

## Expressive Bodies / Controlling Impulses

### *The Dance Between Official Culture and Musical Resistance in Colonial Western Tanganyika*

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#### **Abstract**

This article will demonstrate, via a series of seven music-related vignettes gathered from archival research and oral history, aspects of the historical relationship between resistance expressed via “musicking,” and “official culture” expressed via the use of force, spectacle, policy, and the rule of law. The relationship between power and musical resistance is treated as a dance: one partner in this dance is the “controlling mechanism” inherent and always implied in the expression of power and the entire spectrum of behavior that power encompasses. The other partner is the spectrum of resistive musical responses that includes everything from blatant protest via public performative “spectacle,” “hidden resistance,” accommodative resistance, and subtle and blatant complicity. The majority of the historical vignettes come from the Sukuma region of western Tanzania, taking place during the German and British colonial periods (from the late 1900s up to the early 1960s).

#### **Keywords**

Sukuma, Tanganyika, Music, Power, Resistance, Ngoma

*There are two kinds of dances: Those which are forbidden, and those which are permitted.*

—Jan Hendriks, Catholic White Father missionary to Mwanza, Tanzania, 1930s–1950s

*Bazungu shetani!* The whites are devils!  
*Na Bahindi shetani!* And the Wahindi are devils!  
*Na Baalabu ...* And the Arabs ...  
*Shetani ntaale!* Are the head devils!  
*Batubulagaga!* They have murdered us!  
*Batukomaga* They have forced  
*misumali ku magulu!* nails into our legs!  
*Ulu twalila ...* When we cried out ...  
*Bayuduta ndezu.* They stroked their beards.

—Kalikali Mbagule, “Bazungu Shetani”

As a thematic backdrop for this article, I begin with two texts, framed in dialogic opposition, in order to put into your minds’ eyes and ears historical utterances that capture the essence of ideology production and responsive action during the colonial era in western Tanganyika.<sup>1</sup> This article will demonstrate, via a series of seven music-related vignettes gathered from archival research and oral history, aspects of the historical relationship between resistance expressed via “musicking” (Small 1998), and “official culture” expressed via the use of force, spectacle, policy, and the rule of law.<sup>2</sup> This relationship between power and musical resistance is a dance: one partner in this dance is the controlling mechanism inherent and always implied in the expression of power and the entire spectrum of behavior that power encompasses (to include war, public displays through spectacle, hidden power, and negotiation). The other partner in the dance is the spectrum of resistive musical responses that includes everything from blatant protest via public performative spectacle, hidden resistance, accommodative resistance, and subtle and blatant complicity.

Dance, and communities that form around it, are potential tug-of-war sites of political agency and intrigue. As a cultural institution in Africa and the African diaspora, dance (or musicking, or *ngoma*) has always been a site for strong societal bonding and political messaging and rallying.<sup>3</sup> For example, music played a significant role in both the U.S. civil rights movement and the antiapartheid struggles in South Africa. Agents of control and resistance alike have vested interests in sites related to musicking, especially regarding how citizens and audiences exercise their choices in regard to worship, bodily



**Figure 1** Sukuma *bugobogobo* dancer, Kisessa, Tanzania. Photo by the author.

representations and expressions, listening habits and market inclinations, and political inclinations and affinities.

The majority of the historical vignettes I will be sharing with you come from the Sukuma region of western Tanzania and took place during the German and British colonial periods (late 1900s to early 1960s).<sup>4</sup> The Sukuma people live in a 130-square-kilometer area just south of Lake Victoria-Nyanza and constitute roughly 20 percent of the population of this nation.

Traditionally, Sukuma people have worked the land as cotton and rice farmers, and livestock herding constitutes an important economic asset as well. Rural life here is based on cooperative social networks that include and extend beyond kinship affiliation. In these specialized networks are associations that allocate labor in various ways to include hunting, farming, and healing. All Sukuma labor associations in Tanzania have had a seasonal recreational component that highlights dance and dance competitions; thus, depending on who is watching, these labor associations have also been called dance associations or dance societies (Ranger 1975).

*Baliingi* (sing., *niingi*) are the dance leaders and organizers of the dance societies. *Baliingi* and their song culture are an indispensable aspect of Sukuma intellectual life. They are important culture creators, transmitters,



Figure 2



Figure 3

and entertainers. An important aspect of the work of the *baliingi* work is their communication with ancestors (*masamva*), considered by many to be the source of new musical compositions. As the living relatives of ancestors, *baliingi* have the power to invoke, transform, manipulate, and destroy through their words and deeds, a power held in awe and fear by nonmusicians.

Connections between music and “official” power in this region have deep historical roots. A striking aspect of the precolonial royal music scene in this region was that of drums and drum lore associated with the chiefs, or *batemi*. The royal drum was considered the royal insignia of the chief and was thus the most potent symbol of the chief’s inherent power. When a chief died, a ceremony was held called *kugaba ngoma*, or “to give up the drum,” where the hide of the chief’s drum was split with a knife and was subsequently replaced upon the coronation of his replacement. Although the term *kugaba* means “to give,” it also has a connection to the seventeenth-century chief Rugaba of Ankole, who sent his son Ruhinda off with royal drums to colonize the western side of Lake Victoria. Legend has it that at each stop along the way, Ruhinda would play his royal drums, and the locals would gather and form a village alliance under his rule. According to oral narratives, these drums were



**Figure 4** President of Tanzania Jakaya Kikwete demonstrates his prowess on one of the *lugaya* drums housed at the Bujora Cultural Centre near Kisessa, Tanzania, June 7, 2010. Photo by Juma Kengele.

made from the skins of captured enemies, symbolizing the power that *batemi* had over life and death.

Royal drums were used in ceremonies when caravans returned from the coast, when the chief took a new wife, to celebrate the New Year, and during planting and harvest ceremonies. They were also used in the case of danger, such as from lions, intruders, or bad weather. Royal drums were loud enough to be heard in neighboring chiefdoms. The royal drums safeguarded at the Sukuma Museum in Bujora, played in the image shown here by the current Tanzanian president, Jakwaya Kikwete, are loud enough to be heard five kilometers away.<sup>5</sup>

### Vignette I: Edison's Magnificent Talking Machine, Times Three

The first vignette is one curious example of how Sukuma chiefs used music in relation to power, pomp, and ceremony at the onset of the twentieth century. The *batemi* under German and British colonial rule no longer held their posts by hereditary right but were chosen and then manipulated by the colonizers. The Germans and British used the preexisting forums of public spectacle such as *batemi* installation to emphasize their various programs and policies and spoke through the *batemi*. As always, these events were associated with the performance of music.

The traveler Carl Jungblut mentioned in his memoirs that in 1910 he once visited the Sukuma chief Kahigi, who had been gifted with three Edison “talking machines”—gramophone players—by the local Deutsche district commissioner. Predating John Cage’s revolutionary performance practices in the 1950s,<sup>6</sup> Chief Kahigi entertained, shocked, and awed his subjects at all hours, by playing the machines simultaneously, with three scratchy wax cylinder recordings of “Heil dir im Siegerkranz” (the then unofficial national anthem of the German empire), *Der lustigen Witwe* (an operetta by the Austro-Hungarian composer Franz Lehár), and the chorale from J. S. Bach’s interpretation of *Nun danket alle Gott* (Jungblut 1941, 66).

The effects of the cacophony of these three European music standard bearers played simultaneously perplexed the author of this report, who described the witnesses of the event as reacting with a gamut of emotions: “Some listened and presented a most stoical indifference, others opened their

eyes until they were as large as saucers, and then others again, were convulsed with delight” (Frederick 1910, 61). The compromised authority of the *ntemi* (chiefs) under colonialism was temporarily buttressed by the aural displays of affiliation such as this, which could be, in essence, interpreted as a sonic metaphor for the onset of full-throttle colonialism.

### **Vignette II: Poor Major Barttelot**

The next vignette involves an incident that occurred during the scramble for Africa, the era of European exploration and subsequent colonization of much of the African continent in the 1880s–90s. The setting was the Emin Pasha Relief expedition, a rescue caravan led by Henry Morton Stanley, shortly after his historical meeting with David Livingston. One of the last major European expeditions into the interior of Africa in the nineteenth century, its purpose was to find the kidnapped governor of Equatoria, being held by radical Muslim forces in South Sudan (Stanley 1890).

All the major European caravan leaders were known to hire porters from the Sukuma region, because of their long-established custom of taking caravan trips to the coast as a rite of passage for young men. For this journey, Stanley’s second in command was a certain Major Edmund Musgrave Barttelot, a British army officer in charge of the hiring and firing of porters and responsible for disciplinary issues on the road.<sup>7</sup>

On July 19, 1888, the caravan’s rear column was stationed in Yambuya, in northern Congo, while waiting for more supplies. Adam Hochschild writes: “[Major] Barttelot promptly lost his mind. He sent Stanley’s personal baggage down the river. He dispatched another officer on a bizarre three-thousand-mile three-month round trip to the nearest telegraph station to send a senseless telegram to England. He next decided that he was being poisoned, and saw traitors on all sides. He had one of his porters lashed three-hundred times (which proved fatal). He jabbed at Africans with a steel-tipped cane, and ordered several dozen people put in chains” (1998, 98). In writing what would turn out to be his very last entry in his memoirs, published posthumously, Barttelot mentioned that he was at his wits’ end because the porters in his employ were keeping him up late at night with their raucous *ngoma* and random gunfire and that he needed to step out and do something about it (Barttelot and Barttelot 1890, 350–51).



**Figure 5** Major Edmond Musgrave Barttelot (1859–1888).

An image from a different caravan but from the same region illustrates (with some possible exaggeration), the “porters gone wild” expressive culture that was so troublesome to the major. What is portrayed here is surely the same kind of sonic exuberance that Major Barttelot was trying to contain. Gunfire (not to mention *ngoma*), was a well-known sonic dimension of the nineteenth-century caravan soundscape. The widespread distribution of guns via the slave and ivory trades led to the firing of blank cartridges as the preferred mode of communication between the caravan and nearby villages (Thomson 1885, 71), as shots could be heard for longer distances and signified a positioning of power. The use of guns was so widespread by the mid-nineteenth century that the famed rogue explorer Richard Burton wrote that gunshots were the only credible precursors to a caravan (1860, 66). When inland, porters were engaged for hire and rounded up via gunfire (New 1961, 74), and on the meeting of other caravans, gunshot salutes of welcome would be fired (Grant 1864, 76). Guns were always fired on the occasion of the new moon, which Verney Lovett Cameron proclaimed “very dangerous, as the men never looked in what direction their rifles were pointing, but sent their bullets whizzing about the camp” (1877, 104).

In any event, on that fateful evening of July 19, 1888, Barttelot sent someone out to stop the loud music and random gunfire, but then, according to published testimonials, early in the morning the wife of one of the porters began beating a drum and singing while others commenced once again with





**Figure 6** James Grant dancing with Queen Ukulima in Tabora. From John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 1863 (London: Greenwood Press, 1969).

their random shooting. Major Barttelot came storming out from his tent brandishing a spear and a revolver, saying, “I will shoot the first man I catch firing.” He went toward the woman who was beating the drum and singing, and he then struck and, according to one report, bit her. Suddenly a shot rang out, and Barttelot lay dead with a gunshot wound to the belly. The guilty party was the porter Senga, husband of the bitten woman.

The notorious Swahili slave and ivory marauder Tippu Tipp, having witnessed the event, wrote in his published memoirs thus in archaic Kiswahili: “We asked them, ‘Why did Senga shoot the Major?’ They said it was because the Major had forbidden them to hold dances. Those Sukuma said, ‘These dances are really the great joy of caravan life, are we to be mournful as if bereaved?’ So one evening, around 8 or 9 o’clock, Senga’s wives were singing, when suddenly the Major appeared holding a spear, and making to attack Senga’s wife. Her husband, Senga, when he saw what was going on, shot him. This was the cause of it” (El Murjebi 1971, 209).<sup>8</sup>

To summarize this violent yet somehow carnivalesque power role reversal in academic parlance, we can say with unequivocal certitude that Barttelot was guilty of having a bad case of dumb-ass, while Senga, besides being responsible for the major’s demise, was guilty perhaps of having a dumb case of bad-ass. Barttelot, in the end, was given a hero’s funeral at home, and his grave bears a plaque commemorating his service to England. The porter Senga was, by

contrast, captured, jailed, given a quick “bush” trial, and then hanged and buried in an unmarked grave for his role in this sordid affair (Barttelot and Barttelot 1890, 350–51).

### Vignette III: Boulders Fighting on the Plain

The next vignette involves a song composed during World War I. The song documents a military skirmish between the Germans and the British in Mwanza. I found the text for this song buried in the Hans Cory archive in the East Africana Collection at the University of Dar es Salaam, having been collected by Cory in the 1920s. According to Cory’s meager typewritten notes, the song was composed by the soldier ng’wana Matonange during World War I. He composed the song so to explain to his comrades why the Germans and the British, described in the song as “boulders,” were fighting in his country during the war.

The reference to boulders has special meaning for Sukuma area dwellers, as one of the most striking features of the Sukuma landscape are the numerous surreal glacial deposits of granite. Mentioned often in song, these granite outcroppings are used as foundations or walls of homes, make for irregular paths between residences and villages, and are the cause of irregularly shaped fields for farming.

One of the Sukuma singers with whom I shared the text, ng’wana Makanga, immediately recognized this song as one that had been adapted by his grandfathers as a work chorus for voluntary farming groups in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Another singer, upon being read the text, could not recall the melody but said that he learned the song as a youth to accompany beating millet.<sup>10</sup> He



**Figure 7** Bismarck Rock, Mwanza. Photo by the author.

also heard it sung by Sukuma soldiers returning from their foreign service in Burma, just after World War II.

<i>Shiganga jilikenya ku mabala</i>	Boulders fighting each other on the plain
<i>Bajelemani na Baengeleja</i>	The Germans and the English
<i>Balikiling'himya n'hambo</i>	They run about taken to flight
<i>Linguno ya ng'ombe</i> (2x)	Because of cattle. (2x)
<i>Simba sana, ng'wana Makoma</i>	Dig deep, child of Makoma
<i>Nhobola yabi ya bangi</i>	Tabora belongs to others
<i>Ya Mabiliji, babalya banhu!</i> (2x)	The Belgians, eaters-of-men! (2x)
<i>Shiganga jilikenya ku mabala</i>	Boulders fighting each other on the plain
<i>Bajelemani na Baengeleja</i>	The Germans and the English
<i>Balikiling'himya n'hambo</i>	They run about taken to flight
<i>Linguno ya ng'ombe</i>	Because of cattle <sup>11</sup>

At Mwanza, the Germans held their lake position until an actual British landing took place in July 1916. The German Mwanza forces dug trenches at Seke, in the southern Sukuma region, and managed to delay the British advance for several weeks. This position was finally surrendered in September 1916, when the British overran Tabora with help from a Belgian unit. Finally, in 1917, there was a skirmish at Ikoma, where a German mobile column attacked a pursuing British-Belgian unit there (Austen 1968, 112).

The last line in the second verse refers to the widely feared Belgians, the allies of the British who approached the area from the east. The notoriety of the Belgian soldiers arose from their ruthless sacking in 1916 of the German stronghold in Tabora and was fueled by the word-of-mouth stories of genocidal atrocities committed by King Leopold's personal army in the Belgian Congo. The "eaters of men" trope also refers to those African troops in the employ of the Belgians, the BaManyema, an amalgamated social category associated with immigrants from the Congo, who were hired by the Belgians as soldiers and rumored by their neighbors to be cannibals.

In this song, we see total war as viewed and interpreted locally via sung expression. The economic basis for the war is perceptively characterized as happening “because of cattle,” and the song had enough of a local impact that a handful of people remember the song to this day.

#### **Vignette IV: *Zauberer***

The next vignette highlights the war on culture waged by the German colonials, leveled against musicians and prophets. Sukuma prophets were known for their powerful visions that could sway public opinion. Predictions of the coming of the Europeans were prevalent in the late nineteenth century. Specifically, predictions of the coming of a “snake” (the railroad), or of giant “birds” (airplanes) carrying white-skinned people with “fire in their pockets” inspired the imaginations and legitimate paranoia of many. According to widespread oral tradition, Siita, a prophet who was known to routinely turn his cattle into rocks in order to foil Masai cattle raids, foresaw the coming of the Europeans in the 1850s and also predicted the eventual destruction of Sukuma traditional life, claiming that “people who are half human and half birds would come” (Itandala 1983, 191). Another prophet, in Mwangala, who had predicted that all the Europeans would leave, caused a riotous disturbance that spread to Sengerema, Nunho, and Nera (Bukumbi Diary 1879).

Because of predictions such as these, the Germans realized the power that such individuals might have and were subsequently brusque in their dealings with what they called *Zauberer*, or “sorcerers.” After the prophesy-inspired Majimaji crisis of 1906–8 in southeast Tanganyika, where warriors were encouraged to bathe in magic water that could stop bullets, the Germans began indiscriminately jailing and hanging *Zauberer* as troublemakers throughout the colony.

In 2006, the singer Jige Malele remembered for me and performed the song “Ng’wana Kaliyaya.”<sup>12</sup> She learned this haunting song as a young woman while living on the compound of her brother-in-law, Chief Massanja, back in the 1940s. The song she sings is a first-person account of the hanging of the prophet Kaliyaya by the Germans, for allegedly practicing “sorcery.” Kaliyaya had made the diagnostic claim that a neighbor had killed the brother of someone who had consulted her; she was hanged in front of the bunker of the

Mwanza regional commissioner as a lesson to others who would make claims of supernatural power.

According to Juma Mashaka Kalunde, a former officer at the Mwanza branch of the government cultural affairs office, this song is remembered on multiple occasions: “It is used for remembering ancestors, to heal and ask for help on behalf of another, or to ask for forgiveness for those actions for which we have fallen short.”<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 8** German commissioners' bunker (*boma*) at Mwanza, circa 1897. The “hanging tree” can be seen to the left. From Lothar Von Trotha, *Meine Bereifung von Deutsch-OstAfrika* (Berlin: B. Brigl, 1897).



**Figure 9** The remains of the hanging tree, bronzed as a commemorative monument, at an intersection in downtown Mwanza. Photo courtesy of Iqbal Nshur.

<i>Ng'wana Kaliyaya</i>	Child of Kaliyaya
<i>Mayu, ng'wajima, ee</i>	Mama, you are snubbed out, ee
<i>Kileka mihambo igana</i>	Let medicine containers in hundreds
<i>Chaniila, ng'wajima</i>	Chaniila, you are snubbed out
<i>uBabaye, tunile mayu</i>	O baba, let us weep for her, mama
<i>Eeh, nanile</i>	Eeh, let me cry for her
<i>Nfumu ng'wichane</i>	My fellow healer
<i>Nanile</i>	Let me cry for her
<i>Gawacha lwa kanungejiwa</i>	[She] has died by hanging <sup>4</sup>

In this vignette, we see an absolute expression of violence backed by the rule of colonial law. Resistance is “hidden” (Scott 1992), in that we have no firsthand accounts of what the community response was to this forceful action, albeit we have a song, and we can thus see a lingering trace of resistance personified historically, enacted in every repeated manifestation of this song, evoked time and again over several generations to the present.

#### **Vignette V: These Are the Rules**

The next vignette concerns the British Colonial officials who succeeded the Germans after World War I. To the British, it was the organized “voluntary dance societies” (not *Zauberer*), that represented a kind of political alterity that needed to be monitored and controlled, as well as a work force that could be manipulated and organized. Because these groups had a documented element of secrecy about them, the British were able to legitimate their campaigns against them.

There was great fear about the spread of the dance societies. According to one government report from the 1920s, 80 percent of the young people in his district had already become members (P.C. [Provincial Commissioner] Mwanza 1928). The popular local presses were full of complaints from heads of family about the loss of family members to these groups. There was worry that dance society membership would spread to the chiefs, thus creating top-down political pandemonium.

The British thus formed a commission and sent out anthropologists on the government payroll to monitor these groups. The most famous of these anthropologists was the aforementioned Hans Cory, a German-born



**Figure 10** *Bachweezi* spirit dancers, Tabora. From W. Blohm, *Die Nyamwezi: Gesellschaft und Weltbild* (Hamburg: Friederichsen, de Gruyter, 1933).

naturalized British-Tanganyikan citizen active from the 1920s to the 1950s, who has a celebrated archive in the East Africana Collection at the University of Dar es Salaam. Although Cory was sympathetic to the musicians he worked with, his reports served the aims of the colonial power, to prevent social unrest and promote the shift from subsistence production to the production of cheap export crops for European markets and a money economy in general.

The colonial government action that came to have the longest-lasting result, even into the postindependence period, were the local authority's decisions to require permits for *ngoma* meetings and to subsequently fine violators, as with this ordinance from Kahama District:

#### The Native Dance (Control) Rules, 1948

1. These rules shall be known as the native Dances (control) rules, 1948, and apply within the area of all chiefdoms in the Kahama Federation.
2. No native shall institute or cause to take place any dance unless he is in possession of a permit issued by the Native Authority of the area in which the dance is to take place.

3. A permit shall be in a form to be prescribed by the Native Authorities.
4. The fee payable for a permit shall be -/50 cents.
5. The Native Authority may refuse to issue a permit to any person without assigning a reason.
6. If it appears to the Native Authority to be expedient in the public interest a permit may be revoked. In such cases the fee or a portion of it may be refunded.
7. The number of permits to be issued in any one area may be limited by the Native Authority.
8. The day and hours during which dancing may take place may be prescribed by the Native Authority and it shall be an offence to institute or take part in a dance other than on the day and during the hours prescribed.
9. The permit holder shall be responsible for the good conduct of the dance and shall not permit any kind of disorder or impropriety.
10. No person shall attend a dance with any spear, knife, club or other dangerous weapon, and it shall be the duty of the permit holder to prevent any breach of this regulation.
11. The above regulations shall not apply to public ceremonial occasions for which permission to institute a dance without permit may be given by the native authority.
12. Any person committing a breach of these rules shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Shs.200/- or to imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding three months. (P.C. Mwanza 1948)

According to a P.C. report accompanying this decree, these rules were devised for the following purposes: “To reduce drunkenness and immorality and cases of assault when under the influence of beer”; “To prevent the progressive demoralization of the young people who do not do their share in the work of the community and become undisciplined and unruly, and riddled with venereal disease”; “To try and break the connection between dance societies and the profession of *msambo* or professional thieves, well known in Nyamwezi areas” (P.C. Mwanza 1948).

After numerous complaints by chiefs and other government officials regarding the differences between chiefly ceremony and backyard *ngoma*, “large tribal ceremonial dances” were not to be subject to these laws (P.C. to Member 1951).



As a result, more and more competitions were taking place under the official auspices of the *batemi* in the 1950s.<sup>15</sup>

As the postwar movement for independence in Tanganyika intensified, the Sukuma region fostered the most active and politically oriented African voluntary associations in Tanganyika during the ten years between the end of the war and the birth of the Tanganyika African National Union in 1954 (Maguirre 1969, xxiv).

In the wake of these developments, and as a result of those of the 1954 Mau Mau terror in Kenya, the British passed the Societies Registration Act, which required associations to seek government registration, as well as obtain police permission before collecting subscriptions or holding public meetings (Ilfie 1979, 553). No African civil servants would be allowed to be members of these organizations (Government Circular 1953), and all applications were required to go through the district commissioner together with written constitutions and a ten-shilling application fee. Every organization of ten or more persons, or with office bearers such as president, had to register (Societies Ordinance 1954). It is thus clear that any organized polity converging for the purposes of dance, labor, or both posed both a potential threat and potential promise of hope to the established order. The greatest fears held by both the Germans and the British about these societies came to be realized, as time and time again testimonies have been revealed about African independence leaders getting their first taste of leadership in the rank-conscious and hierarchical dance societies.

### **Vignette VI: Kalikali**

The next vignette is a quick portrait of the composer of the song “Bazungu Shetani” (The whites are devils), one of the song texts with which I opened this article. Kalikali ng’wana Mbagule, whose reduplicative name translates as “fierce fierce,” was indeed a fearless commentator, well loved because he was not afraid to speak his mind about issues affecting farmers. He was the most famous singer in the Sukuma region, active from the 1950s until his death in the mid-1980s, and was thought of as a consummate “composer’s composer.”<sup>16</sup> He composed hundreds of songs, several of which have been cited as being instrumental in rallying supporters for Julius Nyerere in his successful bid for the Tanzanian presidency, which put an end to the British colonial era in 1961.

<i>Nchilu Blacka</i>	The fool Mister Black
<i>Alitudanganya</i>	He cheated us
<i>Banhu, twaluha! (2x)</i>	People, we suffered! (2x)
<i>Kupejiwa mumalugulu</i>	To be removed from the mountains
<i>Kuja kusilili</i>	To go down into lower areas
<i>Kulima maduta</i>	To make contour ridges
<i>Kulima buluba</i>	To cultivate cotton
<i>Mungu twambilijagee</i>	God help us
<i>Bangereja bashoke ku kaya (2x)</i>	The British should go home (2x)
<i>Kuhadikijiwa kulima mabuluba</i>	To be forced to cultivate cotton
<i>Ng'weji gwa mili</i>	In the month of November
<i>Ntemi Ng'waya</i>	Chief Ng'waya
<i>Ng'wana Ng'wandu</i>	Child of Ng'wandu
<i>Ubagema bawana shamba</i>	Tried the agricultural officers
<i>Kubalisha mabuluba</i>	To feed them cotton
<i>Akatulwa no (2x)</i>	He was much beaten (2x)
<i>Akaliwa mafaini</i>	He was fined
<i>Akoya na koya</i>	He stopped altogether <sup>17</sup>

As British crop-growing campaigns intensified from the 1930s to the 1950s, every region had one or more Bwana Shamba (literally, “Mister Farm”) or agricultural field officer, who went out to the villages holding mandatory seminars to make sure that farmers complied with their new programs and schemes. These requirements included prohibitions against growing other crops in the same fields as cotton, as well as requiring every taxpayer to cultivate and maintain an acre of cotton. When farmers were required to plant cotton, there was much complaint, and one local chief’s councilor heard many such cases.<sup>18</sup> The farmers disliked most of all the requirements to build tie-ridges, or *matuta*, even though they later realized that *matuta* yielded more crops. Ridging began as a preventive measure against erosion and functioned as a fertilization method as well. *Matuta* production was much more labor intensive, and when farmers did not do it right they were fined.<sup>19</sup>

Resistance to cotton colonialism was ambiguous and rarely amounted to much more than farmers’ practicing illegal intercropping or refusing to sell their harvest to the export sector. The open defiance portrayed in this song

is unique. Kalikali is complaining about a government agricultural officer, named Mister Black, who is trying to introduce cash cropping into the area. Kalikali praises local chief Ng'waya, who received a punitive fine for serving the visiting agricultural officer a meal of meat sprinkled with cotton seeds during a famine, in order to send the message to the British to stop requiring people in his district to plant cotton to the exclusion of food crops.

### **Vignette VII: Princess Margaret Rose and the Official Spectacular**

The last vignette is an example of British colonial public spectacle, so crucial to the process of control. After World War II, the British government set aside 120 million pounds “for brightening the lives of the people of the colony” (Songoyi 1988, 18). Colonial authorities used these ritual idioms to make imperial authority “manifest and compelling” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, xviii). These displays competed with and eventually replaced rituals, gatherings, and music competitions hosted by the chiefs and ultimately served to remind its participants of the symbolic power of the national government. Lavish events sponsored by the colonial government included agricultural shows, government-sponsored competitions, beauty pageants, parades in tribute to Kaiser Wilhelm, and birthday celebrations for King George and Queen Victoria.

These celebrations included combinations of competitive dances, sports, free beer, military drill, parades and *beni* dances, bonfires, fireworks, and events where African choirs sang lackluster renditions of “God Save the Queen.”

A memorable event among my interview sources was the royal visit to Tanganyika and the Sukuma region by Princess Margaret Rose, younger sister of Queen Elizabeth. Before Fergie, before Lady Diana, she was the paparazzi darling of British royalty in the 1950s and 1960s. Her official tours of the British colonies in the Caribbean, India, and Africa were huge media events. Wherever she went, *taarab* songs, Bollywood numbers, and calypsos were dedicated to her.<sup>20</sup>

The word went out throughout the Sukuma region to bring together the best performers available for Margaret Rose’s arrival, with the warning, however, that “some *ngomas* would not be suitable” (Royal Visit Announcement n.d.). In a propaganda film clip shown throughout the British colonies, she



**Figure 11** Princess Margaret Rose (1930–2002).

was greeted at the airport by musical labor groups such as the snake hunters, carrying spitting cobras and pythons, and by the porcupine hunters, with their baboons dressed up as dance society leaders (*The Princess' Tour* 1956). At the film's finale, she was presented with a matching set of six zebra-skin drums (*Baragumu* 1956).

Needless to say, the bombast and historical significance of this tour was etched into the memories of all who witnessed it, as the princess followed her script of regal power and benevolence and lived up to the expectations held of her. One person whom I interviewed, however, had less than fond memories: "There was a huge celebration, with about seventy groups in all. Our *bugobobo* farmers' group came from more than two hundred kilometers away, together with our drums, our hoes, and our animal skins, and they just refused us, saying our dance costumes were ragged and dirty and that we were not presentable, so we just returned and competed in the villages."<sup>21</sup> One of the hallmarks of Sukuma farmers' dance is the performative presentation of the proud "son or daughter of the soil" peasant. The price of being included in the family of colonial modernity, it seems, was that of adhering to distinctions determined by "sharp clean dress" and "presentability."

## Conclusion

*Where there is power there is always resistance.*

—Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*

*Where there is resistance there is power.*

—Lila Abu-Lughod, “*The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women*”

I would like to conclude this article in the same way that I began, with two complimentary quotes in dialog, or dance. Many of the vignettes I have provided here bear this dyad out. The social theorist James Scott (1992) reminds us that every subordinate group creates out of its ordeal a “hidden transcript” that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. Great care must be taken, however, by cultural analysts and historians evaluating the “hiddenness” of such transcripts, because protest and its effects can just as often occur as open, and eloquent, in the terms of the local culture and are simply misread as “hidden” by those researchers who interpret their limited traces. It is important for us to realize as musicologists, music educators, and musicians that to frame musical protest as “hidden” runs the risk of viewing it from an external perspective, since the performers and their audiences were no doubt well aware of their meanings even if their colonial record keepers were not.

The musical vignettes discussed here survive either in the memories and performances of the living or in utterances scrawled in archives, asking us to evoke, listen to, reflect on, or act on them. Considered from a historical point of view, music and performance can illuminate aspects of culture that fall outside conventional sources for political or economic history. The analysis of song, in context, can elucidate many historical questions, including questions about power relations. Songs, besides presenting events, are points of views about events, intertextual reflections of both the past and the present in a single breath. The performer uses history as an argument, as a proof, as a legitimizing force concerning current events.

The harshness of the German and British colonial policies further provoked Sukuma labor musicians to turn their musical play into a form of protest, however ambiguous, in the face of world capitalist relations. Antihegemonic dance pleasure at the worksite was one form of protest among many that made sense to them, and it created group solidarity. Dancing, composing, and performing while on the caravan or at the cotton *shamba* was not necessarily ambiguous, “private escape,” “confused expressions of discontent,” or “false

consciousness” (Vail and White 1991, 168); rather, it embodied transformative and empowering action, which on occasion could be very public, leading to serious revolutionary rupture in the social fabric, not to mention cause grave injury — just ask Major Barttelot!

### Notes

1. See Hendriks n.d. The song “Bazungu Shetani,” by the Sukuma composer Kalikali Mbagule, from the 1950s, was recorded by the author, village of Isangidjo, September 20, 1995 (author’s personal collection).
2. Small uses the Germanic form of the English noun *music* to signify the process of making music, including the contextual activities that surround music making.
3. A proto-Bantu institution and term widespread in central, eastern, and southern Africa, *ngoma* is “at once the term for drum, as well as drumming or other musical instrumentation, singing, dancing, and the complex of constituent behavior and concepts” (Janzen 1992, 290).
4. I demarcate this time period for the sake of limited space; these vignettes are part of a larger project regarding music, power, and resistance in Tanzania as a whole.
5. See <http://msamagroup.blogspot.com/2010/06/rais-jakaya-ashiriki-sherehe-za-ngoma.html>.
6. *Williams Mix* (1951–1953) is a 4’15” electronic composition by the American composer John Cage for eight quarter-inch tape machines, played simultaneously.
7. See <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=31830232>.
8. “Tukamuliza, ‘Nini sababu Senga kumpiga mejer?’ Akasema, ‘Sababu anawakataza kupiga ngoma. Na wale Wasukuma wanasema, ‘Hii ngoma ndio furaha ya safari. Tufanye huzuni kama tuliofiwa? Hata siku mmoja usiku, labda saa mbili, tatu, wakewe Senga wanakuimba, mara alitokea mejer na mkuki, kutaka kumpiga mkewe Senga. Na mumewe Senga alipoona khabari hii, ndipo alipompiga risasi. Hii ndiyo sababu.’”
9. Gembe Ng’honela Makanga, farmer, *nfumu* (healer), and *pubha* singer, village of Sayusayu, interviewed by the author on several occasions, August 1995.
10. Hamala Chiila, farmer, *nfumu* (healer), and *pubha* singer, village of Ng’wajiginya, interviewed by the author on several occasions, August 1995.
11. Ng’wana Matonange, “Shiganga Jilikenya ku Mabala,” 1917, recorded by the author, Ng’wajiginya village, August 18, 1995.
12. Jige Malehe, *manga* (woman’s healer) and *wigaashe* singer, village of Isangidjo, interviewed by the author, December 20, 1994.
13. “Hutumika kwa kuwakumbuka wahenga, kwa kutibu na kuwaomba msaada wasaidie au kusamehe yale tuliyo kosea.” Juma Mashaka Kalunde, Mwanza cultural affairs administrator and secondary school teacher city of Mwanza, interviewed by the author on several occasions, July 1994 to October 1995, July 2006.

14. “Ng’wana Kaliyaya,” performed by Jige Malehe, recorded by the author, village of Isangidjo, December 20, 2006.
15. James Nsombi, *bucheyeeeki* dance leader, village of Bujora, interviewed by the author, September 1995.
16. Gembe Ng’honela Makanga, farmer, *mfumu* (healer), and *pubha* singer, village of Sayusayu, interviewed by the author on several occasions, August 1995.
17. Kalikali Mbagule, “Nchilu Blacka.”
18. Kuliga Gamaya, farmer, former *ng’wanang’wa* (chief’s councilman), village of Sayusayu, interviewed by the author, August 9, 1995.
19. Sotinge Masanja Masunga, farmer, *mfumu* (healer), and *wigaashe* singer, village of Miswaki, interviewed by the author, July 6, 1994.
20. *Taarab*, also called *tarabu* or *tarab*, is an East African popular music genre. *Taarab* is popularly known as Swahili wedding music, since *taarab* musicians and music are an essential part of these multiday festivities. The east African coast has served as a center for trade with countries throughout the Middle East and Asia, and *taarab* music reflects many of the cultures that have passed through this region. This can be seen in the range of instruments used in *taarab* ensembles and orchestras, which include the Middle Eastern *oud* and *dumbek*, the Indian *tabla*, and Western electric keyboards. Similarly, *taarab* rhythms reflect traditional *ngoma* dances like *chakacha*, Indian film scores, Cuban rumba, and various Congolese and East African dance music. Perhaps most important, *taarab* lyrics radiate with the allusive intricacies of Swahili poetry and showcase the beauty of this long, literary tradition.
21. “Kulikuwa sherehe kubwa, na vikundi sabini na kitu zilikuwepo. Kikundi chetu cha bugobogobo tulisafiri zaidi na kilometre mia mbili, pamoja na ngoma, majembe, na ngozi zetu, na walitukataa, wakasema mavazi yetu yalikuwa machafu, na hatuweza kucheza mbele yao, na basi tulirudi nyumbani kwetu na tulishindana na ngoma yetu vijijini.” Ntamanwa, Doshi Tagili, farmer, *bugobogobo* dance leader, village of Matala, interviewed by the author on several occasions, November 1994, April 1995, October 2006.

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