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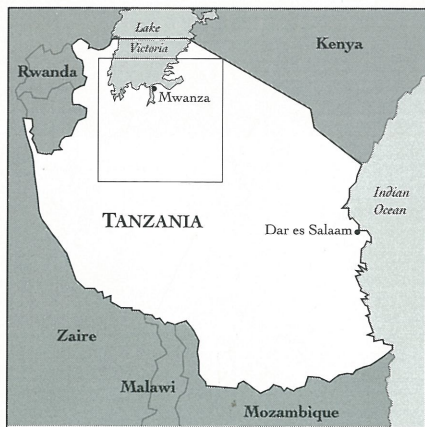
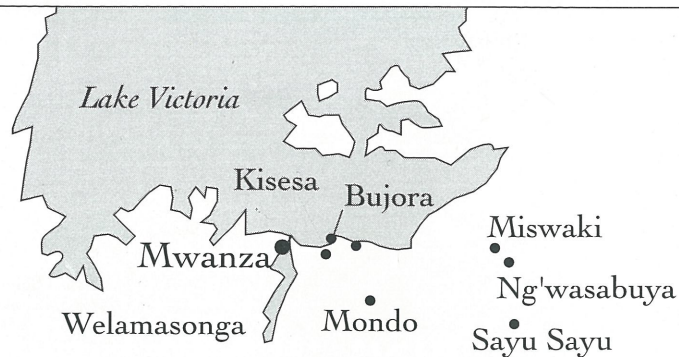
# Tanzania

## Music of the Farmer Composers of Sukumaland

*We Never Sleep, We Dream of Farming*

MUSIC OF THE EARTH





- Seke
- Ng'wajiginya

# Tanzania

## MUSIC OF THE FARMER COMPOSERS OF SUKUMALAND *We Never Sleep, We Dream of Farming*

### Track Listing

#### Bagalu Medicine Society Songs (Tracks 1-3)

1. Bak'balangalanga  
farmer's society  
"Tulibise Bakibulya..." :1:05
2. "Idiri Iya Shimba"  
Ng'wana Dukii'la  
"Tulibise Bakibulya..." :4:0
3. Lushita Ng'wana Nzwilendo  
"Gaya Maya Wane..." :4:6

#### Historical Songs, 1840-1980 (Tracks 4-17)

4. Kang'wii'na Mwami Ng'wana  
Mihumo  
"Lile Lilwa..." :1:10
5. Kang'wii'na Mwami Ng'wana  
Mihumo  
"Aliselema..." :2:4
6. Kang'wii'na Mwami Ng'wana  
Mihumo  
"Barugaruga..." :4:0

7. Kalulumija Ng'wana Nkwabi  
"Nani Opemba Numba Yane..." :1:18
8. Jige Malahe "Nani Opemba  
Numba Yane..." :2:2
9. Jiyoga Hamala Ng'wana  
Chii'ra  
"Shiganga Jilikenya..." :1:15
10. Gembe Ng'honela  
Ng'wana Makanga  
"Bing'we Mukujaga Kaya..." :3:5
11. Buseng'wa Ng'wana Bulahya  
"Yanikwi Lilaga Bana Bane..." :1:32
12. Edward Shing'oma  
"Kidako Sfafumelile..." :1:18
13. Kang'wii'na Mwami  
Ng'wana Mihumo  
"Nchilu Bulacka..." :5:9
14. Kang'wii'na Mwami  
Ng'wana Mihumo  
"Bana Bagosha..." :5:6

15. Edward Shing'oma  
"Ang'bwayegile Neyo..." :1:07
16. Edward Shing'oma  
"Kilya Mang'ondi..." :1:31
17. Edward Shing'oma  
"Aba Baba..." :1:10

#### Life-Cycle Songs (Tracks 18-20)

18. Maria Sago Ng'wana  
Malando  
"Nene Natembaga..." :1:31
19. Maria Sago Ng'wana  
Malando  
"Kubyala Ng'waka  
Kibama..." :1:36
20. Maria Sago Ng'wana  
Mihumo  
"Nsabi na Kale  
Atenanema..." :1:04

*These songs do not have titles in the traditional sense. Italicized words in quotes represent the opening line of each song. Because these are field recordings, there may be some extraneous noise despite the high fidelity utilized.*

## Labor Songs (Tracks 21-28)

21. *Basumba* horn calling  
Ng'wajiginya village youth  
to the labor site. :33
22. Paulo Chanii'ra Kazungu  
Mafanyanga "Gembe Nagema  
Ng'wanone..." 1:52
23. Charles Kanga Kasubi  
Ng'wana Mhoja  
"Nakalima..." 2:16
24. Ng'holo Kasongo  
"Ilelo Hulala Haa..." 1:05
25. *Kazwala Chii'za*  
Women's self-help group  
"Nene Nandikwa na Mwinyi..." 1:42
26. Miswaki Primary School  
millet-threshing song 1:03
27. *Bapachanga* farmer's society  
cotton planting song 1:34
28. *Banunguli* farmer's society  
cotton planting song 2:02

## Post Harvest Festivity Songs (Tracks 29-31)

29. Miswaki village neighbor's  
help society  
"Witaidii G'bwii Langiko  
Ugogo..." 3:34
30. Miswaki village *Wigaa'she*  
singers  
"Nene Nalintuji wa Matuta..." 1:42
31. Kisu'nun'ha and his elder's  
council  
"Nakenbelwa Habari..." 3:35

## Dance Competition Songs (Tracks 32-35)

32. Bak'balangalanga farmer's  
society  
"Linbale..." 1:20
33. Bak'balangalanga farmer's  
society *Bugobogobo* dance piece  
"Makofi..." 1:41
34. Bak'balangalanga farmer's  
society *Mashindano*  
victor's dance 1:35
35. *Kujitegemea* dance society  
*Bununguli* dance piece 1:16

## Narrative Competition *Wigaa'she* Songs (Tracks 36-38)

36. Shing'wenda Ng'wana Sii'ta  
"Nzala Pye..." 2:17
37. Hoja Ng'wana Butemi  
"Gutaponyaga Mpini..." 4:24
38. "Idiri Iya Shimba"  
Ng'wana Dukii'la  
"Yatula Bugong'bo..." 7:27

## Bagika Medicine Society Songs (Tracks 39-41)

39. Sii'ta Mabushi Ng'wana  
Mhogota  
"Yilipogomela..." 2:03
40. Buseng'wa Ng'wana Bulahya  
"Tulibanga Ngika Hee..." :45
41. Buseng'wa Ng'wana Bulahya  
"Nasen'be Ng'wi Mibanga..." 1:38

*Total Time: 67 minutes*

## Field Notes

by Frank Gunderson

# Tanzania

These recordings are highlights of the enormous variety of farmers' music from Sukumaland, an area just south of Lake Victoria in Northwestern Tanzania. The relationship between music and labor is evident throughout Sukuma history, whether in pre-colonial ritual elephant and porcupine hunting societies, late nineteenth century Nyamwezi-Sukuma singing porter societies, or dancing farmers during the colonial and post-colonial era. Today in Sukumaland, farmer musicians, or farmers who compose and perform music, introduce themselves in public interactions as farmers first (*I am a farmer, I hold a hoe*) and as musicians second (*I am also a dancer, I twirl a hoe*). The Sukuma farmer's identification with music operates on many psychological and cultural levels in his or her life, from childhood to old age. It is reinforced most expressively in the

farmer's dance societies via song and dance, both during the labor process or during post-harvest competitions. These recordings represent the historical and current performance practice of this phenomenon in Sukuma society.

## The Sukumaland Composers of Tanzania

In Sukumaland, songs (*mimbo*) are composed by farmer composers or *baringi* (sing: *ningi*), a term that signifies troubadour, singer, composer, and scandal monger. *Baringi* are the dance conductor-leaders and organizers of festive dance-labor societies. The term also has supernatural connotations, as an important aspect of the *baringi's* work is their communication with dead ancestors (*masamva*), who are the assumed source of new musical compositions. As the living representatives of ancestors, *baringi*





are imbued with the power to invoke, forge, transform, manipulate and destroy through their words and deeds; a power which is held in awe and fear by ordinary people. The Sukuma understand that songs are transmitted to *baringi* by ancestors through ritual dreams, an act which signifies the crucial first step of the creative process. These songs are then remembered the next morning in

an act called "capturing the song" and are subsequently fleshed out and fine tuned via oral transmission to the initiate-followers or co-workers at the farm site (*shamba*) or dance practice area (*lubuu'ga*). Finally, songs are displayed publicly in fierce competitions (*mashindano*), completing the creative transmission cycle which links the *masamva* to the public (*ban'bu*) via the *baringi*.

## Shiloti sha Masamva (Ancestral Dreams) and Music Composition

Dreams (*shiloti*) represent the primary realm where *masamva* have direct contact with humans. The Sukuma believe that their *masamva* are generally neutral forces, who occasionally favor living entities with whom they have special interests. Ancestors are thought to have a multivalent pervasiveness in everyday life and are most felt present in the compound early in the morning before dawn. All Sukuma theoretically have access to their ancestors via dreams, but some are better at negotiating such contacts than others. It is thought that those rich with cows get rich because they have strong *masamva*. The Sukuma public feel that it is particularly the musically inclined, the *baringi* and the *bafumu* (medicine healers) who receive these special favors.

Many practicing Sukuma composers believe that the *masamva* are the true composers of songs and are not just "sources of inspiration." Others differentiate between *mimbo ga masamva* (songs from ancestors) and

*mimbo ga masala* (songs based on "cleverness") and testify that they are not the same thing, nor do they have the same impact.

## Becoming a Ningi

There are several ways by which one can become a composer. The primary and most distinctive method is following one's birthright. There are numerous ancestral clans known far and wide for their production of well-known and distinguished composers. These composers are often chosen for training by significant elders within the clan.

The term *luganda*, or "clan" in Kisukuma, signifies a variety of social groupings that need to be outlined in brief. First and foremost is its use in relation to one's blood right or ancestral heritage. Second is its use with labor groups: all labor groups, whether they have musical traditions or not, are called *luganda*. Third is its use in association with festive dance-labor groups with musical and compositional traditions.

Many Sukuma argue that the best composers are born into this work and that those who come from strong



composing bloodlines are the best composers. Evidence exists to support this argument as most well-known composers do indeed come from strong composer clan lines. Of those that argue this position there is considerable discussion as to whether this is because of *masamva*, home environment, or some combination of both (perhaps a localized equivalent of the “Nature or Nurture” debate). Shing’wenda Sii’ta (see **example 36**) relates that his is a clan with a long history of composers, so that *bumani bo kubeja mimbo* (compositional intelligence) “is just in his head and blood.” The singer Makanga (see **example 10**) mentions however that:

“Good composers are born into good clans, where the craft is around. In the family, he or she can see how this work is done. Every clan is like this. You see how people do this work, how they practice, then you try what they do until you can do it also, until you can do the musical work of your clan. For example, you might go at night and see how the *wazee* (old men) play the bell, if you are born into this environment this is a natural occurrence, you will do it and follow it because this is your custom and culture.”

### Sukuma Song Transmission to Initiates and Associates

*Baringi* are not just performers and entertainers, but are also thought of as role models, as “grandmothers” or “grandfathers,” or teachers to their initiates and coworkers. According to Hamala Chii’ra (**selection 9**): “...We are indeed

*Sukuma youth labor group  
working and singing in unison.*



teachers. We are putting out our teachings, this is school. We make sure they are there to learn, and we teach them with our songs. We teach them how to play.”

The majority of my sources cite *mimbo ga pointi*, or “songs with points,” as another crucial element in the successful transmission process from teacher to initiate. These are the songs that stick in the mind of both the workers and the spectators who come to see the composer. These are also the songs most likely to be remembered by general audiences. Hamala adds: “A song without relevant meaning to its listener will be forgotten easily. So if you have *mimbo ga pointi*, people will sing it and others will pick it up. For this to happen the song needs to have sweetness (*butamu*) and meaning (*bumani*) so that those who listen will take it home with them.”

Songs are considered teachings, as evident in the Sukuma proverb, *nukulaga gasbi amimbo gakulagaga*, or “there are real teachings in ten songs.” *Malika ga mbii’na* are considered educative institutions or “schools of

thought.” Farmers’ dance societies are especially likened to schools by those who can’t afford government schooling or who are on the periphery of the reach of government schools.

New full-fledged members in farmers’ dance societies are called *babemba* (from the verb *kubembeka*: to initiate), and rank and file members are called *banyalali*. As *babemba*, the initiates first learn basic musicianship; the building materials of the music. *Babemba* help the composer in his or her work, by contributing to their support, rallying around them in times of crisis, and obeying their orders without hesitation. *Babemba* take the names of their teachers when they have graduated. This act further establishes a composer’s lineage and links the student to the *masamva* of his teacher, even if the student and teacher are not truly related by blood. Thus a student from a strong blood lineage of composers who takes on a teacher outside of his clan can have access to multiple *masamva*, once he or she takes the proper initiatory medicine and the name of the new teacher.

## The Selections

### *Bagalu* Medicine Society Songs (Tracks 1-3)

1. *Bak'balangalanga*  
(Ground Nut Picker Society):  
"Tulibise Bakibulya...,"  
Miswaki village, 8/15/94.
2. "Idiri Iya Shimba" Ng'wana  
Dukii'la:  
"Tulibise Bakibulya...,"  
Welamasonga village, 12/21/94.
3. Lushita Ng'wana Nzwilendo:  
"Gaya Maya Wane...,"  
Isangidjo village, 11/23/94.

The *Bagalu* are one of two competing Sukuma medicine societies dating from the late nineteenth century, the other society being the *Bagika*. All Sukuma farmers with an interest in music performance align themselves with one of these two groups for life and receive in return the esoteric musical and medicinal knowledge that comes from such membership. The two societies were once one, the *Bagika*, but split in a power dispute over the use of medicines. The two societies began to formally compete in

the 1920s in what became wildly popular post-harvest song competitions. These are the primary form of entertainment for the Sukuma to this day. The **first two selections** are differing versions of the same song composed by Gumha, the first *Bagalu* leader, at the turn of the century. The song depicts an incident where the composer Gumha was poisoned by a jealous rival, but eventually recovered in full strength. This song is the most well known *Bagalu* song and is considered a trademark or ritual theme song for them. This song, as well as the **third selection**, "*Gaya Maya Wane...*," also composed by Gumha, is sung while preparing medicines, preparing for song competitions (*m'bina*), or at victory celebrations.

### Historical Songs Composed 1840-1980 (Tracks 4-17)

- 4-6. Kang'wii'na Mwami Ng'wana  
Mihumo:  
(4) "*Lile Lelwa Nera Masasi...*,"  
(5) "*Aliselema...*,"

- (6) "*Barugaruga...*,"  
Isangidjo village, 12/20/94.

In Sukumaland, history is encoded in song and passed on from generation to generation. Each performance brings back to life in the minds of its listeners the tragedy and wonder of the past. **Selections four to six** are examples of nineteenth century migrant labor songs, including porter, soldier, and traveler's songs. The singer of these three pieces is remembering songs taught to him as a child by his grandfather and great uncle, while threshing millet during the 1920s. The singer emphasizes that these songs were sung in the fields and transmitted there by the migrant laborers to their friends and relatives after they had returned home to their farms. The **fourth and fifth selections**, "*Lile Lelwa Nera Masasi...*" and "*Aliselema...*," are porter songs.

During the mid-nineteenth century, Arab ivory hunters and slave traders hired young Sukuma and Nyamwezi men as porters to take them from the East African coast to the Great Lakes region and back. These songs, sung from the porters'

point of view and used in a call-and-response fashion while on the road, complain bitterly about the hardships of life on the road and about the porters' cruel mistreatment at the hands of the Arab traders. The **sixth selection**, "*Barugaruga...*," is a soldiers' song, used initially by the marching armies of Chief Mirambo, the notorious raider of central Tanzania in the nineteenth century. The song reemerged one hundred years later after independence, where it was used by compulsory youth-service labor groups. The composer tells the soldiers to strengthen their hearts, as they should be proud of their service.

7. Kalulumija Ng'wana Nkwabi:  
"Nani Opemba Numba Yane...,"  
Ng'wasabuya village, 7/20/94.
8. Jige Malahe:  
"Nani Opemba Numba Yane...,"  
Isangidjo village, 12/20/94.
9. Jiyoga Hamala Ng'wana Chii'ra:  
"*Shiganga Jilikenya...*,"  
Ng'wajiginya village, 8/17/95.

**Selections seven and eight** are versions of the same very well-known song from the war of Itilima in 1898. The song refers to Ibelenge, the war



captain for Chief Balele of Ntusu. In a series of retributive raids against Chief Balele's uncle Mashindike, who was leading an uprising against the throne, Iberenge burned and raided villages suspected of involvement. The song asks, "*Who has burned down my hut?*", "*Iberenge.*" "*We shall go and pierce him with two spears.*" Like other war and migrant songs from this period, the song has made its way into new contexts. It has been sung by soldiers (*askari*) during both World Wars and, to this day, is sung by medicine healers (*bafumu*) when preparing dance competition medicines.



**Selection nine** was composed during World War I. The composer, Matonange, was a soldier who composed this piece in order to explain to his comrades why the Germans and the British were fighting in his country. Matonange understood the roots of this war to be tied to the world economy, translated in Sukuma terms as *cattle*:

These events are happening throughout the world,  
The Germans and the British, they are chasing each other about because of cattle,  
Only God can predict the out-

come, and return the men,  
Dig the trenches,  
Ng'wana Makoma,  
In Tabora there are the Belgians, who eat men.

**10.** Gembe Ng'honela  
Ng'wana Makanga:  
"*Bing'we Mukujaga Kaya...*," SayuSayu village, 8/13/95.

- 11.** Buseng'wa Ng'wana Bulahya:  
"*Yanikwi Lilaga Bana Bane...*,"  
Fumagila village, 11/22/94.  
**12.** Edward Shing'oma:  
"*Kidako Shafumelile...*,"  
Miswaki village, 8/26/94.

**Selection ten** was composed by the near-mythical Sukuma folk hero, Ng'wana Malundi. Ng'wana Malundi was reported to have had superhuman qualities, most notorious of which was his ability to point at a forest area and magically convert it into stacked firewood. The historical Ng'wana Malundi died in 1936 in his home area of Seke, after spending several years in a colonial prison on the East African coast for alleged insubordination to the local colonial government. In this song, the composer is far from home hunting elephants (Ng'wana Malundi was a renowned elephant hunter and hunter's dance leader) and tells his comrades, who are passing by his home area, to be sure and greet his children, "*...for who will cry for us, we who are so far from home?*" The **eleventh selection** was composed by Ibazu, an early *Bagika* leader, during the 1920s. The composer is addressing his followers, lamenting the death of his

teacher. Like the first two selections, this song is used today by the *Bagika* during medicine preparation, prior to competing, and during victory celebrations. **The twelfth selection**, "*Kidako Shafumelile...*," is a prediction song, or *mimbo ga kubanga*, from 1919. The composer is predicting the eventual coming of the railroad to Sukumaland. The railroad from Tabora to Mwanza was built by the British in the late 1920s and travels through the very villages that the composer describes here.

- 13-14.** Kang'wii'na Mwami Ng'wana Mihumo:  
(13) "*Nchilu Bulacka...*,"  
(14) "*Bana Bagosha...*,"  
Isangidjo village, 12/20/94.  
**15-17.** Edward Shing'oma:  
(15) "*Ang'hwayegile Neyo...*,"  
(16) "*Kilya Mang'ondi Ng'wana Wishi...*,"  
(17) "*Aba Baba...*,"  
Miswaki village, 8/26/94.

Commentary in public arenas by Sukuma farmer-composers about their fellow human's predicament continued to be a major event in Sukuma life into the twentieth



century. As early as 1907, during the *Maji Maji* peasant skirmishes with the Germans, Sukuma composers were commenting in a critical manner on the colonial experience. This early political awareness among peasants was later identified by local Sukuma political activists as crucial in garnering support for the sustained development of political action groups that did their part in the fight for independence. Sukuma farmer composers dwelt upon and then reworked their experiences of such significant events as the *Maji Maji* Rebellion, WWII, or the recent multiparty elections in their elaborate, shamanic dreams. In the **thirteenth selection**, the singer Kang'wii'na sings a song from the British colonial period, composed sometime during the 1930s. The song complains about the British colonial government's requirement for Sukuma farmers to initiate mono-crop cotton farming, at the expense of traditional food crop diversity. The composer praises Chief Ng'waya, who served a visiting colonial agricultural official a meal of beans garnished with cotton seeds as a means of protesting the officer's

insistence of Sukuma mono-crop farming during a particularly devastating famine. In the **fourteenth selection**, Kang'wii'na sings a song written by a man who says he wishes he had been born a woman, so that he would not have been kidnapped by the British and made to fight overseas in World War II. Hundreds of thousands of East Africans were forcibly conscripted by the British to fight in Burma. He sings:

We men have become wanderers,  
and for me it has become too much,  
If my parents were here before me,  
I would tell them:  
Better to have given birth to the  
one with milk in her breast.  
I have been defeated.

The **fifteenth selection**, sung by Edward Shing'oma, was also composed during World War II. Edward "Mzee Kijana" Shing'oma, whose nickname means "old man who is a young man," is an energetic, retired school teacher in his eighties, who has nourished a lifetime of love for Sukuma song. In this song, the composer Maliganya describes

another aspect of military service. He tells how sharp and impressive the *askaris* (soldiers) looked in their military uniforms, and asks, "...now that the war is over, what are they going to do with themselves?" The **sixteenth selection**, also sung by Edward Shing'oma, describes the social chaos caused by the *mabaragwe* or "bean" famine of 1949. The elderly of Sukumaland date everyday occurrences according to their proximity in time to devastating famines or wars. So in a discussion about song, one might hear: "I first heard that song two planting seasons before the *mabaragwe* famine," which would date it at around 1947. This song explains how during famine, people are prone to hide their food from their neighbors. The singer asks "...when people are dying all around you, and you are the only one left tasting food, what kind of advantage is that? Better to share what you have, or else you won't have anyone left to talk to." **Selection seventeen** was composed during the war between Tanzania and Uganda during the late 1970s. The composer tells the dictator Idi Amin that "*war is not child's play*," and that to advertise war in

such a reckless fashion is to bring death to his own soldiers. The composer tells Amin not to mess with the Tanzanians, who are "*scholars of war*" capable of sweeping away Amin and his "*associate from Libya*" (Colonel Kadafi) as easily as "*dust under the rug*."

## Life-Cycle Songs (Tracks 18-20)

### 18-20. Maria Sago "Semeni"

Ng'wana Malando and Leya

(Limi) Kimwaga Mahuma:

(18) "*Nene Natembaga...*,"

(19) "*Kubiyala Ng'waka Kibama...*,"

(20) "*Nsabi na Kale Atenanema...*"

Miswaki village, 9/11/94.

Women composers in Sukumaland find it harder to devote time to their musical art than their male counterparts. Women are expected to get married and to manage large households, a never-ending task without much time for relaxation. Women who compose and perform music are often thought of as witches, considered promiscuous or are thought to be shirking their gender-defined duties. However there have been several well-known and respected female composers in Sukumaland history,

namely the heroine Ng'indu Nkii'ma. Ng'indu Nkii'ma lived at the turn of the century and competed with the already mentioned Ng'wana Malundi. Ng'indu Nkii'ma is respected as a revolutionary by contemporary Sukuma women composers for her ability to make her way in the world on her terms. It is said that Ng'indu Nkii'ma had a powerful medicine horn that she carried in her vagina, and that any man who dared anger her, especially in competition, would die immediately when she pointed the horn in their direction.

Female composers have a variety of methods for calling down their *masamva* ancestors, so that they may be assisted in their compositional endeavors. In **selection eighteen**, Maria Sago calls on her great aunt's spirit Kabula, by singing a song that her great aunt composed. This composer from two family generations prior tells her audience, "...I am not your average woman! I compete amongst the elders, not amongst youths." **Selection nineteen**, composed by the singer Maria Sago, reminds the listener that a woman's life is a difficult one, but has its worthwhile

moments. "Giving birth," the composer related to me, "...is no easy task, nor is raising a child, who, unlike a calf, cannot just get up and start walking around after coming into the world." In this song she continues her train of thought: "...but to give birth to a handsome young boy, who will be the pride of the village, admired by every one once he becomes a young man, oh, what joy." **Selection twenty**, also by Maria Sago, praises those with economic means ("*those with cattle*"), for they are the ones who continue the bloodline, who can bring new members into the family through marriage trade, and "...who bring nice, healthy children into the world."

#### Labor Songs (Tracks 21-28)

21. *Basumba* horn, calling village youth to the labor site, Ng'wajiginya village, 8/15/95.
22. Paulo Chanii'ra Mfanyanga: "*Gembe Nagemu Ng'wanone...*," Miswaki village, 7/20/94.
23. Charles Kanga Kasubi Ng'wana Mhoja: "*Nakalima...*," Miswaki village, 9/12/94.
24. Ng'holo Kasongo: "*Ilelo Hulala Haa...*,"

Isangidjo village, 3/8/95.

25. *Kazwala Chii'za* Women's group: "*Nene Nandikwa na Mwinyi...*," Miswaki village, 9/5/94.

Because of the labor-intensive nature of cotton farming, neighbors are expected to get together every year during the rainy season to form mutual-aid farming societies. Members invite the group to take turns preparing each other's plots of land (*shambas*), by digging tie-ridges for cotton seed planting. Through the synchronization of labor with music, workers develop a special *esprit de corps*. Music at the farm site not only makes the labor task easier, but allows workers to work longer hours and be more productive.

**Selection twenty-one** is an early morning call to work, blown on an antelope horn. **Selection twenty-two** is a farmers' refrain: "*I have tried the hoe, my child, carried on the back.*" **Selection twenty-three** praises a local village leader who has lost hope in the face of a severe famine. The composer convinces the leader that famines are the work of God and no one else and that he should continue with his good work. Recorded while

the singer Ng'holo was chopping wood for an up-coming celebration, **selection twenty-four** provides an example of the more light-hearted nature of Sukuma labor music. She sings: "*Tonight I will sleep out here on the plain. The hyenas will come and they will greet me, 'Well how are you this morning?', 'I am fine, I am fine.'*" Hyenas are thought of in Sukuma society as cohorts to witches, and though generally singers would never allude to such self-incriminating friends in the bush, this song is a humorous exception. **Selection twenty-five** by *Kazwala Chii'za* ("Nice Clothes") Women's group is a contemporary political praise song, or *mimbo ga kugongola*. The singer explains that she has received a letter from Ali Hassan Mwinyi, president of Tanzania, addressing all of her problems. The composer had written to the president to complain that cotton farmers were being promised but were not being paid by the government cooperatives. The song praises the government's *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (C.C.M.) or Revolutionary Party, for its quick response on the eve of the first-time multiparty elections in 1995.



26. Miswaki Primary School millet-threshing song, Miswaki village, 7/20/94.
27. *Bapachanga* farmer society cotton planting song, Seke village, 1/15/95.
28. *Banunguli* farmer society cotton planting song, Kisesa village, 1/5/95.

The musical labor process is learned by Sukuma youth at a very young age. Mothers carry infants on their backs while they work in the farms, and very young children form labor groups which emulate their older brothers and sisters. **Selection twenty-six** is an example of a primary school labor group singing while beating millet. As a part of their agricultural course work, school children are given a small plot of land on the school farm which they are expected to cultivate and harvest. **Selection twenty-seven** is a teenagers' labor group from Seke. **Selection twenty-eight** features a one-string *kadete*, or spike fiddle. This neighbors' group is a porcupine hunters' society that also doubles as a farming society. The group leader

plays the *kadete*, which provides musical encouragement for the labor. He sings: "*Oh mother, look what you have brought into this world. Your son-of-the-soil really suffers.*"

#### Post Harvest Festivity Songs (Tracks 29-31)

29. Miswaki neighbors' help society: "*Witaidii G'hwi Langiko Ugogo...*," Miswaki village, 7/13/94.
30. Miswaki village *Wigaa'she* singers: "*Nene Nalintuji wa Matuta...*," Miswaki village, 9/12/94.
31. Kisu'nun'ha and his elder's council: "*Nakenbelwa Habari...*," Mondo village, 3/13/95.

The period after harvest in Sukumaland (July-September) is a time of relaxation and reflection, as well as considerable well-deserved merriment and excitement. All-night beer drinking, especially among elders, is very popular. **Selection twenty-nine** was performed at an all-night home-brew event by a neighbors' labor group. After the harvest and sale of the crop, the member of the labor group whose crop was

harvested is required by etiquette to host a party. This song in its original context is a competition song; the composer claims to be as strong and wily as the mighty river Shimiyu. **Selection thirty** was performed by a group of locally-known elderly composers and singers at a beer party in Miswaki village. They sing:

I am a tie-riding farmer,  
In this rocky but productive soil.  
I do not steal, nor do I oppress  
others.  
You know I am telling the truth.

**Selection thirty-one** was performed by the famous shaman healer Kisu'nun'ha, otherwise known as "*Mungu wa Pili*" or "God Number Two," so named for his renowned and extraordinary healing powers. Kisu'nun'ha inherited his healing arts from his grandmother, who purportedly took him when he was a youth to live and learn further from the *masamva* ancestors who live beneath Lake Victoria, sometime during WWII. Here he plays an *ndono*, or braced gourd-bow, to an appreciative crowd. The large bow is struck with vigor with a tin can rattle plectrum,

and the sound resonates in the gourd cavity which is held against the musician's body.

#### Dance Competition Songs (Tracks 32-35)

- 32-34. *Bak'halangalanga* farmer's society:  
(32) "*Linbale...*,"  
(33) *Bugobogobo* dance piece "*Makofi...*"  
(34) *Mashindano* victor's dance, Miswaki village, 7/13-20/94.
35. *Kujitegemea* dance society: *Bununguli* dance piece, Isangidjo village, 10/15/95.

Sukumaland village dance competitions take place after the harvest (during the summer and early autumn months) and are judged in a haphazardly democratic fashion. Competing dance teams align themselves on opposing ends of a large unused open space (*lubuu'ng'a*) or soccer field. Spectators congregate between the two competing groups, while judges (*balamuu'ji*) align themselves off-field, near the space's halfway point. Winning teams are



assessed by head count: the dance teams that attract the larger number of spectators during the allotted performance time are declared the winners. Impatient with the subtle intricacies of song-line counting that was the method of assessing memory ability at Sukuma competitions prior to colonization, the British introduced a head counting system to the official competitions which were a part of the commercial agricultural shows that they began to sponsor in the early 1950s. Because of the subsequently wild popularity of this method of performance assessment, dance teams now assemble an array of amusing talents and diversions (*mabinḍa*) to supplement song and dance performance. The use of acrobats (*bang'wishi*) and public "performative" witchcraft helps to keep the attention of a larger portion of the audience.

Post-harvest Sukuma dance competitions between the *Bagika* and the *Bagalu* are serious affairs where reputations are made and lost based on song performance. **Selection thirty-two** complains about Linhale, a composer who "...can't take a joke." The singers bragged to me about how

they burned down Linhale's goat shed on the evening prior to a competition. Linhale was so nervous and agitated the following day that he couldn't sing, thus his opponents (these singers) carried home the prize. **Selection thirty-three** is a *Bugobogobo* dance piece. The original *Bagobogobo* were a farmers' group who decided to take their musical labor play from the fields and fine tune and hone their performance into something that could be used in the post-harvest dance competitions. While the drummers play, the dancers twirl their hoes in highly-choreographed steps. **Selection thirty-four** is an example of the *Bugobogobo's* victory parade dance. **Selection thirty-five** is an example of the *Bununguli* dance. Since as early as anyone can remember, the *Banunguli* society has been a dance-contest favorite. The *Banunguli* are porcupine hunters. In Sukumaland, porcupines are thought of as pests because of their destruction of food crops, therefore the *Banunguli* societies are hired by cautious farmers to hunt the creatures. After capture, the animals are displayed publicly in dance contests against their rivals, the *Bayeye* (Snake Charmers).

## Narrative Competition *Wigaa'she* Songs (Tracks 36-38)

36. Shing'wenda Ng'wana Sii'ta:  
"Nzala Pye...",

Miswaki village, 9/8/94.

37. Hoja Ng'wana Butemi:  
"Gutaponyaga Mpini...",

Miswaki village, 9/7/94.

38. "Idiri Iya Shimba" Ng'wana  
Dukii'la: "Yatula Bugong'ho...",  
Welamasonga village, 12/21/94.

"Long" competition-sung poetry narratives in Sukumaland are called *Wigaa'she*, or "sitting competitions," and are the most respected of all Sukuma art forms. It is common in *Wigaa'she* narratives to expound upon one's personal exploits while degrading one's singing opponent, as Sukuma audiences find such bragging highly entertaining.

In **selection thirty-six**, the well-known composer Shingwenda Ng'wana Sii'ta discusses a recent famine that had been truly worrisome and had destroyed certain roots and grasses that were eaten by their cattle. He praises his wife for her courage during this hardship and tells her that they need to prepare a celebration of

thanks, because they had made it through the hardship alive.

**Selection thirty-seven** is a *Wigaa'she* piece that praises the hard-working farmer. The composer explains that those who are solely cattle herders run the risk of making their peers jealous, with their outward displays of wealth that require relatively little labor. A productive farmer however is respected for his/her efforts. In the first verse, Ng'wana Butemi sings:

Gutaponyaga u-mpini nulu hado,  
tugudimilagi  
Abangi bagaya basabo na ba nina binga  
kuwelelo.  
Aliyo lyabalalang'hana iligembe,  
kwikija dhahabu mmatongo.  
Ulu ubonha lyandi uhila laki na jihumbi  
nu Mungu atagobaga.

Don't let the hoe handle drop, even a  
little.  
Grab onto it firm!  
Many others have died, Their mothers  
and fathers they have left this world,  
But the hoe guards them (those left  
behind)  
The hoe will win you gold, from your  
farms

If you prepare the ridges, you will reap profits,  
God will not refuse.

**Selection thirty-eight** is a *Wigaa'she* competition piece performed by "Idiri Iya Shimba" Ng'wana Dukii'la, otherwise known as "Idiri." Idiri is perhaps the most well-loved "Old School" composer in all of Sukumaland, because of his commanding presence, as well as his *mimbo ga pointi*, or "songs that make points." In this narrative, Idiri relates to his children and his followers about the wealth and prestige that come from being a famous singer. In the first verse Idiri proclaims:

Yitula bugong'ho!  
Nalingoo'sha changila mabala!  
Nakajagopiganila Mashashi na Shinyanga,  
Ng'wana wa Ng'wana Mikomangwa,  
Nalaleka ngemelo mumachalo,  
Mabala nagalubaluba!  
Nulu nalachaga chenge,  
Lelulu gunyijilila amabala!  
M paga Butiama ng'wa Nyerere,  
Jubigi hulilima, bakundililaga!

I am pounding on the door! It is I, the son-of-the-soil who has awakened

the countryside! I really fought them in the land of Shashi, of Shinyanga, that grandson of Mikomangwa, I will stop conversing as if this were a mere affair of the homestead, I have made the entire country shake! Even if I die suddenly, The entire nation will become silent! Even as far as President Nyerere in Butiama, They will really cry, especially those who are farmers!

#### **Bagika Medicine Society Songs (Tracks 39-41)**

39. Sii'ta Mabushi Ng'wana Mhogota:  
"Yilipogomela..., "  
Miswaki village, 9/8/94.

40-41. Buseng'wa Ng'wana Bulahya:  
(40) "Tulibanga Ngika Hee..., "  
(41) "Nasen'be Ng'wii Mibanga..., "  
Fumagila village, 11/22/94.

These pieces are examples of *Bagika* medicine society songs, the society that competes with the *Bagalu*. In **selection thirty-nine**, the composer Sii'ta Mabushi Ng'wana Mhogota reminds his *Ngalu* opponent that he is someone who can dream and predict the future and that his attack has the same

devastating effect of a nuclear bomb. He mixes his medicines and burns his opponents, whose followers come running to his side to hear his good songs. **Selection forty** is an ancient *Bagika* song composed by an early *Bagika* follower. **Selection forty-one** is the *Bagika* ritual theme song and, like its *Bagalu* counterpart, is used for medicine preparation, preparation for competitions, and victory celebrations. This song was composed by Ngika, the

originator of the *Bagika* society, probably sometime around 1880. Ngika uses the common Sukuma metaphorical image "I gather firewood" (*Nasenbw Ng'wii*) to describe the whole range of preparations he is making to beat his rival, including the grinding of magic medicines to be used in setting traps, as well as medicines to be consumed by his followers in order to give them invincible strength.

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## Discography

(Other Recorded Music From Tanzania)

### Popular

Mlimani Park Orchestre: *Sikinde*,  
Africassette.

Remmy Ongala & Orchestre Super  
Matimila: *Songs for the Poor Man*,  
Real World.

Remmy Ongala: *Mambo*, Real World.

Various Artists: *Dada Kidawa: Classic  
Dance Hits From Tanzania 1960s*,  
Various Artists, Original Music.

Various Artists: *Tanzanian Dance Bands  
Volumes 1 & 2*, Line-Monsun.

Various Artists: *The Tanzanian Sound*,  
Original Music.

### Traditional

Hukwe Zawose: *Chibite*, Real World.

Hukwe Zawose: *Tanzania Yetu*,  
Triple Earth.

Hukwe Zawose: *The Art of Hukwe  
Zawose*, JVC/Victor.

*Maisha: Musiques De Tanzanie*,  
Musique Du Monde.

Various Artists: *Master Musicians of  
Tanzania*, Triple Earth.

### Taarab

Black & Lucky Star Musical Clubs:  
*Nyota: Classic Taarab From Tanga*,  
Globestyle.

Culture Musical Club: *Taarab 4:  
The Music of Zanzibar*, Globestyle.

Ikwani Safaa Musical Club: *Taarab 2:  
The Music of Zanzibar*, Globestyle.

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Produced by Peter Alyea and Frank Gunderson, in collaboration with the Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music, Bloomington IN.

CD engineered by Peter Alyea.

Photographs and accompanying booklet notes by Frank Gunderson.

Executive Producer:  
Stephen McArthur

Co-Producers:  
Andrew Sloan and Chris Mills

Cover Artwork and Graphic Design:  
Tim Newcomb

### Contributors:

Frank Gunderson is an ethnomusicologist who has done extensive fieldwork in East Africa. He is currently completing his doctorate at Wesleyan University.

Peter Alyea is an audio engineer at Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music.

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