on a question which is followed by a lively discussion by the audience . . .

Their aim is to stimulate discussion . . . Many dilemma tales pose problems that are even impossible to resolve.

Kubik (1990: 60, 61).

Endnotes:

- ¹ Seotsanyana : (dim.) of *seoli*, the lammervanger or golden eagle.
- ² nkopele : (refl.) *nkopele* (clap for me); (v.) *ho opa* (to applaud/clap with one's hands). With reference to the bird which cannot clap (*opela*), 'flap' is used.
- ³ opele : to clap one's hands.
- ⁴ manamane : (dim.) little calves.
- ⁵ qethoha : to lie on one's back; or to fall backwards or upside down.
- ⁶ Nkhekhenene : In Norton's version it means something great, a bogie. According to Paroz (1974: 150), *Nkhekhenene* denotes an ideophone: *ho re kekhenene*, and means to stand up at once, to be astonished or to parry. Whereas *makhekhenene* means a great doctor.
- ⁷ 'Mankokosane : (n.) sometimes spelt 'MaNkokotsane. 'Mankokosane is a female spirit dwelling in the sky and believed to make children grow. It is also regarded as a children's "*papali* (play song)" which takes place under the rain.

- ⁸ Pula : (n.) rain.
- ⁹ hola : to grow, as in a plant or human being.
- ¹⁰ thamo : anger.
- ¹¹ Shokhoe : an inquisitive, indiscreet person who speaks much and is seen everywhere.
- ¹² khalabetloa : veld roots.
- ¹³ mofala-khopo : twisted sticks.
- ¹⁴ morokolo : droppings or dung from sheep or goats.
- ¹⁵ tsuololo-tsuo! : far-far away.
- ¹⁶ litlhoka : chaffs left in the husks after threshing.
- ¹⁷ Ramakoane : name of a man.
- ¹⁸ Rangakane : an unknown person.
- ¹⁹ tsolong : (loc. at, to the hunt.), from *letsolo* (n. the hunt).
- ²⁰ mafukuthoane : doves. From *hukuthu*, the sound of doves. (See *mahukuthoane*).
- ²¹ Molapo : an unknown person.
- ²² Rasethithi : an unknown person. ‘*ba Rasethithi*’ (‘belonging to’ or ‘of the Rasethithi’s’).
- ²³ Sethithi : name of a person.
- ²⁴ Sethithiboea : the brown-haired caterpillar, referring to Sethithi. Note the pun in *Sethithi* and *Sethithiboea* above.
- ²⁵ tsoene : (n.) monkey.
- ²⁶ khotla : a traditional Sesotho court where the men sit for meetings.
- ²⁷ mokhosi o lla : the sound of the alarm rang.
- ²⁸ thebe : (n.) a shield.
- ²⁹ maleoana : a small piece of meat given to the person who has skinned a calf.
- ³⁰ nkoma-koma : from *nkoma* (v.) to grumble. The verb is intensified.
- ³¹ seletsoana : (dim.) a small axe.

- ³² mahlenhlana : damaged or uneven.
- ³³ liroala : (plur.) loads carried on the head
- ³⁴ Barolong : belonging to the Barolong ethnic group.
- ³⁵ mofoka : weed looking very much like the kaffir corn; also tares.
- ³⁶ Likhalikana : (dim.) small pieces of roasted fat. The word is derived from *khalika* which is roasted fat or lump of fat remaining in the pot after the melted fat has been removed..
- ³⁷ Mahlasi 'a puleng : metaphorically 'leaves' (*makhasi*).
- ³⁸ Se-hamela-poli : the milker of the goat; also the plant Parapodium.
- ³⁹ gaphi! : an ideophone.
- ⁴⁰ u tsoa kae? : from where do you hail/originate or come from? It is used as an interrogative sentence. Same as *ho kae?* (where?)
- ⁴¹ thiteng : (loc.) the unploughed ground.
- ⁴² lefika : (n.) a rock.
- ⁴³ Ha ntetenene : at a very big thing.
- ⁴⁴ ha nkamo-kamo : has the connotation of where things fall apart.
- ⁴⁵ Senyamo? : (n.) a game. The word is used in a Sesotho *papali* and is directed to a young person to declare whom he or she loves.
- ⁴⁶ Semang? : Somebody? or So-and-so? *Semang* derived from *mang?* (who?)
- ⁴⁷ Tlhotse! : sometimes *hlotse* (v.t) from *ho hlola* (to conquer or overcome. Regarding this "*papali* (play song)", the respondent means 'I don't like the person you are suggesting.' Note: *tlhotse* also denotes something rough or thick (adj.).
- ⁴⁸ E liboko! : (lit.) 'it (the person whom you are suggesting) is full of worms', that is, I do not like him/her.
- ⁴⁹ Ka shoa : (lit.) I die. Colloquially, it denotes the person is enamoured.
- ⁵⁰ phutho! : (ideoph.) *ho re phutho*, to lose one's strength or to be unable to answer through lack of words.

- ⁵¹ nqokolotsane : a tiny object or thing.
- ⁵² noni : for nothing.
- ⁵³ kutsu : the elbow.
- ⁵⁴ shopha : to turn in.
- ⁵⁵ morokolo : to throw
- ⁵⁶ tsuololo-tsuo! : far, far away.
- ⁵⁷ Mahaoa-haoane : the charms or spells. Variant: *Mahaba-haba*.
- ⁵⁸ mofumaloli : a person with charms or spells.
- ⁵⁹ le-khaohe : as above the one who tears or separates.
- ⁶⁰ tlee-tlee! : (ideoph.) expressing the force of tearing something, in this case, the fingers. Variant: (*se*)*Katana tlee!* (Tearing the fingers like a rag! (*sekatana*)).

PART C

“*LIPAPALI* (PLAY SONGS)” IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT/EDUCATION IN SESOTHO

Introduction to Part C:

Up to now, I have dealt with the purposes of “*lipapali* (play songs)” in Basotho children’s lives and have given the reader an insight into the various categories of chanted rhythmic games that are conceived by Basotho children to be ‘music’. From the examples given in the previous chapter, the reader will have by now understood the different concept of what Westerners regard as children’s music in their games and music in general and what Basotho children conceive as ‘music’ in their traditional games.

Broadly speaking, Part C takes us on a journey to show the chronological stages of the Basotho child’s life as she or he grows. The following “*lipapali* (play songs)” are not only for amusement or entertainment, they also contain some learning aspect which, in most cases, is in the form of games as expressive behaviour. They attempt to illustrate how the games become gradually complex; how the game gestures and learning play an important role in children’s development as these accompany the various stages of learning and/or training in their lives.

Chapter 6

SURVEY OF THE PLACE OF THE MOSOTHO CHILD IN THE HOME, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

__This chapter lays the basis for the understanding and meaningful place of “*lipapali* (play songs)” in the child’s development and in education. It discusses their education and the role that ‘music’ education plays in the socialisation of their lives. However, not much has been written with regard to this. In order to study the place and role of Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” in this sphere, it is necessary to know their social background because children do not develop in a vacuum; their first surroundings are the home, family and the community from which their lives are shaped and the home is the starting point:

(a) The home and the family:

The *lelapa*¹ (or home) offers Basotho children a place where family celebrations take place to mark other family occasions or where family disputes or impending divorce discussions take place. It offers a closely-knit environment where children are taught to share things; to co-operate with one another; where cradle songs are learnt songs; where story-telling takes place; where counting songs are learnt; where games and singing games are played; where young women learn to grind corn to the accompaniment of grinding songs and where good manners and respect (n. *hlonepho/tlhonepho*) are taught. See Kunene (1958) for the various kinds of Sesotho customs of behaviour,

avoidance of certain words, etc.

As infants grow into childhood, they increase their knowledge of the social environment and of the many techniques practised and artefacts used. With regard to them, Schwebel and Raph observe that ‘. . . during the first two years of life, imitation is a main source of learning’ (1974: 17).

The cognitive-interactionist theories of Piaget, Bruner, Bloom and other present-day scholars state that as children interact with their environment in exploring and experimenting with it freely, their behaviour changes and develops. This being done with adults as guides, facilitators, observers, questioners and analysers. In particular, Basotho children learn how to behave toward their kinsfolk; they establish close and intimate relations with their siblings, cousins of the same sex and adults (who all act as facilitators) and are in close contact with them.

(b) Some ceremonies surrounding the birth of the child:

In Sesotho, as with other traditional African societies, the woman’s role is first to beget a child, and she is prepared for this from an early age. No marriage was regarded as complete without a child and this is influenced by the Sesotho folklore and belief in a place inhabited by a spirit who could answer every wish they desired. Obviously, women who could not conceive a child enlisted the favours of this spirit who lived in the *khapong*, an ‘abode of the Spirit of Maternity’ (Martin, 1969: 93) where Basotho used to come, from time to time,

with offerings hoping to propitiate this Spirit to have their prayers answered.. In order to appease this male Spirit, a barren woman made a *ngoana seka* (a fertility doll made of wood or clay). This doll was strapped on her back for six months in the hope that she would conceive and bear a child. Martin (1969: 93) states:

They lay it (the doll) in the *khapong* as an offering to the spirit
 . . . Should no child be born, it is a sign that the woman has not
 found favour with the spirit yet, so the doll is removed from the
khapong, and strapped on the woman's back until the spirit is
 satisfied, when in joy the longed-for child is born.

The anticipated birth of the child is still expected with immense anxiety and excitement, more so, if the birth of the first child were a male because he ensured the continuation of the family name. This was not the case with the girl child who was regarded as one who will one day leave the family to marry. To educate her was regarded as educating her for strangers or foreigners. In former times when a child was born in Sesotho culture, Laydevant (nd: 19) states:

A new fire is lit with two pieces of dry wood and
 this fire is not allowed to go out for as long as the
 woman and her child stay in the hut for the period
 of legal impurity.

In modern times, to signal to the community that a child is born at a certain

home, a white flag is hoisted on the tip of a tall reedlike or bamboo pole for every one to see and rejoice at the wonderful news. If a woman did conceive and bear a child, this first child was delivered in her parent's home and the father was not supposed to see his infant until it was formally introduced to him. The manner in which the birth of the child was announced to its father was extremely formal but curious: A male neighbour, with a stick in his hand, gently taps the father on his back saying: "*Re nehiloe mora!*"² ("We are given a son!"). If it

is a baby girl, a woman announced the arrival of the baby in the same way by pouring a calabash of water over its head and said: "*Re nehiloe ngoana oa ngoanana!*"³ (We are given a baby girl!). His initial shock is turned to joy.

Briefly, the term *Kuruetso* (n.) is the ceremony during which an infant is exposed to the moon and rain and is derived from *kuruetsa* (to drench or coo as a dove). The term is derived from the ideophone *ho re "kuru"* (lit. to say "*kuru*") which denotes the cry of a frog, a baby or dove. Hence, *Kururu! Kururu!* depicts the sound of a baby crying or a dove cooing.

The *Kuruetso* ceremony in Sesotho has three important stages of the infant's life, namely, (a) the *khoeli ea kuruetso*⁴ (lit. the month of *kuruetso*) being the first month of the child's life whereby it is exposed to the moon; (b) the *kuruetso ea pula* (lit. the ceremony of exposure to the rain) is the second month of the child's life when it is exposed to the rain and (c) *khoeli ea koroso* (lit. (month of *koroso*) being the third month of the infant's life when it is brought home from its maternal grandparent's home and returns to its parent's home where a beast is slaughtered to welcome it. Note, *ho orosa* means to bring

home cattle or grain for the child born at its grandparent's home. Hence, this ceremony is a time of joy, happiness and cause for laughter (*tsehisso*) when the *tlhaba-mokhosi* (lit. sounding of the alarm) is made. These ceremonies (or some) are still adhered to by some Basotho folk in the country-side because an infant is a precious being.

(c) The place of the child in the family:

The place and participation of the child in the family is also seen as a learning process in family matters, which starts very early in its life. Young children await the transition to full participation in adult activities because it is an eagerly awaited privilege undertaken under the friendly guidance of elders. This may involve their gradual observation in certain rites, rituals and tasks performed by their elders in the family or the community. Understandably, their earliest learning is with them. By precept and example, the children learn the names and kinship terms by which they should address each person in their environment and they gradually learn the cultural behaviours expected of them and those they may expect from others. During this period, children receive a considerable amount of instruction in basic attitudes, standards and values. This process of socialisation partly takes place through singing and dancing. Very soon the children will grow up and join the ranks of the older children. It is the home where this education is most conducive to learning and offers the child the opportunity to experience this warmth and companionship.

Children are generally never left alone to fend for themselves because they have a special place in the heart of their families, extended families and the community at large. Traditionally, a neglected or orphaned child was not put

in an orphanage or a children's home for there were no such institutions in Sesotho culture. The extended family was the 'institution' and benefactor and came to the aid of the child (or children) by accepting it as part of the family. Likewise, the community in which the parents live accept children in the same vein as the extended family.

(d) The place of the child in the community:

Children are not only accepted into the family in which they are born, the whole village in which their parents form part also accepts them. Hence, when faced with danger, it is fitting that children could seek help and protection from any villager in the community. The villager could chastise or reprimand the child as a parent would in the family without any fear of their parents. Children could also seek the community's protection.

When children encounter a stranger, parents often put their children at ease by showing them the proper behaviour in more purely social situations to improve their manipulation of the physical environment. Concerning the caring attitude of the community towards the child, van der Vliet (1974: 212) aptly confirms this by stating:

. . . rather his models for behaviour were all around him,
 . . . but usually the whole community was interested in his
 progress (and likely to praise or punish his efforts), he
 learned by emulating their behaviour.

This caring attitude towards such children and emigres was one of acceptance

by the community and this acceptance was not unusual.

(e) Basotho children's education:

Education, to most people, has come to mean the activities that go on in the formal institutions of our society known as schools, which are supplemented perhaps by reading and lectures that are less formally organised. According to Fraser et al. (1990: 186), it is 'the activity engaged in when an adult who has superior knowledge and insight purposefully teaches a child, adolescent or adult who has inferior knowledge and insight in order to help him or her to become intellectually independent and socially responsible (i.e. a mature adult).'

In societies, such as the traditional Basotho, all or most of an individual's education comes from one's family, friends, associates and age mates. They learn more easily and more willingly from them, be it "*lipapali* (play songs)" or songs (*lipina*). They learn the ways of their culture and come to participate more or less fully in it. Observing traditional African societies, children 'are not taught by books . . all instruction takes place through action, dances, and especially songs' (Warren, 1970: 12). In Sesotho, education is, like Venda education, 'very subtle, in that norms are transmitted informally in a pleasant way, especially by means of music and dancing' (Blacking 1964: 53-55). In

describing the early stages of a Muvenda child's education, Blacking states:

The desire to imitate or to play is a very powerful factor in the acquisition of cultural norms . . . They have no separate world of their own, with toys and nurseries: they are always part of the adult world, though they do not, of course, participate in all adult activities'.

On the other hand, Western children are not always part of the adult world because there is a clear dichotomy of what a child is and when it is not. The child is only considered an adult when he or she reaches a specific age, for example, twenty-one and is deemed an adult in the eyes of the law. Whereas, in traditional African society, the child may take on an adult responsibility for caring after its younger siblings at a very early age. Initiation generally marks the end of its education and entry into 'adulthood' where it is required to exhibit an adult personality and take on adult behaviour and responsibilities, though chronologically it is still a child.

In days gone by, bringing up Basotho children and educating them, was multifaceted. Children were educated intellectually and morally in many lessons that involved acceptable cultural codes of behaviour. These could be generosity and kindness or unacceptable codes of behaviour such as envy, jealousy, selfishness, deceit, etc. of which are embedded in song. (See Chapter 9, Didactic Games, nos. 18, 19 and 21.)

Through the educational value of folktales (or *litsomo*), virtues and vices were pointed out in those tales that had a specific didactic content, for example, a

moral or lesson such as “Pride comes before a fall” is learnt in the tale of *Tsilo* (See Chevrier and Tladi (1983: 9) where the child soon learns that humility is best. Children often gained an insight into their culture and what existed in their environment, such as the world of ogres, taboos, magic, witchcraft, the supernatural and the underworld. When they reach the age of puberty, story telling does not play an important part but recedes into the background. As they begin to grow a little older and are able to reason, they engage themselves with such pastimes as *lilo* (riddles) in Chapter 12, for example, ‘Kea u lotha’ (Nos. 36), ‘Tsimo e tsoeu’ (No. 37) and more complex ones.

(i) The education of girls and boys:

Fraser (1990: 187) defines learning as an ‘activity in which the person being taught wishes to benefit from the teaching and in fact to acquire particular learning content’. The separation of boys and girls at an early age is spent with members of their own sex and this is partly due to the organised division of labour according to specific gender roles.

The first educators for girls are their mothers and grandmothers. Little girls between the age of three to five accompany their mothers to the fountain or river while carrying their own miniature pails which are usually some replicas of their mother’s. By the time they are six, seven or eight, they assist in sweeping the house and courtyard, washing clothes, etc. but on a rather small scale. During this period, as they are still children, they may indulge in playing *mantloana* (lit. ‘little houses’) generally indulged in by little girls and

is the emulation of adult activities or roles. *Mantloana* is an enjoyable pastime and is considered as a “*papali* (play song)” while laying the foundation and training for adult life. It has its counterpart with British and North American children which is called playing “house.” About this universal children’s activity, Georges (1972: 173) states that ‘Children playing “house,” . . . establish their own imaginary roles and realm’ and are in their own world of make-believe.

As girls grow older, while engaging themselves in “*lipapali* (play songs),” it is usual for them to care for their siblings while carrying them on their backs and singing a lullaby which they have learnt or composed themselves. By the time they are nine or ten years of age, they are confident enough to balance a slightly bigger pail of water drawn from the river. By early adolescence, they have acquired a reasonable ability in the basic techniques of running a home laid by the ‘game’ of *mantloana*. A few years hence, they are able to indulge in such physical games that require them to display their endurance and ‘skills’ for example, in *khati* (long skipping rope). These are displayed in such games as *Senqaqana* and *Motsokonyana sehoete* (Nos. 47 and 48), respectively.

Where certain kinds of labour entailed physical exertion, for example, hoeing, this was left for a later stage when girls will soon leave their parents to enter initiation ‘school’. If the grandmother lived with their granddaughters, she will most often impart to them the basic education regarding womanhood. The girls’ incorporation into society was further achieved through their attendance of an initiation school where, according to Ashton (1967: 57), initiation was ‘vaguely believed to encourage fertility’. On reaching the age of puberty, more

stringent tasks are assigned to them such as preparing simple meals and making Sesotho bread if and when they marry. They may participate in family matters in relieving their mothers of the burden of household chores.

At a relatively early age, boys, on the other hand, become eager to ape adult activities and this is quite acceptable. By the age of five or six, little boys accompany their fathers or older siblings to herd the cattle in the fields and in doing so, they consciously or unconsciously listen to their fathers' tunes. Before the age of eight or eleven, the boy child is not yet a *moshemane* (a boy, especially one going to be initiated). Like the girls, he will receive the basic education in looking after his parent's sheep or goats, chasing after birds, etc. and telling stories. Boys may hunt and kill field mice and birds in simulated hunts. By the age of twelve to fourteen, they are now capable of a day's work, for example, herding sheep and their life becomes very busy. They become good marksmen and hunters and things are not done in a clumsy way. During this period, their recreation may be in the form of playing *Maraba-raba* (No. 43) on stone slabs or on the ground, a "*papali* (play song)" that requires strategising in Chapter 13. As boys, they would acquire a reasonable facility in their roles in the basic techniques of herding and running a home though they would not have acquired all the knowledge to be successful shepherds, hunters or marksmen. The eldest male child may observe and follow certain protocols in the area of inheritance since it ensured the perpetuation of the family name. In this way, he gradually begins to learn how to become a responsible father and head of his future family. When they reach this age, initiation generally marks the end of their education and entry into adulthood.

After this period, they now become adults and are required to exhibit an adult personality and take on adult behaviour and responsibilities. Today, initiation gives the boys some self-esteem in that they are *banna* (men). The following Sesotho idiomatic expressions and proverbs point to this gender stereotype:

- *Monna ke nku'*; *ha a ke a lla* (lit. "A man is a sheep; he does not cry") which means that a man should have the heart of a sheep in enduring pain. He should not cry as women do when confronted with danger.
- *Monna ha a ipolae, o bolaoa ke ba bang* (lit. "A man does not kill himself; he is killed by others"). This signifies a man who must fight to the end and not give up because others will destroy him. In this context, *monna* (lit. "Man") denotes 'a person' and not gender. Though this is meant to be a general proverb pertaining to both sexes, it has much relevance for young boys and men because of the word *monna* instead of *motho* (person).

Some children may not turn out to be what their parents expect them and this is reflected in the following Sesotho proverbs:

- *Leshala le tsoala molora* (lit. "Coal gives birth to ashes") meaning a good man may have a worthless son or daughter.
- Similarly, *Khomo ea lebese ha e itsoale* (lit. "A cow endowed with rich

milk or a good milk cow does not beget itself”). It is not very often that children inherit the good qualities of their parents’ for a good man may beget a bad son or daughter. The importance of this proverb stems from the fact that the cow plays an important role in Sesotho cultural activities, for example, in birth, marriage arrangements, initiation, death, ceremonies and festivities.

- *Ngoan’a tali, o tsejoa ke mereto* (lit. “The offspring of a rat is known by its streaks”) refers to good or bad attributes of a child that reflect its parent’s breeding and nature, the streaks symbolising the good or bad attributes of the parents.
- Similarly, *Ngoan’a lekhala o tsamaea ka lekeke* (lit. “The child of a crab walks aslant”) means that a child takes after its parent’s attributes.

Sometimes, parents may be at fault in their children’s upbringing and the following Sesotho proverbs illustrate this:

- *Ngoan’a ma-rata-e-loele motho a tsoa kotsi* (lit. “The child who likes to quarrel and/or fight until a person sustains an injury”). This refers to a pugnacious child who often provokes another in order to start a row or fight. As the instigator, he does not care how much injury and pain he causes.
- *Bana baonono ke mohlape-maitisi*” (lit. “Children who are like cattle

without shepherds to lead them”), refers to unruly and obstinate children who do not have anyone to reprimand them. Even when they are reprimanded, they roam about with that air of obstinacy.

Finally, an IsiZulu expression, “*Ukuzala ukuselula amathambo*” (lit. to give birth relaxes the bones). This proverb is similar to *ukuzal’ ukuzelul’ amadolo* (lit. to bear children is to extend one’s knees), (Nyembezi , 1990: 142). It refers to mothers who have borne children and prided themselves in having reared them in the right way (until adulthood) to respect work. Now that the children are grown and are extensions of their mothers (or parents), they can relax, stretch themselves and reap the rewards of their hard labours for having brought up their children. Children having observed the sacrifices made during the trying years, will, *most likely*, reciprocate in kind in their adulthood.

(ii) Children’s music education:

Amoaku (1982: 116), in describing traditional African music education states that ‘the acquisition of musical knowledge . . . is guided by the life styles of the society as a homogenous unit.’ From Nzewi’s (2003: 20) observation, music education in African society is ‘age-gender sensitive . . . peer support builds self-worth . . . and a psychologically secure learning environment that projects gender qualities and emotions manages pride . . .’ Not much has been written regarding the role of Basotho children’s music education and their educational development of which some games form part. In the past, their traditional

education took the form of socialisation, naturalisation and of inducing them into the accumulated heritage of their predecessors.

Music still plays an important role in Basotho children's lives in their dances and games which are *generally* inseparable from their activities. Amongst them, music is a communal affair and is always communal in performance. Folk song and games were and still are one of the most important vehicles of communication amongst the children, more especially in the education of children. This is not different from Kodály's principles of Hungarian children's music education that 'folksong is the child's musical mother tongue and must be acquired when the child is still very young, in the same manner as he learns to speak' (Szőny, 1973: 25). It is usual for them to learn these songs and games as they grow older and in turn transmit them to their siblings while playing. In this way, the songs and games and the moral codes, if any, are kept alive in them.

Wilson (1990: 13) learnt as a neurologist that 'music is an important part of life from the very beginning . . . and in the earliest communications between a mother and her newborn infant. It is profoundly influential to the developing child from that moment on . . . ' Blacking (1967: 31) once stated: "Knowledge of the (Tshivenda) children's songs is a social asset, and in some cases a social necessity for any child who wishes to be an accepted member of his own age group, and hence a potential member of adult society."

Generally, Basotho children are not excluded from attending social events and

adult music making, despite the fact that their repertoire and play songs ‘exist as an identifiable type . . . they are meaningful channels of communication . . . and are worthy of respect in their own right’ (Kartomi, 1980: 209). It is usual that Basotho children when they are a little older that they accompany their mothers to the *mokhibo* or the *mokorotlo* (Basotho dances) and hear the *meluluetsane* (the ululations of encouragement) from the women as the dancers do their bit. Children also know that ‘Not all labour, however, is connected with singing; ploughing . . . for example, have no song associations’ (Adams, 1974: 144). Hence, Basotho children grow up with the sound of music and the movements that go with it.

Alongside the singing of traditional songs, (which the Mosotho child has not forgotten and relegated), mention should be briefly made of their ‘modern’ music education. The school is now the educator. It prescribes the kind of song(s) to be learnt and in what language it is to be learnt--whether English and/or Sesotho. The singing of school songs is now a formalised thing, an outcome of Western musical influence and education. Besides these prescriptions, a specific period is now set aside for the singing and learning of songs. On certain functions, music has to be chosen, learnt and sung. Yet, outside the confines of the class rooms, the children still indulge in their traditional pastimes, dances and games. Wells (1992: 127) notes that ‘various members of the Ministry of Education are keen to re-structure musical education in Primary Schools to include more exposure to indigenous forms of music.’

During the nineteenth century, the French Protestant missionaries compiled a Sesotho hymnal called *Lifela tsa Sione*.⁵ It contained a variety of tunes from Western European composers and transcribed in four part harmony for the benefit of the Basotho who sang them in Sesotho. Martin Luther's choral *Ein Feste Burg* became *Molimo ke setsabelo* ("God is our refuge") no. 119; Mendelssohn's carol *Hark the herald angels sing* became *Elleloang ba Bochabela* ("Observe those in the East"), no. 23 and A.S. Sullivan's hymn *Hushed was the evening* became *Jesu o khutletse* ("Jesus has returned") no.14, etc. These are some of the few hymnal adaptations. According to Brutsch (1970: 8), the national anthem, *Lesotho*, was 'composed as a work song.' Words by the French protestant missionary, Francois Coillard and the tune by the Swiss composer, Ferdinand S. Laur (1791-1854).

The late Mr. J. P. Mohapeloa,⁶ a native composer of Lesotho, added to the style of singing in four part harmony with the result that his choral compositions found their way into the repertoire of every Mosotho composer and conductor. From the influence of the missionaries introducing church choirs and a conductor, who was responsible for selecting the hymns and training the choirs, this is not surprising when this trend was taken over by the school. For the first time, the Mosotho child came face to face with secular songs and those with a semi-Western style of polyphony in the choral works of Mohapeloa. His choral style opened the doors to choral singing for school choirs and conductors who, not only sang them (and still do) with pride, but found them a relief from the stereotyped four-part western hymns. Despite this introduction, the Mosotho did not forget his traditional way of harmonising in

two parts using fourths and fifths. He began to be proud to belong also to an international community of singing choral works through the medium of tonic solfa. The Basotho people and children found enjoyment in the songs of their native composers.

The texts of Mohapeloa's compositions are not only valuable but educative to children. In his choral works, the school child is made aware of the sights and sounds of its native Lesotho, its culture, tradition, historical and geographical landmarks. Children became aware of their folklore in his composition, for example, "Obe."⁷

In 1964, the radio station of Lesotho was established. Now called Radio Lesotho, it does make an effort to broadcast school choirs and children's programs. For those children who might have the advantage of attending choral festivals and who live far from the cities, radios and television are an asset in bringing music of their native language nearer to them. Here the children are able to hear many compositions, traditional and modern, and those composed by their native composers.

Summary: The place of the family is important for this is where Basotho children's education during childhood results not only in personality formation but also in its socialisation. In this socialisation process of incorporation into society, the child becomes aware of its environment and begins to learn its culture and especially those cultural patterns that determine its relations to others, both children and adults. The Sesotho and Tshivenda ceremonies

surrounding the birth of a child are a time of joy. The role of the school as educator could not be ignored. Through music (songs) and “*lipapali* (play songs)”, Basotho children are enriched in knowing about their community, the laws that govern it, the folklore and the history of their people. We have seen that music has its educational value besides giving pleasure and being communal. The role of the radio and Missionaries has played an important role in reaching the farthest corners of the country in exposing children to traditional music, school and Western music.

Endnotes:

- ¹lelapa : Mabile and Dieterlen (1974: 197) define it as a ‘small court yard formed in front of a house by a reed enclosure (*seotloana*); a home; a family; *lapa* (n.) home; *lapeng*, (loc.) at home.
- ² mora : a son.
- ³ ngoana oa ngoanana : a baby girl.
- ⁴ khoeli ea kuruetsa : sometimes *kuruetsa ea khoeli* denotes ‘the ceremony of the month of *kuruetsa*’) depending on the context in which it is used. *Kuruetsa ea pula* and not *pula ea kuruetsa*) is the more accepted form to describe the second stage. [cf. Chapter 7, ‘Games for the very young’, subsection ‘Infants’.]
- ⁵ Lifela tsa Sione : (lit.) Hymns of Sione. It is correctly referred to as *Lifela tsa Sione le tsa Bojaki* (Hymns of Zion and of Strangers).
- ⁶ Mohapelo, J.P. : In Sesotho folklore, it was a fabulous being or ogre with long hanging hairy ears and black noses like whiskers. This

ogre was greatly feared by children. See Mohapeloa's song "Obe" in his *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika*, vol. 2, no. 63, 1980 which is based on this Sesotho folktale. Poet Laureate of Lesotho who left us a legacy of three volumes of choral works in a polyphonic style quite different from the straight leaped four part harmony of the mission churches.

Chapter 7

GAMES FOR INFANTS

Having surveyed the place of the child in the home, family and community, this chapter deals with very young children's amusements surrounding the early stages of an infant's life; later on the encouragement given to a toddler on his (or her) first few steps and finally, when it has come to the age of reason to appreciate and reminisces the role its mother played during its early years of childhood. The first two "*lipapali* (play songs)," namely, *Kuruetso ea khoeli* and *Kuruetso ea pula* ceremonies, reveal ritualistic tendencies in showing Sesotho concepts and beliefs that are evident in the two which have found their way into the repertoire of Basotho children's folk games. A similar situation is evident in children's folk games of native American Indian tribes. As

Culin's (1971: 105) investigation reveals, the games are

largely dependent on their origin in magical ceremonies. Back of each game we find a ceremony in which the game was a significant part. The ceremony has commonly disappeared and the game survives as an amusement but often with traditions and observances that serve to connect it with its original purpose.

It is not surprising that ethnologists and anthropologists have reported that a different kind of folk games were survivals of religious rites and ceremonies of primitive peoples. Sir James Frazer (1951) offered many examples of games in the religious rites of primitive societies. Be as it may, the origin of children's games is complex. The following two Sesotho ceremonies are still practised amongst some Basotho as a rite but viewed by children as an amusement. Hence, their inclusion in the repertoire of Basotho children's *lipapali tsa bana* (lit. games of children).

12. Kuruetsa ea khoeli

(Rite for infant's exposure to the moon)

Ritual as "*papali* (play song)":

Children love to take part in ceremonies relating to infants because it is a time of real joy. Though they take part in the *Kuruetsa ea khoeli* and *Kuruetsa ea pula* ceremonies, the entertainment these two ceremonies offer, compel the

children to regard them as a game because it is a time of joy. This is understandable for the infant has been secluded indoors throughout these months. The Basotho regard these two ceremonies as a form of initiation of the infant as will be seen below. (cf. also Chapter 6, b).

Papali:

During the month of *Kuruetso ea khoeli*, when the moon is full, young village boys would be invited if the baby were a boy. For the first time after its birth, a respected woman in the community will take the infant outside and expose it to the moon, much to the joy of these boys watching this spectacle. Speaking in an inspired manner and with the baby facing the moon, the woman and the boys (the latter jumping with excitement) greet the baby boy saying:

“Kururu! Kururu! Molekan’a hao ke eloa!”

Translation: “Kururu! Kururu! Your friend is there yonder!”

Similarly, young village girls greet the baby girl saying:

“Bona thak’a hao ke eane!”

Translation: “Look, there is your companion!”

From this day forth, the infant is allowed to be taken out of the house but remains within the confines of the courtyard (*seotloana*). Laydevant in his article *The Basuto* (nd.), also notes a similar ceremony whereby the Baganda of East Africa ‘also present their

babes to the new moon so that it will be strong and healthy.’

13. Kuruetso ea pula

(Rite for infant’s exposure to the rain)

Ritual as “*papali* (play song)”:

The ceremony of exposing the infant to the rain in the second month of the birth of a child is generally described as the *khoeli ea kuruetso* (lit. the month of *kuruetsa*) or *kuruetso ea pula* (lit. exposure to the rain).

Papali:

Prior to this, care was taken that not a drop of rain should fall on its head from the time of its birth to the day of this ceremony. This also acted as a form of initiation.

Members of the *lelapa* (family or household) and children in the village will eagerly await a shower of rain when the infant’s family will seize the opportunity to perform this rite. On this day, a respected old woman of the family will place the child gently upside-down in the courtyard and expose it naked in the rain. Despite its cries in the rain, laughter reigns everywhere.

If the child’s exposure was violated, it was believed that when it

grows up it would thief and would now jokingly be scorned as a thief with the words:

“Sholu ¹ ke leo! Ha e ee!” ²

Translation: (Here is a thief! Begone!).

With much ado, the infant is wiped, lovingly caressed and hurriedly returned to the house amidst joy and laughter. This purification rite is performed to prevent it from thieving. Blacking (1964: 18) describes a similar ceremony found amongst the Bavenda of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. He states:

Then the little girl takes the baby back to the hut but before she may enter, the old ladies fill a calabash with water and say that they are going to make rain fall. They pour water on the roof of the hut and it drips off the thatch onto the baby. The ladies ululate again and cry, “Water, water, water, has come. They take the baby into the hut and nearly burst the roof open with praises and ululations.

So, rain holds a special place in the hearts of Basotho children and in *’Mankokosane, pula ea na* (’Mankokosane, it is raining), Chapter 5, No. 3.

14. Pina ea thari³

(Infant's sling 'song')

One of the very first things that an infant experiences on its mother's back are lullabies, soliloquies or speech songs uttered by the mother or childminder which are regarded as "*lipapali* (play songs)" in Sesotho culture. It is not surprising that from infancy to death, the experience of chanted verse or music is all around Basotho children because ceremonial occasions are replete with these.

A baby on its mother's back is exposed to all kinds of music, speech songs, body rhythms and the playing of various musical instruments from the beat of the drum to the beautiful sound of the *lesiba* (a Sesotho stringed musical instrument). Be it dancing at a festival, or while she is hoeing, or while she is performing her household chores, the baby's is aurally exposed to its mother's songs and lullabies while it is strapped to its mother's back. These are the early stages of a child's exposure to these situations.

The beautiful speech song may have once been a lullaby, hence, the title 'Pina ea thari' which is literally translated as the 'Song of the baby's skin blanket'.

Child minder:

"Oho, ngoan'a 'me,⁴

Oa pepuoa⁵ ke mang?"

Ntat'ae o motima rotsoana⁶ sa khoho.⁷

"Oho, ngoan'a 'me,

Oa pepuoa ke mang?"

'Mae o motima khotsoana⁸ tsa nku.⁹

Translation:

Child minder: “Oh! child of my mother,
Who will carry you on the back?”
Its father deprives it of the chicken’s little leg.
“Oh! child of my mother,
Who will carry you on the back?”
Its mother deprives it of the sheep’s little bones.

Papali:

This is an old traditional and unusual “*papali* (play song)” uttered to an infant in praise of its *thari* (formerly a well-tanned traditional skin in which a child was carried on one’s back). In modern times, a small blanket is used to perform this function. ‘Pina ea thari’ has always been known by this title and not possessing any tune or melody. In Sesotho, *pina* (song) may collectively refer to a song of praise (*thoko*), a song of war (*mokorotlo*) and a song of death (*koli ea malla*). In this case, ‘Pina ea. thari.’ could conveniently be categorised as a ‘song in praise of the *thari*’ on account of its poetic structure.

As this “*papali* (play song)” is in the form of an imaginary dialogue, the reader should not literally interpret the childminder’s text as a reflection of the infant’s present state which may not be that of hunger or drowsiness. However, the child-minder’s intention may ultimately be to lull the infant to sleep with the means of the *thari*.

One of the very first things that a Mosotho infant experiences on its mother's back are lullabies ('lipina tsa ho koeetsa bana'), soliloquies or speech songs uttered by the mother or childminder which are regarded as *lipapali tsa bana* (children's games) in Sesotho culture. It is not surprising that from infancy to death, the experience of chanted verse or music is all around Basotho children because ceremonial occasions are replete with these.

15. Ntatile

(Wait for me)

Game for toddlers:

Child minder:

Ntatile,¹⁰ ntsamai¹¹

Ka maoto¹² a mabeli.¹³

Repeated a few
times.

Translation:

Child minder:

Wait for me, (and) cause me to walk

With both legs.

Repeated a few times.

Papali:

This little rhythmic recitation for a toddler has been handed down

from mother to daughter in encouraging their toddlers to walk. Whatever the variants may be in this “*papali* (play song)” it is the child who is ‘speaking’ to its mother or child-minder who holds the toddler’s both hands while guiding it to walk. The child in its bewilderment has previously gone through the initial stages of sitting, crawling and now attempts to stand and walk. According to my informants in Lesotho and due to oral tradition, *Ntintile* (sp.) could have been misspelt or derived from *ntinti!* (interj.) which is said when a ‘child closes its eyes and presents his hands to receive something in play’. This could be the mother’s or the childminder’s hands. With oral tradition, variations are inevitable such as the following “*papali* (play song)” of similar vein:

Ntatai-ka-nkoto

(Guide me to walk with my feet)

Child minder: **Ntatai¹⁴ ka nkoto;¹⁵**

Ntsamai ka nkoto.

Repeated a few times.

Translation:

Child minder: Guide me to walk with my feet;

Cause me to walk with my feet.

Repeated a few times.

Papali:

The phrase, *Ntatai-ka-nkoto*, is an interjection which is used when teaching a toddler to learn how to walk. Like the above, the child-minder or parent holding the toddler's both hands, utters the speech song using baby-talk. She sings it repeatedly (while the child attempts to walk) as if uttered by the child. With joy the child seems to reply:

“Ntatai-ka-nkoto.” (Guide me to walk with my feet.)

Ntatai and *Ntsamai* are a child's way of saying: “Ntataise” and “Ntsamaise” (reflex.) respectively which both connote to guide, help, teach or cause a child to walk by holding its hands to get it to walk towards its tutor. Dargie (1996: 34) succinctly describes the music learning process of a Xhosa child when he states:

I have seen a Xhosa mother teaching her baby, not yet old enough to walk by himself, little songs. As soon as he began to imitate her, she would no longer sing with him, but put in an answering part. It was education . . . Singing becomes play very soon.

It is the conversations and gestures of both child and mother that give the idea of a “*papali* (play song)” which are all in the process of learning in Sesotho.

16. Ke ne ke le ngoana

(I was once a child)

Reminiscence of childhood:

‘At the beginning of childhood, there are presumably individual dreams and solitary play. The child develops these and finds a matching in such cultural models as songs, dances, folktales, poems, riddles, rhymes, themes or games’ (Avedon, 1971: 438). The following verse rhyme is an old traditional Sesotho speech song or chant which has found its way into the repertoire of children. Its popularity has stood the test of time in that it is known by young and old and regarded as a child’s “*papali* (play song).” In order that the verse makes sense to non-Sesotho readers, I have inserted punctuation marks in the English translation and given the rhythm thereafter. The text takes on a strict metrical rhythmical structure in the context of a child’s recitation which is recited in. It will be noticed that the pairs of lines comprise a single thought as I have indicated and maintain the strict syllables and pulses throughout. Child recites using a four beat rhythm with the emphasis occurring on the terminal syllabic word divisions. The first syllable in the end lines are stressed following the rule that accents fall on the second to last syllable, for example, *ngo*a . . . *na*. The rule is, however, broken in *tharí* by receiving a stress on the second syllable *-ri*.

Ke ne ke le ngoana,

Ke sa tsebe letho.

Ka fuoa 'Me
Ea ntlhokomelang.¹⁶
Ka matsoho¹⁷ **a nkuka;**
Ka thari a mpepa;¹⁸
A nkoeetsa.
A b'a a nthuta¹⁹
Puo²⁰ **ea Basotho.**

Translation: I was once a child,
 Not knowing anything.
 I was given Mother
 Who cared for me.
 With her arms she lifted me;
 With a blanket she carried me on her back;
 She rocked me to sleep.
 Thereafter, she taught me
 The language of the Basotho.



speech stress in bold: Ke ne ke le **ngoa** . . na,
 Ke sa tse - be **le**tho.
 Ka fu - oa **'m** me
 Ea ntlho-ko - **me** . . . lang.
 Ka tha-ri a **mpe** . . . pa
 A nko - e - **e**tsa.
 A b'a a **nthu** . . .ta
 Pu-o ea Ba - **so** tho.

In ordinary speech, the verse would be thus:

Ke ne ke le ngoana ke sa tsebe letho. Ka fuoa 'Me ea ntlhokomelang. Ka matsoho a nkuka; ka thari a mpepa; a nkoeetsa a b'a a nthuta puo ea Basotho.

Translation:

I was once a child not knowing anything. I was given mother who cared for me. With a sling blanket she carried me; lulled me to sleep and then taught me the language of the Basotho.

Papali:

This rhythmic chant forms part of the gradual stages of a Mosotho' child's early educational development. An older child of about five to seven years old reminisces about mother's loving care when a very small child and how its mother would take it in her arms and lull it to sleep. Like any caring mother, she would teach it its first words in the Sesotho language.

This little poem which is regarded as a "*papali* (play song)" also teaches a Mosotho child to appreciate the role that a childminder or parent plays in nurturing and giving it warmth and education. This was done through this well-known traditional verse.

- *Lefura la ngoana ke ho rongoa* (lit. "The right or virtue of a child is to be sent"). This means that the joy or beauty of a kind child is when it agrees to run errands for its superiors or helps those in need. A child so willing is as useful as a grown person and is an indispensable person in a home.

- *Ngoan'a se-tsoha-le-pelo-ea-maobane* (lit. "A child who has arisen with its heart yesterday"). This describes a child who is constantly kind, congenial and loving towards everybody from the day you encountered it; be it yesterday, today and tomorrow. While it was happy and going about its good deeds, behaving in a good manner and uttering kind words, the child is the same as it was yesterday. It gives without counting the costs and is not erratic in its behaviour like a traitor; it is steadfast and dependable.

Summary: Sesotho ceremonies pertaining to infants and little children are not exclusively for adults. Children participate in them, for one day, they will be parents. The importance and experience of the rain and moon in the infant's ceremonies are not new to children for these two elements feature in their chants in Chapter 5, '*Mankokosane* (No. 3) and *Khoeli* (The moon), (No. 23).

Childhood is a wonderful stage in a child's life and this could not have been better captured than in *Ke ne ke le ngoana* (I was once a child) which teaches Basotho children to appreciate a mother's role in this beautiful soliloquy from the time it begins to take its first step to the time it is no longer a child.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Sholu : a rogue or a thief. *Lesholu ke leo* denotes the thief approaching eventhough invisible.

- ² Ha e ee! : be gone! Usually addressed to an animal. The thief is regarded as one, hence, this derogatory manner of address.
- ³ thari : the traditional skin in which a child was carried on its mother's back.
- ⁴ 'me : (n.) mother.
- ⁵ pepuoa : to be carried on the back of a person as with a baby.
- ⁶ rotsoana : (dim.) a small leg as that of a chicken.
- ⁷ khoho : (lit.) domestic fowl, but in this context, a chicken.
- ⁸ khotsoana : (dim.) of *lehopo* (rib); *likhotsoana* (plur. chops) .
- ⁹ nku : (lit.) sheep, but in this context, mutton.
- ¹⁰ Ntatile : from the verb *ho leta* ('to wait for' or 'to expect'). (Mabille and Dieterlen (1988: 311); the child awaits or receives the hands of its mother or child-minder. *Ntatile* is also a term of endearment (*ho reneketsa*) and given to the child during this stage.
- ¹¹ ntsamai : baby talk meaning *ntsamaise* (cause me to walk towards you). However, *tataise* denotes to help or teach a child to walk, especially by holding both its hands and getting it to walk towards the *motataisi* (the one who helps to walk).
- ¹² maoto : legs or feet.
- ¹³ mabeli : the numeral two or both but *habeli* (twice) denoting the number of times an action is carried out.
- ¹⁴ Ntatai : Baby-talk meaning *ntataise* ('cause me to walk by holding my hands').
- ¹⁵ nkoto : *nkoto* (n.) is a baby talk for *leoto* ('foot'). *Nkoto* and *nkotopo* signify the lowest part of the vertebrae which also support the child to walk as well as its feet.
- ¹⁶ ntlhokomelang : (reflex.) to 'care for me' from *hloko* (n. attention, care).

Whereas, (v.) *hlokomela* means to take care of or to take an interest in.

¹⁷ *matsoho* : hands. (sing. *letsoho*).

¹⁸ *mpepa* : (reflex.) to carry me on the back; from *pepa*, to carry on one's back.

¹⁹ *nthuta* : (reflex.) teach me; from (v.) *ho ruta* (to teach).

²⁰ *Puo* : language.

Chapter 8

GAME OF IDENTITY

17. 'Mantilatilane

('Mantilatilane)

Who am I?:

The etymology of the word '*Mantilatilane* is uncertain. *-tilane* (n.) refers to

a string of beads worn round the wrist or neck. *Tila* means to stamp the ground with one's foot as a sign of joy. '*Mantilane* (literally 'mother of *Ntilane*') is, according to Mabile and Dieterlen (1974: 245), a 'fictive' woman. *Ho bitsa 'mantilane* (lit. to call '*mantilane*') denotes 'to call someone who does not exist' and this is said in order to instill fear in an insubordinate child. It is usual to hear an adult say to a crying child to quieten it or to an insubordinate one to instil fear: "Ke tla bitsa '*mantilane*'" (I will call '*mantilane*'). This is the counterpart of the frightful apparition of the hobgoblin or bogey man in British and North American folklore.

Basotho children, at an early age, are taught to become aware of their identity by reciting their *seboko* (sing. clan name). The nature of these *liboko* (plur. clan names) are short praises in which the Mosotho child was and is taught to recite and remember its *seboko*. As they grow older, they may mix freely with their age groups in pastimes as dialogue games, for example, '*Mantilatilane* or *U mang?* (Who are you?) as it is also referred to) which will be discussed later in this chapter. Adams (1974: 129) calls this type of identity game as 'word games' because it falls under the category of 'learning one's ethnic and genealogical identity'.

Generally, Sesotho *liboko* are mostly totemic and revered. They may be in the form of birds, such as the vulture (*Nong*); vegetables, such as the pumpkin (*Lephutse*); insects, for example, the spider (*Sekho*); an animal, like the lion (*Tau*) or natural objects such as stones (*Majoe*), to name a few. In the course of the child's learning and education, certain taboos of their father's totem are

also learnt and observed as Basotho lineage is patrilineal. See taboos in *Majantja* (No. 39) also the clan praise of a child belonging to the Bakhatla clan in the recitative section of '*Mantlatilane* (No. 17) which goes thus: *Mokhatla, mo-ana-nong* (*Mokhatla*, the oath-taker of the vulture of the air). To this day the Basotho, especially of Lesotho, still attach importance to their clan names.

One of the very first things that a little child is taught is its identity and self-esteem. "Who am I and from where do I come?" are questions about which a Mosotho child has to be conscious in the early years of its cultural education. The questions posed are *U mang?* (Who are you?) or *O tsoa kae?* (meaning "Where are you from?" or "What is your origin?") which require the response: "Ke Tsepo," (lit. "I am Tsepo"). In order to inculcate this awareness of a child's origin and its sense of self-esteem, a "*papali* (play song)" called '*Mantlatilane* which has stood the test of time, was structured to facilitate this. This "*papal* (play song)" trained the child to remember long or short lines of his or her clan praises, it inculcated it to recite in a logical sequence of thought patterns. It trained the child to know the virtues, idiomatic expressions and to appreciate the richness of the Sesotho language in proverbs such as *Lepotla-potla le ja poli* (lit. rashness eats a goat). It denotes one who hastens or does things in a hurry and this is followed by disappointment(s), thereby, not bringing much good. The proverb appears in the third line of the clan praise of the Bahlakoana ba Mahaseng whose totem is the crocodile (*koena*). See Matsela and Moletsane (1988: 28).

Basotho children love to play '*Mantlatilane* (which they consider as a "*papali* (play song)") amongst themselves, with adults or very often with their parents and relatives who, in turn, recite their clan names to them. It can be played at any time of the season and at any place. When playing it, one will observe the short, recitative-like structure of these clan praises just after the introductory dialogue:

Papali:

In this "*papali* (play song)", the leader wishes to know the identity or clan praise of the other child by posing to the respondent a set of questions which finally reveals the latter as a member of the clan named, for example, the *Bakhatla* clan. *Q* (Question) represents the leader while (*A*), the answers. An introductory dialogue precedes the recitative:

Child A:

Introductory dialogue:

Q: U tsoa kae? ¹

Q: Ua ja'ng?

Q: Ua futsoela ³ ka'ng?

Q: Thèlla ⁵ hè!

Child B:

A: Ha 'Mantlatilane.

A: Ka ja bohobe.²

A: Ka metsi ⁴ a pula.

Recitative:

A: Ke thelle'ng ke le Mokhatla,⁶
moananong! Mo-ana-nkholi-
-kholi oa holimo; Oa Ma-
Molise 'a Setabele.

Translation:

Introductory dialogue:

Q: From where do you originate? A: From 'Mantlatilane's village.

Q: What did you eat? A: I ate bread.

Q: With what did you mix it? A: With rain water.

Q: Then, slide away!

Recitative:

A: Why should I slide away when
I am a *Mokhatla*, the oathtaker
of the vulture of the air belonging
to Ma-Molise of the Setabele.

From the above, the children learn about the respondent's clan praise (which is very often said with pride) and that the totem of the Bakhatla clan is a specific bird, the vulture that flies in the air. Furthermore, the genealogy is traced to *Ma-Molise 'a Setabele* (belonging to *Ma-Molise* of the *Setabele*). There is also a sense of dramatisation and self-pride when the recitative section is uttered.

As the Masotho child came from an oral tradition, language was the only way it was taught with pride to recite, remember and 'record' its genealogy for future generations. See Matsela and Moletsane (1988: 38) for a descriptive account of some Basotho clan praises.

Summary: Besides the element of praise, the "*papali* (play song)" also creates

in the child a sense of an awareness of its genealogy and family clan affiliation. The child also learns to appreciate the richness of the Sesotho language by knowing the virtues, proverbs and idiomatic expressions found in Sesotho. As Bruner (1974: 66) states: ‘No human language can be shown to be more sophisticated than any other . . . ’

Endnotes:

- ¹ kae? : meaning ‘where?’ used as a loc. adv.
² bohobe : bread.
³ futsoela : to mix.
⁴ metsi : (n.) water.
⁵ Thella he! : is an interjective. *Thelle* (lit.) to slide or slip away. It denotes to take an oath or pay homage. The *he!* conveys a challenge, thus meaning: ‘then do it!’ or ‘then say it!’
⁶ Mokhatla : a person belonging to the *Bakhatla* clan.

Chapter 9

DIDACTIC GAMES

This chapter is divided into three subcategories, firstly, the Body (to inculcate an awareness of the child’s social behaviour towards others with regard to

some of its body parts); secondly, Nature (to inculcate in the child an awareness of the role and functions of the natural elements of nature) and thirdly, the Arithmetical side (to train the child to add and to subtract).

Although most of the “*lipapali* (play songs)” I have collected and recalled from my childhood, they have some didactic element about them. In this chapter, the very young perceive them as games unaware of the educational value behind them. These “*lipapali* (play songs)” have one thing in common in that they contain actions and gestures more especially the Nature games which are so spontaneous from a child’s point of view. A discussion of them now follows:

18. Koili

(The leech)

Game about the body:

Children chant: **Ka thola¹ ka koili, mohlakeng,²**
 E mahe³ a mabeli, mohlakeng.

Translation

Children chant: I found the leech’s nest among the reeds,
 That has two eggs amongst the reeds.

The Body (Nos. 18 to 21) is the easiest category that the child can see and because it is part of its person. Basotho children who swim in rivers will have experienced the pain of the *koili*, a blood sucking leech-like creature that lives in river reeds. Here follows a discussion:

Papali:

It is a common characteristic among African traditions that what cannot be said in public is, most cases, camouflaged in song or word(s). The Basotho had their n *Koili*, the leech and its two eggs represent the private parts of a boy and the action where this happens are the reeds symbolising the legs.

It was taboo for a Mosotho child to sit with its private parts exposed. Parents rectified this by chanting this verse to expose the culprit, though there were times that some children (usually little ones) forgot.

Those children who had reached a stage where they became conscious of their bodies would not take to this indirect way of being exposed. The chant was very often effective and offensive when the child, seated amongst its peers, realised that it was the culprit. Note the repetition of the word *mohlakeng* (among the reeds) in both lines to emphasise and trigger the child's awareness of its posture. Such behaviour was and is not acceptable in Sesotho. This was another traditional way of learning and educating a child to sit with decorum.

19. Ho hatlela matsoho

(Washing hands)

Game about the body:

One of the first things that a little child is made aware of in Sesotho is

cleanliness of one's body and the home. It is taught at an early age the virtue of cleanliness and this was done in the form of a game. This attribute and awareness go on in married life when the young girl leaves her parents to start a new life with her in-laws and carries over this virtue to her children. It is a disgrace to have a slothful daughter or daughter-in-law. This is also seen where the children ask '*Mankholi-kholi* (No. 20), a fabulous being in the sky, to give each of them a clean white tooth in return for a black one which they wish to discard. Now follows a discussion of "Ho hatlela matsoho".

Papali:

The child gathers in its learning that dirt is more visible against a light background. The phrase *Matsoho masoeu* (lit. hands that are white) is likened to the colour of snow which the Mosotho child in Lesotho is accustomed to seeing their snow-capped mountains in winter. The colour white signifies cleanliness. If a peck of dirt falls on their clean hands, not only is it (the dirt) visible; it alters the appearance of their hands. Realising that some children have not washed their hands, one who has clean hands asks in an indirect manner:

The child with clean hands asks: **Matsoho masoeu ke mang?**

Tsila-popo⁴ ke mang?

Translation:

The child with clean hands asks: White hands belong to whom?

The creator of dirt is who?

Those children with clean hands immediately echo the child's questions: *Matsoho masoeu ke mang?* (Denoting the possessor of clean hands). Those with dirty hands soon realise that the question indirectly points to them. So all hands, both dirty and clean, are on display. What an embarrassment when the examination of hands takes place and there are ripples of giggles from those with clean hands. As a result, the culprits ashamedly get the message and learn that dirty hands are unacceptable.

This traditional game is reminiscent of Finnegan's (1970: 308) description of a Gandan children's way of drawing a child's attention in not having washed and is greeted with:

Mr. Dirty-face passed here

And Mr. Dirtier-face followed.

Gyekye (1996: 87) notes an Akan maxim which stresses cleanliness in a child's hand: 'When a child knows how to wash his hands, he eats with the elders.' He explains the maxim by saying: "In traditional African society people normally eat with their hands, and two or three people may eat from a common dish or plate and are expected to have washed their hands before dipping them into the common dish. Children often rush to eat without thinking of first washing their hands. They therefore have to be taught or advised to wash their hands before eating."

By these humiliating gestures carried out by their peers, Basotho children will endeavour in future to examine their hands and bodies lest they be ridiculed. So the lesson learned is that: A child should always have clean hands for he or she never knows when others will publicly expose it.

20. 'Mankholi-kholi

(The tooth fairy)

Game about the body:

This recitation is chosen because of its use of speech rhythm and the absence of a regular rhythmic pattern that accompanies most Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)."

Children chant in recitative:

'Mankholi-kholi,⁵

N e h e

leino⁶ **le lesoeunyana**⁷

Ke u nehe la ka le

letsonyana-tsonyana!⁸



track6

Variant:

Children chant in recitative:

Nkholi-kholi,⁹

Nka leino¹⁰ **la hao le lebe-lebe;**

U mphe¹¹ **la ka le letle-tle.**¹²

Translation:

Children chant in recitative:

'Mankholi-kholi,

Take your tooth that is very bad;

(And) give me mine that is very beautiful.

Variant:

Children chant in recitative:

Nkholi-kholi, 'nehe leino le lesoeunyana, ke u 'nehe la ka letsonyana-tsonyana.

Nkholi-kholi, give me a tooth that is white, (that) I may give you mine that is very black. (See Appendix 1, track 6.)

In Sesotho folklore, '*Mankholi-kholi* and '*Mankokosane* are fabulous or unseen birds personified as female beings who are way up in the sky and are only associated with little children. These two beings are considered by the Basotho to be a deep part of their folklore. Like '*Mankokosane*, '*Mankholi-kholi* is tender and kind towards children in their early stages of development.

According to Segoete (2001: 26) in his section on the birds of Lesotho, he states that in former times, people were afraid of '*Mankholi-kholi*, '*Mankholi* or *Nkholi* (the black kite bird) because it used to 'tear the necks of people to pieces and snatched anything that they carried on their heads'. As a method of learning, '*Mankholi-kholi*'s cruel and rapacious nature was hidden from the children and only known to adults who sang praises to it to give them an unripe kaffir corn. However, children have adapted this verse to ask '*Mankholi-kholi* for a beautiful tooth! Segoete continues and says: "Leha ho le joalo, e na le lehlohonolo, ea binoa, ea rokoa." ("Despite this, it has luck, is sung to and praised.")

Papali:

The child stands at the threshold of its door or just outside the house

in the yard while rhythmically reciting '*Mankholi-kholi* on a monotone. It then takes its little 'black' (rotten) tooth and throws it way up into the air to '*Mankholi-kholi* who is supposed to catch it and put it in her large bag. Then, in return, she takes a clean white tooth from her bag and drops it to the child from the air at a later stage. If this was not done, it was believed that the tooth will not grow. That is why the child would return and implore *Mankholi-kholi* to accede to her or his request. However, the order of the gesture may be reversed. (See variant above.) When the child sees its tooth grow again, it attributes it to her. Requests to '*Mankholi-kholi* could go on as long as the child is still losing its teeth and sees her as one who is readily able to dispense her 'gifts'.

A little child's world of fantasy never ceases. When it reaches the age of six or seven and all its milk-teeth have been thrown to '*Mankholi-kholi*, then the world of reality gradually creeps in. See Appendix 1, Ex. 4.

21. Ea phintseng

(The one who has released foul air)

Game about the body:

Although this is a didactic “*papali* (play song),” it is included under ‘Didactic Games’ because it, and the previous one, is one of the earliest lessons that a little Mosotho child learns when in the presence of others. Very often little children cannot contain themselves amongst their peers or members of their family and now and again they would let off foul air. They know that it is not acceptable to do so in public. Children being children would think that this would go unnoticed and would never own up.

Older child chants:	Ea phintseng,
	Habo ho hlabiloa poli ¹³
	E naka ¹⁴ le khopo. ¹⁵
	Tsintsi, ¹⁶ theoaha thabeng ¹⁷
	O mo lomele ¹⁸ koana. ¹⁹

Translation:

Older child chants:	The one who has released foul air,
	At his place a goat has been slaughtered
	That possesses a crooked horn.
	Fly, come down from the mountain
	And bite him/her there yonder!

Papali:

Some games often create a platform whereby a child, who has acted outside of Sesotho cultural norms, is indirectly upbraided by the group. This is not only to correct the culprit, but to build his or her character in preparation for the harsh realities of adult life.

Unlike the usual dialogue pattern of question and answer, the older child poses the above verse in a probing manner. It makes certain that while uttering each syllable, its finger is directed at each child:

Ea phi-ntse-ng. Ha-bo ho hla-bi-loe po-li, etc.

The ‘culprit’ is finally regarded as the child upon whom the last syllable will fall, irrespective of whether it is innocent or not! So, the fly, which is known to little children (and not a bogey animal or person) is beckoned to come down from the mountain to bite the ‘culprit’ as a form of punishment which should take place ‘there yonder’ (adv. *koana*) and not *koana* (adv. ‘here’). Perhaps, this was a way of inducing the real culprit to own up if the last syllable fell on an innocent child.

22. Letsatsi

(The sun)

Nature:

Basotho children experience the effects of the natural phenomena or elements which, to them, have good and bad attributes. They can experience the harshness of some of the elements whereby damage is caused to them or the elements can be agreeable without causing them any harm. (See Nos. 22-26). They are played in the open air and no props are required for they depend on the light that these elements give them. Beginning with the sun:

Letsatsi is based on an old traditional Sesotho rhythmic verse chanted by children in praise of the sun which is personified for the energy and heat it exudes. The sun is the most constant and guiding force in the lives of traditional African people and children because they know that the sun is needed to make plants grow. At sunrise, herdboys know that the cattle should be taken out in the morning to graze in the veld and at sunset, they should be returned to the kraal. Note the beautiful poetic-like stanzas.

The Free State and Lesotho are very cold areas with bleak winters. The fireside keeps little Basotho children, for the most part of the day, huddled together and warm. They beckon the sun according to the circumstances of the day. In their yearning for the warmth of the sun on a cold winter's day, they stand on the threshold of their huts beckoning the sun to come nearer so that they can enjoy its warmth and dance and chant when they see it. In rhythmic fashion they chant and repeat each verse many times:

Children chant: **Tsatsi-tsatsi,²⁰ tlo koano;**

'Riti-riti, ²¹ e-ea koana.

Sometimes added: **(Bana ²² ba hao ba batle.)**

Repeated many times.

Translation: Sun, sun, come hither;
Shade, shade, go thither.

Sometimes added: (Your children are pretty.)

Repeated many times.

Variant: **Tsatsi-tsatsi, tlo koano le abana ba hao.**

Moriti-riti, e-ea koana le bana ba hao.

Repeated many times.

Translation: Sun, sun, come hither and your children.
Shade, shade, go thither and your children.

Repeated many times.

When the sun is no longer needed and they are scorched by it, they dismiss it and the shade (*moriti*) now becomes their friend and they chant:

Children chant: **'Riti-riti, tlo koano ;**

Tsatsi-tsatsi e-ea koana.

Sometimes added: (Bana ba hao ba batle.)

Repeated many times.

Translation: Shade, shade, come hither;
Sun, sun, go thither,

Sometimes added: (Your children are pretty.)

Repeated many times.

Variant:

'Riti-riti tlo koano le bana ba hao
Tsatsi-tsatsi e-ea koana le bana hao
Bana ba hao ba babe. ²⁴

Repeated many times.

Translation:

Shade, shade, come hither and your children.
 Sun, sun, go thither, and your children.
 Your children are ugly.

Repeated many times.

23. Khoeli

(The moon)

Nature:

Children chant rhythmically:

Khoeli ²⁵ **ke ela!**
Toloka! Toloka! ²⁶
Ha e na mosa. ²⁷
Toloka! Toloka!
Mosa oa eona e ka oa ntja! ²⁸
Toloka! Toloka!

Translation:

Children chant rhythmically:

The moon is there yonder!
 Be full! Be full!
 It has no kindness.
 Be full! Be full!
 Its kindness is that of a dog!
 Be full! Be full!

Khoeli is a very old traditional Sesotho children's praise chant directed at the moon. The sun, moon, cloud rainbow, mist and stars have always had a fascination for little children the world over. The Mosotho child almost always personifies these elements of nature, and very often, praises or chants are addressed to them in their honour to describe their attributes. The children may also vent their feelings in a positive or negative way.

Papali:

It is obvious from the text that this is not a full moon because the children beckon it to be full in the beautiful refrain *Toloka! Toloka!* (Be full! Be full!) which punctuates each line to conjure the rhythm of dance. The repetition of the word also conveys an urgency on the part of the children to beckon the moon to be full that they may revel.

The moon is a merciless creature in the eyes of the children in not shedding its full light when it goes into darkness for there is no moonlight to allow them to dance and play in its radiance. Therefore, the moon has deprived them of this joy and is compared to a dog (*ntja*) which, in Sesotho, is not treated with respect but contempt.

The word *ntja* embodies a despised person and newcomers (plur. *mantja*) as well. Hence, one may hear the vocative suff. *tooe!* in 'Ntja-tooe!' (You dog!) when used with the vocative form *ntja!* to indicate anger, insult and sometimes, wonder. Children also know that in Sesotho a girl child may be named

Moselantja (lit. ‘the dog’s tail’), a compound word derived from *mosela* (tail) and *ntja* (dog) which describes her name:

born after the still-birth or death of an immediately preceding sibling or siblings . . . to ensure the survival chances of the baby. Among the Basotho, a dog is one of the lowliest animals. This attitude is borne out by the fact that anyone who is poor, a beggar, a glutton, or over-indulgent in sex, is contemptuously referred to as a dog. (Mohome, 1972: 175, 176).

This negative cultural attitude is also seen in '*Runyana* (The little cloud) (No. 24), where the little cloud is also associated with the unpleasant image or status of a dog. An examination of some Sesotho proverbs illustrate this negative attitude:

- *O ntja likobo; ba mo ja likobo* (lit. one is a dog that they eat his blankets). This denotes a person who insinuates another without mentioning the name. It becomes difficult to respond to him or her because one's name is not mentioned in the conversation. Therefore, one remains silent in pain.
- *Ntj'a se-tsoarisa-mohlophe* (lit. a dog that helps one to seize something white) meaning one who works in deceit or a false friend. Hence, a useless friendship is termed a *setsoalle-sa-lintja* (lit. friendship resembling that of dogs).

- *Lesholu ke ntja; le lefa ka hloho ea lona* (lit. a thief is a dog; it pays by its neck). This denotes that a dog that steals is condemned to be killed, so is a thief.
- Finally, *Ntj'a se-loma-mokoki* (lit. a dog that bites the one who leads with a whip or thong) meaning those dogs that could bite their owners at night despite the fact that the latter have reared them with kindness. Therefore, there are those people in life who, once they have tasted the fruit of success, forget the hands that fed them. They return evil for good. It is similar to biting the hand that feeds you even though good is done to you.

As the Mosotho child grows older, certain major attributes of the moon will unfold and the contempt that it once had will turn to praise and dependence. It will begin to know that the phases of the moon determine certain events in the

lives of its people. When there is an eclipse of the moon, it will know that the moon is rotten (*e bolile*). When the moon is in its last quarter, it will know that the moon is chipped or broken (*khoeli e qhetsohile*).

Thoahlane (1985: 16) gives a short litany of the attributes of the moon found in Sesotho culture. When the new moon is about to be visible, he quotes the Sesotho expression of it being 'scorned by the monkeys'! (*e tlakoa* ²⁹ *ke litsoene*). Just as a child is taught at an early age to show respect by joining both its hands in order to receive something (*ho khakeletsa*), it will know that

the moon is also said to ‘receive the rain with both hands’ (*ho khakeletsa pula*).

On the other hand, amongst the Bavenda of the Northern Province in South Africa, the moon is treated kindly and this is seen in Stayt’s (1931: 226) description: ‘The moon (*ndvedzi*) is often called the *makhadzi* (aunt) who is the head of the kraal, as the moon is held to be the head all the stars.’ Describing the Ga children’s idea of the moon in their play song called *Nyongtsere*, Abarry (1989: 206) states that ‘this is a song with which the children celebrate the appearance of the new moon after a period of dark nights. It strengthens the children’s solidarity and helps them to develop a positive attitude to natural phenomena and the seasonal rhythms of life.’

24 'Runyana

(The little cloud)

Nature:

In Sesotho, when one refers to a thing that has equally good and bad attributes, we refer to it as *ma-senya-a-hlopha* or (lit. a destroyer of that which does good). In Sesotho, this idiomatic phrase generally refers to rain which is needed to make crops grow and at the same time, an abundance of it can cause havoc. Drawing from this cultural observation, the children regard the cloud as a *ma-senya-a-hlopha* because it can assist them in obliterating the rays of the

scorching sun in summer (which are its good attributes), yet in winter, it is a destroyer by blocking out the warm rays of the sun that they so badly needed. Despite this, they cannot do without the cloud.

Variant 1. Children chant: **'Runyana,**³⁰ **'runyana lela,**³¹
Nka³² **le ja, ka le qeta.**

Repeated many times.

Variant 2. Children chant: **'Runyana lela,**
Nka le ja, nka le ja, nka le re kome!³³
Ha le na mōsa.
Nka le ja, nka le ja, nka le re kome!
Mosa oa lōna eka oa ntja.
Nka le ja, nka le ja, nka le re kome!

Repeated many times.

Translation:

Variant 1. Children chant: Little cloud, little cloud, there yonder,
 I can eat it, and finish it.

Repeated many times.

Variant 2. Children chant: That little cloud there yonder,
 I can eat it, I can eat it, I can engulf it!
 It has no kindness.
 I can eat it, I can eat it, I can engulf it!
 Its kindness seems that of a dog's.
 I can eat it, I can eat it, I can engulf it!

Repeated many times.

Papali:

This “*papali* (play song)” is generally played outdoors by both girls and boys between the ages of four to six during winter or summer when there are clouds. When they see a dark cloud while playing outdoors, in exasperation they would recite this chant in the hope of *banishing* it. cf. *Letsatsi* (No. 22) in this respect). They know that dark clouds are a sign of rain that would follow. They know that the cloud, devoid of any mercy, would disrupt their play and very soon they will run indoors to seek shelter from the impending rain.

In the children’s eyes, ‘*Runyana* is seen as a menace like the previous “*papali* (play song),” *Khoeli* (The moon) which to them ‘has no mercy’ (*ha le na mosa*). Its lack of mercy is also likened to that of a dog (*ntja*). So, their contempt for such a cloud while enjoying the warm rays of the sun is shown in their desire to gobble it (the cloud).

The children get to learn that while enjoying the warmth of the winter sun, passing clouds can be a nuisance in blocking the sun’s rays. In so doing, they, the children, have no control over its action. Yet, they know that the passing cloud is needed to block the scorching rays of the sun on a hot summers day. Like *Khoeli*, we experience once more a refrain in the lines *Nka le ja, nka le ja, nka le re kome!* which conjures up the contempt for the cloud.

25. Mookoli

(The rainbow)

Nature:

Children chant:

Se-ja-bana,³⁴

Se ja banana; ke seo!

Se-ja-bana,

Se ja banana; ke seo!

Repeated ad lib.

Translation:

Children chant:

Eater-of-children,

It eats girls; here it is!

Eater-of-children,

It eats girls; here it is!

Repeated ad lib.

Mookoli, the rainbow, has always been associated with the menstruation of girls and was also used to frighten them. When sighted, parents would often recite this short ditty to them but now, children have made it theirs. In Sesotho folklore, the first phrase *Se-ja-bana* (n.) (lit.) denotes “that which eats children” and is linked to them. *Se-ja-bana* is a snake believed to be kept by witch-doctors and fed on children. *Se ja banana* alludes to girls and literally means, “it eats girls”. I could not establish whether the snake was likened to the

Rainbow. There may be no connection between *Se-ja-bana* and *Se ja banana*, but it should be noted that the idea of devouring or eating is evident.

Papali:

With reference to the previous paragraph, it is not surprising that children get a sinister feeling of the rainbow. They are neither enthralled by its beautiful colours nor do they jump with joy (as children are prone to do) when it appears in the sky. Theirs, is not a happy feeling because they know that the rainbow ‘eats children’. Instead, they merely utter this verse *ad lib* while pointing to the rainbow until it disappears.

A Mosotho parent would be heard saying: “Ke *papali* ea bana ha ba bona mookoli” (It is a children’s *game* when they see the rainbow). Because of the actions and the repetitive rhythm of the verse, these gestures all contribute to the Sesotho idea of rhythm in games. Saoli (1986: 37), in his children’s poem entitled *Tsa Mookoli* (About the Rainbow), enters the imagination of a child when he compares the rainbow to a *Lelente* (a ribbon). He describes it thus:

Children chant:	Helang! Lelente³⁵ ke lela!
	Tlong, le tlo bona!
	Le ’mala e mengata.

	Ke lela le baleha.

Translation:

Children chant: Behold! the ribbon there yonder!
 Come, and see!
 It has many colours.

 There yonder, it is disappearing.

Whereas, Saoli captures the modern child's fascination for the beautiful colours of the rainbow which are likened to a 'ribbon of many colours'. The child's beckoning to the rainbow is an approval of its beauty and quite the opposite sentiment expressed by the child(ren) in *Mookoli*.

26. Moholi

(The mist)

Nature:

Children chant: **Moholi, tsamaea,³⁶ re batla ho bapala.³⁷**
Moholi tsamaea, re batla ho bapala.

Repeated ad lib.

Translation:

Children chant: Mist, go away, we want to play.
 Mist, go away, we want to play.

Repeated ad lib.

Papali:

Very often the mist, like the scorching sun, prevents Basotho children from playing outdoors until the mist has disappeared. It is not surprising that little children, between the ages of four to six, either ululate or chant to the mist in an effort to drive it away so that

they can play. The harder they do so, the greater their expectations that the mist would disappear immediately.

This attitude is reminiscent of '*Mankokosane* where, in order to grow taller, the children danced harder in the rain. Also, the sun in *Letsatsi* (No. 22) is driven away when they no longer needed it in order that they could play in the shade. Because of their innocence, there is a sense of impatience, urgency and immediate expectation of the workings of the natural elements.

27. Ho bala menoana

(To count fingers)

Arithmetic:

Two arithmetical number-counting games are discussed, each having its own stylistic characteristics and method. *Ho bala menoana* should not be confused with *Malatalian'-a-tsela*, a didactic game whose objective is to train and sharpen an older child's memory though the element of addition and subtraction are evident. (cf. Chapter 4, No. 1). The second game *Tlosa eo* (Subtract that one) contains some element of addition.

Ho bala menoana is a very old traditional Sesotho counting game-song for little children whose ages range from five to about six years. The finger-counting gestures are mnemonic aids for the child to associate each finger with the

counting which it finds as fun. As the Basotho came from an oral tradition, and before they could read and write, Basotho children were taught to count through the use of objects such as mealie cobs, stones, their fingers or toes which were all visible objects and aids to learning and remembering.

Blacking (1967: 52) states that among the Bavenda of the Northern Province (now the Limpopo Province), 'counting songs are amongst the first items in a child's musical repertoire. They are easy to remember as they are usually accompanied by the action of counting with the fingers'). This brings to mind two Tshivenda children's counting 'song' *Potilo* (cf. Blacking, 1967: 59) which is regarded as a game-song. His other counting song assists the child to number each part of the body by pointing to the head, legs, arms, nose, etc. See his Appendix 11, (1967: 204). I have often heard children sing it in the villages in Venda in the Northern Province of South Africa. Though Blacking has musically transcribed it, it is not effective on score. One has to hear it sung to experience the actions and the high and low tones of certain words that are mnemonic aids to assisting the child to remember to count.

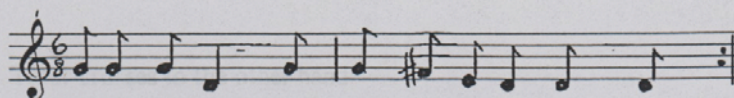
Counting games amongst the Basotho are very often in the form of a song in the Western sense and are usually accompanied by a melody. The reason being that through the rise and fall of the voice which acts as a mnemonic device, the child is able to remember and memorise certain sequences of the counting because Sesotho is a tone language. *Ho bala menoana* is recited in a slow rhythmic manner of either compound duple or compound quadruple. Although the singer quickens the tempo to the end when she reaches *Seleketla-*

poli, this should not be; the rhythm should remain constant throughout in the context of counting game song. This counting song is recited in a regular simple compound metre (See transcription and diagram). The music transcription of *Ho bala menoana* follows:

Ho bala menoana

♩ = 92

Tutor and child sing:



track7

E-noa ke qe - qe ! qe - qe mo-noa-nya - na.

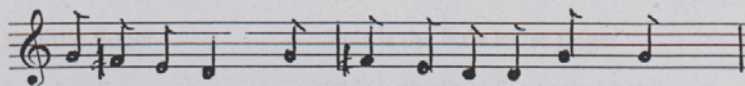
E-noa ke ma-hla-si mpo-po mo-noa-nya - na.

E-noa ke se - bi - li - bi - tloa mo-noa-nya - na.

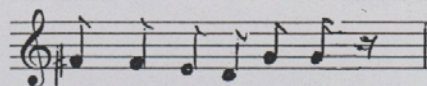
E-noa ke su - pa - le ba - tho mo-noa-nya - na.

E-noa ke the-be - li a - ra mo-noa-nya - na.

E-noa ke qhe - tso e na le qhe-tsoan' Se-



le-ke-tla po - li. Pho- pho -thi -mo - ho - lo.



Qho-bo-sha le -sho-me!

Fig. 15. Child's melody for finger-counting.

The tutor points at each finger while singing “Enoa ke” . . . (“This is . . .”).

- 1st little finger** : **Enoa ke** ³⁸ **qeqe qeqe,** ³⁹ **monoanyana.** ⁴⁰
- 2nd ring finger** : **Enoa ke mahlasimpopo,** ⁴¹ **monoanyana.**
- 3rd middle finger** : **Enoa ke sebilibitloa,** ⁴² **monoanyana.**
- 4th (index) finger** : **Enoa ke supa le batho,** ⁴³ **monoanyana.**
- 5th thumb** : **Enoa ke thebe’a-lira,** ⁴⁴ **monoanyana.**

Tutor crosses to the other hand:

- 6th thumb** : **Enoa ke qhetso** ⁴⁵
- 7th (index) finger** : **E na le qhetsoana.** ⁴⁶
- 8th middle finger** : **Seleketla-poli.** ⁴⁷
- 9th ring finger** : **Phophothi-moholo.** ⁴⁸
- 10th little finger** : **Qhobosha leshome.** ⁴⁹

Translation:

- 1st little finger : This is the little loose finger.
- 2nd ring finger : This is the little finger that helps.
- 3rd middle finger : This is the little, stronger finger.
- 4th index finger : This is the little pointer of people/things.
- 5th thumb : This is the helper of other fingers.

Tutor crosses to the other hand:

- 6th thumb : This is the piece that is broken off.
- 7th (index) finger : It has a little small piece.
- 8th middle finger : The one that hangs down.
- 9th ring finger : The big helper or stroker.

10th little finger : The fastener of the little finger.

Papali:

The tutor, who was very often the mother, grandmother or older sibling, would begin by suggesting to the child that they play *Ho bala menoana*. The child is requested to hold its hands in an upright position with the palms either facing the tutor or held horizontally. In this way, the thumbs always face each other. See Fig. 16. Martin's (1969: 47) account differs in that the back of the hand faces 'the person counting, the palm turned outwards'. Therefore, the position of the tutor is behind the child and not in front.

Finger-counting gestures:

By pointing to the little finger of the child's LH, the tutor asks: *Hoo ke 'ng?* (What is this?) or *Enoa ke?* (This is?) and the reply is: *Enoa ke qeke-qeke, monoanyana* (This is the little loose finger). She points to the rest of the fingers in the LH according to each verse line until she reaches the thumb which is the 5th finger. At this juncture, the child observes that the tutor has to leave the child's LH to cross over (v. *tsela*) to get to the thumb of its other hand (RH) to reach the 6th finger (*tselela*, to be 6) which is analogous to one crossing a river or road to get to the other side. The child visually sees this finger-pointing gesture and soon realises its uniqueness regarding the other fingers. [The reader should note that the first five numbers in Sesotho are adjectives, namely, *'ngoe* (one); *-beli* (two); *-raro* (three); *'ne* (four) and *-hlano* (five). From six to nine, the numerals are verbs

which are described below.]

The tutor then sings: *Enoa ke qhetso*, etc. the child learns that from the 6th (*qhetso*) to the 10th finger, the function of each finger is analogous when one milks a goat and this is indicated by the 8th middle finger as *Seleketla-podi* which refers to the teat of a goat. At an early age, the child begins to learn that the index finger gestures for pointing or indicating objects or people is rightly called *supa (le batho)* (lit. that which points at people) though the finger is also used to point or indicate objects. The child knows that when it is reprimanded, it is the 7th finger that points. Therefore, *supa* means to point and designates 7 or to be 7 (*supa*) when counting on one's fingers.

When counting continues, the child sees the tutor's finger gestures which are indicated by bending two fingers, namely, the 9th and 10th thus leaving 8 fingers stretched out. Hence, the figures 8 and 9 are expressed by the verb *ho roba* (to break or bend) but with finger counting gestures, it means to bend a finger or fingers. This is derived from the expression *Metso e robang* (lit. the unit that breaks or bend). *Roba* derives from *roba + peli*, hence, *tse robeli* (adj.) designates those which are broken or bent. *Ba robileng meno e 'meli* (lit. those who break or bend 2 fingers) all designate 8. Expressions such as *robong* (adj. nine) or *ba robileng mono le mong* (lit. those who break or bend one finger) designate 9 with the 10th finger being bent. Unlike the others, 10 is a noun and is called *leshome* when all

the fingers are stretched out.

With this added background the child is able to have a visual picture of the Sesotho numeration system, thus, appreciating how it functions in each line of the text of the song and the meaningful role of each gesture.

Of all the versions I taped of *Ho bala menoana*, the present text and the translations seemed most logical to an extent. There were some variants which did not coincide with the fingers named. As with oral transmission, variants and discrepancies are bound to arise but one should not forget that in Sesotho, as with other children in Africa, finger-counting rhymes or recitations (for very young children) are learnt *before* they are aware of the number sequence. Cf. Fig. 10, *Malatalian'a tsela*. Hence, it is not surprising that the finger designations in Mabilie and Dieterlen's (1988) description ends at 5 in each hand and not ten. An attempt would be made to highlight the discrepancies between Mabilie and Dieterlen's description and *Ho bala menoana*.

I have expressed the numerals as numbers and not words for easy reading. The following designations are taken from Mabilie and Dieterlen (1988) though the name of the game and the position of the person counting is not mentioned which are crucial factors. See my Endnotes for further explanation of definitions.

For the sake of the reader, I have extracted the following finger-counting definitions and designations found in Mabilie and Dieterlen.

Beginning with the LH:-

The child's LH:-

1 st little finger	:	is	designated	<i>sebidibitlwa</i> .
2 nd finger	:	is	”	<i>tsupabatho</i> .
3 rd middle finger	:	is	”	<i>thebeadira</i> .
4 th finger	:	is	”	<i>mahlasi-mpopo</i> .
5 th (thumb)	:	is	”	<i>kgoronkgopjwe</i> .

The child's RH:-

1 st thumb	:	is	”	<i>phori</i> . *
2 nd finger	:	is	”	<i>photshana</i> . *
3 rd middle finger	:	is	”	<i>phophothimoholo</i> .
4 th finger	:	is	”	<i>seleketlapodi</i> .
5 th little finger	:	is	”	<i>qabatjhana tshu</i> .

Discrepancies in Mabile and Dieterlen (1988) version:-

It should be established at the onset that the hands are positioned as in Fig. 16 and the index fingers in English have the same functions as in Sesotho, that is, they are used for pointing people or objects. However, the meaning of the ‘ring’ finger being the fourth of the LH is a cultural designation (Western) and should not apply to Sesotho and *supa* (*tsupa*) means 7 when counting on one's fingers. Therefore, one can work on the assumption that the counting in Mabile and Dieterlen's (1988) version proceeds beyond the 5th finger but numbered as in the LH:

- The numbering in the RH should continue as the 6th, 7th, etc.

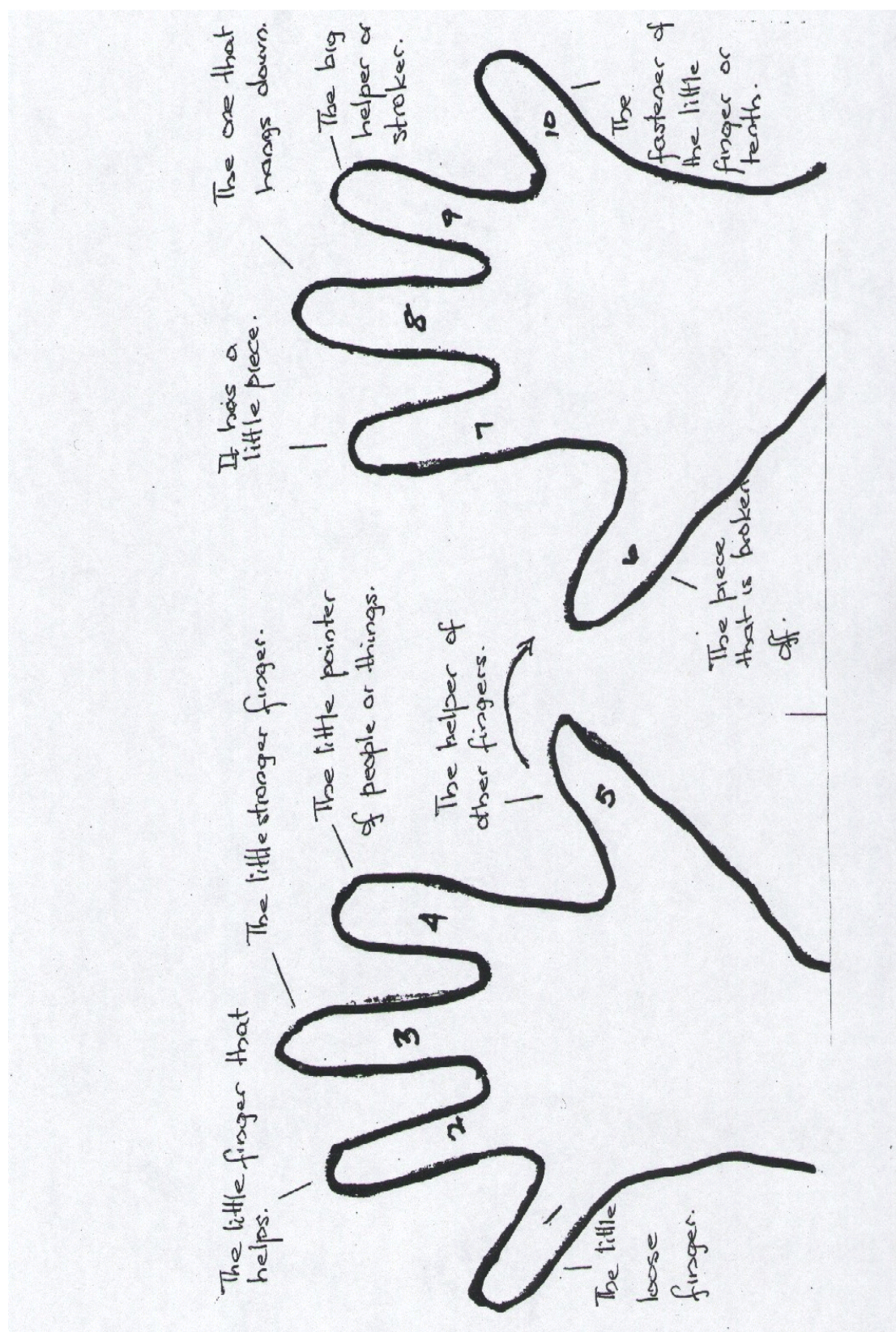
- The 2nd finger of the LH (the ring finger) is wrongly designated as *tsupabatho* (7th) for reasons stated under “Finger-counting gestures.”
- Where *sebidibitlwa* is designated as the 1st little finger, whereas it appears as the middle finger in my example.
- Where *tsupabatho* appears as the 2nd (ring) finger of the LH, appears as the 4th finger in mine despite its reference to pointing at objects or people which is associated with *supa* (7). This would only apply if the game began with the RH and proceeded to the 1st little finger and then the 2nd which would be fingers 6 and 7.
- Where *thebeadira* is designated as the 3rd middle finger of the LH, *thebeliara* appears as the 5th finger (thumb) in my example.
- Where *mahlasi-mpopo* is designated as the 4th finger, it appears as the 2nd in my example.
- Where *kgoronkgopjwe* is designated as the 5th finger (thumb) in the LH, it appears as *thebeliara*.
- Where *phori* always precedes *photshana* (dim.), these should be numbered as the 6th and 7th fingers, respectively, and not as the thumb and 2nd finger of the RH.

- Where *phophothimoholo* is designated as the 3rd middle finger in the RH, it appears as the 9th in my example.
- Where *seleketlapodi* is designated as the 4th in the RH, it appears as the 8th in my example.

From Mabile and Dieterlen's (1988) description, one does not know whether the game is intended for a child to know the numerals, functions and gestures associated with the 6th to the 10th finger.

Common features in both versions:-

- The name and its diminutive **phori/photshana* or *qhetso/qhetsoana*, follow each other immediately after the refrain *monoanyana* and they both fall on the thumb and finger next to it in the RH.
- The thumbs face each other which suggests that the hands are held in the same position as in Fig. 16.
- The counting of both hands begin and end with the little fingers.
- *Thebeadira/thebeliara* both appear in the LH and not the RH. This arises from the fact that in Sesotho, the left hand is described as 'letsoho la bo-tsoara-thebe' (the hand that holds the shield) after the fashion of a warrior holding his shield in the left hand and his spear in the right in times of war.



In all the variations I have collected, it was standard that the refrain 'monoanyana' appeared only in one hand.

Fig. 16. Diagram: naming of fingers.

28. Tlosa⁵⁰ eo

(Subtract that one)

Arithmetic:

Another number-counting game for two children whose ages range from four to six. The learning and educational value of this “*papali* (play song)” is to teach little children to count from one to five then one to ten. Its objective is to improve the child’s ability to concentrate and sharpen its memory in remembering how many pebbles have been removed each time and how many have remained. It is a mathematical process! This “*papali* (play song),” in the form of a game, is not as stringent as *Malatalian’-a-tsela* (No. 1) where older players have to keep a mental track of the number of stones removed.

Papali:

Two children collect ten pebbles and arrange them vertically in parallel rows of fives on the Left Side (LS). See Fig. 17 below. Child B (who is blind-folded or has her/his eyes shut) begins by instructing Child A to remove each pebble according to the five commands of the verse lines below and places each on the Right Side (RS).

The children will observe that these cross-over gestures represented the subtraction in leaving five empty spaces which signified nought while those that crossed over represented the additions with the

unnumbered pebbles. The game becomes more challenging when the players swop roles and begin counting on the LS but from the bottom up with the vertical row of unnumbered pebbles.

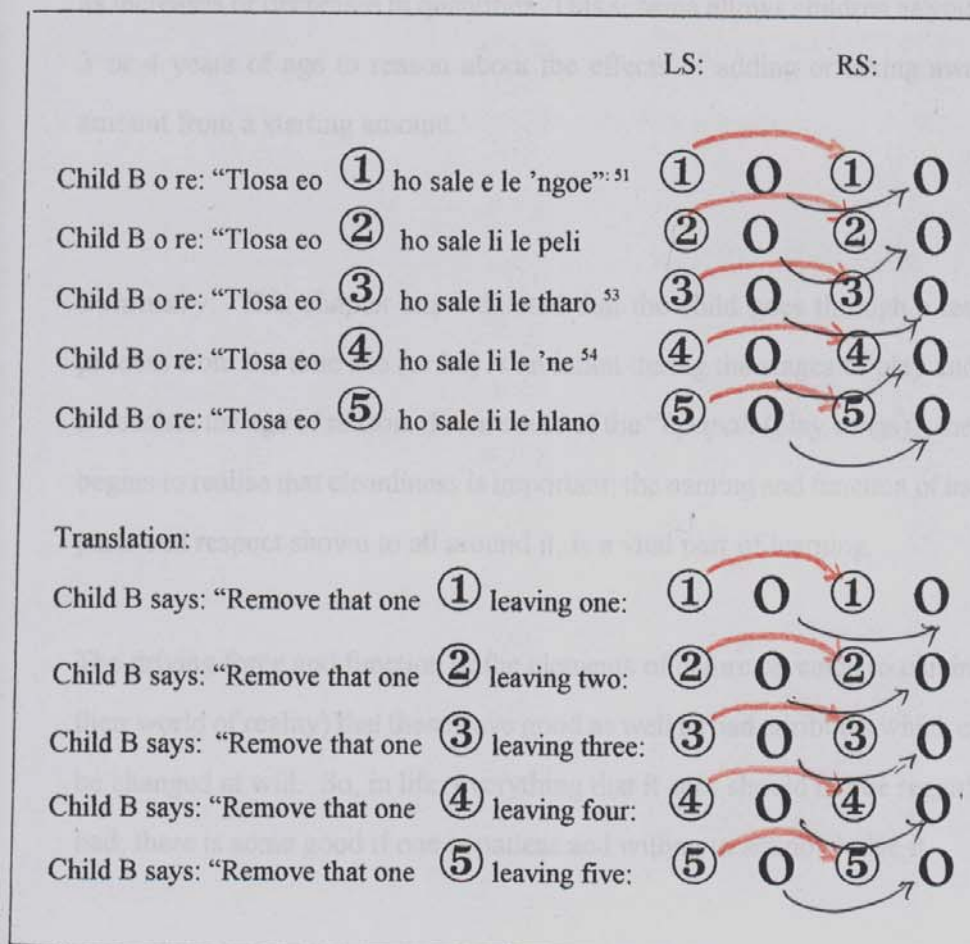


Fig. 17. Illustrates subtraction.

Child A is now blind-folded and instructs Child B to remove the fifth pebble and place it on the last row of the RS but working upwards. This continues with each command until the first pebble is reached.

Finally, there would be ten pebbles on the RS that have been removed from the LS which represented the numbered and unnumbered ones. According to Resnik, Bill and Lesgold (1992: 214), the protoquantitative schema 'interprets changes

as increases or decreases in quantities. This schema allows children as young as three or four years of age to reason about the effects of adding or taking away an amount from a starting amount.'

Summary: This chapter has indicated that the child goes through a learning process from the time she (or he) is an infant during the stages of play and until it reaches the age of reason. From some of the "*lipapali* (play songs)", the child begins to realise that cleanliness is important; the naming and function of its body parts and respect shown to all around it, is a vital part of learning.

The driving force and function of the elements of nature revealed to children (in their world of reality) that these have good as well as bad attributes which cannot be changed at will. So, in life, everything that it sees should not be regarded as bad; there is some good if one is patient and willing to acknowledge it.

The traditional counting system of the Basotho showed that only two number words have any relation to Sesotho numbers and they are *supa* (7) and *leshome* (10). All the other numeration words are descriptive, functional and analogous. When counting, children discover that each finger has an important function to play and some fingers may be weaker than others. The origin of the Sesotho numerals in relation to finger gesture counting are not only educational tools, they reveal some aspects of Sesotho culture and thought.

Counting verse rhymes and number games also show the Mosotho child the mathematical principle that when it removes something (expressed as “Tlosa eo”) from the rest, x number of objects remain (expressed as “ho sale”). When these objects are increased, they are added (or multiplied) and when they are all removed, this is expressed as “ha ho letho” (there remains nothing or nought).

To sum it up, Resnik, Bill and Lesgold (1992: 214) simply state this by saying: “Children know, for example, that if they have a certain amount of something, and they get another amount of the same thing . . . they have more than before. Or, if some of the original quantity is taken away, they have less than before . . . if nothing has been added or taken away, they have the same amount as before.” These principles of arithmetic only become more meaningful to the child only when they are accompanied by gestures, as we have seen.

Endnotes:

- ¹ thola : to pick up; to find; to adopt.
- ² mohlakeng : (loc.) marsh with reeds or a marshy place.
- ³ E mahe : having eggs; it has eggs.
- ⁴ Tsila-popo : *Tsila* (dirt); *popo* (n. creator or sulking or threatening to fight. *Tsila-popo* denotes the ‘creator of dirt’. On the other hand, the dirty child could be retaliating by sulking and threatening to fight the examiner indirectly who does not wish to call the transgressor by name.
- ⁵ ’Mankholi-kholi : A fabulous female person in Sesotho folklore supposed to be in the air, and associated with little children when they

lose their teeth. (*'ma*) *nkholi* or (*'ma*) *nkholi-kholi* is a bird, the black kite or *Milvus Korshun*. See “*papali* (play song)” No. 17.

- ⁶ *leino* : (sing.) tooth; (plur.) *meno* (teeth).
- ⁷ *lesoeunyana* : that which is very white; (dim. formed by suffix *-nyana*) of *le lesoeunyana* (that which is white but indicative of a small white object or thing).
- ⁸ *letsonyana-tsonyana* : (dim.) of *ntsu*, that which is very black also indicating the dim. of *le letso* (that which is black) with *-tso* (black) the adjectival stem. *letsonyana-tsonyana* is used in its intensified form.
- ⁹ *'Nkholi-kholi* : same as *'Mankholi-kholi* but without the prefix *'Ma* which is the contracted form of *'mè oa* (the mother of or the wife of).
- ¹⁰ *leino* : tooth.
- ¹¹ *o mphe* : and (you) give me.
- ¹² *le letle-tle* : that which is very beautiful. *letle-tle* is used in its intensified form.
- ¹³ *poli* : a goat.
- ¹⁴ *naka* : the horn of an animal, for example, the goat.
- ¹⁵ *khopo* : (adj.) Something crooked, for example, like a cow's horn.
- ¹⁶ *Tsintsi* : (n.) a fly.
- ¹⁷ *thabeng* : (loc.) at, from, in, to, etc. the mountain.
- ¹⁸ *mo lomele* : bite him or her.
- ¹⁹ *koana!* : there yonder, (away from the speaker).
- ²⁰ *Tsatsi-tsatsi* : (n.) the sun. The word is used in its intensified form.
- ²¹ *'Riti* : the abbreviated form for *moriti* (the shade or shadow). Hence, the apostrophe before the word *Riti*.
- ²² *bana* : (plur.) children. (sing.) *ngoana* (child).

- ²³ ba batle : they are beautiful.
- ²⁴ ba babe : they are ugly; bad.
- ²⁵ Khoeli : denotes the moon or month, that is the phase(s).
- ²⁶ toloka! : to become full (of the moon). The phrase *khoeli e tolokile* means ‘it is full moon’.
- ²⁷ mosa : mercy or kindness.
- ²⁸ ntja! : (n.) dog.
- ²⁹ tlhako! : to scorn.
- ³⁰ ’runyana : shortened form of *lerunyana* (a/the little cloud) and the (dim.) for *leru* (a cloud) with its suffix *-nyana* denoting a small cloud.
- ³¹ lela : (dem. pron.) for ‘there yonder’.
- ³² Nka : shortened form of *Ke ka* (I can). Whereas, *Nka!* (take!) is a verb imperative interjective functioning as an interjective.
- ³³ kome : (ideoph.) to throw into one’s mouth; to eat.
- ³⁴ bana : (plur.) children. (sing.) *ngoana*.
- ³⁵ lelente : a ribbon (Afrik. *lint* meaning ribbon or riband).
- ³⁶ tsamaea : to go; walk.
- ³⁷ bapala : (v.) to play.
- ³⁸ Enoa ke : meaning ‘This is’. Sometimes the tutor may ask the child saying: “*Hoo ke’ng?*” (“What is this?”) and the child replies: “*Enoa ke . . .*” (“This is . . .”).
- ³⁹ qeke-qeke : (ideoph.) *ho re qeque-qeque* meaning ‘to be loose, and not tight’. Sometimes *phore* (small part or portion) is used.
- ⁴⁰ monoanyana : little finger (dim.) of *monoana* (finger).
- ⁴¹ mahlas! : a helper. *Mahlas!* (the inseparable or indispensable one). Variants: *motlasi-mpompo* or *’tlatsi-mpopo* (a helper).
- ⁴² sebili-bitloa : correctly, *lebili-bitloana* (dim.), the little rolled one. Named after the finger in its natural and relaxed position

which, with some people, it is curved or rolled. Variant: *sebili-bitloe* meaning the same thing.

- ⁴³ *supa le batho* : (lit.) point at people. The second finger of the right hand is generally used to point at people and objects. Also *tsupa-batho/tshupabatho/supa-batho* (n.) mean the same thing while *supa* designating the number seven.
- ⁴⁴ *thebe'a-lira* : or *thebeadira*. In the context of the game, it represents the third finger of the left hand which defends the pairs of fingers on either side of it. (Outside this context, it symbolises a chief's shield.
- ⁴⁵ *qhetso* : or *leqetsu*. (lit.) piece cut or broken off from something; indicating the thumb too. Sometimes *phore* (small portion or thing).
- ⁴⁶ *qhetsoana* : (dim.) of *qhetso*. See *qhetso* above.
- ⁴⁷ *Seleketla-poli* : Impersonal noun. The finger that holds the teat of the goat when milking which is usually the middle finger. Variant: *sereketla-poli* (n.) meaning to 'shake or tremble' when milking.
- ⁴⁸ *phophothi-moholo* : (lit.) the big stroker or the big one. Actually spelt *phophotha*.
- ⁴⁹ *Qhobosha leshome* : *Qhobosha* (to pin or fasten) and *leshome* (the tenth) denote the little finger in the counting game. Variant: (n.) *qabashana tsu/qabatjhana tshu*.
- ⁵⁰ *tlosa* : to cause to leave, remove or subtract. *tlosa* is formed by the causative suff. *-osa* and derived from the verb *tloha*, to leave.
- ⁵¹ *'ngoe* : one; single; a certain or another.
- ⁵² *pele* : two.
- ⁵³ *tharo* : three.

⁵⁴ 'ne : four.

Chapter 10

GAMES FOR CONCENTRATION

In this chapter, the following games share one thing in common in that they instil in children the art of concentration in whatever kind of activity they are engaged. These may be balancing a pail of water in *Mabele-bele* ¹ (lit. No. 29); focussing a child's attention in domestic skills in *Ho pheha khobe* (No. 30) or the ability to speak clearly without undue faltering in *Khulu, Phutha, Thupa*. (No. 31) and *Serapana see* (No.32). Because there was no formal way to inculcate this, "*lipapali* (play songs)" were the media by which parents attempted to achieve this. Each of them will attempt to exhibit its own learning ingredient necessary for the learning process and its development.

29. Mabele-bele.

(Corn)

To inculcate balance:

Rhythmically chanted: **Mabele-bele** ¹ **a sekhooda.** ²
A jeoa ke tlhokoana. ³
Thlokoana ea sekhooda.
S'kuduma; ⁴ **s'kuduma.**

Translation:

Corn belonging to the White people;
 Are eaten by the sticks.

Sticks of the White people,

We are attracted to you; we are attracted to you.

This “*papali* (play song)” is usually played in an open space as a form of recreation by little girls whose ages range between five to eight years. It is probable that it was adapted from a traditional Basotho children’s game but with the passing of time, Zulu and English influence made its presence felt. According to my informant in the year 2000, Ntsoaki, then aged twenty-five, stated that the objective of this “*papali* (play song)” was to develop in a young girl the art of concentration in balancing a pail of water on her head. This was in preparation for her entry into the real domestic world of duties that will await her. See Laydevant (1932: 69) and Hamel (1965: 1-6) for a Sesotho folk description of the *mabele*; its beautiful legendary origin in Jacottet (1908: 54-55) and Ashton (1967: 122) and idiomatic Sesotho cultural expressions surrounding its growth (Thoahlane, 1985: 7).

Papali:

About six to eight girls join hands in a circle and move round while they chant. At the words *S’kuduma*; *s’kuduma*, they all go down twice on bended knees. The essence of the game gestures is that one must fall and rise up at these two words. Thus, this is no mean feat. If one loses one’s balance, one goes out of the circle and the whole process is repeated until two participants remain to see who would fall out. This gesture is also symbolic of losing one’s balance when carrying a pail of water on one’s head. So, one must be in harmony with the rest of the dancers lest one loses one’s step. The “*papali*

(play song)” also teaches a child, in a subtle way, to be aware of the participants’ actions in order to synchronise with them. So, in life, one should be aware of one’s surroundings at all times.

30. Ho pheha khobe

(To cook the maize grain)

To focus:

The reader will note from the text that *khobe* (maize grain) is not in the plural *likhobe* (maize grains) as was seen in ‘*Malatalian*’-a-tsela, Chapter 4, in the sentence “Pitsana ha e na khòbè”. *Ho pheha khobe* literally means to ‘cook a maize grain’. Used in a colloquial sense, it means ‘to look fixedly’ as in this game. The virtue of patience is involved in this “*papali* (play song).” In Sesotho, when cooking food, one does not look at the contents of the pot hurriedly lest the food burns. One must look at the food with much attention and concentration. So this gesture trains the child to examine an object steadfastly lest the eye should miss important details.

Papali:

This is a well known original and traditional Sesotho “*papali* (play song)” indulged in by older boys and girls whose ages range from about twelve to fourteen and who can withstand the strain of concentrating for long. It could be played indoors or outside and at any season.

Only two children participate while the others act as judges to assist the challenger who is designated as Child A and the other child as Child B.

They may either sit or stand. The former challenges Child B and says:

Child A: **“Ha re phehe ⁵ khobe.”**

Translation: (lit. “Let us cook the maize grain.”)

They look steadfastly into each others eyes without blinking (*ba sa panye*) despite any distractions that may occur from some observers to make the game more challenging! If either one defaults by blinking, then the other says:

“U pantse! (or “Li chele!”)

Translation: (lit.) “You have blinked!” (or “They are burnt!).

Then another pair of participants challenge each other.

The word *pantse* (v.i) is derived from *ho panya* (‘to blink’). Note that the challenger’s statement “Li chele” is used here in a colloquial way despite the grain being one in quantity and should be the singular: “E chele!” (“It is burnt!”). Once again we find illogicality in some Basotho children’s verses. As this is a very short game, the one who blinked is disqualified and another enters.

31. Khulu, Phutha, Thupa!

(Tortoise, Gather, Stick!)

Speech development:

Two Sesotho children's tongue twisters are discussed in this subsection. In Sesotho, a tongue twister is defined as a *papali ea puo* (lit. a game for language) whose objective is to encourage (i) concentration on the part of the child when reciting each line quickly without faltering; (ii) to train the child to concentrate when recalling serious events in a quick, clear, systematic and orderly way and (iii) to develop the child's speech and (iv) to consolidate its memory.

Though tongue twisters are played by both girls and boys usually in their leisure, adults may join them just for the sheer fun. Children have always considered tongue twisters as a "*papali* (play song)" because the fun is when the reciter fumbles and utters the words incorrectly, much to the laughter of the group. In the child's faltering, he or she may utter words that are not in the Sesotho language! In one's attempt to recite it quickly a number of times, one discovers that one's tongue is 'twistered' and the twister becomes unintelligible to the listener(s). Hence, from a cultural point of view, the Basotho say that tongue twisters 'tame the tongues' (lit. *lithapisetsa maleme*); or they 'moisten and loosen the tongue'. This desire for accuracy in speech is inculcated at an early age. See Connelly's (1987) investigation of Basotho children's early development of speech and the importance it has in Sesotho culture.

It should be noted that Sesotho tongue twisters are recited words and not sounds which may be recited forwards *and* backwards and repeated many times, for example, see line three of Mohapeloa's "Khulu, Phutha, Thupa!" quoted below. The twister may also be a sentence recited only forwards and

repeated a number of times as in “Serapana see” (This little garden), (No. 32). For the sake of the reader, I have supplied Mohapeloa’s song text below titled “Khulu, Phutha, Thupa” which is taken from his collection of songs entitled *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (Beautiful things to hear and beautiful songs of Africa), vol. 1, no. 18, p. 53, (1953) and based on the traditional Sesotho tongue twister of this name:

Papali:

Introduction: **Bana ba bapala ka lintho tse ngata esita puo:**

Thupa phutha khulu!

Khulu, phutha, thupa,

Thupa phutha khulu!

Ke papali e tsehisang ⁶

E ratoang ke bana, bana ba Basotho.

Ba pheta ka bomong, ka potlakò, ⁷

Khulu, phutha, thupa, etc.

Translation: Children play with many things, even speech.

Thupa phutha khulu!

Khulu, phutha, thupa,

Thupa phutha khulu!

It is a game causing laughter

that’s loved by children, Basotho children.

They repeat one by one, with speed,

Khulu, phutha, thupa, etc.

Depending on the structure of this genre, some may be classed as meaningless syllables such as this ever-popular “Khulu, Phutha, Thupa!” (lit. “Tortoise, Gather, Stick!”). Although the first three lines of this tongue twister evokes the essence of ‘music’ in the African sense and what Jakobson (1983: 69) would call “sound play” in linguistics, the question of tone inflection is not relevant to the reciter due to its quick tempo. The reciter is not conscious of achieving the correct tone but in achieving to utter the words correctly. These meaningless syllables also strengthen the children’s notion that these are just “*lipapali* (play songs)” and this is confirmed by the fourth line of this twister, “*Ke papali e tsehisang*” (It’s a *game* causing laughter). Hence, the question of tone inflection to give meaning is not relevant in Sesotho tongue twisters because the cultural essence is the desire for accuracy in speech and to recall and retain events in a chronological manner from the adults point of view. Whereas the aspect of ‘play’ is divorced of semantic meaning which is not found in the West.

The reader will have noticed that “Khulu, Phutha, Thupa” can be recited in retrograde. This contrasts with the essence of tongue-twisters in the British and North American traditions where the object is to recite them with speed and accuracy (from left to right) always with the same word order, and a number of times until the child gives up. Note the recurrence of one where the consonant ‘p’ begins each word:

“Peter Piper picked a pack of pickled pepper.”

There ‘can be number of changes which can be rung’ (Opie 1973: 30) on a

twister such as this North American one whose meaning is altered in the second part:

How many cookies could a good cook cook, if a good cook could cook cookies?"

Yet, this tongue-twister is not classed as a meaningless verse because both parts make sense.

32. Serapana see.

(This little garden)

Speech development:

The background to the nature of Basotho children's tongue-twisters in the previous game need not be reiterated here. Though this tongue twister seems simple in construction, to a native speaker of Sesotho, it does not seem easy to recite with speed due to its length. The title is shortened and appears below with its translation:

Papali:

With tongue twisters, one person recites it while others listen. There are no restrictions except that the reciter needs to concentrate and understand the tongue twister to avoid any hesitation while attempting to recite it quickly and accurately. The reciter may give way for another to make an attempt if he or she so wishes. Here, follows another tongue twister:

Serapana⁸ see⁹ ke ne kē re ke sa¹⁰ Raseretsana, kanthe¹¹ hase¹² sa
Raseretsana.

This little garden I thought belonged to Raseretsana, whereas, it is not
Raseretsana's.

One cannot escape the natural alliteration in the words beginning with the sound *s* that enhance the quality of the tongue twister. Note also the *k* sounds.

Summary: As children learn and develop, their concentration increases. Sesotho traditional methods of teaching children to balance, focus and develop clarity of speech, have been spelt out in different ways. Hence, cultural thinking was behind the purposes to achieve these goals though children were oblivious to them; to them, these are just pastimes.

Similarities and differences exist between Basotho and Western tongue twisters. Those in the former did not necessarily follow an alliterative structure though words were more important. Whereas, in the latter, *sound* (or alliteration) is indispensable. The common characteristics that both cultures share are concentration, speed and accuracy of the reciter. Though words can be in retrograde in Sesotho and be understood, only meaningless syllables in the West can be in retrograde and not be understood.

Endnotes:

¹ Mabele-bele : According to Mabile and Dieterlen (1988: 24), *mabele* denotes 'the fruits of the shrubs *Rhus dentata*' or 'berries eaten (Ashton,

1967: 320). *Mabele-bele* is also the intensified form of *mabele* a traditional Sesotho crop ‘which was believed to be a poisonous crop’. (Ashton, 1967: 122). Also note the reduplicated polysyllabic radical in *Mabele-bele* which adopts the hyphen. Other children’s reduplications are found in the games ‘*Mankholi-kholi* (No. 20) and *Maraba-raba* (No. 43).

- ² sekhooa : the English or anything pertaining to it or the White man.
- ³ tlhokoana : also *lehlokoana* (a small bit of dry grass). Also denotes a small stick.
- ⁴ S’kuduma : the children’s corruption of the Zulu word *Siyakudumisa* (We praise you). *Siya-ku-dumisa* (lit. We you praise), the *ku* meaning ‘you’ (2nd person sing.).
- ⁵ Ha re phehe : denotes an invitation to cook. *phehe* is derived from *pheha* (to cook).
- ⁶ tsehisang : that which causes laughter. From (v.) *tseha*.
- ⁷ ka potlako : in a hurry or hurriedly and with speed.
- ⁸ Serapana : (dim.) of *serapa* (n.) a little field or garden.
- ⁹ see : (dem. pron., cl. 4 sing.) meaning ‘this’.
- ¹⁰ sa : (poss. pron.) of or belonging to, for example, *Raseretsana*.
- ¹¹ kanthe : whereas (conj.)
- ¹² hase : it is not. (expressing the negative).

Chapter 11

GAMES WITH STONES

Each of the following children's stone games are
 s u b d i v i d e d i n t o t w o
 categories, namely, (a) stone-passing, inculcating
 a l e r t n e s s a n d (b) s t o n e -
 catching, the ability to coordinate eye, hand and stone. These will be discussed
 under their subheadings:



track8

33. Rèti, Rèti

(Rèti, Rèti)

crotchet = 92

(a) Stone-passing game:

Solo:

Duet:

Fig. 18. Musical transcription of melody.

Girls sing:

Reti,¹ **Reti's folla ma dumpa.**²

Repeat.

Stones are passed around: **Ka utloa bohloko; ka seka meokho;**³

an'eso⁴
nyetsoe
maCha

6

Rè - ti, Rè - ti,

Re-ti's fol - a me du - mpa

Ka u-tba- bo-hlo-ko; ka se-ka me-o-kho; Ngca-Foe

ne-so - o nye-tsoe ke ma-Chae - na.

Ngo

o

⁵ ke

ena.

Repea

t.

Translat

i o n :

Girls sing: Reti, Reti, Reti, this means you are striking it. Repeat.

Stones are passed around: I felt a pain; I shed a tear;

My sister is married into the Chinese community.

Repeat.

Variant:

Girls sing: **Reni, Reni, Reni oa le China.**

Repeat.

Stones are passed around: **Re tsoa koana bochabela,**⁷

Re nyetsoe ke maChaena.

Repeat.

Translation:

Girls sing: Reni, Reni, Reni belonging to the Chinese. Repeat

Stones are passed around: We come from there yonder east,

We are married into the Chinese community. Repeat.



track9



Plate 2.

A stone-sing game.

Reti is

pas

p r

ceeded by a brief song called *Nkhono Manketu* (Grandmother Nketu) which I have not transcribed. It differs entirely from *Reni*, *Reni* in character, tempo, and musical style though the stone-passing gestures are similar to *Reti*. Compare Mans's (2003: 204) stone-passing game from the Luo group in Kenya called *Nyithindo* (Little children) and the Owambo (Namibian) game called *Kapau ende lele* whereby the stone is 'exchanged between the left and right hands of the child, ready to pass on again' (The Talking Drum, 1998: 3). Hopkin (1984: 4) notes this characteristic in his collection of *Jamaican Children's Songs* in that 'one song may contain two or more parts whose styles are as surprisingly different.'

Reti (or *Reni*) is played by girls, though in former times it was played by both girls and boys. My informants, comprising female teachers and ordinary folk women whose ages ranged between twenty-five to fifty-five, respectively, recalled playing this game when they were young. They could not account for the foreign reference to Chinese in the song-text because this is how the game-song was transmitted to them. *Reti* (or *Reni*) must have been a young Mosotho girl who, in the past, married a Chinese. This was not in keeping with traditional Sesotho cultural norms of the times and is observed in the words "Ka utloa bohloko . . ." ("I felt pain . . . , " etc). This is also another example of Basotho children's adaptational features in their attempt to be creative. See Wells (1996: 71) on the nature of foreign influence in Sesotho songs. For example, I could not establish from my respondents the meaning of *folla ma dumpa* which could be a corruption of an unknown English phrase. *Reti* was recorded in 1997 and *Reni* in 2001 by the children of Iketsetseng Primary

School, Maseru.

Papali:

Reti (or *Reni*) is a circle game song which may be played by little girls whose ages range between eight to eleven or older girls between the

ages of twelve to fourteen. This “*papali* (play song)” is usually played during the day in the court yard or an open space and at any season when they have nothing to do. No props are needed. The usual number of players is about five to seven. The more players, the greater the volume of singing and the percussion of the stones that accompany the singing. Each girl holds a stone that is easy to hold and light enough to pass round. They sit on the ground in the form of a circle and sing *Reti, Reti*, or *Reni, Reni*, etc while tapping the stones on the ground. At the point where the words *Ka utloa bohloko* begin, each girl passes her stone to her neighbour on the right and then receives another from her neighbour on the left to every beat of the section which is sung with vigour. (Older girls usually play it at a faster tempo.) They continue in this fashion until the end of the section *ke maChaena* when they return to the beginning of the song. All the players must be attentive to receive and pass a stone. Failure to do so not only disturbs the rhythm but exposes the player’s inattentiveness with the result that the player falls out of the game. This is minus one player. This entire pattern is repeated *ad infinitum*. If, as a result, other players falter along the way, and two are left, then the game comes to an end. [Symbol ‘p’: denotes player passing stone.]

These types of stone-passing “*lipapali* (play songs)” played in the form of a circle are very prevalent in Africa and may vary here and there. cf. the following stone-passing games in Norton’s (1963: 122) amongst the Basotho of Basutoland (now Lesotho) in the early nineteen hundred’s; *Malatalian’a-tsela* adapted as a stone-passing game, (No. 1); van Zyl’s (1939: 305) amongst the Bapedi; Weinberg’s (1980: 63) amongst the Zulus and Abarry’s (1989: 211) description of a similar game found amongst the Ga children of Ghana in West Africa. British, European and North American researchers of children’s games do not seem to have mentioned or described these stone-passing games as part of their collection. As Mans (2003: 204) observes: ‘Different forms of stone-passing games are found in so many African cultures that they may be considered an archetype.’ Are they indigenous to black children in Africa?

34. Liketoana

(Small stones)

(b) Stone-catching game:

Liketoana (dim. of *keto*), a stone used in the game of a knucklebones, has always been a game for older girls between the ages of ten to fourteen because of its demanding skill. It has not lost its appeal to this day. Some derivatives of the name are *ketola* (to cause to fall or to throw down) and *keto!* (to fall) from the ideophone *Ho re keto!* *Khetha* (pick) is a word embracing the gestures contained in this game where the *moketi* (the player) has to choose or pick out of more than one object. So, the meanings point to the nature of the gestures

in the game, namely, a stone or stones being picked and allowed to fall in the hand of the player though variations exist.

Liketoana and *Liketo* (which follows next) are generally influenced by the size of the spatial surroundings when these two are to be played. They may be played in the courtyard or an open space preferably during the day and in the children's leisure time.

The IsiZulu version of knucklebones or stone games is called *Izigendo* (plur. lit. (stones) or as it is sometimes called *Ngelitshe* (with a stone) (See Krige, 1985: 77), while the Indian version is called *Pacheta*. For a description of the latter, see Adams (1979: 23). Amongst the Maoris, “. . . knucklebones was played throughout the Pacific area in pre-European times . . . and that the Maoris already had one of their own before those settlers arrived in New Zealand” (Sutton, 1972: 320). However, authors do not discuss the didactic nature of the game but merely give a description of it. The essence of *Liketoana* in Sesotho is the coordination of hand, eye and stone(s) accompanied by a great deal of concentration when catching the stone(s). An ability to strategise and catch are some of the skills needed in this game.



Plate 3. A stone-catching game.

Papali:

Little stones or pebbles are placed on the surface of the ground. Two or three players may be (as in Plate 3) on bended knees or sit cross-legged round a small shallow hole in the ground measuring about sixteen centimeters in diameter and four centimeters deep. About 10 to 12 small stones or a number arranged by the players are placed on the ground or in the hole. They decide who is to begin; who follows and the last to play. One thrower (*moketi*) plays at a time while the rest watch her with calculated attention. She holds in her hand a

larger stone (*mokhu*) called a *ghoen* or taw than those in the hole and throws it in the air, about thirty-six centimetres. While doing so, she may

quickly scoop all the pebbles out of the hole with the same hand in time to catch the larger stone as it descends (or she may remove one stone at a time from the hole depending on the agreement made by the players). She throws the *mokhu* again into the air and the stones that are outside are pushed back into the hole with the same hand except one. This is also done while the *mokhu* is in the air. If she accidentally takes more than her hand can hold and makes a mistake or fails to catch the *mokhu*, then she runs the risk of being out of the game and the next player takes her turn. The failure may result in her lack of concentration in her eye not falling on the falling stone in order to pick up the stones singly or in two's, three's or the number agreed upon. This being so, then she loses the game.

Another variation may exist where the *mokhu* could also be made to land on the back of her palm, but these are some of the many variations. Eventually, a skilful player is considered as one who can select and push the required number of stones from those outside the hole and one who can take a selected number of stones from the hole without faltering. Because of a player's skill and dexterity, she can go on and on until she falters much to the envy of the others who have to wait patiently for their turn. The aim is to empty the hole or remove the stones from the surface to be considered a winner.

35. Liketo

(Stones)

(b) Stone catching game:

Liketo (plur. stones) is a game associated with herdboys and is played to while away the time while their cattle are grazing in the fields. Sometimes, it is played near the homestead when the cattle is in the kraal and the herdboys have plenty time to indulge in the “*papali* (play song)”. Here are some Sesotho derivative words associated with *Liketo*: *keta* (to play knucklebones which is a game with stones or to defend oneself); the phrase *ho re kete* (ideoph. to sound as something falling to the ground) and *lekete* (n. thing that falls). All these derivative words relate to an object falling down and with reference to this game, the objects are little stones or pebbles in the game of *Liketoana* and stones in the game of *Liketo*.

Papali:

I shall not give a comprehensive description of the game but the didactic or educational aspect will be highlighted.) As the “*papali* (play song)” is usually played by herdboys, the ‘rules’ are tough and mirror their rude attitude. The playing stones (*liketo*) are larger than

those played in *Liketoana* and are also thrown in the air while other stones are caught in the hole or outside it.

Each of the two groups agree on the following: *lipalo* (n. the number or counting); the number of round stones (about ten to twelve) to be thrown (*ho ketoa*); the *mokhu* and the challenger (*lepe* ⁸) being the first person in the game to start. The second person in the game is called the *late* ⁹ or the one who follows in the game. The *lepe* begins to throw the *mokhu* in the air and simultaneously scoops the stone or stones below (which are pushed by a feeder) together with the falling *mokhu*. All stones that are scooped in this manner are put aside and counted. It is not unusual for some of the players to test the thrower's skill and dexterity by feeding the *lepe* with more stones or obtaining a slightly *heavier* stone to distract or test his skill, that is, the stones which he has to scoop. The game comes to an end when fatigue creeps in.

Summary: The didactic importance of these “*lipapali* (play songs)” cannot be ignored. The only difference between the stone-passing and the stone-catching “*lipapali* (play songs)” is that alertness, in the former, is essential on the part of each child to maintain a sense of rhythmic exactness of movement and harmony in the passing and receiving of the stones at crucial moments of the game; failure to observe this, renders disunity and unpleasantness.

The stone-catching games' didactic significance is in the individual rather than the group. The "*papali* (play song)" trains the child to develop eye, hand and stone coordination which would stand it in good stead when more than two actions are needed to be coordinated without faltering. The educational value of these games lies in the fact that alertness, concentration and accuracy in receiving and passing on an object from self to another is crucial.

Endnotes:

- ¹Reti : *Reti* could be a corruption of the word *retha* (to strike, beat or to dance) or *serethe*, the wife of a polygamist. Here, *Reti* is the name of a female personage, probably an outcast.
- ²dumpa : meaning unknown. Probably, a corruption of 'to dump something.'
- ³meokho : (plur.) tears.
- ⁴Ngoan'eso : my brother (said of a man); my sister (said of a woman) or my relative.
- ⁵nyetsoe : to be married to (said of a woman).
- ⁶maChaena : (plur.) belonging to the Chinese or the Chinese.
- ⁷bochabela : (lit.) the east or the orient. See Guma, (1980: 4) on the Sesotho notion that the Basotho 'came from the east, where the sun rises.'
- ⁸lepe : (n.) *selepe*, the challenger or first person in the game to start. For purposes of euphony, I have omitted the prefix 'se' in both words, namely, *lepe* and *late*.⁹
- ⁹late : (n.) *selate*, one following another in a game or the second person in a game. The *late* is derived from *ho latela* (lit.) to follow).

Chapter 12

GAMES OF OBSERVATION

The following three games of chance, namely, *Kea u lotha* (No. 36); *Tsimo e tsoe* (No. 37) and *Phupa* (No. 38) are “*lipapali* (play songs)” because the outcome is determined by chance or guesses. The essence of the “*lipapali* (play songs)” is that the player must guess right. The first two are in the form of *lilothon* (plur. riddles, enigmas or puzzles) in dialogue form and are like the Western riddle while the third does not require a knowledge of one’s surroundings to derive at the correct answer as do the other two games. It is beyond the scope to discuss the various structures of *lilothon* and their semantic relationships. See Harris (1976) and Guma (1980).

36. Kea u lotha?

(Guess what?)

Game of chance:

Child A.

Child B:

Kea u lotha?¹ (or **Ka u lotha?**)

Ka'ng?

Masimo² **a mothating?**³

Lintsi. [The answer]

Translation:

Guess what?

By means of what? [or How?]

Fields on a ridge?

Eyelashes. [The answer]

Very young children between the ages of four to five are generally too young to engage in *lilo*tho. As children begin to grow a little older and are able to reason, they engage in them. Depending on their ingenuity, the *lilo*tho are generally those that are based on the child's immediate surroundings and their accurate and intelligent observation of their surroundings, though their intelligent observations have not yet been fully observed. However, they engage in listening. In a few years when they are a little older and they have gained more knowledge, they will take their rightful places.

The *lilo*tho are generally associated with children though adults may engage in them with the aim of exposing and explaining them to their young audience. Though they are confined to children and their pastimes, no restrictions are laid as to where and when they are played. However, they are generally engaged in during the day or at the evening fireside. These *lilo*tho are learnt while the children themselves may compose others. In the process, new ones may be introduced that children are able to grasp though this does not preclude younger ones from 'composing' their own in imitation of those of older children.

Children's *lilo* lack the seriousness of proverbs, which, like the *tsomo* (folktale) embody some truth, and yet there is some seed of truth in the latter. In Sesotho, proverbs, idioms and praise songs are not regarded as children's pastimes and are not considered as "*lipapali* (play songs)" even though they play a part in children's education.

It is beyond the scope of this section to go into other variations of *lilo* formulae, but the following two styles I have given are the most representative with regard to children.

Papali:

Two children engage in dialogue (or declarative questions) with two opposing groups, may contest with each other. Both wit and skill are required of the interrogator who poses the question in the form of a statement which ends in a question mark. It will be observed that all the lines end in a question mark except the line displaying the answer to the *selo* (sing. riddle). The first and third lines are really not questions but interrogative statements. If Child B is stumped, then it loses the "*papali* (play song)" and swops roles.

The reader will note that Child A's statement, "Masimo a mothating?" bears some cultural influence to which the child and audience can relate to their environment, and those are the fields. Despite this, the answer is difficult to arrive at. Basotho children generally use the above simple formula though others exist which need not start with "Kea u lotha" as in the next example:

37. Tsimo e tsoeu

(The white field)

Game of chance:

Papali:

Child A: **Tsimo⁴ e tsoeu eo ereng ha e lengoa mobu⁵ oa eona o be motso.⁶**

Child B: **Pampiri⁷, ha ho ngoloa ka enke.⁸** [The answer.]

Translation:

Child A: A white field which, when ploughed, its soil becomes black?

Child B: A newspaper, when one writes in ink. [The answer.]

This *selotho* shows foreign influence in the objects mentioned and by this, a Mosotho child can learn a culture outside its own. Note the ingenuity of associating the ‘white field’ with the background of a paper. When the field (the paper) is ploughed (when one has written on it), the soil, namely, the black ink, becomes black.

The child not only encounters Afrikaans and English words, but learns that these two white cultures do not only have a written tradition but makes use of

a pen and ink to write down and preserve their thoughts in written form as opposed to its culture of oral transmission.

38. Phupa

(Guess which hand?)

Game of chance:

The word *phupa* is derived from the verb *fupa* meaning ‘to place in the hand or the mouth’ and *phupo* (n.) means ‘a mouthful’. *Phupa*, like the English game “Odd or Even,” denotes to play at guessing in which hand a little stone is hidden but *phupe* (n.) denotes ‘holding in the hand’ or like *Phupa*, a player has to guess in which hand a little stone is hidden. The Sesotho idiomatic expression *Ho tsoarisa motho phupe-ka-lefe* (to hoodwink somebody) embraces the deceitful gestures contained in this “*papali* (play song)” of *Phupa*.

Phupa is an amusement for boys and girls and is played only by two players. Very often girls would be seen playing it alone and likewise the boys. It may be played anywhere and at any time to while away the hours but is generally played during the day because the tiny object and the gestures are more visible.

Papali:

Two children decide to play *Phupa* (sometimes called *Phupe*) while onlookers may be present. A small object, usually a pebble or maize

grain, is hidden in one of the clenched fists of a player whom I shall refer as Child B who stands opposite Child A. Child B places his hands at the back and only one hand contains the object. Child A has to guess in which hand the object is placed when Child B's clenched hands are brought forward before him to make his guess. In order to deceive Child A, B might pull a few stunts by pushing the wrong hand a little forward, or grasping it tightly or clenching it very intensely while saying to A:

“Nka,⁹ ke u time ka kae; ke u fe ka kae?.”

Translation: “Take, where should I deprive you; where should I give you.” [lit. on which side should I give you?]

Touching B's hands, A says:

“Ka qela, ka qela; ka qela, ka qela.

U ntime ka mona; u mphe ka mona.”

Translation: “I ask, I ask; I ask, I ask.

Deprive me here; (you) give me this side.”

Child A has to use his discretion in not being deceived by B's gestures as the tightly clenched fist is not an indication that the object is truly in that hand. Yet, he has to come up with the correct answer! Hence, Child A gestures by pointing to the hand he thinks holds the object and requests to feel it while saying:

Child A: “E re ke utloe pele.”

B challenges and says: “E ka ¹⁰ ho lefe?”

Child A replies: “Mphe ¹¹ ka ho lena.”¹²

Translation:

Child A: “Let me feel first.”

B challenges and says: “In which (hand) is it?”

Child A replies: “Give me (the one on) this side.”

Child B opens his hand and if there is nothing he says: “Bjatla!” (an ideoph.) denoting the sound of hard objects knocking one another, for example, the clattering of teeth. It stands to reason that the object is in the other hand and he also opens it to convince Child A that the object is in it. Therefore, Child A has lost.

They either exchange positions or retain them and begin from afresh.

This “*papali* (play song)” could go on until they decide to call it a day. *Phupa* teaches the child to be observant and critical in its decisions and that one should not be easily deceived.

39. Majantja

(Eater of dogs)

Game instilling cultural knowledge:

As the name suggests, *Majantja* literally means ‘people who eat dogs’. The word can be broken up into: *Maja-* denoting ‘the eaters’; the *-ja* means ‘to eat’

and *-ntja*, a dog. Refer to *Letsatsi* (Nos. 22) and *Khoeli* (No. 23) where the attributes of the dog (*ntja*) are discussed in Sesotho culture.

Majantja, a very popular game could be played indoors or outside and at any time of the year. It is generally played by two older children of either sex whose ages range from about six to ten. This traditional Sesotho “*papali* (play song)” goes back to olden times when Basotho children were taught to avoid eating certain foods and animals which were regarded as taboo. It was believed that if they transgressed this, a calamity would befall them. Hence, the only way they were taught to remember these taboos was to devise a “*papali* (play song)” around the names of edible and inedible foods and animals.

Papali:

The object of this game is to be on guard and quick-minded to decide if one eats the inedible or edible thing. When these are shouted out suddenly, there is the possibility of the player being taken off guard and uttering the wrong name thus, much to the amusement of the onlookers. Child A holds Child B’s arm just above the wrist which must be held limp or hang down loosely. Child A tries to outwit Child B by quickly calling out three times the names of three animals or that of edible food, for example:

Majanku; Majapoone; Majakhomo; Majantja; etc.

Translation: Sheep-eater; Corn-eater; Cow-eater; Dog-eater; etc.

For example, if a sheep (*nku*) is called out thrice in succession, then

Child B indicates this by opening his hand denoting that the animal is edible and he is correct. If a dog (*ntja*) is called out thrice in succession and he mistakenly opens his hands, then he is defeated. Hence, Child A wins. Not only should Child B's general observation of edible and inedible items of animals and food be vital to know in Sesotho culture, he should be at his wit's end in matching the correct gesture with the correct item. An incorrect gesture provokes much amusement from the onlookers for it denotes that Child B is a dog-eater! Hence, the abominable title, *Majantja*.

40. 'Mamolatasali

(Craver of food)

Game instilling discretion:

From the name, it is evident that '*Mamolatasali* refers to a female. This denominative noun is formed by prefixing '*Ma-* (mother of) to the existing noun *molatasali*. The *-lata* (v.) 'to fetch' and *-sali* or rightly *se-sali* (n.) denotes anything pertaining to womankind. Proper names and nouns with the prefix '*Ma-* or '*ma-* are written as one word. '*Mantsali* refers to a little girl whose name one does not know. Hence, '*mamolatasali*, according to Mabile and Dieterlen's definition, is 'a bogey to turn aside children' (1988: 264) and is not a polite form of an address as in the name '*Malerato* (mother-of-love) which enhances the status of the bearer of this name.

Papali:

In this "*papali* (play song)" and in Sesotho, '*Mamolatasali* is one

who craves for somebody else's food without realising that one's presence is not wanted at meal time. She is also seen as one who is not observant when others around her are. Consequently, the Basotho had an idiomatic expression: 'Ea bitsa 'Mamolatasali u re: "Hoa jeoa; ua tingoa!"¹³ See Sekese (1984: 141). This was a way of teaching such a child to be observant. It is apparent from the harshness of the expression that 'Mamolatasali is a constant visitor who calculates when meal time is about to take place or when food is about or has been dished up and is one who does not exercise discretion. She is an unexpected visitor who arrives at meal time. In Sesotho, it is expected

of her to excuse herself in a polite manner to avoid embarrassment for it is proper to be invited to a meal. However, as children are keen observers, these gestures did not go unnoticed if the little visitor still lingered on. The only way of letting 'Mamolatasali know that she has to leave so that the family may eat undisturbed, is for the mother of the children to say to her:

Ea bitsa 'Mamolatasali u re: "Hoa jeoa; ua tingoa!"

Translation: Go call 'Mamolatasali and say: "Eating is taking place; you are deprived of food."

Not realising that this insinuation is meant for her, 'Mamolatasali, hurriedly returns home to convey this message. Obviously, she will

be told the truth and has learnt a lesson that when one finds people at a meal, one should not linger until an embarrassing moment arises; so leave with dignity. Otherwise, one waits to be invited to partake of a meal.

It is interesting how this learning gesture has found its way in Basotho children's repertoire of *lipapali tsa bana ba Basotho* (lit. games of Basotho children) and Sekese (1984: 141) calls these gestures a “*papali* (play song)” but implies that when children have returned from calling ‘*Mamolatasali*, they will find that food has already been eaten!

41. Tsipa koae

(Pinch the snuff)

Game of synchronisation:

Generally, the Sesotho term of respect for an aged woman would be *nkhono* (grandmother) or *ntate-moholo* (grandfather). In Sesotho, we refer to the aged as “tsipa koae.” The children in this indigenous and traditional “*papali* (play song)” are addressing an old person (though we do not know the gender) to scatter the snuff or tobacco. This “*papali* (play song)” can be played anywhere and at any time by girls and/or boys though it is generally played by girls.

Tsipa koae is a difficult and tiresome “*papali* (play song)” because all the interlocking hands move simultaneously up and down while being pinched!

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ure-like fashion, all hands are ‘disentangled’ and the snuff is symbolically allowed to drop from their hands!

Papali:

Two or three children may perform this “*papali* (play song)” or two or three groups may participate. The hands designated as LH (Left Hand) and RH (Right Hand) are positioned before the “*papali* (play song)” starts: All hands would be pinched on the outside.

Plate 4. Interlocking of hands.

Children chant rhythmically: **Tsipa**¹⁴ **koae;**

qhala ¹⁵ **koae.** ¹⁶

Tsitenene! ¹⁷

Repeated ad lib.

Translation:

Pinch the snuff;

Scatter the snuff.

Tsitenene!

Repeated ad lib.

With two players, the gestures are: A pinches B's hand and B pinches the other hand of A who pinches the other hand of B. Therefore, A pinches two hands while B pinches only one!! This is done with an up and down movement of their hands while chanting "Tsipa *koae*", etc.

It should be noted that the pinching should coincide with the words "Tsipa *koae*" and released on "Qhala *koae*." At "Tsitenene!" the gesture is that of shaking off the snuff when all hands are released from one another. By this, the "*papali* (play song)" comes to an end and may be repeated as often as they please until they tire. Care should be taken that the pinching is not overdone on the other participant who has both hands pinched! The same principle applies to three children: A's LH pinches B's RH. B's RH pinches C's RH. C's RH pinches A's RH and C's LH pinches A's LH. The pinching and the release of hands is also done simultaneously with an upward and downward movement as the verse is chanted.

Summary: The important role of *lilo* (from a social point of view), is to provide entertainment. Hence, Basotho children regard them as “*lipapali* (play songs)”. From a functional point of view, *lilo* are used as a means of education in that they are a test of wit and skill where a child has to guess the answer accurately. It was observed that though they are defined as “*lipapali* (play songs)” of chance and are recreational in content, they contribute to Basotho children’s education and development in exhibiting children’s skills and intellectual ability which is enhanced by their knowledge and observation of their surroundings. Likewise, a knowledge of Sesotho taboos was another aspect of their observation in learning what kinds of foods or animals were accepted as edible or inedible in the culture.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Kea u lotha? : (lit.) I propose a puzzle to you; *lotha* (v.t.) to puzzle.
- ² Masimo : (plur.) fields.
- ³ mothating? : (loc.) on or at the ridge.
- ⁴ Tsimo : (sing.) fields.
- ⁵ mobu : soil.
- ⁶ motso : (adj.) the colour black.
- ⁷ Pampiri : (Afrik.) *papier*; (Eng.) paper.
- ⁸ enke : (Afrik.) *ink*; (Eng.) ink.
- ⁹ Nka : (v.) ‘take,’ being an imperative interjective.
- ¹⁰ e ka ho lefe? : meaning ‘on which side is it?’ (adj.) ‘which?’ is cl. 3.
- ¹¹ Mphe : ‘give me’ being a verb imperative command.
- ¹² ka ho lena : on/at this side.
- ¹³ jeoa; tingoa : in these two passive extensions the subjects are implied rather

than expressed and should be: ‘you are being deprived’ (*ua tingoa*). ‘It is being eaten’ (*hoa jeoa*) also translates the impersonal ‘one’ or ‘people’ with the long present tense *hoa* followed by the verb *jeoa* in the passive voice.

¹⁴ Tsipa : to pinch.

¹⁵ koae : (n.) means tobacco or snuff. In the context of this “*papali* (play song)”, it refers to an old person or the aged.

¹⁶ Qhala : to scatter.

¹⁷ Tsitenene! : probably a child’s way of saying *tetenene!* (ideoph.) which means ‘to fall down angrily!’ This gesture is observed when the girls all loosen and simultaneously drop their arms at the end of the pinching which signifies the end of the “*papali* (play song).”

Chapter 13

GAMES OF MENTAL SKILL

Each of the following three games are not games of chance but games of puzzles which helped train the child to learn and develop certain kinds of skills such as creativeness and strategies. Objects such as strings, stones or cultural domestic foods were used to achieve these objectives while whiling away their time. Beginning with *Malepa*:

42. Malepa

(Puzzles)

Game of creative skill:

In Sesotho, the word *Malepa* means ‘puzzles’ or *tsietsi* in the sense of being puzzled. *Ho tsieleha* means ‘to be puzzled’. Hence, the method of creating the pictures in *Malepa* are puzzling and evoke astonishment of the creator’s final product.

Malepa was played with a *lesika* (sinew) which was first softened by wetting it and then rolling it between one’s hands or on one’s thighs. This “*papali* (play song)” inculcated ingenuity and creativeness on the part of children to develop their self esteem in being original in creating some kind of figure representing a picture. I could not establish from my much older informants if traditional and original Sesotho creations existed or if this “*papali* (play song)” was an outcome of foreign influence. In the English-speaking world this type of creativity was popularly known as ‘Cats Cradles’ and many children, the world over, have indulged in it sometime in their lives. Those who were amateurs were often ridiculed by their playmates.

Papali:

Two older children between the ages of twelve to fourteen participate but do not compete. They must decide from the onset to agree in bringing a certain figure or resemblance to fruition which could be in

the form of a cross, a rectangular object in the shape of a box or any object depending on the cultural creativity of the child. One child creates; the other assists in taking a subservient role.

A piece of string called a *khoele* (dim. *khoejana*), measuring about one-and-a-half metres, is tied at the end. It is then wound round the player's eight fingers (excluding the thumb which assists the fingers to form the various resemblances mentioned above). The other player merely assists in grasping or lifting the crossed string by pulling it upwards, downwards and/or between the player's forefingers and thumbs or whatever the instruction(s) may be to form the picture of their creativity. I could recall that the easiest representation was the box which was within the creative skills of little children.

43. Maraba-raba

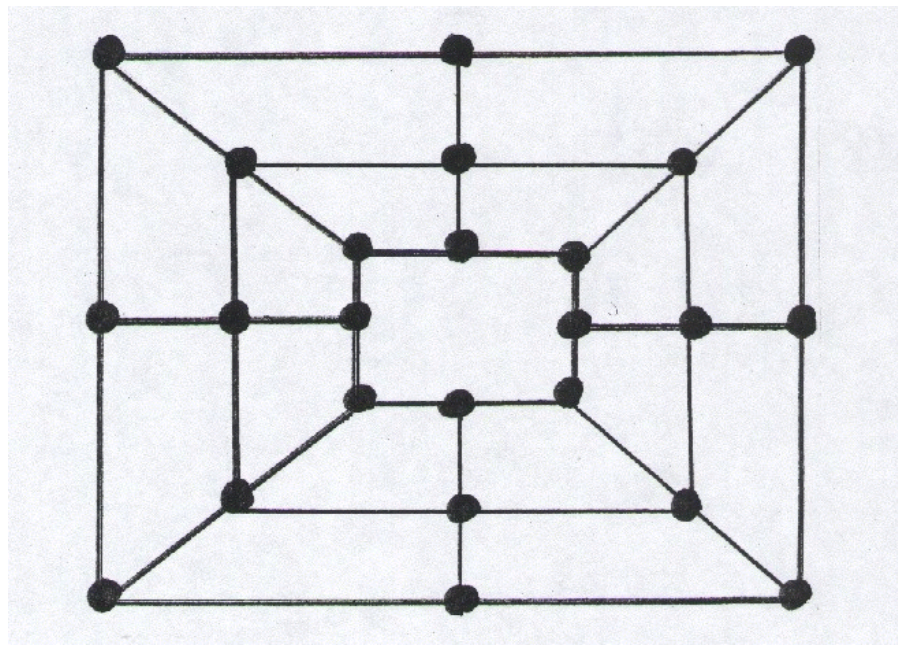
(Entanglements)

Game of strategy:

This game as well as the previous one, has travelled widely and is almost identical with the English game 'Nine Mens Morris'. Amongst the Basotho it is called *Moraba-raba* (sing.) and *Maraba-raba* (plur.). See *labalaba*¹ (sing. IsiZulu).

Maraba-raba derives its name from the word *leraba* which denotes a snare or ambush and *raba-raba* to 'roam in a narrow circle or to fly around'. Its aim

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” displaying strategy. *Maraba-raba* taught a child to be wary of another’s motives and intentions when dealing with people and to sharpen its moves in life.

Herdboys played it while looking after their animals, it never crept into the repertoire and leisure activities of girls to this day. Young school boys and herdboys still play it in Lesotho. In South Africa, the “*papali* (play song)” is a favourite pastime with African men (very seldom the youth) who usually play it during their lunch break.

Fig. 19. Sketch of the game.

Papali:

Maraba-raba only requires two players at a time who may play on a flat stone (*letlapa*) or flat board on which the “*papali* (play song)” is drawn or scratched. The playing pieces which are called *likhomo* (plur. cows), may be nine, twelve, twenty-four in number depending on the number agreed upon. They may be in the form of little pebbles or stones, seeds, beans or any small objects which may represent these. Nowadays, pebbles, tin caps, bottle tops or counters are used. Two players alternate in placing their pieces one at a time in turn on a flat stone on the ground. Thereafter, they alternately move one piece at a time in a straight line, either forwards, backwards, sideways or diagonally to an empty space that is adjacent.

All moves are not optional but compulsory by which the player has to form a line of three pieces in a row of his own. When he achieves this feat, he ‘eats’ (*o ja*) or captures his opponent’s piece from the board/flat stone. When he does not have enough pieces remaining to

form a line of three, he accepts defeat (n. *tlholo*) and the opponent wins!

Summary: Although these two “*lipapali* (play songs)” may be said to show outside influence, they have crept into Basotho children’s game repertory of which the aim is to exercise and sharpen their mental capacity as they become older.

Endnotes:

¹labalaba : meaning ‘to covet or desire’ (Dent and Nyembezi, 1980: 401). Its cl. pref. *Um* would be inserted to give the word *Umlabalaba* which is linguistically and semantically equivalent to Sesotho *Morabaraba*, though there are no connections.

Chapter 14

GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL

As children grow older and gain physical strength in their mid-teens, they begin to play games that afford them some challenge in offering them self-esteem. This is shown in the following four games in this chapter which is subdivided into two sections, namely, (i) games that exhibit strength by pulling, chasing and catching and (ii) those of endurance in testing the player's stamina.

Sekese (1983: 118-119) gives a brief account of the origin of *khati* (lit. rope or ribbon), a long skipping-rope game that was played by Basotho boys in former times. He states that in recent times girls began to steal it from boys and passed it on as their own. This resulted in boys no longer taking an interest in it. Now follows a discussion of the first of the two pairs of games:

44. Mekopu

(Pumpkins)

Game exhibiting strength:

Mekopu (plur. pumpkins) is a “*papali* (play song)” whereby two teams test their strength against each other in a tug-o’-war situation. Pumpkins and maize (*poone*) have always been and are still the most important food relishes of Basotho children. It is not surprising that in some of their traditional songs and “*papali* (play song)”, these relishes were centered around pumpkins in olden times, for example, the genre of songs called *lipina tsa mekopu* (lit. songs about pumpkins).

Pumpkins, like cabbages, come in various shapes, sizes and weights and it would not surprise one to hear Basotho children tease a child whose physique is heavy, round, short and very plump as a *mokopu* (sing. pumpkin). As children are generally unreliable, cruel, unpredictable and manipulative in games, they know that such children endowed with such a physique, are, in most cases, (and according to *their* judgement), an asset in games requiring exertion and strength. This does not connote that they select only players who exhibit such attributes; are interested in numbers and winning. However, with reference to children in North American culture, it is a term of endearment to be called ‘my pumpkin’.

Papali:

Before the “*papali* (play song)” begins, two older children from a group of children decide to test their strength in a tug-o’-war game. The leaders make a pact and decide on two attractive items they are going to offer the children in order to entice them to their side. The children do not know at this stage what offers have been made.

Assuming Leader A offers beef (*nama ea khomo*) and Leader B, chicken (*nama ea khoho*). The children would be lured to the side that offers the gift they find appealing. However, they can only decide once the offers are made known. Thereafter, two leaders come together and hold hands while the children form a long line. The first child comes along and hears the offer of the Leaders at a

time. Beginning with the first child, the offers are declared as follows:

Leader A: **Ha e le nama ea khomo; e le ea khoho, u rata efe?**¹

First child: **Khoho.**

Translation:

Leader A: If it were beef, if it were chicken, which do you prefer?

First child: Chicken.

As Leader A offered beef, the child is told to go behind Leader B. If beef were offered, the child would be told to go behind Leader A with the words: “*Fetela ka mor’aka*” (Go behind me). Then Leader B puts his/her offer. The Leaders alternate with their offers until the last child has made his/her choice.

Finally, the leaders hold each others hands tightly with their groups holding them firmly at the waist. The groups then pull hard in a tug-o’-war fashion to test their strength. With the stronger group automatically winning, the weaker members of the other group inevitably fall down like pumpkins. Hence, the name *Mekopu*.

45. Senthe

(Give way or let me through)

Game of strength:

In the previous “*papali* (play song)”, *Mekopu*, the children’s show of strength was displayed through the formation of a straight line while in *Senthe* (Give way), it is through the formation of a complete circle (‘lesaka la nkope’). Whereas, ‘sakana la nkope’ denotes a ‘small circle of people’ and ‘lesaka’ (n.) alone refers to an enclosure. The word *Senthe* is probably derived from *ho re thee* (‘to give way’). According to Tladi (1972: 27), this “*papali* (play song)” that was usually played by girls was meant ‘to loosen the muscles of their bodies’ (*ho thapolla mesifa ea bona ea ’mele*) and only fast runners were chosen. Nowadays, girls and boys between the ages of eleven to fifteen continue to indulge in *Senthe* separately to test their strength. A description of the “*papali* (play song)” follows :

Papali:

Only fast runners are chosen to take part. Players stand in a circle, tightly holding one another’s hands while moving around. A player in the circle (whom I shall name Thabo) must try to escape from under the arms of the players whose intention is to prevent him escaping. After pacing a few times in the circle in order to gauge where there is a weak opening in the ‘chain’ of hands, Thabo plucks up courage and shouts:

Thabo shouts: **“Senthee!”**

the rest respond: “**U ne u kena le kae?**”²

Translation: Thabo shouts: “Give way!” (or “Let me through!”)

the rest respond: “Where did you enter?”

Seeing the weakest link in the ‘chain’, he forcefully tries to break it by pushing his way through. If successful, he escapes and runs away. If a player from the circle catches him, then he is out. Thabo then joins the circle like the rest and the catcher takes his former place in the center. It does happen that a player can deliberately loosen his/her hand to allow Thabo to escape in order to catch and replace him in the center of the circle.

Variations of this “*papali* (play song)” exist whereby a player, from outside the circle, has to break through the chain of hands to catch the one who is inside. See Adams’s (1979: 6) Sudanese version *Don Don Ba Ji* and the West Indian version called *Cat and Rat* (1979: 7).

46. **Senqaqana**

(The frog)

Game of endurance:

In this chapter, *Senqaqana*³ is the first of two long skipping-rope games (or *khati* meaning ‘a line of things or a long file’) which are generally played by older girls whose ages range between thirteen to fifteen. This is not surprising because of the physical endurance skills that can be developed such as , speed, coordination and the ability to strategise are expected of participants who

should not tire easily. Because of a high level of fitness that this “*papali* (play song)”

requires, it is much more complicated in its intricacies than *Motsokonyana sehoete* (No. 47) which follows thereafter.

Girls chant rhythmically: **Senqaqana ka metsing,**⁴
Pashama; pashama.⁵
Pashama, pashama, pashama.

Translation:

Girls chant rhythmically: Frog in the water,
 Lie on your stomach; lie on your stomach.
 Lie on your stomach, lie on your stomach, lie on your stomach.



Plate 5. Girl simulating frog jump sideways in rope game.

Papali:

Three girls decide to take part in *khati*. The two turners, one on either

side, turn the rope while the girl in the centre jumps rhythmically to the verse above. On each of the last three words, “Pashama,” the skipper jumps once on her side in imitation of a frog while keeping her balance and sense of rhythm to the turners’ swing of the rope. Thereafter, she exits and another jumper (who is awaiting her turn) comes in at an opportune time while the onlookers recite the chant again.

Care is taken that the jumpers do not touch the rope as this would disturb the turners’ swings. If this happens, she is disqualified and another takes her place. It does happen that the jumper might accidentally touch the rope slightly without disturbing the rhythmic swing of the turners’. The “*papali* (play song)” comes to an end when all the girls have had a chance to skip or the players decide when to stop.

47. Motsokonyana sehoete

(The little shaker of the carrot)



Game of endurance:

Mine is a free translation of the title which is known by all as *Motsokonyana sehoete*. The name *Mo-tsoko-nyana* is derived from *tsokotsa* (to agitate or shake). *Ho re tsoko-tsoko!* (ideoph.) denotes ‘to shake’ and the (suff.) *-nyana* meaning ‘small’ or to suggest a diminutive meaning. The *Mo-* (cl. 1, sing.) is personalised to denote the doer, ‘the little shaker’ and *sehoete* (n.), a carrot. Boys’ and girls’ rope games called *khati* had one aspect in common in that the gesture of the skipper in the middle was symbolic of the domestic role performed in daily life of girls or mothers pulling out (*ho qotsula*) carrots from the ground to be cooked. Hence, the skipper in the game gestures is simulating the pulling out and shaking of the carrots as she touches the ground while jumping.

Motsokonyana sehoete is a long rope-jumping game recited to the regular rhythmic chant of the swing of the turners’ rope. Despite its Western influence, it is chosen because it is played by older girls between the ages of 12 to 15 who have the physical endurance of jumping at great speed. Like *Senqaqana*, *Motsokonyana sehoete* requires a great deal of stamina, skill and dexterity on the part of the jumper(s). Hence, its suitability and attraction for this age group.

There are two versions on the track: a modern version sung by the children of Leseli Primary School, Maseru and recorded in 2001 (track 11) and the semitraditional one recorded in 1999 and sung by ’Mè Francina from Butha Buthe. Both versions curiously end with a mixture of Sesotho and English.

Girls chant rhythmically: **Motsokonyana**⁶ **sehoete**,⁷
E ile ea re ke o qotsula,⁸
Lithotanyana⁹ **tsa luma**;
Tsa luma ha bo-moroetsane.¹⁰
Hè¹¹ **one; hè two; hè three!**

Translation:

Girls chant rhythmically: *Motsokonyana* the carrot,
 It happened when I was up-rooting you,
 The little flat-topped hillocks thundered;
 They thundered at the young girl's place.
 Then it's one; then it's two; then it's three!

Papali:

Three girls usually take part in *khati*. Each girl (turner) on either side of the rope, turns it while the third, the skipper, jumps in the middle taking care that she does not entangle herself as the rope passes over her head and under her feet. The repetition of the last line in both versions, gestures to each skipper to exit at the specified count to allow the next girl to enter immediately at the next and so on depending on the number of players taking part. A skilled skipper is able to conform to the turners' instructions and can show her skipping skills in various ways by employing some of the following timings and variations:

- Firstly, by skipping and chanting while throwing a stone down and skilfully picking it up while taking care that she does not touch the rope.

This gesture is a sign that there are carrots growing in the ground, “so, all of you come and let us pull them out.”

- Secondly, depending on the length of the rope, she can allow more players than two to jump in the middle with her.
- Thirdly, while skipping, she and her co-jumper may swop positions.
- Fourthly, she can simultaneously skip with another or more skippers and enter from all angles, viz. the left, the middle and the right corner.
- Fifthly, she can jump by alternating her legs; by entering and exiting without touching the rope as it passes over her head and under feet.
- Sixthly, she is a seasoned skipper if, against all odds, she can adjust to the pace of the turners swings because they may obstruct her in slowing the pace so that she loses the rhythm. If so, she is disqualified!
- Finally, turners can swing the rope twice in succession and it is the jumper’s show of skill to dive into the center and out again *without* touching the rope. If the rope is touched, she is disqualified and is not regarded as a good skipper.

The repetition of the last line in both versions, gestures to each skipper to exit at the specified count to allow the next girl to enter immediately at the next and so depending on the number of players taking part. Children have culled this

modern version on track 11 from *Motsokonyana sehoete* from the original which appears above.



track11

crotchet = 112

A Hela, sehoete!	:	Hail, carrot!
Motsokonyana sehoete.	:	Little shaker of the carrot.
E la re ba motsula,¹²	:	It happened when they uprooted her/him,
lithotanyana tsa luma.	:	the little flat-topped hillocks thundered.
Tsa luma ha bo-Nchakha.¹³	:	They thundered at Nchakha's place.
Nchakha koa rona.	:	Nchakha belongs to (or is one of) us.
Elisabeta Mofoka	:	Elisabeta Mofoka
O sa ile banneng.¹⁴	:	Has gone to the menfolk.
Banneng le basaling.	:	To the menfolk and womenfolk.
Hipi¹⁵ he 1; hipi he 2; hipi he 3.	:	Hipi, then 1; hipi, then 2; hipi, then 3.

Summary: The common factor is the players' motor activities that determine the outcome of these "*lipapali* (play songs)." The educational aspect of the first pair, namely, Nos. 44 and 45, has shown group solidarity in teaching children the universal adage of 'united we stand lest we fall' while the last pair teaches the child self-esteem and individuality in striving for one's goals. Though both pairs of "*lipapali* (play songs)" exhibit different kinds of skills, namely, strength and endurance, they show a clear demarcation in their suitability for much older children who have now reached the critical stages of thinking, discerning, observation and calculation in their development. They also show that if a player does not obey the rules, he or she is eliminated.

Endnotes:

- ¹ efe? : (adj. plur.) meaning ‘which one?’
- ² le kae? : sometimes *hokae?* both adverbs denoting ‘where?’
- ³ Senqaqana : a species of toad or frog.
- ⁴ ka metsing : (loc.) in the water.
- ⁵ Pashama : probably a child’s way of pronouncing *paqama*, to ‘lie on one’s stomach or side.’ In the context of the “*papali* (play song)”, it is performed ‘on one’s side’.
- ⁶ Motsokonyana : the (dim.) suff. *-nyana* is added to the noun and derived from *tsokotsa* (v.) meaning ‘to shake, stir or to agitate’.
- ⁷ sehoete : a carrot or an edible root or bulb growing in the fields.
- ⁸ qotsula : to root out. *Qotsula* is derived from the ideoph. *ho re qotsu!*, meaning ‘to come out with the roots’. Whereas, *qothola* means ‘to draw out leaving the roots in’.
- ⁹ Lithotanyana : (dim.) little flat-topped hillocks and derived from *thota* (n.) a high, flat ground.
- ¹⁰ ha bo-moroetsane : the young girl and her people.
- ¹¹ He one; etc. : *He* (adv.) means ‘then’. The correct Sesotho numerals should be: *Hang*, *habeli*, *hararo!* (lit. ‘once, twice, thrice’). The *ha* are affixed to numerals and numeral adjective stems to form temporal adverbs indicating the number of times an action is carried out, for example, the jumpers exiting .
- ¹² motsula : probably *qotsula* (uproot).
- ¹³ bo-Nchakha : Nchakha and company. Elisabeta Mofoka, an unknown person or probably their friend. *Nchakha* denotes a fool.
- ¹⁴ banneng/basaling : (loc.) to the men/ to the women. *Banna* (men); *basali* (women).
- ¹⁵ Hipi : nonsense syllable associated with players’ exits. See Endnote 11.

Chapter 15

MISCELLANEOUS GAMES

The following three “*lipapali* (play songs)”, namely, *Mosese oa Pinki*” (No. 48), where the young dancers caper while choosing the one they love; *Liboko* (No. 49), about touch and tickling in *Se-ea-le-methati* (No. 50), do not fall into any specific or remarkable didactic categories as the rest of the “*lipapali* (play songs)” in this study. They could be classed as ‘just games of amusement’ that are played for the sheer enjoyment of capering, touch and tickling, respectively. These are “*lipapali* (play songs)” which most children of the world indulge in with some degree of variations that draw from the different cultures of the players.

Some non-Western game gestures may not fit the idea or classification of games with regard to the West. For an example, Nattiez (1999: 403) describes the unusual throat-game gestures performed by two female Canadian Inuit performers and the Siberian throat-singing style which ‘are culturally games.’ This could be said of the gestures in the last “*papali* (play song)” of this chapter, namely, the indigenous Sesotho tickling “*papali* (play song)” called *Se-ea-le methati* (No. 50). Like the throat games mentioned above, *Se-ea-le methati* is ‘culturally a game’ in the eyes of Basotho children which forms part of their repertoire. See Plate 6.

48. Mosese oa Pinki

(Pinki's little dress)

♩ = 80

Game of love/capering:

Solo:

Duet:

Fig. 20. Musical transcription of game song.



track13

Solo voice: 'Me, nthekele, mosese¹ oa Pinki²
E tle re ha ke fihla, nkhono³ a mpone.

Repeat.

(Sometimes: 'madoda⁴ a mpone.')

Chorus/capering: Tilelelele; Tilelelelele; Tilelelelele,
Nkhono a mpone.

Repeat.

Translation:

Solo voice: Mother, buy me Pinki's dress
So that when I arrive, grandmother may see me. Repeat.
(Sometimes: 'suitsors may see me.')

Chorus/capering: Tilelelele;⁵ Tilelelelele; Tilelelelele,
Grandmother may see me.

Repeat.

Mosese oa Pinki, in the form of a game-song or “*papali* (play song),” was recorded in 1997 at Quthing and singers are Nini Leanya and Mamojela Mohale. It is a fairly modern Basotho children’s “*papali* (play song)” modelled on the traditional Sesotho dance for girls called the *moqoqopelo* which, according to Mokali (nd: 6-7), ‘speaks of love and romance.’ It is generally performed by older girls between the ages of thirteen to fifteen who wish to seize the opportunity of the *moqoqopelo* to express their feelings about the loved one under the guise of a “*papali* (play song).” Like the *moqoqopelo*, *Mosese oa Pinki* shows early signs of children’s development and interest in calf love.

The adj. ‘Pinki’ (the Sesotho form of the English colour pink) and *madoda* (lit. Zulu men) bear traces of foreign influence. The dim. *mosese* connotes a little dress and the title *Mosese oa Pinki* (Pinki’s little dress) shows possession of the bearer in *oa* (poss. n.). Hence, the title of the song for the simple reason that the singers pronounce it as such. On the other hand, *Mosese o pinki* (The little pink dress) would denote the colour description of the dress. The last vowel ‘i’ in ‘Pinki’ should be written as ‘Pinki’ (sometimes ‘Pinkie’) and not ‘Pinky. My respondents could not establish which was the correct form. Some older respondents sang both versions because the grammatical aspect did not enter their minds when they were very young. As the colour pink is foreign to traditional Sesotho colours, it is open to question if the original title was *Mosese o pinki*. Furthermore, Basotho do not regard ‘Pinki’ (or ‘Pinkie’) as a traditional Sesotho girl’s name. Due to foreign influence, some Basotho girls are nicknamed as such.

Papali:

In this “*papali* (play song)”, it is obvious that the young girl would like to show grandmother her dress before meeting her suitors. The soloist sings her part while in the centre of the ring. Just before the chorus begins, she beckons another girl from the circle to join her in the center. They both hug each other and caper when the chorus begins *Tilelelelele*, etc. The soloist then leaves the partner and returns to join the rest in the ring to allow the new soloist to choose a partner from the ring. When this is done, they both hug each other and dance at the point where the chorus begins and the same sequence is followed until everyone has had a chance to choose and caper. The beauty of this “*papali* (play song)” is that one never knows who will be beckoned or chosen from the circle! As Wells (1994: 119) states:

“ . . . circle dances are for the entertainment and amusement of the participants themselves. Through the shape of the perimeter traced by the dancers, an alternative world is created . . . ”

Although *Mosese oa Pinki* is regarded by Basotho children as a “*papali* (play song),” it contains some dance elements which Western music educators would class as a game song. A similar occurrence is noted in the title of the Puerto Rican children’s game *Baile de los Pajaritos* (Dance of the little birds), a game song with some dance elements and choreographed and described by Ojeda-O’Neill (1995: 139). This also illustrates that children’s game titles

may be misleading at times and are not what they seem to be. An analysis of their structure is necessary to ascertain if they are solely dances or game songs.

49. Liboko

(Worms)

Game of touch:

Liboko, a “*papali* (play song)” of touch, is an old traditional game which was originally played by little girls and boys; only girls now play it. The gesture of touching one’s playmate before parting was a simple Basotho children’s way of saying *sala hantle* (farewell) after having enjoyed each other’s (or one another’s) company for the entire day. The importance of ‘touch’ and ‘worms’ is not surprising in this “*papali* (play song)” due to the Sesotho superstitions that if touched by one whom you do not know, some calamity will befall one. Hence, the urge of the touched one to symbolically cleanse oneself of the touch (those are the worms). For convenience, the child who touches will be designated as Child A and the respondent being touched as Child B:

Papali:

Child B:

Hela!

Ke tseo.

Liboko!

Child A:

E? ⁶

Ling? ⁷

Ke tsa hao!

Translation: Child B:

Hallo, there!

There they are.

Child A:

Yes?

What?

The worms!

They are yours!

The word *tseo* (a dem. pron.) shows that the worms are in Child B's hands. In order not to be touched by B (who was going to transfer the worms to A), A's quick presence of mind compels her to ask first what she is to be handed and says: "Ling?" (What?/What are they?). Hearing the reply "Ke tsa hao" (They are yours) she runs home as fast as she could from B to avoid being touched (infected) and contaminated with worms. By this gesture, A remains with the worms! (Compare the Zulu children's version of this "*papali* (play song)" of touch called AmaHu in Krige (1985: 77).

Children being children will come out with their own strategies which would form part of the "*papali* (play song)." We noted that Child A protected herself by asking first what she was being given. When a child cannot run very fast, a strategy is simply accommodated by the child sitting down to avoid being contaminated with worms rather than run the risk of running away lest she be caught! Like most children and in some Basotho children's play songs, children have a way of extending a "*papali* (play song)" and punishing a defaulter. So they chant the following verse with vigour to taunt poor 'Malibokoana, the infected child with worms:

Children chanting: 'Malibokoana,⁸

Ha li moje!

Li motetetse!¹⁰

Mohats'a masumo.¹¹

Qhanyatsa! Qhanyatsa!⁹

Qhanyatsa! Qhanyatsa!

Qhanyatsa! Qhanyatsa!

Qhanyatsa! Qhanyatsa!

Translation: Mother-of-little-worms, Crush them! Crush them!
 Allow them to eat her! Crush them! Crush them!
 They should bruise her! Crush them! Crush them!
 The spouse of the cobra. Crush them! Crush them!

The cruelty in the children's statement cannot be ignored in the drama that is to unfold: "Ha li moje!" (Allow them to eat her!) and the beautiful and repetitive refrain *Qhanyatsa! Qhanyatsa!* ("Crush them! Crush them!") are admirably displayed in this poetic stanza. The stamping gesture of the children's feet at this refrain, consolidates their utter contempt and disgust for 'Malibokoana, a nickname given to her by them because she has been touched (that is, symbolically infected with worms) thus, making her an outcast. The children's further disgust in her is shown in another appellation in the phrase "Mohats'a masumo" (the 'Wife of the Cobra'). See Endnote 11 below.

It is interesting to note Flolu's (1999: 36) observation that in children's teasing songs (as *Liboko* contains some element of teasing), 'the purpose is not to offend, but rather to create fun. In fact, those who are offended at being teased, may be ostracised from other "*lipapali* (play songs)"; for to children this is one way of testing their people's sociability and tolerance.' One would also add that teasing becomes a child's experience of learning that cruel children do exist in the world.

50. Se-ea-le-methati

(The one who climbs the steps)

Game of tickling:

Although *Se-ea-le-methati*,¹² a traditional “*papali* (play song)”, has no specific didactic lesson, it is one of the games that is recognised by the Basotho as belonging to the repertoire of Basotho children’s games (*lipapali tsa bana ba Basotho*).

According to Casalis (1981: 115), *mothati* is a ‘rise of a stair or ladder.’ In other words it is a step. Despite the dialogue structure of this “*papali* (play song),” I did not classify it in Chapter 5 under the subtitle “Dialogue Games as ‘music’” because it is simply a conversation in prose lacking any regular rhythmic pattern which would be regarded as ‘music’. *Se-ea-le-methati* is generally played by very young children whose ages range between five and eight. It is played at any season; any time of the day when their chores are done or by the evening fireside to while away the time before they retire to sleep.

The non-Sesotho reader should note that this “*papali* (play song)” should not be regarded as a child’s prankish game of tickling but its title, which is known by young and old, forms one of the old traditional Sesotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” in that it possesses an organised structure and verse.

Papali:

The holding of a player's arm on the shoulder blade is often a gesture that *tsiki-tsiki*¹³ (as *Se-ea-le-methati* is sometimes called) is going to be played. Two children (or pairs of children) may engage in this “*papali* (play song)” which is very often played in the evening when chores are done. Child A will be designated as the active participant and Child B, the passive one. As with most Basotho children's “*lipapali* (play songs),” words or chants very often accompany a gesture. Below is the conversation filled with metaphors. With Child B's hand relaxed, Child A lifts it and begins the first stage of the “*papali* (play song)” by alternately using her right index and middle finger to ‘climb up the steps or ladder’ of B's arm. This gesture represents, in a symbolic way, one climbing up the rung or step of a ladder.

Child A begins to probe Child B about the chief's little abyss and says:

Child A: Na libana¹⁴ see se nooa¹⁵ morena a le sieo?

Child B: Che!¹⁶ ha se nooa-nooe.

Child A: Se na'ng?¹⁷

Child B: Ha se na letho.

Child A: Ha u s'o¹⁸ bone likonyana¹⁹ tsa ka kamoo?

Child B: Che! Ha ke e-s'o²⁰ li bone.

Translation:

Child A: Is this abyss drunk from when the chief's away?

Child B: No, it is not drunk from.

Child A:

it contain?

Child B: **I**t

nothing.

Child A:

not seen my

in there?

Child B:

not seen them.



What does

contains

Have you

little lambs

No! I have

Plate 6. Tickling.

Child A's two fingers, in steplike gesture, then gradually and quickly travel up Child B's arm until they finally reach the latter's armpit. There she is tickled at the words '*tsiki . . .*' a form of sound painting depicting the child's laughter:

Child A: **Se-ea-le-methati,**

Se-ea-le-methati,
Se-ea-le-methati!!
Ha se tsona-tsona tsee ka lehaheng? ²¹
Kamoo, u ²² **li patileng?** ²³
Tsiki, tsiki, tsiki, tsiki!

Translation:

Child A: The one that climbs up the steps,
 The one that climbs up the steps,
 The one that climbs up the steps!
 Are they not really, really, really, these in the cave?
 In there, why have you hidden them?
tsiki, tsiki, tsiki, tsiki!

The reader will have observed that Child B's replies are always in the negative and this is indicated by the word and phrases "Chè!" ("No!"); "Ha se na" ("It does not . . ."); "Ha u s'o" ("You have not . . .") and "Ha ke e-s'o" ("I have not . . ."), respectively. (See Translation and Endnotes.) These negative replies are skilfully employed to provoke and lead up to the tickling when the lambs are discovered, thus, ending the dialogue. Were the replies in the affirmative, the game would have ended at the first positive reply "E!" ("Yes!").

Summary: *Mosese oa Pinki*, a circle game, promotes solidarity, love, friendship very often in circle games because participants are in view of one another. Such recreational "*lipapali* (play songs)" often lay the foundation for

understanding members of the opposite sex as far as calf love is concerned. Such “*lipapali* (play songs)” also abound in various forms in many cultures of the world. *Liboko* is a learning experience for a child to know that one should do to others what one would like others do to you lest calamities befall you. To my knowledge, worms do not have any religious or magical connotations, except that they are associated with all that becomes decayed. Furthermore, the magical gesture and cultural belief of being touched by an outsider whom one does not know, further exacerbate the child as an outcast. Though children know this is just a “*papali* (play song),” *Liboko* might have had some historical and folkloric significance in the past because one has to examine some Sesotho folktales where the protagonist is sometimes protected by magical agents. *Se-ea-le-methati* is not just a Basotho child’s tickling “*papali* (play song),” it is a structured one accompanied with text. As with most children of the world, tickling is merely engaged for fun, unstructured and played at any time, place or season. It is a prankish gesture.

Endnotes:

- ¹ mosese : a children’s way of saying *mose* (n.); now refers to the Western female dress. According to Sechefo (nd: 9), a traditional *mose* was formerly “a petticoat made from the skin of an ox. It is very long behind and short in front.”
- ² pinki : the Sesotho pronunciation for the colour pink. Also a girl’s name.
- ³ Nkhono : grandmother or an old woman being a term of respect.
- ⁴ *madoda* : IsiZulu term for ‘men’. Young men would be *izinsizwa*; *bahlankana* in Sesotho.

- ⁵ Tilelelelele : (or *tilelelele*) a form of ululation which has a very specific celebratory significance in Sesotho.
- ⁶ “E?” : denoting interj. expressive of assent “Yes?”.
- ⁷ “Ling?” : meaning ‘What are they?’ (plur.) of *eng?* (What?)
- ⁸ ’Malibokoana : (lit.) mother of little worms.
- ⁹ qhanyatsa : to crush/to tie very fast.
- ¹⁰ motetetse : to beat or bruise.
- ¹¹ Mohats’a masumo : short for *Mohatsa oa masumo* (in sing. form and meaning the ‘wife of the cobra’); *masumo* also denotes one of the divining bones. It is not surprising that ’Malibkoana’s uncomplimentary appellation is associated with the deadly cobra.
- ¹² Se-ea-le-methati : the rise of steps, ladder, ledge or terrace. *Se-ea-le-methati* is also a Sesotho idiom. See Segoete (2001: 32).
- ¹³ *tsiki-tsiki!* : the intensified form of *ho re tsiki!* an ideoph. meaning ‘to tickle’; *tsikinyana* meaning ‘to tickle one another’. *tsiki-tsiki!* indicates the laughter of the child being tickled.
- ¹⁴ libana : (dim. suff.) -ana of *liba* (n.) a deep place in a stream or abyss (*boliba*).
- ¹⁵ nooa : from of *ho noa* (to drink).
- ¹⁶ Che! : (interj.) meaning ‘No!’
- ¹⁷ Se na’ng? : (lit.) *Se na eng?* denoting ‘it has what?’ or ‘what does it have or contain?’
- ¹⁸ Ha *u s’o* bone : (aux. v.) *u s’o* (or *u-so ho*) meaning ‘you have not’. *Ha* precedes clause *u s’o* and the verb *bona* (to see) has the ending *e* in *bone* (seen). See Endnote 20.
- ¹⁹ likonyana : (dim.) little lambs; (sing.) *konyana*, lamb.
- ²⁰ ha ke e-s’o li bone: (aux. v.) *e-s’o* (or *e-so ho*) meaning ‘I have not seen them’. See Endnote 18.
- ²¹ lehaheng? : (loc.) at the building or cavity.

- ²² u : you (second person sing.)
- ²³ patileng? : from (v.) *pata* (hide or conceal).

Chapter 16

Conclusion

The “*lipapali* (play songs)” or Basotho children’s folk games as expressive behaviour, provided a window to Sesotho children’s learning experiences, culture and thought. It also showed the reader the various mechanisms that the Basotho people used in educating their children despite their oral tradition.

The introductory chapter, Part A, showed that there was a need for preserving Basotho children’s “*lipapali* (play songs)” (“*lipapali tsa bana*”) for posterity as they were being superceded (over the air) by Western children’s melodies, rhythms and games that were gradually having an influence on Basotho children. Though early Basotho authors made mention of children’s games and songs in their works, the literature review showed that they made little attempt in analysing them. One had no inkling of how the songs sounded for their works were generally approached from the angle of literature. A systematic analysis was deemed necessary. However, attempts were made by some of the

early white missionaries in the then Basutoland to collect and notate some Basotho songs but with the exclusion of children's songs and games. This chapter also provided the reader with the cultural background to the study of Basotho children's games, gestures and learning. These were necessary for the understanding of the role these games played in the social and educational development of the child which had a formative influence on child development.

The Sesotho cultural concept of "*lipapali* (play songs)" or Basotho children's folk games and the complex character of the ideas of 'play' and 'games' from a Western and Sesotho angle were discussed. A closer examination of the views of Piaget (1951) laid the foundation for further scholarly investigation into the various kinds of children's play which revealed that 'play' is open-ended and did not involve competition whereas 'game' was restrictive. The purposes of "*lipapali* (play songs)" displayed the principles of the three processes of learning, namely, the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains which had a formative influence on child development in later childhood.

Part B: 'Music' is not a universal language, since even its notion is not the same for all cultures. This section examined the Western idea of music and in children's verse rhymes and games which were compared to the idea of 'music' (chanted verses) in Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)". Notions of what music were from some scholars from both cultures were highlighted to lay the foundation for an understanding of what is considered 'music' in the

eyes of each children's culture in games. The reader was now in a position to understand the question that this research had tried to answer, that is, Part B addressed the problematic definition of 'music' in the "*lipapali* (play songs)", highlighting the fact that 'music' in this thesis written in English, was not particularly relevant to children in Sesotho culture. To substantiate this proposition, the Western idea of music was not viewed the same with the Mosotho's child's idea of music since similar words, games and activities were found in (and the terminology also did not distinguish them) ones Westerners called songs and ones they called nonmusical recitation. What the West called music in children's games, did not pertain in Sesotho. Due to European missionary influence and Western colonisation, some of the "*lipapali* (play songs)" have retained some elements from the West. But the approach to some "*lipapali* (play songs)", the manner in which they were played; the antiphonal and responsorial chanting with their unusual rhythms and gestures, were unmistakably found in Sesotho and in their folk games.

Though the examples are not exhaustive in Part C, Basotho children's learning and education prepared the role they will play in adult life and "*lipapali* (play songs)" and songs were vehicles for achieving this goal. The reader will have noticed that in Sesotho, as in other African cultures, it was not easy to place Basotho children's ages and "*lipapali* (play songs)" in watertight compartments. To assist the reader, these were classified according to their general application or style and their progressive and increasing complexity, though Basotho children's informal learning did not follow the latter with regard to the socialisation process. Like Bavenda children, they 'generally

learn the simplest songs first, and by degrees graduate to those that are more complex' (Blacking, 1967: 4).

As Basotho children (and most children of the world) invariably interacted with adults, so are their songs and games related to adult music. From this arose songs created by adults *for* children and those created *by* children invariably in a spontaneous manner with the restricted Sesotho classification of *lipapali tsa bana* (lit. games of, for or about children). One should not also overlook that change in Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" was attributed to how they heard and interpreted games and songs. Scholars like Kartomi (1991: 63) in her study of aboriginal children in South Australia, later refuted this argument and believed that 'adult music is worlds' apart from the children's play songs and the improvisations from which they may have developed'. However, there has been no consensus on this theory.

Part C supplied the reader with a significant part of the repertory of Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)" which were classified, on the whole, according to the way the Basotho categorised them. My ethnomusicological methods of research included the collection, recording and analysis of the "*lipapali* (play songs)". The methods and principles used by Blacking (1967) and Merriam (1964) were incorporated to describe the "*lipapali* (play songs)". By recording and analysing the texts, they gave the reader a deeper insight into the patterns of Sesotho culture, behaviour and history. The children's texts also gave the reader a kaleidoscopic view of their use of repetition, interjectives, ideophones, metonymy, dialogues, metaphors, euphemisms, figures of speech,

and various themes ranging from birth to death. A wide range of organised games displaying mathematical characteristics, eye, hand and stone coordination, mental and physical skills, to name a few, also reflected the beliefs, folklore, customs, rhymes and songs of Basotho children's traditional education.

What has been demonstrated in general is that 'organised sounds' not conceived as 'music' is important in Sesotho children's education in the studied African traditional culture. Basotho children's notion of chanted verse recited to a given and a constant rhythmic figure was conceived as 'music' according to

Blacking's view (1967: 16, 17) and that "songs" include all tunes that 'are sung' or 'played on instruments', as well as patterns of words that are recited to a given regular metre." These chanted verses and music were not just mere leisure activities; they promoted some kind of learning for the child. They were also aids to improving memory, concentration, physical coordination, speech development, sequential thought processes and problem solving in the training and development of the child. It was found that they created a sense of solidarity and friendship among the participants.

In South Africa, music educators are engaged in research and exploring the idea of multiculturalism in music. Lesotho is still lagging behind despite an abundance of children's "*lipapali* (play songs). As Nichols and Honig (1997: 215) state: 'Language provides a window to really hear the voices of other cultures . . . Through music, children get a chance to see beyond their own habits and own community and appreciate how others live their lives.' Roos

(1991: 142), commenting on a multicultural music curricula, stated: “. . . it is hardly possible to design a new multicultural curriculum for music education and to prepare new, integrated teaching materials, if the background knowledge of the teacher and the spirit in which the instruction material is presented to the class, are lacking in quality, showing an inability to integrate understanding and knowledge.” For this reason, it was vital that educationists and music educators in Lesotho and South Africa, when designing their curricula, they looked into children’s folk music of indigenous cultures and their games as well. This is also echoed by Mngoma’s view (1987: 199-203) that a revaluation of world music as broadening knowledge of musics of other cultures of the world be introduced in the music curriculum.

This study will make a valuable contribution to language and music in the role gestures play in order to give meaning to the movements and rhythms in the

rendition of their verse rhymes because Basotho children's melodies and chants are not just haphazardly structured; they are assisted by a well-defined rhythm (sometimes a lack of it). The study will also make a valuable contribution to arts and culture; music educators and educators; folklore; ethnology; children's sports through educational programmes; child psychology, anthropology and music therapy. Linguists can assist in bringing out hidden meanings and instilling in us the beauty and imagination of children's games, game songs and verse rhymes in examining children's use of metaphors, ideophone, metonymy, dialogues, etc.

It is suggested that research be undertaken with regard to:

- the criteria and reasons for certain Sesotho children's folk narratives are chanted (rapped) while the folktales (*litsomo*) are not. Why the difference in treatment and what procedures (if any) are taken by them;
- the notion of 'music' in Basotho children's games in order to make a comparison with those of other indigenous games of African cultures; the use of children's indigenous games in assisting weaker learners to focus adequately in the early stages of learning music (or nonmusical subjects) in preference to employing most conventional teaching tools. (See bullets in Chapter 2.);
- traditional African and Sesotho methods of 'arithmetic' and number games in children's games since these embody some mathematical content that could assist children to think laterally, strategically and in an abstract mathematical manner;
- assisting in enhancing and developing cognitive, social and interpersonal

skills with the object of improving intolerance of other cultures.

Appendix 1

SESOTHO SPEECH-TONES AS USED IN MELODY, RHYTHM AND CHANT.

Most African languages, like Sesotho, are tone languages, that is, it makes a certain use of relative pitch as an element of speech. The reader will note from some of the authors' quotations that the question of tone semantics is not a clear-cut one. As Finnegan (1970: 71) states: "Some of the detailed analyses of the significance of tone in literature are controversial, and little enough work has as yet been done on this formal aspect." A brief discussion now follows with regard to Basotho children's "*lipapali* (play songs)."

Symbols used in tone:

Not all African languages have the same number of tones or tone contours. IsiXhosa, four; XiTsonga, three; Chichewa, Akan, Ibo and Sesotho each have two tones though some informants include a third, the medium (˘) tone in Sesotho. As Guma (1980: 26) states: "There are only two tonal values or *tonemes* in Southern Sotho and they contrast with each other. They are a high (H) and a low (L) toneme" and these will be marked HL for a high/low and LH for low/high tonemes, respectively. I shall employ two tone symbols, namely, the acute accent (´) used to mark a high (H) toneme and the grave accent (`) to mark a low (L) one which will be placed above the vowels or syllabic consonants. These denote a relative rise and fall of pitch, so that men, women and children can easily speak with them.

For the purpose of this exercise, tone symbols will be shown in red expressing the above symbols; black for diacritics; leader dots for rhythm and word divisions by the use of the dash. The non-Sesotho reader should note from the onset that in Sesotho,

a stress usually falls or rests on the syllable preceding the last, for example, **pina** (song) instead of *pina* and *papali* (a game) and not **papali**. **-ng** at the end of a word is a syllable and the same rules applies, for example, *baneng* (loc.) meaning from, to or where the children and *lumelang* (plur. greetings). [Stressed syllables will appear in bold.]

How tone works and affects meaning:

That tone is phonemic; not only does it assist in differentiating the meaning of words that are spelt the same, it also assists in showing how to pronounce them differently. For example, the following homophonous pair of Sesotho words, namely, *roka* and *roka* and *bona* and *bona* are meaningless to a native speaker of Sesotho though each pair contains the same number of vowels and consonants. Each pair is assisted by the use of diacritics in written documents to help in distinguishing their pronunciation and kinds of meanings by varying the pitch of the voice and by their tonemes. On paper the pairs of words are assisted by diacritics in the pronunciation of *rōka* (to sew) and *ròka* (to praise) and *bōna* (to see) and *bòna* (they).

The semantic tones assisted by the acute accents on the vowels ‘o’ of *rōka* (to sew) and *ròka* (to praise) and the grave accents on the ‘a’ are both pronounced with a HL speech tone. The ‘o’ and ‘a’ in *bōna* (to see) are also pronounced with a HL speech tone and *bòna* (they) with a LH one. The pitch of the speaker’s voice is either raised or lowered.

Sometimes a reader may see these words without diacritics being inserted but the context in which these words are used, would be understood by a Sesotho reader. With the assistance of these two accents, the listener is only able to distinguish the meaning of the words by the speaker varying his or her tone. Therefore, tone is

crucial. The rise and fall of the above pairs of words and their pitches or speech tones, would look like this on a musical score:

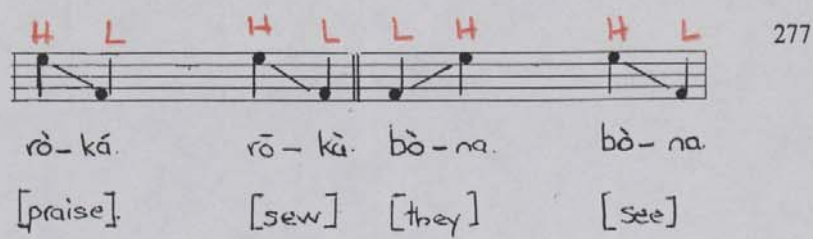


Fig. 21. Graphic illustration of speech tones on music score.

Grammatical aspect of speech tones:

Malan (1982: 401) noted that "Correct tone is essential to understanding which can be usually gathered from the context." With regard to tones performing grammatical functions in positive and negative statements to a listener, Finnegan (1970: 69) states that they are 'significant for grammatical form and for lexical meaning.' The tense of a verb, case of a noun, even the difference between affirmative and negative can sometimes depend on tonal differentiation. See following statements (i), (ii) and (iii):
Positives: (i) *Ke morui.* (I am a rich person.) and (ii) *Ke morui.* (It is a rich person.)
 The first *Ke* is a 1st. pers. sing. pron. and is interpreted as having a low tone and the second *Ke* as having a high tone. To a listener, the speaker conveys a positive statement in (i) and (ii) and a negative statement in (iii) by the difference in the speaker's tone.

Negatives: (iii) *Ha ke morui.* (I am not a rich person.) *Ha se morui.* (It is not a rich person.) The tone markings on *morui* are self-explanatory.

Relationship between Sesotho speech-tones and music:

What some scholars have said with regard to this intricate subject of speech-tones and music is as follows: As late as the nineteen twenties, Hornbostel (1928: 59) noted that 'chanted texts are always more difficult to understand than spoken ones . . . this difficulty is still greater in languages which have pitches as an essential element. Tracey (1959): 10, 11) observed that ' . . . when setting African words to music that the tone melody of the whole sentence shall be correct if a song is to convey the true meaning . . . white arrangers of Sotho and other Bantu translations . . . have

conveniently ignored the tone and stress patterns of the vernacular in order to maintain the flow of the well known [Western] melody . . . ’ Lomax (1968: 595) also corroborates this by stating: ‘African music is also closely intimately linked with language . . . Tone languages permit the use of music for communication.’ About spoken verse and song, Blacking (1967: 155) states that ‘they are united in the same category by virtue of their metrical difference from ordinary speech. Hansen (1981: 224) states that ‘musical preferences are equally important and even paramount in some songs, and override speech-tone patterns’. Dargie (1988: 68, 69) contends that ‘in traditional Xhosa music there is a strong link between speech tone and melody’ but admits that Xhosa speech tone is a ‘complex study’ because at times the melody contradicts speech tone meaning. Nettl (1990: 141-142) states that ‘Not too much is known about this intricate relationship between music and speech, but it is obvious that no simple rule describes it . . .’ With this background, an attempt will be made to examine four selected Basotho children’s play songs with a view to discovering if the melody or chants (where applicable) contradict the tone semantics and if so when, where and why.

The first is adapted for a little child’s counting song; the second, a recitation with regular beats; the third, a strict metrical chant with some syncopation and the fourth, a chant following the dictates of ordinary Sesotho speech. Because of the brevity of Examples 2 and 4, the texts would also be written to enable the reader to compare the speech tones in ordinary speech and when used in melody and chants. Bill’s investigation of XiTsonga poems is ‘thus categorised as being ‘sung’ or ‘chanted and . . . are performed either with or without melody.’ She further reminds us that the ‘presence or absence of melody is not significant, and the rhythmical patterns are the same whether the poetry is sung or chanted’ (1990: 282). Beginning with *Malatalian’a-tsela* as a counting song:

Ex. 1. **Malatalian'a-tsela (No. 1)**

(A Puzzle)

♩ = c 96

Call (Part A)

Response (Part B)



1
Eò ké mǎng?

2
Ma-la-ta-li- a - n'a tse-la.

3
Eò ké mǎng?

4
Ngó-a-n'a Ra'e c m' hū-lo.

5
Eò ké mǎng?

6
Pi-tsa-na hae na kho-bé.

7
Eò ké mǎng?

8
F--'ngoe hae na kho-bé.

9
Eò ké mǎng?

10
Tíba-úo -lla, u re qí-tí.

Fig. 22. Musical transcription of child's counting game song.

The music of this track is used for the memory game, namely, *Malatalian'* -*a-tsela* (No. 4) on page 67. The reader will note its quick tempo which is meant to offset the player in trying to remember how many stones are left. The text and melody in this Appendix are adapted to suit a little child's counting game song. For some discussion, of it, see page 64. The pointing at the child's fingers (suggested by the word *Eò*) and their removal constitute the main gestures. *Éò* (this, these), the dem. pron., is linked with the interrogative, *Ke mang éò?* (This is who?). Thus, the *éò* is said with a HL tone. In English, the demonstrative usually comes after the interrogative, for example, 'Who is this?' and not 'This is who?' Note that the tone of *éó* ('that one') is said with a HH toneme or tone.

The melody in bars 2, 4, 6 and 8 in Part B each form an arch beginning at F and ending at F. The A, G in Part A and the first F's in Part B, also form an arch and similar to the A, G and F's in Part B which correspond with the fall of the melody in the second half of bars 2, 4, 6 and 8. However, a change occurs in bar 10 whereby the melody descends to C instead of F. The melody contradicts the tones in the last beat of bars 2 and 4 in *tsela* and the suffix -*holo*, respectively. Note also the function of the *fermata* to allow the little child to absorb each finger gesture before proceeding to the next. See Fig 10.

Ex. 2.

'Mankokosane (No. 3)

('Mankokosane)

♩ = 120

(-) word division:

(x) evenly spaced jumps



track2



Fig. 23. Children's action play song recited on a monotone.

The regular jumping movements of the children are indicated with a cross (x) above the notes representing the children's feet as they touch the ground. This rhythmic gesture of the children's jumping adds a different dimension were it absent. Obviously, these do not only affect the verse line which is stated in a simple sentence, but the rhythm becomes strict and regulated and changes into a stanza than if spoken in ordinary speech. The letters in bold below are slightly accented with the rhythmic divisions shown by dots:

'Mankokosa . . . ne, **pula** e a . . na. **Ke** tla hola neng? **Ka** So . . ntah'.

Translation: 'Mankokosane, it is raining. When will I grow up? (taller?). On Sunday.

Note the speech-tones (Fig. 23) and the organised pulses which merely assist to divide the metrical beats equally. The **e** (it is) receives one beat to maintain the rhythmic pattern of four beats in a bar.

The children have transformed their simple request in the form of a regular recurring accent in each line in the form of a rhythmic activity representing their jumping gestures which embody the urgency of their request. Though the end lines do not rhyme, a feature generally prevalent in British and North American children's verse, it is the nature of the activity in '*Mankokosane* which governs where and when the children's feet touch the ground and these are the same in every line.

(Mokali 'a Thole)

crotchet = 108



track3

Group A:**Group B:****Q: U mang?****A: Ke Moka-li 'a Tho-le.**

I am

Mokali 'a Thole.

Q: U mang?**A: Ke fu-ma-ne Tho-le**

I found Thole

Q: U mang?**A: a e-ja mo-ko-pu.**

eating a pumpkin.

Q: U mang?**A: Ka re: "Tho-le m-phe."**

I said: "Thole give me."

Q: U mang?**A: A mphu-pe-la tha-mo.**

He became angry with me.

Q: U mang?**A: *Tha-mo ngoa-a-n'a-ke.***

A little mouthful my child.

Q: U mang?**A: TI'o ke u fe-pe**Come, let me feed you *and***Q: U mang?****A: re ee ha Sho-khoe.**

we go to Shokoe's.

Q: U mang?**A: Ha Sho-khoe ha ho u-oe.**

At Shokoe's one is barred.

Q: U mang?**A: *Ba-she-ma-ne pe-li***

Two boys

Q: U mang?**A: ba le-tsa li pha-la;**

blew the pipes;

Q: U mang?**A: *pha-la tsa Mo-tsoe-ne.***

pipes belonging to Motsoene.

Q: U mang?**A: Mo-tsu-mi a fi-hla,**

Motsumi arrived,

Q: U mang?**A: a i-ko-ko-tle-la**

and leaned upon

Q: U mang?**A: *ka lere la tse-pe.***

an iron ladder.

Q: U mang?**A: La khao-ha ntlha;**

It broke on one end

Q: U mang?**A: a le lesela-se-la.**

and he let go of it.

Q: U mang?**A: *A ea ha ma-lo-me,***

He went to my uncle,

Q: U mang?**A: e ngaka le kho-po,**

an unrighteous doctor,

Q: U mang?**A: se-fu-ba sa eo-na.**

and its chest.

Q: U mang?**A: A fi-hla a e-me.**

He arrived and stood.

Q: U mang?**A: *A nyo-nyo-o-se-la,***

He walked stealthily. Repeat 5x.

Mokali 'a thole is selected because of its rhythmic character in the style of a narrative.

It is not recited in ordinary speech as narratives are prone to be, but its metrical rhythm brings the tale alive. Its rhythm also induces some body movements that could be interpreted as dancing than was the tale recited in ordinary speech. Certain lines that are selected will be shown in italics. Temperley's (2000: 79) 'metrical confusion' is used with great effect by Group B's responses which are kept regulated by Group A's constant prodding question *U mang?* In order to maintain the strict rhythm throughout the tale, the children representing Group B are compelled to employ certain techniques such as eliding certain syllables in their responses and prolong certain vowels thus, causing some confusion where accents are found in ordinary speech. For example, in line 6, *Thamo ngoa-a-n'a-ke*, the children have shifted the emphasis from *Thamo* instead of **Thamo**. The shortened form for *ngoana oa* with the poss. particle *oa* becoming *a* the apostrophe used to mark the place of the vowel has been elided between *ngoana* and *oa*. Hence, the elision being protracted to fit in with the regular six syllables so prominent in each line of the narrative.

In line 10, *Ba-she-ma-ne pe-li* should be: *Ba-she-ma-ne ba ba-be-li* (Two boys) with the middle two *ba*'s omitted to maintain the six syllables. The numeral 2 (*pe-li*) from *babeli* is treated like an adjective and becomes *babeli* with the prefix *ba*. The eight syllables in *Ba-she-ma-ne ba ba-be-li* is disruptive to the rhythm. Hence, the contraction and need for the children to maintain six syllables in *Ba-she-ma-ne pe-li*. The tonal accent in line 12, namely, *pha-la tsa Mo-tsoe-ne*, should be **pha-la tsa Mo-tsoe-ne** in ordinary speech but for the sake of euphony and maintaining the metrical six syllables and rhythm, the accents are affected. Furthermore, the first words, letters or prefixes at the beginning of each line act as an anacrusis in giving rise to the second words being slightly stressed as the first beat. This is seen in *ka le-re la tse-pe* (line 15) and *A ea ha ma-lo-me* (line 18). In ordinary speech, the anacrusis falls on the *ka* while the stresses would fall on **lere** and **tse-pe**, respectively, as *tsepe* has a HL tone instead of *tse-pe*.

In the last line, *A nyo-nyo-o-se-la*, (correctly, *A nyonyosela*), the *o* on the third syllable is held on or extended to a fourth syllable in keeping with the rhythm and the six syllables in each line. This beautiful traditional tale comes to an end when the children sway their hips to depict the stealthy movement of the uncle in the last phrase: *A nyo-nyo-o-se-la* (He walked stealthily). Although the end lines do not rhyme like British and North American children's verse, nevertheless, the shifting of the stresses from ordinary speech is aesthetically pleasing to Basotho children. Some selected lines are notated below to show the rhythmic structure of the words.

Group A

Group B

= 108

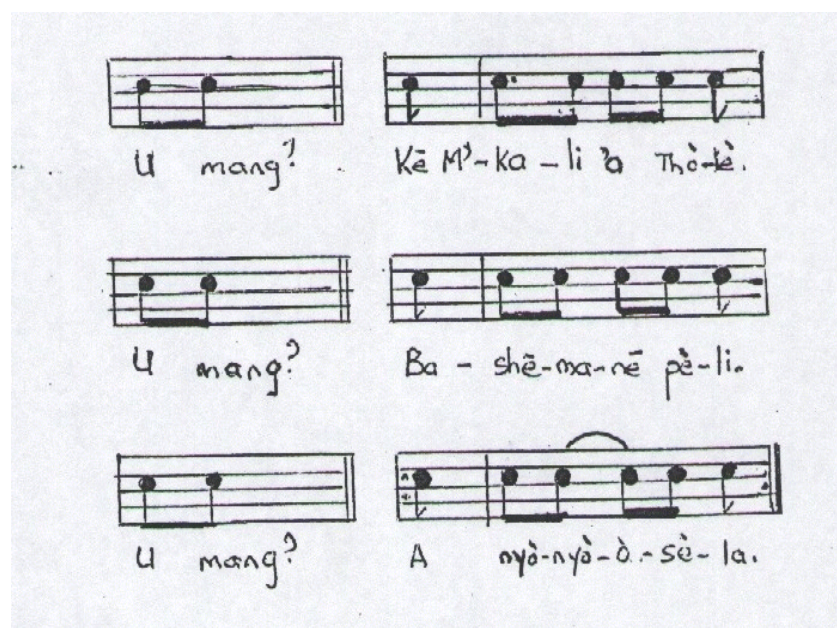


Fig. 24. Rhythm chant based on a Sesotho folk narrative.

Ex. 4.

'Mankholi-kholi (No. 2)

(The tooth fairy)

In free speech rhythm:

'Ma - nkhō-li - khō - li,

n - ka lēi-nò la hao le lē- bē-lē-bē;

u mphe la ka le lē -tlè-tlè.

Track06 oda

track6

Fig. 25.
Speech

song notated in free rhythm.

Because of its free rhythm (or spoken speech), the syllables vary in each line. The first line contains five; the second, ten; the third, ten and the fourth, nine. Compare the text and rhythm of *'Mankokosane* with that of *'Mankholi-kholi* who are both fabulous female beings in the sky waiting to respond to children's requests. *'Mankokosane* contains gestures while the second, not. Yet the children find a need to address and have an ordinary conversation with *'Mankholi-kholi* which is expressed in free rhythm. In ordinary spoken speech, the tone-markings are:

'Mánkhòlí-khòlí, nìkà lèínò là háò lé lèbè-lèbè; ú mphè là kà le lètè-tlè.

Translation:

'Mankholi-kholi, take your very bad tooth; (and) give me mine that is very beautiful.

Variant:

'Nkhòlí-khòlí, nèhè lèínò lé lèsoèúnyàà, ké ù néhé là kà le lètsònyàà-tsònyàà.

Translation:

'Nkholi-kholi, give me a tooth that is a little white one, (that) I may give you mine that is a small black (rotten) one.

In both versions known by young and old, the reader should observe that the children intensify and reduplicate the adjectives, *lebe* (bad); *letle* (beautiful) and *letsonyana* (dim. of a very little black one) to make a statement. (Note. The English translation loses its meaning with regard to the diminutives.)

Summary: Four different styles of children's play songs have been discussed. Comparing the melodies, tone markings and the diacritics (assisting in the pronunciation of the words), it is evident that the speech-tones do *not* always slavishly follow or conform to the pitch contour of the melodies in Sesotho children's play songs. The children's melodies and rhythms are adapted to suit the genre and the specific purpose for a particular game and play song. The uses of children's elisions and protraction and prolongations of some vowels in certain lines, are not only helpful to keep the rhythm alive and intact. They are a necessity for as Nketia (1975: 179) observes, 'where a song is in strict rhythm, a number of adjustments are made in the length of the verbal units to achieve symmetry and balance' and this is evident in Examples No. 2 and 3. Though some examples did not have an aesthetically satisfying foot from the Westerner's point of view with regard to end rhymes in verses, nevertheless, gestures and rhythms gave meaning to Basotho children's verse rhymes in the rendition of their "*lipapali* (play songs)." From the views of the above scholars on the intricacy of speech tone in African languages, Basotho children's melodies and chants are not just haphazardly structured; they are assisted by a well-defined rhythm (sometimes a lack of it) in order to give meaning to the movements, rhythms and gestures.

Appendix 2

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY*

- Track 1. Malatalian'-a-tsela (No. 1). [Appendix 1, Ex. 1]. *Counting game song.*
- Track 2. 'Mankokosane (No. 3). [Appendix 1, Ex. 2]. *Rhythmic chant.*
- Track 3. Mokali 'a thole (No. 4). [Appendix 1, Ex. 3]. *Rhythmic chant based on a Sesotho folk narrative.*
- Track 4. 'Mamakoane (No. 5). *Rhythmic chant: based on a Sesotho folk narrative.*
- Track 5. Ngokolotsane (No. 10). *Chain-rhyme.*
- Track 6. 'Mankholi-kholi (No. 20). [Appendix 1, Ex. 4]. *Speech song.*
- Track 7. Ho bala menoana (No. 27). *Counting game song.*
- Track 8. Reti-Reti (No. 33). *Game song.*
- Track 9. Reni-Reni (No. 33). *Game song.*
- Track 10. 'Motsokonyana sehoete (No. 47). *Rhythmic chant.*
- Track 11. 'Motsokonyana sehoete (No. 47). *Rhythmic Chant.*
- Track 12. 'Motsokonyana sehoete (No. 47). *Rhythmic Chant.*
- Track 13. Mosese oa Pinki (No. 48). *Game song.*

On CD Rom.

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