

DANCING IDENTITIES OR THE INTRICACIES UNDERPINNING DANCE COMMODIFICATION IN BUJUMBURA CITY¹

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Abstract

This article explores the intricacies underpinning the market negotiation in traditional dance commodification in Bujumbura city. With the traditional dance club proliferation, clubs adopt strategies in the competitive search of the maximum of customers. The goal of this article is to understand the strategies adopted by traditional dance clubs to attract and keep the consumers of their products. The main focus is on how club members organise to produce attractive songs and dances, what makes the performances unique, and how they adapt the contents to the identities of their customers. Eleven members of six of the traditional dance clubs operating in Bujumbura city participated in this research. A qualitative approach was adopted and an ethnographic method applied to investigate the mechanisms under study. Findings reveal that, besides strategic geographic positioning, most of the investigated dance clubs start with song-writing before performances. The meticulousness used in the formulation of the messages conveyed through the words and gestures of the performances takes precedence over everything to reach all the possible customers in their different identities. Several choreographic techniques are applied, a range of traditional instruments and clothing used to attract customers.

Keywords: Bujumbura city, Burundian culture, traditional dance clubs, dance commodification, identities.

Résumé

Cet article explore les subtilités qui sous-tendent la négociation du marché tout au long de la marchandisation de la danse traditionnelle dans la ville de Bujumbura. Avec la prolifération des clubs de danse traditionnels, les clubs adoptent des stratégies dans la recherche compétitive du maximum de clients. Le but de cet article est de comprendre les stratégies adoptées par les clubs de danse traditionnelle pour attirer et fidéliser les consommateurs de leurs produits. L'accent est mis sur la façon dont les membres du club s'organisent pour produire des chansons et des danses attrayantes, ce qui rend les performances uniques et comment ils adaptent le contenu aux identités de leurs clients. Onze membres de six des clubs de danse traditionnelle opérant dans la ville de Bujumbura ont participé à cette recherche. Une approche qualitative a été adoptée et une méthode ethnographique appliquée pour enquêter sur les mécanismes étudiés. Les résultats révèlent que, outre le positionnement géographique stratégique, la plupart des clubs de danse étudiés commencent par écrire des chansons avant les représentations. La minutie utilisée dans la formulation des messages véhiculés à travers les mots et les gestes des performances prime sur tout pour toucher tous les clients possibles dans leurs différentes identités. Plusieurs techniques

chorégraphiques sont appliquées, une gamme d'instruments et de vêtements traditionnels utilisés pour attirer les clients.

Mots-clés : Ville de Bujumbura, culture burundaise, clubs de danse traditionnelle, marchandisation de la danse, identités.

1. Introduction

Bujumbura city is Burundi's former political capital, which has become its economic capital since 2018. This most prominent city in the country, as most of the Burundian major urban areas, is cosmopolitan, that is, it is multicultural. The city is religiously and politically diverse, and multinational since the colonial period, with the predominance of Burundians. In Bujumbura city, there are zones which are still inhabited by the majority of specific religious or national groups. Hence, Buyenzi zone has the connotation of being Muslim populated and zones such as Bwiza which is mostly inhabited by Congolese and Senegalese besides Quartier asiatique (Asian Quarter), which is populated by the majority of Indians and Arabs living in the city. Regarding the Burundian community, all the three ethnic groups sharing Kirundi as language and traditions countrywide, as Ntahombaye (2005: 46) explains it well, are represented. These ethnic groups are namely *Hutu*, *Tutsi* and *Twa* (Uvin, 2017) and are present in the city with clear predominance in some particular zones.

In Burundi, as it is the case in neighbouring Rwanda, traditional dance performances are an essential part of both public and private ceremonies and social gatherings since a long time ago (Asiimwe, 2015). Burundian traditional dances (*intambo*) are always accompanied by songs (*imvyino*). The expression 'dancing identities' is ambivalent in this study: it refers to the traditional dance clubs as different dancing entities having each its own identity, on the one hand, and means the way these traditional dance clubs try to perform the identity of each of their customers, in their diversity, on the other hand. In the latter meaning, the dance clubs try to dance as the customers' identities dictate to ensure these clients feel 'fully' represented in the commodified performances. The commodification of traditional dance performances investigated in this article mostly involves both local customers (ceremony organisers) and providers (traditional dance clubs) as detailed in Havyarimana (2021b). In this context, people, somehow, "know" one another and their cultural preferences. In the same line, Su (2011: 496) says that this kind of "commodification sustains discourses of identity building and cultural revival that in turn serves to justify the pursuit of profit". Thus, traditional dance clubs know their people (the Burundian urban publics) and try to perform the ways of living which are dear to their customers, the ways which characterise lives of most of the city dwellers, their traditional ways of life. In such a context, the commodification of traditional dance performances in Bujumbura city is one of the privileged channels to convey multifaceted messages. This lines up with Kringelbach's claim that "performance is capable of encapsulating a multiplicity of messages"

(2013: 10). In this perspective, song and dance production is greatly influenced by the theory through which the clubs speak to their customers in a way that incites them to buy the performances. That is also why songs and dances go together and, every word or gesture performed, counts for the audience. The communication of cultural messages is thus dealt with through singing and dancing on a variety of themes such as friendship, work, love, hospitality, family unity, hunting, war, social life, peace, unity, traditional values and customs, to name but a few.

The aim of this article is to examine the ways and means through which traditional dance clubs commodify dance performances in the ceremonial atmosphere in Bujumbura city. So, amidst the financial gains traditional dance clubs are making (Havyarimana, 2021b), the intricacies underpinning commodified traditional dance performances will be explored and discussed throughout this article. This reflection takes us to the analysis of mechanisms and strategies that are involved in the whole process revolving around the transmission of messages that the audience reads both through songs and different dance steps and gestures in the commodified performances. Hence, the main focus will be on the techniques guiding the song and dance production, the market negotiation strategies, logistical and aesthetical facets of the studied traditional dance clubs.

2. The Song Production and Choreography Techniques

Before dance performances, in most of the investigated dance clubs, everything starts with the composition of songs. Then, several choreographic techniques are applied for a diversity of dance types. Hence, during the production of songs and dances, these clubs know how to organise in order to always offer something new and attractive to their customers. The studied clubs use their sense of innovation to produce the types of dances that interest their customers in several aspects.

2.1. The Song Production Techniques

The most crucial technique in song-writing is to know how to contextualise everyday life situations in the songs. Therefore, even when these clubs are innovating (or incorporating new elements for musical and aesthetic purposes), the composers make sure Burundian historical and cultural messages are included. This ingenuity was also realised by (Mojaki, 2014: 99) who noticed that, during this process, “historical and cultural traits of the dance are recreated, choreographed and presented to the audience”. Each club is self-dependent, and everyone has the opportunity to compose a song within their club. Therefore, when someone gets inspiration, he/she goes, sits somewhere and writes the song as the words come to his/her mind. Nevertheless, for each club, there is a control committee which ensures that the quality of the productions is satisfactory. This internal organ sometimes rejects a song when the standards are not met following the context. Among other standards is the way the melody and the text are concordant,

but also the extent to which the song is danceable in line with the dance movements and gestures. The proposed themes guide the composition under specific contexts when this regulatory body deems it is needed. Sometimes, this body suggests modifications before the adoption of a song, which is subsequently given to the club members for rehearsal (Richard, Personal interview, at Institut Français du Burundi, February 6, 2019).

Song styles vary from club to club. In *Lac aux oiseaux*, for instance, they are solely inspired by traditional songs of their native region. In opposition to *Lac aux oiseaux*, *Abagumyabanga* is open to all trends and identity intricacies at the national level. According to Claude, that is why they recruit members of diverse backgrounds from across the country (Personal interview, at University of Burundi, February 11, 2019). He even added that, in the beginning, they could sometimes hire songwriters from given regions to produce songs and teach them dances from their home regions before establishing a song-writing laboratory. In some other clubs, the task of producing new songs is given to a group of members as it is the case in *Giramahoro* and *Intatana* clubs (Jasmine, Personal interview, at Ecole Indépendante, February 11, 2019 & Lina, from *Intatana*, at Kabwa Building No. 126, February 6, 2019). In this case, some of the above mentioned themes are proposed to the group for inspirational purposes. As a complement to this, composers usually draw on existing traditional songs from the compilation *Agahogo k'abarundi*².

2.2. The Choreographic Techniques: Rehearsals and Performances

Once the songs are available, the clubs need some space to rehearse before performances. They mostly benefit from facilities from public and private bodies for free. According to participants, this support occurs as an encouragement of the work they are doing for the promotion and conservation of the Burundian culture. Most of the supporting bodies are public schools and cultural centres, such as Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo owned by Esprit de Sagesse parish, in Mutanga-Sud. Access to some of the rehearsal places is limited compared to some others. For instance, Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo is encircled by a fence with one main entrance, so activities in the compound are controlled. Public schools, on the other hand, are mostly open and their courtyards are even often crossed by passers-by. That is why, during the rehearsals, kids from the surrounding neighbourhoods, and those who pass by, often come to enjoy these sessions. It is also remarkable that Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo, for example, is cleaner than visited public schools.

Hence, before going to perform in front of an audience, the clubs spend a reasonable amount of time rehearsing. During rehearsals, members are split into small groups, girls apart, boys apart but also, the older members on one side and the younger on the other. The first part of the time is devoted to group rehearsals, and the second is the combining time. It is during the second time that the chorus, which also prepares separately, sings for groups that try to combine what they have been practising individually. Thus, boys and girls dance together, for mixed dances, or merely dance under the rhythm of the chorus and the musical instruments. The small groups

rehearse in the classrooms, the corridors or the courtyards (in the public schools) or use the reception hall and different corners of the compound, including the courtyard (at Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo). In each of the groups, there is a master or mistress who teaches new songs or new dance steps as can be seen in the middle of the picture below.



Figure 1: Intahemuka Young Male Dancers Rehearsing at Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo, ©Photo: Author

It is during this time that dancers learn a diversity of dance steps and contexts of their performance. On the one hand, male dancers can learn a variety of dances ranging from hunting to war dances, including various seduction dances. They, for example, learn how to stamp, wearing rattles on their ankles as a sign of bravery in front of the enemy, during war dance known as *Intore*. Besides, they acquire jumping skills in imitating the prey's movements when performing *Umuhanaga* (hunting dance). The *Intore* dance can be performed alone or in a group and was meant to frighten and chase away the enemy, as Claude explained (Personal interview, at University of Burundi, February 11, 2019). Commenting on the same kinds of dance, Elias added that, in the *Intore* and *Umuhanaga* dances, it is common that dancers use sound to utter war cries or animal sounds, as warriors and hunters used to do on the battlefields and hunting expeditions (Personal interview, at CupLine Café, February 5, 2019). In a different mood, dancers soften their steps as they rehearse seduction dances, mostly turning all-around or following a female dancer while she, from time to time, reacts to signs and gestures of the moving and caring male. All these niceties and technicalities are purposefully incorporated in dance steps as condiments to touch and attract much more customers. As can be seen in the picture below, *Intahemuka* from Ngagara branch is rehearsing a seduction dance.



Figure 2: Intahemuka Mixed Rehearsal at Ngagara IV Primary School, Photo from Havyarimana (2021b)

The seduction dances that can also be referred to as courtship or dating dances “allow the dancers to display their vigour and attractiveness and to engage in socially accepted physical contact between the sexes” (Mackrell, n.d.). Hence, vivacious movements of dancers are nurtured by songs and clapping of the chorus in a vibrant and attaching way (Röder et al., 2016). The male can dance in a circular movement around the female dancer and, at times, rippling his spine (*kwikubanga*: to insist), to express his attachment and love to the woman already in an ecstatic mood (Fink et al., 2012). During my interaction with Mary, she explained seduction dances in the following words: “Seduction dances are characterised by their gallant gestures and movements such as the exchange of glances between the girl and the boy, facing each other from time to time as the boy follows the girl” (Personal interview, at AirBurundiOffice, February 14, 2019). Seduction dance was familiar in ‘traditional’ Burundi as emerged from an interview with Richard. He clarified that this kind of dance uses a lot of pelvis and the hips before adding that they have the particularity of being from the centre of the country, all around the royal domains. Regarding the contexts of performance of seduction dances, he mentioned some special occasions for this kind of dance: “Dancers, mostly girls, move their pelvis elegantly in front of the contemplation of attracted men. In traditional Burundi, it was during the dances of the genre that they used to choose girls of marriageable age” (Richard, Personal interview, at Institut Français du Burundi, February 6, 2019).

On the other side, female dancers learn multiple kinds of dance styles. Contrary to the male repertoire, the types of dance often performed by female dancers can be considered as soft, in the sense that most of them are made of graceful movements of the head, arms as they fling or stretch them out and, at times, elegantly walking, arching and shaking their body. When stamping intervenes in this context, it is accompanied by movements of the body, and the stamping mostly intends to capture the attention of the audience. In the context of different

subcultures, depending on the regional variations, as aforementioned, the gestures encapsulate meanings varying from the pastoral tradition to the agrarian realm beside intermediary varieties.



Figure 3: Intahemuka Young Female Dancers Rehearsing at Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo, ©Photo: Author

As can be seen in the picture above, the Mutanga-Sud branch of *Intahemuka* is rehearsing at Centre Culturel Bwenge-Nyabwo. While the dancers perform, with the possibility for younger members to learn, a group of other members is nearby, organised in a chorus, playing musical instruments and clapping to give rhythm to the dance. As also stated by Asiimwe (2015), these clapping members are composed of both female and male vocalists who sing to encourage the dancers as they perform. Thus, there are fixed days for each club dedicated to rehearsals for the preparation of an event or a ceremony. For most clubs, rehearsals occur during the afternoons and weekends, especially because many of the members are pupils and students.

For other types of dances, such as the one in the photo below, one can see how dancers look graceful, thanks to a combination of both gestures and costumes under the rhythm provided by the clapping chorus and specific musical instruments. A mixture of modern and traditional garments places these clubs at the verge of the neo-traditional performances as typically traditional dances are performed in a modern-like aesthetics (Kringelbach & Skinner, 2012: 2). As can be seen in the picture, satins of two kinds are associated with vegetal fibers and ornaments by male dancers as part of the innovation process on course.



Figure 4: Abagumyabanga Mixed Dance during a Performance, ©Photo: Author

3. The Strategies of Seducing Customers

In the context of serious competition between clubs whose number keeps increasing as time goes by, they adopt strategies to win and maintain the preference of their customers. Customers can be partitioned in private and public ones: private customers are mostly those who organise family or small-scale celebrations and the public customers range from public institutions to different kinds of independent organisations. These people are indeed customers: each performance is paid, and prices vary depending on the kind of ceremony to entertain but also on the number of people involved in it and its location (Richard, personal interview, at Institut Français du Burundi, February 6, 2019). Hence, prices per performance may range from 50,000 to 500,000BIF (Burundian francs), with the possibility of reaching 1,500,000BIF, in some particular contexts. The earned amount of money is significant in the context where a bottle of the most prestigious beer in the country costs 2,200BIF (Amstel Royale), all-inclusive school fees for boarding higher schools is about 150,000BIF per year, and an ordinary meal costs around 1,000BIF. For instance, when the performance involves a team of three people dancing a tape-recorded song, it can be paid 50,000BIF. The price grows as the number of dancers involved increases: in the case of four dancers, the performance is paid 60,000BIF; when it involves five, six or eight people, it costs 70,000BIF, 90,000BIF, and 120,000BIF, respectively. The prices highly increase when the performance is live, that is when it involves a chorus accompanying the dancers. It is therefore paid 300,000BIF without *Ingoma* and costs 500,000BIF when it includes those royal drummers. On some special occasions, especially on the request of some public and private institutions, the performing club can earn 1,500,000BIF for a single performance involving a variety of dance types at the same time.

There is a diversity of customers that the clubs entertain during various celebrations organised in the city such as marriage ceremonies at its different phases (*gukwa*: dowry payment, *ubugeni*: wedding and *ugutwikurura*: the lifting of the bridal veil), religious celebrations, public and other private ceremonies. It is at these occasions that each of the clubs seeks to build a name for competitive visibility and win the trust of the customers as Elias states (Personal interview, at CupLine Café, February 5, 2019). In doing so, the quality of the performances is sought above all as this has proven to influence the customers' behavioural intentions (Theodorakis, Goulmaris, & Gargalianos, 2003). Besides, these clubs adopt geographic positioning strategies that allow them to reach a large number of customers throughout the country and, mainly, in Bujumbura city, as will be seen in the following sections.

3.1. Diversity and Inventiveness for the Name-building

Diversity in the types of songs and dances offered to urban community is among the clubs' first tools to attract many customers in Bujumbura city. As a result, clubs attempt to provide a diversified repertoire of songs and dances to captivate their customers. Inventiveness comes in as the condiment that attaches customers to the best clubs. Here, each club tries to imprint in its performances a distinctive touch to such an extent that one can easily recognise their songs and dances without asking who is performing. Thus, some clubs become famous and popular while amateurs or less experienced ones, that Elias labels as "undergrounds", are only repeating their songs and dances (Personal Interview, at CupLine, February 5, 2019), in a country where the copyrights office (OBDA³) is still struggling to work appropriately (IGL, 2015). The copyrights violations here are not perpetrated in the forms of the generally known piracy of artistic works in the formal remediation circuits (Pype, 2015: 31). It is usually done by the copying of song texts and dance steps by less skilled clubs from renowned ones. Hence, as Elias explained, members of these clubs attend ceremonies where the best clubs are performing and try to emulate what they see once back in their respective clubs.

3.2. Playing with Identities to Attract Customers

The diversification of songs and types of dance seems sufficient to attract customers, from across the country, living in Bujumbura city. Therefore, taking into consideration the ways of life dictated by social norms, regional and ethnic identities traditional clubs play on socio-cultural stereotypes to gain more customers (Havyarimana, 2021: 81). Hence, the meticulousness used in the formulation of the messages conveyed through the words and the gestures of the performances takes precedence over everything to reach all the possible customers in their different identities. This is why, according to Neuenfeldt and Costigan (2004: 113), "the songwriters perceive themselves as creators but creators who must also work within the cultural, social and aesthetic dictates of their communities".

As Richard observes, one can perform a dance style from a given region without incorporating everything required to represent the predominant identity of the region, but all this counts to interest the clients who have nowadays a multitude of choices (Personal Interview, at Institut Français du Burundi, February 6, 2019). As a consequence, for instance, some clients from regions where the pastoral tradition dominates, such as Bututsi and Mugamba, prefer songs and dances in which the cattle rearing tradition is reflected, as the cow has some social and cultural functions in most African traditions (Hall, 1986 & Barrett, 2010). As far as Mary's view is concerned, "for those coming from regions with a predominantly agricultural tradition like Kumoso, Kirimiro, and Buyenzi, themes related to agrarian activities and different types of crops speak to them and attract them the most" (Personal interview, at AirBurundiOffice, February 14, 2019). This also applies for customers coming from areas stretching along the shoreline of Lake Tanganyika, in the Imbo region, where it is preferable for fishing to be echoed in their songs and dances. Elias highlights it: "You cannot go to entertain a ceremony for people from the Imbo region and forget [to dance] *akanyarusizi*"⁴ (Personal Interview, at CupLine Café, February 5, 2019). Central regions and those overlapping over different traditions, instead, adopt mixed styles and those adapted to their local environments like the dance of birds which is performed in Rutegama (Muramvya province), as Mary added.

In the same framework, Elias and Richard pointed out that, at times, there are customers who go beyond by asking dancers from their ethnic group. These customers, therefore, express it either covertly or overtly by asking the club masters to bring dancers who look like them, an expression which is ethnically charged for those who are familiar with the Burundian culture. Nevertheless, as Richard added, there are some other instances where customers explicitly request dancers from a different ethnic group, especially when the aesthetic aspect of the performance is the only criterion taken into consideration. After all, in a country where the unity of Burundians is sung and sought by all means (Iwacu, 2014), some club leaders prefer to abandon these kinds of customers. Nonetheless, other clubs try to rearrange the performing teams to cope with the situation as respectively informed by Elias and Lina (Personal Interview, at Kabwa Building No. 126, February 6, 2019).

3.3. The Geographical Positioning in the City

Another common tactic used by the investigated clubs to get many more customers is their geographical positioning. Thus, they create antennas in several corners of the city and, some even go to the countryside, where they have branches bearing their names in major urban areas. For example, *Intahemuka* has three branches in Bujumbura city: one branch in Ngagara (North of the city), a second in Mutanga-Sud (Centre of the city), and a third in Kinindo (South of the city). Other clubs are also strategically positioned in different locations to compete with their 'rivals' on this competitive market. In the countryside, their antennas are mostly located in major provincial towns. Interactions exist between the clubs and their antennas, but, the latter are managed on a semi-autonomous standard. Members from Bujumbura city teach some techniques

in the antennas which are mainly composed of young members, as Richard from *Intahemuka* clarified (WhatsApp audio message, May 30, 2019). What is interesting here is the linkages between the countryside (the village) and Bujumbura city where talented dancers are concentrated at the detriment of the rural areas, as it is also observed in other African countries (Plancke, 2010: 633-634 & Jewsiewicki & Pye, 2019: 16). This concentration could be explained by the ceremonial atmosphere in urban areas which is conducive enough for the commodification of dance performances since most of the customers also live in 'the city' in opposition to 'the village'.

The positive aspect of the relationships between traditional dance clubs in Bujumbura city and their branches in the countryside is the circulation of techniques through what can be called the 'technical-return movement'. The skilled dancers performing in Bujumbura city are going back to the countryside to technically support younger club branches. The organisation of the antennas is coordinated, at the national level, by the central branches that are located in Bujumbura city for the studied clubs. Nevertheless, there are local traditional dance clubs in the countryside, which also enter in the competition. Some examples are *Abahizi* and *Sagwamahoro*, in Gitega town.

3.4. The Encapsulated Messages in the Clothing and Musical Equipment

Other crucial aspects of the mechanisms underpinning the commercialisation of traditional dance are related to the clothing styles and the used musical instruments. The dance clubs have to acquire clothes for their singers and dancers but also musical instruments to accompany the dance performances. Both the costumes and musical instruments have specific roles and meanings to convey targeted cultural messages.

3.4.1. The Clothing Styles, Objects and Ornaments

The uniqueness of the Burundian tradition is also reflected through the way people dress. The dancers, as well as the singers, dress in a way that the messages are conveyed both through their dancing and clothing. Even when innovation brings in new elements such as costumes and objects, there must be concordance between the type of dance, clothing and equipment. Women mostly wear *imvutano* (wraparound textiles, usually wore by women in the Burundian tradition) and men put on *imbega* (a kind of textiles wore by both men and women loosely wrapped on the shoulders in an oblique way). Women dress this way when they are singing and dancing, and men put on *imbega* while performing *amazina* (epic poetry) and *ibicuba* (pastoral poetry).

On the one hand, the history of Burundi, during the kingdom epoch, is marked by several war incidents with its neighbouring kingdoms which pushed Burundians to develop *amazina* as a genre to praise the bravery or extraordinary achievements or war exploits. Therefore, *amazina* are recited for 'socially important' people, both in public and private occasions, in honour of

what they are and/or have achieved. On the other hand, cattle keeping is one of the Burundian traditions and pastoralists have developed *ibicuba* as a kind of poetry to praise the cow and all its products. In opposition to *amazina*, this kind of praise is sung while *amazina* are recited. Herdsmen can sing *ibicuba* during the going and the coming of the cows, generally when it involves long distances, as a way of keeping the moral to deal with loneliness. *Ibicuba* can also be sung both in public and private, depending on the preferences of the customers.

On the clothing side, *cuyicuyi* (A Kirundi noun originating in Kiswahili/ Swahili meaning ‘what looks like a leopard’s skin’) is a new type of clothes that are worn by traditional dancers. These clothes are made from leopard-coloured-like fabric and are used to perform *umuhanga* (hunt dance). In many performances, satins (another new costume) are associated with *ubuyonga*⁵, wore by young dancers of *umuyebe*⁶. Moreover, *Intore* dancers wear leopard and antelope skins, as a sign of courage and bravery of past Burundian warriors. Combined with these clothing styles, different kinds of ornaments and objects are used to keep customers satisfied. Among other typical ornaments and objects that Burundian traditional dancers use are *urugori* (crown), *umugara* (diadem of *intore* dancer), *ibitako* (different kinds of body decorations), *ibirezi* (different kinds of necklaces), *ibidede or ubuyeye* (different kinds of jewellery among which are beaded headbands, armbands and chest ornaments of *Intore* and *Umuhanga* dancers, *icumu* (spear), *umuheto* (bow of *Intore* dancers), *ivyansi* (calabash cups used to drink cow milk), *ibisabo* (big calabashes used to keep and process the cow milk), and *uruhimbi* (a table-like wooden place where household objects are safely kept), to cite but a few. The following picture shows young decorated men ready for a performance in an *Umuyebe* dance costume, another vibrant male dance in Burundi.



Figure 5: Abagumyabanga Male Dancers before a Performance, ©Photo: Club Abagumyabanga

Most of these clothes, ornaments and objects are locally made. However, some of these traditional clothes (as animal skins) are no longer easy to get, they are gradually being replaced by modern ones which play the same roles as can be seen in Figure 8 below where *Intore* dancers are wearing *cuyicuyi* instead of leopard's skins. In opposition to this, dancers of the royal drums still wear local traditional clothes made from the bark of *umumanda*⁷ tree. Most often, satins are combined depending on the colours of the day for family celebrations and public ceremonies.



Figure 6: Young Intore Dancers during a Performance, ©Photo: Internet

3.4.2. Burundian Musical Instruments and their Short Histories

An arsenal of Burundian traditional musical instruments is used during dance performances. As Richard told me (Personal Interview, at IGAA Kigobe, February 14, 2019), there is a variety of musical instruments that they commonly use. Among others, those instruments are *ingoma* (drums for both dance and percussion), *inanga* (a Burundian traditional eight-stringed harp frequent in the pastoral tradition), *umuduri* (a single-stringed bowed musical instrument played with two small and thin sticks with a gourd resonator made of a calabash), *ikembe* (a wooden musical box with acoustic metallic small sticks on it, commonly known as lamellophone), *indingiti* or *agahuguhugu* also called *indonongo* (a violin-like instrument played with a cord on a small bow), *umwironge* (a bamboo flute), *inkono* (a clay-pot), *amayugi* (ankle-rattles), *amayebe* (vegetal rattle-like objects used by *umuyebe* dancers), and *ifirimbi* (whistle). All of those objects are bought from local producers, that is, from different places in Burundi (including Bujumbura city), but some of them, such as the *djembe* (a small drum beaten by hands for percussion, in the innovative process) and good quality rattles, are bought in Rwanda or Uganda, neighbouring northern countries to Burundi.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to shed some light on how traditional dance clubs in Bujumbura city behave following the attraction of their customers throughout their productions. Thus, this paper has looked at where and how these clubs prepare their performances, from the rehearsal places to the performance locations. Dance rehearsals and performances were analysed in terms of the

techniques applied and the strategic aspects of the clubs' organisation in the context of a multifaceted ceremonial atmosphere. More elegant dance gestures are executed not only to create social and identity-wise performances during private celebrations but also to entertain various official ceremonies that take place in Bujumbura city. Innovative techniques such as the reintroduction of old costumes along with new ones and the introduction of new musical instruments emerged from the discussion. This study also tried to provide a non-exhaustive overview of the costumes and musical instruments that are used, which are mostly made in Burundi. The organisational and market negotiation techniques show that the studied clubs try to root as much as possible their performances in the Burundian traditional way of life through a variety of guiding themes.

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¹ This article is an excerpt from “Dance Commodification and Culture Conservation in Burundi: Dancing Identities in Bujumbura City” (2019), a Master's Thesis defended by the author at KU Leuven, under the supervision of Professor Katrien Pype.

² A Kirundi phrase meaning “The voice/ songs of Burundians” referring to an official compilation of existing Burundian traditional songs which sometimes are played on the national radio-television station.

³ Office Burundais des Droits d'Auteur (The Burundian Copyright Office)

⁴ A kind of dance typical to the Imbo region, which is named after the Rusizi River flowing into Lake Tanganyika.

⁵ A Kirundi name of fiber-made ornaments wore by Umuyebe and Intore dancers.

⁶ A Burundian traditional hunt dance.

⁷ A Kirundi name of a tree called ficus.