

Chapter 3

Competitive Performance and Cultural Identity in Southwest Tanzania

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On a hot, dusty, late September afternoon in 1996, in a fenced-in clearing at the heart of Ikombe, a fishing village on Lake Nyasa's northeast shores, dancers from the plains to the north danced to the beat of their *ing'oma* drum while the people of the village followed their moves. Four dancers in a front row wielded staffs in a fashion resembling bayonet drills. A back row of dancers held calabashes and fly whisks made of tail hair. The dancers followed the directions of their leaders, called kings, some of whom carried wooden spears. After a few hours of dancing punctuated by rests, another *ing'oma* drum could be heard approaching. People from the mountains of Selya to the north were bringing their drum. They had been traveling the whole day by foot. The newcomers entered the village in formation with their own drum sounding a steady beat. They passed, but ignored, the ongoing dance in the village. "Vita Mbele"—"War Up Front" in Swahili¹—was painted on the arriving men's drum, and their demeanor left no doubt as to their seriousness: they had come to compete.

On that September weekend in 1996, a local *ing'oma* association at Ikombe had invited associations from three areas to dance for two days in a competition. A few thousand people came to watch the dances in the center of the village. It was a prime feast at which merchants sold fresh butchered meats and roasted bananas, local beers, bottled soda and beer, cigarettes, and other goods. At the homes of local association members, women cooked chicken or fish and prepared dishes of rice and greens for visiting

dancers. Women brewed beer and sold it to local association members who then offered it to their guests. The Catholic bishop had urged the people of the village to change the days of the competition because it would interfere with church attendance. The Lutheran minister braced himself as his congregation watched a display that they themselves were forbidden to perform. The local government was satisfied because the local association had paid their dance taxes.

The event at Ikombe is important for examining competitive performance for a number of reasons. First, *ing'oma* is a competitive performance that resembles numerous eastern and central African competitive dances such as *mganda*, described by Ranger (1975) and others (e.g., Gulliver 1955; Jones 1945), and *malipenga* in Malawi (see Gilman 2000). *Ing'oma* is, therefore, a dance rich in signification and with a history connecting its dancers to those from far away places, and circuitously with European military displays. Performers bear titles that derive from English language military terms, such as commander, corporal, and major; they wear uniforms that appear to derive from a European military prototype; and some movements in the dance recall World War I bayonet drills. *Ing'oma* dances were also extremely popular in the countryside north of Lake Nyasa in the 1990s. People flocked to see *ing'oma* dance competitions in the dry season when host associations invited guest associations to dance in specially prepared clearings. The occasions were major feasts and were the talk of villages for months surrounding the events.

Second, the competition at Ikombe is important because people who danced *ing'oma* often described it to foreigners as a Nyakyusa dance and competitions as Nyakyusa culture; *ing'oma* had the status of a "traditional" dance in the region. The government invited accomplished teams to represent local culture at official functions such as visits by dignitaries. Yet in Ikombe most people claimed that they were not Nyakyusa but were Kisi, Bena, or Pangwa. In Selya, home of one of the teams who danced at Ikombe that September weekend, people claimed Nyakyusa ethnicity in the 1990s, whereas in the 1920s people there were not Nyakyusa but were primarily Selya, Saku, and Mwamba. In 1925, the colonial government officially classified them all as Kukwe and counted them under the Kukwe paramount chief until 1935, when they and all others under the Kukwe paramount were officially labeled Nyakyusa. The fact, therefore, that there was in the 1990s a traditional Nyakyusa dance is important not only because that dance was a product of interactions between people of diverse cultural backgrounds in the context of colonialism and labor migration,

but also because the performances are linked to the history of Nyakyusa as an overarching group name.

This chapter will examine some historical connections between *ing'oma* competitive dance associations and Nyakyusa social identity.² Whereas other approaches to *mganda*-like competitive dances in southwest Tanzania and elsewhere emphasize histories of migration and stimulus diffusion and the causative role of macroeconomics and colonial politics, my goal is to emphasize the rural contexts within which people began and perpetuated *ing'oma* dance associations. I argue that it was principally young men who developed *ing'oma* dance associations as a means to express and solidify a formative social order, which was becoming known in official circles as "tribal."

In discussing the convergent histories of *ing'oma* and cultural identity, I hope to avoid functionalist/instrumentalist positions that consider dance an institution with a clear and overt purpose; that people consciously made *ing'oma* dance as a means to create ethnicity as a politically useful form of resistance to a changing colonial order. The instrumentalist position has benefits, not the least of which is that it makes ethnicity historically contingent. However, people did not make *ing'oma* associations as a reactive measure against obvious oppression. Dance was not just a tool that young men in the 1930s and 1940s used to adjust or attack the machinery of top-down politics. The makers of *ing'oma* associations had multiple reasons for developing and perpetuating their dances as they did, ranging from sex to intergenerational protest, and many of those reasons remain locally unarticulated, perhaps unexamined. Here I intend to show how their creation of *ing'oma* changed the shape of rural cultural identity, including how people in villages understood their membership in official colonial "tribes."

ING'OMA AND MGANDA-LIKE DANCES

In the early 1930s, people at the northern end of Lake Nyasa began dance associations and formal dance competitions that featured a new dance called *ing'oma*.³ People had danced in groups in the past, and they had danced with groups in villages other than their own, but these were the first formal competitive dance associations in the area. The competitions were also unique in that they were a forum in which people from diverse areas who used different group names came together in order to dance what would become a common "ethnic" dance.

In the 1990s, *ing'oma* (pl. *amang'oma*) was the most widespread drum

and dance tradition at the northern end of Lake Nyasa. July to October was the season of festive competitions that drew large crowds. At competitions myriad voices of spectators commenting, exclaiming, and shouting merged with the deep booming of an *ing'oma* drum, calls by dancers, and the cheers from those close to the action. *Amang'oma* were hard to miss during their season. People discussed competitions weeks in advance, and on competition days people poured down rural paths and roads to see them. For days following an *ing'oma* people talked about what had taken place. *Amang'oma* were fundamental to the culture of this large area.

People who danced *ing'oma* organized associations, which they sometimes called by the Swahili word *chama* (pl. *vyama*), although one was more commonly referred to as an *ing'oma*. People organized *amang'oma* within village sections. Each year while an *ing'oma* existed people danced in competitions with other associations in other villages; they also danced at funerals, particularly those of non-Christians, and at the invitation of the government for celebrations such as the annual tour of the national independence torch. Associations were made up almost exclusively of men, but both men and women claimed that both sexes danced *ing'oma*, within which they included the spectators who danced outside competition enclosure and followed dancers away from the performance arena.

Association members described *ing'oma* as a formal tradition, and although the form varied, all *amang'oma* had some common features. Each *ing'oma* had a series of ranked positions that included majors, kings, corporals, and sergeants. The five major performance roles were *abakubi* (Nyakyusa, sing. *unkubi*),⁴ who beat the drums, *ingilí*, *itinala*, *abakingi*, and *ibesi*. In formal dances, kings directed players to where they should dance. *Ingilí* were three or four players who carried staffs and danced in front. They were followed by the drummers, one playing the large *ing'oma* and two who played smaller drums, *amapelekete*. Drummers all wore their drums strapped over a shoulder and the neck, very much like the snare and bass drums of a drum corps. Near the drummers were the four *itinala* players. *Itinala* have been described as calabash trumpets or kazoos. Behind the drummers and the kazoo players were the *ibesi* dancers, who danced with fly whisks made of tail hair in their left hands and calabash trumpets in their right. The *ibesi* players numbered from four to a dozen but averaged about eight. Each *ing'oma* had an *unganga*, a specialist in medicines or a healer, although often the healer was chosen for the job and received the *ing'oma*'s medicines and instructions from a distant healer who was truly a practitioner in health matters.

Many military tropes in *ing'oma* derive from English and are made con-

spicuous by the formal dress, called *yunifomu* or simply clothes. Uniforms varied by position. *Ingili* dancers wore pressed white shorts and white dress-shirts, red or red-and-white socks, colorful badges of cloth and yarn hung by strings around the neck and resembling military badges about the shirt pockets, and bright colored strips of cloth tied to the waist or around the head or worn as sashes. *Ingili* players often wore hairpins with colored plastic ends and headbands and wristbands. Drummers did not wear white uniforms but wore their normal clothes adorned with *kangas*—women's cloth wraps—which they wore as togas, skirts, or wrapped about their heads. Some drummers wore dresses, necklaces, wigs, and head scarves. *Itinala* players likewise did not wear uniforms, and they seldom wore *kangas* or other adornment. *Ibesi* players dressed similarly to *ingili* players, but with white pants or tights rather than shorts, and without badges. *Ibesi* players often wore sunglasses.

Healers played a fundamental role in associations and I had heard them referred to informally as the most important person of the association. Players took seriously the risk of affliction and injury and never performed in a competition without the medicines the healer controlled. The medicines had purposes varying from protection against harmful medicines employed by others—other associations in particular—to making players be seen to play well and to "be clear."⁵ Healers also treated the drums. Although members of an association made their own drums, some being more experienced at it than others, the *ing'oma* had to be finished by a healer who would seal it with protective medicines, and who usually remained the healer of the association. Medicines that protected a dancer in a competition could continue to protect in daily life; some dancers relied throughout the year on the power of the medicines employed at the competitions while others continued to be treated after the competition season.

Associations were invited to competitions by hand-delivered letters written in Swahili, while *amang'oma* meetings were generally in Nyakyusa language. The people who invited and hosted a competition were responsible for preparing a dance arena called a *boma*.⁶ In a competition, the home association did not dance except to show arriving guest teams into the *boma*. Each member of the home association was responsible for selecting one player from each invited association whom they would house and feed at their home. People in those relations were called *ababwesi* (sing. *umbwesi*), and an *umbwesi* was obligated to reciprocate in subsequent years. *Ababwesi* relationships could and did develop into longer-term reciprocal relations outside of dance. While a guest, an *umbwesi* was fed as a special guest, given as much as he desired of the best available foods and locally

brewed beers. The gravity of this obligation should not be underestimated; some people left home for weeks or months before the competition season to earn the money needed to properly host their *ababwesi*.

Most churches opposed *ing'oma* as they did earlier dance traditions. Lutherans and Moravians, the largest and oldest churches in the area, each forbade congregation members to dance *ing'oma*. Until recently, the Moravians forbade members to even watch *amang'oma*, as did the Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, Seventh Day Adventist, Free Moravian Church (founded by Lazarus Mwanjisi), Ngomela's church, and other churches. The change in the Moravian position was said to have come during the first-century jubilee in 1991, when guests from European churches watched a competition in a neighboring village, videotaped it, and then invited the players to the Rungwe mission to dance at the jubilee. This made it difficult for local church leaders to forbid viewing *amang'oma*.⁷ The Catholic Church did not forbid watching or dancing, and it did not forbid drinking alcohol; in areas where the Catholic Church was present many dancers were Catholic, whereas in other areas Christians labeled dancers "pagans" (*abapaanja*, outsiders in Nyakyusa, *wapagani* in Swahili).

The reasons some churches forbade participation in *ing'oma* were many and historically rich. Those most commonly named in the 1990s were the consumption of local alcoholic beverages and the licentious play said to be rampant at competitions. Dancers were said to leave their homes for days, women and children remaining behind hungry while men drank and danced and enjoyed sexual liberties.⁸ Church officials also stated that the use of medicines and the powers those medicines implied—both the forces that could cause harm and the powers to protect—ran counter to church teachings. The powers of the deceased, *abasyuka* (sing. *unsyuka*), represented another factor in church opposition, for historically in this area drums almost always involved relations with the deceased. A clear example was dancing *indingala* (the Nyakyusa generic for drums and dance) at funerals to satisfy the deceased and to drive them away, a concept that remained when *amang'oma* were danced at gravesites during funerals in the 1990s.

Because *ing'oma* bears a striking resemblance to *mganda*-like dances elsewhere in Tanzania (Gulliver 1955; Ranger 1975: 133–140) and in Zambia (Jones 1945), and to *malipenga* in Malawi (Gilman 2000), the major source to date for understanding *ing'oma* is the work of Terence Ranger (1975; but see Gunderson and Barz 2000). Ranger traced competitive performances related to *beni* dances from the coast of Kenya in the late nineteenth century through eastern and central Africa in the twentieth century (see Gunderson 2000). Because of conspicuous elements, such as military titles

deriving from English, military-like uniforms, and an overall style that resembled military and recruiters' marching bands from World War I, scholars have considered *ing'oma* and similar dances the result of histories of diffusion. In other words, scholars have been concerned with what they perceive as *the history of borrowing, the history of what is seen to be a dance and how it has changed*. However, as anthropologist Peter Pels (1996: 167–168; Appadurai 1996) has noted, "just as the study of a Western type of dress or musical genre does not necessarily produce understanding of the movements of commodities in the marketplace of fashion, so the study of the diffusion of *Beni* does not necessarily produce understanding of the movements of *ngoma*." In its extreme, the diffusion approach holds dance as an object that can be moved and altered rather than a practice that people with experiences shaped by history and culture make and remake in performance contexts (Coplan 1994).

Ranger did not seek to understand dance history in any single society but advocated "a full-scale study of the total dance history of various eastern African societies" (1975: 111–112, and also 122–123). That history would then allow one to see *beni* in any one district as part of a coherent development of dance and musical forms, how people in any society developed a particular dance form, what they may have taken from earlier forms, and what they may have borrowed from elsewhere. Ranger argued that it would be difficult to work out the *beni* history of any one place because of the historical tendency of people to take up and leave off the dance to meet their needs or with changes in fashion. Oral histories in southwest Tanzania in the 1990s confirmed Ranger's opinion that there are complicated dance histories, that traditions are not distinct, and that traditions "died" or "fell," in local terms, and were later modified or remade. There is, however, a greater possibility for and value in understanding seemingly widespread dances like *mganda* in the contexts of local historical struggles than Ranger estimated. Ranger attempted to show how people developed and modified *beni*- and *mganda*-like dances in relation to shifting territorial—and indeed global—economic and political conditions.⁹ For the northern Lake Nyasa area, Ranger considered *beni* and *mganda* to have provided a means for reaction to and comment on indirect rule conservatism, renewed missionary paternalism, and the stultifications of a global depression between the world wars. By the 1930s, Ranger argued, one could see dancers asserting their place in a modern world in contests with Europeans and conservative elders who blocked modernization and change (Ranger 1975: 106–108). Between the wars, people in Tanganyika were also redefining the groups they considered their own and

what it meant to belong to a group. "Tribes" became technical matters whose definitions concerned not only anthropologists and colonial administrators, but also people in the countryside, the supposed tribespeople themselves.

DANCE AND ETHNICITY

I spoke with some dozen schoolboys at Songea secondary school in September 1967 while they were rehearsing *Mganda*. They repudiated with indignation any suggestion of European influence, asserting that it was a dance "as old as the tribe itself." (Ranger 1975: 121)

Through his work with the diffusion of elements in dance, Ranger criticized some commonly held images of *beni*-like dances as ethnic or tribal dances. A focus of this criticism was Africans who seemed unaware of "the complex history of *Mganda* or Beni" (Ranger 1975: 121). Among those Africans were young men and students, and Julius Nyerere, who referred to *Lele Mama* and *mganda* as African dances (*ibid.*: 121–122). Ranger was dismissive of those who claimed *mganda* as tradition. "They think of *Mganda* as their own traditional dance. And clearly it has become precisely that" (1975: 121). Thinking ahead to Ranger's later interest in the invention of tradition, the proposition that *mganda* dances were traditional is compelling.¹⁰

In contrast to the Africans Ranger criticized, most research on *mganda*-like dances at the time assumed a connection between dance and ethnicity, although the connection was between the diffusion of *mganda*-like traits and detribalization. Several earlier authors considered *mganda*-like dances to be clear modifications of existing local dances and relatively recent inventions (e.g., Gulliver 1955; Jones 1945; and see Mitchell 1956). Pamela Gulliver (1955), for instance, traced the development of the *mganda* team in Mbamba Bay to 1926. Jones was unambiguous about the role of diffusion in *mganda*, which he expressed with his interest in "what the African will do when he takes over something he has seen and makes it really his own" (1945: 180). J. Clyde Mitchell's work (1956) is particularly germane. Mitchell was drawn to and conducted a detailed analysis of *kalela* dances at the Northern Rhodesian copper mines because he saw them as a new phenomenon that was tied to tribalism. Mitchell's focus on *kalela* came directly from his interests in ethnicity in the urban Copperbelt, which directly addressed anthropological and government concerns with "detrib-

alization" (e.g., see Gluckman 1950; Molohan 1957; Wilson 1941, 1942; see also Gunderson 2000).

Rather than a breakdown of tribes at the urban copper mines, Mitchell saw the development of tribalism, and a chief expression of this was the *kalela* dance. At the mines people came from the countryside and were placed with and also sought other people from their regions of origin. Mitchell argued that ethnic distinctiveness taken for granted in the countryside would be immediately thrown into relief by the cultural complexity in urban settings (Mitchell 1956: 29). "[T]he more distant a group of people is from another, both socially and geographically, the greater the tendency to regard them as an undifferentiated category and to place them under a general rubric such as 'Bemba,' 'Ngoni,' " and so on (*ibid.*: 28). People identified others with group names in those settings and built networks of others on whom they could rely for protection, assistance, and understanding. Migrants commonly associated with people from their regions of origin through dances, beer halls, eating groups, churches, courts, and living quarters. They formed "tribal" dance associations for entertainment and for mutual aid in times of crisis.

Experiences at labor centers were central to how migrants formed an overarching Nyakyusa identity while abroad and they were important for those young men who began *ing'oma* associations in the countryside at the northern end of Lake Nyasa. The experience of urban life and labor migration can go a long way toward explaining how people initially learned *ing'oma* and perhaps how they came to use the group name Nyakyusa while at work. In itself, however, migration is an incomplete explanation for why people formed competitive *ing'oma* associations back home and developed a rural Nyakyusa cultural identity that included the dance. At the northern end of Lake Nyasa people did not have formal competitive dance associations before *ing'oma*. Moreover, at the mines in the 1920s and early 1930s, young men from the northern end of Lake Nyasa knew themselves and those with whom they associated as Nyakyusa while many of those individuals had very likely not previously shared group names.

Today Nyakyusa is one of the largest ethnic groups in Tanzania. Nyakyusa people number approximately 800,000 and reside from the Malawi border around to the Livingstone Mountains and north to Mbeya district.¹¹ One way to understand how people came to see themselves as Nyakyusa is that such a view was an element of official government discourse; simply put, people learned to be Nyakyusa because they were so in government spheres. When paying taxes or traveling for work in another district after 1936, for example, it was impossible to claim Saku or Kukwe as one's

official group. Such answers would have been recorded as Nyakyusa. This explanation resembles those by historians John Iliffe (1979) and Marcia Wright (1971) and has the benefit of a certain historical logic and archival evidence. However, Nyakyusa took on and maintains a significance that extends beyond the realm of bureaucracy and requires a more complicated explanation than one that relies solely on an imposed colonial consciousness.¹²

INDÍNGALA, THE KONDE, AND THE EUROPEANS

In 1892 the young German missionary Schumann got a close look at *indíngala* dancing at the home of the chief Mwakalobo in the mountains of Selya, not far from Schumann's home at the Manow Lutheran mission. The year had been difficult. The rinderpest epidemic followed a global influenza pandemic, smallpox, and the establishment of German colonial administration. At Mwakalobo's place, a group of young men arrived armed with spears and a drum, an *indíngala*. The spear bearers formed a loose group, someone began to beat the *indíngala*, and the young men started jumping with their spears. Schumann, like his fellow missionaries, knew this as the war dance. But this was not an occasion of war. It was a different sort of crisis. Mwakalobo entered his senior wife's house and returned with a calabash of beer. The drumming and dancing stopped and the people assembled around Mwakalobo; it was so silent one could have heard a leaf fall. The chief prayed to his ancestors and to God, asking that the scourge afflicting them abate. Mwakalobo poured beer into his cupped hand, drew it into his mouth, and sprayed it over the shields encircling him.¹³

In 1891 a woman named Ihojo foresaw a "white thing" arriving and told others not to kill it.¹⁴ Similar predictions in oral histories recorded throughout the twentieth century may explain why the Moravian missionaries were not speared on their first nights at Mount Rungwe, which their porters had feared (Prein 1995: 49). Such predictions tell us more about the nature of communication at the time than about remarkable predictive abilities. Moravian missionaries and the Lutherans who followed met people who anticipated their arrival. These were diverse people with long-distance exchange relations, some similar traditions, and similar languages. These people had knowledge of and experiences with an "outside" world, they had words for money, for papers/letters, they had spears and hoes and body rings made of metals not available in their home areas.¹⁵ In short, "contact" was perhaps equally revelatory for the Europeans and Africans.

While regional society was dynamic and changing, the white things in Ihojo's dreams accompanied fundamental changes to definitions of society

and the individual. Missionaries and the administration that followed assumed that they would deal with a *Volk*—a people or a tribe; they did not see people with complex and changing identities tied to diverse places of origin, sacred groves, and chiefs. Although the Moravian missionaries who settled at Mount Rungwe met people who referred to themselves as Kukwe, Penja, and Ndali, they came to call all these people the Konde. Similarly, the Lutherans who built in Selya among people who called themselves Saku, Mwamba, Kukwe, Nyakyusa, and Sangu, and who on their arrival had met Kisi, Bena, Pangwa, and Saku people, came to know them all as the Konde.¹⁶ The name Konde derived from people living in an area near the lake through which the missionaries passed.

The merger of these people had some basis in observed reality, from people's interactions across existing boundaries. Those interactions included marriages, healing, and public rituals like dance. The people living at the northern end of Lake Nyasa had many dances, each with its own name, while all fell under the heading *indíngala*. *Indíngala* were dances and songs accompanied by drums, the drums themselves, the event of drumming and dancing, and the places where drumming and dancing occurred as they were performed.¹⁷ Dance relations, though, commonly did not coincide with the boundaries that came to be set for the Konde. At the turn of the century, the distribution of the *ikimbímbí* dance included Ngonde and Kukwe areas and people danced *unsegela* in Selya, Busale, and Ndali areas. *Indíngala ja lukíno* was danced throughout the entire area of present Rungwe and Kyela districts and was probably the first dance that Europeans widely associated with the Konde, but it also resembled dances elsewhere, such as Ngoni dances in Nyasaland.

Theodor Meyer, who was among the first Moravian missionaries in the area, explicitly described two *indíngala* drums, *ikimbímbí* and *ingweta*, and witnessed still others which he mentioned but did not name in his published texts. *Ingweta* was not commonly played in the area during Meyer's times, from 1891 to 1916, and he attributed this to the costs involved in acquiring the set of six drums (Meyer 1993: 52).¹⁸ Meyer used "kimbimbi" in place of *indíngala* as the generic for drumming and dancing and for drums, but *ikimbímbí* was also a specific dance. Many people in the 1990s recognized the name *ikimbímbí* but were unable to describe it, the most senior saying that their parents danced it but that it was gone by the time they were of an age to begin dancing *indíngala*. Many dances at the turn of the century were danced jointly by groups of boys and young men and groups of girls and young women. In several, such as *unsegela*, each group formed a line, danced and sang to a drumbeat, while individual women and men danced

out to meet each other.¹⁹ *Unsegela* was said to have died out in the 1930s, when it was last being danced in some parts of the uplands of Selya, Busale up to Lutengano, south of Tukuyu, and in Magenge in Ndali areas. People danced it at funerals, girls' puberty rituals, and as entertainment for its own sake. One man explained that the young men who began *ing'oma* associations had formerly danced *unsegela*.²⁰

Indingala was not a static form when the missionaries arrived, and it was not a hallmark of a *Volk*. People in different areas continually modified their dances, often experimenting with dances where people from other areas watched, such as at funerals. *Indingala* were intimately involved in complicated traditions of communication with the deceased and ancestors, *abasyuka*, and thus in various ways were involved in community health, and often also in actualizing disputes.²¹ Dances were also media of instruction about the intersection of village life and the wider world. Meyer mentioned "special dances that explain things like the following: removing jiggers from the feet, greetings for soldiers, firing a gun, etc." Explaining greetings for soldiers and firing guns suggests distinctly military-like environments for dances; these were subjects whose histories in the area were only about as deep as those of the missionaries' presence (Fülleborn 1906: 339). Likewise, jiggers (*Nyakyusa, indekenya*) were first a problem at Rungwe in mid-1894, and one of the missionaries "complained in early 1895 that he had to spend two half-days a week pulling out the painful jiggers from children's hands and feet" (Prein 1995: 64).²²

Missionaries initially accepted local practices such as drinking local brews and feasting and dancing at funerals, which later came to be considered non-Christian activities. A Lutheran minister explained to me that the missionaries simply could not ban everything they saw as problematic at first for they would lose followers.²³ This should not be understood as a lack of tension between the missionaries and local people over local practices. Meyer, for example, described the funeral of a Christian woman at Rungwe that was accompanied by loud wailing to the deceased. Meyer asked, without result, for the mourners to keep their wailing quiet. "Finally," he recalled, "I saw no alternative but to take the corpse, with the assistance of other male Christians, and to place it into a small room behind my place. I told the bereaved that they were allowed to come to my place with the mourning, and that there they could continue some of their mourning. They came and the mourning proceeded peacefully" (Meyer 1993: 240). At the Lutheran station at Itete in Selya, the Rev. Dr. D. M. Brown boasted in his 1923 diary entry that he had successfully "put a stop to" drumming on a Sunday at the funeral of Chief Mwangomo, drumming

and dancing then proceeded on Monday (Charsley 1969: 89–90). Mackenzie (1925: 161) viewed new dances with sexual overtones as “epidemics” that were “evil” and “highly objectionable” and led to “great moral injury,” but he noted that “the approach of a white man sends the dancers rushing off to hide in the bush, as I have often found at all hours of the night.”

Drums at the turn of the century were not so much signs of a people—a *Volk* or a tribe—as they were signs of chiefs. At a funeral, historian Simon Charsley explained, a chief had to “provide the drums for the dancing or, as Hall, an ethnographically minded District Officer, has it, his authorisation is required for the beating of the drums” (Charsley 1969: 65). Meyer wrote that there existed “groups of dancers who are able to be called by a head of a village that they come and play for people; they are usually paid a small bull” (Meyer 1993: 53).²⁴ But this connection between drums and chiefs was under stress in the 1920s.

THE BRITISH, THE NYAKYUSA, AND THE WAR DANCE

On the afternoon of 25 March 1928, in the green and probably damp mountain ridges north of Tukuyu, dancers roamed and leapt to the beat of *indingala* drums, wielded spears, and slashed at banana plants. The site was the grave of chief Mwasoni, who had just passed away. After the drumming and dancing had gone on for some hours another *indingala* could be heard approaching. One of the late Mwasoni’s sons knew what was coming and asked the dancers to leave; he was adamant and gave them an ox. Some of the dancers left and some of them stayed, for this was a funeral, a prime feast. The other dancers arrived, about fifty men who lived under chief Kanyasa, but when they saw the dancers from chief Kasambala’s place already dancing they turned to leave. Someone threw a banana stem at the late-comers, and a man ran toward Kasambala’s people, thrust his spear into the ground at the grave and hauled it back out, spraying dirt at the onlookers. In the fighting that ensued, seven men were seriously wounded by spears and stones, others sustained minor injuries. The district officer described this as a “faction fight,” an event in an existing antagonism between rival chiefs and their people. The paramount chief had ordered the chiefs not to attend the funeral on the same day and to prevent their people from bringing spears. The district officer interpreted the occasion through his understanding of local custom: formerly, funeral dances at graves almost always led to blood-shed, particularly at funerals of chiefs; one of the fiercest wars in the area lasted three years and was originated in an insult delivered at a funeral.²⁵

The most controversial *indingala* at the northern end of Lake Nyasa at the turn of the twentieth century was *indingala ja lukino*, which mission-

aries and later Europeans who witnessed it came to call by the unflattering title of "the war dance" (e.g., Fülleborn 1906: 340; Meyer 1993: 187, 239; Wilson 1987 [1951]: 150; Schumann, in Merensky 1894: 115).²⁶ Throughout the first half of the twentieth century men commonly danced *indíngala ja lukíno* (often referred to in the 1990s as *ja lukíno* or *ja kukína*) at funerals. They roamed and leapt clutching spears, while women circulated among them sounding ululations.²⁷ At least one drum accompanied the dancers. The dance that Schumann witnessed at Chief Mwakalobo's in the midst of the crises of 1892 was a variety of *ja lukíno*. The dance was related to complicated relations between the living and the deceased, the *abasyuka*. In his summary, historian Simon Charsley accurately explained that appropriate ritual actions for the deceased could alleviate troubles experienced or help to avoid troubles foreseen, troubles such as too much or too little rain, not enough sun, lack of success in economic activity, crop failures, a shortage of fish, human and cattle diseases, other natural disasters, and war (Charsley 1969: 66).²⁸ In Selya, Chief Mwaipopo explained to Godfrey Wilson in 1935 that people make war whereas hunger comes from the deceased.²⁹ Dancing *indíngala ja lukíno* at funerals was a way of pleasing the deceased and driving them away, which could prevent misfortunes.

Ja lukíno was controversial to Europeans in part because it represented beliefs they found foreign and unintelligible; but it also had the potential to result in fights as parties from different locations came to dance and to watch dancing at funerals, which were (and remain) among the largest of public feasts. Translating *Kukína* as "war dance," however, is interesting because the verb is perhaps more accurately glossed as "to play." A century ago, Merensky glossed it as "to dance" (1894: 362). The word has a festive connotation and in the 1990s was used to describe what children do and the action of players in a football game. I have no doubt that dancers of *ja lukíno* spoke to missionaries, ethnographers, and government officials of the fighting associated with the dance; people did so in the 1990s. But the fact that people smiled when giving such descriptions along with what we know of the dance's contexts suggests "war dance" is an inappropriate translation and one that reflects colonial constructions of *indíngala* and the Konde/Nyakyusa.

People continued to dance *indíngala ja lukíno* in the years between the wars, and it retained its negative associations among Europeans. Monica Wilson recalled *indíngala ja lukíno* being danced in the 1930s, and almost completely associated it with fighting, although she and Godfrey Wilson "neither saw nor heard of a fight" during their fieldwork (1987 [1951]: 151). Monica Wilson considered that a decrease in fighting was a result of

colonial pacification of the Nyakyusa, that a "mutual dependence in war" had become less of a sanction for village unity. In the following quote, Monica Wilson reported a conversation with a chief concerning fighting and *ja lukino*.

Hostilities often flared up at a funeral when men danced the war dance with spears (*ukukina*). The Nyakyusa interpret this dancing at funerals as an expression of anger at death, a protest against death. . . . But the anger at death very easily emerged into anger against human enemies. "If the men of two chiefdoms or two villages were present at a burial they would quarrel and fight. The fight began when one hurled his spear into the ground and this spewed earth over someone else. Perhaps there would only be a few dancing at first and many sitting down, but when a neighboring chief was seen approaching with his men, and the sound of the trumpets was heard, those already there would say: 'If we sit still they will say there are no men but only women at this funeral. Let us dance too.' So they would all get up and dance, and if the others did anything there would be war. Now the custom of the war dance is dying out. We chiefs control it, and when another chief comes to a funeral we tell all our men to sit down while he and his men dance at the grave, because if we do not, the war of old times is liable to break out."³⁰

This chief told Monica Wilson that chiefs controlled *ja lukino* in the mid-1930s; missionaries had clearly tried to get chiefs to control this dance (e.g., Mackenzie 1925: 161), but at least some of the time chiefs were less able to control *indingala* than this statement suggests. Discussing the mid-1930s, Monica Wilson wrote that "in the old days quarrelsomeness within a village was bad . . . and towards members of another chiefdom it was good. In the wider society of to-day the same distinctions are apparent: the war dance at funerals is limited lest it lead to fighting between villages . . . but admiring audiences watch their friends in the detachment of the King's African Rifles at bayonet drill in Masoko" (Wilson 1987 [1951]: 80–81).³¹ Thus, while chiefs claimed to limit *indingala ja lukino*, "admiring audiences" made their own decisions about what "display" they watched. *Indingala* were "of the chiefs," that is, drums and dances were sponsored and hosted by chiefs and signified their territory, but people continued to watch the performances that engaged them and to learn new dances.

The Wilsons also documented the *ipenenga* dance (pl. *amapenenga*), which is important in part because dancers commonly used objects from the coast and southern Africa, and because it established a prelude to the *ububwesi* practice of *ing'oma*. *Ipenenga* dancers wore *amagolole*, usually blue and white toga-like cloths. One drummer beat an *indingala* with drumsticks, and two other drummers beat smaller drums, called *imbosa*,

while dancers "swaggered" (Wilson 1987 [1951]: 78), slowly waving fly whisks from behind them, over their heads, while moving in pairs through a wide circle. Dancers sometimes carried umbrellas in this dance. It was usual for both men and women to dance *ipenenga*.³² In the 1990s, people danced *ipenenga* in some Lutheran churches, reconfigured, I was told, so that the efforts were for God and not for the ancestors. Despite reconfigurations, dancers explained to me that their performance was authentic because they used umbrellas, fly whisks, and other ritual objects in these new contexts as they had been used in old.

In addition to the more standard sites of *indíngala*, such as funerals and girls' puberty ceremonies, people also danced *ipenenga* at the invitation of chiefs, both their own and foreign. Mungongege, an elderly neighbor during my work near the Mbaka River, explained to me how this worked in the 1930s.

We would go with our *indíngala*. Of course, we would not bring food, we would find food waiting for us there, and they [where we were invited] would cook for us.³³ They would give us a cow which we would kill ourselves. They brought for us bunches of cooking bananas . . . if we had been invited for maybe three days, we would sleep right there. We would all sleep in one place together, but if we were many, they would find for us perhaps three houses. And our wives, many went with us and we danced with them there.³⁴

Mungongege and others assured me that being housed and fed after dancing *ipenenga* was not *ububwesi*, the establishment of reciprocal relations between dancers as in *ing'oma*. But through this explanation we can begin to understand the creation of obligation that could be part of *indíngala*, which is important for understanding the ways people developed *ing'oma*. With *ipenenga*, a chief was obliged to provide food and shelter for visiting dancers. Similar obligations existed with earlier *indíngala* within the land of one chief, but it is unclear about relations between chiefs and foreign dancers; for example, dancers at funerals were not fed as a group but ate with other guests from where they had come.

WAR, LABOR MIGRATION, AND *ING'OMA*

During World War I large numbers of people traveled to foreign places and returned home having witnessed exotic dance traditions. The fact that the war was carried through the countryside meant that people also saw foreign displays performed in their own lands. With increased labor mi-

gration after the war, more people left to stay in foreign areas for longer periods, in contact with distant traditions. It is possible that just after the war people in the area danced *indingala* related to *mganda* dances. Ranger traced varieties of *mganda* in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the 1920s, brought by people such as Charles Sinyangwe, who fought in the battle of Karonga. "When we returned from the war we found Beni," Sinyangwe said. "In the war there was no Beni, there was only fighting." People in Nyasaland reportedly adopted Swahili songs when *beni* arrived from Tanganyika (Ranger 1975: 71).³⁵ Ranger cited Koma-Koma, who described the *mganda* dance traditions as beginning in Usisya, where in 1914 people saw soldiers marching and later tried to imitate them, and the tradition then spread up to Nkhota-kota (Ranger 1975: 117). From Nyasaland, Ranger suggested *mganda* was carried to the Nyasa-speaking villages of the Tanganyikan shore of Lake Nyasa, "and so back into the land of Beni" (and see Gulliver 1955). In Tanganyika, the educated young, situated as they were in a context of limited economic opportunities and intense missionary competition, took to *mganda* at once (Ranger 1975: 121). Ranger quoted an interview concerning the Nyakyusa that claimed a dance that "was called the 'Parade' by the Army in the first world war was copied afterwards by the villagers. The first centre of its origin was Malawi, and then it spread outward to Rungwe district. There was an actual imitation of the army parade with a leader holding a stick, followed by other people behind him. Later some modifications to suit African demands were introduced" (Ranger 1975: 159–60).³⁶

Untangling with precision how and when people developed *indingala* traditions is hindered by the available sources. Government and missionary references to dance tend toward the obscure. Similarly, the Wilsons' otherwise lush ethnographic publications appear arid when examined for material pertaining to dance. For example, we know from published photographs that the Wilsons saw *ipenenga* (1987 [1951], illustration xiv, facing page 131); however, Monica Wilson only referred to the tradition as "swagger," which thus became something like a technical term, or *kumoga*. Wilson glossed *kumoga* broadly as "display," which is interesting if accurate, but in the 1990s *ukumoga* had a use reserved for dancing. Wilson also used *kukína* and "the war dance" to refer to *indingala ja lukíno*. Both of these Nyakyusa words, *ukumoga* and *ukukína*, are verbs, which might make them odd choices for signifying specific dances. The oddity of this choice is underscored by the fact that these dances did have specific names, and that people used those names in the 1930s when the Wilsons were in the field. Godfrey Wilson, for example, wrote about "*ipenenga*" in his field-

notes. Godfrey Wilson was not concerned with dance; he wrote fieldnotes at funerals observing that, now the pagans are dancing pagan dances, now the Christians are dancing and singing. Such distinctions could not be clearly made because at funerals people who were Christians took part in supposedly pagan dances and people who were not Christians sang Christian hymns. We are fortunate, however, that the Wilsons were careful and excessive recorders; although dance was not for them a significant focus of study, they did provide numerous references from which to attempt reconstructions.

Monica Wilson noted dancers who used a "calabash trumpet," which was the form of *mganda* kazoos, and "more sophisticated" dancers wearing "freshly pressed shorts and shirts, or lounge suits and toupees" (Wilson 1987 [1951]: 78, 232).³⁷ It is possible that a *mganda*-like tradition developed during or just after World War I and disappeared, and that people began a different tradition—*ing'oma*—in the early 1930s, similar to what Ranger described for Bukerebe. All of my evidence indicates that the Wilsons witnessed the early days of *ing'oma* rather than the end of an early *mganda* tradition.

The years between the wars are crucial for understanding the Nyakyusa as a "tribe." Government studies and policies, the actions of chiefs and native authorities, professional anthropological research, and missionary policies all sought to define the Nyakyusa. From the early 1920s, the colonial government treated some 200 *abanyafyale* ("chiefs") of roughly equal status in the area as a pool from which to select two each month to judge native cases.³⁸ Beginning in 1926 with indirect rule, eight chiefs became government employees, along with a paramount chief for the Nyakyusa and one for the Kukwe. Chiefs and headmen oversaw tax collection from people in their areas, with paramount chiefs holding "the books" that made chiefs and headmen answerable to them. Chiefs and headmen increasingly had to be responsive to the government beyond their obligations to farmers and laborers in their villages. Their positions directly depended on relations with the government.

In 1935, the Nyakyusa and the Kukwe, which the British administration had defined through the agglomeration of smaller groups of people in 1926, were amalgamated for official government purposes, the new tribe being the Nyakyusa. The government recognized eleven chiefs and no paramounts. The ten-year process of becoming Nyakyusa under indirect rule had not been painless. People told the Wilsons about chiefs working for the government and of the failure or disappearance of rituals that decades before were considered efficacious in alleviating hunger. People expressed

themselves in other ways, such as by burning chiefs' houses. Some chiefs became quite wealthy at this time, acquiring large herds of cattle, marrying tens of wives, purchasing automobiles. Today, rusted frames of these cars can be found in side yards, heirs have married one or two wives, they have no cattle. Mwakatumbula, one of the most powerful chiefs in the area, died in 1955, some said killed by the will of his people for failing to meet his obligations to them.

Between 1934 and 1938, the Wilsons recorded rituals that would come to define the Nyakyusa in anthropology, many of which were aimed at alleviating hunger the likes of which had not been seen in 15 years. The years of the middle 1930s were stressful not only because chiefs fulfilled government expectations of becoming "more definitely government men,"³⁹ but also because of problematic rainfall and a locust invasion, both of which preceded a famine. During these years, locusts consumed crops, diseases spread, and rain fell either far too heavily and flooded fields and washed away crops, or it came and then stopped leaving sprouting plants to wither. In 1933, the year after the locust plague, Tukuyu registered a 40-inch decline in rainfall over the average of the previous 14 years. The year 1934 showed an overall increase, but rains generally failed during planting seasons and were exceptionally heavy during dry seasons.⁴⁰ The famine of the 1930s was a real hunger that people compared with that of the early 1920s following the influenza pandemic and the end of the war (Ellison 1999).

The first decade of indirect rule brought a dramatic change in the volume of labor migration. Long-time administrator R. de Z. Hall described migrations from the area to Mbeya from 1910 to the late 1930s changing from a "trickle" to a "flood."⁴¹ By 1938 the annual turnover of labor at the Lupa gold fields in Mbeya was between 42,000 and 52,000 men—over one-third the workforce came from Rungwe district and stayed on average four to five months. People also went to work in the mines of Northern Rhodesia and South Africa, although not in the volume of coming decades.⁴²

This is the context in which people in the area developed the tradition of *ing'oma* and in which Nyakyusa in its modern sense was defined. Ranger offered a powerful explanation for this. *Beni* dances provided a vehicle for reaction to and comment on indirect rule conservatism, the renewal of missionary paternalism, and the stultifications of the Great Depression; and by the 1930s *beni* was a challenge to European and African enemies of modernization and change (Ranger 1975: 106). The difficulty is to remember that people were not facing a transformation of one unified moral community; rather, the unity was new. People in the 1930s and

1940s who struggled with the material conditions of life were also making new definitions of culture and tradition.

The first to make *ing'oma* drew on knowledge of existing dances. Oral histories are unambiguous that people brought elements of *ing'oma* to Tanganyika from Nyasaland, but there was nothing new in a drumming relationship with the south. Young men, usually those who had been away to labor and had had the chance to see other traditions, went to Nyasaland specifically to establish relations with people there who danced something like *ing'oma*. The relations involved an initial exchange, a payment for being taught the tradition. The teachers instructed the few who arrived and later traveled to their protégés' villages in order to give several days of intensive instruction. This was still how people began *amang'oma* associations in the 1990s and was also the process for the training period.⁴³

By the end of World War II, people across the north end of the lake danced *ing'oma*, but they were only starting to claim it as the Nyakyusa dance. The late Kileke Mwakibinga, who had worked as the Wilsons' cook in the 1930s, told me about dancing "*iputa*" as a traditional Nyakyusa dance in northwest Tanganyika after World War II in celebration of the birth of Prince Charles.⁴⁴ He described the grueling but satisfying experience of dancing and not being fed during the entire day, and then being given a cow for winning a competition. This was not a version of *ing'oma*. The dancers wore *kangas* and some wore *amanyeta*, brass body rings like those worn by men and women in the late nineteenth century. Kileke Mwakibinga provided a reference informative of the process by which people formed cultural identity through dance as they worked abroad.⁴⁵

The first to dance *amang'oma* did so by invitation to compete, but they called those competitions *putika*,⁴⁶ not *imípalano* as competitions later came to be called. With *putika*, an association—not a chief—invited other associations to compete at their village. A home association did not dance; they possibly provided beer for the visitors as groups, not individually, and they did not provide food. The visitors most often returned to their homes at the end of the day when they had finished dancing. *Ing'oma putika* thus had an important difference from earlier traditions of *indíngala*; whereas chiefs had been central in the relationship with outside dancers (e.g., with *ipenenga* they issued invitations and fed and housed the visiting dancers, if needed), they were not involved in *putika*. In the mid- to late 1940s, in what may have been a different wave of *ing'oma* development, people started the practice of *ububwesi*, in which individual association members developed reciprocal relations with members of other associations in other areas through the process of competitive dance. People who began specific

associations in those years explained that *ababwesi* were part of the specific *amang'oma* they learned in Nyasaland.⁴⁷

Ing'oma represented a rift between the ways chiefs constructed Nyakyusa and how farmers and laborers saw themselves. Rather than a contest over authority, however, *ing'oma* was an expression and solidification of a new cultural order by farmers and laborers. (*Ing'oma* can also be seen as a continuation of *indingala*, as a medium in which people interpreted the interface of village life with the wider world, much as turn-of-the-century dancers explained firearms and soldiers.) To the extent that there was a contest between people and chiefs, it was less about authority than about signification and definition, about the power of public culture. People had regarded *indingala* as belonging to a chief, but this was not the case with *ing'oma* when the associations were new. As it was explained to me in 1996 by Mwisalege, who was among those who began the renowned association Kanyasi in Busale, their first *ing'oma* was not "of the *umalafyale*," as were other *indingala*; rather, it was "of the players."

Mwisalege: The first one, that one it was ours. Kanyasi. It was simply ours.

James Ellison: The *umalafyale* was not involved?

Mwisalege: No. Today, it has been grabbed by *utamaduni*—the government—so we pay taxes.⁴⁸

The uniqueness of *ing'oma* was also shown by the fact that some people claimed that technically *amang'oma* were not *indingala*, whereas *indingala* is the general term for drums and dancing traditions.⁴⁹ Chiefs had virtually no decision-making power in *amang'oma*, and some people claimed—often contrary to observable evidence—that chiefs did not dance *ing'oma*.

Finally, by constructing *boma* for dance competitions, farmers and laborers raided the tribal discourse of chiefs and the colonial government. *Boma* was widely employed in colonial Swahili in eastern and central Africa to refer to a seat of government. Ranger interpreted the use of *boma* by *mganda* players, along with adoption of European terms and artifacts, as a means to apprehend a modernity that was becoming less accessible. Association members made a drum *boma* by planting large shade trees, most often *imipandapanda* trees. People liked *imipandapanda* trees because they provided good shade, but they were also important historically. In late precolonial and early colonial times, ritual specialists planted these trees when chiefs took control of a territory, and the trees were said to be signs of the chiefs. As Charsley (1969: 85–86) summarized, the "success [of the

trees] is thought to be linked with the success of the prince [chief] and his people. . . . At their foot the [chief] should finally be buried, and around them will then grow up a sacred grove." In the 1990s, many such groves existed, although taboos surrounding them had declined. The significance of the trees had also changed: *imipandapanda* trees in the 1990s were thoroughly associated with dance *boma*, not with chiefs. Dance associations planted the trees and held competitions at their *boma*. Dance associations held meetings at their *boma*, such as those to hear a case against a member accused of violating association rules. Village meetings—not government meetings, but meetings for so-called customary matters such as witchcraft and illness cases—were also held at the dance *boma*.⁵⁰

Thus, in developing competitive dance as an expression of a new cultural order, people appropriated some of the most obvious signs of social power, of ties to fertility, and of relations with ancestors. With competitive dance associations, people formed local ties independent of colonial structures. Their associations brought contemporary realities of the wider world into focus in villages. Through dance competitions people traveled across what had been culturally variegated landscapes to dance. With the practice of *ububwesi*, the reciprocal exchanges between members of different associations at competitions, people forged ties among those with whom they were shaping their new cultural order.

CONCLUSION

In the 1990s, the Nyakyusa were among the largest ethnic groups in Tanzania. Nyakyusa people live at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, from the Malawi border around to the Livingstone Mountains and up into Mbeya district. This chapter has shown that Nyakyusa is an entity with a colonial history. I have examined competitive dance in the area because in the 1990s it was claimed as traditional and as an emblem of Nyakyusa culture. Understanding that both Nyakyusa and competitive dance have colonial histories, I have tried to explore competitive *ing'oma* dances as a discussion about history and culture, as a history that converges with that of cultural identity and that can help to explain how people in the countryside formed a Nyakyusa community. This is not a totally new idea; Ranger (1975: 78) suggested that *beni* dances could be a "decoder" of Lamu history," in which "Lamu oral tradition explains [*beni*] in a dramatic way, which can serve as a sort of parable of Lamu social change." There is a need to analyze dances as multifaceted and as expressions of the sorts

of new cultural orders that people were making as they began *ing'oma* associations.

It is possible that post-independence border restrictions between Tanzania and Malawi contributed to *ing'oma* remaining a relatively stable Nyakyusa tradition, although it has undergone changes since the 1930s, and people break up and remake associations. Ranger suggested that the restrictions gave *beni* a particularizing role, in contrast to *beni* formerly reflecting an enlargement of cultural scale. Border restrictions slowed traffic in ideas and goods across the Songwe River, but those relations did not stop. Since restrictions were lifted, interactions in dance analogous to those in earlier times have flourished.

In 1996, the governing party called on dancers from Rungwe and Kyela districts to represent local culture and tradition while officially welcoming the national independence torch to southwest Tanzania. In both Kyela town on Lake Nyasa and Kiwira, some 30 to 40 miles north, near Mount Rungwe, the party called out *amang'oma* dancers, represented by two different associations at each location who staged competitions. *Amang'oma* were not alone at the festivities, and the additional performances illustrate differences between Kyela's and Kiwira's dances. In Kiwira to the north, dancers performed *ipenenga*, and others danced *imbeeta*, which has no drums. *Ipenenga* and *imbeeta* dancers were all elderly and came from different villages, since there were no coherent associations for these performances in the 1990s. In Kyela, two *samba* associations and an *ikihoda* association accompanied *amang'oma*. *Samba*, also called *musondo*, was danced by male youth mostly under the age of 20. Girls and young unmarried women, accompanied by a man playing a drum, danced *ikihoda*, which has a longer regional history than *samba* (see Gulliver 1955). *Ikihoda* was related to a dance in Malawi called *indoolo*. *Samba* and *ikihoda* dancers organized associations, often simply referred to as the *samba* and *ikihoda*, respectively, recalling references to *ing'oma* associations. Both were said to have originated in Malawi, and both were danced widely in Kyela district and northern Malawi near the lake, but they were rare in the hills and mountains of Rungwe district to the north. Both *samba* and *ikihoda* associations danced *imipalano* competitions similar to those of *amang'oma*, including *ububwesi*, reciprocating partners in other villages. Through these competitions people built relationships from Kyela district into Malawi and down the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa.

In the 1990s, each dance association paid an annual culture tax and registered with the government as a cultural institution. Throughout Tanzania, the government registered associations and called on them to play

at government occasions, so that each area had its official traditional dances. A young man from Iringa who was living near Tukuyu told me that a few people in Iringa began a dance association that resembled *ing'oma*, but they were denied permission to play at official independence torch festivities and the group fell apart. Permission was denied, he said, because the district government wanted dances that were originally of the area.⁵¹

Dances in a knowable history of southwest Tanzania have never been permanent; rather, people have always changed them, in part through interaction with people and traditions in other areas. Young generations used inherited *indingala* to make new *indingala*. The *samba* is a current example, an analogy for *ing'oma* in the 1930s and 1940s, that ideas in the realms of bureaucracy and ethnology about ethnic traditions overlap with but differ from the performances people chose to make and to watch and the ways they formed their cultural identities. Farmers and laborers who were the focus of official definitions of the Nyakyusa had their own ideas about the social order. Through competitive dance and people's lived experiences abroad and at home, they formed a new cultural identity with a ritual, a competitive dance.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this chapter was published as "Competitive Dance and Social Identity: Converging Histories in Southwest Tanzania," in Gunderson and Barz (2000). This chapter draws from research in Tanzania and South Africa from 1994 through 1996, funded in part by a J. William Fulbright grant, for which I am grateful. I am indebted to many people in southwest Tanzania, in particular Jacob Bansigile Mwakitwange and the Kibonde *ing'oma* association. Archivists at the Tanzania National Archives (TNA), the University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives Department (UCT), and the Rungwe Mission Archives (RMA) made possible references to sources in those archives. I retain responsibility for the interpretations in this chapter. An idiomatic translation might be "take the fight to them." The /ing'-/ of *ing'oma* is pronounced like the English word "sing" without the /s/, to which the English speaker then adds -oma to complete the word. Some spoke of fly whisks as imports from South Africa and referred to them as horsetails, but they were probably wildebeest tails (see Pels 1999).
2. For a more detailed treatment of these related histories see Ellison (1999).
3. A form of the word *ing'oma* or the Swahili *ngoma* was not a part of Nyakyusa lexicon prior to the development of this tradition.
4. "Aba" indicates human plural, similar to "wa" in Swahili. Titles were often

brought into Nyakyusa language within their appropriate noun classes, "unkingi/abakingi." Exceptions included the abstract "sajenti."

5. "*Tuje beelu*" is an ambiguous statement when translated from Nyakyusa into English. The following are possible glosses: so that we are clear (i.e., stand out or are understood); so that we are clean (i.e., sharp in appearance, the dance is understandable); so that we please; so that we are transparent (thus avoiding the effects of harmful medicines). *Tuje beelu* could be juxtaposed with statements on ritual and health found in Janzen (1992) and in the works of Turner (e.g., 1968) coming from eastern and central Africa, as well as with Monica Wilson's (1957, 1959) analyses of rituals of transition in this area in the 1930s.

6. Ranger (1975: 120) cited Koma-Koma discussing the *boma* in the *mganda* of Malawi as the whole group of dancers and the place where they met, usually with large trees or a tree for shelter. *Boma* was the colonial seat of government. In southwest Tanzania in the 1990s, *boma* referred to the place where competitions were held.

7. Keti Salemba, Ibigi, Ilolo, September 15, 1996. Keti, a longtime member of the Free Moravian Church, described for me how, if people watch *ing'oma*, they begin to move with the music, and if they have done that, then they too are dancing it, and so to watch is to dance.

8. *Beni* was criticized in *Mambo Leo* in 1928 for its extravagances, its bankrupting effect, the complaint being that participants denied their children food to put forward fleeting appearances of wealth (Ranger 1975: 97–98). Similar criticisms in the 1990s were standard, if weak. Many dancers were Christians with children they cared well for.

9. In one sense, Ranger's suggestion provided a precedent for Pels' view (1996: 165ff) that dances resolved crises that arose in Luguru history.

10. The statements are also made compelling in light of how other writers have since examined the relationship between dance and identity (e.g., Daniel 1995, ch. 5; Declich 1995; Simon 1989).

11. Using census data and lexicography, Knut Felberg (1996: x) estimated the population in the 1990s who spoke a variety of Nyakyusa as a first language to be about 800,000. This figure included nearly all of the people in Rungwe and Kyela districts and substantial numbers in Mbeya. A further estimate is that there are roughly one million people who speak as a first language the closely related and mutually intelligible Nyakyusa and Ngonde languages. The 1988 Tanzania census did not distinguish ethnicity.

12. Ethnic constructions appear to have gained validity through the positioning of some narrators with greater access to the means to record, present, and preserve their versions, thus there is a common assumption that social anthropology, colonial administrators, and/or missionaries created African ethnicities. It is, however, merely an assumption that colonial administrators, anthropologists, native authorities, and farmers and laborers at the northern end of Lake Nyasa referred to the

same things when talking about Nyakyusa, Ngonde, Ndali, and Kinga, for example. See Ellison (1999).

13. Based on an account in Merensky (1894: 115), cited in Fülleborn (1906: 322) and Charsley (1969: 67).

14. "Akandu akeelu"; the name varies in oral histories. Interview, Tumbwene Kilasi, Ibigi, Ilolo, September 15, 1996.

15. Theodor Meyer to Buchner, August 25, 1891, cited in Prein (1995: 59); Merensky (1894). Only recently has a detailed history of the centuries before the arrival of the Europeans been undertaken (Weber 1996; and see Kalinga 1985).

16. The Moravian history is discussed in detail in Prein (1995). For a similar process in later years see Ellison (1999); see Iliffe (1979: 318–341), Wright (1971). Fülleborn (1902) presents tables with the claimed tribe ("stamm") of origin of the parents of people he measured. Some of these include the names of chiefs, some references to places.

17. Based on my recording of the term's use and notes from archival sources. The definition is similar for the 1990s to what it was earlier this century (Felberg 1996: 47). *Indingala* is thus analogous to the word *ngoma* in Swahili. For Janzen (1992), *ngòmà* is proto-Bantu for "drum" and "song-dance," and this should extend to the area concerned in this chapter. However, in Nyakyusa language the closest related "*ing'oma*" refers to the particular tradition and did not come into widespread use until the 1940s.

18. In this chapter I refer to the Swahili translation of Meyer's book; English translations from that text are my own. *Ingweta* is probably Fülleborn's "hour-glass" shaped drum (1906: 338).

19. Meyer (1993: 53) described one such dance; descriptions of *unsegela* come from interviews with Ambwene Mwasambungu Mwansele, Kibonde, Lupata, June 3, 1995; Andwele Mwambepo Mwalupufu, Kibonde, Lupata, October 10, 1995, and at Inguti, November 18, 1995; Kunyatuka Mwambepo Mwalupufu, Inguti, November 18, 1995; Jeki Mwakalimbo, Butola, Busoka, October 2, 1996. See Fülleborn's discussion (1906: 338–340) of men and women dancing together. MacKenzie (1925: 160–161) described four dances at the northwest corner of the lake that involved lines of men and women, *ikimbimbi*, *ingwata*, and *amasere*, and also *ikindundulu*, which was danced without drums; he did not mention *unsegela*.

20. Poliki Mwambepo, Ipoma, Lupata, December 9, 1995; Supete Mwisalege, Kibonde, Lupata, September 21, 1996; Jeki Mwakalimbo, Butola, Busoka, October 2, 1996. It is possible that Monica Wilson included a picture of *unsegela* in *Good Company* (1987 [1951], illustration xiii, facing page 130). However, see below concerning the Wilsons and dance. The dance was recently revived or had continued in areas such as Masoko and Mbaka, where it was danced by youth for entertainment in the 1990s. Simon Daniel Mwakasomola told me in July 1996, Landani, Mbaka, about dancing *unsegela*.

21. In the 1930s some people said that *indingala* were present in the land of the deceased, *ubusyuka*; GW16:40, BC880.

22. Knowledge of how to deal with this problem was spread through the medium of *indingala*. Johnson (1964 [1939]: 459) gave "tekenya" as the Swahili for jigger, saying they are usually called *funza*.

23. Reverend Andulile Mwafingulu, Kisungu, Ikombe, September 27, 1996; see also the discussion in Jens Hensen's day book (RMA) concerning Moravian elders' debate over the uses of locally produced alcohol in the early 1940s. Ambilike Mwasakyeni, Itekele, Ilolo, September 14, 1996, recalled that missionaries did not oppose the *ipenenga* dance (which was probably in the 1920s).

24. Meyer did not clarify "head of the village," nor did he discuss where or what people danced or from where the bull was procured, or the structure of the dance group. My understanding of such groups is that there was no formal membership, that criteria for dancing loosely involved age, residence, and ability.

25. Based on a report by DO Rungwe to PC Iringa, 27 April 1928, TNA 18/1.

26. Mackenzie provided photos of the dance, which he referred to as the "death dance" (1925: 280, 296); and see the photos in Wilson (1959, facing pages 20 and 21). Argyle (1991: 80) noted that "war dance" was "a common South African English term for *ingoma*" in the first half of this century in South Africa. The Ewe Kpegsu drum in West Africa was called a "war drum" in English, which contrasts with descriptions of it: "its songs give advice from the ancestors, its dance embodies power. A performance of Kpegsu affirms life and gives respect to the dead" (Locke 1992: 12). One master drummer explained, "How to sing and advise the children of doing good things—that is why [the elders] created their Kpegsu group" (Godwin Agbeli cited in Locke 1992: 13).

27. As Monica Wilson described it, "men charge up and down with spears, displaying their strength, and take umbrage at the slightest thing" (Wilson 1987 [1951]: 80).

28. Monica Wilson (1987 [1951]: 73) neglected *indingala* and saw neighbors' obligations at a funeral as limited to bringing food, firewood, and belts, saying they took no part in elaborate rituals to cleanse the relatives, drive the thought of the deceased from their minds, or bring back the spirit to bless the homes.

29. Mwaipopopo, July 15, 1935, GW25, 75-6, BC880.

30. Wilson (1987 [1951]: 151). She offered no clarification of "trumpets" in the text.

31. The bayonet drills bore obvious resemblance to the *ingili* position in *ing'oma*. Wilson also noted, significantly: "This detachment was not supposed to include Nyakyusa who were recruited for a detachment stationed outside the district, but in fact Nyakyusa got in by posing as men from Ngonde, Nyasaland."

32. Interviews with Mungongege Mwambingu Mwankumbi, Landani, Mbaka, July 19, 1996; Kunyonywa Lujelo, Ibaga, Ilundo, October 7, 1996. Tabita Ngoka kana Ikambo, Mbambo, July 21, 1996.

33. They were given foods. In Nyakyusa language, giving someone a gift is spoken of as "cooking for" them.

34. Mungongege Mwambingu Mwankumbi, Landani, Mbaka, July 19, 1996;

Ambwene Mwasambungu Mwansele, Kibonde, Lupata, June 3, 1995, described *ipenenga* dancers in Lupata invited from Ngonde areas and given a cow; Anangisye Mwansule Mwakigali Mwakyusa, Igembe, Lupata, January 17, 1996.

35. Sinyangwe returned home from the war and found *beni*, which makes a cloudy causal argument. I recorded no oral histories that tell of a *mganda*-like dance in this area in the early 1920s.

36. This reference in Ranger's book is problematic. Ranger introduced it as a statement by Mr. Mwambene, who did the research, but the text citation is to Reverend Lazarus Mwanjisi. Mwanjisi was also cited stating that the "parade" branched into three dances, *ming'oma*, *mapenenga*, and *mipalano*. *Amapenenga*, as we have seen, are quite different than *mganda*-like dances. *Imipalano* (sing., *umpalano*) are *ing'oma* competitions. Mwanjisi was a devout Moravian at the time of the war and later founded his own church, which forbade participating in or watching dances.

37. The Wilson archives contain an undated photograph of *ing'oma* dancers from their 1937 trip to Nyasaland, see Ellison (1999: 282–283). Monica Wilson's comments here refer to the period between 1934 and 1938.

38. New Langenburg district annual reports for the years 1919 and 1920, TNA; Rungwe district annual reports for the years 1922 and 1923, TNA; "Native courts" [n.d.], Rungwe district book, TNA MF 2; R. de Z. Hall, "Handbook for local courts, local courts memorandum no. II," October 21, 1950, 7, TNA 18/1/27.

39. Rungwe district annual report for the year 1924, January 12, 1925, 2–4; see also Rungwe district annual report for the year 1923, January 16, 1924, TNA.

40. "Agricultural officer annual report 1934," copied in GW36, 150-1, BC880.

41. R. de Z. Hall, "Migrations of Wanyakyusa into Mbeya district: Report on the infiltration of Wanyakyusa from the Rungwe district into the Mbeya district," November 30, 1941, 12, TNA 25827 Vol. II.

42. DO Tukuyu to DC A. Savage, Karonga, October 18, 1938; [R. de Z. Hall?] to ADO Tukuyu, October 19, 1938; "Labor report 1937," DO Tukuyu, January 13, 1938. All in TNA 18/L1/20.

43. *Ijando* were not circumcision rituals but the practices for the competition season of *ing'oma*. Like the word *ing'oma*, no form of *ijando* existed in Nyakyusa language before the beginning of this dance tradition.

44. Interview at Itete, Kabembe, January 13, 1996.

45. And he provided the only reference I have to *iputa*. *Ukuípúúta* is the verb to pray and was used to describe the act of prayer to the ancestors in the early twentieth century, but I did not learn of an association of it with this dance.

46. Angubuka Mwakyusa, Kibonde, Lupata, July 6, 1996; Supete Mwisalege, Kibonde, Lupata, September 21, 1996; Silivanos Isaa Twalagusyaga, Ikombe, September 27, 1996. I could determine no other gloss for *putika* in Nyakyusa language. I found no relation between this and *iputa* as described by Kileke Mwakibinga.

47. For example, Supete Mwisalege, Kibonde, Lupata, September 21, 1996.

48. Kibonde, Lupata, September 21, 1996. *Utamaduni* (Swahili) refers to cul-

tural practices and Mwisalege used the Swahili term to indicate taxes on cultural associations. This separation from chiefs forces a reinterpretation of information presented in Ranger (1975: 160) by Lazarus Mwanjisi and Mr. Mwambene, that claimed each chief had a dance team before TANU removed chiefs. People did form associations in areas governed by chiefs, and in fact associations in the 1950s did come to refer to chiefs, as had earlier dances. But that was not how they began.

49. For example, Jacob Bansigile Mwakitwange, Kibonde, Lupata, June 9, 1995; Kileke Mwakibinga, Itete, Kabembe, January 13, 1996. It was not uncommon, however, to hear reference to "indíngala" when *ing'oma* was the topic.

50. *Ing'oma* practices, called *ijando*, were not held at *boma*. Practices were held at other places, which were then referred to as *ijando*, under other shade trees, commonly *imitánda* or mango trees. In the village where I began learning the Nyakyusa language, village-wide meetings were also held under an *umpandapanda* tree, although it was not a *boma*. After my first few weeks as a resident I was asked to explain my work at such a meeting, under an *umpandapanda* tree.

51. "Ngoma za jadi." "Jadi" (Swahili) implies genealogical ties in origins. The conversation was in Tukuyu, October 5, 1996.

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