

## About “Vamudara,” a Shona *shangara* dance song from Zimbabwe

The Shona people are the largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe, in southern Africa. “Vamudara” is a dance song which takes the form of a sort of drama. The scene involves an old man who likes to drink so much, he does not even care about dressing well or buying new clothes. He wears *marengena* and *manyatera*—ragged clothes in tatters and cheap sandals made of cut-up car tires. The other men in the beer hall or beer park who have gathered after work to sing, dance, and drink the fresh local beer in moderation are concerned about his welfare, but do not attempt to confront him directly about his habits. Instead, Shona people will discipline each other indirectly through song. A song of this type is not meant to shame an individual but rather to give him or her something to think about while letting them know that others are taking notice and expressing concern. The tone of the song is somewhat sarcastic, but not meant to be cutting.

The *shangara* dance beat is found in the drum pattern. Sometimes, if miners are singing the song and dancing, they wear the heavy rubber “gumboots” that protect their feet from the water sloshing in the gold, silver or diamond mines.

### About the Arrangement

This arrangement was created by taking the two basic parts of this popular *anti-drinking* drinking song (!) and arranging it with additional set parts for a group to sing. Although most Shona people would know the *kutema* (the actual song that has passed intact through generations of singers) and would sing the same or similar *mazembera* (bass) and proper *kudaira* response parts, they would never have heard it arranged with these particular additional *kudaira* lines.

Begin with the *mazembera* (bass) part and gradually layer each part in turn. Bear in mind this is not the definitive, fossilized version. In Zimbabwe, “Vamudara” might be sung in just this way once, and then, perhaps, never again! Improvise freely! Switch voice parts so the men are singing falsetto and the women singing the bass parts an octave higher. Isolate each part by suddenly cutting off others, then bring them back in creatively. End by fading out.

The traditional dance is a circle dance with alternating pairs of men and women in the middle twisting, stamping, jumping and shuffling to the beat that is maintained by the drum. You might include it performed by a small group of dancers located in front of the choir, moving forward in turn to show off their particular take on the dance, in the style of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the great South African vocal group. The basic step pattern is:

L R L R L R L RR L RR

### Words and Meaning:

The words show the condition of the old man, and the concern of his friends. They don't really wish to give him money to get drunk, but they are expressing their hope that if they show him support he won't need to get drunk after all.

#### *Mazembera (typical bass part):*

Haiwa, Baba-o we “Oh, father, oh” (followed by vocables)

#### *Proper kudaira (a typical response):*

Owe (vocables)

#### *Kutema (the traditional song passed down over the years):*

Vamudara mwapfeke marengena	Mr. Old Man, you are wearing tatters
mahuzwepi se kunge mune mari?	Where did you hear people are drinking, as if you had any money?
Ndino mutewera mambo (2x)	[ <i>The old man says about the beer</i> ]: I will follow you, chief (2x)
ndino kutewera Turesi, hi-ya-a-a	I will follow you, Mr. Turesi, (vocables)
ndino kutewera mambo.	I will follow you, chief [ <i>implying, leave me alone, beer is what is important to me</i> ]

#### *Kudaira lines (improvised or composed additional lines of response): The others say to him:*

Haiwa ndom pawo zuinhu zuese	If drinking means that much to you
munoda kutetereka.	we will give you what you need to get your drink and get drunk
Teterekai chechelele	(You can) stagger drunk and be happy.

### Expanded Translation:

As in many songs from all parts of Africa, this song has many levels of meaning which are clear to those who have grown up in the culture. Here is an expanded translation of “Vamudara.”

People in the beer hall call out, “Geez, you old man, you are always going out dressed in rags, looking for beer, but the problem is you don't have any money for proper food and clothing, let alone for getting drunk.”

He answers them saying, “I always follow beer wherever it is, and beer is my chief. For some men a woman is the highest influence and authority, for some women it's a man. Beer is all the authority and woman I need, all rolled into one, so leave me alone—there is nothing else I care about.”

“Well,” they say to him, “if that is how you feel, we will give you some money to buy beer so you can get drunk and stagger, forget your troubles and be happy. We will not lecture you any more about drinking.”

### Pronunciation: the phonetic pronunciation is below the words in the arrangement.

A demo recording of “Vamudara” is available—#VTS09-Recording. It includes pronunciation and performances of the song.

# Vamudara

A Traditional Shona Recreational Song from Zimbabwe, Africa  
 Traditional Arrangement & Additional Words and Music  
 Dumisani Maraire

Intro: Basses (Mazembera)



Hai-wa ba-ba-o we Hai-wa ba-ba-o we Hai-wa ba-ba-o we Hai-wa ba-ba-o we  
 (hi-wah bah-bah-oh way)

A (proper Kudaira)

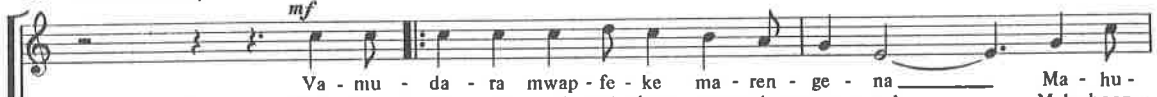


O we O we



Hai-wa ba-ba-o we Hai-wa ba-ba-o we Hai-wa ba-ba-o we Hai-wa ba-ba-o we

B (Kutema) Lively



Va - mu - da - ra mwap - fe - ke ma - ren - ge - na Ma - hu -  
 (Vah - moo - dah - rah mwahp - feh - kay ma - rehn - gay - nah Mah - hooz -



Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we

1. 2.



zwe - pi se kun - ge mu - ne ma - ri Va - mu - ma - ri Ndi - no mu -  
 way - pee say kuhn - gay moo - nay mah - ree) (Dee - noh moo -



Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we



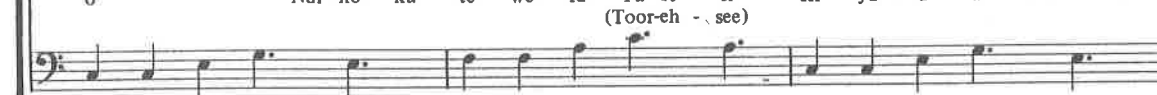
te - we - ra mam - bo - o Ndi - no mu - te - we - ra mam - bo -  
 tay - way - rah mam - boh - oh



Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we



o Ndi - no ku - te - we - ra Tu - re - si Hi - ya - a - a Ndi - no ku -  
 (Toor - eh - see)



Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we



s.

te - we - ra mam - bo - o *mp* Va - mu - da - ra mwap - fe - ke ma - ren -

A. (Kudaira line)

*mf* Hai - wa ndom pa - wo zuin - lu zue - se mu - no - da ku - te - te -  
(Hi - wahn dohm pah-woh zhwihn-oo zhway-say moo - noh-dah koo-tay - tay -

T. (Kudaira line)

*mf*

B.

*mp* Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we

ge - na *mf* Ma - hu - zwe - pi se - kun - ge mu - ne ma - ri Va - mu

re - ka Te - te - re - kai che - che - le - le Hai - wa ndom pa - wo zuin - lu  
ray - kah Tay - tay - ray - kai chay - chay - lay - lay)

Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa be - ba-o we

2.

*mf* ma - ri Ndi - no mu - te - we - ra mam - bo - o Ndi - no mu -

*mp* Hai - wa ndom pa - wo zuin - lu zue - se mu - no - da ku - te - te re - ka Te - te - re - kai che - che -

*mp*

*mf* Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we

te - we - ra mam - bo - o Ndi-no ku - te - we - ra Tu - re - si

le - le Hai - wa ndom pa - wo zuin - hu zue - se mu - no - da ku - te - te -

Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we

*D.S.*

hi - ya - a - a Ndi-no ku - te - we - ra mam - bo - o Va - mu -

re - ka te - te - re - kai che - che - le - le Hai - wa ndom pa - wo zuin - hu

Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we Hai - wa ba - ba-o we

### PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Clap or

Hosho (rattles)

Drum

Repeat Section "C" several times. Audiences may join in with bass and Part "A" Soprano lines. Fade out gradually to end song.