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# Sukuma Figures, Boundaries, and the Arousal of Spectacle

AIMÉE BESSIRE

There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at.

Laura Mulvey (1989:16)

Dancing is a great obstacle to the conversion of the Sukuma.

W.F. Père Chomerac (1901:n.p.)





**S**ukuma dance figures were considered so shocking by early twentieth century catholic missionaries that many deemed all Sukuma dance

“immoral.” Used in provocative performances to entice the crowd, Sukuma figures are manipulated in a variety of ways, but most memorable for some spectators (including these missionaries) are the sexual simulations performed on the dance ground. What was considered “illicit” by outsiders is deemed exciting and innovative by a Sukuma crowd. As one Sukuma elder suggested to me, “People run to see the figures ... [they are] excited to see them.”<sup>1</sup> Figural sculptures with movable body parts (Fig. 2)—mobile head, arms, legs, and penis—can achieve almost any pose. And when a second figure with movable extremities is introduced, the theatrical possibilities are limitless.

In the frame of competition, two groups numbering anywhere from one to twenty or more, depending on the type of performance, compete simultaneously, each on a separate side of the performance ground. There are no hard and fast rules for Sukuma competitions, which are conducted in song composition and dance, but there are many similarities in performance method (see Gunderson 1999, 2000). Competitors remain separated, and, while one group may begin before the other, both bring out their most powerful songs or moves and the most impressive, eye-catching costumes and dance objects at the climax of competition to entice the crowd and to “pull the people” (*kuvuta watu*) from one side of the dance ground to the other. The use of large- and small-scale figures enhances this tug-of-war for the audience’s attention. Whichever group maintains a larger audience on their side of the dance ground at the time the judges enter (after the “climax” of the performance) wins the competition.

An archival photograph from the collection of the Sukuma Museum sparked the memory of Joseph Mayhegu Lupande, Sukuma historian, medical officer, and *mfumu* (Sukuma healer practitioner), who recalled figures being used to mock the opposing dance leaders and to accentu-



GEORGE MEISTER. © SALOME FUND, LLC

ate the motion of body parts (Fig. 3). His description is especially illuminating of the intricacies of figural interaction and provides a specific example of the use of figures in competition. Looking at this photograph of Kameyagi Ntamanwa, a leader of Bugobogobo, Lupande recalled a competition between Bugobogobo and Bukomyalume<sup>2</sup> dance groups:

As the drumming began, the dancers opened their performance with the crowd evenly divided.<sup>3</sup> On one side, members of the Bagalu Dance Society performed Bugobogobo, led by Kameyagi Ntamanwa, while on the other side, Bagika Dance Society affiliates danced Bukomyalume, led by Hoja Ng’wana Lyaku. Dancers on both sides began their performances at a moderate pace, which was maintained until the more frenzied crescendo of the dance climax, when all stops were pulled and “secret weapons” were brought out. When that moment arrived, one of Ka-

megayi’s dancers emerged from a hiding place holding a large, wooden figure above his head. The crowd rushed to see the figure and the group began a performance mocking the opponent, Ng’wana Lyaku. For the purposes of the spectacle, the figure became Ng’wana Lyaku and the crowd roared with laughter.<sup>4</sup>

The drums grew louder on the Bukomyalume side of the dance ground and the Bugobogobo audience turned to see what they were missing. With strategic timing, Bukomyalume dancers appeared holding two dance figures high overhead to capture the distant crowd’s attention. A male figure danced with a female figure and a large part of the crowd left the Bugobogobo side to watch the figures “perform.” This figure, too, was characterized as the opponent and was used to satirize Kameyagi interacting with a woman. The enthralled crowd did not move from the performance space despite the efforts of

*Opposite page:*

1. Sukuma male figure with movable extremities Wood, 77cm (30") Bareiss Family Collection

*This page:*

2. Sukuma dance figures Wood, 89cm and 83.5cm (35" and 33") Bareiss Family Collection





COURTESY OF THE SUKUMA ARCHIVES, BUJORA

the Bugobogobo dancers to further excite the group and pull them away. In the end the Bukomyalume group was declared the winner.

While not frequently seen in today's competitions, the large corpus of Sukuma dance figures, called *mabinda*, were used in performances like this one as recently as the 1970s to capture the spectators' attention and finalize a victory in competition.<sup>5</sup> Such sculpture, as highlighted in recent exhibitions such as "Kilengi: African Art from the Bareiss Family Collection (Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, Germany, 1997; MAK, Vienna, Austria, 1997–1998; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, 1998; University of Iowa Museum, Iowa City, IA, 1999; Neuberger Museum of Art, SUNY Purchase, NY, 1999–2000; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, 2001–2003) and "Tanzania Meisterwerke Afri-

kanischer Skulptur" (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 1994; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, 1994) helps to dispel the long-standing myth that there is no figural art in East Africa. Gerald Hartwig's account of Bukerebe figural sculpture represents the only written history of East African figures that closely resemble those used in Usukuma for dance competitions (Hartwig 1969:83–102). Perhaps due to Hartwig's mention of one such figure as an ancestor figure on Bukerebe (Ukerewe Island),<sup>6</sup> Sukuma and Nyamwezi figures have often been misidentified as ancestor figures or grave markers.<sup>7</sup> In 1922, a unique male and female pair, collected by a German ethnographer, were documented as figures representing the *ntemi's* (ruler's) grandmother and grandfather.<sup>8</sup> Yet this rare instance of ancestral figures is far from the use of Sukuma figures as active sculptures for dance competitions. Most frequently Sukuma figures are used to satirize character types (either in the opponent dance group or in the village), create narratives with invented characters, or simulate sexual relations. Separated by the confines of the performance space, dancers perform the unsuggestible or move the figures in sexually provocative ways to excite a growing crowd and entice them to stay on their side.

## Sukuma Dance

Throughout Tanzania, the Sukuma are admired for the spectacular appeal of their dance performances (Fig. 4). Annual competitions, occurring after the harvest season from June to September, draw large crowds in rural Usukuma and provide a forum for the richest display of Sukuma arts, including song compositions, drumming, body movement, costuming, and the use of masks, dance objects, and figural sculpture. With a diversity of perfor-

mance styles, Sukuma dance itself is not easily defined or taxonomized. However, there are consistencies in successful competition strategies, a long process involving the fortification of the dance field through architectural devices and empowering and protective substances, the personal enhancement of dancers through marking the body with such substances, and strategies for the actual dance performance involving movement or song composition, costumes, the use of additional implements or "attraction devices" and, above all, timing. This complex strategy, especially as it includes the use of powerful medicines and objects, is prescribed by an *nfumu* (pl. *bafumu*; medical practitioner).

The challenge for the performers is to continue to excite, provoke, enthrall, amuse and, above all, to draw the spectators to their side of the competition field. The verb that is used to describe a good competition, *kubidumaga*, means "to invade or battle one another."<sup>9</sup> For the Sukuma audience and performers alike, the competition is a war.<sup>10</sup> Metaphorically, this competition takes on the seriousness of an actual battle, especially when one considers the use of substances and objects as medicinal or empowered "shields" and the implantation of "minefields" on the opponent's ground, which will be discussed shortly.

Dance competitions emphasize the dichotomy of the two dance societies, Bagika and Bagalu, and the history of

This page:

Top: 3. Kamegayi Ntamanwa performing Bugobogobo with wooden dance figures, ca. 1950. Photographer unknown.

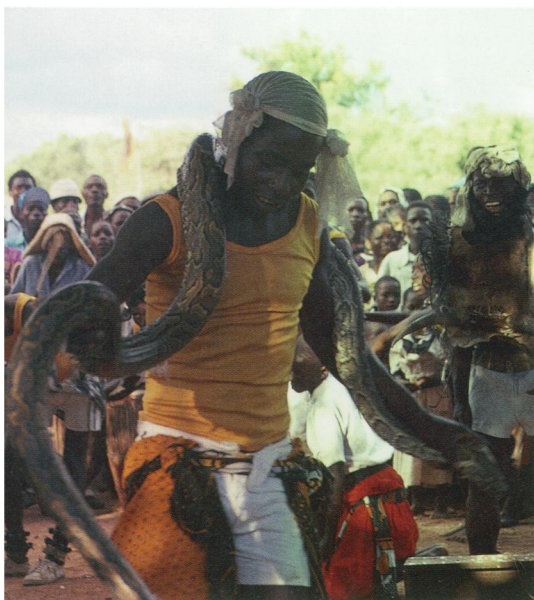
Bottom: 4. The Sukuma are well known throughout Tanzania for their dances with snakes. Bugoyangi performer of the Bana Sesilia of Isesa dancing with a python. Isesa, April 19, 1995. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

Opposite page, from left:

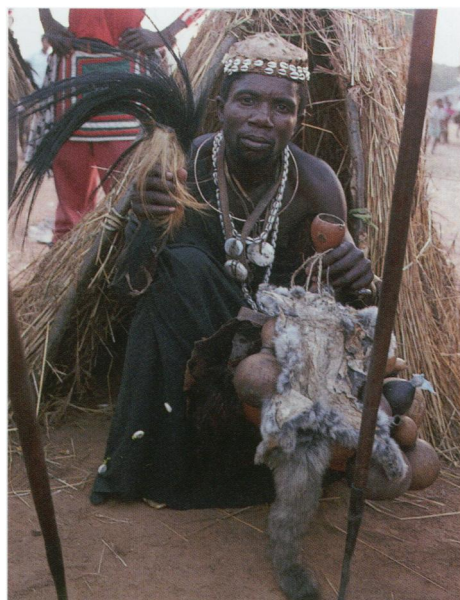
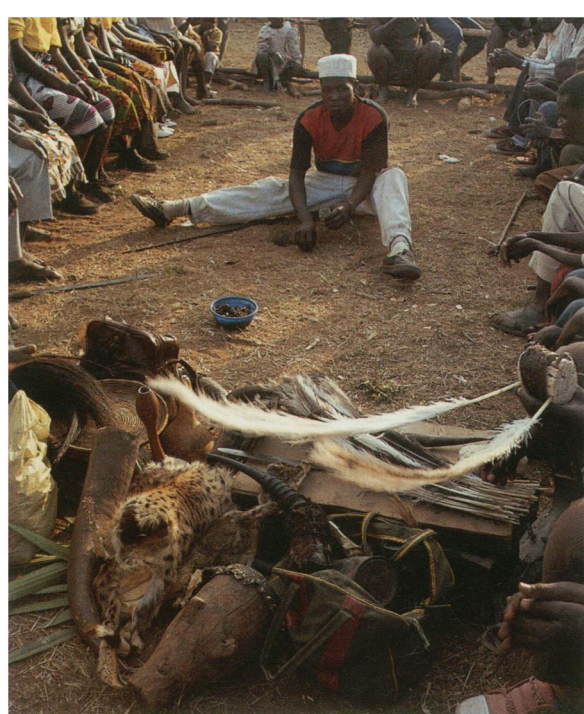
5. *Nfumu* inserting *bugota* (empowered substances) on the dance ground during a performance of *Wigashe*, a song composition competition. Note the *bugota* and objects of ancestral remembrance (*shitongelejo*) in the foreground. Bulabo competition, Red Cross Stadium, Kisesa, Tanzania, June 16, 1996. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

6. Dance leader with many medicinal calabashes (*mitumba*), Bulabo competition, Red Cross Stadium, Kisesa, June 1995. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

7. *Mhembe ya bugota*, horn inserted with empowered substances. Collection of Bulungute Muleka, Ng'wabochuma. This type of medicinal horn is used by both Bagalu and Bagika. The important ancestral object of the Bagika is called *mhela*, which is a rhinoceros horn containing the empowered substance that many presume to be the most powerful of all Bagika *bugota*. The rhinoceros is the token animal of the Bagika (Gunderson 1999:355.). The Bagalu horn, *mbogo*, is made from wildebeest horn and is also considered the emblem of the Bagalu (Gunderson 1999:355.). Photo: Aimée Bessire.







their competition can be traced to these societies' founding leaders, Ngika and Gumha. According to oral histories, the initial dispute that engendered the creation of two societies occurred in the late nineteenth century, when Gumha Misinzo competed with the older Ngika Wandela to show his prowess in song composition and medicinal training. Both men had traveled at different times to *ndakama* (a general Kisukuma term which means "the south"), the Tabora region, for their practitioner training. According to one version of the story, Gumha and Ngika each claimed to have the stronger medicines and they began competing with one another on the dance field with music and medicine.<sup>11</sup> Ngika was known better for his great knowledge of medicines than his ability to compose songs, while Gumha is recalled more for his musical abilities than his medical experience. Each used their special talents in music and medicine to compete, and each has been mythologized by his successors and contemporary followers as the leader with the most potent medicines.<sup>12</sup> *Balingi* (sg. *ningi*; performance leaders), continue to compete with song, dance, and medicines in much the same way as these two early competitors; Ngika's followers, the Bagika (literally "people of Ngika"), are still mythologized for their medicinal prowess while the competing dance society, Bagalu ("people of change")<sup>13</sup> are known for their compositional abilities.

## Spectacle and Sukuma Performance

As a cultural medium based on the notion of spectacle, Sukuma performances presuppose interaction between performer and audience, observer and observed. According to spectators of Sukuma perfor-

mances, pleasure in looking is multifaceted. Not only sight but also sound (the aural equivalent of the gaze) entice the spectator's pleasure in looking. Many suggested that this pleasure includes the auditory pleasure of the drumbeats, singing, whistle blowing, and the clacking of the paraphernalia worn by dancers, as well as the visual pleasure in the bright costumes, the rhythmic movement of the performers, and the entertainment, surprise, and shock of the unexpected or unorthodox.<sup>14</sup>

In the context of spectacle, looking is in fact a shared experience, where the spectatorial subject directs its look at the performing object while the performer, as object, is aware of the gaze and potentially invigorated by it. Sukuma performance is, in fact, predicated on a self-conscious awareness of the spectatorial look, as the focus of the competition strategy is to plan ways to entice the gaze to win the competition. There is also the possibility for the return of the gaze, yet performers always remain self-conscious objects in the spectacle, uniquely aware of their status as "object" of the viewing subject's gaze. It is precisely this awareness that delineates a separation between spectator and performer as insider/outsider.

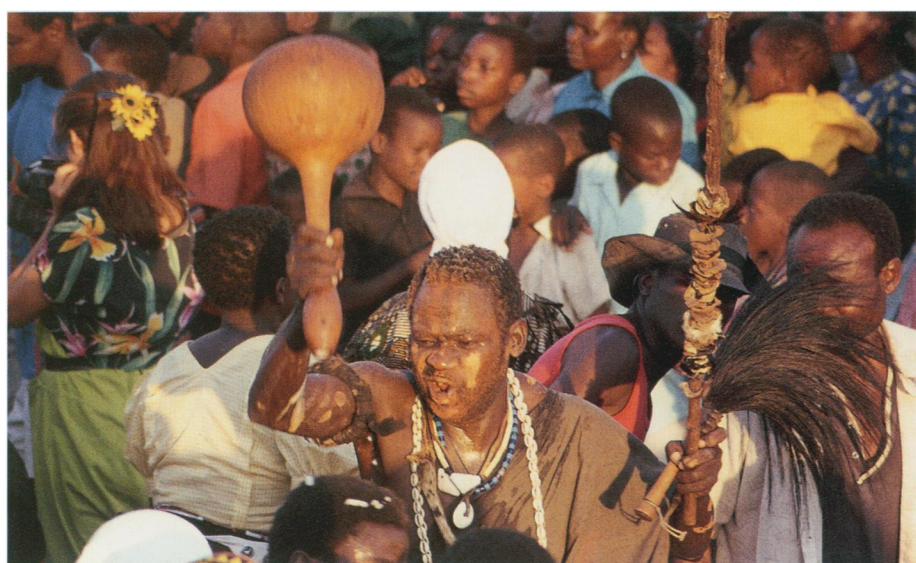
But if it is the pleasure of looking and listening that directs the audience's enjoyment of the performance, what then informs that pleasure? In relation to pleasure in looking (scopophilia), Laura Mulvey has posited that "there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at" (Mulvey 1989:16). In the case of Sukuma spectacle, this pleasure in looking and being looked at is enhanced by the barriers of the performance space or theatrical stage, which allow spectators an aspect of voyeuristic pleasure and give performers the thrill

felt by purveyors of the forbidden. As a voyeur, the spectator watches silently without necessarily being seen, for all eyes are on the spectacle. This sense of the forbidden is enhanced by the cross-dressing of some performers, the concealment and use of powerful substances, outrageous performances with animals, contortions of the body, or use of dance figures to generate sexually explicit movement, all of which create distinctions between the performer and spectator such as transgendered/gendered, insider/outsider, sacred/nonsacred.

## Medicinal Empowerment

Dance performers are also separated from the audience by a boundary created through the use of charged substances. An





analysis of the boundary between sacred space (the site of a medicinally charged performance ground) and nonsacred space (the area of the viewing public) through the use of substances is of particular importance to understanding Sukuma spectacle. Like the history of the founders of the two Sukuma dance societies, the winner of a dance competition is thought to have not only better performers but also stronger substances than his opponent. Prior to the competition, *bugota*, or empowering materials made from different herbal and nonherbal sources, are embedded in the dance field, hidden in objects, disguised on the opponent's side to cause "harm," worn or cut into dancers' bodies, and sometimes used publicly as part of a dance.<sup>15</sup> While each side uses such substances to "destroy" their enemy's power, they also employ *bugota* to shield themselves from potential danger. Concealed on the body, *bugota* become a form of power or attraction; yet, while the actual materials are hidden, the sites and spaces containing *bugota* are often subversively

revealed by the performers who put them there as part of the overall spectacle in dance.<sup>16</sup> While the audience accepts and even anticipates that powerful substances and objects will be used freely behind the barrier of the performance space, these actions could not take place openly in a village context. In daily life, the open use of *bugota* aimed at an adversary is labeled the work of *balogi* (sg. *nogi*; sorcerers). In Kisukuma, there is a distinction made between *bafumu* and *balogi*, where *bafumu* represent reputable medical and religious practitioners and *balogi* are sorcerers who practice clandestinely their potentially dangerous and harmful activities. A great many myths surround *balogi*, who are believed to work at night, and deaths or illnesses attributed to them are often avenged by antisorcery acts. In the village, those regarded as *balogi* are feared, often ostracized and, historically, have been persecuted. On the dance ground, however, the aggressive use of medicines is expected as part of spectacle. Makula Kitalugalilwa Bulungute suggested that the use

of offensive substances was understood as part of dance competitions:

*Balogi* would use bad *bugota* to win.... It started because some healers competed. They performed and used *bugota* to show their power. It was a way to prove power.<sup>17</sup>

Behind the boundary of the performance space delineating a distinction between sacred and nonsacred ground, *balingi* can openly and safely claim to be *balogi* in a quest to exhibit the more powerful substances.<sup>18</sup> As one *ningi* claimed in the context of a competition: "*Nene nogi mno. Milimo gwane nagalogaga baanhu duhu. Mpaka akafa*" ("I'm most surely a sorcerer. My work is to bewitch the opponent. Until he dies").<sup>19</sup>

The use of such substances, as both demonstrated and suggested to the crowd, arouses interest and holds attention (Fig. 5). In many ways, the unknown empowers the object in the minds of the outsider. Revealing the evidence of empowering substances adds another layer



Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

8. The dance leader Kalwinzi's performance space with rope separating the performers from the audience, Bulabo competition, Red Cross Stadium, Kisesa, Tanzania, June 16, 1996. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

9. Maganigani's performance space constructed with pathways, stone shrines, and *numba ya masamva* (ancestral shrine), Bulabo competition, Red Cross Stadium, Kisesa, Tanzania, June 20, 1995. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

10. Elder woman sitting next to a high, bamboo flag pole as part of Maganigani's competition strategy, Bulabo competition, Red Cross Stadium, Kisesa, Tanzania, June 20, 1995. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

11. Dance leader wearing many empowered calabashes and amulets. Photo: Aimée Bessire.

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12. Sukuma dance figures being performed on pole. Photographer unknown.

of intrigue to the performance, especially as the visible medicines incite a "mysterious" curiosity at the site of the dance ground, where the spectators know of the existence and use of medicine but are not privy to the knowledge of their full use and potential power. In subtle ways that are linked to the overall strategy of the competition, performers bring out *mitumba* (medicinal calabashes), often sprinkling the powerful contents on the dance ground (Fig. 6). The aura surrounding the use of such medicines is reinforced by the barrier of the performance space as well as the spectators' lack of access to the environment where unknown powerful substances are poured freely and washed over bodies. The viewer watches these sacred acts only from a distance—from the secular side of the boundary. In this way, the barrier between spectacle and spectator secures an aura around medicinal power for viewers, while shielding them from the harm that might be directed at the opponent dance group.

In addition to the visible evidence of medicines, the spectator knows of the presence of *bugota* on the dance ground but is often not permitted to witness its exposure. Concealed, these substances represent the unknown. This creates a distinct tension, which occurs as part of the spectacle itself—of revealing and concealing the use of powerful materials. And, when *bugota* are invisible to the public, the performers' understanding of these types of substances further empowers their performance. With this "invisible" use of medicine in mind, however, it is important to note that empowered substances are also displayed at times by some dance leaders as a performative part of the competition. In this case, the revelation of *bugota*, the type and potency of which certainly remains a mystery for the audience, affirms the boundary

between sacred and nonsacred on the dance ground.

Dance groups arrive at the competition field with enough time to design the performance space. This includes ordering the space and mapping the ground with medicines and small "dwellings" and ancestral shrines (*numba ya masamva*), strategies which result from a dialogue between a *ningi* and an *nfumu*, a dance leader and a religious or medical practitioner. Sabo Ng'wana Ng'webe underscored the importance of *bugota* and the *nfumu's* prescription for winning: "It is necessary to have *bugota* if you are going to fight in a dance. If you lose, it might be that the *nfumu* was not powerful enough." She recalled the procedure for using *bugota* when she danced with a group in the

1930s, which is similar to the methods used today:

On the dance field, one dancer entered first. Another prepared the *bugota*. At the *ningi's* compound, we received *bugota*. After bathing and cutting the *bugota* at the *ningi's* house, we also prepared it on the dance ground. The leader put it in a fire and the crowd would run when they saw the smoke to see the *bugota*.<sup>20</sup>

Sesilia Ng'wana Kidesheni concurred, with this description:

On the day of competition, the *ningi* is the first to go to the area where he dances and prepares the *bugota*



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that he received from the *nfumu* on the dance field. He also goes to "bewitch" the dance ground of his opponent.

She added that "these medicines really work. People cannot leave the side of the dance ground if the *bugota* is good."<sup>21</sup>

Empowered substances are considered of such crucial importance to winning the competition that an *nfumu* often accompanies the dancers to the dance ground. Joseph Lupande suggested that at the site of a competition, the *nfumu* is available for constant consultation and revival of strategies: "When the opponent overwhelms the dancer, the *nfumu* will show them what to do [to win the competition]."<sup>22</sup> Ndalo Mabyule, a practitioner in Ntulya village, said that she often gives performers medicine for competition to "bring a special power of attraction," and also incises *bugota* into the bodies of dancers to protect them. Another type of medicine, she offered, confuses competitors and might cause them to sing the song of their opponent, "which shows a great weakness."<sup>23</sup> Ndalo also provides a pouch of medicines to be used on the dance ground and rubbed on dance objects to attract the crowd. Fully equipped with a dance medicine bag (*mbogoshi ya mbina*), the practitioner is ready with everything necessary to empower and protect the dancers to assure a victory.

In analyzing the contents of one medicine bag, Makula distinguished between several different types of *bugota*, one for protection (*lukago*), one for attraction (*samba*), and an aggressive variety for bewitching the opponent (*malogo*).<sup>24</sup> These general categories of Sukuma medicines are used both on and off the dance ground, but Makula described the ways that they were used in the context of performance: *Lukago* protects the bodies of dancers and the dance ground itself from the potentially harmful effects of the opponents' aggressive medicines; *samba* is used to make a person, dance objects, or the dance ground attractive to the audience; and, in opposition to this, *malogo* is used to make competitors unappealing or to bring them bad luck or even harm.<sup>25</sup>

Within the architecture of the larger competition ground, medicines placed in objects such as animal horns are also used to detract from the opponent's power or to render the enemy's medicines useless. In this context, the insertion of *lukago* and *samba* on the dance site for protection and empowerment is often concealed from view, as are the medicinal "minefields" which are placed on the opponent's path intended to destroy their chances for victory. Joseph Sungulile, a Sukuma historian and chief archivist of the Sukuma Archives, suggested that "If the opponent sees that you have power, he can try to harm you. You then need protective

*bugota* [*lukago*]."<sup>26</sup> When the opponent dance group crosses a path of dangerous concealed substances, their power and therefore their chances for a victory are potentially diminished.<sup>27</sup> Competition then becomes a battle of medicines and of minefields of substances secretly concealed on the "enemy" lines. But there is always the chance to neutralize the power of these dangerous substances by using or wearing counteractive devices. For Bagika affiliates, for example, wooden peglike beads called *mhegi* are worn around the neck or on the ankles, legs, or arms as protection to neutralize the dangers of these minefields. During performances, large numbers of these cylindrical, wooden beads clack noisily on the performers to deflect the potentially harmful medicines of the opponent. Objects such as a medicinal container made from antelope horn, *mhembe ya ng'holongo*, are used to intensify the dance field and further delineate sacred from secular space (Fig. 7). In the case of the horn, empowered substances are embedded in its open end and the pointed end is *kuduma*, literally "stabbed" or "pierced," into the ground. This, then, reveals on the dance ground the group's medicinal empowerment and protection, surrounding the dancers with a "force field." Bagalu dancers insert the *mhembe ya ng'holongo* into the dance field close to the dance leader or composer and facing the Bagika side as a means of assuring a victory.

### Architectural Boundaries

The architecture of the performance space reinforces the boundary between spectator and spectacle and, in so doing, creates a distinction between sacred and secular space. Such a separation is critical to the performance of the dance figures. Boundaries are created both visibly and invisibly to delineate the separation between spectator and spectacle. Rope or twine create one such barrier when they are used to encircle the space and physically prevent the crowd from violating the spatial divide (Fig. 8). Sogota dance leader Maganigani used another method to demarcate his performance space in a 1995 competition when he dug a small trench around the perimeter of the dance ground. The crowd remained outside the trench as the dancers performed inside. Additionally, during some competitions, fierce dance "officials" patrol the space with *fimbo* (staff) in hand to remind wandering children not to violate the spatial separation or crowd the dancers.

Architectural shrines and paths on the dance ground also visibly distinguish the interior of the performance space, while charged substances, as we have seen, are often used for invisible demarcation. Shrines are used on the competition ground to honor the ancestors with offerings to help to assure victory and also for con-

Left: 13. Dance figures performed on a rope  
Wood, 25cm (10")  
Private Collection

Right: 14. Sukuma dance figures carved by the late Hoja Lyaku, Lugeye, Kitongo. Photo: Mark Bessire.

cealing one or two dancers as they reinvigorate the medicines used on their bodies. In 1995, according to the prescription of his personal diviner, Maganigani carried out an elaborate strategy involving the use of medicines as well as the construction of an ancestral shrine and multiple, small, stone shrines (*mashigo*), where offerings were made (Fig. 9). These *mashigo* were placed at intervals around the perimeter of the rectangular performance space. At the center of the dance space, a structure was erected that resembled a large ancestral shrine, literally "house of ancestors" (*numba ya masamoa*), or small *iduku* (*nfumu's* dwelling) with enough room for one or two dancers to enter and remain concealed.<sup>28</sup> Smoke billowed from the front door and roof of the "shrine" as performers entered to reinvigorate their *bugota*. As an indexical sign, this smoke signalled not only fire, but also the secrecy of the use of *bugota* inside—telling, but not telling. Through such visible displays, the crowd was reminded that Sukuma competition is won both on the merit of dance abilities and the power and knowledge of medicinal forms. According to the *nfumu's* prescription, the dance ground was used as the setting for both the active movements of the dancers as well as the silent and "mysterious" enactment of a play of medicines. Throughout the performance, a young man lay conspicuously on the ground near the dancers, while an elder woman, well known for her medicinal powers, sat next to a very high bamboo flag pole that had been erected by the Sogota dancers in the center of the dance space (Fig. 10).<sup>29</sup> The unexplained presence of the young man and the elder woman, both fixed in a state of determined immobility, aroused curiosity and anticipation in the spectators' imaginations. For some, it was clear that this was a type of *bugota*.<sup>30</sup>

Regardless of how the delineation is created or dissolved, the spectator is continually reminded of the boundary between performance and audience. Yet, despite these boundaries, Sukuma performance takes place on the same spatial plane as the spectator and defines a "democratic space," to borrow Phillip Fisher's phrase, where performers and spectators are on the same ground line, rather than separated by a raised or lowered performance stage (Fisher 1991a:40–7). This spatial relation determines the nature of the spectators' visual interaction with the dance and their experience of the large and small scale of the dance figures. An important element in the spectator's engagement with spectacle, the boundary





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clearly distinguishes reality from the staged "reality" of performance.

Susan Stewart also posits that "the spectacle assumes a singular direction," where, "[i]n contrast to the reciprocal gaze of carnival and festival, the spectacle assumes that the object is blinded; only the audience sees" (Stewart 1993:108). This is the case with Sukuma spectacle, where the dancers create an object through their performance for the crowd's gaze; yet, Sukuma performances have also been known to come close to Stewart's definition of the "reciprocal gaze" where the reciprocity between performer and spectator often evokes a more carnivalesque environment. According to Marie MacLean in her book *Narrative as Performance*, "Since ... the reader [audience] is always an outsider to the consensus of the text [stage] we must ask if he or she is not

always a transgressor, a breaker of boundaries and an intruder into the world of the other" (MacLean 1988:37). Such an observation can be interpreted literally in the case of performances where the spectator possesses an inherent possibility to transgress the performance space. Boundaries, after all, can also be dissolved.

The audience is perhaps most acutely aware of the boundary between interiority/exteriority, insider/outsider when a spectator crosses the line and becomes part of the performance action. This is often the case in Sukuma dance contests, since individual dancers are rewarded for their performance by members of the audience who transcend the barrier of insider/outsider and become part of the ongoing spectacle. To show their appreciation of specific aspects of the perfor-



mance, such as a dancer with fluid movement, a particularly humorous dance, or an exhilarating physical feat, members of the crowd run toward individual performers to present them with money. Women and young girls do so while showing respect to male dancers as they would do in the village, by dropping one knee (*kupiga magote*) as they present the shillings. Yet, there is often an embarrassed self-consciousness to this transgression of the boundary. The voyeurs who transcend spectacle in such actions are then aware of their movement from spectator to part of the spectacle and, as Kaja Silverman has posited, "through that awareness a consciousness of self is produced" (Silverman 1996:164). The tension for the voyeur is the exact site where subject and object become one, in a fold of the boundary delineating oppositions.

This fold is, in fact, even manipulated, often spontaneously, as part of spectacle. In the chaotic carnival of Rabelais, inversion is taken so far that spectators actually become performers in melding with the unexpected. As Mikhail Bakhtin has suggested in the case of Rabelais, the delineation of spectacle and spectator dissolves and is replaced by chaos and total inversion (Bakhtin 1984:225). Likewise in Sukuma performance, where inclusion of the audience can be part of the dance group's strategy, the dissolution of boundaries is often exploited as a means of exciting the crowd.

Chaos was manipulated in this way during a 1995 competition where the boundaries delineating the performance space were dissolved and spectators became part of the spectacle. Toward the end of the competition, the spectators were permitted to push in on the performers (or conversely, in the very literal sense of *kuvuta watu*, "to pull the people," one could say that the performers "pulled" the crowd) in such a way that barriers were





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unhinged (Fig. 11). With great spontaneity, spectacle in this case turned to the chaos of carnival as spectators and performers were enmeshed as integral components of the action. The dancers no longer performed for the spectatorial look, but rather, engaged with the crowd in immediate exchange. The only reminder of the separation of crowd and performers was the visibility of costumes and the empowered medicinal calabashes worn around the neck of the dance leader.

Similarly, Buyeye dancers performing with a python and goat and successfully manipulated chaos during another 1995 performance.<sup>31</sup> At the pivotal moment in the competition, the performers made a spectacular entrance from outside the dance circle carrying a palanquin high on their shoulders, which held Salu Kadelya, a live goat, and a python. Close to Kadelya, the python slowly wrapped itself

around the goat, which bleated and tried desperately to get away despite the fact that it was tethered. The palanquin then abruptly collapsed under its substantial weight and, as the wooden platform crumbled, Kadelya, the goat, and python all crashed to the ground. A *mélée* of wood, flailing limbs, and propelling snake ensued; Kadelya scrambled out of the way as the goat tried fervently to right itself in order to flee the pursuing snake. The other dancers, as surprised by the events as the goat and python, moved quickly to capture both creatures and then, as if both catching and mirroring the crowd's excitement, capitalized on the moment and began a frenzied dance with the python. The crowd roared with excitement.

The incident of this Buyeye performance underscores the importance of the boundary in Sukuma dance. Behind the safety of the barrier, spectators experience the potential of danger and the excitement of the unusual, but when the boundary is dissolved, the spectators lose their position as voyeur and become part of the spectacle. The palanquin created a stage for the spectacle of the dance leader, goat, and python; yet the collapse of the stage deteriorated the delineated boundary between spectator and spectacle and what followed was carnivalesque chaos where boundaries dissolved and audience became such a part of the action that they ran to escape the danger. The performers then mirrored this moment of excitement and, in so doing, "reconstructed" the barrier of the dance ground. While the crowd ran to get away from the potential break in the safety of the boundary of the dance space, the performers quickly sealed the "door" by grabbing the python and dancing with it.

These instances of chaos remind us that boundaries exist and can be dissolved. At a competition, the Sukuma observer maintains an awareness of the "distance between self and spectacle," to borrow Stewart's definition again, and this distance is, above all, mitigated not only by physical separation but also by the performance of an inversion of the ordinary. In further defining the spectacle, Stewart suggested that it "functions to avoid contamination," as if to say, "Stand back, ladies and gentlemen, what you are about to see will shock and amaze you" (Stewart 1993:107).

## Dance Figures

The boundaries of the spectacle elaborated above enable the transgressive performances of Sukuma figural sculpture. Behind the "safety" of the performance space, dance figures are used to arouse the crowd through their animation of, most usually, the distinctly taboo. Essentially, the movable parts of these figures intimate the ability for theatrical expression (Fig. 2). Arms and legs swing with drum beats

and gesture their message of indiscretion—either mocking the opponent or village individuals or enacting potentially shocking "sexploits" behind the "safe" barrier of the performance space.

In recent times, wooden figures were used in Sukuma dance competitions between Bugobogobo and Bukomyalume dancers, but elders suggest that the history of the figures goes back to competitions of earlier dance groups.<sup>32</sup> The acquisition of Sukuma figural sculptures by Western ethnographers in the late nineteenth century would support this, as some of the sculpture predates the existence of the Bugobogobo and Bukomyalume dance groups.<sup>33</sup> In recent memory, however, these are the two dance groups that performed using figural sculpture. Both Bugobogobo and Bukomyalume dance groups were founded as cooperatives by individuals who were both farmers and *bafumu*. As part of their cooperative work, members "danced while farming to generate energy."<sup>34</sup> Consistent with their agricultural roots, both dances, which are among the many competitive dances of Bagika and Bagalu, are often performed with farm implements such as hoes or sickles.

Dance figures were once frequently employed in competitions by Bugobogobo and Bukomyalume performers to excite the crowd. Those who remember when Sukuma figures were a regular part of dance competitions recall their use to simulate sexual relations.<sup>35</sup> Figures, such as a standing male figure in the Bareiss Family Collection (Fig. 1), support this memory and represent the potentially crowd-pleasing possibilities of genital mobility. Rigged with a complex series of rubberized pulleys (presumably black rubber from automotive tires), this figure stands on movable legs and possesses mobile arms, head, and penis. The range of motion of all of the body parts is forward and backward, which enhances the creative potential for movement of the extensive male member. Here, it is important to reiterate that such performance actions are only conceivable because of the boundary created between spectator and spectacle.

Without this boundary, the transgressions of Sukuma societal norms enacted on the dance ground would not be possible. These transgressions further reinforce this separation. In viewing, the audience is removed from the space of "reality" and can thus witness outrageous physical feats of the body, poisonous snakes being handled with seeming nonchalance by the dancers, or wooden figures performing suggestive gestures that would be considered highly secret, even scandalous, if enacted in the village context. Separated by the confines of the dance space, dancers can sing racy lyrics, make the dance figures perform lewd gestures or mimic sexual acts, and in general express artistically what they could not in daily life.<sup>36</sup> On



Opposite page:

15. Sukuma dance figure  
Wood, 79cm (31")  
Private collection

This page, counterclockwise from top left:

16. Sukuma dance figure  
Wood, tin; 212cm (83 1/2")  
Bareiss Family Collection

17. Sukuma dance figure  
Wood, tin, fiber cord; 202cm (79 1/2")  
Bareiss Family Collection

18. Detail of Figure 17.



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the dance field, these actions are manipulated strategically to capture the crowd and are appreciated for their creative, entertaining, and unorthodox nature. A closer analysis of dance figures, formally and theoretically, illuminates their use as *mabinda*, devices to attract the crowd.

### Actors in a Competitive Theater

Disparate interpretations of the dance sculpture suggest the ability of the figures to become many different characters. Through costuming and the accumulation of materials, including paint, the addition of hair (usually wildebeest tail), and costumes, the figures are transmutable—like actors in a play of multiple personalities, the figures can become anyone. Lucia Busheni, a Sukuma dancer, called the con-

struction of narratives with the figures *maigizo*, or “theater.” She told of one man who has constructed a narrative around his wooden figure named “Joyci Wowowo.” Like the figures used in competition years ago, suggested Busheni, Joyci Wowowo moves her arms and legs as she “knows all kinds of dances and performs well.”<sup>37</sup> In such performance “theater,” figures are used for joking and for enacting a *mise-en-scène* where they are cast as certain characters, specific individuals from the village, or even caricatures of personality types. Innocenti Ibalabala, a painter and sculptor at Bujora village who has carved several dance figures, said that dancers often have a “funny looking” figure carved and, when it is suggested in a performance that it represents a known individual, “people laugh.”<sup>38</sup> Busheni added that the dancers plan a strategy of how to dress and perform with their



wooden figures,<sup>39</sup> which are also painted different colors and often costumed to resemble a *mzungu* (white person), a pregnant woman, or a priest, among other characters.<sup>40</sup> The possibilities are endless.

Like the characters they portray, Sukuma dance figures come in all sizes, and scale plays a large role in the spectator's relation to the dance figures. Small-scale figures were often lifted high overhead on a pole or attached to a rope that hung the length of the dance space (Fig. 12). These were used to capture the crowd's attention and to bring them closer to witness the smaller scale visual narrative that was enacted. Comical stories were told with the small-scale figures, such as a humorous fight between two individuals. When the performers pulled strings on either side, the two figures swung down the rope at great speeds until they hit heads in the middle. Such a scene could also be manipulated to enact a love narrative with the figures moving along their adjoining rope until they meet in an embrace (Fig. 13).

Large-scale figures, ranging in height from 3–7' (1–2m), were also revealed at the competition climax to attract the crowd and gain victory over an opponent (Fig. 14). These could be more readily distinguished than the small-scale figures from the distance of the opponent's dance space; the broad gestures possible with movable limbs were visible from afar and were intended to entice the crowd to their side of the dance ground at the critical moment of competition. For the viewer, there is also a distinctly different relation to the figures in terms of their scale. Large-scale figures were frequently manipulated as surrogates of the body. In this case, the figures were the focus of the spectacle and the dancers holding them played a secondary role. In cases where the dancers themselves interacted with large-scale figures, both dancer and figure represented active bodies and blurred the line between body and surrogate. Costuming of the figures, as Busheni described, enhanced the mimesis of the figures as body and enabled the performers to play roles and make the narrative more exciting. This is very similar to the ways in which costumes are manipulated in Sukuma dance in general to create an object of the body. In comparison, the action of the small-scale narrative is psychologically distanced from the viewer, as there is not the same voyeuristic opportunity to envision oneself as part of the action. With the large-scale figures, however, especially when these are physically life-sized, the spectator as voyeur can imagine the figure as a surrogate of the body, and in this way, there is room for the voyeuristic imagination.

In the context of Western collections of Sukuma dance sculpture, we are left to look for clues to the figures' original use, such as the mobility of limbs and genitalia as well as the interconnecting possibilities

of these parts.<sup>41</sup> The emphasis on posture and the body suggests the expressive potential of Sukuma figures. Body parts, joints, and posture, all visible from a distance on the dance ground, are sculpturally emphasized over facial features, as the bulbous knees of one figure prominently demonstrate. When standing, the knees of this figure protrude awkwardly and incised lines in both mobile arms suggest bicep musculature. No other area of the body is as prominent as the knees, which protrude farther than the now-broken feet, suggesting that the knees were exploited in potentially humorous ways. One can only imagine the way that this bodily emphasis could be manipulated in the context of competition and how the knees would have looked when the legs swung to the rhythm with the dancers.

Another figure perhaps best illustrates the potential for expression. In this case, gesture conveys the theatrical as the body twists and turns in an expressive pose. The legs are splayed and the figure is "caught" in a semisplit position. One leg is damaged and broken at the upper thigh while the other bends slightly at the knee down toward a gnarled foot. Carved from a solid piece of wood, it is clear that the sculptor utilized and perhaps exploited a section of the tree that branched into two areas for the splayed legs. Between the legs, a penis is broken off and it is possible to envision that this would have steadied the seated figure. The thick waist rises to a thinner chest with arms cut off just below the shoulder. It seems most likely that the figure would have had mobile arms attached, but an archival photograph from the Sukuma Museum also suggests that armless figures were used in competition (Fig. 3). Twisted to the side and upward, the figure's head gives the illusion that the upper body follows the torque of the neck. A full mustache of wildebeest tail sits jauntily above the open mouth and ostrich eggshell beads inserted in the wood for eyes convey an illusion of alertness, so that the figure seems engaged in conversation with someone above the right shoulder. The unique pose of this figure, like that of other figures, could be manipulated time after time to represent many different character types and delight the audience.

For the most part, faces are abstractly carved, with a cursory delineation of features, while mobility is often elaborately worked out through a series of ropes and pulleys as in Figure 1. For instance, the face of the figure described above is far less prominent than the bulging knees. Two oval ears protrude close to the edge of the cheeks and cowrie shells are inserted into the wood to represent wide-set eyes. The nose, only visible from underneath, is delineated by two small nostrils drilled into a small overhanging "ledge." Below this, a small opening forms both mouth and chin as it trails off to the fig-

Left to right:

19. Sukuma dance figure torso  
Wood, 118cm (46 1/2")  
Bareiss Family Collection

20. Sukuma male figure  
Wood, 83.5cm (33")  
Bareiss Family Collection

21. Sukuma female figure  
Wood, 89cm (35")  
Bareiss Family Collection

ure's cheek. In other cases, facial expressions are emphasized (Fig. 15). Here the bulbous forehead and prominent ears, nose, and open mouth might have been used to mock an individual in humorous performances. Other faces depict only noses and mouths, with little regard for other features.

Two large standing figures in the Bareiss Family Collection illustrate the transmutability of Sukuma figures and also the way that individual memory plays a large role in the reinterpretation and re-writing of past traditions (Figs. 16 and 17).<sup>42</sup> In the course of my field research on the dance figures, one particular figure was interpreted in many different ways: as a Maasai warrior, a Malingishi dancer who liked to swing his hair, a woman, and Bob Marley (Fig. 18).<sup>43</sup> A close examination of this figure not only reveals the different characters but also the sculptural devices employed to draw the crowd.

Standing on long legs hinged to the torso at the upper thigh, the figure rises to a height of nearly 7' (2m). In fact, it was the tall stature and addition of long braids to this figure which caused some Sukuma individuals to suggest that it could be used to represent a Maasai *ilmoran* (warrior), a group which has had a long history of conflict with the Sukuma. On narrow limbs, the knees are slightly accentuated, and the thin torso thickens, with the emphasis on a broad chest with raised arms. Covering the front of the chest, which is presumably a hollowed cavity, is a collage of *bati*, the galvanized tin or corrugated iron used for roofing. The upper arms are raised in a stationary position and are missing the forearms, which would once have hinged at the elbows and swung with the figure's motion. A thick neck supports the head, which leans back with its chin down and turns to the side, as if laughing or in conversation. In competitions, figures were often characterized as the opponent dance leader, made all the more entertaining as the figure was "encouraged" to enact outlandish, ridiculous, or promiscuous feats.<sup>44</sup> Charles Bungu suggested that fully mobile arms, as these once would have been, could be activated to portray "a man who held a beer pot and could move his arms to put the pot to his mouth to drink and then turn his head to look behind him."<sup>45</sup> The tilted head of this figure could easily represent both the gesture of drinking as





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well as the turned movement to look over one's shoulder. With such mobile potential, the figure could likewise be used to depict any number of human actions in the context of the performance.

The figure's covered torso represents the charged potential of concealed substances, as many individuals suggested that the *bati* was placed over the stomach "to hide something secret,"<sup>46</sup> like a *bugota kali* ("fierce medicine"). A torso fragment of a figure in the Bareiss Family Collection also displays the use of tin over the hollowed-out upper trunk of the body (Fig. 19). This space could have concealed *bugota* or even empowered objects. In much the same way as sacred and non-sacred space are delineated with the use of concealed and revealed medicines on the performance ground, these figures emphasize the separation of spectator and spectacle through their potential medicinal empowerment.<sup>47</sup> A second standing figure with movable arms and legs is similarly cloaked in tin (Fig. 17). In these figures, the tin covers a large space, but similar tactics were used to conceal smaller areas in figures. Smaller regions of empowerment were not necessarily visible to the spectator.

A figure in a private collection, whose stomach, head, throat areas, and nape of the neck are covered with *bati*, suggests that *bugota* can be concealed on a dance figure's body just as medicine is incised into similar areas of the performer's body. (Pambe 1978:318). Medicines are most often incised into the bodies of Sukuma dancers at specific points of empowerment, such as the arms, forehead, or base

of the neck. As we have seen, the mythos surrounding the concealed use of *bugota* empowers the performers before their audience. Through the empowerment of such sites with *lukago*, to protect from the opponent's potentially harmful forces, and *samba*, to help draw the crowd, the body represents a container of *bugota*. Ignatius Pambe suggests:

Most... incisions are placed in parts of the body where it is easily understood that they are meant to make a good singer. These are incisions such as are done to the throat, tongue, temples, chests, and back. The incision at the middle of the head is a very prominent magical symbolism according to ... songs of the "Balungu" or "Bakolongo" magical associations (ibid.).

If the dance figures are, in some cases, manipulated as surrogates of the body, then we must consider their role as containers of medicine, not unlike the incision of *bugota* into dancers' bodies. The figures, like the human body, are imbued with an inner strength that comes from their containment of *bugota*.<sup>48</sup>

### Arousing Performances

A figure in a private collection represents a particularly powerful example of containment of power, with bodily sites, such as the top of the head and center of the back, embedded with medicines and concealed with tin (Fig. 1). In addition to these medicinal sites, this figure also has a "collage" of potentially empowered, accu-

mulated substances intended to entice a crowd. In its present condition, long but patchy strands of "hair" (presumably wildebeest tail) are attached to the figure's head with large metal staples. Affixed to the figure's long, thick neck are two more vertical staples, side by side, which resemble the keloid scars that occur with the incision of medicines. Additionally, ovoid leather patches nailed to the sides of the head represent ears, and round tin or aluminum disks were inserted in the eyes, with smaller tin pieces used as teeth. The metal of the figure's eyes and teeth catch the light and make it "more fearsome," according to one Sukuma dancer.<sup>49</sup> In 1995, the technique of catching light was similarly used in a Sukuma competition to "pull" the distant crowd. In that case, a mirror was manipulated to catch and reflect the sun's rays to interest distant spectators and attract them away from the opponent's side of the competition ground. Yet, perhaps more than the reflective tin, the most clearly "exposed" attraction device of this figure is the extensive penis, which is rigged to a complex series of pulleys to enable its mobility. Rubber strips are threaded through holes at two places at the top of the shaft of the wooden penis. The lower of these strips is pulled around the back, where a longer string can be used to raise the member to perform.

Such exaggerated sculptural features and the range of possible motion suggest the overtly sexual nature of some of these figures. This is made all the more clear by male and female pairs with corresponding genitalia which enable them to fit together



like puzzle pieces (Fig. 2). Creating a narrative of sexual arousal as a means to entice the spectator, these figures transgress the proprietary boundaries of Sukuma conduct within the village. Linking body parts activate the figures in a mise-en-scène which suggests human reproduction and represents, above all, a public enactment of a private act, thus further reinforcing the separation of spectacle from the space of daily life. Sesilia Kidesheni recalled that dancers “made a complete show with the figures without hiding that this was a secret act.” Within the sphere of the performance space and behind the safety of the dance ground, such actions qualify as entertainment, and this “secret act” was used as a tool to excite the spectator, both through the taboo nature of the figures’ actions and the surprise of inverting the highly secret in a public realm. Kidesheni remembered with excitement the crowd’s great love for such figures: “Everyone loved watching ... even the children. It was all for fun and for attracting the crowd. People would run to see what the figures would do next.”<sup>50</sup>

One particularly amorous couple perhaps best illustrate the possibilities of figural interaction (Figs. 2, 20–22). A close reading of this couple provides insight into the sculptural emphasis on paired interaction, as it will shortly become clear that this pair, as well as others, were intended to depict a narrative of sexual relations. Standing on immovable legs, the male figure hunches slightly forward with a rounded back, broad but concave chest, and slight abdominal paunch (Fig. 20). The figure’s mobile arms are thin and, while one is damaged and cut off just above the elbow, it is possible to surmise that it would have mimicked the other arm with its bend below the elbow and handless wrist ending at the base of the genitalia. Steadying him beyond the breadth of the sturdy platform is his extensive male member, which, as it rests on the ground, is visibly longer than the figure’s legs. A string is tied around the top of the member and crosses over the figure’s chest to the back, where it can be secured to a nail during critical use.<sup>51</sup> From the back and side views, the figure appears to thrust his pelvis slightly forward, a sense that is emphasized all the more by the slight bend in the knees which seems to counterbalance the figure’s weight. The male’s head is tilted slightly and when both figures interact, he gazes up toward the upturned, almost coquettish nose of his companion.

The female figure is decidedly larger in stature than her male counterpart, both in height and in girth (Fig. 21). The mobile arms of this figure seem extraordinarily thin next to the thickness of her trunk, as the one undamaged arm hangs straight down to her side with the slight suggestion of a hand reaching to what would be the figure’s knee. The female stands on



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shorter and thicker legs than those of the male figure and the knees are slightly bowed to reveal her uplifted genitalia. At the top of the upturned pubic triangle, a small “V” shape suggests labiae and a thin cavity accentuates a vagina. Rising above this area is the figure’s protruding belly, which extends outward in a tumultuous swell with the breasts resting on its weight. Elders recalled that sculptures often characterized such types as a pregnant woman and the breadth of this figure’s stomach suggests pregnancy.<sup>52</sup> Both figures are depicted without clothes, but the bodies are covered in a red patina with some areas highlighted in black. When the figures stand facing each other at a distance of approximately 8–10” (20–25cm) apart, it is possible to pull the string at the back of the male figure, presumably undetected by the audience, and raise the penis to an angle of 90 degrees or more (Fig. 22). Most

conveniently, the penis fits as perfectly into the awaiting genitalia of the female figure as Cinderella’s slipper on her foot. These figures are not loners, but rather a matched set, or perhaps one could call them mates for life.

Paired performances with such figures are not possible without the barrier delineated on the performance space. There is a distinct difference between what could be done publicly with the human body and what could be done with a figure. The figures, in this way, served as surrogates of the body, enabling the idea of the body to transgress social norms without consequence. The sexual and transgressive nature of some of the dance figures seems all the more ironic or satirical behind the boundary of the dance ground when one considers, as Lucia Busheni posited, that “Sukuma dances are respectful [of cultural social



Opposite page:

22. Sukuma figural pair in action  
Bareiss Family Collection

This page:

23. Mashomali Lotema performing Bademi with Mariam, his doll. Ntulya, July 10, 1996. Photo: Earle Combs.

mores].... The Sukuma don't dance like other cultures in Tanzania, not like disco. Women dance only with their shoulders."<sup>53</sup> Many Sukuma suggest that this is a "respectful" way for women to dance, because it does not include suggestive motion of the hips or legs.<sup>54</sup> Some Sukuma individuals would consider such actions "improper" for a woman, which recalls the Sukuma proverb *Fumaga ilima, utizufuma mu nhung'wa*, "Leave your farming, but not your good morals" (Gunderson 1999:370).

## Sukuma Transgressions and Colonial Interpretations

What was not proper for women, however, could easily be enacted by the dance figures in the space of spectacle. Yet it was just this transgression of Sukuma social values that caused many missionaries to deem the use of the figures "immoral." Catholic missionaries are frequently remembered expressing their disapproval of the figures, and some even considered all Sukuma dance "immoral" because of the eroticization of some dance sculpture.<sup>55</sup> Filippo Ibalabala suggested that "the priests thought the figures were *shetani* [evil]. They didn't like to see people dancing with them."<sup>56</sup> A priest interviewed by R.E.S. Tanner during the 1960s described what he regarded as the "immoral" aspects of Sukuma dance and the performance of the figures:

Some of their dances are immoral. Their actions are immoral.... You have a dance group going around.... They have two little dolls. The women [figures] are supposed to be cooking and they have a fire going. They take another wooden doll, a [male] and then he fornicates with the doll. That's kind of immoral (Bradley[?] 1960s).

For this priest, as well as others, Sukuma dance transgressed moral boundaries.<sup>57</sup> Many priests attempted to stop the dances and to distance the Christians from the competitions, as the White Father Père Chomerac noted in 1901:

With the good weather and the lack of work for our [Sukuma], the dances are once again beginning here and there. We are doing our best to distance our Christians, but without much success. We are also

attempting to make the chief stop them, but they only disappear for a moment to reappear at another.

The king himself dares not to forbid them for fear of displeasing his people. Dancing, then, is a great obstacle to the conversion of the Sukuma. (Chomerac 1901:n.p.)

The presence of local priests at the dance ground often created a self-consciousness on the part of both performers and spectators, with performers sometimes concealing figures when the priests came into view.<sup>58</sup> Through their disapproval of the sexual nature of some performances, priests objectified the spectacle and created an uncomfortable tension between viewer and viewed within the dance space.<sup>59</sup> The boundary was thus intensified, as spectators and performers were acutely aware of the gaze under the pressure of outside criticism—both as subject and object of the gaze of the priest as voyeur. With the negative reaction of the priests widely known, it is not surprising that the crowd reacted all the more strongly when the figures were used to imitate such character types as the local priest.<sup>60</sup> "People would [then] run to see the figures," recalled Mzee Ng'wenwandege, a carver and dancer from Ntulya village.<sup>61</sup> Yet some have also suggested that it was the ongoing disapproval of priests in a highly Catholic environment that led to the demise of the figures.<sup>62</sup>

## Contemporary Dance Innovations

Sukuma performers and spectators alike continue to value innovations of dance objects and regalia for their ability to en-

tertain audiences. Over the past fifteen years, wooden figures have been replaced with "flashier" attraction devices. The Lyaku family, who own many dance figures carved by their grandfather, Hoja Ng'wana Lyaku, no longer use the figures in performances, but rather, in recent competitions, they have more highly valued the plastic monkey mask that they received from a Japanese traveler. This, suggested Kabula Lyaku, "attracts and amuses the crowd in the same way as the sculptures," but it is far more exciting to the spectators because it catches their eye in a new way. Mashomali Lotema agreed with Kabula Lyaku that innovations draw the crowd. He performs Bademi (a shepherds' dance) with a plastic doll that he named "Mariam" (Fig. 23). Mashomali bought the doll in 1991 when he visited Zanzibar and was told that "she had the color and the clothing of a Chinese person."<sup>63</sup> He performs with Mariam in dance competitions with a large group of men, all of whom wear women's clothing. Dressed in a red skirt, floral blouse, and a woman's head wrapper and carrying Mariam in a blue rayon Chinese gown, Mashomali epitomized the idea of the spectacle. Far removed from daily life, both by his cross-dressed garb and the use of his unique and innovative attraction, Mashomali had the recipe for a sure crowd pleaser. The audience was attracted not only by his eye-catching and psychologically titillating costume, but also by the use of the dance figure who, later in the performance, wore sunglasses and "danced" to the beat of the *muziki* on Mashomali's radio. Women and men in the crowd crossed the barrier of the dance ground, excited to show their appreciation of Mariam by putting money in her glasses.

Much like the way in which Sukuma dance figures capture the crowd, innovations such as these continue to enthrall the audience, ever-mindful of the site of spectacle. Each performance of Sukuma dance is unique; yet all competitions reinforce the boundary between spectator and performer, observer and observed, through the architecture of the dance ground and use of medicines to demarcate space. Transgressive performances, such as the potentially "obscene" pairings of figures that so shocked some missionaries, reinforce this boundary because of the impossibility of their existence without it. Put quite simply, the performance of Sukuma dance figures is only possible because of the separation of the performance space from everyday life. The spectacle is only enticing if it transgresses the commonplace, yet it is only possible to evoke such shocking performances because they occur outside of the ordinary, or within the safe "boundary" of the performance space. ■

Notes, page 93





**LABELLE:** Notes, from page 35

[This article was accepted for publication in January 2005.]

1. Particularly in South Africa during the 1990s. See among others, "Ten Years of Collecting (1979–1989)" (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Art Galleries, 1989), "Art and Ambiguity: Perspectives on the Brenchurst Collection of Southern African Art" (Johannesburg, Johannesburg Art Gallery, 1992); "Convention, Context, Change" (University of the Witwatersrand Art Galleries, 1992); "Ezakwantu: Beadwork from the Eastern Cape" (Cape Town, South African National Gallery, 1993); "Zulu Treasures of Kings & Commoners: A Celebration of the Material Culture of the Zulu People" (Durban, KwaZulu Cultural Museum and the Local History Museums, 1996), etc. And more recently in Europe: "Ubuntu: Arts et Cultures d'Afrique du Sud" (Paris, Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, 2002), which had a South African beadwork section.
2. Unfortunately, only a few objects could be borrowed from the Royal Ontario Museum, as the ROM will open its own African gallery in early 2006.
3. One individual expressed typical "mixed feelings," asking, "How do I relate to this now? Is it me, is it not me?" Martha Kuwea Kumsa, research assistant/consultant for "Beads of Life", Oromo culture, interviewed on April 25, 2003 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.
4. Information provided by Martha Kuwea Kumsa.
5. This analysis is based on several samples of these skirts.
6. Information confirmed by Bibiana Nalwiindi Seaborn, research assistant/consultant for the "Beads of Life" exhibition, Tonga culture, interviewed on October 24, 2003, at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.
7. Ntwane initiates wore plaited grass around their neck, torso, and waist.

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1. Sesilia Taabu Ng'wana Kidesheni, interview, Bujora, 18 August 1996. (All interviews cited were conducted by the author.)
2. Sukuma sources agree that the dance figures were used by Bagobogobo and Bakomyalume dancers, although some also recalled seeing figural sculpture used for Buecheyeki (Mzee Ng'wenwandege, 28 July 1996; Sabo Ng'wana Ng'webe, 4 August 1996; Buyeye (Philippo Ibalabala, 29 July 1996; Jacobo Ng'wana Embasi, 2 August 1996), and Bunungule (Suzanna Ng'wana Methodi and Antonia Ng'wana Dionisi, 3 August 1996). Bugobogobo was often performed to compete with Bukomyalume, a newer dance group that is said to have split off from Bugobogobo.
3. Here I describe a Sukuma performance with dance figures as it was described to me by Joseph Mayhegu Lupande (27 July 1996) based on a photograph in the Sukuma Museum Archives. Today it is rare to see the dance figures performed and this description presents an idea of the use of the figures and the innovations of Sukuma dance. Lupande identified the Bugobogobo dance leader in the photograph as Kamegayi, then the head of Bugobogobo, and noted that he competed with Hoja Ng'wana Lyaku, a famous *nfumu*, blacksmith, dance leader, and sculptor of dance figures, who died in 1994. Philippo Ibalabala said that Kamegayi was deceased (Philippo Ibalabala, interview, Bujora, 29 July 1996). Hoja Ng'wana Lyaku, who originally danced Bugobogobo, learned Bukomyalume from its first leader and during his life became a famous Bakomyalume dance leader (Lupande, interview, 27 July 1996; James Sombi, interview, Bujora, 27 July 1996).
4. Lupande suggested that the figures were often used to personally opponent dance leaders. He said that figures were frequently given the names of their dance opponents, for example, a member of a Bagika group might call a dance figure "Bulungute," after the leader of Bagalu, and then proceed to perform with it in a way to mock the idea of Bulungute. He also suggested that "enemy" dance leaders were even mocked in daily life by naming them after dogs (Lupande, interview, 27 July 1996).
5. While some individuals defined *mabinda* as the Kisukuma

equivalent of the Kiswahili *sanamu* ("sculpture"), the term seems to refer not only to a specific taxonomy of objects, but rather to a more general notion of attracting the crowd. *Mabinda* is also a term used to describe a larger category of attraction devices, including stunts and physical actions on the dance ground. The term *maleba* is also used to designate the objects and paraphernalia associated with dance (Frank Gunderson, email communication with author, 11 April 1999). Yet the figures are called *mabinda* and this would suggest that the figures are regarded not as object-entities but rather for their actions, as stunts or theater, as one person suggested (Lucia Busheni, interview, Bujora, 25 July 1996). Hartwig posited that the figures were called *mabinda* or *maleba* in Kisukuma and he defined both of these as "objects used to attract attention" (Hartwig 1969:95). Sukuma sources suggested that the figures were *mabinda*, yet the distinction between *mabinda* and *maleba* remains elusive. Hartwig further suggested that when dance figures were adopted by the Kerebe, they were called *ameleba* in Kikerebe (most likely a derivation of the Kisukuma *maleba*; *ibid.*:100.)

6. Gerald Hartwig told the history of a figure that was used as an ancestral figure by the Omukama of Bukerebe, an island north of Usukuma in Lake Victoria. While the Bukerebe and Basukuma are geographically close, they remain culturally distinctive and each group has its own language. Hartwig suggested, based on an interview with the "86-year-old grandson of the Omukama, Machunda," that a Nyamwezi caravan, possibly that of the famous Nyamwezi chief and warrior Mirambo, stayed on Bukerebe for an extended period, during which time a Nyamwezi carver created the standing male figure and presented it to Machunda. Machunda called it *kigiliya* and when his uncle, Kinabo, died, it was believed that his spirit was contained in the figure. The figure remained at the royal compound until Rukonge fled from German troops, which advanced after his attack on Baganda Catholic catechists. The Germans took the sculpture with them and it was then placed in the White Father mission at Kagunguli to illustrate the "evils" of what the Europeans interpreted as the former Omukama's pagan idol worship. This story is likely to have occurred at some time between the 1840s and 1870s (Machunda died around 1884). Hartwig (1969) also convincingly documented the influence of Sukuma dance traditions, including the use of figural sculpture as attraction devices in competitions, on the Kerebe.

7. Sukuma and Nyamwezi figural sculpture, both stemming from the same tradition as dance accoutrements, has been misidentified in the art historical literature since its fairly recent appearance on the Western market. For example, Nyamwezi figural sculpture was identified in the Guggenheim venue of the Royal Academy's exhibition "Africa: The Art of a Continent" as "ancestor figures" (Phillips 1995:162.) With mobile limbs, however, it is more probable that the figures were used as *mabinda*.

8. These figures were collected in Mwanza for the Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich in 1922 and are published in the 1994 catalog *Tanzania: Meisterwerke Afrikanischer Skulptur/Sanaa za Mbingwa wa Kiafrika* (Jahn 1994:266.) The use of sculpture to represent specific ancestors does not have other precedence in Sukuma religious or artistic tradition and it is unclear whether these figures depicted individual deceased family members or served as reminders of the maternal and paternal ancestors. For the Sukuma, *numba ya masamba*, or ancestral shrines, serve as sites to pay respect to maternal and paternal ancestors; yet nowhere in Usukuma did I see the use of figural sculpture to depict or honor ancestors. As with the tradition of the figural sculpture created by a Nyamwezi or Sukuma carver and given as a gift to the Omukama of Bukerebe, it is possible that one sculpture was used to represent a known individual who died; however, as previously noted, there is no documentation of a tradition of ancestral figures in Sukuma culture.

9. Through his research, Frank Gunderson clarified that the Kisukuma verb *kubidumaga* is most likely the reflexive form of *kuduma*, the verb "to stab" (as a spear in the ground) or "to stick" (as with thorns, as is done in Sukuma dance competitions in bodily feats where the stomach is wrapped tightly with a thorn branch). The verb *kuduma* is more generally defined as "to invade, to pierce," and the reflexive tense might be translated as "to invade or battle one another" (Frank Gunderson, email communication with author, 18 April 1999; see also Gunderson 1999).

10. Kidesheni, interview, Bujora, 18 August 1996.  
 11. Joseph Mayhegu Lupande, interview, Bujora, 2 August 1995; Bulungute, interview, 19 May 1995.

12. Bagika and Bagalu oral accounts provide conflicting views of the origins of Sukuma dance and competing versions of the same story. Archival records from both colonial government and missionary sources provide some insight to the dance society founders (see Cory 1946, n.d.; Hendriks n.d.), but most of this evidence was documented after the leaders' deaths and is related to the myths that had already developed. Instead, oral accounts provide for the existing histories of the dance societies and their leaders. For a thorough history of the Bagika and Bagalu dance societies, see Gunderson 1999:125–43. Bulungute Muleka, Gumha's grandson and the current leader of Bagalu dance society, suggested that when Gumha and Ngika returned from their training in dancing and medicine, "more people went to see Gumha than Ngika." According to Bulungute, "Ngika got mad and said that they would compete by medicine and different techniques for medicine. Gumha also found more medicine to dance against Ngika" (Bulungute, interview, 19 May 1995). In this same vein, Ngika's followers recall his medical prowess as more powerful than

that of Gumha (Kasuka, interview, 29 July 1996; Gonella, Gonella, Gonella, and Manonange, interview, 17 August 1996).  
 13. The name "Bagalu," often referred to in earlier texts as "Bagumha" (and some state that these two names were once interchangeable) is said to reflect Gumha's knowledge and change after his medicinal training in Tabora. When he arrived home after his lengthy studies, he declared, "*Nagaluka*," "I have changed." His followers were then called Bagalu, or literally, "people of change."

14. Ndalo, interview, 22 May 1995; Sombi, interview, 14 June 1996; Embasi, interview, 2 August 1996; Buekere Linus, interview, Bujora, 7 June 1995; Masalu Joseph Edward Ntemi, interview, Bujora, 28 June 1995; Kidesheni, interview, 18 August 1996; Ng'wenwandege, interview; Busheni, interview; Helena Ibalabala, interview, Bujora, 28 July 1996.

15. *Bugota* and *dawa* are both used in Kisukuma to refer to a variety of medicinal mixtures. *Bugota* is the Kisukuma word for "medicine," but today, the Kiswahili word *dawa* is frequently used even by those individuals who speak mostly Kisukuma. These words refer to everything from healing substances to mixtures perceived to have special powers as well as most types of ground, powdered substances, including, in a very loose translation, baking powder and ground spices. In this case, the English word "medicine," which has traditionally been used (along with the outdated term "magic medicine") in Western scholarly literature to describe a range of African magicoreligious and healing conventions, has also been used to refer to specialized *bugota*, often used for dance. This, however, might be misleading. While the English "medicine" — stemming from the Latin *medicina* (*ars*), or healing art, the feminine of *medicinus*, relating to a doctor—relates to physical healing, the Kiswahili word *dawa*, also used in Kisukuma, is a more general term encompassing healing medicines as well as substances used to make an individual attractive to others, to bring wealth and good luck, and even, at times, to cause harm. This said, however, there does not seem to be a more acceptable English word to use in the translation. Throughout this text, I will refer to the substances as *bugota* or medicines/medicinal or charged substances. When used here, these terms encompass a wide variety of substances.

16. *Bugota*/*bugota* can be incised into the skin, washed over the body with water or lotion, placed on a fire and "inhaled" into the lungs and through the pores, or placed in the mouth in small amounts. These activities can be either revealed or concealed as part of dance spectacle.

17. Makula, interview, 19 May 1995. Philippo Ibalabala similarly suggested that "dancers long ago used *bugota* even until someone would die" (Philippo Ibalabala, interview, 29 July 1996).

18. Gunderson has addressed the fact that it is only possible to openly claim to be a *nogi* (sorcerer) in the context of the dance space "without the kinds of fatal punishment meted out to non-*balingi* who are accused of witchcraft":

Perhaps one reason is that *balingi* only bewitch other *balingi*, and this is done publicly. There is no doubt as to who is doing the bewitching, how they are doing it, and to whom. Thus when one calls a *niingi* a witch, it is a much less dangerous accusation. It is assumed that the one bewitched should have the necessary skills and resources to counter the attack, otherwise they shouldn't be calling themselves an *niingi* (Gunderson 1999:177–8).

19. Sawaka Ng'wana Jiyoga, interview by Frank Gunderson, Ng'wajiginya (Shinyanga), 17 August 1995. Frank Gunderson, email communication with author, 19 April 1999.

20. Sabo Ng'wana Ng'webe, interview, Bujora, 4 August 1996.

21. Sesilia Taabu Ng'wana Kidesheni, interview, 18 August 1996.

22. Lupande, interview, 2 August 1995.

23. Ndalo Mabuye, interview, Ntulya, 22 May 1995.

24. Gunderson outlined two different types of *malogo* used by Sukuma *balingi*, *salala* and *nhamanhamu*:

Today *salala* is well known as one of the most dangerous kinds of *malogo* *ga mbina* used in competitions. It is considered the opposite of *samba*, or as a kind of "hate" medicine. As one *nfumu* put it to me: "... if you use *salala* against your opponent, even a chicken wouldn't come to look at his dance. People will ask 'What kind of singer is this?' and then they will chase him away (Jisen'ha Masasi)." When used together with the *samba* medicine known as *ndagu*, the combined power of the medicines is thought to be an incredibly powerful mixture, and the composer will be hard to beat (Ng'wana Hilya). *Baheemba* [apprentices/dancers] are sent out to drop it along the road (*kubandya*), or to place it in the dance arena area of their opponent. *Nhamanhamu* is a much more aggressively malevolent substance, said to be from the much-respected medicine men of the Balaturu-Tatoga. It is a type of poison that temporarily affects the nervous system, blown into the face of an opponent through a straw so that he/she can no longer move his jaw and sing (Ng'wana Gamaya; Kisunun'ha)" (Gunderson 1999:170).

25. Makula, interview, 7 June 1995.

26. Sungulile, interview, 18 March 1995.

27. Lupande, interview.

28. In nonperformance contexts, ancestral shrines, which range in size from 3–5' (1–1.5m), are built for the placement of offerings and not for an individual to enter. The fact that Maganigani's structure was used to conceal performers sug-



gests that it was intended to reference a small *iduku*, or structure used by *bafumu* for divinations and religious practices, and not specifically a *numba ya masamva* (ancestral shrine). Whether the structure represented a shrine or divination structure, it served to conceal medicinal practices from the crowd and further reinforced the sacred/nonsacred dichotomy of the boundary of the performance space.

29. Marie-France Perrin Jassy suggested that "before entering a competition, a *ningi* may seek the blessing of his [medicine] father's wife, or some powerful old woman." This was not corroborated through my field research, although it is possible that Maganigani followed such a prescription for winning by employing the famous elder *nfumu* to sit motionless throughout the performance (Jassy 1978).

30. Charles Bungu claimed that Maganigani employed both individuals as a means of following the *nfumu's* prescription to win the competition (Charles Bungu, interview, Bujora, 18 August 1996). Conversely, Masalu Ntemi, one of Maganigani's dancers, suggested that the young man was merely passed out drunk (Masalu Joseph Edward Ntemi, interview, Bujora, 28 June 1995). This presents the interface of fact and fiction on the dance ground, where the unknown is often mythologized (as perhaps in the case of Bungu's interpretation of the prostrate man) and associated with the invisible strategy prescribed by the *nfumu*.

31. Isangijo Buyeye performers, Bulabo dance competition, Red Cross Stadium, Kisesa, June 1995.

32. Ng'webe, interview, 4 August 1996.

33. Two female figures (one with an elongated body and the other with a short, stocky frame) were collected by Kollman in 1897 in Nela and Masanza chiefdoms, respectively (see Krieger 1990:figs. 109, 112.). Hartwig documented the influence of Sukuma dance on the Kerebe, and suggested that the Kerebe began dance competitions with figures after learning this art from the Sukuma. He further added that by the late 1960s, it was rare to see such figures performed in competitions on Bukerebe (Hartwig 1969:98-100, 1978:65).

34. James Sombi, interview, Bujora, 26 July 1995.

35. Kidsheni, interview; Busheni, interview; Mzee Lunagenya, interview, Bujora, 15 July 1996; Lupande, interview, 27 July 1996; Philippo Ibalabala, interview; Innocenti Ibalabala, interview, 1 August 1996; Embasi, interview; Susana Ng'wana Methodi and Antonia Dionisi, interview.

36. According to Sukuma social mores, one does not call attention to oneself, yet in spectacle, dancers are as outrageous as they desire (Maritina Salum, interview, Bujora, March 1995).

37. Busheni, interview, 25 July 1996.

38. Innocenti Ibalabala, interview, 1 August 1996.

39. Busheni, interview.

40. Ng'wenwandege, interview.

41. The majority of Sukuma figures are in German collections, specifically, the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, the Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, and a large number of German private collections.

42. At first, I was doubtful that these figures were Sukuma, as the more refined carving style seemed more likely to be attributed to Nyamwezi sculptors as some Sukuma carvers suggested (Innocenti Ibalabala, interview, 1 August; Philippo Ibalabala, interview, 29 July 1996); yet, after interviews with many elders, it seems equally possible that the figures are Sukuma. Whether they are Sukuma or Nyamwezi, there is little doubt that the figures, with their mobile limbs, were used for entertainment during dance competitions.

43. The individuals interviewed regarding this particular figure had distinctive interpretations, all of which suggest the ability of the figures to become different characters. The following is a sampling of the diverse translations of this figure:

This was made by a Msukuma, but it was done to look like a tall Mmaasai with long hair. They put a piece of *bati* over the stomach to hide something secret. They used *lasta* [machine-manufactured hair extensions] for the hair (Ng'wenwandege, interview). [The figure's hair is actually made from plant fiber and the figure most likely predates the machine manufacture of *lasta*. This, however, was not clearly visible in the photocopy seen by Mzee Ng'wenwandege.]

A long time ago, dancers here didn't cut their hair, specifically dancers of Malingishi, they liked to shake their long hair (Charles Mahenda, interview, Bujora, 2 August 1996).

This is an example of a tall man. A long time ago, dancers had only long hair. They didn't shave their heads (Philippo Ibalabala, interview, Bujora, 29 July 1996).

She is meant to look in action. She has many joints. This is a woman (Innocenti Ibalabala, interview, 1 August 1996).

This is a man, because he doesn't have a buttocks or breasts and he has dreadlocks like Bob Marley (Embasi, interview).

44. Lupande, interview, 27 July 1996.

45. Bungu, interview, 18 August 1996.

46. Ng'wenwandege, interview.

47. Hartwig suggested that on Bukerebe, medicines were applied to the figures in dance competitions as a representation of the entire group. He posited that the "inherent magical power [of the *ameleba*] was designed to entice people to come and watch the performance thus enabling them to achieve victory" (Hartwig 1969:99). While this was also, in part, true for the Sukuma use of dance figures, the figures themselves were

not regarded as having an "inherent magical power." Instead, it is the concealment of *bugota* in and on the figures that empowers them and enhances their attractiveness to the spectator. Additionally, when substances are applied to the sculptures, the figures do not serve as a metonym for the group, as Hartwig suggested, but rather, they help to empower the overall performance.

48. In some cases, the figures themselves were perceived to have the ability to empower and protect, as in the case of the dance figures in the compound of the Bakomyalume leader, Hoja Ng'wana Lyaku. Hoja Lyaku once had a large storehouse of dance figures that he carved, and his grandsons maintain some of these figures in the fencing of the family's cattle kraal as part of the legacy of their late grandfather. They were told by the family patriarch before his death never to remove the figures—that they protected the family cattle and the entire compound (Steven Kabula Lyaku, interview, 21 June 1995).

49. Embasi, interview.

50. Kidsheni, interview, 18 August 1996.

51. Interestingly, the penis is the only mobile appendage on either of the figures. This underscores the emphasis on the pair's intimate interaction.

52. Ng'wenwandege, interview.

53. Busheni, interview.

54. It is also interesting to consider the influence of colonialism and colonial imposed/taught moral values. Would such statements about dance have been made by Sukuma individuals in the precolonial era? This is not clear.

55. Interestingly, the colonial administration also had a general distrust and wariness about Sukuma dance, but it was more a fear of the imagined potential for subversive intent in the dance organizations themselves. In a report on Sukuma dance societies, R. de Z. Hall concluded that the societies were not subversive to the colonial government:

The general conclusion I form is that there is nothing antisocial or subversive of Government in the activities of Sukuma societies: that, on the contrary, they are on the one hand an organized outlet for the desire for self expression among the youth of the country, and on the other, a series of medical councils or practitioners of beneficent medico-magic: that the prevention of tattooing can only drive the societies underground and tend to impart to their proceedings a secret and sinister aspect which is at present lacking, save to a slight extent in the Bagalu and Badono societies whose tendencies can well be corrected by education: and that the suggestion of enthalldom is illusory, since the bulk of society members leave the societies on passing the period of youth (Hall 1936:96).

Regardless of these conclusions, the government still maintained a close watch over the Sukuma societies and associations.

56. Philippo Ibalabala, interview, 29 July 1996. (Jan Hendriks [1962:2] suggested that the word *shetani* (pl. *mashetani*) was introduced to Kisukuma by the first missionaries, who chose the Arabic word to represent the devil or evil spirits.) Hartwig described a similar reaction to the male figure sculpture which was looted from the Bukerebe (Ukerewe Island) royal compound by the Germans. According to Hartwig, the local catechists of Kagungulu Mission "demonstrated their disdain for the image by hitting it with sticks and simultaneously breaking portions of the *kigilya*. Both ears were broken, the right side of the face, including part of the nose, was gouged out, both feet were broken off at the ankles, and the sex organs were destroyed" (Hartwig 1969:86). The destruction of the figure represented a clear assault on the symbolic authority of the Omukama, the ruler of Bukerebe. While this reaction represents an extreme of the mere disapproval of the priests in Usukuma who witnessed sexual "theater" with Sukuma dance figures, it does, nonetheless, underscore the dialectic and the disparate interpretations between insider/outsider.

57. Not all Catholic priests objected to the use of the dance figures. Elders suggested that Father David Clément, the long-standing Bujora Parish priest, liked the dance figures. Sesilia Taabu Ng'wana Kidsheni suggested that Clément did not approve of some performances with the figures because he did not believe that children should witness the explicit sexuality. But she also added that it was "all for fun and for attracting the crowd" (Kidsheni, interview, 15 July 1996). Philippo Ibalabala recalled that Clément "liked the dance figures a lot. He was very happy when he saw [the figures performed]" (Philippo Ibalabala, interview, 29 July 1996). The artist and sculptor Innocenti Ibalabala agreed with his father, Philippo: "Priests didn't like the figures. They thought that they were uncivilized things, but Padi Klémenti liked them a lot" (Innocenti Ibalabala, interview, 1 August 1996). This represents the distance in beliefs of Clément and his fellow priests, many of whom regarded Clément as a radical.

58. The same American priest also described spectators running away from these performances with the figures when the local priests were present on the competition field: "When they see the priest coming ... they say we better take off ... we better leave because here come the priests and if they see us standing here watching, they'll say ... [it is not good]" (Bradley 1960s).

59. If one considers the colonial (and missionary) imposition of modesty in relation to the nude body and other aspects of personal and social behavior, it is not surprising that the priests disapproval of the dance created a tension.

60. Mzee Lunagenya and Sesilia Taabu Ng'wana Kidsheni,

interview, 15 July 1996.

61. Ng'wenwandege, interview.

62. Busheni, interview; Kidsheni, interview, 18 August 1996;

Innocenti Ibalabala, interview, 1 August 1996; Philippo Ibalabala, interview, 29 July 1996.

63. Lotema, interview, 10 July 1996.

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1. Until the early 1980s the Art Council was a voluntary community advisory group whose members were interested in encouraging and supporting the arts. At that time, the Arts Council was professionalized and placed under the control of the Ministry of Sports, Culture, Education, and Youth.
2. Awards are given to the most colorful, spectacular, and well-costumed masquerades, as well as to the best masquerade from out of state.
3. Previous years' themes include "Mmanwu as Agent of Social Control" and "Mmanwu as Entertainer," suggesting that the governmental organizers sought to indicate both formal aspects as well as socially significant qualities that would benefit the public.
4. The 1993 Enugu Mmanwu Festival parade took place in Nnamde Azikiwe stadium. The stadium was named after Nigeria's first elected president, an instrumental participant in the Nigerian struggle for independence from Great Britain. By naming the stadium after Nnamde Azikiwe, the military