

THE INFLUENCE OF FREEDOM SONGS ON ESCALATIONS OF WITCH-HUNTING AND BURNING IN THE VENDA HOMELAND, 1989–1995

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ABSTRACT

The study looks at the influence of freedom songs on the role played by women during witch-hunting activities in the village of Fefe of Venda between 1989 and 1995. The article focuses on witchcraft-related events that took place at Fefe, in the Mutale municipality, north of Thohoyandou, in the Vhembe district during the said period. It shows that the women of Fefe were conscientised about the events taking place in their village, by the youth, through freedom songs. The result was that the women of Fefe did away with their traditional way of thinking of being condemned to domestic affairs and decided to join the protests against witchcraft-related problems. The women at Fefe, therefore, overcame significant obstacles and prejudices and assumed leadership roles within their community.

INTRODUCTION

Witchcraft-related violence in the Venda homeland was a disturbing issue that rocked the region during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this period many people lost their lives when they were accused of being witches or collaborators in the act. As a result, most rural communities in Venda experienced division because some people were portrayed as heroes while others were viewed as villains (Mavhungu 2000). The witch-hunting and witch-burning activities came about as a result of the reluctance of the homeland government to do anything about the spate of murders that were taking place. Communities in Venda claimed that the deceased had either died under mysterious circumstances or were victims of ritual murders. Some were found hanged in the bushes or dead with their body parts missing. Vhavenda blamed the violence on traditional healers, witchcraft and/or the homeland government leaders. Vhavenda refers to the people who live in the former Venda and speak the Tshilvenda language. In most of the relevant literature on history and anthropology they are referred to as the Venda or the Vhavenda. However, the term, which is found to be politically correct at present,

is Vhavenda, hence our use of the term. For the purpose of the study on which this article is based, the authors identified the Fefe village in the Mutale municipality of the Vhembe district, north of Thohoyandou, as their area of focus.

During the same period, deaths related to witchcraft and ritual murders led to protests that were accompanied by the singing of freedom or protest songs. Freedom songs were regarded as the force that drew people together in solidarity against oppression and thus had a political connotation. In addition, these songs were associated with the liberation movement because they were usually sung in political and protest meetings, which were critical of the then political dispensation. They were also regarded by the oppressed as the best way to express grievances about the problems and frustrations they were experiencing as a result of the laws of the country. Consequently, when these songs were sung during witch-hunting and witch-burning, both the Venda homeland officials and the South African government were quick to blame the liberation movement for violence in the area (Le Roux 1989).

The escalation of witch-hunting and witch-burning disturbances prompted both the Venda homeland and South African government to appoint commissions of inquiry (Le Roux 1989; Ralushai 1995). At that time, various researchers regarded the Northern Province (now known as the Limpopo Province) as an interesting area for research on witch-hunting and witch-burning. There were those whose interest was to compare European and African witchcraft, while others focused on examining whether witchcraft existed or not. Others concentrated on the violence that resulted from witchcraft-related accusations, and in the process investigated the main causes of this violence. In addition, the media became involved not only in reporting, but also in conducting their own investigations into the matter. However, these researchers did not investigate the influence of freedom songs on witch-hunting and witch-burning.

The aim of this article is to narrate the relation between freedom songs and witch-hunting and witch-burning in a selected village in Venda during the period 1989–1995. As a starting point the origin of freedom songs is sketched. This is followed by a discussion of the changed role of freedom songs as they became the instrument through which people expressed their anger and frustration with witchcraft-related practices. The factors that led to the adoption of freedom songs during witchcraft-related protests, and the role of youth movements in these protests, are discussed. The definition and historical background of freedom songs in the anti-apartheid struggle elsewhere in the Northern Province during this period are explained. The discussion includes the role played by freedom songs during witch-hunting and witch-burning in the Fefe village. An explanation is given of how the women of this village became involved in the protest activities.

Much of the information gathered for the purpose of the study was found in books, articles, commissions of enquiry (Le Roux 1989; Ralushai 1995) and newspaper articles. However, the information in these sources focused on witchcraft and witchcraft-related deaths and not on the influence of freedom songs during witch-hunting. The study gathered information on the role of freedom songs by mostly conducting oral interviews.

Youths and adults who sang these freedom songs during witch-hunting were identified. However, for fear of persecution the interviewees wished to remain anonymous. It is for this reason that the interviewees are identified by numbers for the purpose of the study (Y for females and X for males).

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Theoretical framework

This article is influenced by feminist theory. Feminist theory argues that the position, status and role of women need not be overlooked as this would be regarded as rendering them powerless (White 2000). Thus, the silence or inactivity of women need not be interpreted as an inability or powerlessness. Feminist theorists also promote women's dignity 'by defending their (women) capacity to emancipate themselves' (Meyers 2002:4). This also means that women themselves need to fight against the long held beliefs and practices that deem them inferior and subordinate. In this study the women of Fefe during the early stages of the witch-hunt were regarded as inactive and powerless. However, this changed as the witch-hunting spread and the youth took control of the situation by using freedom songs to mobilise the community of Fefe.

Literature review

Various sources indicate that witchcraft and witch-hunting are not new. They show that they have been experienced in other parts of the world, namely Europe and Africa. Monter (1969), for example, describes the violence of the years around 1750 as shameful. This, he also claims, was even denounced by leading French scholars who strongly criticised witchcraft. Austen (1993) maintains that in Europe and Africa usually women with little power constituted the majority of those implicated in witchcraft. Mbiti (1995) on the other hand argues that jealousy plays an important role in encouraging one to engage in witchcraft activities. Even though these authors are in one way or another addressing issues associated with witchcraft, they fell short of recognizing the influence that freedom songs had on women, something that this article aims to highlight. It is in this context that this article reviews literature on witchcraft in South Africa.

The connection between witchcraft and anti-apartheid resistance

According to Niehaus (2002), the passing of the Witchcraft and Suppression Act no. 3 of 1957 undermined traditional administrative organs. This Act contained six clauses of which the first and the second are the most relevant for this article. The first made it an offence to naming others as witches, while the second prohibited witch-doctors or witch-finders from naming other people as witches (Ralushai 1995). The Act was drafted without consultations on how African chiefs dealt with witchcraft-related activities. This, in spite of the fact that traditional leaders adhered to the clauses of the Act, which prohibited them from prosecuting those accused or suspected of witchcraft. People resultantly associated the Act with the apartheid government or with apartheid laws. Hund (2001) asserts that traditional leaders were resultantly accused of being agents of apartheid. He continues to indicate that the perception was that they were enforcing the Act and apparently being used by the apartheid government to promote its racist agenda among black people of South Africa.

The result was that the Act promoted the mob execution of those accused of practising witchcraft as it prohibited traditional leaders from dealing with witchcraft in the traditional way of expulsion, banishment or imposing cattle fines. The truth is, regardless of being traditional in nature, the trials and sentences saved the lives of those accused of the practice. Hund further indicates that 'the criminalization of these remedies by the Act sowed the seed of chaos' (Hund, 2000). Magagula (1999) supports this by saying that those who were accused of being witches were 'frequently acquitted and those laying charges rebuked and fined'. These developments evidently resulted in a sense of bitterness for those who were victims of rebuke and fines. The situation also made them to feel hatred towards those they previously accused of witchcraft as they were eventually acquitted. This was in contrast to how it used to be in the past when the practice was facilitated by traditional leaders and promoted reconciliation. Chavunduka (1992: 19) supports this assertion by saying that the 'new law prevented innocent people for being accused but failed to address the problem of witchcraft'.

Definition of witch-hunting

In order to define witch-hunting one has to first understand what is meant by witchcraft. Hayes (2006) indicates that anthropologists define witchcraft as the perceived power that a person has to harm others by occult or supernatural means. Mbiti (1995: 202) refers to witchcraft as a 'manifestation of mystical forces of the universe neither evil nor good in themselves which may be inborn in a person, inherited or acquired in various ways'. Ashforth (1996) on the other hand defines witchcraft as a range of ideas, discourses and practices that deal with issues of power and relates to the unseen but is regarded as a 'public secret' of black South Africans. In the same context, Ralushai (1995) describes witches as 'a word attributed' to people who either knowingly or unknowingly use

supernatural powers to inflict evil on their fellow human beings. During such incidents, before colonialism and apartheid, where an individual would be accused of witchcraft, a witch-trial was conducted at which people usually did not take the law into their own hands.

As facilitators of these trials the traditional leaders would advise the accused and the accusers to release five cattle each as payment to the traditional court for their case to be heard (Tshamano 2005). In a sense this was meant to dissuade people from randomly accusing one another of witchcraft. This also meant only those who had genuine reasons would undertake the risk of accusing others of witchcraft. In addition to this practice the accused seldom found themselves victims of mob justice as they were usually banished from the village if found guilty of witchcraft (Nthai 2002; Tshamano 2005). To corroborate this statement Niehaus (2002), who researched among the Tsonga- and Sotho-speaking groups of the lowveld, maintains that when traditional leaders served as mediators during 'witchcraft-related' cases, fewer incidents of killing took place. One could be tempted to say that traditional leaders were not only acting as facilitators but as reconcilers as well, for the sake of harmony within their communities.

The passing of the Witchcraft and Suppression Act of 1957 undermined traditional administration. The Act also gave communities the perception that chiefs were protective towards those who were accused of witchcraft or of being witches (Niehaus 2002). As a result, after the passing of that Act people started to take the law into their own hands. Hund (2001) indicates that a new form of 'popular justice' emerged in South Africa as the communities made it their responsibility to act against those they regarded as outcasts or witches. In addition to what Niehaus says, Nthai (2002) asserts that traditional values and customs were tampered with during the apartheid era, and this included the platforms that dealt with witchcraft accusations. Minnaar (2001) also indicates that the Witchcraft Suppression Act replaced the practice of expulsion with the execution of those accused of practising witchcraft. This means that the Act did not address the social problem of witchcraft as it created tension within communities instead of bringing harmony like it used to be when traditional leaders tried such cases and broke the tension between the antagonists.

These arguments from the authors mentioned above indicate the origin of witchcraft-related killings, which also takes the form of burning the accused to death. This usually takes place when those accused are first identified, then hunted down like prey, hence the word witch-hunting to be followed by witch burning. Hexman (2002: 7) defines witch-hunting and witch-killing as 'witchcraft-eradication' where 'individuals are targeted because other people identify them as witches'. They are then subjected to violence, which sometimes ends in 'necklacing'. Unlike freedom songs it is evident that witchcraft, witch-hunting and witch-burning were socially related. As such it would have been unimaginable for freedom songs to have an influence on the latter. It is for this reason that an investigation of the influence of freedom songs on witch-hunting in the Fefe village interested the authors. The authors elect to do this by first giving a short historical background and origin of freedom songs.

A SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ORIGIN OF FREEDOM SONGS

Songs perform different functions among African communities, be they religious or work-related. During slavery singing was used as a tool to share the experiences from the harsh conditions under which the people worked. Freedom songs are regarded as recent but they originated from slavery work songs. The discussion in the introduction and the definition given of freedom songs indicate that they were (are) associated with black people's protest, political opposition or an opposing political opinion and the struggle for liberation. These songs are part of South Africa's black people's attempt to do away with any form of oppression (Tshamano 2005).

There is no clear definition of freedom songs. However, the authors have attempted to define freedom songs as those songs that were sung by black South Africans during the struggle against apartheid or as part of the liberation from oppression during the apartheid era. The singing of these songs was a way of expressing the dissatisfaction with and opposition to the unjust laws of the country (Tshamano 2005). This means that these songs had a political connotation. They became even more used and prominent during the period around the 1976 Soweto student riots. This was when people engaged in rent-, school- and other related kinds of resistance, protests or boycotts.

The South African experience of protest songs is that these freedom songs are believed to have originated from churches during the 1940s. The power associated with them during apartheid forced the white government to ban or outlaw all forms of freedom songs (Interview with X9 2003). People who were found singing and trying to mobilise others by singing them were prosecuted by law and if found guilty, which was often, were charged, either with public violence and in extreme circumstances, terrorism or incitement to commit acts of terrorism. This made freedom songs something to be used secretly and with caution or forethought (Interview with Y9 2003).

A former student activist at the University of Venda, in his analysis of the August 1988 unrest in the Venda homeland, which was sparked by the spate of ritual murders that were taking place throughout Venda, says that the power of freedom songs made people forget what they intended doing thereby ending up acting irresponsibly and/or unexpectedly (Interview with Y9 2003). This was supported by one shop steward of the 1987 South Africa's Railways workers' strike who said that 'as a result of the emotional and mob influence of freedom songs they would end up "necklacing" scab workers instead of just scaring them' (Interview with X13 2003).

However, the discussion above does not wish to paint a picture that freedom songs in their own right did not bring any good. According to the same University of Venda student activist, it would be a mistake to view freedom songs only as the embodiment of violence because they eventually have done more good than harm. He sees the New South Africa as the end product of how significantly useful freedom songs were in South Africa in conscientising people about what was happening around them (Interview with X9 2003). People who used freedom songs to achieve their selfish needs were

believed by many to be politically immature and without connections to any political organization.

These songs were usually taught to people by black political activists who were also called 'comrades'. In most cases these comrades were the youth. Delius (1996: 211) describes comrades as a loose grouping of youths 'composed of pupils, students and unemployed secondary school leavers ranging in the age from teens to mid-twenties'. These songs succeeded in helping to form a bond among people, united them in order to be emotionally charged into action or to organise themselves politically. In the context of this article 'comrade' relates so much to the youth whose mission they claimed was to 'free people from supernatural evil' such as witchcraft by identifying, hunting or helping to expel witches from the Fefe village after they had been accused of the practice of witchcraft.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based for the most part on oral interviews and where secondary sources were available, these are acknowledged. However, they were mainly on witchcraft and ritual murder. Interviews were conducted in order to critique the authenticity of the information. These interviews were unstructured and conducted in groups and where possible individuals were interviewed. The respondents preferred group interviews for fear of persecution. This also discarded the perception that there might be something illicit taking place during the study or interviews. The respondents were located from representatives of structures such as civic organisations, traditional councillors and leaders, police and correctional officers, teachers, women and women's organisations, the youth and youth organizations, and ordinary community members. Priority was given to those who participated, witnessed or helped in one way or another in finding a long lasting solution. The respondents were then identified by numbers for the sake of the study, which are Y for females and X for males. The article is a narrative and follows a qualitative approach.

FREEDOM SONGS AND THE WOMEN OF FEFE VILLAGE DURING WITCH-HUNTING

The connection between witchcraft and apartheid reared its head during the same period (1989–1995). The youth in Venda regarded the inability of the homeland government and South Africa's apartheid government to deal with ritual murder and witchcraft in the rural areas as an impediment to peace and progress within their communities (Kohnert 2003; Tshamano 2005). The youth further regarded this as a pretext to keep them divided in their fight against apartheid. The earlier discussion on the Witchcraft Suppression Act indicated how the youth perceived traditional leaders for failing to deal with ritual murder and witchcraft-related deaths. In other words they were convinced that the Act had taken away the powers of traditional leaders to deal with this social

problem in a more traditionally appropriate way, namely by the expulsion, banishment or fining of those accused of the practice.

The perceived protection of those accused as a result of the Act and the fact that traditional leaders were the ones reinforcing it (the Act) on behalf of the apartheid government meant to the youth that there was a leadership and authority vacuum to be filled. Stadler (1996: 87) brings another view to the youths' perception when he says 'the youth used the ideology of witchcraft as a source to contest general authority'. The result was that the youth eagerly formed anti-witchcraft movements under the leadership of comrades. Delius describes comrades as a loose grouping of youth 'composed of pupils, students and unemployed secondary school leavers ranging in age from teens to mid-twenties. This group of youth included girls who participated in numbers but less represented in leadership positions and rarely participated in international debates. In the context of this study "comrade" refers to the youth whose mission was to free people from being victims of witchcraft-related practices by either burning witches or expelling them from the community' (Delius 1996). These movements became widespread and led to the increase in witch-hunts and witch-burnings (Baholo 1994). It was usually during these activities that the comrades would be singing emotionally charged freedom songs that influenced what Le Roux terms 'mass psychology' aimed at 'politicizing' the youth (Le Roux 1989).

According to Hugh (1948), music plays an important role in the African's philosophy, literature and history, as it is used in times of joy and sorrow, peace and war, during religious ceremonies and recreation. This was confirmed by the majority of women at Fefe when they admitted that at the beginning they knew little about freedom songs and as a result their participation in singing was minimal (Tshamano 2005). Many women admitted that they simply joined these groups of youth who seemed to be more familiar with singing freedom songs. They listened to the messages contained in the songs and began to mimic them until they found a proper tune as they sang along. According to Y8 (2003), the songs were not difficult to understand as they were sung in Tshivenda. These songs were usually adapted tunes of freedom songs that were given Tshivenda lyrics in order suit the circumstances.

The adaptations were done in order to make them and the problem at hand, as well as the intended solutions communicable to the community of Fefe. The singing of these songs was a way of sending a message to the people of Fefe that it was time to gather at designated places to discuss the problem of witchcraft and chart the way forward. Y9 (2003) argues that the people who played an important role in conscientizing them were those youths coming from different tertiary institutions such as the University of Venda and some colleges of education in the area. She further indicated that these were the people who encouraged them to stand for their rights as no-one would come and fight their war. As a result, Y9 (2003) says she is one of the females who responded by fully involving herself.

Another woman who claimed to have fond memories of how freedom songs influenced women to play a role at Fefe during protests against witchcraft was Y10. At the time she was studying for a Senior Certificate when her way of seeing things changed completely. She admits being hesitant at first as she thought that it was the duty of young men in the village to deal with community problems. Y10's (2003) experience also came after listening to freedom songs when she realised that the youth were raising genuine concerns that affected her as she had been a victim of a 'lightning bird' when her home was struck by lightning. According to her, when she decided to join the chanting comrades in protest and the singing of freedom songs she never looked back. Y10 (2003) says that the year 1989 is remembered and celebrated by the people at Fefe as the women's year. According to her, it was a year during which the women of Fefe started to realise that in order for them to be emancipated they had to stand up for themselves.

It is important to understand that initially the support for the activities of the youth came mainly from the younger generation. However, the influence that these youth had on the community, through singing freedom songs, eventually filtered down to the adult women whose husbands usually worked in the urban areas. These were ordinary rural women whose responsibility was to look after their children and mind the homesteads, and ploughing fields in the absence of their husbands. One would imagine that these women would find it very unusual to be involved in any form of protest, let alone singing freedom songs. Their experiences with the youth had changed the women's view of social issues such as witchcraft. Instead of the passive reaction that they were used to, they became reactionary and occupied the forefront of the protests against witchcraft. Their participation in and assumption of the forefront position in the protests was noted in two incidents that took place at Fefe in 1989. These were the bus accident of 11 August and the lightning incident of October/November of that year.

During the period of the homeland system the homeland governments used to host shows that were meant to promote 'ethnic nationalism'. It was during these shows that traditional dances were performed by school children as well as adults in order to promote ethnic culture. In August of 1989 the women of Fefe and accompanying villages were being transported to a show ground at Tshilamba in the Mutale district of Vhembe. Unfortunately the bus, which was overloaded, overturned and in the process eighteen people were killed, sixteen of whom came from the Fefe village, fourteen being women (Interview with Y11 2003). This incident angered the people of Fefe.

As a result the villagers of Fefe, who had lost many people during the accident, hinted at the possibility of witchcraft. Experiences such as these dominated much of the thinking of the villagers, especially those who lost their loved ones, even though they felt that there was nothing they could do (Interview with Y11 2003). In order to express their anger and frustration, women stopped participating in communal activities, such as working at the headman's mielie field. Y9 (2003) indicates that they also stopped participating in the Tshigombela dance (one of the famous Vhavenda traditional dances)

and all activities associated with traditional ceremonies that were in honour of the headman. This was a way these people tried register their grievances about the loss of their loved ones in the bus accident, since the headman was doing nothing about the suspected witchcraft.

The people's anger was again triggered during October and November of 1989 when Fefe village experienced an unprecedented spate of lightning strikes, which burned between four and six houses within a period of four weeks. Dissatisfaction arose and a group of villagers led by both the youth and women started to sing freedom songs that triggered widespread protest and demonstration in the village of Fefe. However, the protest was orderly as no property was destroyed and no-one was killed. They went to the headman's kraal as a group and threatened to sleep at his place if nothing was done to put an end to the destruction that was being caused by lightning (Interview with Y12 2003). The headman was accused of doing nothing after four houses were burnt. According to these informants, he (the headman) wanted to know if he was a suspect in the lightning incident but the people insisted that they had marched to his kraal because the lightning did not strike his place (Interview with Y12 2003). Together with the villagers, the headman agreed to send his brother to inform the police that people were perishing as a result of witchcraft. The crowd started to sing freedom songs at the headman's kraal and later dispersed after agreeing to meet again the following day for a possible feedback from the police and to discuss the way forward (Interview with Y12 2003).

The following day the Fefe community gathered again expecting to hear what message came from the police, which eventually came from the headman's brother. The message was unfortunately that the police would be arriving soon to listen to the grievances, which they eventually did not do. This turn of events was followed by a series of meetings where it was decided that each family should contribute R10.00 in order to consult a fortune teller (*mungome*). A committee was appointed whose main function was to facilitate the search for a *mungome* and help in the management of the funds that were collected. The committee was composed of five women (Interview with Y13, Y14 and Y15 2003).

The reasons advanced for the appointment of an all-women committee were that women, as a result of their gender, were unlikely to be harassed by police, which would not have been the case had the committee been composed of men. Secondly, the majority of the protesters were women and were the ones who showed activeness and resilience. The last reason that was advanced was that the men were afraid of harassment from the police and therefore put women in the forefront (Interview with Y13, Y14 and Y15 2003). The reasons given point to the fact that had it been before these women had experienced the influence of freedom songs, they would have flatly refused to be part of the committee or organisers, let alone take part in the protests. The committee fulfilled its mandate because the *mungome* was eventually appointed and came to carry out his responsibilities.

The lightning incident was followed by the resurfacing of the bus accident issue of 11 August 1989 in mid-December of the same year. According to Y16 (2003), during a gathering it was agreed that two men would be sent to look for another *mungome* who would talk about the person responsible for the bus accident that took so many lives from Fefe. When they arrived at her place the *mungome* refused to accompany them, saying that the police were lying in wait for them back home. On their arrival back home the two men were surprised to find the police waiting near the gathering monitoring the situation although they did not harass the people. After feedback amidst the singing of freedom songs and the chanting, the gathering was dispersed to meet the following day for another meeting on the way forward (Interview with Y16 2003).

According to X9 (2003), 'the very same night the police went around arresting people who were perceived as leaders of the protest'. He himself says he heard police knocking at his door at approximately ten o'clock in the evening. They asked him to accompany them immediately after he opened the door of his house. Inside the police van he found a number of men, all of whom were perceived to be the leaders and organisers who were accused of promoting violence. The majority of the men who were arrested were the husbands of the women who either belonged to the committee or were at the forefront of the protest. Some of the arrested men worked around the Witwatersrand area and had just returned for the Christmas vacation. They could not have been involved in the protest (Interview with X9 2003). Such an incident supports the notion that choosing women to lead the protest because the police would not harass them, as much as they would do men, sounded valid. These men spent the night at the Tshilamba police station after which they were released later the following day without being charged (Interview with X10 2003). They later heard on their arrival back home about the efforts made by women, while they were in custody, to force the police to release them (Interview with X11 2003). The discussion below exposes what transpired after the arrest of the men by the police.

The wives of the arrested men informed their neighbours the following day about what had happened to their husbands the night before. According to Y17 (2003), early the next morning a bell was rung and the people of Fefe gathered on the hill where women vowed to follow their husband to Tshilamba Police station. They took along a list of names of those people who had contributed to the collection of money for the appointment of a *mungome*. The first name to appear on the list was that of the headman, followed by that of his younger brother and then the rest of the contributors who were villagers. These women walked all the way to the police station, about thirty kilometres, on foot.

Y18 (2003) indicates that on their arrival at the police station these women found the police station gates closed and 'forcefully pushed them open in the presence of the police and demanded the immediate release of their husbands who should fend for their children'. In addition to that, Y19 (2003) says that they demanded to be arrested together with their husbands if the police were not prepared to release them, after which

the police released them. The police transported the released men home in police vans and the triumphant women used taxis and other means of transport home as they were tired from the long walk to the Tshilamba Police Station (Interview with X12 2003).

CONCLUSION

In its attempt to explain the relation between freedom songs and witch-hunting activities between 1989 and 1995, the article focused its attention on the events that took place at the village of Fefe in the Mutale municipality, north of Thohoyandou, in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province. After looking at the historical background to the origin of freedom songs and their influence, it has been established that they (freedom songs) worked as an instrument through which the people at Fefe village expressed their anger and frustration against the Venda homeland government's indifference towards witchcraft-related matters.

It has been established from the study that it was through freedom songs, which were associated with the liberation movement and the struggle against apartheid, that the people of Fefe, first the youth and later the women, were conscientised about the problem of witchcraft engulfing them. The women of Fefe, who initially thought that it was the duty of the youth (especially young men at tertiary level) to address the problems affecting the community or the village, changed their views after listening to the lyrics of the songs and decided that it was time that they too joined the struggle.

The study concludes that the women of Fefe, through singing freedom songs, immediately assumed leadership roles, as seen when the working committee (comprising only women) was selected and finally led the march to the Tshilamba Police Station to demand the immediate release of their arrested husbands. It can be concluded that the recruitment of the women of Fefe, their participation in protest and immediate assumption of leadership roles can be attributed to the influence brought about by the use of freedom songs and their (the women) singing of these songs and understanding of their lyrics.

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