

1972

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Kaduma, Godwin Zilaoneka

University of Dar es Salaam

Kaduma, G.Z (1972) A theatrical description of five Tanzanian dances, Masters dissertation,
University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam

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A theatrical description of five Tanzanian dances

Godwin Zilaoneka Kaduma

Master of Arts

University of Dar es Salaam, College of Social Science, 1972.

This study is not a choreographic analysis of dance; but, rather, a description of the theatrical qualities of five Tanzanian dances under consideration. The introduction establishes the meaning and place of dance which, in Tanzania, is called Ngoma, but a much bigger social function whose study and analysis is the work of an anthropologist and not a theatre artist. The study's main task is to point out the theatrical qualities in traditional dances, and to use these as criteria to establish that dance is theatre. It also notes some of the important socio-economic and historical factors which have directly contributed towards the making of the theatre in traditional dances. This is done through an account of the history of dance as well as that of the people themselves. The five dances described herein are:

1. The Luheyo

2. The Kiduo

These are from the Wahehe and Wabena tribes of Iringa and Njombe districts.

3. The Msunyunho

4. The Nhindo

5. The Selo (or Kayamba)

These are dances of the Wagogo tribe of Dodoma, Kongwa and Mpwapwa districts.

The descriptions are based on live performance and deductions are as they were given and expressed to me by the artists themselves and elders of the peoples involved.

The conclusion gives a breakdown of the theatrical characteristics found in the five dances.