



**Midlands State
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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND MUSICOLOGY

The Decline of Mbira Performances in Families. A Case Study of Mhuri yekwa Gumira of
Zihute Kraal in Murehwa

BY

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences in Partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the requirements of the Bachelor of sciences Honours Degree in Music and
Musicology at Midlands State University.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned do here-by proclaim that this dissertation is a product of my own work and the research findings and investigations have not been submitted anywhere else to serve any purpose. Other related sources of information that the researcher has made use of has been fully acknowledged by means of referencing.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my children Alicia, Takudzwa, Jonas Jnr, Alistair and my special husband for sending me back to school when I thought the world had crumbled on me. Knowledge is power. Thank you *Shumba* (totem) I love you.

ABSTRACT

This research is a case study which was conducted in *Zihute Kraal* in *Murehwa* district. The study focuses on the decline of mbira performances in families concentrating mainly on Mhuri yekwa Gumira Mbira Performers who were great mbira players around the 1960s and released a single entitled *Wanyanya*. The study investigated the factors that contributed to the decline of mbira playing amongst the group members.

In order to gather essential data on what caused once vibrant mbira groups to abandon the mbira playing tradition, an ethnographic research was engaged. Snow ball and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the participants for the study in the *Zihute Kraal* in *Murehwa*. Face to face semi structure interviews, observation, video recordings, field notes are the instruments which were used to capture data. In the study the researcher noted that Christianity and other factors brought by colonialism contributed greatly to the decline of mbira performances by Mhuri yekwa Gumira. Many family members and people in the community converted to Christianity as a result many people disassociated themselves from a religion that was regarded as pagan. Apart from Christianity other reasons are also highlighted such as searching for employment, resettlement programs, financial constraints and failure to receive royalties from recorded works.

The study recommends that old mbira songs need to be revived by means of digitalizing them to make the songs accessible to everyone. In addition old mbira songs also have to be transcribed so as to preserve them. The study also recommends documentation of mbira playing families.

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Last but not least many thanks goes to all the participants *Musafare Madhanga Gumira*, Solomon *Kurasa Gumira*, and Brian *Matongo* for providing data for the study.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction and Background to the study.

1.0 Introduction

Chapter one gives an insight to the background of the study highlighting why the researcher have decided to conduct a research of this nature. The statement of the problem and significance of the study will be discussed in the chapter. The chapter also covers research questions that will help the researcher to fill the gap.

1.1 Background to the study.

The *Gumira* family was well known for *mbira* playing around the 1960s. They were hired to perform in different functions in the kraal and many other places. The family also used to perform during ritual ceremonies. As young boys they could play to the extent that they released their *mbira* single “*Wanyanya*” in 1969. The family is no longer playing the instrument today. However the group has not been documented as one of the earliest *mbira* group to record *mbira* music in Rhodesia. The researcher feels that a study of this group is necessary so as to document their career and the reason for abandoning the *mbira* playing and also archiving the information about the group and also having it known by many people. The researcher feels that there were many great *mbira* players of the colonial era who were not known and their music was not documented. Carrying out the research of this nature would help close existing gap left by other researchers.

In February 2016 the researcher was invited to *Tambarimba Marimba* workshop where she met a colleague Francis Kurasa. As we were chatting about *mbira* playing he mentioned “*Mhuri yekwa Gumira*” as some of the musicians who did their recordings in the 1960s. The researcher had not heard or read about them even when she read the book *Township music* by Joyce Jenje Makwenda or Fred Zindi. The *mbira* players were not mentioned as some of the Early

Township Musicians, hence was motivated to carry out a case study of this nature so that the data gathered would help in adding more knowledge to the already existing information.

1.2 The statement of the problem

“*Mhuri Yekwa Gumira*” were known mbira players in *Zihute* kraal to the extent that they released their mbira single in 1969 but most of the mbira players are no longer playing the instrument today. The researcher intent to document their career background and causes of the decline in mbira performances.

1.3 Research questions

- i) Who are the *Gumira* family?
- ii) What had initially inspired the *Gumira* to embark on *mbira* performances?
- iii) Why the *Gumira* family abandoned the *mbira* playing tradition?
- iv) What impact did colonization had on *mbira* music in Zimbabwe?

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will gather information on why this well-known *mbira* family has abandoned *mbira* playing. Most people who released mbira songs did so as families as an example *Mhuri yekwa Gumira, Mhuri yekwa Chimombe, Mhuri yekwa Mujuru* and many others. If the researcher successfully carries out this research, it will be of special significance.

1.4.1 Music educators

As a primary music teacher and *mbira* player, the results of the research will widen my knowledge on mbira performance. Also the other music educators will benefit in the same way. The results obtained from the study will help in preserving *mbira* music as some music will be recorded. The study will unearth performing groups who can be used as resource people in schools and colleges.

1.4.2 Mbira Musicians.

The outcome of the research will be of great importance to the musicians because they will know some challenges faced by other musicians in the same industry and some will also adopt the creativeness of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*.

1.4.3 The society.

The study will help to revive the mbira playing traditions in the society. To make sure other people and young generation benefit from these *mbira* families. The data gathered will be documented for future use by scholars and other stakeholders. The information will be preserved as video tapes and pictures. This will make people know more about “*Mhuri yekwa Gumira*” mbira group. The study will be part of documentation on these mbira playing families especially *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* who has no any form of the documentation on its mbira playing history. The study will make people know more about their career. The research will concertize people who are practicing mbira playing to maintain their culture of *mbira* playing for the benefit of their society and also for commercial purposes thus benefitting them financially. Conducting this research is also important because if the songs are released, they may have a way outside the country the foreigners are made aware of our culture. This will virtually bring foreign currency to the country. The researcher feels that this study is worth conducting to add on to the existing knowledge and close some gaps through a thorough investigation of the collected literature.

1.4.4The media

The study will be part of documentation on *mbira* playing families especially *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* who have no form of documentation on their *mbira* playing history. The research will add data and information on mbira performing groups of the late 1960s and 70s. Dissemination of mbira music will accelerate and extend the spread of local music styles .Through mass media Younger artists or *mbira*

players will learn different interpretations and techniques at an early stage by copying music they hear on recording. Information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the research.

1.5 Synopsis of Methodology

Bernard (1988) says that research design is a mental plan that specifies the method and procedure for collecting and analyzing data. It is a framework that stipulates what information to be collected, from which source by what procedure. This study was a case study which was in a qualitative form. The method gives emphasis on the value of studying variables in their natural settings (ibid). Qualitative research was the most suitable research method to be used to conduct a case study on *Mhuri yekwa Gumira mbira* performers because it allowed the researcher to collect data from the participants in their natural environment that is *Zihute kraal* in *Murehwa* District the researcher visited *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* to collect data that would answered the research topic.

Population and Sampling

According to Bernard (1988) population refers to the whole group of people residing in a defined area at a given time. In relation to this study, the population included all the people of *Zihute kraal* in *Murehwa*. According to Kothari (2004) a sample is part of a population which is provided by some process or usually by deliberately selection from the parent population. In this research the researcher have selected the *Gumira* family members who took part in *mbira* performance in the 1960s. The *mbira* performers match the topic under study. The sample will be selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Sampling refers to taking a fraction of a larger population. Kathari (2004) Indicates that sampling technique is a procedure the researcher would choose to use in selecting items for the sample. According to *Chiromo* (2006) purposive sampling researchers have to handpick the cases to be included in the sample. The participants were selected basing on the researchers opinion of their typicality.

In this study the researcher has selected the *Gumira* family who took part in mbira performance in the 1960s. The selection of the sample was not complicated it was based on an approach known as purposeful. Maxwell (2005) cited in Dodge (2011) says that purposive sampling technique is a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons or activity are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can be acquired from other choices. The researcher used purposive and snow-ball sampling techniques to select the sample. According to Mkuzo (2009) purposive sampling technique was the most suitable in conducting a case study. The researcher used her knowledge to hand pick the participants who were actually part of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira mbira* performers. Selection was depending on the nature of the study and knowledge of the population. Snow ball sampling technique mainly focus on rare members of population and progress from one case to another through referrals. Barnett (2002) cited in Chiromo (2006) researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics they require.

To collect data the researcher used interviews and observation as research instruments. According to Phrasisombath (2012) research instruments are instruments that are normally used to gather important, objective and accurate data that will answer to the topic under study. Interview according to Kahn and Carmel (1957) is described as a conversation with a purpose. The researcher used Interviews because there are one of the best methods to use in collecting Primary data that is both qualitative and quantitative. In this case study the researcher used semi-structured interview, this enabled the researcher to acquire first-hand information from the participants who played the mbira as it is a one on one process. The information was recorded through videos, photography, audio tapes, and the researcher made use of triangulation for the legitimacy of results. An interview guide was prepared to enable the interview to go smoothly. Bjombolt and Farstad (2012) says that it is generally beneficial for interviewers to have interview guide prepared. The researcher agrees with Bjombolt during

interview the participants were able to express themselves freely. Observation is one of the methods used in conducting the research. According to Zikmund (2003) Observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry. The researcher used Non Participant Observation in the Case study *Mhuri Yekwa Gumira* because most of the members were no longer performing mbira music to the extent that they cannot play not even one simple mbira song like *Karigamombe*. The researcher observed how they tune or play the mbira instrument. Triangulation was employed to insure validity and reliability of the data collected. The researcher did not force the *Gumira* Family to take part in the study without giving consent. All ethical considerations were observed during the course of the study.

Observation is one of the methods that was used in conducting the research. According to Zikmund (2003) Observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry. The researcher used Non Participant Observation in the Case study *Mhuri Yekwa Gumira*. The researcher opted for a non-participant observation. The researcher observed how the participants are tuned or played the mbira instrument. Triangulation will be employed to insure validity and reliability of the data collected. Greener (2008) says that the methods undertaken by the researcher should be clear enough to install confidence in the reader. The researcher did not force the *Gumira* Family to take part in the study without giving consent. All ethical considerations were be observed during the course of the study.

1. 6 Definition of terms

- *Banya* - A hut that is used by spirit mediums to conduct ritual ceremonies and to store materials used during the ceremonies.
- *Chipwa* - It is a rain Making ceremony similar to Mapfuwe but it is performed during rainy season when people suspect a drought season or when they sense natural disasters such a floods. The community plead with the *Musikavanhu* (God) through ancestral

spirits to intervene and stop disaster from occurring. *Musafare Gumira* (interview 04/02 2017)

- *Guruuswa* - A place found in the northern part of Zambezi River in Southern Tanganyika.
- *Nhare Mbira* - According to Gwekwerere (2012) it is a twenty two or more keys instrument popular among the *Zezuru* people of Zimbabwe.
- *Mapfuwe* - refers to a traditional rain making ceremony performed before the rain season to ask for rain commonly practiced in *Murehwa* district in *Mashonaland East*. *Musafare Gumira* (interview 04/02 2017)
- *Muchekanyanza* - The *Gumira* ancestral spirit who is the family guardian. *Musafare Gumira* (interview 04/02 /17)

1.8 Conclusion

Some traditional mbira playing families have abandoned mbira playing tradition because of various reasons hence documenting them is a way of preserving this information for future generation. The material gathered will be used as reference by scholars and other stakeholders in *Murehwa* and the world over.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature and gives an insight on *Nhare mbira*, its origin, tuning and the role it played in the society. The focus will also dwell on the documentation of mbira playing families, how the knowledge was passed on from one generation to another in the pre-colonial era and in the modern days and also the impact of colonialism and Christianity on African people's livelihood and their music. The information will enable the researcher to reveal the gap to be filled by this study. .

2.1 The origin of mbira

According to Berliner (1981) *mbira* is referred to as hand piano or finger piano is one of the most popular instrument in Africa. The word *mbira* is both plural and singular. Berliner highlighted that the mbira is one of the traditional instrument commonly found in Zimbabwe. The *Nhare mbira* is going to be the focus of this study because the *Gumira mbira* playing family played no other *mbiras* other than the *nhare* even the songs they recorded were played on *Nhare mbira*. Berlina clearly indicates that the Zimbabweans particularly the *Shona* people *Nhare mbira* had a special significance in their culture for many years. Maraire (1992) says that the importance of the *mbira* instrument can be measured by the role it has played in ritual and ceremonial occasions. *Nhare mbira* because of its unique sound has the power to link the living and the dead (ibid). The history of the mbira stretch back to the 14th century at Great Zimbabwe ruins where the first mbira was made. It is believed that the spirit came among the *Shona* people and taught them how to make the musical instrument. The origin mbira has brought controversy in the music arena. Maraire (1992) the origin of *Nhare mbira* in the pre-colonial era cannot be easily traced because there is no documented information on musical activities during this era. According to www.mbirajunction.com (2007) *Shona mbira* has been

in presents for many years amongst certain tribes of the *Shona* people of Zimbabwe and stretched to Mozambique. No specific period was given. On the other hand Adzenyah etal (1991) argues with Maraire and www.mbirajunction.com by giving the period of seven hundred in which the ancient mbira has been in existence in the *Shona* society particularly the Zezuru tribe.

From the above discussion the *Nhare mbira* however has been in existence since time immemorial as it played a pivotal role in the lives of the Shona people. The scholars did justice in investigating the origin of *mbira nhare* but they did not mention how the instrument fell in the hands of the *Gumira mbira* playing family who are found in Murehwa. The study will unearth how the *Gumira* family among other families in *Murehwa* got the *mbira*.

2.2 The role of mbira in the traditional society

According to Washington (2002) the Shona people have been a music loving people for whom music has been an integral part of the culture. Even in a dynamic society as the shona child grows up he or she is exposed to music accompanying every event. *Mbira* music fits in all aspects of music both sacred and secular. Mbira music was normally performed during the time of need as an example when there is drought, floods or any calamity that might befall a community. Berliner (1981) says that *mbira* music is believed to be an expression of troubles and grievances directed to the ancestors and the members of society. Maraire (1992) notes that this communication is done successfully through all night mbira ceremonies known as (mapira). Even though *mbira* music is sacred it is also performed at social gatherings or celebrations of all kinds such as weddings, installations of new chiefs to mention only a few nowadays it is played at independence days and international conference.

Mbira music when performed in context has the ability to stop natural disaster such floods and drought. Azim (1996) highlights that *mbira* music is religious, it has the ability to chase away evil spirits and treat various ailments herbs or intervention of traditional healers just like what

modern men of God do through prayers. The *mbira* according to Azim (1996) is praised heavily for its power to sooth the nerves during a fierce storm and to calm wild animals of the African jungle for example when people are hunting the instrument can be played so that the hunters are not attacked by wild animals. Nhare Mbira is also played at social gatherings. At the death of a chief *mbira* music is performed continuously for one week before the community is informed. It is also an individual instrument, which sometimes accompany storytelling and at kurova guva ceremony to bring back the deceased into the community. The role of *Nhare Mbira* was well discussed by Maraire, Azim and Berlina. The study will be narrowed down, focusing on Mhuri yekwa *Gumira*. The study will uncover the role the *mbira* played among the societies in *Murehwa* that include the Gumira family. Nketia (1974) highlighted in Gwekwere (2012) indicates that sometimes the schedule of musical activities is related to the beliefs of a community. There are no families among the Shona people that live in isolation. This research will unearth how other families in *Murehwa* benefited from the *Gumira* family as a mbira playing family. The benefits could be cultural, traditional or musical. So far there is no documentation about *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*

Jones (1982) mbira music depicts political history, religion and social reality. Mbira is one of the most popular traditional instrument found in Zimbabwe. African traditional religion continues to play an important role in Zimbabwe although some people have abandoned some traditional practices in favor of Christianity. *Mbira* music has not been restricted to religious and entertainment context only but also used as a vehicle for social commentary in the sense that most of the songs composed have a social meaning relevant to the targeted group. The mbira instrument was passed on to the fore fathers by the spirits. Some contemporary musicians have found the instrument user friendly and some of them have fused the western instrument with the magic *Nhare mbira*. Gwekwerere (2012) says that Thomas Mapfumo used both western instruments and *Nhare mbira*, he is also popular for playing the *mbira* beat on electric

instruments. Stella Chiweshe and a few others have done the same with *Nhare mbira* and western instruments in their music. Ibid also notes that traditional music became a source of commercial commodity after colonization, some artist making a living out of performing indigenous music. Gwekwerere (2012) did not cite *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* who also recorded their mbira works so as to earn a living. On the other hand Jones (1982), Berliner (1981) and Azim (1996) have clearly outlined the role of *Nhare mbira* in both pre-colonial and post-independence era but they ignored the fact that mbira music in the post-independence era became a source of income as demonstrated by the *Gumira Mbira* playing family. Recording mbira music maybe was a way of earning a living. Matiure (2013) agrees with Gwekwerere (2012) noting changes that have taken place because of globalization. The context in which the mbira music used to be performed have changed from traditional to commercial setting and from local to international stage (200:104). By recording the single *Wanyanya* the *Gumira mbira* playing family demonstrated that they were also affected by globalization as a result they marginally performed for commercial purposes. All the scholars who discussed the role of the nhare mbira did not mention *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*.

2.3 Organology of the Nhare mbira

According to Maraire cited in Gwekwerere (2012:210) mbira is a family name for instruments with metal keys attached to a wooden board. Berliner (1981) agrees with Maraire (2013) in describing the mbira instrument. The scholars says that many mbira instruments have sound boards which amplify the sounds and metal keys are suspended over a. soundboard is referred to as the (*gwariva*). It is made from hard wood mubvamaropa tree (*Plerocarpus anglorences*). Bottle tops or shells are nailed on a metal plate at the lower end of an mbira to give a percussive sound which augment the sound (ibid). Even though Gwekwerere (2012) and Berliner (1981) talked about the mbira design however, they did not exclusively bring out whether the *Gumira*

family understood the physical makeup of the gadget. The study will unearth how the *Gumira Mbira* playing family understood Mbira Nhare.

According to Shepherd et al (2003) most mbira keys are arranged with the lowest key in the middle of the instrument. The Gwemyambiras pluck the instrument right and left or vice versa. The playing technique depends on the position of the keyboard. The mbira dzavadzimu is a unique instrument that uses a key board on one instrument. The mbira nhare should be held in the correct manner according to Gwekwerere (2012) putting the small finger of the right hand through a hole support the instrument when playing. Gwekwerere explains that the right hand plays the top keys on the right whilst the left hand plays the left keys. Sound is produced by plucking the keys, two thumbs stroking down and fore fingers stroking up. Playing the instrument requires one to keep long finger nails so as to play the instrument comfortably. Mbira Dzavadzimu keys ranges from 22 to 28 keys. Gwekwerere et al (2012: 166) *mbira* instrument fall under melodic idiophones which have pitch and can surrogate the human voice. The literature from the scholars reveal the organology of the *Nhare Mbira* but the materials, size, resonance given is not in relation to the *Nhare mbira* played by the Gumira mbira playing family.

2.4 Tuning of *Nhare Mbira*

Berlina (1993) tuning differ among mbira types. The scholar highlights that in Zimbabwe quite a number of Tuning has been used. Hugh Tracy (1961) highlights several methods of tuning *mbira* nhare such as the popular method *Nyamaropa* (Mixolydian mode), *Dambatsoko* which is similar to *Nyamaropa* played by the *Mhuri yekwa Mujuru*, *Kutsanzira* (Dorian mode) and *Mamba* (Phrygian mode). Huwiler (1995:30) argues that the way in which the *mbira* should be tuned does not match any tuning fork. A five pitch scale and a seven pitch scale. Shepherd et al (2003) indicates that tuning varies from one area to another which means that it depends on individual. *Mbira Dzavadzimu* of the shona people of Zimbabwe is structured in a heptatonic

scales. Which are in a major, minor, natural minor and Phrygian with some interval difference from the western scales (ibid). William et al (2010) says that the *mbira* idiophone referred to as lamellophone is found across the whole Bantu world. The scholars have suggested various methods of tuning the Nhare Mbira but did not mention how the *Gumira mbira* players tuned their *Nhare Mbira* or how the *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* understood the *Nhare Mbira*

2.5 Mode of Transmission

Berliner (1978) notes that not anyone can learn to play the mbira instrument because there is no written music to learn from. Mbira music is passed on from one generation to another. To learn the mbira, learners acquire the knowledge by imitating the experienced. The music is not notated. African music was a communal thing people worked together to come up with a piece of music. There was no formal education in music composition. Besides learning from the experienced. Some *mbira* players get their skills and inspiration from their dreams. As urbanization took its toll the transmission of knowledge for mbira playing shifted gradually from oral tradition to theory. Matiure (2013) notes that formal teaching of mbira to students in schools as a way of transmitting the legacy to the young. However Berlina (1978) and Matiure (2013) explains well how *mbira* playing skills were transmitted from one person to another during the colonial and post-independence era but the literature does not indicate how mbira playing skill are passed on from one generation to another in the *Gumira* family

2.6 Documentation of mbira playing families

Recording of musical activities in Zimbabwe only commenced around 1930s according to Makwenda (2005) even though there were musical activities in the pre-colonial era. There was no technological means to carry out such a task. Many authors have written more about Zimbabwean performing artists, Gospel singers, *Mbira* players, Jazzy musicians to mention only a few ,their works ,success and failures have been documented. Zindi (2003:84)

documented some mbira players like Ephant Mujuru who formed a group with his friend Charles Mutwida in 1972 called *Mhuri yekwa Chaminuka*. The group was later named the spirit of Hakurotwi Mude. Mude according to ibid was the leader of a well-known *mbira* playing family of the 70s *Mhuri yekwa Rwizi*. The group could perform in rituals or other ceremonies. Ephant Mujuru first recorded his music in 1975 unlike some mbira musicians was very lucky to work with famous author Paul Berliner author of *The Soul of Mbira*. This contributed to his popularity amongst writers. His musical works were recorded by many authors. Zindi (2003) also documented Stella Chiweshe known as the mbira queen in Zimbabwe. Stella Chiweshe like many other mbira performers had her musical career been written down by various authors such as Berliner (1981), Turino (2000) and others. Mbuya Stella Chiweshe has been documented as one of the mbira players who started her career at a tender age challenging the male dominated domain. She learnt the mbira playing techniques from her uncle. In the early eighties she did many musical shows abroad where she gained popularity than in Zimbabwe. Even though Zindi (2003) gave a fair share on his documentaries on pop music, not all *mbira* musicians were documented this include Mhuri Yekwa Gumira hence I found it necessary to carry out this study.

Makwenda is another writer who traced musical activities in Rhodesia from the early 1930s up to the 1980s. When I read through the book I was hoping to come across some mbira players including *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*. I suppose the author's main focus was on township music which was mainly influenced by colonialism and urbanization.

According to Standard (2013) Dumisani Maraire *mbira* legend is one of the lucky mbira player whose contribution in the music arena was greatly recognized. He learnt to play *mbira* from family members. He later became an mbira legend, a lecturer and a writer. He passed on his knowledge to his daughter Chioniso Maraire. His daughter grew up in good mentorship from his father. She became one of the one of the best musicians between 1990 and 2000. The latter

was an accomplished singer and a song writer. Chioniso recorded an album entitled ancient voices when she fused traditional instruments and modern instruments. She died when her career was at its climax in 2013 Standard (19/02/ 2017).

According to Jones (1992) in recent years many mbira musicians emerged such as Mbuya Madube, *Mbira dzeNharira*, *Maungira eNharira*, Hope Masike amongst others.

Turino (2000) says that documentation of indigenous Shona music began around the 1950s by (R.B.C) Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation. Music was recorded for airplay on African service Radio. According to ibid mbira recordings were more common compared to other types. Mbira players were also invited in the studio for live interviews. Mr Mbabane did most of the recordings. Amongst the recorded mbira musicians were *Bandambira*, *Hakurotwi*, Mude and many others. Hakurotwi was one of the best mbira players of the time. Chris Mhlanga and *Tute Chigamba* took up the mbira in the 1960s they were inspired by the recordings of *Bandambira*. Ibid purports that they actually learned mbira music from the radio broadcast.

Brussilar (2003) highlighted that some families have developed strong attachment to the *mbira* instrument, and some great performers have been born from families of great mbira performers. A good example is *Musekiwa Chingodza* from *Mwangara* village in *Murehwa* who began playing at the age of five. Musekiwa introduced a *nyunga nyunga* with an extra key which widens the instrument repertoire. According to Berliner (1981) another family popularly known for *mbira* playing is *Mhuri yekwa Magaya* mbira ensemble led by Cosmas *Magaya* who is an international recognized and outstanding *mbira dzevadzimu* player and teacher. He collaborated with *Mhuri yekwa Rwizi mbira* group for over 25 years *Magaya* is also an instrumental writer in Paul Berlina Soul of *Mbira* in the 1970s up to date (ibid).

Turino (2000) says that *Sekuru Gweshe* comes from the Budya, a subgroup of *Kore Kore*, he is a descendent of Nehoreka the founder of shumba totem. He began to learn the mbira

instrument at a tender age of 14. He is credited for adding keys to the njari so that he could play all music he comes across on the instrument. As a result of this, he came up with his own personalized mbira known as *Munyonga* which he played on his CD *Mhuri YekwaNehoreka*. Amongst these mbira players are also many other families that kept mbira music alive like *mhuri yekwa Makonese*, *Mhuri yekwa Mukonchirwa*, Beaular Joko, and many others. The scholars have documented quite a number of mbira playing families but they did not mention *Mhuri yekwa Gumira mbira* playing family and yet the family contributed a lot in the music industry. The study will unearth who the *Gumira mbira* playing families are and their contribution in the music industry

2.7 The decline of nhare mbira performances

Activities of African traditional religion were negatively disturbed by colonial and post-colonial activities such as urbanization, religion, migration, industrialization. The research will establish what contributed to the decline of mbira performance among the *Gumira* family.

According to <http://blogs.stockton.edu> when Southern Rhodesia was colonized in 1890 so many changes took place for all indigenous people. The indigenous people were forced into under privileged peasant class. The white settlers occupied fertile land whilst the black Africans were resettled in state lands. The people who once lived a life of agriculture and use of forest resources were relocated to communal areas with poor soil and poor rainfall. Game reserves were introduced and some acts which protected wild life were imposed. Hut tax was introduced. All these unfavorable acts forced the indigenous people to work for the white settlers in their farms and mines so that they earn money to sustain themselves. On the other hand, urban areas were built. These became a melting pot for all marketing activities and industrialization. The developments marked the beginning of migration of rural folk in search of jobs *ibid*. Makwenda (2005) says that the creeping in of civilization resulted in many people leaving their homesteads in search of jobs. The migration impacted negatively on the families

traditional music, as some migrants did not migrate with their music or musical instruments especially the mbira. It also destroyed the mbira playing tradition of playing together as a family because the family unity had been destroyed by these job hunting expeditions. Some traditional mbira player players were forced to abandon the mbira playing tradition others ventured in to different music styles.

In urban areas according to Makwenda (2005) around the 1930s loud speakers were installed in townships by municipality councils so that the black Africans would hear news because only few owns gramophones which were expensive. This development in a way negatively impacted on traditional music because the news bulletins were accompanied by musical episodes. Makwenda purports that western culture introduced new musical trends through electronic media every one desired to be associated with the new musical styles which led to the abandonment of traditional culture in favor of western culture. The mbira and the drum which had carried the African tradition for many years were out of fashion. Makwenda (2005) highlights some of the reasons that contributed to the decline in traditional music in Zimbabwe but the author did not scale down to a particular family. The study will bring out the causes of the decline of mbira performances in the Gumira family.

According to Karmapa (1997) Catholic missionaries castigated the use of mbira instruments in the Church even though other traditional instruments like drums and rattles have fitted well in their religious procession. Mbira instrument became a victim because of the role it played in traditional ceremonies.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The chapter highlights and discusses the methodology used in this research in order to come up with comprehensive data. The purpose of selecting observation and interview guide as research instruments will be analysed as well as population and sample for the research, ethical issues, the research design, presentation and analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design

Bernard (1988) says that research design is a mental plan that specifies the method and procedure for collecting and analyzing data. It is a framework that stipulates what information to be collected, from which source by what procedure. This study was a case study which is in a qualitative form. According to <http://occupytheory.org/advantages-and-disadvantages-ofqualitative-research/> qualitative research refer to investigative methodologies and techniques described as naturalistic, ethnographic, field, anthropological or observation research. This method gives emphasis on the value of studying variables in their natural settings (ibid). Qualitative research method allowed the researcher to be able to critically evaluate the data collected. According to <http://www.snapsurvey.com>blog> The method enabled the researcher to unearth the causes in the decline of mbira performances in the *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* of *Zihute* kraal. It is an inquiry in which a researcher will explore a program event, activity process or one or more individuals. Qualitative approach will also enabled the researcher to unearth the significance of mbira performance in the shona culture and the impact of modernization on Zimbabwean traditional music

<http://www.merriam-webster.com> defines as an intensive analysis of an individual unit, for example a person or community stressing developmental factors in relation to environment. A case study is guided by time frame and activity. Yin (2002) identified five components of an

effective case study such as research question, purpose of the study, unity analysis, connecting data to propositions, and the criteria for interpreting data.

All these components have been included in the case study in order to come up with a comprehensive case study that would unearth the decline of mbira performance in the Gumira family. It also deals with an occurrence that is difficult or impossible to calculate mathematically such as beliefs meaning, attributes and symbols Atolaibi (2014). Hancock et al (2009) agrees with Dodge (2011) that qualitative research mainly focuses on behavior in natural setting and focuses on data which cannot be expressed numerically. The study of this nature enables the researcher to have an overview on how people can have different ways of looking at reality usually psychological reality. Qualitative research involves the real world context and various viewpoint on board. In this research the phenomenon under study is the decline of mbira performance in families. The study focus on *Mhuri Yekwa Gumira* in *Zihute* village in *Murehwa* district. Since the researcher is also a *mbira* player a qualitative approach will be ideal because the researcher find it easy to create rapport with people who also play the same instrument. The will also have a Textual description of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* musical career.

3.2 Population and sample

According to Bernard (1988) population refers to the whole group of people residing in a defined area at a given time. In relation to this study, the population include selected the people of *Zihute* kraal in *Murehwa*.

3.3 Sample

Sampling involves the assortment of a number of study elements from a designated study population. According to Kothari (2004) a sample is part of a population which is provided by some process or usually by deliberately selection from the parent population. In this research I have selected the *Gumira* family members who took part in *mbira* performance in the 1960s.

The mbira performers match the topic under study. The sample will be selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques.

3.4 Sampling technique

Sampling refers to taking a fraction of a larger population. Kathari (2004) Indicates that sampling technique is a procedure the researcher would choose to use in selecting items for the sample. According to *Chiromo* (2006) purposive sampling researchers have to handpick the cases to be included in the sample. The participants are selected basing on the researchers opinion of their typicality. In this study the researcher has selected the *Gumira* family who took part in mbira performance in the 1960s. The selection of the sample was not complicated it was based on an approach known as purposeful. Maxwell (2005) cited in Dodge (2011) says that purposeful sampling technique is a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons or activity are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can be acquired from other choices. According to Mkuzo (2009) purposive sampling technique is the most suitable in this research as the researcher used her knowledge to hand pick the participants. Selection depends on the nature of the study and knowledge of the population. Purposive sampling is not time consuming, less expensive and demands less effort, as compared to other sampling techniques. Choosing who should take part in the research mainly done by the researcher. Purposive sampling will work in conjunction with Snow ball sampling technique. Snow ball sampling technique according to Mkuzo (2009) focus on rare members of population and progress from one case to another through referrals. Barnett (2002) cited in Chiromo (2006) researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics they require. The participants are then used as the informants to identify others who qualify to be included in the research the referrals will continue identifying others as the study unfold. I select my sample as *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* from *Zihute* Kraal. The family members referred me to the knowledgeable ones who led me to persons who have abandoned mbira playing and those who

were still practicing mbira playing tradition. Snow ball was the most ideal because it allowed the researcher to identify specific members of the *Gumira* family, who actually took part in mbira performance around the 1960s.

3.5 Research instruments

According to Phrasisombath (2012) research instruments are instruments that are normally used to gather important, objective and accurate data that will provide answers to the topic under study. In order to capture the holistic information about the mbira group the researcher made use of interviews. Interviews according to Kahn and Cannell (1957) is described as a conversation with a purpose. Interviews are one of the best methods to use in collecting Primary data that is both qualitative and quantitative which involves in depth or unstructured interviews and semi structured interviews.

3.5.1 Semi structured interviews

In this case study the researcher used semi-structured interview, which enables the researcher to acquire first-hand information from the participants who played the mbira as it was a one on one process. This gave the researcher an opportunity to probe further so as to get clarity of questions. The emotions of the participants was also assessed during this process. The information was recorded through videos, photography, audio tapes, and the researcher made use of triangulation for the legitimacy of results. Bernard (1988) says that structured interviews are used when you won't get more than one chance to interview someone According to Sutton (2004) semi structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative analysis. Semi-structured interviews gives the researcher an opportunity to carry out the research. The order of the question can be changed depending on the direction of the interviews. An interview guide with questions can be used. A researcher conducting a semi-structure interview is more flexible than the one conducting a structured interview *ibid*. The interviewee can be flexible to probe further until the desired results are achieved. Semi-structured

interviews allowed the researcher to acquire the data that cannot be obtained through observation such as the career background of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* the researcher used Semi structured interview so that the interview is well done. Preparing an interview guide enabled the interview to go smoothly. The interview guide consisted of a variety of questions that were asked to the family members of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* who actually took part in mbira performance around the 1960s. Bjombolt and Farstad (2012) says that it is generally beneficial for interviewers to have interview guide prepared. The researcher prepared the question in advance which made the interview to run smoothly. This approach enabled the participant to express themselves freely.

3.5.2 Observation

According to Zikmund (2003) Observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry. It is referred to as a systematic recording of event, behaviors and artifacts or objects in the social setting chosen for the study. There are different types of observation such as Non Participant observation and Participant observation structured and non-structured observation. In the study of the decline of mbira performances in families the Case study of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*. The researcher opted for a non-participant observation. The researcher observed how the Gumira mbira players tune their instruments or play the mbira instrument. The researcher have chosen the structured observation and prepared a number of areas to observe especially the playing part of the mbira. Structured observation enabled the researcher to note the impact of the environment on their mbira performance.

3.6 Data validation and reliability

The research about the decline of mbira playing in families need to be dependable, flawless and transparent so that the reader is able to follow it and borrow some ideas if need be. According to Greener (2008) the method undertaken by the researcher should be clear enough to install confidence in the reader. The researcher made use of the applicable research

instrument to collect adequate data that answered the research topic. Triangulation was employed to insure validity and reliability of the data collected. Ethical consideration needs consideration during the research. The researcher should not

3.7 Ethical Issues

Ethical consideration was considered during the course of the study. The researcher did not take advantage of the respondents or grabbed their properties without their consent. Also a pre-visit to Zihute kraal in Murehwa district should be conducted so as to make the respondents aware of the research and its advantages. The researcher did not force the family members of the Gumira family to take part in the study without giving consent. Respondents were allowed the researcher to use their names, videos, pictures or any other materials that needed to be used in the study during the study. The rights of the participants were respected. All measures were taken to respect the human rights of the respondents and the society as a whole. The researcher guaranteed the participants confidentiality, thus insuring them that identified information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the research.

3.8 Summary

The chapter has covered all topics under research methodology which produced a qualitative research such as research design, research population, sample and sampling, research instruments and data validation and reliability. Interviews and observation used to collect data from members of the *Gumira* family who took part in mbira performance in the 1960s were also discussed. The *Gumira* family who resides in *Zihute Kraal, Madhanga Village* in *Murehwa* district. *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* has been selected as the population under study.

Chapter 4

Data presentation, interpretation, analysis and discussion

4.0 Introduction

The research was undertaken to establish contributions to the abandonment of *Nhare Mbira* by *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*. This chapter presents, interprets, analyses and discusses the data collected through the use of interviews and observations to answer the research questions. The presentation and analysis of the data was done following subtopics derived from research questions as follows: *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*, Introduction of the *Nhare mbira* in the Family, The functionality of *Nhare Mbira* among the *Gumira* family before 1980, works by *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* and major causes of the declining in *mbira* performances among the *Gumira* family

4.1: Mhuri yekwa Gumira

Mhuri yekwa Gumira is a unique family that made history around the 1960s because of its outstanding members who were talented in *mbira* performances. According to *Musafare Gumira* (interviewee 04/02/17), the *Gumira* family originated from *Guruuswa*. They are the descendants of the great ancestor *Muchekanyanza*. According to oral history the family decided to leave their place of birth when one of their grandparents who was supposed to be installed as a chief refused to hand over one of his sons for sacrifice. *Musafare Gumira* one of the informant, the norms and values of the *hungwe* people, before one becomes a chief, he should kill his first born son (interview 04/02/17). Conscience overpowered the great ancestors of the *Gumira* family and decided to run away so that he could save his son's life. The *Gumira* family settled in *Murehwa* where the majority of this unique family resides. They now live in *Madhanga* village, *Zihute Kraal* in *Murehwa* district. *Madhanga* village carries the name of the eldest grandparent *Madhanga Gumira*. They are of the *Soko Wafawanaka* totem. According to Chigwedere (1980) *Mambiri* chose *soko* totem to guard against incestuous behavior and also for social identity of his followers. Chigwedere also notes that the choosing of the *soko* totem

took place in a mythical place known as *Guruuswa*. *Guruuswa* is found in the northern part of the Zambezi River in Southern *Tanganyika*.

Most of the *Gumira* family members are subsistence farmers whilst others are formally employed. They grow crops like maize, *rapoko*, groundnuts to mention only a few mainly for home consumption. Rearing cattle, goats and chickens is also part of their life style.

Musafare Gumira (interview 04/02/17) says that The *Gumira* family was made up of cousin brothers coming from the extended family from 6 grand parents who are *Madhanga*, *Mubvumbi*, *Nhandara*, Enock, Paul and Johane of the *Soko wafawanaka* toem. The *Chapangaras* were also part of the *Gumira* family in their relations The *gumira* family was well known as a family that had a *mbira* playing tradition well known in *Zihute Kraal*. Many male members even small boys from the bigger family were able to play the *Nhare Mbira* . According to *Matongo* the nephew to the *Gumira* family, the active members from the big family were Solomon *Gumira*, *Musafare Gumira* and Ruben *Chapangara* senior and were the ones who did *mbira* productions using the name using the name “*Mhuri yekwa Gumira*.” Solomon Taurai *Kurasa Gumira*, *Musafare Madhanga Gumira*, and *Matongo* are still alive (Interview 04/ 02/17).



Plate 1: Musafare and nephew Matongo (picture by author)

4.2 Introduction of nhare mbira in the family

The *Nhare Mbira* was brought into the family by Taurai Solomon *Kurasa Gumira* around 1950s. Taurai Solomon *Kurasa Gumira* was given the mbira by *Mazhindu* Canisio who was married to Solomon's twin sister. *Mazhindu* had migrated from *Seke* and he was a traditional healer. He taught Solomon how to play *Nhare Mbira*.



Plate 2: Solomon Taurai Kurasa (picture by author) Mbira yatakatanga kuridza ndakaipiwa nemukuwasha wangu Mazhindu kuma 1950 uye yakava chinhu chaidiwa nevanhu vechirume mumhuri nekuti yaititandadza panguva dzemanheru. Kunyangwe zvazvo pakutanga takanga tisati taakukwanisa kuridza asi mumwe nemumwe akanga aine chishuwo netarisiro yekuve gwenyambira. (Solomon Taurai Kurasa interview 04.02.17)

Translated to mean

The first mbira that we played was given to me by my brother-in-law Mazhindu around the 1950s and almost every male member of the family liked the instrument because it was now our source of entertainment in the evening. Although initially we were not able to play the instrument but every one learned to play with great desire and hope to be great mbira player.

The instrument was learnt by most male members of the *Gumira* family. It was mainly played at their evening dare which usually took place under a big *mukuyu* tree (plate 4). It was under this big *mukuyu* tree that most family traditional functions such as *mapira* and *mafuwe* were performed. Solomon and *Musafare* made an effort to acquire a set of 2 new *Nhare Mbiras* in the late 1950s. One of these mbiras still exists today.



PLATE 3: One of the first set of nhare mbira bought by the Gumira family around late 1950s (picture by author)

The nhare mbira became the major source of entertainment to the family. Their functions were always accompanied by the playing of the mbira rather than using traditional drums. This is supported by Berliner (1993) where he notes that the Shona people of Zimbabwe places a special significance and value on the mbira. From the day they received the *nhare mbira* the Gurira family fell in love with the instrument and made sure that plays its role in family occasions as well as in the community.

Rwiyo rwatakatanga kuridza rwunonzi Karigamombe asi taingoti dongi mombe mbudzi. Rwiyo urwu rwaiita nyore nekuti taingonzwa mbira yacho seirikuimba dongi mombe mbudzi saka zvaiva nyore kuti nyangwe uriwega waingoteedzera (Musafare Gumira interview 04.02.17)

Translated to mean

The song that we first learnt was *Karigamombe* popularly known in the family as “*dhongi mombe mbudzi*”. The song appeared to be easy to learn because we could hear the instrument singing “*dhongi mombe mbudzi*” so we only followed that phrase “*dhongi mombe mbudzi*”.

Karigamombe means "taking the bull by the horns," or "undefeatable" and is a good first piece to learn because of its relative simplicity Berliner (1993) with its simultaneous plucking of both the upper and middle registers in a steady beat, it becomes easy to play, but challenging to properly count. *Karogamombe* is an imitative of the older song *Nyamaropa* meaning blood. *Nyamaropa* is alleged to be the first composition of *nhare* instrument. Most students are first introduced to this song because it's easy to learn. (ibid)

4.3 Functionality of the nhare mbira among the Gumira family before 1980.

Before 1980, the *nhare mbira* was an important part of the *Gumira* family. When not in use the *mbira* instruments were kept in a small hut called *banya* together with other tools used for ritual functions. The *nhare mbira* played different roles among the *Gumira* family during *mapira* or rain making ceremonies (*mafuwe* or *chipwa*). *Mafuwe* and *Chipwa* ceremonies are performed for the same purpose that is asking for rain but on different occasion. *Mafuwe* ceremony was performed when people ask for rain around September or October whilst *Chipwa* is performed when people realize that there is potential drought (interview 04.02.17) the *Nhare Mbira* was used as a medium for spiritual manifestation. According to Solomon Taurai Kurasa Gumira (interview 04.02.17) for the spirits of *Muchekanyanza*, *Jokonya*, *Badze* and *Nyamuchaya* to manifest *mbira* had to be played. Matiore (2011) agrees with Solomon when he says that *mbira*

dzavadzimu is well known for its ability to evoke spirits and to communicate with *Musikawanhu* (God) who respond immediately. According to Matiure *Mbira dzavadzimu* was also used as a weapon against feminine and evil.

Mbira idzodzi ndodzaiita kuti midzimu isvike. Taiti kana pane zvinhu zvemusha zvakakosha zvinoda kugadzirisha kana kuti tipuwe gwara rekuteedza pane zvaida kuitwa mumusha, mbira ndodzaitanga kuridzwa kubva masikati.

Translated to mean:

During *mapira* the *Nhare Mbira* was used to lure ancestral spirits. We played the *Nhare Mbira* from late afternoon if there was something important to be solved or to seek guidance in whatever we wanted to do.

Iyi mbira yaitikoshera mumusha medu zvakanyanya. Yakaita kuti musha wedu udzikame pamagariro, kuremekedzana pakati pemhuri, kutya kubata zvinhu zvechivanhu zvaigona kunyangadza musha.

Translated to mean:

The *mbira* was important to the family because it promoted harmonious living, respect and fear of harming others. According to Solomon Kurasa Gumira (personal interview 04.02.17) it is because of the *Nhare Mbira* that they survived the war of liberation and no terrible actions were experienced in their village. Solomon Gumira narrated that the comrades respected the family elders and other members of the family because of the *Nhare Mbira*. The comrades also came for *mapira* during the night were they were given guidance during the war. If there was dry spells the family played the *mbira* and rain would come as believed. From the explanations given the *mbira* was their source of life.

Mbira iyi inzira yekutaura nayo nevadzimu (Shadreck Gumira interview 04.02.17) Kana mvura yanetsa, taona kuti mazuva atinowana mvura apfuura kuridza mbira kwaitibatsira kuti mvura inaye. Dzimwe dzenguva taiti kana tine zvatakanganisa kuvakuru vedu taiti tikakumbira tadziridza chaizvo mbira tiri pasi pemukuyu uyo, vaitibatsira kuti mvura inaye (personal interview Musafare Gumira 04/02/17).

Translated to mean:

Mbira is a means of communicating with ancestors. If we experience a dry spell or drought, the dance is performed so that we get the rains. Sometimes if there is something wrong done, we played *mbira* under that big fig tree and those in the heavens could hear us and solve our problems.



Plate 4: The big fig tree where most functions were performed. (picture by author 04/02/17)

The Gumira family believed that the *Nhare mbira* made their life whole because it was part of every ceremony. www.mbir.org/shonaculture.html in support of the role of mbira in the Gumira family and communities that surround Zihute Kraal says that mbira pervades all aspects of shona culture, both sacred and secular. The Mhuri Yekwa Gumira performed mbira music at Bira ceremonies, to summon ancestral spirits such as *Muchekanyanza* the family guardian also they performed mbira for entertainment. Their songs reflected their life style by commenting on social events.

4.4 Works by Mhuri yekwa Gumira

Colonialism brought many changes to the roles or function of *Mbira* music in the shona society. Apart from ritual purposes and entertainment mbira music has since been commercialized in Zimbabwe and abroad. Matiure (2013) notes that the migration of mbira players to towns and overseas have resulted in commercializing mbira music. *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* was also caught up in the trend and widened their horizon as far as mbira performance was concerned. According to Musafare Gumira the chief informant With the help of *Chademoyo* they managed to visit the recording studio and do their first recording. Some of the works of Mhuri yekwa Gumira include *Wanyanya* and *Shumba* (Interview 04/02/17). These songs were produced as singles during the late 1960s. The single was recorded and produced by *Chademoyo*. According to Turino (2008) Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) was founded in 1932 and around 1960 and 70s many mbira players were recorded. Even though the Gumira Family recorded around this period their work was not documented unlike *Mhuri yekwaRwizi* and *Mhuri yekwa Chimombe* , *Hakurotwi Mude* to give only a few examples. The living members no longer remember other songs they produced except the two mentioned above. This is evidence that the family had abandoned the *nhare mbira* although Musafare still have the mbira in his house. I asked him to perform one of their recorded songs but he couldn't. Solomon Kurasa even

struggled to play Nhemamusasa, a mode in which Wanyanya song was recorded.. All the two songs have social commentary.



Plate 5. The single Wanyanya recorded in 1969. (Picture by author)

4.5 Major causes of the decline of mbira performances among the Gumira family

4.5.1 Change of Religion

In African families, it is the children who can inherit the works of their fathers to maintain their continuity but it is now different with the *Gumira* family. Christianity influenced the *Gumira* family to abandon their mbira playing tradition. The spread of Christianity greatly affected the Gumira family which had their own traditional way of life which was African Traditional Religion. According to *Musafare Gumira* (interview 04.02.17), it was around late 1980s when the family members mainly women and children started going to United Methodist church. In support of this Dutiro cited in Matiure (2013) notes that during colonial period Missionaries taught that *Mbira Nhare* was pagan hence the performance of mbira suffered a setback. Even though the Africans had their own way of communicating

with God (*Musikavanhu*) through playing *Mbira Nhare*. Huwiler (1995) agrees with Dutiro that the new comers considered traditional music that is mbira music unsuitable for divine worship. However the mbira music was substituted with western melodies. The African music composers were afraid that they would upset the missionaries by composing more traditional music. The only option was to abandon the traditional African religion in favor of Christianity. Not only the Gumira family was affected by the new development but many people in Rhodesia were forced to convert to Christianity and threw away all that was associated with paganism. By comparison the new religion and its music was so attractive and better as compared to African Music and the local people started doubting the value of their own music and their own way of expression Huwiler (1995:8)

Chitendero chakauya chine simba. Taifunga kuti vana vedu ndivo vatichasiira nhaka yekuridzwa kwembira tichitarisa zvipo zvekuridza zvakanga zviri mavari asi zvose zvakashaya basa pavakatanga kuenda kuchurch.

Translated to mean:

The impact of Christianity on African traditional religion was very powerful. We thought our children would inherit the work that we had started considering the talent that we could see in them but because of the church all was in vein.

The Gumira family are no longer able to maintain some of their cultural activities because, according to Musafare Madhanga Gumira most family members of the Gumira family were converted to Christianity. (interview February 4, 2017)

Machechi awanda hapana chichabuda. Tasara tiri vashomashoma vachirikwanisa kutenda munezveekubika doro uye kuridza mbira kwega pasina doro vanhu vanotoona sezvinhu zvemadhimoni. Musafare Madhanga Gumira (interview 4 February 2017)

Translated to mean:

Christian churches are now many that traditional functions no longer flourish. There are now very few of us who still participate in beer brewing for ritual purposes. The playing of mbira is now seen as demonic.

Some of the spirit medium vanished because of strong religious belief in the family, they felt they were being neglected except Muchekanyanza who is believed to be the family guardian ancestor. However, the Gumira family still have a hut (*banya*) for their spirit medium *Muchekanyanza*. Muchekanyanza is believed to be the ancestor of the Gumira family.



PLATE 6: Musafare madhanga Gumira and the researcher standing in front of the hut of sekuru Muchekanyanza (Photograph by author)

Musafare Gumira (interview 04.02.2017) mentions that there are tools for the spirit mediums that are kept in the small hut. The tools include small axe (*gano*), knives, (*mapakatwa*), spear (*pfumo*), walking sticks (*midonzvo*) and skins (*matehwe*). There are also pieces of cloth kept in the house. Tools and cloth are used by the spirit medium during rituals when possessed. The cloth is used as ritual dress for the medium during the ritual ceremonies. Only the elderly people who are no longer sexually active are allowed to enter in to the hut. Pregnant women, breast feeding women and young men are not allowed into the hut.

Mhiko dzemba iyoyi hadzidi vechidiki vachirikuita zvebonde kuti vapinde imomu. Madzimai akazvitakura kana varikuyamwisa havadiwe zvakare imomu. Iyi mirau yedu yatisingadi kuti itaurwe zvikonzero zvayo asi vanhu vanofanira kuzviteedzera zvakasimba (Musafare Madhanga Gumira interview 04.02.17).

Translated to mean:

The rules for *sekuru Muchekanyanza's* hut do not allow sexually active people to enter the hut. This also includes pregnant and breast feeding mothers. These are the rules that have reasons that are ritualistically protected but have to be followed.

4.5.2 No royalties were received from recorded works

Despite the desire to be well known mbira players *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* also expected to earn a living out of their works but this did not happen. No royalties were realized from the few works they produced. According to *Musafare Gumira one of the participants* (interview 04.02.17) during that time there were very few music promoters. Promoters could have assisted them to do live performances so that they could have stayed in the music industry longer than they did. Makenzie (2010) cited in Matiure (2013) says that most of the ensembles in Zimbabwe were formed as a way of making money, some managed to survive in the music industry but unfortunately *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* did not survive in the industry

Takaedza nepataigona kuti tive anagwenyambira vanembiri asi zvakaramba nekuti panziyo dzatakaita hapana chatakawana zvakaita kuti tishaye mari yekuramba tichienda mberi nebasa rekuridza mbira.

Translated to mean:

We tried by all means to work hard so that we could become well known mbira players but shortage of resources became our biggest challenge since we did not realize any royalties from the few work that we did. When the author asked if they had registered with the collecting societies. Musafare showed that he had no idea on how to register. Ignorance could have contributed to their downfall.

4.5.3 Rural to urban migration.

A number of factors influenced the disintegration of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira mbira* performers. According to Makwenda (2005) because of industrialization many people left their homes in search of employment. After failing to realize any benefit from the works already done some of the members of the *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* that include *Musafare* and Reuben *Chapangara*, moved to Harare where they were assisted by their Uncle Paul Gumira to secure employment at the University of Zimbabwe as general hands. This meant that the team could not stay together for practices. During the colonial period many people left their home steads in search of employment. The Rhodesian government had introduced hut tax which was paid in the form of money. The lifestyle of people changed because people needed money for their upkeep and to pay tax. The life of the Africans transformed from peasant farming to formal employment. These developments did not spare *Mhuri yekwa Gumira*. Some of the mbira players joined the mass exodus to the city in search of jobs. Some continued with their mbira playing tradition but most of them were no longer playing as families. Matiure (2013:4) says that the migration of people to towns affected the extended family system. Normally the Africans were used to

come together to conduct rituals and perform music. Mature agrees that this has led to the decline of mbira traditional practices that involved mbira music.

4.5.4 Resettlement program

After independence there were a lot of post-independence programs that either positively or negatively affected how people lived in rural areas and these programs included the resettlement program. In 1983 some of the *Gumira* family joined families who were resettled in *Hoyuyu* resettlement scheme in *Mutoko* including Solomon T. *Kurasa Gumira*. Post-independence programs such as resettlement programs disturbed extended family cohesion.

4.6 Summary.

The study established that The *Gumira* family originated from *Guruuswa* in the *Zambezi* valley. Findings also discovered that the *Gumiras* are the descendants of *Mambiri* one of the shona great ancestors. The study unearthed that out of five members who performed as Mhuri yekwa *Gumira* three are alive some are deceased such as Reuben *Chapangara* and Mishake *Gumira* Senior. Only *Musafare Gumira* is still able to play mbira but his colleagues Solomon and Cornelius *Matongo* are no longer able to demonstrate basic *nhare* mbira playing skills. *Musafare Madhanga Gumira* rarely plays the mbira despite having managed to keep the two sets of mbira in the small *Banya*. It also imaged that *Musafare* no longer have any one to perform with even during leisure time as they used to do under the big fig tree. *Musafare* has no one to share the skills with, because of Christianity most children were not inspired to take the legacy of mbira forward. Francis *Kurasa* is the only person from succeeding generation who was inspired to play mbira, only because he learnt the mbira playing skill at school. The study also unearthed that their culture was also eroded by Christianity.

Only two *Mbira* singles were found *Shumba* and *Wanyanya* but the group had more than two mbira recordings. The mbira performers themselves couldn't remember the songs they recorded. This is evidence that they abandoned mbira playing long back. The disintegration of

Mhuri Yekwa Gumira Mbira performers was also as a result of government led resettlement programs. Some members of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* went to resettlement areas whilst others refused and remained behind. Searching for employment in Harare contributed in the decline in mbira performance and family dispersal. It is believed that mbira playing was the backbone of family unity because during *Jenaguru* people would gather at one homestead or *Padare* to listen to mbira music. Also During the time of need when there is drought or any calamity they played their *Nhare Mbira* to summon the ancestral spirits. Most family members are now members of Christian churches such as United Methodist church, Roman Catholic and Apostle sects. Apart from entertainment mbira music was used in rain making ceremonies and to date some people use it for entertainment though not very often. *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* did not get any royalties from the recorded works and they were demotivated to continue with music production (*Musafare Madhanga Gumira interview 04/02.17*).

Most mbira playing families in Zimbabwe should take music as a profession. They need proper music management and marketing skills in order to survive in music industry. Poor management has led to collapse of many promising mbira ensembles.

4.7 Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, before colonialism the shona society had their own way of communicating to God using traditional mbira music. The introduction of Christianity in the country forced many people to shun their own religion in favor of Christianity. The chapter discussed the reasons that contributed to the abandonment of Mbira Nhare by Mhuri yekwa Gumira after making such an effort to record two singles *Shumba* and *Wanyanya* . Searching for employment, resettlement programs, lack of financial resources and failure to get royalties from recorded work, were some of the reasons that contributed to the decline of mbira performances in the family. The family could have made it in the Music industry considering

the time they recorded their music. Their work was not documented and marketed that could have made them popular and could have earned more money through selling their singles.

Chapter 5

Introduction, Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

5.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a general summary of the study and summarizes the major findings on the abandonment of mbira playing by Mhuri yekwa Gumira mbira playing family. The chapter also covers some recommendations on what can be done to improve mbira playing tradition in families.

5.1 Summary

Chapter one discusses the background of the study which highlight the reasons for conducting the research and the statement of the problem. The research questions in the chapter helped the researcher to get answers from the research topic. Significance of the study was also discussed which focused on the benefit of conducting the research and the beneficiaries of the study. Delimitations were discussed in the chapter highlighting challenges that the researcher faced during the course of the study. Definition of terms were given to create a deeper understanding of the study.

In chapter two the researcher consulted various scholars who wrote about *Mbira Nhare*. Subheadings were formulated and the researcher discussed each sub heading. Under each topic the researcher indicated what other scholars have written about *Nhare Mbira* and identified the gap that need to be filled by the study. For example documentation of Mbira playing families. The researcher identified scholars who documented Mbira playing families like Zindi and Turino and highlighted that Mhuri *yekwa Gumira* was not mentioned in the books. Chapter three basically focus on research methodologies such as the research designs, sampling techniques and research instruments that helped the researcher to collect data. Chapter three

presented guidance to the researcher on how to conduct the research without violating ethical issues.

Chapter four interprets, presents, analyses and discusses the data collected through interviews and observations to answer to research question about *Mhuri Yekwa Gumira*. A summary on what caused the decline in mbira performance is highlighted in the chapter. In chapter five the researcher gave recommendations on what can be done to promote *Nhare Mbira* performances in Families. The chapter also give a conclusion of the study.

5.2 Conclusions

My findings led me to conclude that colonialism brought so many advantages and disadvantages on Zimbabwean indigenous music. Traditional music is one genre that has been greatly affected by Christianity. This has influenced many people to abandon their religion in favor of Christianity. The introduction of currency in Rhodesia left many with no choice except to leave their homes and families in the village in search of employment in order to get the currency they needed to earn a living. Post-independence programs such as resettlement programs also affected family cohesion as people moved from their villages in search of more fertile land. Also financial constrains contributed in the decline of mbira performances in the Gumira family because recording and producing music demands a lot of money hence most of the mbira performers had no stable source of income, they relied on sponsorship. When their promoter *Chademwoyo* failed to continue with sponsorship. Their career in music crumbled. This movement did not only affected the family set up but also their traditions and religion just like what transpired in the *Gumira mbira* playing family. This affected the passing on of the mbira legacy to young generation. These days in Zimbabwe only the minority play mbira as families. The family unity has been disturbed by these migration. Most people are so rooted into Christianity to the extent that they no longer believe in traditional ceremonies. Mbira music has been losing a grip on its role in the shona societies. *Musafare Gumira* argued that although

mbira music was losing its place in the traditional African religion, some Christian converts still believe in their African religion. He said that when there is drought some Christians contribute *chimera rapoko* mea lie meal even though they do not physically take part. Some even ask him to consult the ancestral spirits when disaster struck the community.

5.3 Recommendations

From the findings the researcher recommend that:

- Mbira playing families need to be promoted. Mbira players just like any other musicians need financial support in order to survive in the music industry. Artist need money to buy instruments, transport, recording and marketing their products. There should be an organization that support upcoming artist.
- There is need to revive old mbira songs by means of digitalizing them. The mbira works of *Mhuri yekwa Gumira* that has been recorded on analogue should be converted to digital to make it accessible to everyone
- Mbira songs need to be transcribed so that they are preserved. There are many mbira songs that are not transcribed in Zimbabwe including the Gumira mbira works. There is need to revive mbira songs for future generation.
- Nhare mbira education in schools should be strongly advocated. Even though mbira is gaining its popularity not everyone has accepted it in the community. People need to be concertized that the mbira instrument is innocent just like any other western instrument.
- More documentation on mbira playing families need to be conducted. Mbira music is lying idle in the community and it's not fully utilized. Not only Mhuri yekwa Gumira produced great works. There are so many mbira performers whose work have not been documented.

- Most mbira playing families need to be concertized of their music rights just like any other artists. Some mbira musicians know very little about their music rights especially musicians who recorded during the colonial period.
- The local television and radio stations should give enough airplay to music by mbira playing families. The mbira playing families should make use of the social media such as face book, you tube, twitter to mention only a few to market their works.

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Appendix 1

Guide for semi structured interview.

Personal details

- 1.) Tell me a brief history about yourself?
- 2.) When did you start performing *Nhare Mbira*?
- 3.) Probe: How did you start performing *Nhare Mbira*
- 4.) How sacred was the *Nhare Mbira* instrument in the Family?
- 5.) Probe:
- 6.) What was the ethics of mbira playing?
- 7.) What was the spiritual significance of *Nhare Mbira* in your family?
- 8.) Probe:
- 9.) Which materials were used to make *Nhare Mbira*. Why?
Probe:
- 10.) How did the traits / attributes were passed on from one generation to another.
- 11.) What caused you to abandon the mbira playing tradition?
- 12.) Probe:
- 13.) How were you affected by the decline in mbira performance?

Appendix 2

Observation guide

Observing:

- How they tune the *Nhare Mbira*.
- How they play the *Nhare Mbira* .
- The instruments improvements replacements in relation to spirituality.
- How they keep the *Nhare Mbira* . Is there any special reservation.

APPENDIX 3



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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
MUSIC AND MUSICOLOGY

19/01/17 (date)

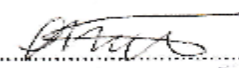
Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT RESEARCH

The bearer MATHIDAH DANDU Registration
Number P1503271 is a student at Midlands State University. He/ She is studying for
a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Music and Musicology and is conducting a research
entitled:

The decline of mbira performances: The case study
of the yehwa district of Zibwete kraal in
Murehwa district.

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


Dr P. Mafure
CHAIRPERSON

