

REASSESSING THE ZIMBABWEAN CHIPENDANI

by

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Abstract: The Shona *chipendani* (pl. *zvipendani*) is among dozens of musical bows found throughout southern Africa. An understanding of where the *chipendani* fits into the larger space of Zimbabwe's musical and social life is markedly thin. Other than Brenner's observation that the *chipendani* may occasionally be played by adult men while socializing over beer, descriptions of the *chipendani* seldom go further than remarking on the instrument's associations with cattle herding, and reducing it to the status of child's play. In this article, I argue that conceptions of the musical and social identity of the *chipendani* must be expanded beyond its conventional portrayal as a herdboys instrument, since other groups of people have been actively involved in performing the instrument. I further maintain that the social role of the *chipendani* extends beyond providing accompaniment for a singular activity—that of cattle herding—into other contexts. By challenging Tracey's conception of solo bow playing as "self-delectative," my account of *chipendani* music opens up space for new readings of other musical bows throughout southern Africa.

Keywords: *Chipendani*, bow music, herdboys, *bira*, *vadzimu*, Tracey, Zimbabwe.

Introduction

The Shona *chipendani* (pl. *zvipendani*) is among dozens of musical bows dispersed throughout southern Africa, in a wide arc stretching from the equatorial region of the Congo down to South Africa.¹ Described by Robert Kauffman as "probably the most widespread" of all Zimbabwean musical bows (1970: 36), the *chipendani* features a single, divided string.² Using the mouth as a resonating chamber, *chipendani* performers can produce a series of amplified, isolated harmonics above the instrument's fundamental pitches. Just as other musical bows throughout southern Africa have contributed to the emergence of a host of new musical styles, from the Malawian *kwela* music of Donald Kachamba to South African *maskanda* music (Kubik 1979, Rycroft 1977, Davies

¹ A version of this article was presented at the 1st Bow Music Conference, held at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 24–27 February 2016. Many thanks to organizer Sazi Dlamini and other conference participants for such productive conversations on the *chipendani* and other musical bows. In addition, I owe immense thanks to Klaus-Peter Brenner for his insightful reading of this article, and his immensely helpful comments.

² Writing on the material culture of Zimbabwe, Ellert concurs with Kauffman's assessment, stating, "The most common chordophone is the bow and of these, the chipendane (sic) is perhaps the best known" (1984: 82). For a synopsis of the literature on sub-Saharan African mouth bows whose organological structure and/or playing technique show a close affinity to those of the *chipendani*, together with a table categorizing these bows and a map illustrating their distribution, see Brenner (1997: 375).

1994), the *chipendani* has influenced Zimbabwean acoustic guitar music in addition to constituting a performance tradition of its own (Turino 2000).

Following Robert Kauffman's early observation that "it appears that the principle of harmonic sequences generated by the basic bow tones is followed in most of the other [Shona] musical genres" (1970: 231), Klaus-Peter Brenner's extensive study of relationships between the *chipendani* and the *mbira dzavadzimu* convincingly demonstrates that the construction and playing technique of the *chipendani* combine to produce "the basis of the recent Shona musical idiom," and in particular its hexatonic tonal-harmonic system (1997: 367). As Brenner elaborates, the types of self-referential structural symmetries present in *chipendani* music both constitute an excellent example of ethnomathematics, and pose a significant challenge to musicological assumptions that only a written compositional process is capable of producing "complex, coherent, and rational" musical structures (1997: 368).

More than child's play

In comparison to Brenner's rigorous treatment of the mathematical complexity of the *chipendani*, our understanding of the instrument's larger place in Zimbabwean musical and social life is markedly thin. Nearly universally, it is portrayed as the exclusive domain of Shona herdboys.³ Depicting the *chipendani* as an instrument primarily intended to "convey highly personal concerns normally arising from solitude," for example, Mickias Musiyiwa suggests, "In traditional Shona society songs of this monologic format were those sung by lone singers such as herd boys often accompanied by *chipendani*, *chikokohwiro* [a whirligig made from the shell of a wild fruit known as *damba*], and *chigufe* [a spherical aerophone also made from *damba* fruit]" (2013: 62). Similarly, Klaus-Peter Brenner states in the summary of his book:

The *chipendani* is an instrument with which Shona males (at least up to one or two generations ago) used to enjoy their time as youngsters while tending cattle, whereas the large *mbira*-types, particularly those associated with the possession-ritual of the ancestral cult, are definitely adult instruments (1997: 373).⁴

However, in the main text he draws a markedly broader picture:

Der chipendani war früher ein vor allem bei jugendlichen und jungen Männern beliebtes Instrument, mit dem man sich die Zeit beim Viehhüten vertrieb. Heute ist er in dieser Funktion weitgehend durch die mubanju genannten Halslauten mit Paraffinkanister-Resonator verdrängt. Einige Männer der mittleren und älteren Generation spielen diesen Mundbogen indes noch gelegentlich. Sie tun dies, dem auf ein individuelles, kontemplativ nach innen gekehrtes Musizieren zugeschnittenen geringen Tonvolumen entsprechend, nur zu informellen Anlässen. Auf dem chipendani spielt man in erster Linie zum eigenen Vergnügen oder allenfalls für einen

³ One important exception is Maraire, who describes the *chipendani* as "played by men of all ages," including herdboys, hunters, and elderly men (1982: 101). Perhaps because Maraire's discussion of the *chipendani* appears in the form of an unpublished Master's thesis, it has not significantly influenced subsequent scholarship on the instrument.

⁴ Paul Berliner likewise states that bows were "favored as solo instruments by herdboys tending their cattle" (1978: 21).

kleinen Kreis von Zuhörern. Gelegentlich mag es vorkommen, daß jemand auch in einer zum Hirsebiertinken versammelten Männerrunde einmal seinen chipendani von der Wand nimmt, wo er gewöhnlich außerhalb der Reichweite kleiner Kinder aufbewahrt wird, und zwanglos zwei oder drei Stücke zum Besten gibt, um sich dann aber wieder dem Gespräch zuzuwenden.

English translation:

Formerly, the *chipendani* was an instrument that was played mainly by male youths and young men who used to play it as a pastime when herding cattle. Nowadays, it is in this function largely supplanted by the *mubanju* type of necked lute with a paraffin tin can resonator. Occasionally, some males of the middle and elder generations still play this mouth bow, however. Due to its soft volume which lends itself best to an individualized and introverted kind of music-making, they typically do this at informal occasions. The *chipendani* is played primarily for self-delectation, or at most for an intimate small-scale audience. Occasionally it may occur that, in a circle of men who have gathered for drinking millet-beer, someone takes his *chipendani* from the wall where it is stored beyond small children's reach and shares two or three pieces after which he joins the conversation again (1997: 20–21).⁵

Other than Brenner's observation that the *chipendani* may occasionally be played by adult men while socializing over beer, descriptions of the *chipendani* seldom go further than remarking on the instrument's associations with cattle herding, reducing it to the status of literally child's play. As a result, scholars have largely discarded it, together with other Zimbabwean musical bows, as "not worth talking about" (Kahari 1981: 87), reflecting what Natalie Kreutzer has identified as a more general predilection for researchers to "judge children's play as insignificant" (2001: 182).⁶

In this article, I argue that conceptions of the musical and social identity of the *chipendani* must be expanded beyond its conventional portrayal as a herdboys instrument. I do not contest that the *chipendani* has been played by herdboys; indeed, ethnographic accounts confirm that herding is among the contexts for *chipendani* performance.⁷ Yet I contend that other groups of people have been actively involved in performing the instrument, including women as well as men, and elders as well as children. Along the same lines, I maintain that the social role of the *chipendani* extends beyond providing accompaniment for a singular activity—that of cattle herding—and into other contexts, ranging from courtship to the ritual sphere of ceremonies such as the post-funerary rite of *kurova guva*, and even the spirit possession rituals of the *bira*.

Attention to marginalized instruments such as the *chipendani* is particularly vital in expanding scholarship on Zimbabwean music, which has largely focused on the *mbira dzavadzimu* (see for example Kyker 2016a, Turino 2000). Yet close attention to the *chipendani* also contributes to reshaping our understandings of a broader southern African musical culture, particularly through alternate readings of extant archival

⁵ I thank Klaus-Peter Brenner both for bringing this passage to my attention, and for this English translation, which he kindly provided.

⁶ For some noteworthy counter-examples see Picken 1975, Pinto 1991: 229–244, Kubik 1994.

⁷ Dumisani Maraire, for example, identifies Ephat Mujuru and Tonga Dzororo as having learned to play *chipendani* "from other young boys as they were herding cattle" (1982: 16; see also p. 9).

materials such as Hugh Tracey's extensive collection of musical bow recordings, which are now housed at the International Library of African Music (ILAM). By labeling nearly all of the bow songs he collected throughout southern Africa "self-delectative," or intended only for the performer's own hearing, Tracey painted a picture of "self communication" as the primary goal of musical bow performances around southern Africa, influencing subsequent readings of these instruments (List 1971: 402).⁸ As my analysis will make clear, however, performers routinely allude to *chipendani* playing as deeply social, from the instrument's role in facilitating courtship to its ability to convey social commentary regarding a number of topics, from kinship relations to colonisation. By challenging Tracey's conception of solo bow playing as "self-delectative," my account of *chipendani* music opens up space for new readings of other musical bows throughout southern Africa.

Listening beyond salvage ethnography

My analysis is based on over ten years of ethnographic fieldwork, focused mainly around my interactions with the elderly *chipendani* players, Sekuru Compound Muradzikwa and Sekuru Tute Chigamba.⁹ Like many musical bow players, Sekuru Chigamba would later take up other instruments, including the acoustic guitar and the *mbira dzavadzimu*.¹⁰ In addition to playing the *chipendani*, Sekuru Muradzikwa also plays the Shona ground-bow, which he calls *dzikamunhenga*, and which features a single string attached to a bent tree branch on one end, and affixed to a sheet of metal covering a resonating pit dug into the earth on the other. Because depictions of the ground-bow's social role often parallel portrayals of the *chipendani*, I incorporate Muradzikwa's ground-bow playing into the following discussion.

While the number of primary informants in this study is small, it reflects the apparent difficulty of finding musicians who actively continue to perform either the *chipendani*, or other Zimbabwean musical bows such as the *chitende* or *chizambi*.¹¹ Accordingly, these instruments have often been portrayed as "disappearing" musical traditions, which are perceived to have succumbed to the influence of modernization, Westernization, and the advent of consumer capitalism. In the words of Mhoze Chikowero:

...many indigenous instruments like *ngoma*, *mbira*, *nyanga*, and *chipendani* (string bow) were slowly supplanted by their "Western" variants [Zindi 1993: 11]. While some of them

⁸ While Tracey extended this label to various types of *mbira* and the guitar, musical bows predominate among his examples of "self-delectative" music, including the Zulu makhweyana and ugubu bows, the Xhosa uhadi bow, the Shona chizambi friction bow, the Chewa kubu bow, the Tonga kalumbo bow, and other unidentified bows.

⁹ Other musicians who have informed this study include Tute Chigamba's grandson Brian, who likewise plays *chipendani*, as well as the *mbira* players Sydney Maratu and Chartwell Dutiro.

¹⁰ As Turino reports, "The well-known guitarist from Masvingo Province, Jacob Mhungu, for example, told me that he had been a *chipendani* (bow) and lamellophone (probably *njari*) player in his rural home, but in 1949 was inspired to take up the guitar after he had seen movies with country and western performer Tex Ritter at a mission school" (2000: 238).

¹¹ For more on these and other Zimbabwean musical bows, see Ellert 1984, Jones 1992, Snowden 1938.

have persevered, others, like *chipendani*, have succumbed or linger on as little more than anthropological curiosities (2007: 113).¹²

Contemporary *chipendani* players appear to concur with these scholarly assessments. As Muradzikwa told me:

Now, most people can't play it. That is the trouble with it. So now, if my picture is taken, with me doing what I do, if people are aware of it, they will say, "Oh, that is what used to be done long back," and start writing it down, now. Children who are born now will know, and say, "Oh, *chipendani*, *chipendani*". Yes. You see? (Interview, 12 October 2003)

While Muradzikwa is clearly in favour of documenting *chipendani* performance for subsequent generations, the question of how to approach the *chipendani* without falling into the type of salvage ethnography that has characterized so many ethnomusicological encounters with musical instruments and practices that appeared to be losing ground in the context of modernization, Westernization, and the advent of consumer capitalism remains paramount. This problem is particularly pronounced in the case of Muradzikwa's ground-bow, an instrument long declared all-but extinct not only in Zimbabwe, but also in neighbouring countries, such as South Africa (see Kruger 1989). I view the question of how we might engage with musical bows such as the *chipendani* and *dzikamunhenga* beyond "re-discovering" nearly extinct musical instruments, or attempting to preserve archival specimens of disappearing performance practices, as one that takes on particular significance in the context of emerging understandings of the Anthropocene as an age of mass extinction, with a concurrent loss of diversity that ranges from the biological and genetic to the linguistic and musical (Marett 2010).

Similar to Angela Impey's recent work on women's *is'tweletwele* (jew's harp) and *umqangala* musical bow playing in the Maputaland border region of South Africa, my approach highlights "music's capacity to operate as both historical text and oral testimony," conveying critical information about the negotiation of individual and social identities, both historically and in the present (2008: 33).¹³ Impey's work offers strong evidence that the *umqangala* and *isizenze* mouthbows of Maputaland, which "comment on social encounters, on passing sightings, on love and marriage and on social conflicts that require resolution within the family," were not intended for the ears of their performers alone; rather, they were distinctly tied up with experiences of sociality, from greeting songs associated with walking on pathways in the village to compositions criticizing the social changes wrought by apartheid (2007: 106).

In the following pages, I offer short biographical sketches of the two *chipendani* players who have primarily informed my analysis, Sekuru Chigamba and Sekuru

¹² See also Berliner 1978: 21, Maraire 1982: 193.

¹³ At the same time, I ask readers to hold in mind that it is by no means conclusive that the *chipendani* and other related musical bows are in fact disappearing or dying out. A definitive answer to the question of whether the *chipendani* is disappearing lies outside the scope of this paper, yet there is some evidence to support the possibility that it may not be in danger of dying out. Natalie Kreutzer, for example, has elicited responses from adults suggesting that some children in the Nharira rural areas were still learning to play *chipendani* in the 1990s (2001: 190).

Muradzikwa, with special attention to each artist's early encounters with *chipendani* music. Placing these accounts in relation to extant sources on *chipendani* music, I make the case for moving beyond conventional portrayals of *chipendani* playing as primarily a herdboyc pastime. In the next section of the paper, I offer an interpretation of what I see as one particularly prominent facet of the historic social identity of the *chipendani*. I begin by identifying prominent themes in the lyrics of several songs played by Chigamba and Muradzikwa. Reading these lyrics in conjunction with the artists' own oral histories, as well as published sources, I proceed to locate *chipendani* playing at the center of social negotiations over relations between men and women, bringing gender, courtship, marriage, cattle, and agricultural labour together within a single performance practice.

Compound Muradzikwa

Born in Buhera in 1943, Sekuru Compound Muradzikwa began playing *chipendani* in 1955, after hearing his paternal grandfather performing the instrument. As he told me:

My grandfather used to just play; now, he didn't want to teach me, now. What I did, when I went with the cattle, I would twist the inner bark of a tree, making it all by myself, making it, although it wasn't sounding, just doing that, just doing that. Grandfather, when he went to the field, now, when I entered his house, I would steal that *chipendani* of his, by myself I would play, playing, playing. Now, when he saw that, he said, "No, come here, I will teach you". He taught me for six months, then he fell ill, then he died, now. Now, I was left just doing catch up, doing what I could, just playing like that. (Interview, 12 October 2003)

The song Muradzikwa learned from his grandfather, called "*Tsoko*," or "Monkey," portrays children confronting wild animals raiding the fields:

<i>Tsoko tsoko tsoko tsoko</i>	Monkey, monkey, monkey, monkey
<i>Kudya munda tsoko</i>	The monkey is eating the field
<i>Amai vangu tsoko</i>	Oh mother, the monkey

Other *chipendani* songs, such as "*Mai vando swere piko* (sic)," or "Where has Mother spent the day," recorded by Hugh Tracey in 1951, offer strikingly similar depictions of children chasing wild animals away from the fields.¹⁴ In two spoken-word sections of the song, the lead vocalist describes how "*Mai vando swere piko*" was sung in order to scare baboons away from the fields, saying, "When they heard us singing this, they would run away". Notably, the children charged with this type of agricultural labour call upon their mothers in the lyrics to both "*Mai vando swere piko*" and "*Tsoko*". Relating *chipendani* music back to both kinship and agricultural labour, these songs are thus tied to a constellation of related themes in *chipendani* songs, as I discuss in the last section of this article.

Following his grandfather's death, Muradzikwa began to play a variety of other songs. In the following conversation with me and Sekuru Chigamba, Muradzikwa described how these songs largely come to him unbidden:

¹⁴ ILAM number: 13741. Similarly, Diane Thram recorded Frank Gomba playing a song that describes baboons walking, with simple lyrics that say "Kwa kwenda mutiro," or "Where the baboon is going". Thram's recordings are housed at Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music.

Kyker: So, Sekuru, so the other songs that you learned to play, how did you learn them? When your grandfather died, by whom were you taught, now? Because you have a lot of songs, really.

Muradzikwa: I have a lot of songs. So, what I do is, if you are able to play this, if you are playing by yourself, playing and playing, you simply see that you think of songs and then you're already playing it. Yes.

Chigamba: They come on their own.

Muradzikwa: They come on their own, as you are playing. Yes. If you sit while you are playing, as you are playing, "*Tsoko, tsoko, tsoko*," and you are capable of just that one song you end up playing another one, maybe you're playing yet another one. Yes. I watched the horses running, there, running. Then I followed along, myself, now. Now, in my playing, as I am hearing now how I am playing, I even see that, this is what the horse does when it is running. You see? Yes. (Interview, 29 July 2006)

After Muradzikwa began attending his local primary school, he started bringing his instrument with him to school, immediately gaining the attention of his teachers:

They said, "Ah, Compound sings "*Tsoko, tsoko*," what is this?" The teachers then called me, and when I played at school, oh, they were very happy. Yes. Sometimes I would feel shy, thinking, "Ah, the teachers have called me, but I don't want to go and play there," feeling shy to sit among so many people, all of the teachers, and they would be laughing. But then, I was told, "Ah, now you are really playing, you've become very good". (Interview, 29 July 2006)

Muradzikwa's education was cut short after both of his parents died after being hit by a bus in 1962. For a time, his skill as a *chipendani* player enabled Muradzikwa to remain in school:

I would, if I took that *chipendani*, if I went when the children were getting out of school, if I went playing there, at the school, I would be given money by the teachers, to buy books, for me to study at school, now. (Interview, 29 July 2006)

As the eldest sibling responsible for three younger sisters, however, Muradzikwa finally found himself compelled to seek out formal-sector employment, moving to the capital city of Harare (then Salisbury) in search of work. With his wages, he managed to send one of his three sisters to school.

Shortly before Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Muradzikwa was hired as a security guard at Imire Game Park, located outside the town of Marondera. In addition to his guard duties, he regularly played *chipendani* for guests at Imire's Sable Lodge until his retirement in 2010 (see Figure 1). As he observed, these interactions with game park visitors, who were largely white Zimbabweans and foreigners, influenced both the way he performed the *chipendani*, as well as how he approached making instruments for sale. In the first place, he has developed a number of songs in which he delivers vocal lines in English. As he told me, "When I am playing for the clients, I translate into English, so that they understand what I am saying". Marking a clear departure from the rest of his repertoire, these English vocal lines are largely spoken, rather than sung. At Imire, Muradzikwa also began placing increased emphasis on decorating his instruments with designs burned into the wood. As he told me:

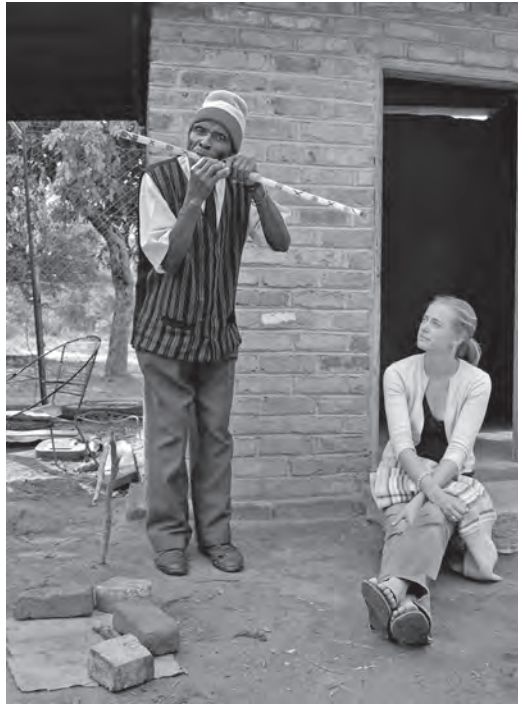


Figure 1. Compound Muradzikwa and Jennifer Kyker in front of the security guards' station at Imire Game Park. Photo by Debby Chen, used with permission.

You see all of this, these designs. That the white people, some of them will buy an instrument, and go with it. If you teach him how to play, he will go with it. When he gets to where his friends are, they will be very surprised, and even laugh, saying, “What is this?” They will be seeing it, now. (Interview, 29 July 2006)

Even after he began working at Imire, however, Muradzikwa described performing regularly in the rural areas of Buhera, often in ritual contexts such as the *bira*, a type of ceremony intended to call the *vadzimu* (spirits of familial ancestors) to possess living mediums in order to consult with their descendants:

When we are in Buhera there, like that, they call me on the weekend to go and play, “At another home there is beer, a *bira*,” and I’ll be playing, playing, playing. Now, in the morning, now, if I say, “Oh, now I am going, now I am going,” they pay me, now, money, now. They pay me money, to say, “Oh, thank you, we thank you, we thank you”. When I arrive home, when I sleep, tomorrow another comes again, taking me. He! Doing it just like that. (Interview, 12 October 2003)

Describing one particular instance in which he performed *chipendani* during a ritual event, Muradzikiwa told me:

I went to *Ambuya’s banya* [*Ambuya* is a respectful term for a senior female spirit medium, lit. “grandmother”; a *banya* is a round, thatched hut constructed specifically for ceremonial purposes], in the forest there, oh, when there was a ceremony, for the spirit mediums. I

played *chipendani*, and the *mbira* just waited. I played it, this thing, the spirit medium had tears, like so, crying as I played. (Interview, 29 July 2006)

This account is particularly notable for the way in which it positions the *chipendani* as sharing the sonic space of the *bira* with the *mbira*, long recognized for its connection to Shona ceremonial life. Indeed, through its ability to bring even a senior female medium to tears, the *chipendani* appears to rival the power of *mbira* music in this anecdote. As I will soon argue, Muradzikwa's experience of performing in the ritual space of the *banya* suggests that the conventional portrayal of the *chipendani* as played exclusively by solitary herdboys must be revised in favour of a more expansive and complex understanding of the instrument's social role. Before turning to this argument, however, I discuss the experiences of a second *chipendani* player, Sekuru Tute Chigamba. As I will illustrate, Chigamba's account offers further support for abandoning reductive notions of the *chipendani*, even as it introduces a number of different themes than those that emerged in my discussions with Muradzikwa.

Tute Chigamba

Born in Mushongahande village, Guruve in 1939, Sekuru Tute Chigamba regularly attended spirit possession ceremonies at Kamuchanyu village, where his father served as acolyte to one of the senior ancestors of the Nhova clan, known as Dumbu. Marking the start of his musical life, Chigamba's first instrument was a six-key *karimba* with a small gourd resonator, which he learned as a child living on a commercial farm with his father in the early 1940s. In 1946, the family then moved back to Chigamba village. Here, the young Tute began living with his paternal grandmother, Manungwa, whom he remembers as particularly skilled in telling *ngano* folktales:

After *sadza* at night, we have nothing to do. We sit down. So, some, they don't sleep very early. So when she told the *ngano*, she was doing it so that those people who are slow to fall asleep would go to sleep faster, because some *ngano* can make you feel weary, or bore you. You listen, you listen, then you sleep. Then she would tell you, "If you want to sleep, go and sleep". Then you would stand up, and go and sleep. (Interview, 4 March 2003)

During visits to his mother's natal village of Mushongahande, Chigamba was exposed to the *chipendani* in a context similar to these evening storytelling sessions. Chigamba's maternal grandfather Sunday Mufudzapake had a brother named Mapurete, who had four wives. Mapurete's fourth wife, a woman named Chihwiro, was a *chipendani* player. As Chigamba recalled:

She used to play at night. And she was not telling stories, she was playing *chipendani*. And we had to go there, and all gathered. Sitting, listening to her play *chipendani*. So I said, "No, I can play this!" And then I did. And my uncle, the brother to my mother, he plays also *chipendani*. (Interview, 4 March 2003)

At roughly the same time, Chigamba also taught himself to play the acoustic guitar after watching his paternal uncle, named Merrick Charama, play on a store-bought instrument he had purchased with his earnings as a labourer on a nearby white-owned

commercial farm. Just as Muradzikwa had snuck into his grandfather's house in order to secretly teach himself to play *chipendani*, so too did Chigamba approach teaching himself to play guitar in the same fashion:

I started playing guitar when I saw my uncle was playing guitar, and then I stole it, and play! He was not there, and I stole it, and play it. And you know, the song he was playing, it was his favorite song. And I played that favorite song. So some day, his wife came and she saw me playing. She thought the one was playing was her husband. And when she got inside the house, the room, and she saw me playing, she didn't say anything. And she moved out[side], and I put back the guitar, and moved out. So, after a week, she told her husband, "Well, there is one of these guys can play guitar".

So, he was so cruel. So, you know, she could tell him at the very same day, but she was afraid I could be beaten, because he was cruel. And then when he was told so, he wanted to know who. And we were three. Three of us were grown up, and he called us. He said, "Is there anyone who plays guitar?" And we all kept quiet. He said, "No, I wanted to know if anyone can play guitar". I said, "It's me". He said, "OK, you play". I played the song, the song he likes, and he laughed. He said, "Oh, no, you are the only one who is allowed to play the guitar, not anyone else". (Interview, 28 May 2003)

While Chigamba put down both the *chipendani* and the guitar after finding employment in Harare (then Salisbury) in 1962, he soon took up the *mbira dzavadzimu*, teaching himself to play the instrument partly by listening to radio broadcasts of the late *mbira* player known as Bandambira. After independence in 1980, Chigamba joined the National Dance Company of Zimbabwe, and he has remained one of the nation's foremost *mbira* performers, teachers, and instrument makers.

In 1984, Chigamba moved from his family's rural homestead in Guruve to a resettlement area in Rushinga, in what he described as an effort to find "a free place, where you can stay with your family and not be too crowded". In Rushinga, Chigamba's son Garadziva married a woman whose father, named Sekuru Cigaretta, was also a *chipendani* player. By the late 1990s, Garadziva's son, Brian Chigamba, had learned to play the *chipendani* from Sekuru Cigaretta, whom he lived with for several years. In addition, Sekuru Chigamba himself resumed playing *chipendani* after he was given one of Sekuru Cigaretta's instruments by an American *mbira* student interested in *chipendani* music (see Figure 2).¹⁵ Immediately, Chigamba found that he was still able to play two of the songs he recalled hearing his grandmother, Chihwiro, play. He also began composing his own songs for the instrument, just as he had for the guitar.

Chipendani playing grandfathers—and grandmothers, too

The accounts told by both Chigamba and Muradzikwa pose significant challenges to reductive portrayals of the *chipendani* as a herdboy instrument. It is particularly notable that both Chigamba and Muradzikwa remember the *chipendani* not from their experiences herding cattle—an activity in which both men participated as boys—but from their encounters with senior kin, with relationships between grandparents

¹⁵ In a recent exchange with Chigamba, I learned that Sekuru Cigaretta has since died (Chigamba pers. comm. 6 Oct. 2015).



Figure 2. Sekuru Chigamba (right) and his grandson Brian (left) holding *zvipendani* made by Sekuru Cigaretta. Photo by Author.

and grandchildren proving particularly central in both cases. Joining these accounts, Maraire's informant Zibron Gonye likewise described learning to play *chipendani* from his grandfather (1982: 14). Based on these recollections, I contend that the *chipendani* has historically been played by adults—and even very senior figures—rather than exclusively by youth, constituting a major shift in the instrument's social identity.

Complementing my interviews, both visual images of the *chipendani* and other scholars' fieldwork appear to confirm that adults have historically been active participants in *chipendani* performance. In the domain of visual imagery, a Zimbabwean postal stamp issued in 1991 portrays the adult male *chipendani* player Frank Gomba (R. Landers pers. comm. 20 Nov. 2015). Similarly, a photograph in the book *Zimbabwe Epic*, first published by the National Archives of Zimbabwe in 1982, depicts an adult male *chipendani* player sitting on a wooden stool. Andrew Tracey's sole photograph of a Shona *chipendani* player, taken in 1960, also shows an adult man playing *chipendani* (see Figure 3). Finally, we have Hugh Tracey's 1931 pastel portrait of Baba Runesu Chipika, which graced the cover of ILAM's journal *African Music* in 1991 (see Figure 4). Writing as editor of the journal, Andrew Tracey noted that his father initially met Chipika in 1920, by which time the latter was already working as a farmhand in Gutu.¹⁶ At the time Hugh Tracey executed his portrait, then, Chipika would have been well into adulthood.

¹⁶ In an online interview, Andrew Tracey further describes Chipika as having helped manage his father's research trips between 1929 and 1932 (Tracey 2008).



Figure 3. Andrew Tracey's 1960 photograph [ILM00122_25] featuring an adult male *chipendani* player. Photo courtesy of International Library of African Music.



Figure 4. *African Music* (1991) frontispiece featuring a painting of Baba Runesu Chipika by Hugh Tracey. Courtesy of International Library of African Music.

Andrew Tracey further observed that Chipika, who was also a skilled *njari* player, was primarily responsible for introducing Hugh Tracey “to African music, religion, and lore, the love of which was to prove the reason for his subsequent research and for the foundation [establishment] of the International Library of African Music”. Chipika, whom Andrew Tracey described first and foremost as a *chipendani* player, thus played a significant role in the emergence of ILAM (Tracey 2008).

In addition to these visual depictions, all four of the *chipendani* players who served as informants in Klaus-Peter Brenner’s study of relationships between *chipendani* and mbira music—Green Tamanikwa Mususa (1936–1995), Sydney Musarurwa (1949–2000), Mondrek Muchena (1939–1995), and Chaka Chawasarira (b. 1941)—were adult men. During the period of his fieldwork, Brenner observed Green Tamanikwa Mususa playing an instrument he had made in 1962, at the relatively mature age of 26. Another particularly influential *chipendani* player, Frank Gomba (b. 1918), continued to play well into advanced age, and worked with several ethnomusicologists, including Claire Jones, Diane Thram, and Thomas Turino.¹⁷ Dumisani Maraire worked with four adult male informants in his study of *chipendani* music, including the renowned *mbira* player, Ephat Mujuru.¹⁸ Finally, Yuji Matsuhira has recently recorded an adult male *chipendani* player, Golden Nhamo.¹⁹ On the other hand, no ethnomusicologist appears to have worked directly with any *chipendani* players in the younger age group conventionally associated with the instrument. This may be related to the same bias against children’s music that has marginalized the *chipendani* within the scholarly literature, or it may be evidence that the instrument is indeed dying out. Yet, the predominance of adult *chipendani* players in ethnomusicological accounts certainly establishes the fact that young boys are not the instrument’s only performers.

While historical records are thin, what appears to be the sole reference to *chipendani* music prior to 1950—an article written by A.E. Snowden for the *Native Affairs Department Annual*—describes a *chipendani* played by a Salisbury resident identified as Bunhu (1938: 99). The fact that the instrument was played in the nation’s growing urban capital during the early 20th century illustrates that its social value extended beyond the context of cattle herding.²⁰ In addition, it is likely that the musician

¹⁷ Jones told me that once she had “introduced Keith Goddard to Sekuru Frank, he became the go-to person for musical bows (he also played mukube and chizambi) and Keith brought numerous people to visit him” (C. Jones pers. comm. 7 Jan. 2016). Among these visitors, Thomas Turino’s recordings of Gomba would subsequently influence ethnomusicologist and mbira player Chartwell Dutiro (see Perman 2007: 36).

¹⁸ Other informants named by Maraire are Zibron Gonye, of Makaure village, Thonga Dzororo, originally from Tete, Mozambique, and a resident of Beatrice, and a Zulu man identified only as Themba (see Maraire 1982).

¹⁹ According to Matsuhira, Golden Nhamo was born in Wedza, likely in the mid to late 1950s. After moving to Harare, he began playing mbira with Samson Bvura. He revealed that he was a *chipendani* player only when Matsuhira expressed interest in filming the two musicians (Y. Matsuhira pers. comm. 7 Jan. 2016).

²⁰ Snowden identifies two variants of the *chipendani*, both played in towns, in addition to the incanco or isibanjolo bow played by Native Constable Hwabeyi (1938: 101).

Snowden encountered was an adult male, who would have been able to secure the type of registration document, or *chitupa*, required to live and work in the capital.²¹

Chigamba's memories of listening to his grandmother play *chipendani* are particularly exceptional, as they further suggest that *chipendani* was not solely a male musical domain, contrary to the specifically gendered figure of the herdboys.²² Indeed, when I later sought clarification from Chigamba as to whether it was unusual to find female *chipendani* players, he replied that the instrument "was played by men and women," and that his grandmother's playing "was not surprising for people" (Chigamba pers. comm. 6 Oct. 2015). In my view, Chigamba's account contributes significantly to shifting understandings of music and gender in Zimbabwe, for women's musical roles are often described as limited to singing, dancing, playing the hosho shakers, and drumming.²³ Extending our evolving understanding of music and gender in Shona society, Chigamba's account of a *chipendani*-playing grandmother suggests that women may constitute an important, yet largely unwritten part of the Zimbabwean musical record.²⁴

Relocating *chipendani* within a variety of social settings

As we move away from conceiving of the *chipendani* as an instrument historically played exclusively by young boys, we must likewise reconfigure our understanding of its social role. Rather than an instrument played exclusively while tending livestock, and in the uncultivated spaces where cattle graze, Chigamba and Muradzikwa illustrate how the *chipendani* has been present in a variety of settings, from recreational contexts to the ritual space of the *bira*. In both players' accounts, for example, an emphasis on audience, listening, and participation strongly contradicts previous portrayals of the *chipendani* as one suited only for solitary performance.²⁵ Describing his experiences

²¹ Registration documents were issued at the relatively young age of 14; it is further possible that the player could have been a minor child of an adult male worker. My argument that Bunhu was likely an adult male is based partly in the fact that Snowden appears to have worked with other adult male bow players, such as Native Constable Hwabeyi (1938: 101). It also seems significant that he never identifies any of the bows he describes as being played exclusively by children.

²² Maraire's Zulu informant Themba similarly described learning to play mbira from his grandmother, reflecting Nollene Davies's observation that musical bows in South Africa were, "played by both men and women" (1994: 120).

²³ In her recent article on women's participation as mbira dzavadzimu players, for example, Claire Jones states, "While women commonly play hosho and ngoma (drum)—at which many are quite accomplished—I have never seen or heard of Zimbabwean women playing any other indigenous Shona instruments" (2009: 130). At the same time, Jones identifies the earliest known historical account of a woman playing mbira, in the writings of Michael Gelfand (1959: 108). Subsequent to the publication of Jones's article, my oral history work with female mbira players offers preliminary evidence extending Zimbabwe women's involvement as mbira dzavadzimu players back into the pre-colonial era (Kyker 2014).

²⁴ Mbira player Sydney Maratu, for example, told me that in the pre-colonial era, women also played a type of aerophone known as *chigufe*, further expanding the range of instruments they are known to have performed (2003).

²⁵ Drawing partly on the work of Kirby, for example, Robert Kauffman claims that "some of the bow sounds, particularly the harmonics, are so soft that they are almost inaudible through the ears alone" (1970: 31). See also Maraire (1982).

while performing in Buhera, for example, Muradzikwa told me, “We’ll be playing where they’ve brewed beer, drinking beer and playing. And they’ll be dancing in there. Yes, they’ll be dancing hard” (Interview, 29 July 2006).

While Muradzikwa frequently enlivens his *chipendani* playing with both storytelling and singing, Chigamba described the instrument as one best performed without vocals:

Singing for *chipendani*, that’s very, very few people who sing for *chipendani*. But what we know is, *chipendani*, we don’t sing. Yeah, *chipendani* can sing. You know, you use your mouth and sing with *chipendani*. See, what they want to listen is, the sound which sings like ten, twelve people singing. So, that’s what they want to hear. So, if you sing, you are disturbing those sounds, you know, come from your mouth. (Interview, 4 March 2003)

Positioning the solo performer, whom he consistently refers to with the pronoun “you,” against a group of listeners, whom he denotes using the pronoun “they,” Chigamba’s description of an actively engaged audience contrasts quite clearly with accounts claiming that the *chipendani* is “more tactile than audible,” and as a result nearly imperceptible to anyone other than the player (Kauffman 1970: 64). In his youth, Chigamba repeatedly experienced this type of group listening as he sat with other grandchildren listening to Chihwiro play in the evenings after eating *sadza*, as they sat together around the fire during the family recreational time known as *kutandara*. Similarly, Maraire’s informant Bernard Wazarah recalled watching his grandfather play *chipendani* “most nights while sitting by the fire” (1982: 13). Incidentally, this very setting has been identified by Natalie Kreutzer as among the primary sites for children’s musical acquisition (2001: 185).

Chipendani and the ancestors

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the secular setting of *kutandara* is the ritual context of the *bira*, where Muradzikwa’s accounts of performing *chipendani* are especially challenging to reconcile with existing portrayals of the instrument. There are clearly links between *chipendani* playing and the spiritual realm, particularly with the non-ancestral *mashave* spirits capable of bestowing particular talents, such as hunting, healing, or musicianship, on their hosts. Indeed, Muradzikwa plays a song for the *mashave* spirits, called “*Rwiyo Rwemashavi Okuvhima*,” or “Song for the hunting spirits,” on his *chipendani*. Similarly, when Muradzikwa told the story of making a senior female spirit medium cry in the *banya* with his *chipendani* playing, his short concluding exchange with Chigamba, who was present during this interview, highlighted the role of the *mashave* spirits in producing such an emotionally charged musical moment:

Muradzikwa: Oh, I said, “Now, how do these things happen?”

Chigamba: Oh, they have, they have their *mashave*.

Muradzikwa: No, oh, if only things carried on like this. Sure. (Interview, 29 July 2006)

In addition to its associations with the *mashave* spirits, however, Muradzikwa also recounted playing *chipendani* in the ceremonial setting of the *bira*, oriented

toward the *vadzimu* (sg. *mudzimu*) ancestral spirits.²⁶ In this regard, his account is without precedent in the literature on *chipendani* music. Challenging conventional understandings of the instrument, Muradzikwa narrated how ceremony participants experienced possession as he played *chipendani*. As he told me:

They get possessed, yes... Like these *mbira*, that you play. If I take those *hosho*, playing them, and you are playing hard, playing, and we are drinking beer as you play, you'll see I've put those *hosho* down, and I've started to dance, now. I start to dance, now, you see sweat without end, moisture coming out, I'm now getting possessed, now, you see, now? ... These things, they are gifts. A gift that you are given by God, you do not refuse. (Interview, 12 October 2003)

Muradzikwa's assertion that spirit possession can occur during *chipendani* performance was so unusual that the *mbira* player Sydney Maratu, who was present during this particular interview, felt compelled to try to clarify whether I had inadvertently elicited incorrect information, possibly through inadequate facility with the Shona language. Their exchange is worth reproducing in full, as it illustrates how Maratu, himself a Shona ritual music specialist, responded to Muradzikwa's account of playing for spirit possession, which Maratu had difficulty reconciling with his own personal experience playing in *bira* ceremonies:

Maratu: What you are being asked here is, when you are playing, are there people who get possessed when you play this? That they, as you are playing, then they get possessed?
 Muradzikwa: Like here [Imire], oh, no one gets possessed.
 Maratu: What about those in the village, there?
 Muradzikwa: In the village, yes.
 Maratu: As you are playing this?
 Muradzikwa: In a *bira*, you mean?
 Maratu: Yes.
 Muradzikwa: Yes.
 Maratu: You even play in the *bira*?
 Muradzikwa: Oh, oh, oh! I play!
 Maratu: And the *midzimu* comes out?
 Muradzikwa: It comes out, yes.
 Maratu: This is something new for me. I've never heard that. (Interview, 12 October 2003)

Despite Maratu's surprise, Muradzikwa is not the only performer I have heard mention the potential for the *chipendani* to play a role in ritual contexts related to the *vadzimu* ancestors. *Mbira* player Chartwell Dutiro, for example, identifies *chipendani* as among the various musical styles that may be performed during *kurova guva*, a ceremony held a year after an individual's burial in order to incorporate his or her spirit into the family's ancestral lineage (Interview, 20 March 2001).²⁷ On the other hand, possession is neither sought nor expected at *kurova guva*, making Dutiro's account less challenging to conventional understandings of music and possession than Muradzikwa's.

²⁶ In this way, Muradzikwa's account directly challenges Maraire's assertion that the *chipendani* "is not played for muzimu [sic] (religion) or mashai [sic] (spirits)" (1982: 106).

²⁷ For more on music at *kurova guva*, see Kyker (2010).

Just as Chigamba's recollection of listening to his grandmother play *chipendani* for her grandchildren in the evening suggests that we must view the *chipendani* not simply as a solitary instrument, but rather as one with a variety of social identities, so too does Muradzikwa's account of performing at ceremonial events involving spirit possession challenge us to recognize it as an instrument that may be vested with a spectrum of spiritual overtones, from its associations with the *mashave* talent spirits to its potential role in the *bira*.²⁸ It is possible that Muradzikwa's narrative represents the exceptional experiences of a single player, and more work needs to be done in order to clarify what might constitute representative versus exceptional accounts of the role of the *chipendani* in Shona and social life.²⁹ Yet Muradzikwa's recollections of playing in the *bira* serve to call attention to the instrument's inherent relationship to indigenous Shona spirituality through its links with the *mashave* hunting spirits; at the same time, his account intimates that further research may reveal other unexpected facets of the instrument's social identity.

Men, women, labour, cattle, courtship, and marriage

The repertory of the *chipendani* is comprised of songs that can be organized into at least three different categories: original compositions; songs passed down from one generation to another; and arrangements of songs also played on other instruments, such as those taken from *ngoma* or *njari* mbira repertoires.³⁰ While Sekuru Chigamba holds that *chipendani* players seldom sing while performing, extant recordings of the instrument suggest that *chipendani* songs are often accompanied by lyrics, whether sung by the *chipendani* player himself, or by other performers.³¹ In the final section of this paper, I analyze both titles and texts of several *chipendani* songs' texts and/

²⁸ Further to my arguments that the *chipendani* was not played exclusively by herdboys and that the instrument participated in wider Shona social and ritual worlds, the photograph in Zimbabwe Epic portrays a *chipendani* player who appears to have clear connections with Shona ritual. Visible in the photograph are a variety of adornments that signify the ritual world of the spirits, including his *ndarira* bracelets, headdress made of small white beads, and double-stranded necklace made of larger beads, also white. Clad in nothing more than a loincloth, the man sits in a house made in an older style, with earthen walls. At his feet sits a small *karimba*, its wooden soundboard mounted on a gourd resonator and encircled by shells. To his left lies a wooden implement, most likely a hoe; directly behind him hangs a *hwamanda* aerophone. With obvious evidence of the use of a flash, the photograph does not appear old; it was likely taken in the 1970s or early 80s. Other than a single line crediting the photograph to Zimbabwe Newspapers Ltd., the photograph's provenance is uncertain, and it seems probable that it may have been staged. Even if staged, however, the photograph is notable in that the subject chosen to play *chipendani* was not a young boy and was depicted as having a relationship with the ritual world of the ancestors.

²⁹ Along the way, we may also end up reassessing the social position of other types of musical bows. While Ellert's description of the *chizambi* friction bow initially associates the instrument with herding, for example, his account concludes with the observation, "The *chizambe* (sic) is played by some *n'ngas* resident near Great Zimbabwe and is also popular amongst people of the Sabi river" (1984: 83).

³⁰ An example of the first is "Kunatsa Muroyi," a *Korekore* drumming song I recorded Brian Chigamba playing in 2003. An example of the second is "Ndinosaurs nani," recorded by Hugh Tracey in the Zaka District in 1949 (Tracey 1973: 391).

³¹ These include my recordings of Compound Muradzikwa, who both sings and tells stories as he plays *chipendani*, and Hugh Tracey's recordings of various *chipendani* players from Zimbabwe.

or titles. These songs are drawn mostly from my recordings with Sekuru Chigamba and Compound Muradzikwa. However, I also reference recordings made by Hugh Tracey and housed at the International Library of African Music in Grahamstown, South Africa, as well as one song played by Green Tamanikwa Mususa, and recorded by Klaus-Peter Brenner.

The texts and titles of *chipendani* songs touch upon varied themes. Among them are onomatopoeic representations of animal sounds, such as Muradzikwa's original composition "*Mabhiza*," or "Horses," which he composed after seeing horses racing at Harare's Borrowdale racetrack. *Chipendani* songs may also deal with topical issues, as in the case of Muradzikwa's "1963," a reference to his memories of seeing liberation fighters running for cover during Zimbabwe's war for independence. Other songs, such as Muradzikwa's "*Ndezvemeso Muromo Chinyarara*," or "It is for the eyes alone; the mouth must keep quiet," may offer counsel or advice, delivering a moral message similar to that found in *ngano* folktales.

Yet a constellation of related themes clearly emerges in the texts of many *chipendani* songs, which center around issues related to agricultural labour, men, women, cattle, courtship, and marriage. In the following discussion, I illustrate how these related themes permeate the texts of several *chipendani* songs. By reading these songs in relation to each other, I contend that the *chipendani* has close ties to Shona gender negotiations, specifically the ways in which men secured access to women's agricultural labour through courtship and marriage, as facilitated through exchanges of cattle. The social identity of the *chipendani* lies in its location at the nexus of these themes, through which men and women have jointly engaged in the production of gendered difference.

To illustrate this argument, I begin with the lyrics to Compound Muradzikwa's "*Yekufudza Mombe*," or "Cattle Herding Song," which portrays a young herdboys urging his brother to hurry so that they might return the cattle to their kraal before sunset:

Tine mombe shamwari	We have the cattle, my friend
Tiende kudanga	Let us go back to the cattle pen
Zuva ravira iri	The sun has set
<i>Tonorohwa nababa</i>	We will be beaten by father,
<i>Kunzi tanonoka nemombe</i>	Saying we have arrived late with the cattle
<i>Kuenda kumusha</i>	Returning to the village

As the lyrics to this song suggest, the *chipendani* has indeed been played by young herdboys, in addition to adult men and women. Klaus-Peter Brenner, for example, reported that two of his four informants, Green Tamanikwa and Sydney Musarurwa, "confirmed the informal herdboys pastime usage reported in the literature," with Tamanikwa in particular further associating the instrument with other rural pastimes related to herding, "such as throwing spears or whipping spintops" (K. Brenner pers. comm. 15 Oct. 2015).

By reading the songs "*Yekufudza Mombe*" alongside other *chipendani* songs, however, I suggest that cattle are but one thread in a complex tapestry of themes extending to gender, courtship, marriage, and agricultural labour. Indeed, several of these themes are implicitly present even within "*Yekufudza Mombe*". In the first place,

cattle herding is itself closely related to other forms of agricultural labour. Furthermore, cattle are inextricably tied to Shona marriage negotiations, which commonly involve a transfer of cattle from the family of the groom to that of the bride, known as *roora* or *lobola*. Other rural pastimes associated with cattle herding may also lead indirectly back to courtship and marriage, for as Chenjerai Shire has observed, boys' outside play is often oriented toward "games which were concerned with ensuring procreation in adulthood... At the same time as we played these games 'outside,' while herding cattle or goats, we were learning to be men in gendered spaces" (1994: 155–156).

Furthering these relationships, Muradzikwa's *dzikamunhenga* groundbow song "Kuramba Murume Ane Mombe," or "Refusing a man who has cattle," both equates cattle with wealth and emphasizes their intimate ties to marriage:

Sango sango	The forest, the forest
Sango sango	The forest, the forest
Sango sango	The forest, the forest
Sango sango	The forest, the forest
Sango rine nyama sango	The forest has meat, the forest
Sango sango	The forest, the forest
Sango nherera sango	The forest, orphan, the forest
Wakapusa!	You are stupid!
Kuramba murume ane mombe	To refuse a man who has cattle
Uchafa uchitambura	You will die suffering
Unoramba murume ane mombe	You refuse the man who has cattle
Ndiye ane mari iye	He is the one who has money
Uchida murume asina mombe	And you love a man who has no cattle
Sorry maningi!	So sorry!

My name is Compound Muradzikwa
The son of a vegetable grower
Husband [father] of five.

This attempt to exert pressure on a woman who has chosen a potential partner without cattle reflects how marriage decisions affect entire families, rather than only individuals. As one study of economic shocks and marriage timing in Zimbabwe observed, "As the transfer of bride wealth from (the family of) the groom to the family of the bride upon a daughter's marriage presents an opportunity to acquire cattle, an unmarried daughter might be considered part of a household's asset portfolio" (Hoogeveen *et al.* 2011: 148–149). This effect is so powerful that the timing of a daughter's marriage can be "used to avoid getting stuck in poverty" (*ibid.*: 149).

Joining Muradzikwa's songs is a piece that Chigamba recalled learning from his grandmother, Chihwiro. While Chigamba's rendition of the song had no lyrics, he related that the story behind the piece concerned a married couple, who spent most of their time playing *chipendani* instead of working in the fields:

The story is for two people, Chihwiro and Chigombe. Yeah, I think they were a couple. So, they were playing *chipendani*, and spend most of their time playing *chipendani*, instead of

going to work in their fields. You know, when it is time for the rainy season, people work hard. But I think they spent most of their time playing *chipendani*. So when it is time to harvest, they harvest nothing. (Interview, 1 October 2002)

Relationships between men, women, marriage, and agricultural labour are expressed clearly in this story. Furthering these links, Chigamba's understanding of the social role of the *chipendani* is directly tied to courtship, which represents the initial phase in a marriage process that will ideally conclude with an exchange of cattle:

Chipendani was for courtship. Courtship, meaning someone would be looking for a girl to marry. So, you walk. We had houses arranged in *rundaza*—a line. So people in the village, they built their houses, you know, straight. So when you are walking like that, you walk, and you take the *chipendani*. "Over there, I saw a girl, over there. That girl isn't allowed to go outside by her parents. So how shall I see her?"

You take the *chipendani*, you go playing your *chipendani*, playing, playing. You don't walk too fast, you will be walking slowly, slowly, slowly, and you get to that girl's place, who has been told not to go out. She wants to see what you are playing. "So, what is that thing?"

You say, "Oh, it's called *chipendani*".

"How is it played?"

You play for her. So, after you've played for her, you finish. You say, "So, you, I would like to see you, now, how can I see you?"

She tells you that, "If you want to see me you can come like this, like this, like this".

So there, what is needed is that, when you see her, if you speak with her, if she loves you, you couldn't be seen by her parents or by anyone else. If she loves you, you, when you want to go and marry her, you go when the sun is like this, going to the *dare* [a meeting place for men] where her parents are. You arrive there, you sit down, you clap. So, once you've sat, and you've clapped, they ask you, "So, what do you want here, is there anyone you know here?"

You say, "Oh, as a young man, I just said, let me arrive here".

They realise. (Interview, 4 March 2003)

Inherent in Chigamba's account is the suggestion that *chipendani* performance was not relegated exclusively to spaces outside the village, such as the uncultivated areas where cattle are grazed, but also to the pathways, yards, and thatched houses that comprise much of the Shona domestic sphere. Especially in light of Impey's recent work on musical bow playing in Maputaland (2008), the possibility that walking—both specifically as part of courtship and in a more general sense of undertaking a journey—represents a particularly important historic context for *chipendani* playing seems deserving of further investigation outside the scope of this paper. Preliminary evidence supporting this connection lies in Ellert's observation that the instrument "was common throughout the country and traditionally was played as an accompaniment on long foot journeys" (1984: 82), and in Maraire's statement that given "its portability, light weight and soft sound, the *chipendani* is a very suitable instrument to be used by someone who is walking and is alone" (1982: 103; see also p. 104).³²

³² A catalogue of Mozambican musical instruments similarly describes the Mozambican *chipendane* as "normally played by men of all ages, as a form of entertainment, often serving as company on long walks" (Duarte 1980: 7).

Themes related to finding a partner appear to carry into other *chipendani* songs. As transcribed by Dumisani Maraire, the song “Monica,” performed by Tonga Dzororo, describes the trials of a girl who fails to find a lover due to her cracked feet, which signal a lack of self-care (1982: 153). Also transcribed by Maraire, the song “*Zhanje*” is described as coming from a game that teaches young people to choose good companions (1982: 185). In this way, “*Zhanje*” appears similar to “*Sarura Wako*,” which also encourages players to choose a partner, and has been described as a “dramatization of how one chooses a partner during courtship” (Nyoni and Nyoni 2013: 238). Finally, Frank Gomba’s song “*Zamu RaBetty Ndakaribata*,” or “I touched Betty’s breast,” [CD track 1] points toward the type of sexual play that boys seek out in adolescence.³³ As Claire Jones told me, “This song was one of Sekuru Frank’s favourites, and on more than one occasion in my presence he described it (usually with great hilarity) as a song he sang as a boy in a teasing way, translating it as “I *grabbed* [emphasis in original] Betty’s breast” (C. Jones pers. comm. 11 Jan. 2016).

Further solidifying the instrument’s links to marriage negotiations, Ngonidzaashe Marongwe’s research has revealed that during the precolonial era, men in Zimbabwe’s Shurugwi District

...used poetry to complain to their in-laws in cases where there were delays in the handing over of new brides or excessive *lobola* (bride price) demands. These men would wake up very early in the morning, go out of their sleeping hut, and sing songs about their complaints while playing a traditional form of guitar *chipendani*. After such “performances” the in-laws would often gather together and initiate the process of handing over the bride (2013: 461–462).

As colonisation intensified in the mid-20th century, the mediation of gender relations through courtship and marriage began to fracture, with the changing economy directly affecting the exchanges of cattle involved in *roora*, or bridewealth (Smith 1998: 510). As in other musical genres throughout southern Africa, the texts of *chipendani* songs likewise began to reflect the implications of these shifting social, political, economic, and gendered relations. In reference to the song “*Murungu*,” composed by Green Tamanikwa Mususa’s older brother, for example, Klaus-Peter Brenner observes:

This song was composed by an elder brother of his in the 1950s, while—according to the then legal regulations of the *chibaro* system of forced labour—being compelled to work on a white man’s farm. Only if the employer would agree to release the worker by formally signing his worker’s passport would he be free to leave and move away in search of another job... Mususa’s brother hated being trapped in that exploitative situation and subversively used to cheer himself and his co-workers and fellows-in-misery by playing and singing this *chipendani* song, containing lyrics like “Hey boss, sign my worker’s passport, I want to leave,” especially funny when performed in the presence of that—addressed, but unsuspecting—white “boss”. (Brenner, pers. comm. 16 Oct. 2015)³⁴

³³ A 30 second excerpt of Gomba performing this song is available through ILAM’s online audio search option on the ILAM homepage [www.ru.ac.za/ilam], under the title “Zamura raBette Ndakaribata”.

³⁴ See also Brenner (1997: 42).

“*Murungu*” conveys distinct echoes of Leroy Vail and Landeg White’s arguments regarding aural culture’s potential to transmit “maps of experience” throughout the colonial period (1991: 320). Yet it also points toward links between colonisation and changed gendered identities. In the words of Chenjerai Shire, “As men moved from rural communities to be relocated in farming compounds, mines, town locations and schools, their identities shifted. Ideas about *zvechirume*, freely translated as ‘male preoccupations,’ were dislocated as a result of this movement” (1994: 148). At the same time that men were increasingly drawn into exploitative colonial labour regimes, their access to the cattle essential for bridewealth was severely restricted through forced relocations into increasingly smaller areas designated as “Native Reserves,” and through concomitant colonial efforts to reduce the size of native cattle herds.³⁵ No longer could men count on securing women’s agricultural labour through marriages marked by exchanges of cattle, transforming masculinity and male identities.

Even as the transformations wrought by colonisation intensified, however, *chipendani* music continued to evince concern with gender relations and marriage negotiations. In 1951, for example, Hugh Tracey recorded the song “*Kwa Ambuya Asina Keriya*.”³⁶ In the catalogue accompanying the recordings, Tracey’s notes on the song’s meaning state, “You must bring your mother-in-law a present on your bicycle carrier when you go to see her, or she will be angry” (1973: 394):

Kuroora kwemazuva ano uko
Mukomana uyo akanga aenda asina keriya kwaambuya
Vakati ambuya vaisa muromo mumhuno
Ini ndakapwatika kuseka kwazvo
Ndikati, “Hehehehehe, ambuya vemazuva ano veduwe!”
“Mukwasha akauya asina chaanacho pakeriya”
“Anotsamwa zvakaipa kwazvo.”
Uchati, “Mukoma zvino (unintelligible),”
“Keriya!”

Marriage these days
 That young man had gone to his mother-in-law’s with no bicycle carrier
 They said his mother-in-law pursed her lips right up to her nostrils
 I exploded, laughing so hard
 I said, “Hehehehehe, mothers-in-law these days!”
 “If a son-in-law goes without anything in his bicycle carrier,”
 “She gets very upset.”

³⁵ As Allison Shutt has observed, “Beginning with settler occupation in the 1890s, settlers had imposed destocking on Africans, but with the passing of the Land Apportionment Act in 1931, destocking became a regular feature of native affairs policy” (2002: 267).

³⁶ Several other *chipendani* songs recorded by Hugh Tracey likewise speak to themes I have identified in this article. Speaking to changes in labour, wealth, and gender relations, the song “*Chitima*,” for instance (ILAM number: 7855), takes the image of a train—a clear icon of colonial labour regimes—as its title. The vocal part of this song concludes with two onomatopoeic representations of the train’s sound, beginning with the vocables “gezengeje” and ending with the rhythmicized line of text, “All of your wealth has been finished by whores,” or “*Chuma chako chakapera nemahure*”.

And he'll be told, "Brother, what we want here is"
"The bicycle carrier!"

The image of a son-in-law who arrives at the doorstep of his in-laws riding a store-bought bicycle—a symbol of colonial mobility—alludes to social transformations under colonisation, with its stringent labour demands and related cash economy. This theme is reinforced by the song's opening line, "Marriage these days," which functions to set contemporary marriage practices apart from the past. Yet the song's fundamental premise, that a mother-in-law would expect her son-in-law to express material generosity when he visits, also points toward long-standing expectations of affinal kin, expressed in the proverb, or *tsumo*, which states, "A son-in-law is a fig tree/ That never finishes bearing fruit".

Tracey's recording of "*Kwa Ambuya Asina Keriya*" [CD track 2], which may be the most widely available *chipendani* track thanks to its inclusion on the album *Other Musics from Zimbabwe*, and its availability directly from ILAM, speaks to many other points I have made in this article.³⁷ Performed by a trio featuring a *chipendani* player named Muchabaiwa accompanied by two singers named Richard and Remigio, it features an introductory spoken word section followed by interlocking vocable-based singing lines, deconstructing typical portrayals of *chipendani* as solo instrument (see also Brenner 1997: 55). The song's lyrics clearly intimates that far from being "self-delectative," it is intended to be heard more widely, serving as a form of social commentary that both warns men not to appear on their in-laws' doorsteps without a basket of groceries, and delivers a critique of the son-in-law's position as an inexhaustible source of wealth. While the ages of performers are not indicated in Tracey's catalogue, the voices of the singers seem to be those of adult men, suggesting that the *chipendani* was being actively played by mature adults in the mid-twentieth century.

Conclusion

In this article, I have illustrated how conventional portrayals of the *chipendani* as a "herdboy instrument" are inherently reductive, masking the complexity of the instrument's social role. One of the primary findings of my fieldwork emerges through oral histories with *chipendani* players, who describe how musicians of all ages, and of both genders, have historically been actively engaged in *chipendani* performance. Of equal importance, these oral histories demonstrate that *chipendani* playing has crossed between numerous social contexts, ranging from informal family gatherings to the ritual setting of the *bira*, and from herding cattle to courtship. Just as Angela Impey has suggested that musical bow performance in Maputaland may offer a means of eliciting information about relationships to land, I have illustrated how Zimbabwean *chipendani* music points toward the negotiation of gender relations, bringing together themes of cattle, courtship, marriage, and agricultural labour. Moving the *chipendani* out of the domain of child's play, this approach encourages us not only to learn more

³⁷ ILAM number: 13741.

about the musical and social qualities of the *chipendani* itself, but also to consider the *chipendani* in relation to the larger family of musical bows dispersed throughout southern Africa, opening new possibilities for thinking about similarity and difference in diverse traditions of musical bow playing. Along the way, we may reach an enriched understanding of other musical bows, such as the Zimbabwean *chitende* and *chizambi*, which have similarly been categorized as “herdboy instruments”.³⁸

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³⁸ Ellert, for example, describes both instruments as “often played by boys herding cattle” (1984: 82–83). A catalogue of Mozambican instruments similarly describes the *chizambe* (sic) as “principally used by herders, as a form of alleviating their solitude” (Duarte 1980: 12).

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