

## Profiling a Cross-Cultural Mixed Gender Traditional Playhouse Game in Zimbabwe

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper is aimed at documentation of a common cross-cultural playhouse traditional game for children in Zimbabwe. The main objectives of the research were to: identify the similarities in the playhouse traditional game across-cultures; discuss possible causes of these similarities in the game; establish the origins and originators of the game; highlight the social functions, purposes and values of the game and make recommendations on how the game can be preserved for posterity. A qualitative, descriptive, participatory research method through demonstrations, open and structured interviews and documentary analysis were used for data collection. Although there are several possible causes of the similarities in the game it is impossible to only attribute particular causes to the similarities, but just to say the cause of similarities could be attributed to all or some of the causes of similarities identified. The presentation is based on a common playhouse traditional game of four selected ethnic cultures in Zimbabwe, namely Kalanga, Ndebele, Shona and Tonga. The selection of the game in the four ethnic cultures of Zimbabwe is purposive, because not much comparative documentation has been done on the traditional games of Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, on the basis of ethnic commonality and popularity. The foursome approach to documentation of this traditional game has been considered as a unique, diverse nomenclature approach in documenting common and similar games in the history of traditional games documentation and profiling in Zimbabwe. Whilst names and naming in African cultures is indicative of their spiritual historic, social, economic, political, and evolutionary experiences, most traditional games in Africa and World over have similar and general functions and purposes. The presentation is formatted as a profile of the same game in the four selected cultures concentrating mainly on the number of participants, description, instructions or rules of the game, purposes, functions and values of the game. A brief historical back ground of the origins and geographical locations of the ethnic groups will help in establishing the linkages between the cultures opening up a window for viewing the game's similarities and differences.*

**Keywords:** *Profiling, Cross-cultural, Mixed gender, Traditional playhouse game, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Zimbabwe.*

### INTRODUCTION

Cultural change is another human universal. Meaningful cross-cultural research from developmental scientists fortunately, supported by grants and funding is increasingly common today in the global north countries like North America unlike Africa, particularly the southern sub-Saharan region. Over the millennia, world-wide cultures have emerged, flourished, declined, and lately disappeared hence making this cultural ebb and flow raising a question to what happens to a tradition and culture's sports if that culture disappears? It is with no doubt and deceptively simple that when the culture disappears, its sports vanish (Guttman, 2016). The urgent need to recognize and study more

diverse groups within and outside the Africa is unanimously recognized across the world. Focus on the Southern Africa in this paper, is the first in a four series paper presentation on the documentation of cross-cultural traditional games in Zimbabwe. In Precolonial Africa cultures had no political boundaries. In fact, in the contemporary world, the reactions and the manifestations of social groups solidify upon expressions and wants of the collective, which may have conditioned rhythms, similar to those that seasonal variations induced in the so-called "archaic communities" (Mauss, 2003). Any cultural practices that society viewed as promoting Ubuntu/ unhu/ ubuntuism/ vumunhu were embraced by the next culture or by the next generation and became embedded into its

own culture. There were elements of acculturation and enculturation which resulted from cultural intermarriages, cultural globalisation or cultural villagization as a result of its mega significance for the survival of the cultures, such as rain making ceremonies, natural disasters combating rituals, which brought all the cultures within the affected geographical setting together. As such, traditional games are part of the remnants of such practices where children and youths shared these common cultural pastime activities. Games are changing and are adjusted to the requirements of time in which they are implemented. Some old, traditional games, common in the past, are forgotten and disappear because today's children no longer know them (Kovačević & Opić, 2014). The problem of communication between people of different generations arises, but also between peers who spend less and less time in joint activities. Therefore, when cultures are transformed, either from within or in response to external forces, their sports are also transformed and only a few spent much time pondering the nature and extent of the transformation (Guttman, 2016).

This paper is aimed at presenting a documentation of a common cross-cultural playhouse traditional game for children in Zimbabwe. The presentation is based on a common playhouse traditional game of four selected ethnic cultures in Zimbabwe, namely Kalanga, Ndebele, Shona and Tonga. The game has the same play structure and patterns but differs in the naming according to the culture. In Kalanga, the playhouse traditional game is called Mazakwa, in Ndebele it is called, Amatope which is similar to the Nambyan name Kuzana matope, in Shona, they call it Mahumbwe and in Tonga, they call it Ntuuntu. This Traditional Playhouse game is not only common in the selected ethnic cultures in Zimbabwe, but is found across Africa and other continents in the world. The selection of the game in the four ethnic cultures of Zimbabwe is purposive, because not much comparative documentation has been done on the traditional games of Africa and Zimbabwe in particular on the basis of ethnic commonality and popularity. The foursome approach to documentation of a traditional game has been considered as a unique approach in documenting common and similar games in the history of traditional games documentation and profiling in Zimbabwe, since most traditional games researchers prefer a single game profile approach.

The foursome approach has been considered in this documentation, because of the diversity of the ethnic Zimbabwean cultures. Whilst names and naming in African cultures is indicative of their spiritual historic, economic, social, political and evolutionary experiences, most traditional games in Africa and World over have similar and general functions and purposes. The presentation is formatted as a profile of the same game in the four selected cultures concentrating mainly on the number of participants, description, instructions or rules of the game, purposes, functions and values of the game. This will open up a window for viewing the game's similarities among the four selected cultures. A brief historical background of the origins and geographical locations of the ethnic groups will help in establishing the linkages between the cultures.

Finally, the game's suitability for revival, modernisation, gamification and inclusion into the schools Physical Education curriculum, sportification are explored, taking into account the benefits and values the game adds to the Indigenous Knowledge Systems of the country. This documentation endeavours to make a contribution to the revival of a heritage that risk extinction. (Chivuna, 2014).

### METHODOLOGY

A qualitative, descriptive, participatory research method through demonstrations, open and structured interviews and documentary analysis were used for data collection. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify informants from the Kalanga people, Ndebele people, Tonga people and Shona people, who could participate in the study. The target population for inclusion in the study consisted of middle aged and elderly males and females from the four selected ethnic groups. Participants were asked to describe the nature, Social functions, purposes, values, rules of the game, number of participants, paraphernalia used in the playhouse game, and at times allowed to demonstrate some aspects of the game.

### Literature Review

For thousands of years traditional games have been the major pastimes of all people. It is a form of communicative and expressive actions common among all human beings and evident in all cultures. Hospitality is in the acceptance of the otherness showing how man in his daily life identifies himself with the group, thus shaping his collective memory, and understanding his passage from "nature to culture" (Mauss &

Cavenaghi, 2016). The uses of games for both children and adults have deep significance for the individual and the community through the conservation of physical, mental, and moral energy (Shea, 1991 in Tubera, 2008). Also, traditional games not only act as physical activity or active playing but also they give positive benefits to physical health for instance; increase heart rate, oxygen consumption and blood pressure (Rauber et al., 2014). These attributes indicate a prospective role of playing strategies for cardiovascular health in children. Games are not just about running, they do not only satisfy play needs, but also the needs for motor skill development (Berti & Zingari, 2019), social creative expressions, conceptual understanding, problem solving, personal and social development. Others benefits of traditional games are the intensity of positive emotions was higher in cooperative games and lower in individual games (Berti & Zingari, 2019). It can contribute to the motor, linguistic, cognitive and social-emotional development aspects of children (Restati & Ilham, 2019).

Games basically contribute to the development of totality of an individual and the nation in general. In the past, children used to gather on any open spaces in the mornings, late afternoons into early evenings running around, jumping, rolling, shouting and enjoying their favourite songs and dances. They at times challenged one another on simple games that are dependent on chance or probability, and games that demand submaximal and even maximal physical exertion. The inexpensive materials found scattered around the homesteads and strewn in the bush were the centres of the children's creativity and competitiveness. Traditional games are usually available played by children in the rural communities, more likely to live in low-income families due to the lower cost compared to the modern video games (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, 2007; Restati & Iiham, 2019). To a great extent, the very demanding school curriculum that almost takes away all the children's playtime and preference for modern games ahead of the traditional indigenous games are some of the major factors why indigenous traditional games and recreational activities are now slowly diminishing.

At present, the traditional games that used to be played at the playing ground by children have been replaced by the modern video games and sports that include football, netball and other

foreign play patterns. This present state calls for a massive action to address the need for the rediscovery, promotion, marketing and preservation of the indigenous traditional games that are a major part of local ethnic and national heritages. The presentation believes that the beauty of traditional games goes beyond their recreational values. They are not only reflectors of how children think and feel, but also living evidence of how children live and are still connected to their past (Chivuna, 2014). Thus, if these games would not be preserved, part of our history dies too. It is for this reason why this paper would like to study and document properly the selected mixed gender traditional children's game from the selected four cultures in Zimbabwe.

Every society in Zimbabwe possesses some unique cultural and social identity that is peculiar to that society. Traditional games and recreational activities form part of the uniqueness and identity of a society. However, these are currently under severe threats from the contemporary activities and sports that the European settlers brought with them, when they colonised Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. Children in Zimbabwe ethnic cultures, in their different geographical locations no longer play their indigenous traditional games and recreational activities, given this background the once revered traditional games and recreational activities among these selected ethnic cultures face the danger of being relegated to history with very little prospects or entirely no place in future (Chivuna, 2014).

### **The Tonga People and Their Cultural Games**

In Zimbabwe the Tonga people are mainly found in Binga district, which is in the north western part of Zimbabwe along the Zambezi River and they make up the third largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe after the Shona and the Ndebele. Both ethnically and linguistically, the Tonga of Zimbabwe are one and the same people as those found on the northern banks of Zambezi river, in Zambia. Before 1957, they lived a fruitful life along the banks of its river, whose rich alluvial soils sustained them throughout the year. However, when the Kariba dam was built and the banks of the Zambezi river were flooded, they were re-settled on higher ground, although some refused to move and they consequently drowned when the lake was flooded. The Tonga are now found in most areas of the north of Zimbabwe and spread over into Matabeleland North and Mashonaland west

provinces. Other ethnic communities living with the Tonga people in various districts are the Nambya (Hwange district), Chewa (mainly in the mining towns), Kore kore (Kariba/Omay, Mount Darwin and Nyaminyami Districts), Shangwe/Gova of Gokwe district (Hachipola, 1998). They are part of the early Bantu settlers who occupied the riverine areas of the Zambezi as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Up until the construction of the Kariba Dam in the late 1950s, the Tonga lived along the banks of the Zambezi river, largely without interference from the colonial rulers. Then, tens of thousands from the chiefdoms who lived on the shores of the river were deported from their habitat. The Zambezi valley along which they lived was flooded to make way for a huge lake and an electricity generating station at Kariba (Reynolds, 1968). Incidentally much of what has been documented about the history of the Tonga seems to centre on their physical material and tangible properties, displacement and abandonment, forgetting the displacement of their intangible heritage materials as well, which resulted in the loss of their past and separation of their future, while such physical activities as hunting, fishing, canoeing, music and dance are identified and described, the literature does not identify any indigenous games and sports of the people. There has been no deliberate and comprehensive documentation done, which poses a threat to the future existence of the games. It is this paper's intention to identify and document one intercultural or cross-cultural mixed gender game that was popular and regularly played by both Tonga boys and girls in the olden days. Most traditional games disappear through the introduction and promotion of foreign- mostly British and American games and sports into the school's playgrounds which had their own "play lore." The same holds true for the destruction of the habitats where traditional games were played; the old pubs, the streets and squares, from our cities and villages, which are now replaced by parking lots or sold to "city land developers" or "Land Barons", (Lavega, 2004). The Domino or chain effect can also be observed and has made these traditional games endangered "games species," which risk to become museum artefacts realities if no solution to reintegrate them in the ludic culture of our youngsters and protect their habitats for our future generations (Renson, 1992).

There are many Indigenous traditional games among the Tonga people as viewed by Van

Mele and Renson (1990), in Chivuna (2014). These Indigenous games and recreational activities are characterised by organised play that follow a certain structure and the players adhere to agree upon rules that reflect a socio-cultural dimension of reasoning and behaviour. Like other ethnic groups, the Tonga people's games are linked to their culture although some are also found across cultures. Some of them are Ntindi, Banana-banana, Mandombe, Siamweenzenze, Ntuuntu (playhouse), Ngoma mutibe (dance), Chilimba (dance) and Bulambe to mention just a few. Many studies have documented several indigenous games to preserve the culture of the societies in which they exist, and shape the developing personality of the child and culture by participating in the games. However, indigenous knowledge on the games of the Tonga people of Zimbabwe has not been researched analysed and documented (Chivuna, 2014). For the games to be promoted, developed and revived for the young Tonga people and for the benefit of its entirety there is need to find valuable and dependable information to assist in the development of these games.

For the revival and promotion of these indigenous traditional games, it is important to document them as a way of preserving them for the future generations. The games are very important in the development of the Tonga people of Zimbabwe and beyond, in-so-far as they contribute to the peculiar physiological, physical, social, cognitive and emotional benefits they present. The act of passing over the practice of the indigenous traditional games knowledge from one generation to the other may not guarantee originality and ownership of the traditional games by one culture or community, (Wharton-Boyd in Lyoka; 2007). The Tonga traditional games knowledge has been orally passed on from one generation to the next. This being the case originality and ownership of these games is difficult to explain and apportion, because there is no documented information about the games and who first developed them and where. Suffice to say, however, since there is consistence in their existence across the sampled ethnic cultures of Zimbabwe ownership of the games is therefore credited to all of them (Chivuna, 2014). Traditional games can certainly appeal and benefit to many groups in society. That is why traditional games deserve explicit attention from society and from local and international authorities.



### The Shona People and Their Cultural Games

The term Shona refers to an ethnic group of the Zimbabwean population which, comprises close to 85% of the total population (Tatira, 2004). They are further divided into sub ethnic groups namely the Karanga, the Manyika, the Ndau, the Kore kore and the Zezuru. All the sub-ethnic groups speak the same language called Chishona, (Tatira, 2014).

In the past, traditional Shona games were performed as part of entertainment. It was in the process of entertainment that Shona children learnt important aspects of life. The games they played not only sharpened their cognition but some were essential for the physical fitness. The Shona children participated in a number of games, some games were for boys only, such as those that involved simulations of fights, hunting, climbing and jumping. There were also games for girls only, such as *Matakanana* and those that involved playing with dolls and child minding and nursery. There were other games that were played by both boys and girls or the whole family such as; *Tsoro/ Fuva* and *Mahumbwe* which is the main concern of this paper. (Tatira, 2004). It has been observed that many social skills can be learnt through Shona traditional children's games, for example the children learnt to share tools used for games. They learnt to manage conflict such as to respond to a playmate's accusation and derogatory remarks during competitive games. They also learnt to keep friends, playmates, gender respect and deal with those who showed lack of understanding and self-sacrifice, which skills had consequences that taught them about social interaction from youth to their adult years. (Nyota & Mapara, 2008).

### The Kalanga People and Their Cultural Games

Kalanga constitute the people and language, which is spoken in Southwestern parts of Zimbabwe in Bulilima and Mangwe districts. Kalanga is one of the ethnic groups of Zimbabwe. Linguistically and culturally they belong to the main Karanga tribe of Zimbabwe. The Kalanga are part of an ethnic group which has its origins closely linked to the Shona ethnic group, although today they are viewed to be linked to the Ndebele, an ethnic group which took over their land in the mid-nineteenth century, (Nyathi, 2005). In Zimbabwe, it has been established by various scholars that indeed Kalanga is a dialect of Shona (Hachipola, 1998). It is true that there have over the years been

developments in Kalanga not found in the mainstream Shona, but thirsiest make Kalanga a completely different language yet. As part of the Shona culture most of the children's games are classified based on gender, with girls having their own specific girl child games such as *Jowe-jowe* and *Milidza gumbo*, and the boys have their own specific games like *Mngqwayi*, *Fuba* and other several board games. There is also a mixed game for both boys and girls which is known as *Mazakwa* in Kalanga which is the centre of discussion of this paper. Most of the Kalanga children's games are similar to the many Shona and Ndebele children's games in their spatiality, play patterns and nomenclature.

### The Ndebele People and Their Cultural Games

In Zimbabwe isiNdebele is mother-tongue to most African people living in Matabeleland North and South Provinces. As these provinces are inhabited by people other than Ndebele it means that other ethnic groups in the region have also adopted isiNdebele as their mother tongue or at least as their main means of communication (Hachipola, 1998). IsiNdebele language in Zimbabwe has not yet been given a proper linguistic study, especially for purposes of discovering the sociolinguistic and regional varieties of the language. It is spoken side by side with many other languages in the whole of Matabeleland region, with the majority of the minority languages being in the region. There is therefore expectation of many mutual influences between IsiNdebele and the other languages at the level of vocabulary, phonology, etc. (Fortune 1964 in Hachipola, 1998), suggests that at vocabulary level IsiNdebele has borrowed from Kalanga, Tonga and Khoisan. It is also possible that borrowing has come from other local languages, therefore making it a mixture of many other languages spoken in its vicinity (Hachipola, 1998). Children's games in the Ndebele culture, like in the other mentioned cultures above can be categorised into three possible classes, being games for boys only such as *Insema*, a piercing game, *Intonga*- a stick fighting game, *umacatshelana* (Hide and seek) game. Game for girls only, such as *mamuarahop* scotch, *pada*, and the mixed gender games, such as *amatope* playhouse, which is the one under comparison in this paper.

### The Game: Playhouse /Mazakwa/ Amatope/ Mahumbwe/ Ntuuntu.

This game is a socio-dramatic play. It is a traditional children's play that is participated in

by children in the age groups of about four to fourteen years. The number of participants is not well defined, but is free to all those interested and willing to participate in the play. Play time can start in the late afternoons to mid-evenings, this is a game for both boys and girls, (Nyota, & Mapara, 2008). It involves the youngsters setting up their “play camp” near homesteads. In this game children imitate adult roles of father, mother and children. Here they practised what they saw their elders do; looking for food, preparing and preserving it, resolving disputes and even worshipping, (Siamonga, 2017). In addition, other members form the extended family like aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces. The plots of the game are very simple and elaborate, (Nyota & Mapara, 2008). For instance, the mother-baby scene may just consist of feeding the baby, sleeping and waking up, while the husband-wife is more elaborate, it involves for example the husband gathering food and the mother cooking and serving the food. All this was learnt during childhood, but today with western knowledge systems, information communication technology and globalisation, children have limited or no time for the traditional games and songs. The game is classified as a mimicry/simulation game according to Chaska’s classification system, (Gundani et al., 2008)

### The Game: Organisation and Materials

Mainly it is the elder participants who would mobilise the tools, materials, utensils and food stuffs to be used for construction of the mini huts and housing structures to the site of the intended ‘play home. ‘The younger players would bring along with them their dolls other toys. Some parents would even provide some old furniture, mats and utensils such as old cooking pots, plates, cups and spoons for use by their children during the games.

### Number of Participants as a way of appreciating and supporting the game

The number of participants in the games varied from two to about twenty depending on the population of children and adolescents and those interested in taking part in the game at the home stead or in the village. Children and adolescents from one or more villages could team up and play the games together with each village team representing its own village of origin.

### Play Time and Play Area

Parents played a monitoring, advisory and supervisory role during the preparation stages of

the games, which were played in open spaces close to the homesteads, during late afternoons into late nights if there was full moon. In rare occasions the games would end the next morning. The games involved choosing a suitable site for the play home, constructing the mini huts, houses and granaries all which were done by the children. Meals were prepared by the girls from the mealie-meal they would have pounded and grinding their mothers’ grinding stones, Vegetables were collected from the gardens and leftovers from the fields. The girls did all the house chores just as their mothers did at their homes with boys doing all the other men related activities just as their fathers did, therefore intensifying the general gender stereotypes that are common in the African societies that are more patriarchal.

There was a lot of pre-game preparation that was done towards these play house games. Every participant was expected to contribute something towards the success of the games with parents assisting where there was specific need. The game can be classified as a mimicry game where children and adolescents mimic adults’ roles at homes and in general community life activities of choice.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Rationale of the Playhouse Game

Games have a significant role in the lives of all human beings. They embrace the fundamental nature of Homo sapiens, which is play, hence, Eichberg and Norgaard (2000) in Gundani, et al (2008) propounds that the human being is only then really human, when playing. An analysis of this seemingly simple drama show that it has capacity to; instil in the youngsters those cognitive skills that are valued in African cultures. It teaches and entrenches in the children’s psyche the duties and roles they are expected to play when they have their own families. The game provides a way for the children to explore and rehearse social roles they shall occupy in real adult life. As they play the game, they get a chance to convince others of ideas during petty discussions at a moot family meeting (*dare*) for the males. The children also learn to control their emotions as they simulate serious issues such as parenting and adolescence in a playful manner (Nyota & Mapara, 2008). They also get enlightened and have chances to explore and examine personal concerns in a non-threatening environment of real parents and adolescents. The game also enables the children to create self-understanding

as the game affords them to be active, interactive and imaginative. It promotes social cohesion in the players, tolerance, self-respect, architectural skills development during the constructions of semi structures they used as home settings. The need for spiritual respect, appeasement procedures/protocols and religious respect were inculcated in children as they imitated spiritual rituals of worshipping through ritual dances. All this was learnt during childhood play. All these values of the playhouse were and still are common values embedded in most African cultures and ethnic groups. They are part of the African “Ubuntu’s DNA”, which is not separated by the current colonial boundaries and identities. The children who played the mothers’ role during the play learnt Child caring, baby sitting and child-minding roles. The mimicry mothers also played an important role as family culture custodians to the mimicry children. Whilst cultural games and recreational activities, are identifiable with specific unique ethnic groups, which are unique to their existence and culture the playhouse game has refused the obliteration due to modern acculturation process as if for purposes of posterity within the identified cultures, (Gundani et al., 2008). Children managed to get entertained with little adult supervision and restriction. The cultural games in general formed part of indigenous learning and an education for living, which was to train the children for adulthood. They learnt by observation, imitation, practice and listening to stories told by their elders, (Siamonga, 2017). Children’s games and songs also provided primary socialisation which made it possible for children to adapt to their natural and social environments; they were more than games. These and play songs provided an opportunity where children learnt by guided participation in social experiences and explorations of their communities. The introduction of Traditional Sports Games, primarily in school physical education programmes, as proposed in some relevant contexts of is a tool to practice activities that contribute, in a holistic way (Berti & Zingari, 2019), to the personal and relational growth of children, involving: the immersion in both cognitive and motoric activities, the possibility of experiencing multiple relations among players, changing and negotiating rules, the use of various play materials, the experience of a sensitive and culturally-oriented experience of body and the all-important imagination (Jaouen et al., 2010; Parlebas, 2016; Berti & Zingari, 2019). According to research most of

the traditional games are at risk of becoming extinct, especially in urban areas, because of rapidly changing natural environments, fast-paced economic, social and cultural changes in Zimbabwe, (Siamonga, 2017). For this reason the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology development has introduced the new curriculum which, introduced Heritage studies and Traditional knowledge systems. That will entrench these games among a host of other subjects that enhance good child development and the teachers’ colleges especially the primary teachers ‘colleges and other universities’ language departments recruiting for training students from most minority languages ethnic groups of Zimbabwe for promotion of such heritage knowledge like traditional games and sports. Children’s games if embraced in the new curriculum are a way of ensuring the continued existence of traditional customs, traditions and culture. The games will also provide a platform for learning and a lot will be achieved, including natural resources management, seasons of the year, physical strength, perseverance and determination, conflict management, handling life’s successes and failures. Play house games are beneficial in socio-motor development in which there are no winners and losers.

### The Possible Causes for Cross-Culture Commonality of the Playhouse Game

- Inter-cultural marriages; after many generations of intermarriages with other cultures women, as mothers have become the first teachers in child development. They teach the generational cultural practices to the growing children and monitor and evaluate the degree of cultural knowledge acquisition as the children develop towards graduating into the next generation adults. Due to the history of intermingling and intermarriages amongst ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, ethnographers and historians have lately come to agree that there are no longer purely distinct ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. However, it is unclear whether this similarity is primarily due to extensive cultural exchange amongst these communities through intermarriage or whether it ultimately stems from common origins.
- The resettlement and relocation schemes introduced by the governments before

independence and after independence to decongest some areas or for purpose of setting up game parks/reserves and to help the landless, have brought into other ethnic areas people from different cultural and linguistic affiliations (Hachipola, 1998). The resettled people would have much influence on the original ethnic or linguistic group depending on whether they belonged to the then majority or minority language group.

- Labour migrations into mining settlements and farms especially during the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation period in the 1953 to 1963. The labour migrants brought with them their cultural games and recreational activities which they passed on to the resident locals and in the process, they also learnt the locals' games, language and recreational activities, which they took back to their countries of origin at the end of their contracts or on retirement.
- School teachers' training programmes and deployment across cultural and linguistic regions. Teachers deployed in a different linguistic and cultural region would inevitably teach, for example, cultural heritage issues they are conversant with from their region of origin to the learners in their region of deployment and will also learn some cultural and linguistic issues which they would take back and share with their own people during school holidays.
- Language discrimination and preference for teaching in schools in different linguistic and cultural regions, especially the categorisation of languages as official major and minority, before the Zimbabwe Constitutional Amendment number 20 of 2013, when English, isiNdebele and ChiShona were considered the only official languages that were used in the schools and the rest as minor languages that only could be used in "family matter discussions" or at the lowest level of school learning.
- Limited reading materials on heritages and cultural issues in most previously minority linguistic and ethnic groups, which has forced some publishers to translate books on heritage studies in the then major languages to minority languages as a way to create materials for teaching minority languages, (Hachipola, 1998).
- "Cultural games sports and recreational activities fraud" by some unscrupulous cultural tourists from some foreign countries who visit African Countries and other unsophisticated communities; due to lack of ownership, patents and copyright laws. These strong culture, stolen games, sports and recreational activities are then repackaged for promotion, preservation, marketing and reuse or resell in the tourists' countries of origin where they may even end up being patented, and protected by very strict copyright laws.
- Social economic activities, such as trading, rural to urban migrations and urbanisation.
- Cultural entrepreneurship leads to cultural dilutions of what used to be cultural taboos, dilution through such activities like cultural carnivals, festivals and trans-regional cultural trade fairs.
- Advancements in Information Communication technologies, has led to societal globalisation and villagization, where people come and shop for unique cultural and religious products for repackaging and reselling in their areas, regions and countries of origin.
- The new Zimbabwe school's curriculum allows for the teaching of similar content in the Heritage studies subject making it easy for sharing of similar/familiar cultural practises.
- Advocacy for Ubuntu/unhu, leads to tolerance, acceptance and appreciation of other cultures' activities, leading to adoption of similar and familiar practises. Some cultural practises lead to creation of cultural comfort zones where "sanctity" of certain African cultural practises that are of concern, makes these communities more vulnerable to large influx of Cultural activities. Researchers who would come learn and export their once protected cultural practises. The practises were protected through lack of exposure to the outside world therefore were not subjected to research and exploitation by outsiders.
- Academic exchange programmes in institutions of learning have also contributed significantly to the commonality of some traditional games and activities, through the foreign embassies in conjunction with the local ministry of foreign and international trade school children have travelled to other countries where they share these cultural games and activities as a way of promoting bilateral relationships between the countries.



### SUMMARY

The foursome approach to document a common popular mixed gender children's traditional game has managed to an extent, expose the fact that without thorough documentation of the traditional games and sports, some traditional games and recreational activities are assumed to have originated in a particular area or are a preserve of one culture, which may not be correct. Documenting traditional games exposes the trans-cultural boundaries of the games as well as ownership. In African cultures games and recreational activities are culturally and communally shared. It is therefore the duty of indigenous knowledge Systems researchers to expose through orthography the origins and ownership of the common traditional games. What comes out clear in this research is a common tradition of games culture among the ethnic tribes of Zimbabwe, traditional games and recreational perceptions and hence a common history and origin. Language tells the history of a community and its links with languages of related communities. No wonder the languages of the four selected ethnic groups belong to the Bantu group of languages born of a common origin and history. The similarity in the game is therefore a product of more ways than the four languages discussed. Through trans-regional cultural festivals, trade fairs and exhibitions specific origins of particular games maybe identified. In Zimbabwe, the trans-Limpopo Cultural Trade Fair in Chiredzi, the Cultural Festivals; the Kalanga (Plumtree), the Xhosa (Mbembesi near Bulawayo), the Venda (Beitbridge), the Ndau/Shangani (Chipinge), the Tonga (Binga) and the Kore kore or Mabuja (Mtoko) are means and ways of sharing, preserving, promoting and marketing cultural information on Zimbabwe cultural inheritance, where no one can claim personal ownership and copyright to. Cultural games property and Copyright is therefore communally owned, until such a time when it has been particularly transcribed into an individualised peculiar novel format that allows for personalised copyright ship, patenting and ownership. The games will therefore remain everybody's property and free for all of us to participate in. They should be safe guarded for their rich Ludo diversity as part of our cultural heritage.

The spatiality, play patterns and nomenclature of the game are similar amongst the four selected ethnic groups, although they are no longer very popular and low in participation. Participation is commonly by young children and young adolescents of both sexes; however, parents are still excited about their children participating in the game, this is noticed through their support through availing provisions for the play house game and the granting of permission for children to play the game into late night. Although there are several possible causes of the similarities in the game it is impossible to only attribute particular causes to the similarities, but just to say the cause of similarities could be attributed to all or some of the causes of similarities identified. The form, purposes and values of the game are still the same as those of the old generations.

### CONCLUSION

Although there are several possible causes of the similarities in the game it is impossible to only attribute particular causes to the similarities, but just to say the cause of similarities could be attributed to all or some of the causes of similarities identified. Further research on each of the identified possible cause can be carried out to establish the extend of its influence to the similarities in the game across ethnic groups. It remains, however important to bear in mind that traditional games are a living heritage and not a "frozen" reality or romantic nostalgia. They have to keep up with times without losing their idiosyncrasy.

### Recommendations

The schools' curriculum should emphasise unity through exposure of cultural commonalities, rather than differences, an aspect that the new curriculum both at primary and secondary school levels do not address, rather emphasis is more on ethnic and cultural differences than what they share in common as Zimbabweans. The possibility of sharing with children, and especially with teachers and educators in training, the richness of Traditional Sports Games (TSG) supports the transmission to new generations, encouraging intergenerational exchange and the diffusion and practice of TSG as a living heritage in schools (Berti & Zingari, 2019). This means emphasis was given more to cultural practices which are a result of

adaptations to their unique environmental realities. The fundamental thought and broad world-view are glossed over and sometimes ignored completely.

If well documented, traditional games, sports and recreational activities are an effortless and veritable strategy that Zimbabweans could harness for creation of a united nation.

There is need for further research, documentation, and inclusion into the Schools' Physical Education, Life Skills Education and Heritage studies curricula for posterity.

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## Profiling a Cross-Cultural Mixed Gender Traditional Playhouse Game in Zimbabwe

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