

SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE MUSIC OF THE CWEZI CULT IN ANKOLE (Western Uganda)

by

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The Rev. Y. B. Bamunoba made a special study of the Cwezi cult in Ankole. In the *Uganda Journal*, Vol. 29, no. 1 (1965), he published an interesting article in joint authorship with F. B. Welbourn on the *emandwa* initiation which is still in vogue, though only to a limited extent and usually very locally. Their essay gives a detailed description of the ceremonial followed during the initiation rites and enumerates a few situations in which the *emandwa* rites are performed. More valuable information on the subject is recorded in another article 'Diviners for the Abagabe' (*Uganda Journal*, Vol. 29, no. 1). The content of both papers is related to the spirits of the legendary Cwezi rulers. Although incidental mention is made of ritual singing, dancing and flute playing, no further details on the music are given.

During research work carried out in Ankole I came across some music-making used in the Cwezi cult. This paper intends to give a general outline of the Cwezi cult and of the most important occasions demanding Cwezi rites and ceremonial music and to provide as many details about Cwezi music as are available at present, such as the use of musical instruments, the ritual singing and dancing, and the variety of performers.

In accordance with old customs the ceremonial in honour of the Cwezi is performed in secret and only the initiated are allowed to be present. This strict secrecy necessarily results in scarcity of data and one-sidedness of informants. This is why the following facts gathered during my fieldwork in Ankole and from valuable discussions with the Rev. Bamunoba are by no means exhaustive.

Cwezi cult

The legends have it that the Cwezi "were a strange people which suddenly appeared several centuries ago . . . coming from the North and that they immigrated into the interlacustrine area of East Africa. They conquered the people on their way . . . and they disappeared southwards, finally vanishing into lakes and craters . . . It is widely assumed that the Cwezi had a real historical existence, being the ancient rulers of the great Hima empire". In former days there was a firm belief among the people of Ankole "that the Cwezi who were if not a numerous then a very wonderful people did not die, but disappeared and they will return again to rule over them. In the meantime the spirits of the Cwezi rule over the land and a cult has gradually grown up". The Cwezi "appeared so wonderful to their Bantu subjects, that they were deified after their deaths". The worship of the Cwezi spirits is often referred to as the *emandwa* cult (cf. Oberg, 1950: 122-125 and Wrigley, 1958: 12-14). For the sake of clarity it should be noted here that all Cwezi are *emandwa*, whereas not all *emandwa* are necessarily Cwezi.

In the families of the Hima and of the Iru at least one member had to be initiated into the *emandwa* (*okutaasya omu mandwa*), although there could be more than one in the

Ed: Some of the music discussed in this article may be heard on the record "Ankole, West Uganda" (Van Thiel, 1971). Other records on which Ankole music may be heard are TR 134 and 135, recorded by Hugh Tracey, in the "Sound of Africa" series of the International Library of African Music, P.O. Box 138, Roodepoort, 1725, Transvaal, S. Africa.

same family. The initiate was not only their 'representative', not even just their 'intermediary', he became *emandwa* himself. The initiation rites were not necessarily performed for each novice individually, a group of candidates might be initiated collectively. The elaborate rites of the initiation of the newly appointed Omugabe, ruler of the former Kingdom of Ankole, were always included in the accession celebrations.

Rites in honour of the Cwezi spirits used to be carried out on regularly recurring occasions and in particular cases. Periodically, e.g. at the appearance of the New Moon (*okuraama okwezi*) sacrifices were made by the initiated members of the family, called *ebitambo by'oruganda*, in honour of their *emandwa* in order to preserve a good relationship with them. In time of misfortune rites were carried out to propitiate the malevolent spirits concerned. When, for instance, the country was badly hit by an epidemic of plague, sacrifices were made to conciliate Cwezi Kahumpuri who was held responsible for this sort of evil (Bamunoba/Welbourn, 1965: 21). In the case of illness of a member of the family, or when sickness broke out among the cattle, appropriate rites were conducted (*okuterekyerera*) and special incantations performed by medicine men. In Ankole, the medicine man is known as *omufumu*. Cwezi Ryangombe, who was considered to be 'patron' of the hunters, was worshipped and implored to make hunting expeditions successful. If a whole family or an entire village was in danger or in an emergency, offerings were made to their *emandwa* and protection sought from them.

Some of the Cwezi celebrations are organized by a special officiant. The initiation ceremonial, for instance, is always presided over by an initiator. Having consulted a diviner, the head of a family (*nyineeka*) usually invited a friend or one of his relatives to perform the initiation rites. It is absolutely necessary that the sponsor chosen himself must have been ritually dedicated to the *emandwa*. In my fieldwork among the Iru the initiator was always referred to as *omutendeki*, whereas in 'Emandwa Initiation in Ankole' this master of ceremonies is called *omutende* or *kyatura* (Bamunoba/Welbourn, 1965: 17). With regard to the word *kyatura* we refer to the *Kinyarwanda* verb *okwatura* in Anthropos 1912/13. *Okwatura* means to initiate (Arnoux, 1912: 529).

The officiant is the central figure of the ceremonial and is respected as such. When he is on duty, he wears ceremonial dress and makes use of some ritual objects. Formerly, the officiant's dress consisted of two skins of heifers (*empu z'ente encwa-mutwe*), one hanging over each shoulder and kept crossed in front and at the back by a girdle (*omweko*). Later, these hides were replaced by a piece of barkcloth (*ekitooma*) or any cloth, sometimes decorated with cowrie shells (*ensimbi*) and/or beads (*enkwanzi*). A narrow strip of cow-hide about one inch wide (*ekisingo*) was tied round his head. This headband was also adorned with shells and beads. This 'crown', which could be manufactured only by someone who was initiated himself, might serve in more than one initiation in the same family. The *ekisingo* was generally considered as the symbol of all *emandwa*. During the ritual actions the sponsor frequently held in one hand a wand adorned with a cow-tail and decorated with beads and shells. Often the initiator as well as the initiates wore charms and amulets (*engisha*), hanging round the neck or tied round the arms, and in the other hand the sponsor held a ritual handrattle (*oburengo*) which he shook continually.

Occasionally, e.g. in healing rites, different leg-rattles, such as *amajugo* and *enjebajebe*, formed part of the ritual dress of the officiant and were worn by other participants as well. These rattles will be discussed later. Pictures in Roscoe's book, 'The Banyankole' (plates XII-XV), show that during ceremonies for healing sick cattle Hima medicine men used to hold a spear in each hand (Roscoe, 1923: 84 and 87). Generally speaking, the officiant was not only in charge of organizing the ritual actions and movements but was also responsible for the ritual singing; nor was any ceremonial dancing performed without directions from him.

Instrumental Cwezi music

It is necessary to differentiate between the Cwezi music of the royal enclosure and that of the Hima and the Iru living in Ankole.

In his article on 'Diviners for the Abagabe' the Rev. Bamunoba reports that Kabarega, King of Bunyoro, sent Nyabuzaana to Ankole in order to be a private diviner of Mutambuuka, King of Ankole from c. 1850 till c. 1875. She seems to have been accompanied by "famous musicians of the Cwezi cult in Bunyoro" (Bamunoba, 1965, Vol. 29, part 1). These musicians assisted her when she performed rites in honour of the Cwezi, e.g. at the appearance of the New Moon. These royal performers of ritual Cwezi music have received special attention, firstly because of the musical instruments which they brought from Bunyoro and which they used to play to accompany the *emandwa* rites, viz. drums (*engoma*) and cone-flutes (*ensbeegu*); secondly, because of the vocal music which they sang during the *emandwa* ceremonies.

In former times, the *engoma*, single-skin conico-cylindrical drums, did not belong to the musical instrumentarium of the inhabitants of Ankole. Roscoe remarked that "it was a surprise to discover that these people have never been in the habit of using drums in any of their ceremonies or dances" (Roscoe, 1922: 94). Rhythmic accompaniment to Iru singing and dancing was originally provided for by beating on their cowhide aprons (*enkanda*). They also used empty water pots (*enyungu*) such as are still in use today. This percussion vessel is struck at the opening with a beater made of banana fibre (*ekireere*). The *engoma* was known in the royal enclosure only. There was the sacred drum Bagyendanwa, its family of royal drums and also several other ceremonial drums which were beaten on special occasions, such as the accession of the newly appointed king or the appearance of the New Moon. Some African informants explained to me that the Hima and the Iru in Ankole were not allowed to beat and play the *engoma*, let alone to possess them.

In the royal enclosure drums were regularly beaten by court drummers specially employed for this purpose by the Omugabe. One *engoma*, called Rwabasheegu, was always used to provide the rhythm with the music of the *ensbeegu*, conical end-blown pipes with a small opening at the tip. The royal pipers, all trained musicians, produced only one or two notes on their instruments. The *ensbeegu* were always played in consorts and in hocketus style. The set of *ensbeegu*, thirteen in number, as well as the drum Rwabasheegu belonged to the regalia of the principal royal drum Bagyendanwa (Van Thiel, 1966/7: 9). The *ensbeegu* music would sound several times in the course of the initiation of the newly elected ruler of the former Kingdom of Ankole. The cone-flutes which Nyabuzaana and her famous musicians brought from Bunyoro are identical in every way with the *ensbeegu* which already existed in the royal court of Ankole, being regalia of Bagyendanwa.

Ensbeegu were similarly included among the regalia of other small kingdoms such as Igara, Buhweju and Buzimba, which were suppressed in the early part of this century. Igara and Buhweju became two counties of present-day Ankole, whereas Buzimba forms the western part of the County of Mitooma. After the Kingdom of Igara had ceased to exist, the music of the *ensbeegu* survived and became popular in the folk music of Igara. In Buhweju *ensbeegu* used to be heard only rarely and very locally; for the last few years they have been silent. In Buzimba the music of the *ensbeegu* had fallen into oblivion, long before they were destroyed in a bushfire in 1937. The specific names for the *ensbeegu* used in Igara and Buhweju differ from those of the *ensbeegu* of Bagyendanwa's ensemble (Van Thiel, 1966/7: 12 and 18).

In former days the playing of instrumental music during the Cwezi ceremonial of the Hima and the Iru was notably restricted, *ensbeegu* music and drumming being set apart exclusively for royal festivities, and being heard round the royal palace only. It was uncommon in the traditional music of the Hima and the Iru.

There is one musical instrument which most inhabitants of Ankole have in common in their Cwezi music, the hand-shaken gourd-rattle, usually referred to as *oburengo*. This vessel rattle is made of a gourd (*ekisisi*) with a diameter of 10 to 14 cm which contains seeds and pebbles. The gourd is usually perforated at various places all round it, these tiny holes serve not only as ornamentation but also improve the resonance of the idiophone. The *oburengo* is principally played by the officiants and their assistants in different ceremonies of the *emandwa* cult, such as the initiation and healing rites.

The Hima Cwezi music as well as their traditional music is commonly sung 'a capella'. Some songs, however, mainly their fascinating eulogies, are sung simultaneously with the music of the trough zither (*enanga*), played by the Hima women. This is not the traditional Hima instrument but that of the Kiga. It consists of a trough, usually about 70-75 cm long and about 25-30 cm wide, without a permanently attached resonator. Unlike the Kiga men, the Hima women when playing their *enanga* music always use a resonating vessel, at present an iron washing basin or an aluminium cooking pot. The Kiga traditionally use six strings, whereas the Hima as a rule play seven strings, understood of course that structurally only one string is used, laced through the notches at both ends of the trough and stretched from end to end across its mouth.

In the course of the years the *engoma* was imported by immigrants, mainly from Buganda which lies to the east of Ankole. The use of the *engoma* was gradually taken over by the Iru, but not by the Hima pastoralists. At present, drumming forms an integral part of the music-making of the Iru. The other musical instruments which we have come across in both the folk music of the Iru today and their ritual music are exactly alike, such as the reed-box rattle (*akakyenkye*), the spherical pellet-bells (*amajugo*), the seed-shell rattles (*enjebajebe*) and the metal hand-rattle (*esaasi*).

The *akakyenkye* is a vessel rattle consisting of a flat box about 25-30 cm long, about 18-23 cm wide and 2-3 cm high, made of two rigid layers of thin reed containing pebbles and seeds (*obunyagashani*). — The *amajugo*, leg-rattles worn by dancers, are composite vessel rattles each consisting of four to six small-sized iron spherical pellet-bells threaded on a strip of dried cow-skin. — The *enjebajebe* is a composite vessel rattle made of three to six dried seed-shells which are fixed on a stick at different places, close together, but usually not touching. The fruit shells which contain pebbles and seeds are perforated in order to improve the sound. — The gourd-rattle is indispensable in the Cwezi music of the Iru and is usually referred to as *oburengo*. This single rattling vessel has a diameter of 15 to 25 cm and its normal length is about 30 cm. — The *esaasi* is a hand-rattle consisting of a little can made of tin plate and containing little pebbles; it is perforated all over.

A few Cwezi songs are typified by a musical phenomenon which is quite uncommon in the traditional music of the Hima and the Iru, viz. handclapping (*okuteera omu ngaro*). Hima men are reported to have performed songs in honour of Cwezi Mugasha with handclapping (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 35). I had the opportunity of personally recording handclaps in Cwezi songs of the Iru in the County of Isingiro. The rhythm is a steady succession of regular handclaps which are all of equal intensity; there is no question of particular rhythmic patterns. The tempi of the handclapping in these recorded *emandwa* songs vary from ± 89 to ± 126 beats per minute.

Vocal Cwezi music

In addition to the instrumental music of the pipe band of the former royal court of Ankole, there was much singing during the rites of the royal initiation as well as during other celebrations of the Cwezi cult. The singing of the women and relatives of the Omugabe usually alternated with the instrumental music. The *Uganda Journal* published some texts of initiation songs and prayers (Bamunoba/Welbourn, 1965:

18 ff.). Unpublished field notes of Rev. Fr. Piet van Spaandonk, White Father of Africa, contain the following interesting Cwezi song-text.

“*Ekitongyerero ky’omuhambo*” (The Song of the Bundle)

This song in the Runyankore language was sung and dictated to Father van Spaandonk by Bibiana Ndinda, an elderly Hima lady of the Abashaari clan, who at the beginning of the present century was one of the wives of Ruhara, a well-known county-chief of Rwampara in Ankole. It was sung in a rather monotonous, plaintive type of plain chant, each line beginning on a high-pitched note followed by a level-voiced reciting tone, with a final dropping of tone on the last two syllables.

The bundle (*omuhambo*) referred to in the title is made up of plants which the officiant of the Cwezi cult collects and holds as a wand during divination ceremonies. The song details the different plants or herbs contained in the bundle. The speciality of this type of song is that in practically each case the verb-stem contained in the name of the plant is used to make a pun in relation to the person for whom the ceremony is done. A similar pun in English might be: This is a reed; may it help you to read. According to Bibiana Ndinda the first word of each line, *damagashani*, is an invocation consisting of the words: *Rama* and *Egashani*. They mean: Live long (*-rama*), Exalted Spirit (*egashani*).

Damagashani, harimu orubingo:
naakubinga enimi mbi.

Hail, Spirit, it (the bundle)
contains a reed-stalk: I would
chase away an angry bull.

Damagashani, harimu orubingura:
naakubingura enimi mbi.

Hail, Spirit, it contains Bersama
abyssinica: I would make an angry
bull pass by.

Damagashani, harimu orutanga:
naakutanga owa Rutaijwire,
ei enfura eijura ekamanyiira.

Hail, Spirit, it contains a stem of
cactus: I would prevent from going
to the Insatiable (death), where
gentlemen have the habit of crowding
together.

Damagashani, harimu orucwamba:
batarukukomesa noofa!

Hail, Spirit, it contains star-grass:
don't let yourself be tied up with it,
it would kill you.

Damagashani, harimu akashambi:
otariza omu kashambi.

Hail, Spirit, it contains a twig of
an ‘*akashambi*’ plant; don't ever
go in a splint.

Many texts of Cwezi songs were formerly only used during the royal initiation. In the course of the years they were borrowed by the Hima and the Iru. Nowadays they are well-known in their own initiation ceremonies. At first sight it appears strange that the Hima and the Iru should borrow these royal initiation song-texts, though it can easily be understood if we know that the kings and the royal family used to be initiated into the very same *emandwa* as the Hima and the Iru, such as Wamara, Kagoro and Ndahura.

The different phases of a ceremony had their specific songs, e.g. during the opening rite held at home on the eve, then arriving at the sacred place (*akatungutungu*), then praying, relaxing or dancing. The rites of the very first day of the initiation reach their climax just before the *omutendeki*, the initiate(s) and the whole company return to the

house of the candidate. Before leaving the ritual place, the head bands (*ebisingo*) related to the three *emandwa* of the initiate(s) are placed on the head of the candidate(s), while all present sing distinctive songs of each of the three *emandwa*. Each Cwezi has special songs and dances in his honour (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 34). In his article 'The Kingdom of Ankole in Uganda' Oberg reports that the king of Ankole had not three but four *emandwa*, namely Wamara, Mugasha, Kagoro and Nyakiriro (Oberg, 1950: 161).

In the vocal music of the Hima and the Iru set apart for the Cwezi ritual there has always been, and there still is, room for 'improvisation', whereas the performers of the royal initiation songs used to keep strictly to their fixed texts of Cwezi songs. Nyabuzaana's musicians also attracted special attention because of the secret ritual language of their song-texts which differed from those of the Hima and the Iru. Not only does the ritual of the Cwezi cult always take place in strict secrecy, it also has a secret language, unintelligible to the uninitiated and which may not be disclosed to uninitiated members of the family. During his initiation the candidate has to pass a test in order to prove that he has sufficient knowledge of the secret Cwezi language. During the initiation rites of a candidate-diviner (*okubandwa kw'okutendeka*) the novice (*omutendekwa*) is, for instance, required to change the class prefixes of all nouns into that of *nyabu*, e.g.:

<i>OMU-ntu</i>	becomes	<i>NYABU-ntu</i>	(man)
<i>EN-te</i>	„	<i>NYABU-te</i>	(cow)
<i>EM-buzi</i>	„	<i>NYABU-buzi</i>	(goat)
<i>OMW-ereere</i>	„	<i>NYABW-ereere</i>	(baby)

It is by the name *nyabwereere* that the novice himself is called during the initiation rite.

At an appropriate time during the first day of the initiation celebration the initiate is requested to give evidence of his musical powers by creating a totally new Cwezi song. My aged informants could not remember whether the candidate is allowed to prepare his new song beforehand or whether he improvises it on the spur of the moment during the ceremony without any previous preparation.

Specific vocal techniques

Characteristic vocal techniques differentiate the folk music of the Hima and the Iru from the singing of the Cwezi cult.

● Not only in their recreational music but also in their *emandwa* cult the style of the Hima singing is characterized by specific melodic ornamentation, grace notes and microtones.

● During one of my recording sessions of Hima Cwezi music a few women performed a song of a rather peculiar musical style, composed of disjunct melodic movements; the large-sized jumps in a downward direction continually exceed the octave. This singing is typified by an uncommon vocal technique: a frequent and rapid change from falsetto into chest voice (Van Thiel, 1971: 40-41).

● Many of the Hima and Iru *emandwa* songs are marked by typical humming and buzzing, also by much groaning, grunting and growling. This particular type of voice production was spoken of by Roscoe and by the Rev. Bamunoba and was confirmed by several other informants and by my own recordings. These regularly recurring, inarticulate throaty sounds are believed to be an integral part of the Cwezi music in Ankole. Without these sounds, African informants told me, it would no longer be justifiable to speak of authentic Cwezi music.

● In various descriptions performers of Cwezi music are reported to produce animal sounds: they cry like hyenas, squeak like bats or rats and imitate many other animals (Bamunoba/Welbourn, 1965: 17).

● Rolling of the R's by women has been recorded as a particular feature of the Hima Cwezi music (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 35). This is confirmed by several of my own recordings (Van Thiel, 1971: 41).

● In addition there also frequently occur ologyes (or ululations) in my recordings of *emandwa* songs (Van Thiel, 1971: 41). Bamunoba indicates the ologye as 'kwiriririri' and describes it as "a high-pitched cry of ecstasy" (Bamunoba/Welbourn, 1965: 23 and 25).

One Hima song in honour of the Cwezi, recorded in August 1966, was characterized by a female chorus singing in parallel thirds. It is difficult to decide whether they are major, minor or neutral thirds. So far I have not come across any other singing in parallel thirds in the traditional music of Ankole.

Post-initiation rites and Cwezi music

Banyankoré who have been initiated into the *emandwa* cult are entrusted with maintaining a good relationship with the spirits and therefore have to make periodic offerings (*okubonga*). The sacrifices made by the Hima in honour of the Cwezi never involve bloodshed (Gorju, 1920: 206). They take food to the shrines (*endaaro*), spirit huts made from branches of the *omurembe* tree, on special occasions, such as the appearance of the New Moon and in time of sickness. The pastoral Hima usually offer milk and meat, whereas the food offered by the Iru agriculturalists consists of flour, millet and fruits. Several autochthonous informants explained to me that it was considered to be a blessing of the spirits if the food offered was eaten by dogs, ants or any other animal. If the food had not disappeared by the next morning, it was an indication that the spirits had not accepted their sacrifices, and this refusal naturally causes great concern and anxiety. These sacrifices are usually accompanied by singing in honour of the spirits concerned.

New Moon festivities were customary in some former royal courts, such as Ankole, Buhweju and Buzimba as well as in the kraals of the Hima pastoralists (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 34). "To the Africans in general, the new moon is always a time for rejoicing; it is watched for and hailed with songs and festivities" (Roscoe, 1922: 62). The appearance of the New Moon had a deep religious meaning in Ankole. The moon was considered to be divine, respected as such and therefore worshipped. Oral tradition has it that Cwezi Wamara is believed to have received Ankole's sacred drum *Bagyendanwa* from the moon (Roscoe, 1923: 24). The period of darkness before the New Moon appears was generally thought of as a time of misfortune, weakness and evil. The Hima of Ankole did not feel at ease when they watched the light of the New Moon without adequate preparation. To welcome their 'divine visitor' they felt obliged to re-affirm their good relationship. During the period of darkness the Omugabe felt alone, left to his own devices, without protection, devoid of divine assistance. Through the light of the New Moon the Omugabe was believed to receive the power to drive away all evil, to bring fortune again to his subjects and to receive energy to rule the country competently. Accordingly, the Omugabe had to prepare himself for the coming of the new light. The royal New Moon celebrations therefore included a preparatory purification rite for this purpose. A king-elect used to undergo a purification for the first time shortly after his appointment. Once the new Omugabe had been appointed he was purified the next morning, this ceremony usually taking place four days after the burial of the deceased king in front of the royal palace (Katate/Kamugungunu, 1955: 30 and 33).

In the former royal enclosure on Kamukuzi Hill near Mbarara the New Moon festivities were marked by specific drumming, not only by the royal drummers but also by the Omugabe himself. The Omugabe used to beat the drum called Iguru when he went to visit the royal drum Bagyendanwa immediately after the appearance of the New Moon (Katate/Kamugungunu, 1955: 42). The drumming of the Omugabe consisted of regular beats. The royal drummers, on the other hand, used to play different rhythmic patterns. Roscoe reports that a small drum, Mpulo, lying on the left side of Kabembura, was beaten by the guardian at each New Moon (Roscoe, 1923: 45). Six royal drums, as a group called Empuuro, were also beaten at the New Moon by drummers from the Abaruru clan. Banyankore who were living near the royal palace at Mbarara used to listen to, and enjoy the fascinating drum rhythms.

I tried in vain to collect further technical information on this ceremonial drumming to mark the New Moon, details such as the number and variety of different rhythmic patterns, on which drum(s) they were beaten and the drummers' playing technique. A great drum expert who lived in the village of Nyarubanga in the County of Kashaari was not within reach during my stay in Ankole from 12th January till 22nd March, 1969. Nor could any information be given about his whereabouts during my various field trips between January 1971 and October 1972. Nor could anybody else add further explanations about the music set apart for the New Moon festivities.

In addition to the beating of the ceremonial drums, the abovementioned court music of the *ensheegu* used to be played during the New Moon celebrations. Food was sacrificed in front of the shrines of their spirits; various Cwezi songs were performed by the royal family, the singing usually alternating with the instrumental music.

The informants are not unanimous concerning the duration of the New Moon celebrations. The *Uganda Journal*, May 1937, mentions that the drums were beaten for about a week, while Roscoe reports in 'Northern Bantu' that the drums were beaten incessantly for four days only (Roscoe, 1915: 140).

Among the Cwezi ceremonies the healing rites were presided over by a medicine man (*omufumu*). A cattle magician was usually referred to as *omutsiriki* (Oberg, 1950: 145). The presiding medicine man and/or his assistant(s) not only shook the ritual gourd-rattle (*oburengo*) but also wore iron leg-rattles (*amajugo*). "When the medicine man and his assistant(s) arrived at the home of the patient they took their rattles and bags and danced round the outside of the house". During this performance the patient was placed on the floor of the hut. Then, "the chief medicine man took up a position at his head while the assistant(s) sat at his feet, and they chanted an incantation, accompanying it with the noise of their rattles. The assistant used his rattle during the whole performance and both kept up a growling chant, which was supposed to terrify the ghost . . . Towards the end of the rite, the medicine man usually fanned the patient uttering incantations over him . . ." (Roscoe, 1923: 140).

Cwezi dances

Dancing plays an important part in the religious rites of many peoples. In Ankole too, dancing is closely related to the *emandwa* cult.

The common form of the royal as well as Hima and Iru initiation dance is the simple form of choral dance, the circle dance. At the appropriate time all who take active part in the initiation ceremony form a circle near the *omurinzji* tree (*Erythrina abyssinica*) which is claimed as the tree of the Cwezi, and kneel down on both knees, the initiate always in the centre. The dancers keep their places, with the exception of the *omutendeki* who may quit his place in the circle and take a place in the centre beside the initiate, in order to give him special instructions, and then go back to take his place again in the circle.

This ceremonial dance which used to be performed repeatedly at any suitable time

during the initiation is by no means a gentle dance with graceful movements. A peculiar throaty vocal sound is accompanied by violent movements of the body. *Okusbombera* means to perform the exciting, vigorous and strenuous ritual dance in which the dancers are subject to fits of convulsive movements. While they sing and groan and grunt they strike the ground with both hands energetically so that large clouds of dust are raised and at the same time the upper part of the body moves violently up and down to the rhythm of the music.

The continuous uttering of these monotonous throaty sounds and the vehemence of the bodily movements tire, weaken and finally exhaust them, eventually causing a state of complete senselessness. It is a common phenomenon in the Cwezi ritual that the dancers, not only the initiate(s) but the other participants as well, become so excited that their behaviour grows more and more abnormal. The greater the excitation, the more chance there is that the dance will ultimately reach its paroxysm with the dancers jumping out of their skins with great excitement, and no longer being themselves. The spirits, as it were, take 'possession' of the dancers. Inspired by the power of the peculiar Cwezi music and excited by the characteristic atmosphere of the initiation, the dancers, the initiate(s) in particular, drop to the ground in a trance, they fall into a state of possession. This is called *okubandwa*.

In accounts of ritual dances in honour of Cwezi Mugasha the men dance on their knees, only one hand is struck against the ground, while the dancer smacks his chest with the other, known as *okukoncana* (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 35). In the same ceremonial dance of Mugasha it occurs now and then that the dancers "get up on their feet and dance round doing the same thing, keeping time by joining the chant . . . The women meanwhile sit and grunt, or they dance with their hands in the usual manner, which consists of making graceful movements with the arms and swaying the body, the whole representing cattle moving through grass with their horns swaying about, while the men grunt and pull up tufts of grass" (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 35).

With regard to the choreography of traditional dances in Ankole, it is of interest to mention here that I have so far come across three different types of circle dances. Firstly, Hima men customarily enjoy their recreational circle dance (*ekitaaguriro*) which they perform in a sitting position and with waving arms. Secondly, the Iru women, in particular those who originate in the present-day counties of Igara and Buhweju, have the *enjogyera* circle dance which used to be performed at the end of the wedding festivities before the departure of the bride from her parental home. Thirdly, the Hinda royal family of the former Kingdom of Ankole as well as the Hima and the Iru have the ceremonial circle dance (*okusbombera*) which is to be performed during the initiation into the *emandwa*, as described above.

Although reports on Hima dancing usually refer to the fascinating *ekitaaguriro*, a dance which is performed in a sitting position and which is today by far the most common, some accounts of Hima music speak of Hima dances in a standing position which consist of jumping into the air. In ceremonial dancing in honour of Cwezi Mugasha the dancers may get up on their feet and dance round . . . keeping time by joining the chant (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 35). Speaking of Hima music-making at times of relaxation, Roscoe reports that the women sitting together inside the kraal enjoyed zither music, moving their bodies and arms and at the same time making a buzzing noise between their lips, and that "the men outside joined in and danced swaying their bodies to the rhythm and jumping into the air" (Roscoe, 1923: 81).

According to Roscoe's description of healing ritual in Ankole, mentioned above, the chief medicine man and his assistant(s) used to perform a medicine dance, moving round the outside of the patient's house before entering. Another procession-like dance in Ankole, outside the Cwezi cult, is a wedding dance, called *emigunjo*. Before the bride undergoes the purification (*okubaasirira*), four women, all members of the family, known

as *banyina*, cover themselves with one piece of cloth, leave the house one behind the other, holding one another with both hands at the hip or at the shoulder. This moving up and down in the courtyard of the home of the bride's parents is known as *okucwa emigunjo*. Nowadays this traditional wedding dance is no longer in general use, but is only performed in a few places.

Another typical dance of the Cwezi cult in Ankole is the 'couple dance'. In times of sickness the Hima used to make sacrifices either in honour of the *emandwa* to whom the sick person was dedicated or to the one who was held responsible for the illness. Then, "all go out to the nearest *omurinzi* tree . . . The men approach the tree, holding *enywera* herbs (*Vernonia smythiana*) in their hands, all the time dancing in pairs, each with one leg locked round the leg of his partner" (Lukyn Williams, 1938: 36). Concerning this 'dancing in pairs' I have so far not come across any couple dancing, nor any dancing while each performer locks one leg round the leg of his partner in the ritual music of Ankole.

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