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Though the transition from hunting labor to migrant porter and monocrop agricultural labor came about as a result of outside historical forces, the indigenization of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sukuma labor through music performance was a natural Sukuma response, consistent with their own historical trajectory.

# From “Dancing with Porcupines” to “Twirling a Hoe”: Musical Labor Transformed in Sukumaland, Tanzania

Frank Gunderson

*In the Sukuma area of northwest Tanzania, farmer-musicians, or farmers who compose and perform music, introduce themselves in public interactions first as farmers, with the phrase “I am a farmer, I hold a hoe,” and second as performers, with the phrase “I am also a dancer, I twirl a hoe.” Identification with music operates on many psychological and cultural levels from childhood to old age, and is reinforced and expressed most cogently in their use of song during cotton farming. Cotton farming is a relatively recent chapter in Sukuma history, a result of (and creative response to) British colonial government requirements between the two world wars. A new farming class emerged, which drew on prior musical labor fraternities such as medicinal societies, hunting societies, porters, and military organizations for their personnel, musical repertory, and dance paraphernalia. The Sukuma made the imposition of long-distance migrant labor and cotton cropping their own by making these labors musical. The author discusses how Sukuma farmers developed musical farming from these prior musical labor practices, and provides several examples of this transformation.*

## Introduction

For little more than two months just after the onset of the first rains that routinely fall from late November to early February, the everyday rural soundscape of the Sukuma area<sup>1</sup> is transformed from a state of tranquility to one of cacophony by the intense competing drums in neighboring farms for as far as the ear can hear, by the rambunctious shouting and song of farmers, and by the thud and clang of hoes impacting the earth in rhythmic unison. On occasion, the farmers move on cue, one by one or in groups of twos and threes to abandon their work altogether, to throw their hoes into the air and catch them, or to twirl them to the beat in cho-

reographed and rehearsed unison over their heads, through their legs, and around their chests and waists at lightning speed. It would be difficult to avoid the engrossing soundscape and "musical labor" produced by these farmers' associations of cotton farmers, who begin their treks to the fields as early as five in the morning to get an early advantage on the heat of the equatorial midday sun.

I use the phrase "musical labor" in order to avoid the conceptual underpinnings of the term "work-song" as it has been used in the past and to draw attention to the context and processes of those activities surrounding labor where music is present, which include composition, performance, transmission, as well as the song and song text itself. My reservations about calling Sukuma music "work-song" is further drawn from the Sukuma philosophy that sees musical labor as a human experience both related to and different from labor, a performative behavior neither strict music performance nor strict labor, neither work nor play, but somehow retaining aspects of both. Music performance such as this not only lightens the work load and transforms work into something more playful, but also performs a role in creating a dynamic and heightened group consciousness, creating an environment where everyday village discourse and political commentary are encouraged, enjoyed, and reflected upon. Working together with music becomes more than simply a technical means of accomplishing agricultural tasks; it plays a crucial role in establishing closeness, mutual support, and community solidarity. It is the totality of these experiences of music at the labor site, the reflective reception and compelling production of songs laden with creative metaphors and evocative allusions to local realities, that gives the participants such a rewarding aesthetic experience. When bound with the intense physicality and bodily knowledge derived from labor "performed" for long durations that is at the same time synchronized to, and constantly surrounded by call-and-response choruses and rhythmic ostinatos enhanced with variation, the participants experience intense emotional euphoria and joy.

Before the sweeping transformations brought about by the institution of colonial-era mono cropping, farm labor in Sukumaland was accomplished by village age-grade societies. These societies were a variation on a cultural theme; found in most places but not all, primarily mandatory but in some places voluntary, inclusive of women but in some places exclusive. As in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, Sukuma-Nyamwezi culture is based on cooperative social networks that include and extend beyond kinship and age-grade systems. Ordinarily every individual past puberty belonged to one or several such groups outside his own family to which he/she owed allegiance. These specialized associations, known as *nganda* (sing. *luganda*), or "clans" in KiSukuma, allocated labor according to hunter, agricultural, and magico-religious dance societies (Varkevisser 1971). The term *nganda* is an important cover term signifying a variety of social groupings to include one's lineage or ancestral heritage as well as one's labor group affiliation. The precolonial Sukuma age-grade farmers' *nganda* were similar to the "reciprocal" *coumbite* work parties in Haiti, or

to the Kpelle women's societies of Liberia, where members work on each other's fields for little payment. Joining a voluntary musical labor *luganda* such as the elephant hunters, porcupine hunters, or snake hunters was an initiation into adulthood in an African society without formal puberty ceremonies.

### The *Banuunguli* (Porcupine Hunter's Society) and *Bayeye* (Snake Hunter's Society) Musical Labor Associations

Two of the older Sukuma musical labor *nganda* that enjoyed popularity in the Sukuma area for at least four generations before the arrival of the first Europeans (Baumann 1894:97) were the *banuunguli*, or "porcupine hunter's society,"<sup>2</sup> and the *bayeye*, or "snake hunter's society."<sup>3</sup> Porcupine and snake-hunting dance societies have been noted elsewhere among Tanzanian ethnic groups to include the Luguru, Kutu, Kwere, and Zaramo, who, interestingly enough, all have joking relationships<sup>4</sup> and thus a history of contact among the Sukuma-Nyamwezi. By the mid-eighteenth century *banuunguli-bayeye*<sup>5</sup> competitions were the most renowned and anticipated dance forms in the Sukuma-Nyamwezi areas (Abrahams 1967:64).

Though *banuunguli* and *bayeye* groups still exist, for all practical purposes they have abandoned their hunting practices for farming and recreational competition. To this day, *bayeye* and *bunuunguli* songs are similar in content, centered around the specialized occupational nature of the societies, the ins and outs of hunting, and their relationships with their totem animals. According to the mythology that both societies share, *bayeye* and *banuunguli* societies were at one time the same association, founded by a healer named Katabi in one tradition, Ndelema in another. As with other dance group splits in Sukumaland, the content of the stories about the split between the *banuunguli* and *bayeye* are about differences between teachers and prominent students over medicines. The time of the split up of the *bayeye* into separate *banuunguli-bayeye* dance teams is uncertain, but informants claim that it occurred toward the end of the nineteenth century (see also Gunderson and Barz 2000:407). Several sources claim that both societies spread through migrant labor and inter-regional portage from Ufipa in southwestern Tanzania to the Tabora region in the early 1800s (Abrahams 1967:64; Bosch n.d.).

The breakaway founder of the *banuunguli* was Kisatu, who lived in Tabora and who brought the medicines and rituals from Ufipa in the mid-nineteenth century (Ng'wana Mihumo 1995). During the late 1920s, *banuunguli* societies spread north throughout Sukumaland by workers digging and laying track for the Mwanza-Tabora railroad.<sup>6</sup> When they first moved into southern Sukumaland, the *banuunguli* arrived as a variant called *bushilombo*, and then *bashila tembe*, or "those who have nothing but mud to wear," a parody name that originated with the *bayeye*, alluding to the group members' poverty and their vigorous and dust-inducing acrobatic dancing, according to an article published in the newspaper

*Lumuli* #234 in April 1963. In some areas, members of the *bayeye* to this day joke with their *banuunguli* rivals during competition with the following ritual exchange: "Wagwa mutembe unamuji!" (He has fallen into the mud, my father!), or "Liku galagalaga litugije" (He has fallen down, he is not that intelligent). *Banuunguli* drummers reply with a drum pattern on the *mbeha* drum, emulating the syllables and pitch contours of the spoken phrase, "Paga nakubinze lukunu" which literally means "I will keep dancing in this fashion until I bust my ass!"

The old *banuunguli-bayeye* societies' professional duties were to investigate the whereabouts of snakes and porcupines, to hunt them down, and to capture them. Porcupines were dangerous to crops, especially corn, and snakes were dangerous to humans and livestock.<sup>7</sup> Because porcupines and snakes often share the same holes and even live and coil up together, it was important that those trained in going after one or the other be aware of the kinds of problems they would encounter if they met with either party. Farmers pooled their information and resources regarding how to capture these animals. Young men were organized and sent into the burrows by the light of the moon, accompanied by drummers who gathered outside the hole and performed to give the hunters courage. The hunter who went inside immobilized the creature with medicines that he blew into its face, and he killed the creature either with a spear or with his bare hands. Ngoya recalled that the grandfathers, or *baba buheemba*, of the society would be there waiting as the hunters come out, and would ask: "So, how many are there? Five? Well, why can't you bring them all out?" (Ngoya 1994). The captured porcupines were then eaten, as they were considered sweet to eat, or they were displayed while still alive at the post-harvest dance competitions. Snakes were captured by hand or by trap (Werther 1898:65), and their poisonous teeth removed every five to six days, whereupon they were brought out of their boxes and provoked to move in competitive dances with *banuungul* dancers to the horror and delight of the audience. These groups demonstrated the proficiency of their medicines by dancing with poisonous snakes and allowing themselves to be bitten, whereupon other members applied the appropriate medicines.

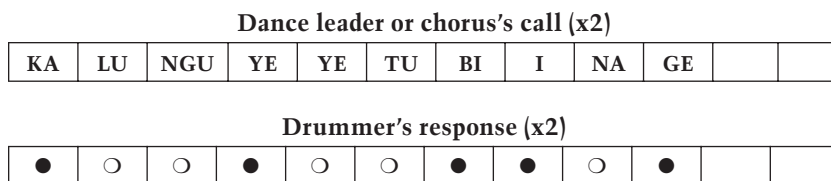
Both porcupines and snakes are disoriented by loud repetitive percussive noises (like drumming), and therefore can be manipulated easily and in entertaining ways during music performance. To my astonishment, I witnessed that when the animals began getting used to being around drum music, they moved around stepping slowly and precisely to the beat, as described in the nineteenth-century German explorer Kandt's seemingly unlikely description of a hedgehog found by his porters on the road. Many long-distance porters were recruited from the ranks of the hunting associations, and they brought with them their hunting skills and lore. Kandt puzzled over the actions of his porters' "hedgehog club," whose members organized themselves to hunt the animals and sing songs to draw them out of hiding:

Nsassa<sup>8</sup> (*sic*), 4 September. Today one of my people trapped a hedgehog. I didn't know, if it is *erinaceus albiventris wagneri*, because it rolled itself together and I could not see its flesh. The Wanjamwesi knew immediately, the thing to do. They formed a circle around the hedgehog, clapped in time in the hands and sang:

The Leadsinger: Oh hedgehog.  
 The Choir: Little monster, you should  
 compete/dance with me.  
 Little monster, unravel yourself.

The meaning seems approximately to be: *O, hedgehog. You Naughty thing, let yourself be tamed, come to us.* The hedgehog unrolled itself immediately, nodding the head in time with the song, and starts running around. Maybe somebody (should) attempt the same once with a German hedgehog. [Kandt 1904:55]<sup>9</sup>

After having witnessed similar happenings on several occasions, my only explanation is that the animal is confused by the drumming and goes into a slight trance, while the drummers alter the tempo of their playing so as to follow the animal's predictable footsteps. While taking drumming lessons with the well-known *bunuunguli* drummer Ngoya, I was further surprised to find a drum pattern mnemonic that is quite similar in syllabic form and textual content to the song text documented by Kandt ninety years prior. The phrase, "Kalunguyeye Tubiinage," (Little hedgehog, come dance with us) is a common dance leader's cue (sung chorus) and children's song that is introduced into *bunuunguli* performances at the point where the hedgehogs are brought into the dance arena. Drummers may answer the cue or chorus with its associated trademark mnemonic phrase played on the lead *shikiija* drum in a call-and-response fashion, or they may play the phrase without the cue at any point as a cross-rhythm, to the delight of the audience. The *shikiija* drum rhythm corresponds to the natural rhythm and stress of the text, with the bass tone supporting the stressed syllables.



● Bass pulse, played with hand or stick.

○ Muted hand tone.

Figure 1. *Bunuunguli* mnemonic drum pattern, "Kalunguyeye tubiinage . . ." "Little hedgehog come dance with us."

*Banuunguli* and *bayeye* groups dance in organized competitive musical events, called *m'bina*,<sup>10</sup> where reputations are won and lost. This is a form of popular entertainment that includes musical performance such as song duels and dance contests. Postharvest village competitions are the primary forum of public music performance and popular entertainment in Sukumaland. During the German colonial era in Tanganyika (1884–1914), a fiercely competitive relationship between two shamanistic healing societies developed and eventually coalesced all existing Sukuma musical labor groups under their two respective organizations, known as *bagiika* and *bagaalu*. Today, all competing musical labor associations, including the farming associations, proudly align themselves with one side or the other of the *bagiika-bagaalu* complex, and draw their ritual, medicinal, and esoteric musical knowledge from these groups. *Bayeye* and *banuunguli* songs are similar in content, centered around the specialized occupational nature of the societies, the ins and outs of hunting, their relationships with their totem animals, and slander between each other. The following text composed by Kasimbi, one of the early founders of *bayeye*, is a typical boast:

<i>Kasimbi nene,</i>	I, Kasimbi,
<i>Namalabanga</i>	I have finished thirty
<i>makumiadatu abanuunguli</i>	<i>banuunguli</i> here and there.
<i>Ikulekule.</i>	
<i>Bayeye unene,</i>	<i>Bayeye</i> , myself,
<i>Nulu nucha,</i>	Even if I die,
<i>Lufu lwane nulilwa ngoma</i>	My death will be wept
	by the <i>ngoma</i> .
<i>Bakanihoyelaga.</i>	They (the mourners)
	will really make some
	Noise about me. <sup>11</sup>

All of their songs contain short choruses, and for this reason have been adopted by the farming groups as well, or by those *banuunguli* and *bayeye* groups who double as farm labor groups today.

### Sukuma-Nyamwezi *Bapagati* (Porter) Labor and Music in the Nineteenth Century

With the onset of the ivory trade in East Africa, young Sukuma-Nyamwezi men proved their manhood by taking journeys to the coast, extending the realm of a territory established by the hunter associations and inter-regional salt bearers (Senior 1966). Porterage constituted one of the most ancient and massive forms of labor migration in African history (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1978:11), and were the first cash wage earners in East Africa (Beidelman 1982:614). Sukuma-Nyamwezi men were sought above



all others as porters of choice for caravan travel for reasons that included their experience as traders; their knowledge of the interlacustrine region that was the destination of so many ivory and slave traders, missionaries, and explorers; the pride they took in their profession; and their presumed greater capacity to carry loads for long distances (Roscoe 1921:25). Porterage was thought by the Sukuma-Nyamwezi to be a test of supreme manliness (Burton 1860:35), and indeed even the sons of kings were found taking part in this rite of passage.

Through music and “soundscape production” on the road porters maintained their dignity, subdued by the nature of their employment and by the rigors of the long march. “Soundscape production” refers to the realm of humanly produced music and noises that occurred on caravans that included all-night *ng’omas*,<sup>12</sup> gunshots, reveilles and fanfares, hummed tunes and marching rhythms, and the general clatter of bells, horns, shouts, and whistles. Although in many aspects the caravan soundscape was undoubtedly carnival-like in its surreal multivalence, it was too much in the realm of work-related activity to be considered “carnival.” The caravan soundscape functioned more as a unique kind of worksite pressure release rather than as a Bakhtinian inversion of the social order (Abrams and Bauman 1972).

At a purely functional level, the utility of nineteenth-century porter music was to pace the group in regular steps over long distances. Music served to establish enthusiastic camaraderie and courage among strangers not necessarily affiliated by clan. Sukuma-Nyamwezi porters sang on the road to encourage each other, and to break the monotony of the road (Roscoe 1921:67). Porters composed songs in the evenings in order to muster courage in the face of hostile territory, or to express concerns for being left behind in the wilderness (Hore 1971:31). Songs were sung in a mixture of KiSukuma, KiNyamwezi, KiSwahili, and corrupt Arabic, and their songs included the imitation of bird and animal calls (Simpson 1975:14). Performance contexts associated with the departure and arrival of these groups became commonplace.

Music styles and paraphernalia associated with the porters spread quickly. As alluded to in the previously mentioned anecdote about porters and porcupines on the road, Sukuma porters spread practices and materials associated with *bayeye* and *banuunguli* societies throughout western and central Tanganyika (Illife 1979:80), to include songs, ritual practices, and portable instruments like *kituumba* drums<sup>13</sup> and *nghinda* bells.<sup>14</sup> Porters also brought their songs composed on the road back to their homes during the farming season, performing them as accompaniment to their small-scale agricultural tasks, and, in turn, they brought their farming songs on the road with them for solace and entertainment (Weule 1909:389).

Long-distance porterage represents an important transitory chapter in Sukuma music history, as it was the labor realm where precolonial hunting songs morphed into twentieth-century farm labor. Porters from the coast took up farming when they were not on the road, creating for the

Sukuma individual multiple labor sites where, in many cases, the same corpus of music was performed and transmitted freely. Once this pattern of transference was established, songs had a way of taking on a life of their own, transmitted in varying contexts beyond their original purposes. Thus, a nineteenth-century porcupine hunter's song or a porter song sung in the first person that comments on the travails of life on the road is found sung earnestly by teenage Sukuma farmers at work in their fields today, or used by the farmers' dance societies as a "warm up" before going into competition.

### The Rise of the Sukuma Musical Farming Associations during the Colonial Era

Although hand-woven cotton production existed on a small scale before the arrival of the Europeans (Burton 1860:318; Grant 1864:60), German farmers at the turn of the century were responsible for its expansion on a wider scale. After the post-World War I handover of the Protectorate to the British, the colonial government quickly became committed to improving and sustaining cotton production. As early as August 1917, district agricultural officers were sent to Mwanza to promote the local cotton crop. The local administration even resorted to closing mission schools during peak harvesting and sowing seasons (Austen 1968:126). The rise in cotton production from 1924 (Manyanda 1974:28) was the most pronounced. As crop-growing campaigns intensified, such as the "Plant More Crops" campaign from 1932 to 1945, every region had one or more *bwana shamba*<sup>15</sup> (agricultural field officer) who held village seminars and made sure that farmers complied with the particulars of various programs and schemes. However, resistance to cotton colonialism was ambiguous and rarely amounted to much more than illegal inter-cropping, planting in poor soils, or refusing to sell their harvest to the export sector (Isaacman and Roberts 1995:37).

Sung discourse, on the other hand, was a means that Sukuma farmers used to deal with these issues. The following text of a song from the 1930s documents a notorious local event, remembered by Kangw'iina Ng'wana Mihumo. This well-known song of complaint titled "Nchilu Blacka" (The Stubborn Mr. Black), complains about the British colonial government's requirement for the Sukuma to drop hunting and small-scale agriculture and commence with monocrop cotton farming at the expense of traditional food crop diversity.<sup>16</sup>

<i>Nchilu Blacka alitudanganya,</i>	The stubborn Mr. Black deceives us,
<i>Banhu twaluha.</i>	People, we have suffered.
<i>Kupejiwa mumalugulu,</i>	Taken from the mountains,
<i>Kuja kusilili, kulima maduta.</i>	To go into the valley to farm cotton.

<i>Kulima buluba,</i>	To farm cotton,
<i>Mungu twambilijage.</i>	God help us.
<i>Bangereja bashoke</i>	The British should just
<i>kukaya (x2).</i>	return home.
<i>Kuhadikijiwa</i>	Forced to cultivate
<i>kulima mabuluba,</i>	cotton,
<i>Ng'weji gwa meli.</i>	In the month of November.
<i>Ntemi Ng'hwaya,</i>	Ntemi Ng'hwaya,
<i>Ng'wana Ng'wandu,</i>	son of Ng'wandu,
<i>Ubagema bawana shamba,</i>	He really tempted those
	<i>bwana shambas,</i>
<i>Kubalisha mabuluba.</i>	To feed them cotton.
<i>Akatulwa no (x2).</i>	He was beaten seriously.
<i>Akaliwa mafaini.</i>	He was given a fine.
<i>Akoya na koya.</i>	He stopped that activity
	completely.

The composer praises local chief Ng'hwaya, who served a visiting colonial agricultural official (Mr. Black) a meal of beans garnished with cotton seeds as a means of protesting the officer's insistence of Sukuma monocrop farming during a particularly devastating famine. In another song from this period, the composer Funuki explains to the hypothetical *bwana shamba* why farmers who are not Christians should not have to work on their cotton farms on Sunday, as was the local requirement. He told the officer, "We are of the *ng'oma* religion; we shouldn't have to work either."<sup>17</sup>

Eventually farmers began growing cash crops themselves so that they would not have to work on the cotton plantations or migrate to the coast (Manyanda 1974:19). After the Mwanza-Tabora railway was finished in 1928, more Sukuma farmers were witnessing the benefits of growing and marketing their own cotton crops, inspiring many to abandon migrant labor for the coast altogether (Rounce 1949:71). During the world depression in the 1930s many more Sukuma became cotton growers. When cotton prices were high, profits were used to buy cattle. In tough years, cattle were sold as food. Cotton growing enabled farmers to earn money and have time for dancing. Sukuma farmers began to organize farming associations in order to deal collectively with the new issues facing them, and based their groups on the models provided by the *banuunguli* and *bayeye* associations.

As the farming societies proliferated, elements within the colonial government began to express differing views on the phenomenon. One faction felt that musical farming groups were dangerous sources of dissent that might be harnessed by the growing independence movement, and lobbied toward monitoring their movements. The German missionary Spelig wrote that the Sukuma musical farming associations that were related to *banuunguli* and *bayeye* dance groups were harmless on the surface, but contained potentially dangerous elements of "secret oathing" (Spelig

1929:62). The government anthropologist Hans Cory was sent to investigate the subversive potential of these "secret societies." Though he found that the groups had elaborate and lengthy periods of ritual seclusion, for the most part, he deemed them harmless (Cory n.d.[a]). He found instead that Sukuma farmers at the time were composing songs that discussed and negotiated the curses and benefits of the new economic system, such the following by Mgakanzira:

The drum of the chief calls to plant cotton.  
Gird up your loins, clean the fields,  
Then even the European will not be angry.  
On the day you get your money,  
you will buy what you like, cattle,  
or boots to put on. (Cory n.d.)

Once farmers began acquiring larger areas of land and individualistic cash cropping started, it no longer seemed appropriate for the village organization with its automatic membership to perform its services for food only. When people moved away from the dense villages to dispersed settlements in order to start cash crop production, a great expansion of the labor force was required (Knudsen 1977:68). Therefore, the village age-grade farming *nganda* started claiming cash as well as food, and sometimes large sums of cash and large quantities of food from wealthy men. The age-grade farming *nganda* could not keep up with the demands for labor, so other organizations that held the interests of young men and women, namely, hunting-dance *nganda* like *banuunguli* and *bayeye*, or the newly formed cotton-farming groups<sup>18</sup> like *bagobogobo* and *bakomyaluume*, moved into the void. Because these dance groups saw that they could streamline their operations and personnel and thus charge less for their labor than the age-grade groups, by the time of independence in 1961, the age-grade farming *nganda* were significantly diminished in most parts of Sukumaland, and members from those groups were joining the new farmers' associations.

### *The Bagobogobo (Skin Wearers) Musical Farming Associations*

One of the newly formed farmers' dance groups that stepped in as a result of this demand was *bagobogobo*. *Bagobogobo* groups have captured the attention of many Tanzanians throughout the groups' seventy-year history, and their dances, like those of the *bayeye* and *banuunguli* who preceded them, are considered by many to be a significant Sukuma contribution to Tanzanian national culture. When I first began asking my friends about the origins and meanings of the term *bagobogobo*, someone told me that the term could have a hundred meanings. I think that what he meant was that the term brings to mind so many stories, impressions, and multiple histories, that to track down one true thread of origin would hardly be worthwhile.

Nevertheless, I have attempted to track down the broader outline of where this genre has occurred.

According to most sources, the original *bagobogobo* dance group began as the *bakhonongo*. It is unclear what the origins of this term are, but many believe that it originated in reference to a group of individuals migrating from Konongo, a linguistic group related to the Sukuma and Nyamwezi and residing just south of Nyamweziland. A related explanation is that those people occupying the area south of the Ugalla river (the Warungwa) had historically been famous smelters and traders of iron hoes called *khonongo*; thus, the term *bakhonongo* was a kind of nickname applied to anyone who became a trader in hoes (Kilasa 1975). The *bakhonongo* dance group used these small hand-held hoes (*lisuka*) as props, as they continue to do to this day. In any case, the terms *bakhonongo* and *bagobogobo* began to be used in reference to dance labor groups in Sukumaland in the late 1920s and early 1930s, especially in the Bulima and Ndagalu areas. Ntamanwa remembered that *bagobogobo* really got going around 1938, around the same time as the *mandege* or “corn” famine, named so because of the corn relief distributed by the British to all of the chiefs. By the time of the subsequent *LeguLegu* famine of 1949, the *bakhonongo* group had resolutely changed its name to *bagobogobo* (Njiile 1995).

Sources agree that the early ranks of *bagobogobo* members came from the *banuunguli* and *bayeye* societies (Masuha 1963:31; Mihumo 1995). *Bagobogobo* groups adopted the prior associations’ short topical choruses, and their drums that were made by the same clan of drum makers who built drums for the *bayeye* and the salt caravan societies (Kadelyia 1994). The nickname *bagobogobo*, which means “the wearers of animal skins,”<sup>19</sup> was given to members because of their manner of dress. *Bagobogobo* wore the skins of hunted animals in the fashion of *banuunguli* such as foxes, hyenas, jackals, and leopards, decorated with porcupine quills (Cory 1954: 55), and the feathers of ostriches, known as *lumuuda* (Shingoma 1994). They prepared these skins in such a way to cover the entire body except for the head. The clothing they wore was a joke, and drew spectators (Misuga 1995), as the skins were very dirty and unwashed. They decorated their hoe handles with *ng’hindu* bells previously associated with *banuunguli* and *bayeye* associations, which created an ancillary rhythm to the primary pulse produced by group hoeing.

Early *bagobogobo* dance groups organized themselves in the fashion of pseudo-military ranked hierarchy, as *banuunguli* and *beni* groups did.<sup>20</sup> They drew their members from the mandatory age-grade farming *nganda*, and in their early history they drew severe criticism from elders for this reason. Nevertheless, by all accounts, *bagobogobo* members were older and more experienced farmers than the village age-grade farming *nganda*, and could do in two hours what it took the age-grade farming *nganda* two days to accomplish. Since they specialized in cotton farming, they could charge for their services. The age-grade farming *nganda* did not consider

themselves professional dance groups, and just sang short choruses among themselves in their farms, or as Buseng'wa Ng'wana Bulahya put it, ". . . Before *bugobogobo* came along, people were just listening to the clanking of their hoes" (Bulahya 1994).

*Bagobogobo* members continued the compositional practices of the prior musical labor groups as well. Their songs are composed by *baringi*, a term that signifies troubadours, singers, composers, and scandal mongers. *Baringi* are the dance conductor-leaders and organizers of the musical labor groups. The term also has supernatural connotations, as an important aspect of the *baringi's* work is their communication with dead ancestors, who are the assumed source of new musical compositions. As the living representatives of ancestors, *baringi* have the power to invoke, forge, transform, manipulate, and destroy through their words and deeds, a power held in awe and fear by ordinary people. Songs, perceived as *n'hambu*, or "conversations from the past," are important conduits of ancestral voices, either transmitted as first-person narratives through the generations or transmitted through a composer's dreams.

An early composer associated with *bagobogobo* was Mang'ombe Kusela, but little is known about him. What is remembered most about the early *bugobogobo* composers is that, at some point in the 1940s and early 1950s, Sagini Kamegayi, the supreme leader (*malamala*) of the *bak-honongo-bagobogobo* in the Mwanza region of Sukumaland, was challenged by Kaboja Majimbili of Ndagalu (Songoyi 1995) in a dispute over strict dance rules and beer consumption. Kaboja then broke away to form a new farming dance group known as the *bakomyaluume*, or "dew steppers." Like the *banuunguli*, *bagobogobo* groups were known for their penchant for farming in the evenings and early morning hours by the light of the moon. "They would go and sleep at the farm site and start cultivating about midnight, returning at ten in the morning," a *bugobogo* dance teacher, Julius Ntamanwa, once told me. It was their reputation of working by moonlight, instead of sleeping, that earned them the moniker *batalalaga*, or "they who never sleep." The *bakomyaluume*, on the other hand, rarely made it out to the fields before 5:00 in the morning; thus, they were nicknamed by *bagobogobo* groups as "the ones who step in the dew." Kamegayi was challenged later by Kalugula Ndaki from Busumabu, a *bunuunguli* dancer who saw an opportunity in trying out *bagobogobo* elsewhere, and is thus credited to have popularized the dance throughout Sukumaland (Nzwilendo 1994; Masalu 1995). The original dissenter Kaboja was trained in *bayeye* dance; thus, his split from *bagobogobo* to later compete with Kalugula, the ex-*bunuunguli* dancer, was seen by all as a natural friction consistent with Sukuma dance history (Dukiila 1994).





Figure 2. Kalugula Ndaki (left), early *bagobogobo* leader. Photograph courtesy of the Sukuma Archives, Bujora Cultural Centre, Bujora-Kisesa, Tanzania, circa mid-1960s.

Figure 3. Sagini Kamegayi (right), early *bakomyaluume* leader and Ndaki rival. Courtesy of the Sukuma Archives, Bujora Cultural Centre, Bujora-Kisesa, Tanzania, circa mid-1960s.

### Sukuma Musical Labor Associations Since Independence

Prior to independence, *bagobogobo* groups abandoned the practice of wearing animal skins, and began wearing uniforms made of hemp and sisal instead. Sources date this change to the 1956 Royal visit to Tanganyika by Princess Margaret of England. The word went out throughout the Sukuma area to bring together the best performers available for her arrival, with the warning, however, that “some *ng’omas* will not be suitable” (Royal Visit Announcement n.d.). She was greeted at the airport by *banuunguli* and *bayeye* dance groups, among others (*Baragumu* 1956). “There was a huge celebration, with about seventy groups. Our group (*bagobogobo*) went with our ‘dirty skins,’ and they just refused us, so we just returned and played in the villages” (Ntamanwa 1995). However, this modernist unease about wearing old skins at *ng’omas* was only temporary, lasting about ten years. Contributing to this period of unease was the new government’s suspicion that groups like *bagobogobo* were lazy and “anti-development” (citing their disdain for tractors), and spent more time playing *ng’oma* than farming.

Since the late 1960s, however, both *bagobogobo* and the *banuunguli-bayeye* dance groups have found themselves "validated through visibility" (Slobin 1992:11), because of a sustained national political consciousness that romanticizes the role of the peasant farmer.<sup>21</sup> *Bagobogobo* groups are now praised because of the role they play in development, using limited resources to their fullest potential.<sup>22</sup> Their recent revivalist move to readopt animal skins in their dance routines, and their streamlined appropriation of snake and porcupine dancing, *banuunguli* style, into their public competitive dances, now contributes to a sense of national pride. Similarly, most *banuunguli* groups have abandoned hunting and now earn their livelihood as farmers. Their old songs about porcupines are performed on their farms and in public competitions, and are more popular than ever. This *bunuunguli* text, popular at political rallies in the late 1960s and revived, once again, for the multiparty elections of 1995, praises Julius Nyerere and Paul Bomani<sup>23</sup> from the point of view of the TANU/CCM<sup>24</sup> card-carrying farmer:

<i>Kambaragi O Nyerere.</i>	Kambaragi, Oh Nyerere.
<i>Watwenhela buchaguzi.</i>	He has brought us the right to choose.
<i>Tozunya bise Banuunguli.</i>	We have agreed, the <i>Banuunguli</i> people.
<i>Tuchagula igembe.</i>	We choose the hoe.
<i>He namba wani! (x2)</i>	Indeed, Number One! (x2)
Paul Ng'wana Bomani, hagama!	<i>Paulo Ng'wana Bomani,</i> persevere forever!
<i>Watwenhela maendeleo</i> <i>ga barabara.</i>	You have brought us new roads.
<i>He namba wani</i> <i>ya balimi! (x2)</i>	Indeed, Number One among the farmers! (x2) <sup>25</sup>

*Bugobogobo*, *bunuunguli*, and *bayeye* dances are now taught in primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training colleges, and at the university. The contemporary musical labor associations are enlisted by the government to disseminate information on various campaigns. In the heady days after independence in the 1960s, participants for one festival were expected to come up with songs praising the revolution, the nation, the Arusha Declaration, and the politics of self-determination (*Mkutano wa Mwanza Music Festival* 1967). All public festivals with any official affiliation were subject to censorship, "to make sure that all songs had to do with the history of the development of political consciousness in our nation" (*Nyimbo za Wanafunzi za Kisiasa* 1967).<sup>26</sup> During the war against Idi Amin in Uganda in the late 1970s, noncompetitive *bagobogobo* and *banuunguli* groups<sup>27</sup> based in Dar Es Salaam began wearing khakis and acting out mock combat in their dance routines to inspire the troops and rally support for their effort (Janzen 1992:35). In the 1970s, *bagobogobo*



groups were at the forefront of a government-sponsored "Hoe is Wealth" (*Igembe Sabo*) campaign designed to encourage farmers' output, as well as to garner respect for farmers among the populace. In the 1970s and 1980s, government-sponsored *bagobogobo* songwriting focused on campaigns like reforestation, eradication of the tsetse fly, and on radio spots containing development issues such as "health," "water," and "roads" (*Kurecodi Nyimbo* 1988). From the late 1980s to the present, AIDS awareness songwriting campaigns were vigorously pushed, not by the government, which was increasingly short on funds,<sup>28</sup> but by NGOs like AMREF (Rwechun-gura 1995). Many composers from *banuunguli* and *bagobogobo* groups are composing songs that address this issue for public competitions, with the hopes of winning limited prize money.

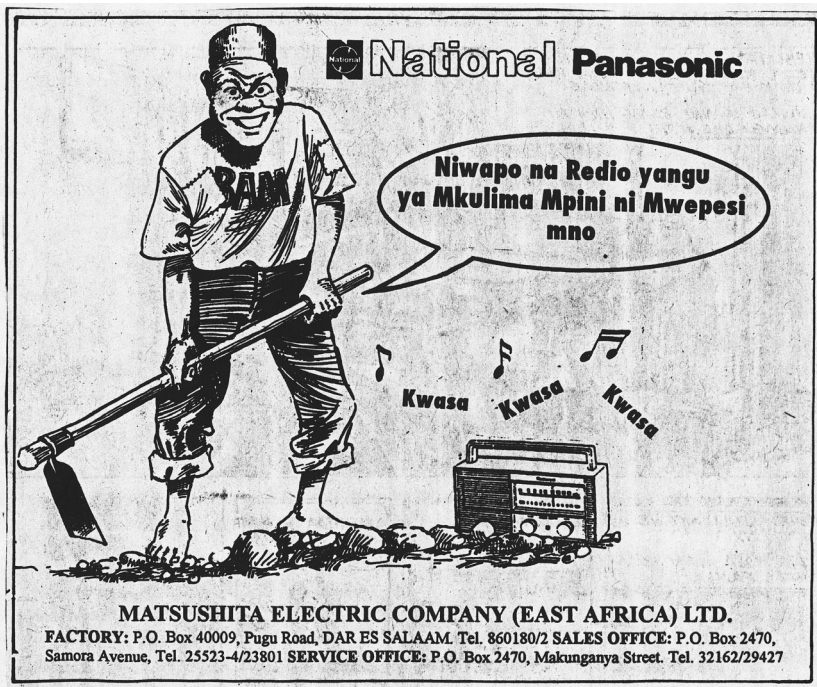


Figure 4. Sukuma farmers' musical labor as represented by advertisements in the popular press (Sani 1994). Caption reads "When I am here with my 'farmer's radio,' the hoe handle becomes very light." The farmer is working to a popular early 1990s Congolese dance style known as *kwasa kwasa*.

## Conclusion

Following a longstanding concern in anthropology and the social sciences to discern in culture prominent, recurring, and transformative themes and habits (Benedict 1934; Bourdieu 1990; Sahlins 1982), an overriding question from the outset of this work has been to ask: What is the essence of the relationship between labor, music, and dance in Sukumaland, and what has that relationship been historically? How are the cultural realms of "music and labor" in Sukumaland troped? I refer here not to narrative tropes but to cultural tropes of action and behavior (Fernandez 1991:6), common cultural patterns or likelihoods that are transmitted, repeated, and transformed in music and performance practice.

All Sukuma specialized musical labor groups have had a fluid propensity for transmission and exchange of common reconstellated or "recycled" cultural elements, or what Bourdieu calls "transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu 1990:52). Group members draw on their intersocietal connections with other affinity groups to spread their musical ideas and materials around: through migration, breakaway rifts, innovation, and emulation. As with other informational networks, such as the various "-scapes" discussed by Appadurai (1990) and echoed by Slobin (1992), these "dance-scapes" fluidly exchange several identifiable "dispositions." These include the belief systems underlying compositional practice, dance competition, and composition-related medicines; musical instruments, dance costumes and paraphernalia; ideas about leadership and societal rank; ideas about drums and the establishment of power, initiate lore, and taboos; and ideas about societal secrecy, dances, and song content, not to mention singing styles and song repertoire.

Another factor contributing to the habitus of tradition is the imagination of place evoked in musical labor performance. In Sukuma social history, "sense of place" is evoked through working and "musicking" in labor activity sites having both mobile and fixed locales (the hunting group, the caravan, the search for medicines, and the *shamba* farmsite). These sites, enacted historically through labor and song amid the common geographical area of rolling hills and granite boulders, share a common soundscape or acoustemology (Feld 1996:91). The sounds of hunting, caravan travel, and farm labor share several aspects, to include call-and-response or antiphonal singing spread out over wide and evenly spaced distances; cajoling shouts, whistles, and hums; the echoing thuds of marching and scuffling feet; or rhythmically entrained hoes impacting the earth. Memories evoked through making music while working remind its practitioners of the commonalities of these variable "sites": the places where ancestors once worked and breathed and their presence(s) are both invoked through music.

With the introduction of cotton as a cash crop to Sukuma society, the age-grade, mutual-aide, and, to some degree, the hunting societies such as the *banuunguli*, transformed into entrepreneurial farming enterprises. Farming groups such as the *bagobogobo* responded with vitality to the

contradictions generated by the cotton economy in much the same way that witchcraft practices have proliferated rather than decreased as a result of modernizing forces throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Because of so many musical labor groups being on the scene, ancestor-inspired dream composition is more prevalent than ever. Twentieth-century agricultural labor retained many aspects of the ritual behavior of the prior labor musical societies, and has maintained its own precolonial aspect of ritual that includes a sense of treating farm labor as divine, enacted in order to “activate” the growth of crops. A novice in a modern music labor group is mentored by a charismatic leader, is still cut with medicines, learns how to “dream” a song, and learns the important foundational choruses songs of his/her particular group.

Jean and John Comaroff (1993) assert that multiple modernities exist in sub-Saharan Africa, the result of a complex mediation of competing interests and claims. Further, where the existence of modernity might be difficult to identify and trace, the manifestations of “post modernity” in Sub-Saharan Africa are even more so. The verdict is still out whether or not the postmodern era arrived in Africa with the “post-colonial” as a “space clearing gesture” (Appiah 1995:119), or whether the romantic association of the “postmodern” with the “premodern” postulated by Jameson (1991) even applies at all in sub-Saharan Africa. One thing clear from the cases outlined here is that the ongoing *bricolaging* of expressive culture now generally associated with the global-reaching postmodern moment had long been in operation by multiple generations of musicians at the village level in the Sukuma region of northwest Tanzania, as it had in other parts of Africa (Piot 1999).

Nevertheless, the modernizing effect of monocrop cotton farming on the life ways of the Sukuma people cannot be understated or trivialized. The introduction of cotton production created a new economic framework for living, and was very much the day-to-day face of colonialism. Because cotton production was so demanding, it restructured the rhythm of everyday life, and affected short-term and long-term strategies of production and consumption, as well as the timing of important social events and religious ceremonies (Isaacman and Roberts 1995:31). But even as the transition from hunting labor to migrant porter and monocrop agricultural labor came about as a result of outside historical forces, the indigenization of late nineteenth and twentieth century Sukuma labor through music performance was a natural Sukuma response to modernizing forces, consistent with their prior historical trajectory.

## NOTES

This research is based on fieldwork done in 1989, 1993, 1994–96 and 1999. The author combined participant observation and music performance together with intensive interviews and historical research in a dozen archives and libraries located in Tanzania. All interviews were done in KiSwahili and KiSukuma. Interview transcriptions, subsequent translations, and song text corrections were done by the author, M.J. Kalunde, Paulo “Chaniila” Mafanyanga, Peter Massesa, and Elias Songoyi. Funding for the 1994–1996 research period was provided by a grant from the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

1. The BaSukuma belong to a Western Bantu language grouping known as Sukuma-Nyamwezi, constituting nearly six million people, the largest culturally and linguistically integrated people on the Tanzanian mainland. Their homeland is an area just south of Lake Victoria-Nyanza.
2. From KiSukuma (*nuunguli*), “porcupine.”
3. From KiSukuma (*kuyeyeka*), “to move like a snake.” The term describes the wriggling movements that the dancers make with their upper torsos, what they call “dancing the shoulders,” which is done in opposition to the movement of their lower torsos.
4. “Joking relationship” refers to a peculiar combination of friendliness and antagonism found between some kin, clan, and ethnic groups. In KiSwahili, “joking relationship” is *utani*. In KiSukuma, “joking relationship” is *bupugu* or *wimeji*.
5. In KiSukuma, the *ba-* prefix signifies “people” or “ethnicity.” The *bu-* prefix refers to an abstract noun or “state of.” In reference to Sukuma dance groups such as the *bayeye*, the *ba-* prefix tells us that these are the people who do the *bayeye* dance, whereas *bayeye* refers to the dance itself.
6. Humorous evidence that the *banuunguli* had reached Sukumaland by this time comes from the diary entry of a member of the White Fathers organization, who wrote that he had asked a local chief to tell the *banuunguli* dancers to move away because they were disturbing his sleep (*Diaire du poste de St. Michel de Msalala Et Mbuli 1892–1974*).
7. Dangerous snakes in northwestern Tanzania include spitting and water cobras, mambas, puff-adders, red boomslang, and pythons.
8. Should be *Nassa*.
9. “Heute fing einer meiner Leute einen Igel. Ich wusste nicht ob es ‘erinaceus albiventris Wagner’ ist, da er sich zusammengerollt hatte und ich seinen Leib nicht sehen konnte. Die Wanjamwesi wussten gleich Rat. Sie bildeten um den Igel einen Kreis, klatschten im Takt in die Haende (sic) und sangen.  

Der Vorsänger (sic):    *Kalungajeje!*  
Der Chor:                    *Kali nischinde! Kali kutukunja.*  
Der Sinn scheint ungefaehr zu sein: Der Vorsänger: ‘O Igel! Der Chor: Du schlimmer! Lass dich baendigen, Du schlimmer! Komme zu uns. Der Igel rollte sich sofort auf, nickte mit dem Kopf im Takte des Liedes und fing an, umherzulaufen. Vielleicht versucht jemand dasselbe einmal mit einem Deutschen Igel!’
10. In KiSwahili, music competitions are called *mashindano*, from *kushindana*, “to compete.” See also Gunderson and Barz (2000).
11. From the *bayeye* piece “Kasimbi Nene . . .” composed by Salu Kadelyia. Performed by Salu Kadelyia, recorded by Frank Gunderson in his home in Isangidjo village on 11 August 1995. Translated and corrected by Paulo Lusana, Elias Songoyi, and Frank Gunderson.

12. A proto-Bantu institution widespread in Central, East, and Southern Africa, *ng'oma* is "... at once the term for drum, as well as drumming or other musical instrumentation, singing, dancing, and the complex of constituent behavior and concepts" (Janzen 1991:290).
13. A term for any kind of small drum, made from anything from tin cans to small trees, with heads kept in place with sticks, bored near the rim.
14. This is a cover term for any kind of bells worn on the legs, a small bell with a small ball inside (*kaáná; gololo*) shaped like a small cone or boat, or double bells shaped like a bursted fruit.
15. Literally, "Mister Farmer."
16. Composer unknown. Text recalled from memory by Kang'wiina Ng'wana Mihumo. Recorded by Frank Gunderson at Isangidjo village on 20 December 1994 (see Gunderson).
17. From the *beni* piece "Bise Enaba Tulimungwanahumbu . . ." composed by Nkuli Ng'wana Funuki. Performed by Ng'wana Makanga, recorded by Frank Gunderson in Ng'wajiginya village on 17 August 1995.
18. These new entrepreneurial farming and self-help groups adopted a kind of "punk" aesthetic in the spirit of the boisterous *banuunguli*, and took on humorous, risqué, self-promoting, or self-demeaning names, such as *matako* "the butts"; *bapiga pasi*: "those who iron their clothes"; *basekeleja*: "the ridiculed"; *bhubya*: "the bad guys"; *bachiluchilu*: "the fools"; the *bapina*: "the orphans"; and *bajjiingi*: "the fuckers."
19. From the KiSukuma term *ngobo* (skin); *ngobongobo* or *mangobo* (many skins); *bagobogobo* (the skin wearers). This term, at the time of its inception, would have meant "those who uphold traditional values by wearing traditional clothing." The Sukuma people wore animal skins up until the 1890s (Koponen 1988:254).
20. For a detailed discussion of the *beni* dance phenomenon in East Africa, see Ranger (1975), and Gunderson and Barz (2000).
21. Key to this legitimization was a collection of speeches by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere delivered around the time of the "Arusha Declaration," where he outlined his government's new socialist policies. In an oft-quoted speech where Nyerere outlined his cultural policies for the new ministry of culture, he reminded his colleagues of the effects of colonialism on national cultural consciousness: "Culture is the essence and spirit of any nation. When we were at school we were taught to sing the songs of the Europeans. Lots of us can play guitar, piano or other European instruments. But how many of you have been taught the songs of the Wanyamwezi or the Wahehe? Many of us have learned to dance the rumba, rock and roll, and the twist, and even to dance the waltz and the foxtrot. But how many of us can dance or have even heard of the *Gombe Sugu*, the *Mangala*, the *Konge Nyangumuni*, *Kiduo*, or *Lele Mama*? I have set up this new ministry to help us regain our pride in our own culture. I want it to seek out the best of the traditions and customs of our tribes and make them a part of our national culture" (Nyerere 1967:186–87).
22. One government official in the 1960s called the farm labor groups examples of "good culture" (see *Mkutano wa Viongozi* 1967). Another bragged that the villages in his district "never went hungry," because of *bugobogobo* (see *Letter of request* 1991).
23. Paul Bomani was an early TANU leader, civil rights leader, and cotton farmers cooperative organizer who rose to prominence in the 1950s, after protesting the practices of middlemen Hindi traders who cheated Sukuma farmers by not paying them enough for their cotton. Several songs were composed in his honor in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s he was made Minister of Finance and Planning in Julius Nyerere's government, and later he was appointed Tanzanian Ambassador to the United States, a post he held for twenty years.

24. Tanganyikan African National Union, which changed its name to Chama Cha Mapinduzi (The Revolutionary Party) in 1977.
25. From the *bunuunguli* piece "Kambaragi O Nyerere . . ." composed and performed by Kang'wii'na Mwami Ng'wana Mihumo. Recorded by Frank Gunderson in Isangidjo village, Magu on 20 December 1994.
26. ". . . Makusudi ya ombi hili ni kwamba nyimbo hizi ni za kihistoria katika maendeleo ya kisiasa na jamii ya taifa letu'.
27. The *banuunguli* and *bayeye* groups have long made themselves available for noncompetitive and commercial dancing shows for the authorities. Blohm (1933) describes their snake shenanigans displayed before appreciative chiefs, and they reportedly danced at a celebration of Kaiser Wilhelm's birthday, sometime before World War I (Iliffe 1979:238).
28. However, the government was involved in sponsoring a traveling District neotraditional *ng'oma* troupe to area schools, which performed songs and theater with AIDS-related materials (*Onyesho Maluum* 1994).

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