


Mbira Music and Spirits Possession in Zimbabwe



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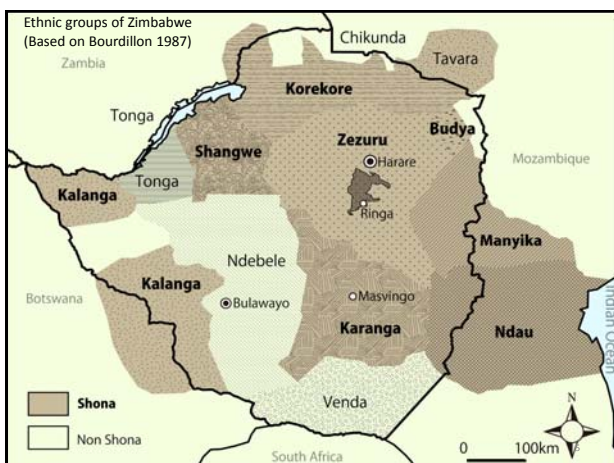
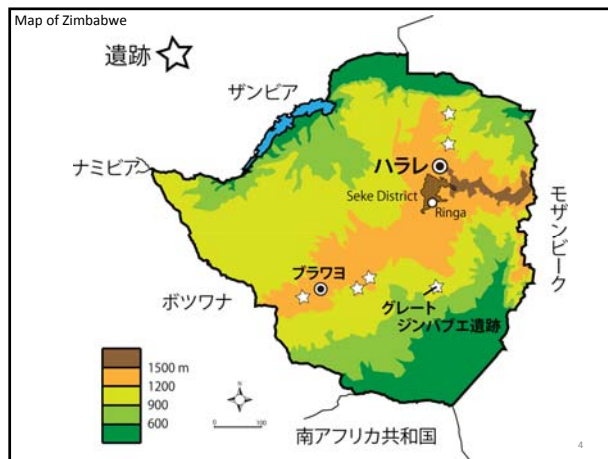
### 1. Preface

- Shona peoples in Zimbabwe have customs of ancestor worship and spirits possession.
- Music helps people to be possessed by spirits.

Basic structure of Shona ancestor worship

A case of ritual associated to the ancestor worship

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### 2. Ancestor Worship of Zezuru

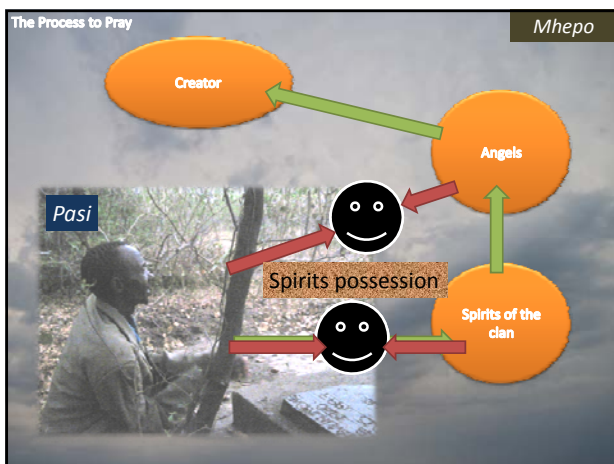
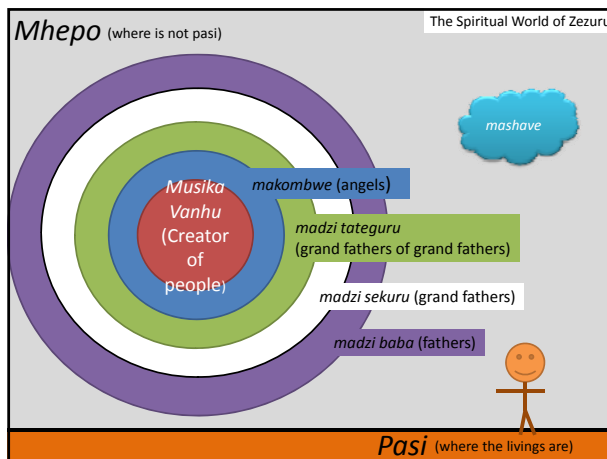
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2. Ancestor Worship of Zezuru

### The Structure of Spiritual World

- *Pasi* (ground) and *mhepo* (air)
- Creator (*Musika Vanhu*), angels (*makombwe*), ancestor spirits (*vadzimu*) and *mashave* (which are not Creator, angels and ancestor spirits).
- Creator is the supreme god, but people pray for ancestor spirits which mediate people and creator.

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### 3. Music of Zezuru

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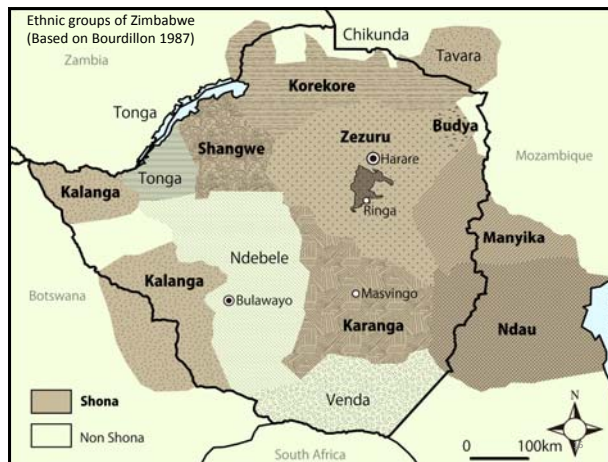
Characteristics of *mbira* music

1. Variety of traditional songs
2. Repetition and improvisation
3. High sound of *hosho*

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4. A Ritual of Spirits Possession

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Ritual for Healing

- Date : June (dry season), 2005.  
Most people in Ringa village are farmer  
From September to April is farming season.
- Place: at the house of sick woman
- Participants: the sick woman, family members of the patient, neighbors, and a spirit medium (*svikiro*)

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The purpose of spirits possession

- Healing a patient

A woman was sick.  
No one could cure her.  
The father thought this sickness was caused by the ancestors.  
He decided to hold a ritual to ask his ancestors reasons of sickness.

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Sprit Medium (*svikiro*)

- Spirit medium is called *svikiro* (who is reached by spirits) or *homwe* (pocket).
- Being possessed is called *-svikirwa*. *-svikirwa* means “to be reached”.
- A spirit medium was invited to the ritual held in Ringa.
- He was living in Ringa. He could be possessed by the spirit of his grandfather.
- Anyone can be possessed at rituals.

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*Svikiro* at the ritual

- He was living in Ringa. He is a farmer.
- He could be possessed by the spirit of his grandfather (particular spirit).
- In the family of sick person there was no *svikiro*.
- Father of sick women wanted to talk with spirits of his paternal clan through a spirit of other clan.
- Anyone can be possessed at rituals.

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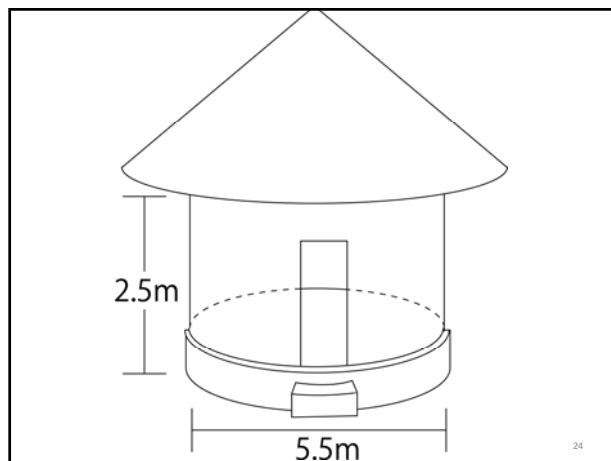
Process of the ritual

1. Brewing beer (1 week)
2. Gathering
3. Mbira playing
4. Talking with spirits
5. Mbira playing

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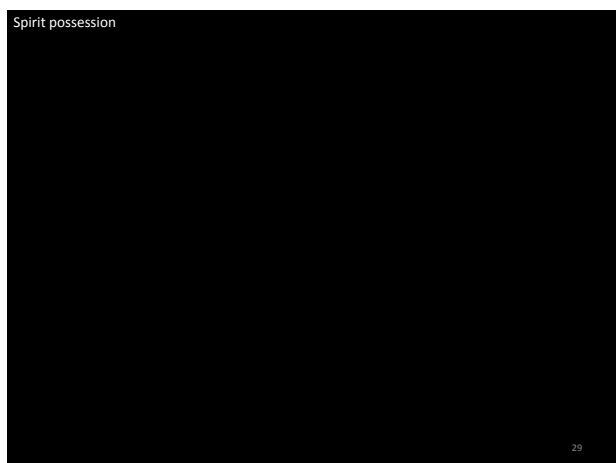
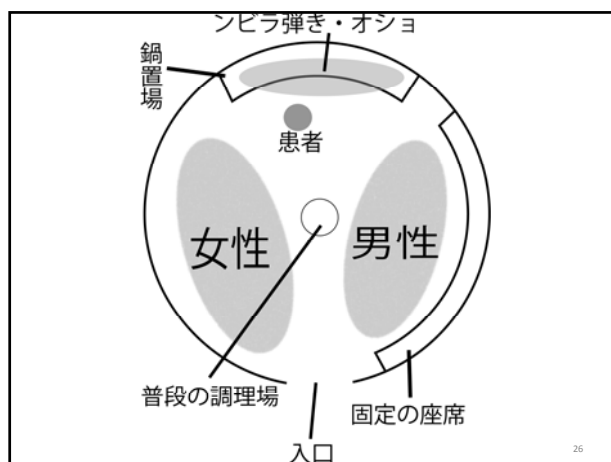
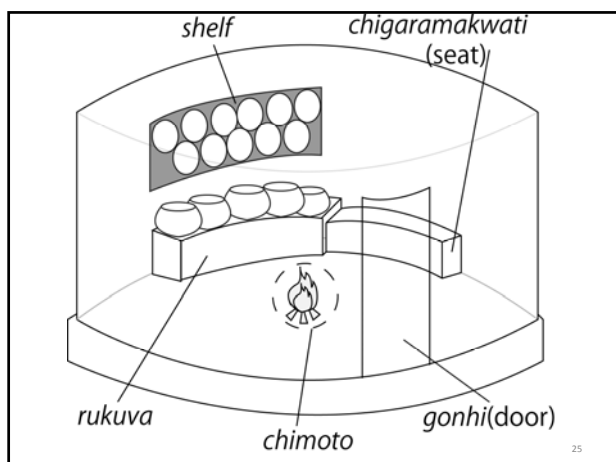


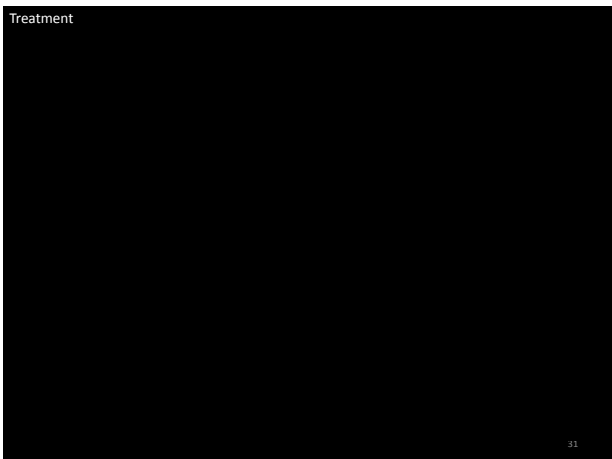
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#### Results of the ritual

- After a few weeks of the ritual, the woman died.
- Many spirits came to the ritual.  
A man possessed by a spirits said “I can see women sitting on the water. But you (sick person) are sitting in the water, you are sinking”.
- This man is not possessed by the specific spirit, but he was possessed by unknown spirit then predicted her death.

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#### Summary

- Shona peoples believe the system of spiritual being which centers creator.
- But they pray for spirits of their paternal clan.
- When they want to talk with spirits, they try to call spirits to possess human being.
- Music help people to be possessed by spirits.

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Thank you very much for your attention.

