Two of the oldest musical labor societies in the Sukuma region are the banuunguli (s., ng’uunguli) or ‘porcupine hunter’s association’, and the bayeye (s., nyeye) or ‘snake hunter’s association’. Porcupine hunting dance associations have been noted elsewhere among Tanzanian ethnic groups, to include the Luguru, Kutu, Kwere, and Zaramo, who, interestingly, all have joking relationships (and thus a history of contact), with the Sukuma-Nyamwezi. By the mid eighteenth century, the banuunguli-bayeye competitions were as renowned and anticipated in this region as the bagiika-bagaalu competitions are today (Abrahams 1967: 64). Several sources claim that both societies spread through migrant labor and porterage from Ufipa in southwestern Tanzania to the Tabora region in the early 1800s (Abrahams 1967: 64; Bosch 1930; Mayalla 1994).

According to the tradition shared by both societies, long ago the bayeye and the banuunguli societies were one. The joking relationship between the banuunguli and the bayeye is more cordial than other Sukuma dance rivalries, and many dance practitioners are members of both groups. As with all of the other celebrated dance group splits in the Sukuma region, participants remember the split between the banuunguli and the bayeye being between teachers and prominent students over differences about medicines. This tradition may have some basis, as the complex ritual training of both societies is nearly indistinguishable. The time of the split of the bayeye into the separate bayeye-banuunguli dance teams is uncertain, but informants claim that

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1 From Kisukuma nunguli, meaning porcupine.
2 Two other snake hunting societies mentioned both in the academic literature and in oral narratives, are the bagoyangi and bazwilili. These have all but ceased to exist, except in remote areas, but the terms are still used and referred to in oral narratives, nicknames and in songs. See also Cory (1946).
3 From Kisukuma kuyeyeka, to move like a snake. The term describes the wriggling movements that the dancers make with their upper torsos, what they call ‘dancing the shoulders’, in opposition to their lower torso.
it occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, at roughly the same time as the breakup between the *bagiika-bagaalu*. In the case of the old *bayeye-banuunguli* moieties, the associations’ professional duties were similar: to discover the whereabouts of snakes and porcupines, to hunt them down and to capture them. Porcupines were dangerous to crops, especially corn, and well, snakes were just dangerous. Because porcupines and snakes live and coil up together in the same holes, it was important that those trained in hunting one or the other know about the problems they might run into if they met with the opposing party. The students of these groups were also taught that both animals react to sound in the same way: They are disoriented by loud repetitive percussive noises (like drumming), and thus can be manipulated easily and in entertaining ways during music performance.

The *bayeye* dance societies are specialized as snake hunters and healers of poisonous snakebites. The hunters capture the snakes by hand, or by traps (Werther 1898: 65). They are pinned to the ground using forked sticks, and they remove their poisonous teeth every five to six days (Cory Archives #188). In their dance competitions with the *banuunguli*, the *bayeye* dancers reveal the snakes, which they refer to as ‘their children’ (*bana biswe*), and provoke them to move, much to the horror and delight of the audience. Other groups demonstrate the proficiency of their medicines by dancing with the poisonous snakes, even allowing themselves to be bitten. At this point, other members will be on hand to apply the appropriate medicines. The *bayeye*, though they preceded the *bagiika-bagaalu* medicinal associations, share an affiliation with the *bagiika*. Of all the dance societies of older origin still operating today, the *bayeye* have the longest and most elaborate initiation period. Recovered snakebite patients are sometimes required to join in the association as a form of payment. As with the *banuunguli*, some *bayeye* groups closer to urban areas have gone through a transition period, where the medicinal practices of the association have diminished, and the groups exist only for competing and dancing with non-poisonous but crowd-pleasing snakes. Like the *bagobogobo*

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4 Kisukuma terms for the most common poisonous snakes are as follows: *nswila* (spitting cobra), *ng’haga buganga* (cobra), and *nhimbiji* (black mamba).

5 These initiations are described by Cory (1946) and Millroth (1965: 148).

6 Oral accounts and local newspapers report numerous incidents involving the death of *bayeye* dancers due to snakebites. See Mambo Leo 1925; ‘Nzoka Yabulaga Bazwilili Babil’ 1958; ‘Ngoyangi Akagongwa Nyoka’ 1963.