

PRESERVATION AND REVITALISATION OF THE ENDANGERED GĪKŪYŪ FLUTE

by

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Abstract. Based on observations, interviews, and recordings collected in Kenya in May-June 2015, this article presents a summary of the search for a nearly “extinct” musical instrument and the need for advocacy research. The *mūtūrūrū*, originally an oblique bark flute of the Agīkūyū of Kenya, is also made from more durable bamboo and plastic. Initial investigations suggested that the flute was no longer played due to urbanization, modernization of farming techniques, and the loss of certain rituals and dances. Discovery of several elders who still play *mūtūrūrū* and the process of watching them build and play bark, bamboo, and spider web *mūtūrūrūs* is narrated. The challenges of preserving a tradition when the cultural context for performance no longer exists and potential opportunities for a re-introduction of the *mūtūrūrū* to contemporary Kenyan culture through intentional curriculum, traditional performances and advocacy in Kenyan cultural centers are discussed.

In 1972 Andrew Tracey asked a question that echoes through my mind whenever I am doing research in Kenya. He wondered, “what function and criteria Westerners have, or should have, in their concern with African music” (1972: 5). If there is an ideal function and criteria for Westerners studying African music, I would suggest that we are still working out the details, even if the larger question has been answered. Perhaps Kwabena Nketia put it best when he described the ideal attitude as one of “a student eager to learn...from master musicians and other carriers of African musical traditions” (1986: 45). This posture of a student towards a teacher carries varying levels of respect and the respect and obligation felt toward a teacher should extend to that teacher’s family and people, as well (*ibid.*).

This attitude is at the foundation of what Janet Topp Fargion calls “holistic preservation,” and defines as one that is “the *facilitation of the continuation of tradition*” (2012: 50, author emphasis). In this model, ethnomusicologists partner with communities, helping to facilitate music making beyond research; in doing so, ethnomusicology becomes an instrument in the preservation process (Fargion 2012: 58). Jeff Titon’s concept of sustainable preservation is similar. In his model, collaborative music making is “a way of being human,” where cooperation is favored over a hierarchical management system and flexibility over a “golden age” mentality, thus creating a space that encourages creativity (2009: 120–121). These spaces function like ecosystems, where the diversity of old and new musics improves the overall health of the community (Titon 2009: 129). Continuing with the environmental metaphor, Titon decries “heritage spaces” which contribute to the commodification of music through

tourist-centered performances, comparing them to fertilizers which “starve the soil” (Titon 2009: 122). John Katuli explained that these types of performances are often out of context, generally on a stage, “tailored for entertainment,” and adapted specifically to entice new audiences. He further argued that, as these changes are occasionally made by people not familiar with the particular music, “what is presented is therefore their own creation” and unrelated to the original music (J. Katuli pers. comm. 4 Sept. 2016).

The *Mūtūrūrū* in Kenya

Kenya has a rich musical landscape. There are diverse ecosystems like the ones described above where old and new musics come together, and there are heritage spaces geared towards tourists. But, missing from the contemporary soundscape of Kenyan music is the *mūtūrūrū*. The *mūtūrūrū* is an oblique flute of the Agikūyū (or Kikuyu) people, traditionally constructed of bark. According to Jomo Kenyatta in his seminal and comprehensive book on Agikūyū culture, the *mūtūrūrū* was played by men guarding the millet fields before harvest (1962: 91). The Agikūyū (Kikuyu) are reported to be the largest ethnic group in Kenya (Kariuki 2001: 19). The *mūtūrūrū*'s decline and near extinction illuminates how the Agikūyū have adapted to Westernization and urbanization. Furthermore, revivals of traditional dances have taken on new forms as traditional choreographers, unable to find the *mūtūrūrū*, have instead substituted it with other flutes.

Thus, to preserve the *mūtūrūrū* would both allow the Agikūyū to reclaim a part of their musical heritage and enable traditional practitioners to reach new levels of authenticity in their performances. Many cultural preservation measures are already in place in Kenya; however, my field research, conducted from May 1, 2015 to June 14, 2015, necessitated finding Agikūyū elders who would teach and demonstrate the flute's construction and performance as well as consent to extensive interviews regarding the use, context, and pedagogical techniques. Practitioners of traditional music, such as musicians, coaches, and choreographers, also gave interviews and allowed for the observation of rehearsals. Local cultural centers provided opportunities for discussion and observation, especially the cultural center at Murkurwe wa Nyagathanga in Murang'a County, where the *mūtūrūrū* was eventually rediscovered.

In addition, several music teachers in the vicinity agreed to interviews. Kenyan music textbooks list the *mūtūrūrū* in their indices as part of units covering traditional music (referenced in Floyd: 2005). Discussing the extent to which the *mūtūrūrū* specifically was taught in the classroom helped clarify the *mūtūrūrū*'s lack of use in Gikūyū culture. My interviews with these teachers provided a valuable insight into the mores and procedure of the school music festivals. Several of these festivals took place while I was in Kenya; but unfortunately, these festivals did not provide the opportunity to hear the *mūtūrūrū* being performed live nor did they introduce me to musicians who perform it in other contexts. It was, however, valuable to observe these festivals and gain a better understanding of the context in which much of Kenya's traditional music is being performed.

Music teachers and traditional practitioners alike agreed that the *mūtūrūrū* would be difficult to locate as it was rarely played anymore; I was further discouraged when

other instruments were continually brought out in place of the *mūtūrīrū*. Though I always began interviews by specifically asking for a *mūtūrīrū*, I was routinely presented with either a *wandindi* (a stringed instrument), a *kigamba* (a leg rattle) or a *shoro* (a ceremonial horn). There is a seeming interchangeability of terms between a *shoro* and a *mūtūrīrū* and/or a flute and a trumpet which persisted throughout my research. One Gikūyū man referred to the *mūtūrīrū* as a “trumpet” on an early interview recording, and traditional music practitioner Charity Muraguri stated that the *mūtūrīrū* was occasionally made from a cow’s horn, though bamboo was more prevalent (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015). The various different materials used to construct the *mūtūrīrū* could account for some of the flexible shift in terminology. The synonymous nature of the labels (flute/trumpet/horn and *mūtūrīrū/shoro*) is intriguing; whether this is simply a linguistic or translation issue inherent in Gikūyū or English, or whether something deeper such as organological classification differences is involved remains to be seen. The terminology here seems to be interchangeable to the Agikūyū regardless of whether English or Gikūyū is being spoken.

The variable vocabulary led me to change tactics when inquiring about the *mūtūrīrū*. After being shown another *shoro* at Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga, I took out a *chivoti* I happened to have in my bag. The *chivoti* is a transverse bamboo flute played



Figure 1. Cutting bamboo at Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga. Photo by author.

by the Mijikenda in Kenya. I played it for the elders and then held it obliquely, as if I were playing a *mūtūrūrū*. The combination of the sound, bamboo material, and oblique position seemed to clarify what I was looking for from the elder's viewpoint. They did not have a *mūtūrūrū* on hand, but quickly explained that they could make one.

Finding the *mūtūrūrū*

After negotiating a price they would be paid to make one for me, the men informed me the process would take about an hour, and they agreed to allow photographs. I took several photos of the initial bamboo cutting. After this the men left without explanation. When the men finally returned with the *mūtūrūrū* made from bamboo, it looked much as I had expected it to based on Kenyatta's (1962: 90) and Senoga-Zake's (1986: 152) descriptions, although no one seemed able to actually play it. Once again the men left, this time to find an older man who was, in their words, "the expert." After a while the sound of a flute wafted from beyond the trees, and soon thereafter "the expert," Kagari, appeared and demonstrated the *mūtūrūrū* he had just made from a plastic tube. He agreed he could make the attempt at a bamboo *mūtūrūrū* playable and began to work on thinning the bamboo tube. Kagari and the men left once more, but only went as far as the other side of the hut in front of me. This time I followed them along with Mwangi, who was my driver and translator; and to my relief, the men allowed us to watch their work on the instrument. They were thinning the bamboo tube with a variety of long metal objects including what appeared to have once been a long drill bit and another long thin metal rod.

Kagari got the bamboo *mūtūrūrū* in fairly good, playable condition and then one of his helpers brought a tree branch, scored it, and then slowly pulled a tube of bark off of the branch. This is exactly how Kenyatta describes the *mūtūrūrū*'s construction (1962: 90). This finally clarified for me how bark was a viable material for flute tubing. The man slid the bark gently up and down over the branch causing the sap to froth and bubble. With the bark still on the stick, he made notches for finger holes and the men agreed upon a length for the tube. This *mūtūrūrū* was longer than the bamboo one and the sound was lovely and deep when they played it. The men scraped the bark to smooth it before they oiled it with old motor oil. The bark version was meant to be a temporary instrument; "just for a day" (S. Karanja interview 9 June 2015).

The temporary nature of the instrument brings up interesting questions. If the Agĭkūyū had never switched to a bamboo version of the *mūtūrūrū*, this impermanence could very well have been a contributing factor in the decline of the flute. It is also possible that because new instruments were quickly and easily constructed they were taken for granted by the Agĭkūyū, which could in turn have led to their eventual near abandonment. The transient beginnings of the *mūtūrūrū* may have underpinned Gĭkūyū practices regarding the flute and its maintenance. However the very change to bamboo as a raw material seems to indicate the desire to preserve the instrument beyond the ephemeral option made from tree bark. And, the plastic *mūtūrūrū* Kagari played at Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga suggests that the raw material may have more

to do with available substances that can be blown through to create sound than any symbolic meaning attached to the material.

Construction materials and process

Available literature mentions several different kinds of trees as possible material for the *mūtūrūrū*'s construction. Senoga-Zake listed *mukeu* or *mugio* (1986: 152); Kenyatta also claimed these branches are used (1962: 90). Antony Wanyoike told me that *mokeo* is bamboo (A. Waynoike pers. comm. 11 May 2015), which seemed odd because Senoga-Zake used *mokeo* for the *mūtūrūrū*'s construction, but also used the term *bamboo* for another flute (1986: 152). Raymond Mackenzie explained that *mokeo* is in the bamboo family, although not bamboo itself (R. Mackenzie interview 13 May 2015). John Kahiga, one of the elders, told me that *mūtūrūrūs* were constructed from the bark of the *murangi* tree (J. Kahiga interview 26 May 2015). Charity Muraguri meanwhile claimed that the *mūtūrūrū* was typically made from bamboo but that a cow's horn could also be used. She explained that bamboo gave a better sound, however, and was more readily available than the horn (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015).



Figure 2. Making a bark *mūtūrūrū*. Photo by author.

Bamboo *mūtūrīrū*



Figure 3. Bamboo *mūtūrīrū*. Photo by author.

The charts below gives the dimensions of the bamboo flute and bark flute that were constructed by the elders for me.

Length	17 inches
Diameter	13/16 inch
Bore hole diameter	1/2 inch
Wall width	1/8 inch
Finger hole diameter	1/4 inch
Distance from center of bottom hole to bottom	3 and 5/8 inches
Space between finger holes	2 and 3/8 inches
Distance from center of top hole to top	8 and 7/16 inches

Bark *mūtūrīrū*



Figure 4. Bark *mūtūrīrū*. Photo by author.

Length	15 inches
Diameter	1/2 inch
Bore hole	Approximately 1/2 inch
Wall width	< 1/32 inch
Finger hole diameter	1/4 inch
Center of bottom hole to bottom	2 and 7/16 inches
Space between finger holes	2 and 3/4 inches
Distance from center of top hole to top	8 and 5/8 inches

There were varying opinions on the number of finger holes among those I interviewed. Mackenzie claimed that *mūtūrīrūs* had only three or four finger holes (R. Mackenzie interview 13 May 2015), though Kenyatta listed as many as eight (1962: 90). Kagari showed me a *mūtūrīrū* with six holes, which he explained was used by those who continued to play the *mūtūrīrū* past boyhood (N. Kagari interview 9 June 2015).

The men at Mukurwe used no standard length or bore for the instrument and finger hole placement was approximate just as Senoga-Zake described (1986: 152). Although approximate, the sizing of the finger holes is consistent in at least one regard. The top finger hole (closest to the mouth) is the wider of the two on the standard *mūtūrīrūs* used by boys at Mukurwe. On the six-holed *mūtūrīrū*, the top hole is again the widest and the holes get incrementally smaller going down.

The six-holed *mūtūrīrū* was the version used when young men continued to play beyond childhood. Karanja said that the “expert” would have played this type (S. Karanja interview 9 June 2015). This was the term the men at Mukurwe often used to describe someone particularly skilled at the *mūtūrīrū*. They seemed to have two levels of “experts.” Kagari and Karanja were considered “experts” because they had general knowledge of the *mūtūrīrū*. However, there was a second level of skill, the “expert’s expert”, as I thought of it. Few of these men are left; they are those who continued to play the *mūtūrīrū* when they were young men. Kagari also described the six-holed version as “higher” than the other one (N. Kagari interview 9 June 2015). Based on an earlier conversation about the lack of standardization of bore holes it was clear he was referring to a level of difficulty—a value judgment on the skill required to play it, rather than the relative pitch of the instrument.

Six-holed *mūtūrīrū*



Figure 5. Six-holed *mūtūrīrū*. Photo by author.

Length	16 inches
Diameter	7/8 inch
Bore hole	11/16 inch
Wall width	App. 1/8 inch
Finger hole diameter	Varies
Center of bottom hole to bottom	1 and 1/8 inch
Distance from center of top hole to top	8 and 5/8 inches

The men at Mukurwe also constructed a type of *mūtūrīrū* not found in any of my previous research. They called this a “spider web” *mūtūrīrū*. Made of bamboo, it is held transversely. One end is closed, covered in a paper membrane.¹ Kagari used glue to

¹ Whether an actual spider web was ever used for this flute was never fully explained to me, though certainly there is precedent in the *ngoma* drum used in Tumbuku healing as described by Steven Friedson, for example, uses a *nembe-nembe*, a spider’s nest, which is inserted into a hole in the body

attach the membrane, but told me that traditionally they would have used gum from a cedar tree. The embouchure hole should be in the center of the instrument. The men were unable to get this type to play, but Kagari insisted that it would resonate “like a loudspeaker” because of the membrane (N. Kagari interview 9 June 2015).

“Spider Web” *mūtūrūrū*



Figure 6. Side and end view of “Spider Web” *mūtūrūrū*. Photos by author.

Length	11 and 1/4 inches
Diameter	7/8 inch
Bore hole	1/2 inch
Wall width	1/8–1/4 inch (uneven wall, width varies)
Embouchure hole diameter	5/16 inch



Figure 7. Attaching the membrane to a “spider-web” *mūtūrūrū*. Photo by author.

Performance context

Muraguri claimed that the *mūtūrūrū* is so rare now in part because one of its uses was for the circumcision rituals. Boys performed the *mumburo* and *ruhia* dances during these rites. During *ruhia* they would play the *mūtūrūrū* while they hit a horn strapped to their backs. This music was used to “psych” up the boys before they headed into the river for circumcision (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015). Kagari confirmed that the flute was used in these ceremonies (N. Kagari interview 2 June 2015). As the rituals fell out of use, so did the music associated with those rituals.²

However, the *mūtūrūrū* functioned outside of the circumcision rites, as well. Muraguri stated that the *mūtūrūrū* was used for leisure and in children’s songs, as well as to pass the time while the boys watched the livestock graze (interview 17 May 2015). Kagari confirmed the *mūtūrūrū*’s use in herding (interview 2 June 2015). As the Agikūyū moved away from a shared rural way of life, the musical landscape was altered in a manner similar to what Jonathan Stock describes regarding the loss of songs for rice weeding in China. As farming techniques shifted from the communal to the individual, the need for songs decreased (2009: 371). Stock’s assertion, “A better standard of living has resulted, but so has a decline in collective singing” (2009: 371–372), applies here as well. Muraguri also explained that the physical act of clearing areas for settlement often eliminated the very bamboo (and presumably the *mokeo* trees) necessary for constructing the *mūtūrūrū* (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015). Modern farming techniques also changed the aural landscape. Ken Maisiba asked a pertinent question—“Who would hear a musical instrument being played while machinery was running?” Furthermore, he added, the rise of machinery changed the fabric of community farming. Whereas there was a time when people would work as a community on one *shamba* (farm) at a time, the introduction of modern equipment made for a very individualistic notion of farming, thus removing the social aspect and with it the opportunities for music making (K. Maisiba interview 11 May 2015). This also fits with Stock’s assessment of Chinese weeding songs. Ng’ang’a concurred that when the context for a music is gone, such as the community harvesting of the Agikūyū, the music often disappears. Ng’ang’a, however, directly (and completely) attributed this to outside influences. He said that because the Agikūyū were the first to embrace Christianity, they became the first victims of “Western culture” (Ng’ang’a interview 15 May 2015). Muraguri listed several factors in the decline of the instrument such as a preference for Western instruments, which have replaced the *mūtūrūrū* in certain functions. In other cases the *shoro* has replaced the *mūtūrūrū*; Muraguri believed that, contrary to Kenyatta’s book (1962), the *mūtūrūrū* was never a prominent Gikūyū instrument (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015). Education is another reason for the decline in *mūtūrūrū* playing. The school system, the benefits of which few would dispute, also keeps boys from the herding they would have typically done, removing another context for *mūtūrūrū* performance.

² Merriam suggested that religious music is often less affected by culture change than other music due to the fact that it is crucial to certain rites whereas “recreational music fulfills other needs which are not highly rigidified” (1980: 307–308).

While the Agĭkŭyŭ found new contexts, such as church music, for some of their traditional instruments, the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ* did not always fit the new music. Karanja pointed out that the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ* does not fit easily into Western-style tonality (S. Karanja interview 2 June 2015). The accordion and mouth organ, once introduced to the Agĭkŭyŭ, became the instruments of choice. Kagari said that as new Western instruments were introduced, the traditional ones were put aside. He claimed there was no particular reason for this, simply that the newer instruments kept their interest (interview 2 June 2015). Muraguri contended that the way the dances themselves were carried out affected the continuation of the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ*. She felt that because Gĭkŭyŭ dances use a lot of footwork and verbalization, playing an aerophone would be difficult. The verbal chanting is much more attractive, according to Muraguri. She claimed hands, mouths, and feet are prominent instruments in Gĭkŭyŭ dances (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015). Kagari indicated that the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ* was used in several songs that employed mixed instruments such as the *wandindi*, the *kigamba*, and smaller ankle jingles. The flute, according to Kagari, had no specific meaning or symbolism when used in these ceremonies (N. Kagari interview 2 June 2015). When I asked about the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ*'s use in traditional religion there was quite a discussion on the use of the flute in Christian music. Though this was not my intention with the question, discovering that the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ* was in fact used in some church music after the introduction of Christianity warrants further investigation.

Performance quality

Another important element to understand regarding the *mŭtŭrŭrŭ* is how to distinguish a good performance from a mediocre one. Rather than skill, Kagari spoke of interest levels when considering good *mŭtŭrŭrŭ* execution; like in a classroom, he said, the one who is interested will want to learn more. An “expert”, he claimed, continued to play, created new songs, and practiced frequently. Up to this point, the interview had been in English. To take this question further and learn exactly what elements made a quality performance, Mwangi translated the question into Gĭkŭyŭ. Kagari answered that the sound and style of playing were important (N. Kagari interview 2 June 2015). Here Karanja added that the performer's appearance was also important, and swayed as if pantomiming a performance (S. Karanja interview 2 June 2015). It was unclear if the expressive movements themselves are important or if Karanja was using those movements to symbolize expressive playing. The movements themselves may be important; while I studied the *chivoti* at Kenyatta University, Mackenzie indicated that moving while playing is important. I had hoped that the performances by the senior “experts” would clarify this; but, as that was not possible, this becomes a question for future research. Kagari and Karanja added that a good performer would attract an audience. Quality is judged according to the creativity in choice of pitch, Karanja explained; varying between high, low, and medium pitches was a good performance. When asked if a melody line would typically be smooth and gradual or with larger intervallic jumps, Karanja said a smooth line was preferred (S. Karanja interview 2 June 2015).

Pedagogy methods

Kagari explained he had been learning to play and construct the *mūtūrīrū* since he was a boy. Before he attended school, he and the other young boys would play the *mūtūrīrū* while they were tending the goats. The older boys knew how to play, he said, and they taught the younger boys how to make and play the *mūtūrīrūs*. Even after attending school, Kagari said, they were still taught how to play traditional music on the *mūtūrīrūs*. The music was passed on orally. Older boys taught younger boys songs that they themselves had been taught as young boys. A boy could also compose a new song himself and teach it to the others. Kagari himself taught me; I had been having difficulty finding a workable embouchure to play the *mūtūrīrū*, so Kagari demonstrated the proper embouchure and explained that I needed to “whistle” into the flute (N. Kagari interview 2 June 2015).

Observation also played a part in my own learning process, and was for me a very effective method. While watching Mwangi, Kagari, and Karanja play, I realized how much larger their lips were than mine. It occurred to me that if I tried to approximate their lip size as well as their embouchures, I might have some success. I pushed my lips out as far as possible and was excited when the instrument sounded. This process was a learning opportunity for the elders at Mukurwe, as well. When the men explained that their experts were unable to come to play for me due to health issues, Kagari and Karanja revealed that one of the old men had recently taught them more about the *mūtūrīrūs*, showing them some adjustments that needed to be made to the sizes of holes. On the original *mūtūrīrūs* the men had made, the holes were all the same size; the elder explained to them that the holes needed to be larger at the top and get gradually smaller. They also said the embouchure hole on the spider web *mūtūrīrū* needed to be placed in the middle of the instrument. Consulting elders in this fashion is similar to how students participating in school music festivals learn traditional music.

Conservation measures

The popularity and widespread participation in the Kenyan school music festivals make them an ideal vehicle for the revival of the *mūtūrīrū*. Students are already encouraged to go to communities in order to speak with cultural elders regarding songs and dances they study. The importance of maintaining musical and dance traditions is entrenched in the school curriculum. Muraguri called these festivals important “forums for transmission” of traditional culture (C. Muraguri interview 17 May 2015). The vastness and diversity of Kenya’s culture, with forty-two different ethnic groups, explains why an instrument has been overlooked in festival performance. However, with the commitment to preservation already in place among Gikūyū elders, facilitating connections between the elders at Mukurwe and interested music teachers and coaches fits both Tilton’s and Fargion’s models of preservation. There are a few possible avenues. Traditional dances are already part of the music festivals; to add the *mūtūrīrū* back into its traditional dances, such as *Ruhia*, would be relatively easy once cooperation and connection exists between elders and teachers. Gikūyū students could also be offered the opportunity to

solo on their own flute. Again, precedent already exists for this process. The festivals have a category in place for performance on traditional African instruments; students frequently perform on *nyatitis* and *chivotis*. Finding a way for students to access the knowledge of the elders in Mukurwe, which admittedly is rather off the beaten path, is key to this and can be worked out on the ground in Kenya. The music teachers, as well as the coaches for traditional dances and performances, will be able to properly determine the best way for this learning to take place.

Practitioners of traditional music, such as Muraguri and Mackenzie, are maintaining many of the cultural instruments of Kenya. Muraguri felt that the *mūtūrūrū* was “fertile ground for research”. She hoped to add the *mūtūrūrū* to her own performances and wanted to challenge other practitioners of traditional music to do the same (interview 17 May 2015). Gīkūyū traditional music is currently performed at weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies, and political gatherings. The *mūtūrūrū* is not performed in these contexts, but Muraguri hoped to see the instrument regain some prominence because of its historical importance in functions such as the circumcision rites discussed earlier. She claims the *mūtūrūrū* “needs to take its place” among practitioners of traditional music and dance (C. Murguri interview 17 May 2015).

Muraguri feels that the *mūtūrūrū* could also find a new place in the sacred folk songs, the old melodies that have Christian lyrics added to them, believing the *mūtūrūrū* could be used effectively in this context in solemn moments, such as during depictions of the crucifixion of Christ. Because of the *mūtūrūrū*'s association with *ruhia* and other circumcision rites, contextualization issues may cause problems. Gīkūyū churches, for example, worship Jesus in a Gīkūyū context. Members are given Biblical names, and the services are exclusively in the Gīkūyū language with Gīkūyū music and dances (A. Wanyoike pers. comm. 29 September 2015). The *mūtūrūrū* would need to be contextualized in a similar manner for church use.

These kinds of preservation methods, where the *mūtūrūrū* would become a part of living, breathing performances are important; so are physical preservation methods. In June 2015, I deposited a *mūtūrūrū* I acquired in the traditional instrument collection at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. Other *mūtūrūrūs* were donated to the World Instrument Collection at Liberty University in September of 2015. Future placements could include the archives at the National Museum in Nairobi and other cultural centers such as the Ruiki Cultural Center. The *mūtūrūrū*'s preservation is still in the early stages. Due to the length of time it took to find the *mūtūrūrū* in 2015, I was unable to do much more than documenting the construction and identifying surviving “experts.” After a brief follow-up visit in June of 2016 I attempted to connect the elders at Mukurwe with interested teachers; I hope to keep encouraging these connections on future visits by arranging visits to Mukurwe or bringing Kagari and Karanja to the students preparing for the festivals.

Conclusion

Kenya has its fair share of the kinds of heritage spaces Titon refers to (2009: 122); but, is there a problem with the music performed in such spaces? Certainly, in some ways

there is. Some would argue that any kind of preservation is preferable to none at all, whereas others feel that the music in these contexts, packaged for (mainly Western) tourists, is modified to suit their tastes. However, while new music or new contexts within an old tradition may raise concerns for some about a tradition's preservation, these concerns may not often be ours to hold.

The *mūtūrūrū* is not likely to be revived in a manner identical to its traditional usage, however exciting possibilities exist for new ways that the Agikūyū can reincorporate the *mūtūrūrū* into their ever-changing culture. School music festivals, traditional performance groups, and churches are some avenues; the role of an ethnomusicologist is that of a bridge between the men who hold the knowledge of the *mūtūrūrū* and the music teachers, festival coaches, and traditional practitioners who need that knowledge restored. Ultimately the Agikūyū themselves must decide if the *mūtūrūrū* becomes a living artifact, changing to meet new cultural needs, or a monument to their cultural history in local museums and universities.

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