

FOLKLORIC MUSICIANS AMONG THE BUGAKHWE

A MASTER'S PROJECT

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Abstract

Increased access to global media by traditional culture in remote parts of Africa has, in many cases, seen indigenous music marginalized in favor of imported forms. In some places, a folkloric tradition thrives, though this music may face extinction if those who practice it do not document their art in a way which can be passed down to future generations. For this project, I recorded seven musician/composers of the Bugakhwe, a Khoisan people group living in the Okavango Delta region of Botswana. Two were given enough studio time to create a complete CD-length set, so as to show off the depth of their individual styles. The other five recorded “signature” songs—two or three songs for which they consider themselves best known—so as to illustrate the breadth of the musical style. Recording techniques used, brief biographies of some of the musicians, and summaries of song lyrical content have been included.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Increased access to global media by traditional culture in remote parts of Africa has, in many cases, seen traditional music marginalized in favor of imported forms. In some places, a folkloric tradition thrives, though this music may face extinction if those who practice it do not document their art in a way which can be passed down to future generations.

For this project, I recorded seven musician/composers of the Bugakhwe people, a Khoisan group living in the Okavango Delta region of Botswana. Two musicians were given enough studio time to create a complete CD-length set, so as to show off the depth of their individual styles. The other five recorded “signature” songs—two or three songs for which they consider themselves best known—so as to illustrate the breadth possible in this type of music. This way, a listener can have some sense of the variety of songs which might be composed by one composer as well as what other composers might create still within the same musical genre. These musicians would self-describe as playing within the same style of music. I have seen all of them perform live in at least one context, usually two or three. Usually they will perform in the same section of a concert. For example, at the President’s Day Competition of 2009, those present performed in the section entitled “Traditional Instruments.” When I saw some of them at the Kuru Dance Festival in 2008, they all performed at an event called “An Evening of Instruments.” They were referred to me by two Okavango Delta-area non-profit organizations: Thari-E-Ntsho Story Tellers and the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (Tocadi).

The instruments preferred by the Bugakhwe—and many other Khoisan groups—function best for personal amusement. Instruments such as mouth bows and thumb pianos lose much of their appeal when played even a few feet away from the performer. To the extent possible, I recorded these instruments as the players would experience them.

This paper includes a summary of scholarly literature on the music of Botswana, so this music can be appreciated in context. The instruments used have been described along with recording techniques used to document them. Brief biographies of the musicians and summaries of song lyrical content—materials solicited for a CD booklet—are included as well. Finally, I have included my personal observations on the recordings with some questions for potential future research.

Need for the Project

Kwama “Dipo” Shangaira and Mokoya Jame //elexu are *Bugakhwe*, speakers of the *Khwedam* language, born and still living in the remote desert village of *Kapatura* on the edge of the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Both are blind. Both are among the most revered Bugakhwe folkloric musicians of their generation. The music that they produce, while firmly rooted in the traditions of their people, is wholly original.

Authors such as Elizabeth Wood, who published the most complete catalog of Botswana’s traditional instruments, and John Brearley, who wrote about several “musical tours” of the country provide us with most of the scholarly writing on Botswana’s music. Other indirectly related scholarly sources include Jones and Berliner’s work in Zimbabwe, Mans’ in Namibia, and Kirby’s book on musical instruments in South Africa. The existing materials lack depth in a number of key areas. While Wood did several village-

level studies, she focused almost exclusively on Tswana culture. Minority cultural groups have never received adequate focus. Brearley observed instruments and musical styles without cultural context. The information presented by these authors is out of date. Wood's most recent work appeared in 1989 (though it focused on research done in the 1970's); Brearley's most recent article saw publication in 1996, based on research done in the 1980's. Of the sixteen instruments described by Wood in 1985, only four have been observed as still in use in the country in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Brearley and Wood both refer to "Basarwa," a term collectively used by the dominant Tswana people for more approximately 15 small *Khoisan* people groups, which include the approximately 7,000 Bugakhwe.¹ A study specifically focused on the musical culture of the Bugakhwe has yet to be done.

Purpose Statement

This project documents a particular musical culture at a particular time. The recordings have been made to serve future research in at least three areas. First, these recordings can be seen on a continuum with Brearley's writing and recording in the 1980's as well as Woods in the 1970's. These recordings will help scholars understand how music has evolved in Botswana. Second, these recordings can be viewed in the context of geography. As music of the Okavango Delta of Botswana, they can be compared to Jones' work on the music of Zimbabwe or Mans' on Namibia. They invite questions of to what extent the music of the Okavango Delta has been informed by music

¹ Ethnologue, <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/xuu> (accessed September 12, 2014).

of other regions throughout Africa. They help us come to a fuller understanding of African music distinctives. Finally, these recordings can be seen as the folkloric music of a people group: the Bugakhwe. They could be compared to other musics associated with a particular Botswana ethnic group, such as Wheeler's recordings of Naro folkloric music. Are there similarities between the way a Bugakhwe person would compose setinkane music verses how a Tswana player would? How does Bugakhwe setinkane playing relate to Shona mbira playing?

Transliteration and Glossary of Terms

Setswana, Botswana, Batswana, Motswana

Setswana, one of the two official languages in Botswana (the other is English), is a Bantu language, which uses prefixes attached to the root form of nouns to determine the class of the noun and, therefore, its complete meaning. Botswana is the place where the Batswana live; the singular form of Batswana is Motswana.

Khoisan

Khoisan is a linguistic term which refers to Khoi and San languages.¹ The relevant people groups have been referenced in other literature as “bushmen” or “San;” Botswana-specific literature calls them “Basarwa.” Unless referencing another work, I will

¹ Ethnologue, “Language Family Trees: Khoisan,” http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=80-16 (accessed December 16, 2012).

use the term Khoisan to refer both to languages and people groups because it has less cultural baggage than the other two terms.

Linguistic distinctions of Khoisan languages

A linguistic distinction of Khoisan languages is that they contain a wide variety of consonantal clicks. Clicks may be represented orthographically either through characters not otherwise used in the language (such as the letters “c,” “x,” and “q”) or by symbols (such as “!” or “/”). The double-slash symbol, “//” for example, is a lateral click, made by pulling the tongue from the teeth on the side of the mouth—a sound used in North America to encourage a horse. The letter “h” indicates aspiration. The letter “g” is used to indicate the “h” sound of English. So, the name of the musical instrument *secgorogoro* is pronounced “sehorohoro.”

On the use of non-English terminology

One finds various spellings for musical, cultural, and linguistic terms in the available literature. Where one term is clearly an alternate spelling of the same thing, I have normalized spelling to the most common form in the most recent literature to avoid confusion. For example, Brearley refers to the Nharo people, which is an alternate spelling of Naro. I have regularized all references to Naro.

Folkloric/Traditional/Contemporary

The distinction between traditional, contemporary, and folkloric is an important one in relation to these recordings. When relevant, I will use the terms as they tend to be

used locally in Botswana. Traditional refers to music of unknown authorship, songs which people believe have been “passed down” for a significant period of time.

Contemporary music may be used broadly to refer to musical styles which come from the outside. Hip hop, reggae, rock (especially heavy metal), and dance music have had a powerful impact on the musical culture of Botswana, often overshadowing indigenously created musical styles, sometimes even being expressed in indigenized forms. Most people in Botswana who self-identify as musicians would identify with a contemporary style.

Folkloric is a term used in Botswana to refer to songs, instruments, and performers using a traditional or indigenous style for newly composed songs.¹ To an outsider’s ear, folkloric music sounds identical to traditional music. Most folkloric music will be performed on indigenous African instruments, though some ensembles employ Western instruments, such as keyboards, without violating the definition of folkloric. This project focuses on folkloric musicians—musicians drawing from a traditional musical vocabulary to create new songs and music.

Limitations/Delimitations of the Project

While these recordings focus on a particular time, a particular place, and a particular group of people, reference must be made to the historic context of traditional music in Botswana and the historic context of Khoisan music. Reference must also be made to other music in southern Africa as is relevant to the project. These references

¹ Personal conversations with self-described folkloric artists Ntirelang Berman, Mmoloki Matlho, and Olebotse Motlamme between 2008-2011.

come primarily from available literature, rather than from original research. Inferences might be made to, for example, the influence of Bantu poetry on Khoisan poetry, the evolving understanding of tradition in southern Africa, and hidden meaning within texts. These would be compelling areas for future research, but would not be considered a part of this project.

I have lived in Botswana since 2007 and in Maun specifically since 2009. Maun is a village on the southern tip of the Okavango Delta, about three hours by car from the heart of the Bugakhwe community. I have been working as a consultant in Applied Ethnomusicology with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Botswana and the Bible Society of Botswana. I have become known in the musical community in Botswana through my association with these two organizations, and also through my attendance at the annual Botswana Music Camp. The musicians recorded for this project were chosen organically through relationships I have made over the course of my years of living and working in this region. While I came to know their music through live performances in which I was part of the audience, I came to know them as artists through other friends. By the time the recordings were made, I was already familiar with their music and they knew who I was. Therefore, the sample was not random, but selected based on the relationships with musicians that had been previously formed.

Assumptions

Alan Lomax proposed the “common-sense notion that music somehow expresses emotion.”¹ Time has shown us that music functions differently in different cultures; even different types of music in the same culture can have a different function. That said, the goal of music must be to convey *something* from a performer to a listener. What the performer intends to convey and what the listener receives are not necessarily the same thing. The chapter entitled “Artists and Their Songs” documents what the composers had to say about their songs. A compelling area of future research would be to discover that the audiences receive from performances of this music.

I also make the assumption that people are influenced by their context: by the language they speak, by the culture in which they grow up, by the nation in which they make their home, and by the continent on which they live. Because of this, while the project focuses on Khoisan music, I assume that my recordings will speak on some level to a greater understanding of the music of Botswana and African music in general.

Finally, I have made the assumption that this project will be a product of its time and place. Culture change is inevitable. Culture change does not necessarily happen more slowly in so-called traditional culture than elsewhere; it may even occur faster. I would not be surprised to return to Botswana in twenty years and find an entirely different musical landscape. In that sense, this project provides a snapshot of where things were at the time of these recordings, to be seen in a continuum with other musical documents.

Bounding of the Study Setting

The project is limited to Khoisan musicians. The two principle performers are Bugakhwe. The Bugakhwe are a Khoisan language and cultural group of approximately 7,000 people.¹ A little more than half of them live in the Okavango Delta area of Botswana. Some live in Namibia and Angola. A group of unknown numbers were relocated to South Africa following the Namibian war of independence.² All of my recordings took place in the Okavango Delta.

While the choice of the artists to be represented should, theoretically, give a compelling picture of the musical style represented in the region, I am limited to the artists referred to me within the scope of my contracted work within Botswana. I cannot know for sure without substantial further research whether or not an accurate picture of Khoisan musical culture has been documented.

My contractual limitations also precluded any efforts on my part to document diversity amongst musicians. I could not, for example, seek women musicians to balance male musicians brought to me. I recorded the instruments brought by the musicians, rather than prioritizing finding lesser known instruments from among the known instruments of Botswana.

I focused on musicians who play instruments. Botswana's folkloric music is often divided into the categories of choir, dance, and instrument. Choirs and dance groups,

¹ Alan Lomax, "Song Structure and Social Structure," *Ethnology* 4 (1962), 425, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3772850> (accessed January 13, 2012).

¹ Ethnologue, <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/xuu> (accessed September 12, 2014).

while an important part of Khoisan musical culture, will not be featured in this project. This is, again, because of the opportunities available to me. This project, will be a “snapshot” of a particular group, a particular place, a particular time. These are the artists who were brought forward by the entities mentioned for the reasons given.

² Various Artists, *We Tell Our Stories With Music: Kulimatjji nge*, Double Story Books: Cape Town, Compact Disc, 2004.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What follows is a review of existing literature on the music of Botswana with emphasis on the people groups of the Okavango Delta. The review has been organized around the following topics: the region, key researchers, song repertoire/genre, instruments, and musical change/culture.

Demographic Information

In the seventies, Wood wrote that Botswana had one tribe and one language.¹ Existing demographic data, taken from the CIA factbook, SIL's Ethnologue, and other sources reveal two key things: 1) Botswana is highly multi-ethnic, and 2) many of these ethnic groups have migrated from somewhere else. Many may actually consider their true home somewhere outside of Botswana. Many authors have noted Africa's knack for assimilating musical ideas from outside and repurposing them. Southern Africa has seen many instances of migration which have brought disparate African ethnic groups together. South African mines, for example, attracted workers from throughout Botswana, among other places. Displaced Africans have used music as a means of maintaining ethnic identity,² but these diverse communities have also gave rise to multi-

¹ Elizabeth N. Wood, "Traditional Music in Botswana," *The Black Perspective in Music* 13 (1985), 15.

² John E. Kaemmer, "Southern Africa: an Introduction," *The Garland Handbook of African Music*, ed, Ruth M. Stone (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 327

ethnic musical styles which were a hybrid of ethnic styles. Music learned by one group from another would return home remade in the image of the receiving group.¹

According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) factbook, ethnically, the population of Botswana is 79% Tswana, 11% Kalanga, 3% Basarwa, 7% other (including Kgalagadi and white).² These figures are somewhat misleading as to the actual tribal composition of the country, since “Basarwa” is a catchall term for Khoisan peoples. There are approximately fifteen distinct ethnic and language groups comprising the Khoisan, according to the Ethnologue, living in remote places in the country (and possibly not being adequately documented in census efforts).³ “Other” includes all Europeans, Americans, Indians, Chinese, and white native Africans (descendants of Dutch and English colonists).

The CIA factbook lists four languages: Setswana (78.2%), Kalanga (7.9%), Sekgalagadi (2.8%), and English (2.1%) based on the 2001 census.⁴ The Ethnologue, on the other hand, lists twenty-nine languages. Setswana is spoken as a first language by half

¹ Tomeletso Sereetsi, *The solo four string guitar of Botswana*, Gaborone: In the Loop Pty Ltd, 2013, 9-11.

² CIA-The World Factbook, “Botswana,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bc.html> (Accessed March 10, 2012).

³ Ethnologue, “Ethnologue Report for Botswana,” http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=BW (accessed March 4, 2012).

⁴ CIA-The World Factbook, “Botswana,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bc.html> (Accessed March 10, 2012).

of the population. English speakers amount to approximately 4,000, far outnumbered by the 20,000 Afrikaans speakers.¹

Among the significant ethnic groups of the Okavango Delta region are Herero (31,000), Mbukushu (20,000), and Yeyi (47,000). A number of smaller, but significant, Khoisan groups also reside here, notably //Anikhwe, Bugakhwe, and Dciriku (approximately 3,600).²

While people have been living in what is now Botswana for approximately 100,000 years, according to the Unesco World Heritage Center, many of the ethnic groups currently residing there arrived within the past few hundred years.³ The Yeyi have been in the region at least since 1750, at which time they were displaced by Mbukushu who came to the region fleeing Chief Ngombela of the Lozi.⁴ Some estimates put the Yeyi arrival at around 1000 AD,⁵ making them the first Bantu group to arrive in the region. The dominant ethnic group of Botswana—the Tswana—migrated from East

¹ Ethnologue, “Ethnologue Report for Botswana,” http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=BW (accessed March 4, 2012).

² Ibid.

³ UNESCO World Heritage Center, “Tsodilo,” <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1021> (Accessed March 1, 2012).

⁴ Thomas J. Larsen, *The Bayeyi of Ngamiland* (Gaborone: The Botswana Society, 1992), 7.

⁵ Andy Monthusi Chebanne, Mike Rodewald, and Lydia Nyati-Ramahobo, *Mutjango wu Shiyeyi: Shiyeyi Writing System* (Gaborone: The Botswana Society, 2007), 9.

Africa sometime in the 14th century.¹ The Herero may have arrived from Namibia as late as the twentieth century. They are not mentioned in existing literature prior to 2000 and are omitted from Bock and Johnson's article on the people living in the Okavango region.²

Key scholars and works

Key scholars on the music of Botswana include John Brearley, Mothusi Phuthego, Jürgen Schöpf, and Elizabeth Wood. Though Minette Mans writes primarily about the music of neighboring Namibia, many of the instruments, styles, and cultural issues remain relevant on both sides of the border, so it makes sense to consider her as a key scholar on the music of Botswana as well.

Brearley, a classical violinist from the United Kingdom, made two trips to Botswana which read as musical travelogues; or, perhaps more accurately, as a musician's observations while traveling the country. He provides accurate descriptions of diverse

¹ John E Kaemmer, "Southern Africa: An Introduction," in *The Garland Handbook of African Music*, ed, Ruth M. Stone (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 313.

Encounter South Africa, "The Tswana," <http://www.encounter.co.za/article/94.html> (accessed March 7, 2012).

² John Bock and Sarah E. Johnson, "The Okavango Delta Peoples of Botswana." *Global Sojourns*, http://globalsojourns.com/imatedump/Web_Articles/Articles_Botswana/Okavango_Delta_People.pdf (accessed February 16, 2012).

musical instruments¹ as well as song transcriptions.² His three articles (the earliest published in 1984 and the most recent in 1996) give some examples of musical change in the region. He does not provide any stylistic analysis, and only in the most recent article, which is specifically about Botswana's indigenous bowed zither, the *segaba*, does he discuss musical differences between the numerous ethnic groups represented in the country.

Phuthego is an educator in Botswana. He seems to be the only Motswana who has written a significant number of scholarly articles on the music of Botswana. His music related articles focus on *segaba*. As he is the only scholar among those listed here who also plays the instrument, his writing on its construction and playing is more likely to be accurate than Schöpf's and Brearley's (where their descriptions differ).

Schöpf authored *The Serankure and Music in Tlòkweng, Botswana*. The book focuses primarily on *serankure* (another name for *segaba*) with an "excursion" (his word) into a reed pipe played in ensemble called *ditlhaka*. His writing on the *serankure* is valid, certainly, but limited in scope, spending a short period of time with a few players.

¹ Instrument descriptions:

//Gwashi: John Brearley, "A musical tour of Botswana, 1982," *Botswana Notes and Records*, 16 (1984), 56.

Lamellophone: Brearley, 1984, 45.

Musical bow: Brearley, 1984, 48.

Segorogoro: John Brearley, "Musicians of the Kalahari," *Botswana Notes and Records*, 20 (1989), 77.

Segaba: Brearley, 1982, 52-53; Brearley, 1989, 78.

Sevuikivuiki: Brearley, 1984, 55.

² Transcriptions by Brearley: Brearley, 1984, 46-47, 50-56; Brearley, 1989, 79-80, 82, 84, 86, 88; and Brearley, John, "The Segankuru— a 'Bush Fiddle' or a Bowed Bow?: Some of its Exponents and their Songs," *Botswana Notes and Records*, 28 (1996), 128, 132-134, 136-140.

Phuthego, for example, speaks of three distinct finger positions used by segaba players while Schöpf's players only use one of them. The ditlhaka writing is very significant, since no one else has written anything about this instrument. Still, the analysis of ditlhaka is incomplete.

Wood produced the most articles on the subject on the music of Botswana, publishing five between 1976 and 1989. The government of Botswana contracted with her to document and record music at several locations around the country. Her writing, done within the historical context of incomplete documentation of the true ethnic and linguistic diversity of Botswana, reflects that limited understanding. The unfortunate—albeit understandable—outcome is that this diversity is not reflected in her own documentation. For example, her article “Traditional Music in Botswana” states that the country’s inhabitants are made up of eight tribes which speak the same language (“the customs and languages of all the tribes are the same”).¹ In truth, as already mentioned, it is now known that at least 29 languages are represented in the country, most of which would have been present at the time of Wood’s writing. With those criticisms in mind, Wood provides a wealth of information. Two of her articles (1976 and 1980) focus on the musical life of two different communities. Her other articles contain inventories of song lyrics, discussions of lyrical themes, and scale patterns. Her 1985 article contains the most complete list of musical instruments in any writing on Botswana to date.²

¹ Elizabeth N. Wood, “Traditional Music in Botswana,” *The Black Perspective in Music* 13 (1985),15.

² *Ibid*, 24-28.

Song repertoires and music genres

Many languages in southern Africa have no word which could accurately be glossed as “music” in the English sense of the word. Rather, there exist distinct words for singing, for playing an instrument, and for dancing.¹ Some work has been done towards understanding song genres in Botswana, both from an emic and etic point of view. There has also been some work towards documenting song repertoire in an individual or community.

Lewis-Williams, Wiessner and Flemming both explore trance singing and dancing amongst Khoisan groups in Botswana. Lewis-Williams, in studying the *!Kung*, is primarily concerned with an emic understanding of the word *!Kai*, which is translated to mean trance. The principle question is whether what *!Kung* healers do should be considered a trance and whether they should be considered shamans. Lewis-Williams concludes that the *!Kung* understanding of what they are doing is different than the Western understanding of these terms. Their focus is not on music, as such, but on altered states of consciousness. Healing trances are closely associated with Khoisan music in Botswana, so the discussion is relevant. Wiessner and Flemming document *!Kung* trance dancing and singing, which they say can be generalized to most other Basarwa groups. This includes lyrical content of songs as well as what one of the healers says while listening to a recording of himself after the event.

Wood’s “The Broad Diversity of Subject in the Traditional Songs of Botswana” contains an inventory of Tswana songs. The songs contain complete Setswana lyrics with

¹ John E. Kaemmer, “Southern Africa: An Introduction,” *The Garland Handbook of African Music*, ed, Ruth M. Stone (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 311.

English translations. She divides these songs into children's songs, initiation songs, women's songs, men's songs, mixed group songs, and Basarwa (Khoisan) songs. She devotes only three lines to the Basarwa songs and includes no lyrics or translations.¹ It is unclear from the article if the categories given are intended as emic but they are probably not. I have heard people speak of initiation songs since these are associated with a particular ceremony. The other categories seem to be an imposition from the outsider's perspective. Olivier, working a little over a decade after Wood, analyzed emic music genre amongst the *Ju'hoan* (a Khoisan group living in northeastern Namibia and northwestern Botswana). Olivier divides 200 songs into emic genre by way of a tier diagram which takes into account such aspects as orchestration, rhythmic inventory, and social function.

Brearley devotes a section of his 1989 article to animal songs.² These are songs performed by Naro people with mouth bows used to mimic the movements of the animals. The performer will stop playing the bow at intervals to tell the audience what had transpired during the instrumental portion of the song. He also notes the frequency with which certain animals are featured in songs.

Biesele focuses on the music style and repertoire of "Jack," a "San" man in his late twenties (in 1975). While she notes that Jack is anomalous in many ways, she addresses how he uses his instrument in shamanic practices and how he composes his own songs.

¹ Elizabeth N. Wood, "The Broad Diversity of Subject in the Traditional Songs of Botswana," *Botswana Notes and Records*, 21 (1989), 20. <http://pao.chadwyck.com/PDF/1330893160153.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2012).

² John Brearley, "Musicians of the Kalahari," *Botswana Notes and Records* 20 (1989), 83-87.

Both the use of the instrument in a shamanic context and the composition of original songs were seen at the time as unusual; Jack was also much older than most players of the instrument. Lyrics for seven songs are translated and reoccurring themes are analyzed.

Instruments and organology

Major works on musical instruments have been written about the instruments of Zimbabwe (Jones, 1992), Namibia (Mans, 1997), and South Africa (Kirby, 1934). These books feature many instruments which are also found in Botswana. However, the reports of authors other than those of these significant works must be used to corroborate the existence and use of these instruments in Botswana.

Zimbabwe is Botswana's neighbor to the east. Because of political issues in Zimbabwe, many Zimbabweans have come to Botswana, including musicians. Jones' *Making Music: Musical Instruments in Zimbabwe Past and Present* contains a history of Zimbabwean music which begins with reference to thousand year old archeological records and ends with popular music in the 1980's.¹ An inventory of instruments in current use follows, including a chapter devoted to each of the following: aerophones,² chordophones,³ and idiophones.⁴ Special focus is given to locally important instruments

¹ Claire Jones, *Making Music: Musical Instruments in Zimbabwe Past and Present*, Harare: Academic Books Zimbabwe, 1992, 23-37.

² Ibid, 47-59.

³ Ibid, 60-75.

⁴ Ibid, 76-84.

marimba,¹ mbira,² steel drums,³ and drums,⁴ with a chapter devoted to each. Where these instruments also exist in Botswana, as in the case of marimba, the information given by Jones appears to be equally relevant to Botswana as it is to Zimbabwe. However, without further study, one could not say with certainty how relevant Jones' book is to Botswana instruments.

Similarly, Mans' *Ongoma! Notes on Namibian Musical Instruments* contains drawings and photographs of hundreds of instruments, organized via the Hornbostel-Sachs categories. Instrument names are given in most, if not all, of the languages of the people groups who use the instruments. As many of the instruments are played by Khoisan peoples who live on both sides of the Namibia/Botswana border, the book has a great deal of value in terms of identifying instruments which might be present in Botswana. However, one cannot assume a 100% match of Namibia's musical instruments to Botswana's.

Finally, Kirby's *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* extensively documents musical instruments found in South Africa, many of which are also found in Botswana. The question remains how relevant Kirby's documentation is to the instruments of Botswana. Given that Kirby published in 1934, the reader must also wonder how musical and cultural change has affected the current inventory of musical

¹ Ibid, 85-109.

² Ibid, 110-136.

³ Ibid, 137-145.

⁴ Ibid, 146-161.

instruments, even in South Africa. The website for the university which houses the late professor's instrument collection says that, even as Kirby collected the instruments they were becoming "obsolete."¹

Wood's "Traditional Music in Botswana" (1985) features drawings of 16 traditional instruments.² These appear to have been adopted as an "official" instrument inventory in Botswana, given that this series of drawings appears with virtually every presentation on music I have seen in the country. However, most, if not all, of these instruments have become rare.

Brearley writes about seven instruments—*segorogoro*,³ *sevuikiviki*,⁴ *setinkane*,⁵ // *gwashi*,⁶ *lya*,⁷ traditional guitar,⁸ and *segaba*—⁹only two of which also appear in the writing of Wood. This could be because Brearley spent more time amongst the minority peoples of Botswana; he specifically mentions Yeyi, Mbukushu, and Basarwa, for example, while Wood dealt almost exclusively with Tswana tribes.

¹ South African College of Music, "The Kirby Collection," <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/sacm/kirby.html> (accessed March 20, 2012).

² Wood, 1985, 26-29.

³ Brearley, John, 1989, 77.

⁴ Brearley, John, 1984, 55.

⁵ Ibid, 45.

⁶ Ibid, 56.

⁷ Ibid, 48.

⁸ Brearley, John, 1989, 87.

⁹ Brearley, 1984, 52-53; Brearley, 1989,78; Brearley, 1996, 121-144.

Only three musical instruments appear in more than one document. Of these three, the segaba/serankure is the best documented. Segaba is a kind of bowed zither with an oil can (or, sometimes a paint can) resonator. Brearley mentions it in two of his three articles and devotes one article solely to this instrument. Phuthego writes of it in two articles. Wood calls it the most prevalent instrument.¹ She also mentions it in passing in her article about music in Kweneng. Schöpf devotes an entire book to it.

The second most frequently mentioned instrument in the available literature is usually called *setinkane*. The setinkane is a “thumb piano” with a number of metal keys affixed to a squarish piece of wood that can be played with or without a resonator. Such resonators are typically made from a gourd, a fiberglass replica of a gourd, or a tin can. The instruments described may actually be different but similar instruments. Brearley, for example, describes a 15-key setinkane whose tuning is almost identical to the Zimbabwean *karimba/mbira nyunga nyunga*.² It has six pitches with two represented in a lower octave and four represented in a higher octave. Wood, on the other hand, describes an instrument with four pitches and twenty or more keys (several octave and unison duplications).³ While called by the same name, these instruments are clearly as different as a guitar and a mandolin. Playing techniques and song repertoires do not translate readily from one variant to another. This instrument is also referred to as *ndingo, dongo*,

¹ Wood, 1985, 28.

² Brearley, 1989, 90.

³ Elizabeth N. Wood, “The Use of Metaphor and Certain Scale Patterns in Traditional Music of Botswana,” *African Music*, 6 (1983): 113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30249774> (accessed February 2, 2012).

sansa, or *mbira*. Biesele (1975) focuses on the style of a single performer, a !Kung traditional healer in the Okavango Delta who uses the instrument in his healing practice. Brearley writes of it in two of his articles, transcribing several tunes and analyzing the tuning of the instrument.¹ Wood examines the instrument in her 1983 and 1985 articles. The 1983 article contains a description of the tuning of the instrument.² All of the performers I recorded used this instrument. Five considered it their principle instrument.

The third instrument mentioned in multiple articles is the so-called “traditional” guitar. Brearley does not regard it as a traditional instrument, but as a recent adaptation.³ Kirby, on the other hand, notes the existence of the *ramkie* (a guitar-like lute) from 1730 in Cape Town, South Africa—nearly a century before the invention of the modern guitar.⁴ The tuning of the traditional guitar, different number of strings, and the playing style (often with the player fingering chords with a hand over the neck instead of under the neck in the Western manner) suggest that this might be a traditional African instrument rather than simply a copy of a Western one.

A full inventory of instruments that are mentioned in writings specifically about Botswana and which authors wrote of them can be found in the Appendix. While most of the documentation dealing with indigenous instruments refer to these artifacts as

¹ Brearley, 1989, 90.

² Elizabeth N. Wood, 1983, 113.

³ Brearley, 1989, 87.

⁴ Percival R Kirby, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 249-250 quoted in Andrew L. Kaye, “The Guitar in Africa,” *The Garland Handbook of African Music*, ed, Ruth M. Stone (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 75.

“traditional,” I do not see a great deal of evidence that the majority of them have been in use for a long period of time. Whether as a result of changing musical tastes or of the marginalization of traditional musical forms in the course of cultural change, few of the traditional instruments remain in active use.

Musical change and musical culture

Including Kirby’s work on South Africa, the earliest published work relevant to music in Botswana dates to 1934. Kirby focused primarily on South Africa and it is unknown how relevant his work is to present Botswana. The earliest Botswana-specific articles appear in the mid-1970’s (these being Biesele’s “Song Texts by the Master of Tricks” and Wood’s “A Study of the Traditional Music of Mochudi”). Wood and Brearley, the two most frequently published authors on the subject of Botswana’s music, were active between 1975 and 1989. Therefore, the bulk of the research on the music of Botswana occurred during that fourteen year period.

It is significant to note that the musical world described by Wood and Brearley has largely disappeared. Of the 16 instruments described by Wood (1985), I have only personally seen four. Biesele notes that the thumb piano is an instrument played exclusively by the young amongst Khoisan peoples;¹ in 2014, more than 30 years later, the players are mostly old (presumably the same people who took up the instrument in their youth still play, but have not passed the instrument down to subsequent

¹ Megan Biesele, “Song Texts by the Master of Tricks: Kalahari San Thumb Piano Music,” *Botswana Notes & Records* 7 (1975), 172.

generations). The old people, she says, prefer their traditional instruments, such as the musical bows; these bows, in 2014, are virtually extinct.

Only two works deal with contemporary musical culture: Schöpf and Tumedí. Schöpf's book arguably deals with a musical culture which may be dying out (the style of segaba playing depicted in the book is actually called "Old Man Style" by other segaba players, most of whom use an entirely different left-hand technique).¹ Tumedí, on the other hand, contains a contemporary portrait of the lifestyle of traditional guitar players.

¹ Mmoloki Matlho, personal communication with the author, December 2011. Note that the "young man" style is described in the writings of Phuthego.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Project Design

Recordings were made in two separate contexts, each with a slightly different focus. In the first context, I recorded two musician/composers in a two-day period. Each musician had as much time as he wanted (up to a full day) to record a CD's worth of material. These two musicians were chosen by insiders in the community and insiders in the creative arts scene in Botswana as two of the most revered musicians in the community. In the second context, I was present at a cultural festival as a guest of the Khwe cultural association, Tocadi. The day after the festival, I recorded all of the musicians who were invited to perform at the event. Each musician was asked to present one or two of their "signature" or "famous" songs, the songs for which they are best known.

I recorded these musicians in what I believe is a unique manner. Since Khoisan instruments are played primarily for the enjoyment of the performer, much of what makes the instrument distinctive is lost when documented by normal field recording techniques. People in Botswana have access to the same professional recordings purchased in the Western world, so I also wanted to record these musicians in an appealing manner. The often primitive, noisy sound of field recordings implies to Botswana that their music isn't as rich or polished as Western music. Working within the limitations of the environment (my recording space consisted of a canvas tent with mattresses around the artists for sound baffling), I tried to get a pristine studio sound,

placing microphones as close as possible to the instruments. I used some post-production mastering techniques to render a professional sounding mix. I hoped to present on CD something that is both close to what the musician hears in his head when he performs and at a quality comparable to imported CDs.

My microphones consisted of the following: a Røde NT4 stereo, a Studio Projects C1 large-format condenser, a Samson dynamic, and a Zoom H2 quadrophonic microphone. I recorded the quadrophonic microphone to an internal hard drive. The other microphones were run into my laptop computer running Logic Pro via a Mark of the Unicorn Traveler interface.

The typical Bugakhwe folkloric performer performs solo, accompanying his instrument with his voice. In an effort to capture the player's perspective of the song, I used as my most basic recording setup the zoom quadrophonic microphone placed between the performer's head and his instrument. This setup proved most effective with Kwama Shangaira, who would hold his instrument between his knees with his head poised over it as he sang. I recorded wide stereo of the instrument and narrow stereo of the voice. I could physically move the microphone to balance between the amplitude of the singer and the amplitude of the instrument. I also had some flexibility mixing the two stereo tracks in post production.

Three of the artists I recorded incorporated a choir—a group of four singers who sang a refrain to the song in a manner similar to Khoisan dance music. Since I had never seen folkloric musicians incorporate backing singers in this manner before, I had to adapt my recording techniques to these songs. When recording the musicians who incorporated choirs, I used the 4-track Traveler and my microphone arsenal. I sat the backing singers

off to one side to give myself some mixing control and used the Røde NT4 to capture them as a stereo image, which was mixed with the other tracks to give the illusion that the singers were sitting around the leader (which is how they might be arranged in a typical public performance). The dynamic microphone captured the lead voice, while the large condenser captured the instrument. In post-production, I discovered that the Røde and Studio Projects captured highs with more detail than the Zoom. I compensated for this by adding an exciter to those tracks, restoring upper range harmonics. This was done to make the CD “hold together” rather than to artificially modify the sound.

As we recorded each song, I asked the musicians through a translator what they would want listeners to know about the song. This information was given to the publishers of the CDs for use in the liner notes.

The master CDs were released to the entities which had commissioned the project. The two CDs by the individual artists will be distributed by Thari-E-Ntsho Storytellers, while the compilation recorded at the festival will be distributed by Tocadi.

Reporting

The CDs are presented either in their commercially available form (if released in time for this project), mp3s or as CDR burned for this project. The discs are accompanied by both the documentation which would accompany the commercial release as well as any relevant production notes made at the time of recording.

Chapter 4: Instruments Used

The musicians at my recording sessions performed on three different types of instruments: one percussive bow, one mouth-resonated friction bow, and several variants of a setinkane, a thumb piano. These three instruments are probably not the only ones played in this cultural community. These are the musicians who were invited to the event who were able to attend. All of the musicians played the setinkane for at least one song. Each type of bow was played by one musician.

Setinkane/Ndingo

All seven musicians played some variant of the thumb piano for at least one song. // elxu did not bring his own, but borrowed Shangaira's. The other musicians brought their own.

The implication in most of the existing literature is that, while this instrument may differ on the number of keys (and how the keys are organized) and whether or not it has a resonator (and the substance of the resonator), it is essentially the same instrument. For example, Mans writes, "The number of lamellae on the instrument differs from region to region. The *kang'ombyo* from the eastern Caprivi and southern Zambia has seven lamellae, while another from eastern Caprivi has eleven. The *otjisandji* from Otuzemba in the Kunene region has sixteen, and still another found in the Ondangwa region has only five."¹ The instrument is known by many names, even within the same language community. The Ju/'hoan call it *stinkere*, *setingere*, *ndingu*, *!goma*, or *stangani*. The

Mbukushu call it *thisendji*. In the Sambyu language it is *sitandi ndingo* or *sitandi lidumudumu*. The Herero and the Tjimba both call it *otjisandji*.¹ Most people I have encountered in Botswana call the instrument setinkane or some variant on *ndingo* (such as *dengo* or *dongho*). It is clear, though, that setinkane is best understood as a genre of instruments, rather than a particular instrument. Setinkane actually refers to the resonator which most of the instruments in Botswana share, made from a tin can.

I have personally observed four distinct variants in the instrument in Botswana. Non-musicians will refer to all of them as setinkane, dongo, or whatever their regional term for the instrument happens to be. Musicians will differentiate by ethnicity of the variation, at least when speaking English (there may be local language terms for these instrument variants as well). For example, a three-octave, six-pitch version of the instrument with keys organized from low to high, left to right (in the manner of piano keys) I have heard called the “Mbukushu” type. The 15-key version similar to the Zimbabwean *karimba* is, understandably, the “Zimbabwean” type. The one described by Wood I have heard called a “Basarwa” instrument. Finally, most Khoisan musicians I have encountered in the northwestern part of the country play an instrument with one main row of keys and one or more “high” keys, making a total of nine keys—a variant I have not seen in existing literature. Nqisie Dxao was the exception, playing the Basarwa variant described by Wood. Appendix B includes a photograph of Shangaira’s instrument.

Aside from the can, all setinkane have two elements in common: 1) a number of metal keys, and 2) buzzers made from ostrich shells or bottle caps. The player plucks the

¹ Mans, 35.

keys with his thumbs. The buzzers are activated incidentally, vibrating in response to the keys.

I learned to play the Zimbabwean karimba in preparation for the recording session. I have two friends who play a version of this instrument. Ntirelang Berman plays the version I saw mostly in these recording sessions, while Skit Kobamo plays a personalized variant of the Mbukushu type.¹ Both of these musicians record their instrument through the use of a contact microphone, similar to a guitar pickup. Tendai Muparutsa, whom I met several months after this recording session, told me that mbira buzzers provide a challenge to recording, as they can overshadow the musical notes generated by the instrument. He recommended muting them with some kind of gum.²

To some extent, buzz increases with amplitude, so hitting a key hard will activate the buzzer. But as the player moves through the arpeggios which form a song, tones build on each other, so the overall amplitude increases even if the player does not play any louder. Furthermore, certain tones seem more likely to “activate” the buzzers (this phenomenon can be heard most clearly in Dxao’s track).³ With players who can “master the buzz” like the players on these recordings, the effect sounds very much like a second musician

¹ Ibid, 32.

¹ We met while learning to play karimba from Yonah Zhoya, a Zimbabwean mbira player.

² Tendai Muparutsa, personal conversation, August 21, 2010. Ntirelang Berman subsequently confirmed this, saying that bees wax was traditionally used as a mute, but that he started using mounting gum—the same kind he uses to apply his contact microphone—since it is easier to remove.

³ I haven’t been able to find a reason for this. It might be due to interaction between the grain of the wood and the placement of keys or buzzers.

accompanying the setinkane player with a shaker. Since I did not have access to contact microphones and I did not know yet to mute the buzzers, I placed the microphone as close as I could to the opening in the resonator, hoping to get as much tone as possible. I also wanted to record some element of stereo imaging across the fingerboard. The instrument variant that I play has the same pitch repeated in multiple places. Some songs involve a technique of alternating the same note in different positions. As a player, one gets the effect of the note moving around in the stereo image as it hits the ears. I tried to get close enough and stereo enough to capture this effect whenever it was present in the instruments recorded.

//aa//hava

The *//aa//hava* is a braced, gourd-resonated bow struck with a stick. Appendix B includes a photograph of the instrument, showing the resonator and beater stick in proportion with the bow. The size of a typical hunting bow—about one meter long—the *//aa//hava* string is braced, enabling two distinct pitches to be sounded while beating the string with a stick. The gourd resonator is placed on the stomach. By moving the resonator against the body, the player can create “open” and “closed” overtones.

Because there is only one known player of this instrument, it is impossible to separate *//elexu*'s personal performance style from the instrument style. In each of his songs, he establishes a repeated rhythmic figure from a combination of striking the string with the stick and opening and closing the resonator. The cycles are fairly short (sometimes only three beats) and repeat until the song finishes. He tends to speed up gradually as he plays a song and stops either when he tires of the song, or when the striking cycle becomes too

fast to play easily. He sings over the striking cycles, usually in falsetto. His songs often have high and low vocable content which supplements the harmonic melodies implied in the bow.

While //elexu is the only known player of this instrument, he plays this instrument a lot, appearing at nearly every relevant performance of folkloric music in Botswana. I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that when Batswana picture the musical bow, they probably picture //elexu playing it. It is strange to me to think that the man who is one of the last visible players of the musical bow plays a unique instrument which has not appeared anywhere else in the available literature.

We can find similar instruments, but there is nothing else quite like a //aa//hava. Mans, writing of Namibia, describes an unbraced bow with a gourd resonator which is played with a stick by the Ju/'hoansi called *!goma*.¹ She also describes a braced bow played by Ju/'hoan, Herero, Tjimba, and Khoekhoe peoples which is beaten with a stick like the /aa//hava, but the bow is much smaller and mouth resonated.² Jones, writing of Zimbabwe, describes a gourd-resonated bow that looks like an unbraced /aa//hava called *chitende*.³ She also refers to a braced bow called *chipendani*, but this is a small, mouth-resonated bow.⁴ Another similar instrument is called *dinudi* by the Mbukushu, *milimbo* by the Yeyi, *omburumbumba* in Tjimba, *okambulumbumbway* in Oshikwanyama, and

¹ Mans, 52.

² Ibid, 54-55.

³ Jones, 61-62.

⁴ Ibid, 66.

okambulumbumba in Oshindonga. This instrument has some minor, but arguably significant, differences. The bow is smaller than a typical hunting bow. The technique and style are significantly different as well, with the brace adjustable “on the fly” by the little finger and the thumb nail used to generate a third fundamental pitch.¹

Finally, a Tanzanian instrument called *ndono*, associated with traditional *gogo* music, is structured like an /aa//hava, though the string is split into three sections instead of two. The *gogo* style of playing sounds very different than the /aa//hava music I recorded² and the string, gut in the Botswana instrument, has been made from steel in the *ndono*.³

//elexu credits his great-grandfather with inventing the instrument. While I found no reason to doubt the musician's word, it is also possible that //elexu's great-grandfather learned to play an instrument from outside Botswana, such as Tanzania's *ndono*, and brought it to the Okavango Delta. It is also possible that he innovated the instrument by combining ideas from other musical bows available locally. Also, given that the Yeyi and the Bugakhwe have lived in close proximity for the better part of a thousand years, it is possible that //aa//hava is a simplified version of *milimbo*.

Certainly, //elexu's performance and composition style bear no resemblance to any musical bow genre within my experience in Botswana, any reference in scholarly literature I have read, nor in any recorded media I have heard; his instrument and style are unique even among the Bugakhwe. There is a sense in which this music exists as an artist, and

¹ Mans, 56-58.

² <http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/samap/category/keywords/ndono-musical-bow> (accessed March 9, 2012).

³ Msafiri Zawose, personal correspondence, March 2012.

instrument, and a genre unto itself, since there are so few other percussion bow players with which to compare it.

In retrospect, I think my recordings of //elexu and the //aa//hava were the least successful. I concerned myself primarily with mixing between instrument and voice—the instrument generated significantly more volume than his soft, falsetto singing. Having subsequently heard ndono music and learned to play a mouth resonated percussive bow, the *chipendani* (very much like a mini-//aa//hava), I suspect I may have missed some of the nuances of the overtones generated by opening and closing the gourd.

Segorogoro

Segorogoro has a bow often shaped like a hacksaw—an almost rectangular shape with curved corners. The longer section of the stave has notches cut into it. The string is made from a flat piece of palm leaf (though Mans reports plastic packaging strips also being used in Namibia).¹

The only scholarly reference to the segorogoro specifically in Botswana comes from Brearley; it does not appear in Wood's inventory of musical instruments published four years prior to the Brearley article.

Brearley encountered the instrument in Nata, a village about halfway between Maun and Francistown—about six hours or so by car from where I recorded it. He describes it as a bow with a palm-leaf string which is made to vibrate by rubbing a stick across notches cut in the bow. The basic sound produced is a rhythmic vibration. In Botswana,

¹ Mans, 50-51.

it may also be known by the similar sounding names *seworoworo*, *seburuburu*, and *sewelewele*.¹

Several sources from outside of Botswana reference the instrument, meaning that it is not uniquely indigenous to Botswana. Kirby mentions it as being played by the Venda (who call it *tshizambi*), Thonga (*zambi*), and “Bushmen” (*nxonxoro*) and says it has been reported in Angola.² Mans has it played in Namibia by speakers of Silozi (*kaholoholo*), Oshikwanyama (*okayaya*), Ju'hoansi (*//kai n'lao*), Thimbukushu (*kagrorongongo*), Otjizemba (*elumba*), !Kxo (*nxonxoro*), Sisambyu (*kagrorongongo*), and Rukwangali (*kaorongongo*).³ England recorded it as fairly common among the !Kung of eastern Namibia during the 1950s and 1960s, who learned it from the Tawana of Botswana.⁴ It was also recorded, played by displaced Khwe musicians in South Africa as recently as 2004.⁵

Kirby's photographs of the instrument show rattles attached, made from seed cases with small stones inside, but the instruments found in Botswana and Namibia are of a less ornate variety.⁶ Mans and England report the instrument being stopped with a stick.

¹ Brearley, 1989, 77.

² Kirby, chapter 9.

³ Mans, 50.

⁴ England, Nicolas, *Music among the Zu/wasi of South West Africa and Botswana*, Harvard, 171-184 quoted in Brearley, John, “Musicians of the Kalahari,” *Botswana Notes and Records* 20 (1989), 77.

⁵ *We Tell Our Stories With Music*. Various Artists, Kulimatjijing Double Story Books: Capetown, 1-919930-64-7, 2004, page 30-33.

⁶ Brearley, 1989, 77.

This is not mentioned in Kirby and not observed by Brearley in Botswana. Motsukwe Xoro who played for my session, used his thumb to stop the instrument.

I had heard this instrument played on several occasions before I had the opportunity to attempt a recording. At a festival in D'kar in 2008, the announcer pointed a cheap dynamic microphone at the instrument. When miked this way, all one hears is the percussive sound. While setting up to record, I observed that the performer held his mouth against the reed and moved his mouth as he rubbed the stick. Intuiting that there must be a reason for this—otherwise the instrument would not need the reed—I moved my equipment closer to his ear, hoping to hear what he was hearing.

I discovered that the segorogoro's sound comes from two places. The slotted bow itself serves as a scraped idiophone with a sound very similar to a *güiro*. Scraping the bow generates a quiet drone by vibrating the bow string. By changing the shape of the mouth cavity, the player creates an overtone melody.¹

¹ Russ Landers, in personal conversation speaking of the chipendani August 21, 2010, said the overtone melodies have a five note scale based on the shapes the mouth takes when making vowel sounds: A, E, I, O, U. He noted that the first mouth-bow songs Zimbabwean children learn involve these vowels as vocables, perhaps as a way of teaching mouth bow intonation. Because my conversation with Russ occurred after the recording session, I did not have an opportunity to ask Mr. Xoro about this.

Chapter 5: Artists and Their Songs

The biographical information on Kwama “Dipo” Shangaira and Mokoya Jame // elexu comes from interviews conducted primarily by Thari-E-Ntsho Storytellers representative Bontekanye Botumile during the recording session. These were intended for the liner notes of the CD. I was not provided with any specific biographical information on the performers present for the festival recording sessions.

Kwama “Dipo” Shangaira

Kwama Shangaira was born in Kaputura in northern Botswana in 1952. His father taught him how to play the ndingo. When he discovered a gift of healing, he learned a singing and dancing style called Yeu/i to complement his ndingo playing. He lost his vision as a teenager and now sees only in shadows. He works as a musical healer. He says that the ndingo music heals him, guiding his spirit. In addition to his healing practice, he is in demand as a performer at cultural festivals such as Kuru Dance Festival, Mbungu wa ka Thimana, and President’s Day Competitions.

Shangaira recorded nine songs with me. All were his own compositions. Three songs were recorded in multiple versions. He had begun using backing singers fairly recently and was uncertain whether two of the songs would be better with the choir or solo. We recorded these songs in both arrangements and he chose which version he wanted on the CD. He revisited the songs “Kariku” and “Qhouku” at the festival session several months later. The CD has his solo performance; the festival has a choral performance. The festival performance of “Kariku” is much shorter.

Shangaira's performance style, like his lyrical style, reminded those present at his session of blues music (Botumile first said it), though it would be easy to push the comparison too far. His tin can resonator coupled with the metal buzzers attached to his ndingo achieves a distorted tone. His vocals are accompanied by rapid arpeggiated patterns on the instrument. These patterns sometimes seem to respond to the vocal melody and other times seem to be purely harmonic accompaniment. Shangaira's voice is rough and unadorned, not much different than his spoken voice. He sings quietly, mixing his amplitude with the volume of his instrument. He often slurs words—a lyric-delivery style that I have often noticed among instrumentalists in Botswana who are simultaneously singing—and sometimes breaks into speech. The sung lyrics are repetitive, often repeating two to four phrases (“lines”) over and over again with little variation. In listening to my recordings now, I suspect there is one spot where someone in his choir had made a mistake and he had half-stopped the song to berate them before continuing. Not knowing the language, I cannot be sure; spoken word sections are not uncommon in Shangaira's songs. These spoken parts are used to tell the story more directly than he can within the lyrically-brief and repetitive nature of the ndingo song style. In “//aaxa,” for example, a direct appeal to the president of Botswana, is made in plain speech by one of the female choir members.

His songs and what he said about them follow:

CD 1, Track 1. *Kaputura* tells the story of two rivals in the village. After a fight, the younger sought refuge in a neighboring village. The older man pursued him and killed the younger man's son. The young man cried out, “You chased me from my home. I sought refuge in a neighboring village. You still pursued me and killed my innocent son.

Now, where will I be safe? Leave me alone or else I will kill myself. That way, I will be in the spiritual world in peace.”

CD 1, Track 2, CD 3, Track 12. In *Qhouku*, a young boy pleads to an unsympathetic audience after being falsely accused of a wrong he did not commit. As he looks at the skeptical eyes of his accusers, he despairs and decides to flee the village. At the second recording of this song, when Shangaira performed it he commented further on the lyrical content: if someone gets sick, they might accuse someone else of bewitching him when really he was sick all along. “We should work together to see problems and come up with solutions rather than accusing each other.”

CD 1, Track 3. // *aaxa* contains an appeal to the President to consider the situation of the Khwe people. "You are the new president. Please help improve the lives of the poorest people in the country.”

CD 1, Track 4, CD 3, Track 3. *Kariku* is about a man who reacts with shock after his family has betrayed him. He cautions others never to trust anyone, especially family. Family members could be the ones who deliver “the last blow.” The song says, “I thought maybe I would benefit from having relatives, but now it seems not to be so, because my relatives hate me. They have killed me already.” Friends are better, he thinks, because they won't kill you.

CD 1, Track 5. *Gaam* commemorates the qualities of the lion, especially its hunting skills. The singer marvels at how it stalks, chases, and kills its prey, without being detected.

CD 1, Track 6. An untitled song deals with a young woman who teases men with her beauty in order to obtain presents from them. After accepting the presents, she rejects their advances. She ends up with a bad reputation.

CD 1, Track 7. In the song *Gurusen*, a skillful dancer is asked to perform a special shoulder dance. After the dance, he is killed and buried. The killers eat part of the corpse and turn the dead dancer into a zombie to dance for them and otherwise perform their bidding. While performing this song, Shangaira's choir demonstrated the shoulder dance.

CD 1, Track 8. *Kwama*. Shangaira's first name—Kwama—means “pay for me.” In this song, he laments his poverty. During his CD session, he recorded a musically identical song with alternate lyrics called “Dipo.” (**CD 1, Track 9**) “Dipo” is Kwama's nickname and he said the song deals with the related theme of his poverty and dependence upon others because of his visual impairment. He opted to cut this song from the final CD, but is included with the files for this project.

Mokoya Jame //elexu

Mokoya Jame //elexu, like Shangaira, is a native of the village of Kapatura. Born in 1959, he is a few years younger than Shangaira. He is a widower with five children. When he was twelve years old, he lost his sight. Although he plays the ndingo, the //aa// hava is his favorite instrument and the instrument for which he is best known. He says that his instrument chases away the loneliness and keeps him comforted. He wanted us to know that he only performs self-composed songs. Initially performing as a solo artist at festivals, such as the Kuru Dance Festival, he introduced a quartet of backing singers in 2001.

As with Shangaira, //elexu recorded nine songs with me. When we met again at the festival recording session, he reprised his two “signature” pieces, “Kxoxo” (“The Lion”) and “//xau” (“The Kudu”). On three songs, he used his choir of four backing singers who sang a repeating refrain.

All of //elexu’s songs contain one or both of two themes: hunting and animals. In almost every case, he names the song after the featured animal. It would be an oversimplification to say his songs are only about animals or hunting, however. Rather, the songs are designed to present a moral or cultural lesson in a poetic form, using the animal as a metaphor. For example, the song “Djiri” contains the wisdom that monkeys only come to the ground to find food. The reason given is that a monkey is safe in the trees, but is subject to predators on the ground. It is important to pass on this information to future generations, because it will keep them alive. Similarly, it is important for people in traditional societies to pass along their distinctive wisdom to future generations, lest the culture die out. “Nkyave” speaks of the spindly legs of the giraffe which might lead one to think it has no meat. However, the giraffe is actually full of meat. There are two lessons in the song. First, as the translator said to me when paraphrasing

//elexu’s commentary on the song to me, “It is like the English saying, ‘Don’t judge a book by its cover.’” Second, the cultural value of sharing abundance is addressed, with the hope being that when one has an unsuccessful hunt, there will be someone with whom to share meat in the future.

//elexu sings mostly in falsetto. His songs are full of vocable melodic content between lyrical lines. This is similar to the process of a chipendani player, in that while

there are melodic notes in a musical bow, they are mostly in the player's head. That is, because of the harmonic properties inherent in a musical bow, multiple pitches can be perceived in a single note played on a bow. The bow functions primarily as a percussion instrument. The player has a challenge to bring the melody out of his head to the ears of his listeners.¹ //elexu sings four vocable notes, two high notes "Ah hah" and two low notes, which are hummed, establishing the harmonic structure of each song and making manifest the harmonic structure implied by the bow. Despite the length of his songs, which range from three to thirty minutes, the lyrical load is fairly light: 4-16 lines per song, repeated multiple times. When we started his session, he played "//xau," for nearly a half an hour, only stopping when too exhausted to continue. I asked (as tactfully as I could through a translator) if all of his songs were this long. The message came back that whenever he has performed before, someone has told him to stop; this was the first time someone had not forced him to stop playing a song and he hadn't been sure what to do. I did not want him to feel under pressure to make a song a particular length. I told him to make the songs whatever length he wanted, but to keep in mind that a CD has a maximum length of 80 minutes. With the rest of his recordings, he limited the length of the songs so that they would all fit. He also pointed out that they repeated much of the same material over and over again; he would allow me to fade out tracks to make them fit the CD length. The important thing was that all of the songs appeared together on the disc.

¹ Landers, personal conversation, August 10, 2010.

CD 2, Track 1. *//otci* describes a raptor that eats eyes of dead animals. Its sighting by any household is ominous. When people see it flying with its mate, they say that there has been a lion or a leopard killed in the area.

CD 2, Track 2. *Nkyave* was inspired by a conversation *//elexu* had as a young man, speaking to an old man about a giraffe. “One would be inclined to think that a giraffe is an animal with no meat. Do not be fooled based solely on its long, bony legs,” the old man told young *//elexu*. After hunting and killing the giraffe, he found he could not consume all of the meat by himself and shared the meat with the village.

CD 2, Track 3. In *Djiri*, an old monkey explains the monkey heritage to a younger monkey. They are arboreal animals, only seen on the ground when foraging for food. He stresses the importance of passing this information to future generations.

CD 2, Track 4. *Kxa/ôâ* gives the image of a young man returning from an unsuccessful hunt disheartened. It is considered shameful in the Bugakhwe culture for a man to come back empty-handed after a hunt. The young man hides because he is ashamed. His father urges him not to be discouraged.

CD 2, Track 5. The song *//eukhwe* was composed impromptu at the 2009 President's Day Cultural competition held at Maun, Botswana. When he arrived for the event, the competition organizers told him that there was no division for his instrument, so he would not be allowed to perform with it. *//elexu* composed this song on Shangaira's *ndingo* which thanks the President of Botswana for giving him a platform to showcase his music and culture. This gives him hope as a poor man and as a musician.

CD 2, Track 6. In *Du Phobu*, a boy returns home after a successful hunt and describes a mysterious animal he has killed. It has a massive body like a cow but its horns are different. His father explains that it is an eland, “the cow of God.”

CD 2, Track 7. *Kuni* describes a duiker hunt. The duiker is a small deer, about the size of a dog. In the past it had to be chased until it collapsed from exhaustion.

CD 2, Track 8, CD 3, track 14. //elexu composed //xau to commemorate his first hunt with his father. Prior to the hunt, his father described a kudu and the song contains the description: it is a graceful animal, with distinctive spiral horns. It has stripes and hide the color of dark sand. When //elexu and I met again several months later, he added some more detail to his story. During the hunting season, when everyone was very hungry, an old man danced all night. Then, early in the morning, he ordered his son to go into the bush and hunt. The son was given a bow and arrows and told to “find us some meat so we can survive.” The young man was fortunate. He killed a kudu, but he didn't know what it was. He returned and tried to describe the animal to his father. The father realized his son has killed a kudu and says, “Now, we shall survive!” It is curious to me that the stories given to me on the two separate occasions when I recorded versions of this song don't exactly match up. One begins with the description of the kudu, while in the other, the hunter returns not knowing for sure what he has killed. This may be due to the periphrastic nature of the tellings of the story that I received, or the difference between translators. He performed this song solo on his CD and with his choir during the festival sessions.

CD 2, Track 9, CD 3, Track 2. *Kxoxo*. A young man is warned to be careful while hunting in the bush because there are lions (*Kxoxo*) which kill people. As with “//xau,” he

performed this song in both contexts, performing it solo for his CD and with his choir during the festival. The solo version did not appear on the CD, but was held aside for an exclusive compilation CD from Thari-E-Ntsho Storytellers.

Festival performers

My notes from the festival only cover the contents of the songs as told to me by the performers for the purposes of the liner notes. Tocadi intended to market the resulting CD to tourists attending future festivals, so some explanation of each song in English was required. Other information may have been collected by Tocadi representatives, but I do not know, since I have not seen the final released version of the CD. The titles of the songs are given in English; they were to be given both their Khwedam name and their English name on the final CD.

Motsukwe Xoro

Xoro contributed two songs on segorogoro, then returned later to perform one song on ndingo. The segorogoro songs did not have sung lyrics, but he told the story represented in the song before each performance.

CD 3, Track 1. *Thirsty*. A family lived in a dry area. They sent the kids away to get water. Now, in the late afternoon, the parents are worried because the children have not returned and the parents cannot quench their thirst. They are confused and wonder if their children have gotten lost or killed.

CD 3, Track 15. *Illness*. An old man is ill at home. Brother says to sister, “Do not mourn him. He’s been ill. He is leaving us in this life. You see him now for the last time.”

CD 3, Track 8. *Chieftainship*. At a time in the past, people were sent to kill the chief. Now, these people control the singer and his people, leaving them voiceless. Natural resources are taken away, leaving the people in mourning, helpless, frozen, and confused.

Kashere Motoloki

CD 3, Track 4. *Spring Hare*. The spring hare starts gathering and hunting in the evenings, around seven or eight PM. This song tells its tactics on the hunt.

CD 3, Track 9. *Djiri (Monkey)*. The monkey speaks to his wife as she travels to get food in the bush. He says to be careful in the bush because of snakes, in the trees because they might break, and with drinking water from the holes of trees because she might drink amphibians by accident. He wants her to be careful because she has their baby on her back.

Nqisie Dxao

Dxao's ndingo differed significantly from the others, resembling what I've heard others call the "Basarwa" kind of setinkane, four pitches repeated across multiple octaves.

CD 3, Track 5. *Climate Change*. During the dry season, it is hot. In rainy season, it is wet; even trees show life. He said that when he learned the song, it wasn't explained to him, but he had to figure it out as time went on.

CD 3, Track 10. *Sadness*. About when you lose parents or some family. At the first of the year, people tend to get sick and pass away, from Christmas to the first month of the year.

Xontao Boo

CD 3, Track 6. *Attire*. About the cultural attire of women, the belt worn on the waist with the covering. From the beginning, they had it and they still wear it today.

CD 3, Track 11. *Theft*. The ndingo has many pieces on it. The low notes encourage encourage vandalism and robbery. The high notes discourage destruction. Both voices together influence the player.

Sedumedi Kgabatso

CD 3, Track 7. *Land*. There is a piece of land that the //anikhwe used in the Gumare area in previous centuries. Recently, they have been living in the area between Bana Ba Metsi School and Mogotlho, displaced because of political change. They have been hunting, fishing, and gathering where they are now. The song is about thinking that it would be good to be able to go back to their original lands, *N/oaxom* (“red cliffs”), where their staple foods are.

CD 3, Track 13. *Vulture*. In *N/oaxom*, near their home, they say the vulture and followed it to find a dead hippo. The ladies accused their husbands of coming unprepared because they have no knives or axes to carve up the animal. The wives threatened to divorce their husbands. But the parents came and said, no, stay together. People will make mistakes. We should work together.

Chapter 6: Thoughts and Questions

While the compositions of Kwama Shangaira and the other composer/musicians featured in this project are just as contemporary as the imported hip-hop pumped out of loudspeakers in every shebeen, in Shangaira can be heard something distinctively Bugakhwe, distinctively Khoisan, distinctively Batswana, distinctively African. These distinctions tie his music to cultural and regionally specific traditions. Even those Batswana who dislike setinkane music—and would never dream of listening to it outside of a cultural festival—still accept it as *their* music. What about this music makes it their music? Is it possible to map the distinctions, to measure what part of this music is specific to the Bugakhwe, specific to the Khoisan, etcetera? Is it something in the words? The language? The modalities and scales? In short, when someone hears music and says, “That’s *my* music,” what in the music that they are hearing triggers that response, that identification??

When I asked the various performers featured in these recordings what their songs were about, I received answers which encompassed both the overt and implicit content of the lyrics. I wondered how much of this information would be apparent to the casual listener. To put it another way, did they tell me what they hoped to be conveyed in the song because I did not know their language or because, without explanation, the information might not be obvious? To test this question anecdotally, I played some of the songs for a Bugakhwe friend and colleague. I asked him to write down the words he heard in the songs in his language and translate to me roughly what they meant. After listening a while, he said he didn’t want to write anything down until he had an

opportunity to speak with the song writers. It remains unclear to me whether he could not understand the words (because of the diction of the performer), whether he could not make sense of the lyrical content (as in, not enough context), or whether he had some other reason for his reluctance to commit the songs' lyrical content to writing. Schöpf speaks of semantic layers¹ in Tswana song, wherein the actual lyrics of a song are not performed, or are not performed in a linear order. He received a lyric for one of the songs he analyzed which he had confirmed by another musician as the correct, complete lyric. He documented several performances of this song and noted, "not all of the words in the interview version occur in the performance. In fact, only a small portion of the whole text is performed and a clear preference lies in the initial phrase(s)."² Berliner speaks of the challenge of analysis of Shona poetry which, "because of the subtlety of the symbolism in the song texts, the same line of poetry can hold various meanings for different people," or may use archaic language whose meaning has been mostly forgotten.³ Both the Tswana and the Shona are Bantu cultures while the Bugakhwe are Khoisan. If Biesele⁴ is correct, mbira instruments entered Botswana Khoisan culture in the early 1970's, most likely borrowed from nearby Bantu peoples. Aspects of Bantu poetry have entered Khoisan culture along with their instruments, but this would require further study.

¹ Jürgen K. Schöpf, *The Serankure and Music in Tlókweneng, Botswana*. Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung Amand Aglaster, 2008, 109.

² Ibid, 83.

³ Paul Berliner, *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981, 161.

⁴ Biesele, 172.

For that matter, these recordings suggest a number of future research questions:

- For Khoisan people who value Khoisan folkloric music, what is it about this music which they value?
- How do folkloric singers choose the topics for the songs they compose?
- How do listeners describe their experiences of folkloric music?
- How is the contemporary folkloric music of the Bugakhwe related to contemporary folkloric music in Botswana and to the music of other Khoisan peoples throughout southern Africa?
- Which instruments are used most frequently and why?
- What criteria did the musicians use to determine their primary instrument (availability of instrument? availability of instruction? liking this instrument over others? other reasons?)
- Who are the greatest musician/singers? What criteria are used to rate one musician/singer as better than another?
- Are there types of songs which are preferred to others? That is, are certain instruments, genres, or lyrical themes more exciting to listeners?
- How long have the most enduring song styles/musical genres endured in the community?
- By what process does a performer choose which songs to perform (does he always perform his own compositions or does he incorporate into his repertoire songs by others or traditional/anonymous songs?)?

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Appendix A: Traditional Instrument Inventory

An inventory of all instruments previously mentioned in writings specifically about Botswana, the author who mentioned the instrument, and the year of publication:

Aerophones

- Dithaka (Schöpf, 2008)
- Lengwane (Wood, 1985)
- Motlatswa (Wood, 1985)
- Lenaka la phala (Wood, 1985)
- Lepatata (Wood, 1985)
- Lenaka la tholo (Wood, 1985)

Idiophones

- Mathowa (also called mathou, matlhoo) (Wood, 1985)
- Marapo (Wood, 1985)
- Segorogoro (Brearley, 1989)
- Sevuikivuiki (Brearley, 1982)
- Setinkane/ndingo/dongo (Wood, 1985; Biesele, 1975; Brearley, 1982, 1989)

Membranophones

- Moropa (Wood, 1985)

Chordophones

- //Gwashi (Brearley, 1982)
- Lya/Xwanngwaa/Letlaka/Shango (musical bow) (Brearley, 1982)
- Lengope (Wood, 1985)
- Mafata-iswaneng (Wood, 1985)
- Nkokwane (Wood, 1985)
- Oil-can/Traditional guitar (Brearley, 1989; Tumed, 2010)
- Segwane (Wood, 1985)
- Segaba/Serankure/Serankuru (Wood, 1985; Brearley, 1982, 1989; Phuthego, 1999, 2006; Schöpf, 2008)

Appendix B: Photographs



Mokoya Jame //elexu CD cover.



Kwama Shangaira CD cover.



//elexu's //aa/hava (photo by Eshinee Veith)



Shangaira's ndingo (photo by Bontekanye Botumile).