Mmamoshimane (Sotho wedding song)

Text	IPA	Literal Translation
Mmamoshimane	[m: mɑ mɔ ʃi mɑ nɛ]	Mother of the boy
Selo se mariba-riba	[si lɔ] [si] [mɑ ʀi bɑ ʀi bɑ]	Some thing of veils-and-veils
Selo se dinala-nala	[si lɔ] [si] [di nɑ lɑ nɑ lɑ]	Some thing of nails-and-nails
Selo se ka ntlong	[si lɔ] [si] [kɑ] [ⁿt͡ɬ'ʊŋ]	Some thing is in the home
Go bolela tshelete	[xɔ] [bɔ lɛ lɑ] [tʃɛ lɛ tɛ]	It talks, money!

The quest for the meaning of this song led us on quite a journey. Each choir we consulted gave a different explanation of *Mmamoshimane*'s text. This is often the case with folk songs of any culture—one learns a song as a child without ever really knowing what the words are about. Most of us don't wonder about it until we're older, and then realize that discerning its meaning can actually be quite tricky!

The first woman who attempted to translate *Mmamoshimane* for us kept saying, "You know—like a baboon forehead." We'd then ask, "So, it's about a baboon?" And she would respond, "No—it's about a wedding!" Then we would end up back at square one. "What does a baboon's forehead have to do with a wedding?" To which she'd respond, "Money talks!" Consulting a Sotho dictionary didn't help much. In the end Matlakala Bopape, who worked with us on this project, gave us the following explanation, and the song made a lot more sense:

Mmamoshimane is one of several Sotho words for 'mother-in-law,' here specifically referring to the mother of the groom. The song describes a moment in the marriage ceremony rituals when the bride—who wears an elaborate wedding veil and with beautifully-painted fingernails—is enticed to leave her in-laws' home to stroll and dance in the street with her husband.

A symbolic gift of money from the wedding guests is demanded by the household in order to allow the bride to come out and be admired by all. Hence the phrase, "money talks!" at the end of the song.

STRUCTURE:

AA BB AA B'B' A

bold letters = sections without dancing

*begin dancing on the first "*riba*" of "*selo se mariba-riba*"

A Section= *Selo se mariba-riba...*

B Section= *tshelete, tshelete...*

B' Section = same as above, but with 2nd B-section dance for the women (snapping fingers up and down instead of to the side)