

SECTION TWO

Mobilities



# Swahili Covers, Sufi Prayers, and Liberation Hymns

## *Women's Mobilities in Competitive Tufo Dance Associations in Northern Mozambique*

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### INTRODUCTION

It was 9:00 a.m. and Dona Helena's *quintal* (yard) was a flurry of activity. Several women were tying colorful strips of cloth and purple jacaranda flowers to the interior of the *mpantaney* (figure 3.1)—a large open-air shelter made of wooden poles and *macubara* (woven palm fronds)—while a small group had congregated around Paula, who sat perched on a white plastic chair beneath the shade of a mango tree; spread across the ground in front of her were an assortment of plastic basins, pots, utensils, and three small charcoal cook stoves. She was giving a master class on how to cook prawn samosas to members of Associação Cultural Estrela Vermelha (Red Star Cultural Association) in Pebane, a coastal fishing town in Mozambique's Zambézia province (see map 3.1). Founded in the 1960s, Estrela Vermelha of Pebane (henceforth EVP) is a competitive dance association that performs *tufo*, a "traditional" song and dance genre owing a rich heritage to East Africa's Swahili coast. This morning, the group was finalizing preparations for a *carrama*, an annual, multiday event that brings together *tufo* groups from the same club for singing, dancing, and feasting.<sup>1</sup> Hosting a *carrama* in Pebane had been EVP's dream since re-forming after the civil war ended in 1992, so this was a highly anticipated moment, and the association—twenty female dancers, four council members, two drummers, fifteen nonperforming members, and many



FIGURE 3.1. *Tufo* dancers inside the *mpantaney* at the closing ceremony of a *carrama* hosted by Estrela Vermelha de Pebane in Pebane, Mozambique, September 17, 2017. (Photo by author)

ancestors—had been planning for months to host four invited groups, some traveling from long distances.

Later that evening during the welcoming ceremony, one such visitor, Estrela Vermelha from the port city of Nacala, entered the stage to dance. Within minutes, Samira,<sup>2</sup> an EVP dancer, grabbed my hand, pulling me from my spot at the edge of the audience to a plastic chair in the front row. “Sit here, and record *everything*,” she instructed, her voice breathless from excitement. “These women are the real owners of *tufo*. They are *ashinène*!” In Makhuwa, the primary Bantu language in northern Mozambique, *ashinène* means “original owner” or “first-comer.”<sup>3</sup> It is a label that designates authority and knowledge and can be used to refer to ownership of land, a language, or a cultural practice like *tufo*.

Months later, EVP members were still talking about the group from Nacala. Their dancing, they concluded, had raised the overall quality of the *carrama* because it demonstrated mastery over the oldest iteration of *tufo*, which takes its basic movement pattern—the head and torso reclined, and moving in a pattern from right to left, forward and backward—from the Sufi *dhikr*, the transcendental recitation of praise poetry (Trimingham 1980, 103). In *tufo*, the beauty of these movements is amplified by its synchronous performance, demonstrating control



MAP 3.1. Map of Mozambique. (Courtesy of the United Nations)

over both the individual dancer's body and the collective.<sup>4</sup> Ten to twenty women, seated in rows and adorned in matching uniforms and jewelry, sing and dance in unison. Their right arms are extended and sweep across the body in long graceful motions, while they mark time by moving their shoulders up and down to the deep, steady cadence of the principal drum, the *kapurra* (figure 3.2).



FIGURE 3.2. A dancer from Chimpimpi de Tibone in Pebane exemplifying the traditional *tufu* posture. (Photo by author)

While all dance associations that perform *tufu* are familiar with these movements, what distinguishes a good group from an exceptional one is the way they perform with feeling and show off their unique style (*maneira de gingar*), inviting spectators to become “intoxicated by the performance” (Gearhart 1998, 108). Estrela Vermelha from Nacala was lauded as a group that *knows* the genre, because they had sparked joy with their mastery of aesthetic form and feeling. As a result, they earned the status and respect that aligns with the label *ashinène* and would be invited to perform again. But this group also knew how to leverage their knowledge by asking the hosting group to pay for their return journey. This expense was not in the festival budget, but EVP scrambled to collect additional funds to comply with this request—how could they say no to a group who traveled so far, increased EVP’s prestige as hosts, and, as one dancer put it, “lifted the spirit of Pebane.”

*Tufu* performances create the potential for movement across form and scale—from microlevel movements of the body to large-scale movements of people (King and Skeldon 2010)—in that dancers can gain access to geographic, social, political, and sometimes even economic mobility if their singing and dancing is well received by the audience. In this essay I discuss how dancers creatively and strategically use performance aesthetics as a “field of possibilities” that they can appropriate to increase their movement opportunities by analyzing how EVP selects

and prepares song repertoires for three performance events: a regional *carrama*, a national political meeting, and a local recording session. I draw on fourteen months of ethnographic research with competitive dance associations that perform *tufo*; between 2016 and 2018 I lived in Pebane, Mozambique, and was a member of EVP, learning the art form, attending rehearsals and meetings, traveling to local and regional events, and performing with this group.

I begin by outlining the history of *tufo* as a product of several migrations within the Indian Ocean arena that have produced an aesthetically diverse, flexible genre of music and dance. Then, I turn to the concept of mobility as a theoretical and empirical frame for analyzing the social significance of *tufo*. More specifically, I discuss sociological and musicological uses of the term *motility* to propose that “aesthetic agency” (Bohlman 2011) is a movement strategy appropriated by dancers. Finally, drawing on ethnographic data collected at rehearsals, performances, and in postperformance reflections, I demonstrate how dancers work within the conventions of the genre to showcase their knowledge of *tufo* in order to bolster their reputation while considering the potential of aesthetics to facilitate *actual* forms of mobility in the future.

#### MOVING THROUGH *TUFO*: HISTORIES OF MIGRATION, POLITICS, AND TRAVEL

*Tufo* is a genre born out of musical migrations across the Indian Ocean and along East Africa’s Swahili coast. Oral histories trace its origins to Saudi Arabia, where it was first practiced by Prophet Muhammed’s followers when they welcomed the Prophet to Medina, then known as Yathrib, by singing praise songs accompanied by frame drums (Lutero and Pereira 1980, 19). As Arab traders and religious scholars moved west along well-established maritime routes, they introduced new ritual practices to coastal East African communities, leading to the development of many syncretic religious rituals between Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

Comorian scholar Sheikh Habib Salih introduced a new style of *mawlid* in Lamu, Kenya, in the 1880s that merged the praise poetry of the *dhikr* with the drumming and dancing of *ngoma* competitions that had long been an important part of social life throughout southern and eastern Africa (Gearhart 1998; Bang 2003, 149–50).<sup>6</sup> Though these innovations were met with strong resistance from the religious establishment, Salih’s *mawlid* brought orthodox Islamic traditions into a public space where they became more accessible to the poor and nonliterate. Moreover, the Africanization of Islam challenged deeply entrenched class hierarchies and attracted thousands of new followers in the early twentieth century as the *turuq*<sup>7</sup> expanded into the interior (Gearhart 1998, 97). Further innovations, such as the inclusion of instruments and religious texts in Swahili and local dialects, meant that sacred practices were also adapted for secular occasions like weddings and birth ceremonies (Fair 2001, 180–81).

The sociopolitical context in Mozambique at the turn of the twentieth century, however, differed significantly, as the Muslim chiefly clans along the northern coast were busy fighting political and territorial encroachment from the Portuguese. While the dominant Sufi Orders, the Qadiriyya and the Shadhuliyya Yashrutiyya, established themselves in Ilha de Moçambique and Angoche in 1896 and 1904/1905, they did not proliferate until after 1930, when the Portuguese consolidated their colonial power and built new transport and communication infrastructures (Bonate 2007, 67).

The late expansion of the Sufi Orders in Mozambique was consequential for ritual practices. While in Kenya and Tanzania, the merger of the *dhikr* with *ngoma* practices instituted drumming into many Islamic celebrations, this did not happen in Mozambique. Rather, tensions over the changing ideas of Islamic orthodoxy provoked by the Sufi Orders sedimented around debates over the permissibility of drumming in the mosque, and *dhikr* and *mawlid* ceremonies. While, according to Bonate (2007, 67), drumming was a common feature of Muslim festivals and funerals prior to the arrival of the Orders, it was outlawed from these ceremonies as the Orders expanded between 1930 and 1963.

*Tufo* was introduced on Ilha de Moçambique by a Qadiri sheikh in the early 1930s during this volatile period of religious and political transition (Arnfred 2004, 43). First labeled as *mawlid*<sup>8</sup> and performed only by men, the ritual underwent several changes in this new context: as a practice that included drums, it was secularized, deemed a dance society activity, and renamed after the drum of the tambourine family that often accompanies Islamic celebrations around the world—*ad-duff* in Arabic, *dufu* in Kiswahili, and *adufu* in Portuguese (Farmer 1993, 621). In northern Mozambique, it became *tufo* following Makhuwa language pronunciation, where the *d* becomes a strong dental *t* (Lutero and Perreira 1980, 19).

Women became involved in *tufo* when men from the local Muslim associations asked them to come “brighten” (*brilhar*) their soccer games. Abdul Satar, a member of Pebane’s first *mawlid* group, recalled, “When *tufo* started, men were busy playing soccer and invited women to dance *mawlid*, but the women started another culture, and it became *tufo*.” As women grew the practice, they adopted the names and uniform colors from the soccer teams for their *tufo* associations and modeled their group structure after the *turuq* (Arnfred 2011).

After independence in 1975, further changes occurred to the genre when Frelimo,<sup>9</sup> Mozambique’s ruling party, adopted a Marxist-Leninist platform. Under the umbrella of national culture, *tufo* and other “traditional” dances became designated as folklore and were incorporated into an official program of welcome ceremonies, political events, and commemorative days. Cultural groups were in service to the state, and revolutionary hymns sung in Portuguese, Mozambique’s lingua franca, became an important part of the repertoire. Several groups even changed their name to reflect socialist ideology. For example, the country’s first *tufo* group, Mahafil Islam in Ilha de Moçambique, became Estrela Vermelha

(Red Star), in homage to the international socialist symbol, and also the nickname of the Frelimo security forces (Arnfred 2004, 61). When Mozambique transitioned to a multiparty democracy after the civil war ended in 1992, the genre became further embedded in politics as many groups aligned themselves with political parties (Teixeira 2007). In the last decade, moreover, cultural policy makers have taken steps to preserve *tufu* as national cultural heritage by preparing its nomination to UNESCO's list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2012, though the application was never completed.

Today, *tufu* is expanding throughout rural and semiurban areas in northern Mozambique, countering the trend among other *ngoma* genres in eastern Africa, which have declined or disappeared in recent decades (see Gearhart 1998; Hill 2000; Fair 2002). In Pebane, for example, three new groups formed in a period of eight months in 2018, a substantial increase from the eight groups active when I arrived in November 2016. The genre's growing popularity can be explained, in part, in terms of the benefits competitive dance societies offer. Women describe their motivations for membership as a constellation of local and regional travel for performances, community development, social visibility, play, and the feminine beauty practices associated with *tufu*. Consequently, embodying histories of migration, women's desire for travel, and their social and political advancement, *tufu* is a genre that integrates mobilities across form and scale.

#### PERFORMANCE AS POTENTIAL: MOTILITY AND "AESTHETIC AGENCY"

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, mobility has emerged as a key concept-metaphor among scholars studying the increasing movement of people, objects, and ideas that characterize the globalized world.<sup>10</sup> While mobility often signifies progress, freedom, or modernity, it is also depicted as deviant or rebellious, as is evident in the disturbing, negative portrayals of transnational migrants or refugees. Movement, moreover, can only be understood in relation to stasis, and one example of this is the symbiosis between "roots" and "routes" in narratives of geopolitical identity formation (Friedman 1998, 151–52). Geographer Tim Cresswell (2010) argues that these conflicting meanings of mobility—as shaped by sociocultural and historical contexts—are what give mobility its status as a "resource" that is contested, negotiated, and managed. Moreover, who is mobile, and the ways in which groups are physically, socially, and economically mobile, matters politically (Adey 2006; Bissell and Fuller 2011).

In contemporary Mozambique, where physical, social, and economic mobility are perceived as a means for advancement, the differential politics of movement are evident along lines of class, region, political affiliation, race, and gender. Government rhetoric, corporate advertising, and popular music laud the nation's advancements, yet nonelites—often moving on foot as state officials, foreign

diplomats, and aid workers move along the crumbling roadways in all-terrain SUVs—underscore the ways in which mobility has become profoundly inequitable (Paasche and Sidaway 2010; Groes-Green 2013; Archambault 2012, 2013). Furthermore, as growing numbers of men are stuck at home, unemployed, women’s mobility is increasing as they pursue work in parallel markets to feed their families (Sheldon 2002), countering movement patterns during the colonial era dominated by male labor migration.<sup>11</sup> In the north of the country, *tufó* plays an important role in increasing women’s movement opportunities as successful, well-connected groups travel locally, regionally, and in some cases nationally, to perform at events. This travel also allows dancers to expand their social networks and cultural and economic capital, as they form friendships with members of new groups and meet potential patrons at performances. At the same time, the increase in mobility that many dancers enjoy has led to tensions in intimate relations, and more specifically, marriage, as men fear their wives’ increased visibility and freedom of movement will attract wealthier suitors and lead to divorce (Hebden 2020).

These tensions reinforce Cresswell’s contention that mobility is more than just the physical act of moving; mobility politics also encompass the representations of movement that give it shared meaning and the embodied experiences of moving that give it subjective meaning (2010, 160). When analyzed as an integrated system, mobility is a form of power that can be both enabling and repressive. However, while Cresswell defines mobility in terms of *actual* movement, I extend this definition to include the *possibility* for movement and the strategies people adopt to actualize mobility—what Vincent Kaufmann terms as “motility” (2002)—in order to also consider the imagined forms of future movements that could materialize through the construction and maintenance of social networks in *tufó*.

Motility is a concept borrowed from the biological sciences to describe movement that is “yet-to-be-realized or might-never-happen” (Leivestad 2016, 140). In the social sciences, it has gained theoretical currency as a way to tie people’s social movements to their capacity to be spatially mobile, or put differently, the way a group or individual transforms potential into actual mobility (Kaufmann and Montulet 2016, 45). According to Kaufmann, motility depends on one’s *access* to different forms or networks of mobility, their *competence* in recognizing and using access, and their ability to *appropriate* access and skills—which could refer to the strategies, values, perceptions, and habits that are meaningful in relation to movement (Kaufmann 2002, 1). In the context of *tufó*, aesthetics is one such “field of possibilities” that dancers can appropriate as movement potential.

Philip Bohlman’s concept of “aesthetic agency” contributes a musicological perspective to these sociological understandings of motility in that it highlights music’s ability to sustain physical mobility by accommodating multiple political meanings, which people can appropriate (2011, 150).<sup>12</sup> According to Bohlman, music is “spatially malleable and mobile” (2016, 168), it can move and be moved, and its aesthetics carry forms of knowledge that, depending on the context, can

adopt or express different meanings. In other words, aesthetics can propel movement in spite of outside forces. At the same time, performers appropriate aesthetics for their own political ends.<sup>13</sup>

As a genre that accommodates multiple historical influences and meanings, *tufu* aesthetics are malleable and have the potential to sustain other forms of movement, depending on a group's access, competence, and appropriation. In the next section, I show how women strategically use the particulars of sound, lyrics, rhythm, and choreography in *tufu* performances to pursue new forms of movement that they deem valuable.

### HISTORY, POLITICS, AND POP MUSIC: THE APPROPRIATION OF AESTHETICS IN THREE EXAMPLES

In the context of competitive public performance, the visual, kinetic, sonic, and affective textures of *tufu* weave together as forms of capital that can raise a group's status, or alternatively, destroy their reputation. Selecting repertoire to perform at a public event is therefore serious business, and in EVP rehearsals this is a collective decision open to debate. Group members choose lyrics, melody, tempo, choreography, and uniforms that speak to the event's theme and the anticipated audience. If they do this well, they may receive invitations to perform at additional events, which translates into future possibilities for travel. Returning to Kaufmann's definition of motility, dancers access new forms of mobility through event invitations. Their competence in using this access, however, depends on their skill as a group, which includes their ability to successfully show off their knowledge of the genre's conventions, their ability to energize (*animar*) the audience, and their ability to secure the appropriate patrons or funding that facilitate their actual travel.

However, as the following three examples illuminate, dancers also appropriate the "aesthetic agency" of *tufu* when selecting performance-specific repertoire to maximize their future mobility potential. There is more to group success than technical skill, energy, and fundraising; success is also achieved by the expert pairing of lyrics and melody, for example, to praise a visiting government official, or by embodying piety in the choreography for an Islamic song at a wedding. Each of the following examples highlight the ways in which women debate and select song repertoire that caters to the theme, audience, and purpose of an event while also strategizing for their own advancement.

#### *Example 1: Historical Migrations and Knowledgeable Movements*

Twenty-five women were packed inside the mud brick clubhouse, as EVP was meeting to practice choreography in preparation for the upcoming *carrama* they had been invited to attend in Nampula, northern Mozambique's largest city. While the drumheads were warming up in the fire outside, Amina, the *anuno*

*mwanene*—the queen or “owner” of the group—led us in song, accompanied by Fatima, who sang a countermelody, matching the volume and timbre: “*Allah hu allah. ya rabi salama, siku ya kiama, moto ya kasema.*” This is an old song with Kiswahili lyrics that evidences the genre’s Islamic heritage. Amina told me later that it is about judgment day—*siku ya kiama*—and is a reminder to think about the end of life, “when the fire is going to call us.” This song would be included in the *carrama* repertoire, but there was some confusion among the dancers as to how it should be choreographed. Is this better seated or standing? “*Opatchera okilati*”—you have to start seated because it is a *carrama*—asserted Safiana, Pebane’s Head of Culture, who was attending the rehearsal to help the group prepare.

At *carramas*, like the one I described in the introduction, protocol is strictly observed. A performance begins with the stage entrance (*entrada*), where dancers coordinate an opening choreographic sequence with the drums while moving into formation. From there, they transition to a seated position for their first several songs in order to display their knowledge of the genre’s performance conventions. EVP dancers were aware of these rules, and group members agreed that this song, as an opening selection, must be danced seated. But when a young dancer from the back row asked, “How fast should we be moving?” this sparked another debate. Elder members, who no longer dance but still participate as advisors to the group, argued that the song must be danced at a slow tempo because originally it was a prayer. When a few of the younger, more forthright dancers pushed back, Safiana was forced to intercede and chastised the group members for their indecisiveness. “You are going there to show them what you know,” she reminded the dancers, “so demonstrate that you *know*. But you must go with certainty so that the other groups don’t say that this group doesn’t know.”

To know, in this context, is to have mastered the history, affects, and aesthetic form of the genre—to correctly embody the shared conventions that have circulated through time and across space. Musical genre, argues Fabian Holt, is not only “in the music,” but in the “minds and bodies” of groups of people who share its conventions (2007, 2). Conventions are founded by what Holt calls “center collectivities,” which are “specialized subjects that have given direction to the larger network that sustains and creates the genre’s identity” (Holt 2007, 20). While Holt’s conception of “center collectivities” emerges from his study of genre in American popular music, and includes a wide range of authorities and corporate companies that are largely urban based, “center collectivities” works well to explain how genre conventions are created and circulated in the *tufu* network because it aligns with Makhwa matrilineal “first-comer” ideology through which authority has historically been determined. As direct descendants of the first and oldest *tufu* groups, those from Muslim-majority coastal towns like Ilha de Moçambique, Angoche, and Nacala in Nampula province, and Moçimboa da Praia in Cabo Delgado, are considered the owners of the practice, or *ashinène*—the label EVP members attached to Estrela Vermelha of Nacala-Porto. *Carramas*, which bring

together geographically dispersed groups from the same team network, are events at which these “center collectivities” reinforce and correct genre conventions, and where team identity is celebrated through aesthetic display. For dancers from places like Pebane, where *tufu* was introduced later through internal migration down the coast, it is important to demonstrate that even though they “aren’t the owners of this culture,” as one elder asserted, they have been acculturated and know the sounds and gestures that form the basis of *tufu*, correctly embodying its historical “roots.”

The aesthetic “roots” of *tufu* as a genre emerge from multiple historical “routes.” Cultural and postcolonial theorists like Paul Gilroy (1993), Stuart Hall (1994), James Clifford (1997), and Susan Friedman (1998) argue that roots and routes move dialogically back and forth and are “two sides of the same coin: roots, signifying identity based on stable cores and continuities; routes, suggesting identity based on travel, change, and disruption” (Friedman 1998, 152). *Tufu* narrativizes the disruption, displacement, and intercultural encounters of slavery, colonization, and migration through song, sound, and body movement. The aesthetics of body movement in traditional *tufu* are a dialogue between rootedness and routeness in the most literal sense—as a seated dance, the lower body is rooted to the earth while the upper body mimics the movement of the dhows across the Indian Ocean. These aesthetic narratives tell the story of multiple intercultural encounters in the second half of the nineteenth century: Hadhrami migrations to East Africa, the expansion of the Sufi brotherhoods down the Swahili coast, and the movement of slave trade caravans inland, destroying some Makhuwa chiefdoms through slave raids while “saving” others through conversion to Islam. The sounds and gestures introduced in northern Mozambique through the Islamic ritual practices that were circulated through these migrations gave rise to *tufu* half of a century later. Today, these “roots” create new “routes” to mobility for groups that correctly embody this knowledge at a *carrama* (figure 3.3).

While dance practices are a part of processes of inclusion as individuals are acculturated into a community through dance (Ness 1992; Buckland 2002; Hamera 2007; Gilman 2009), they also reveal hierarchies of power and social exclusions (Desmond 1999). In *tufu*, these processes of inclusion and exclusion are revealed, in part, through critiques of the kinetic dynamics of body movement—the factors of rhythm, speed, force, duration, muscular tension, and relaxation that we feel when we move our bodies. Diedre Sklar argues that kinetic dynamics can combine to produce vitality affects—the complex qualities of kinetic energy that are embodied in movement, like a surging, explosion, crescendo or diminuendo, that are culturally encoded dispositions (Sklar 2008, 95). While kinetic dynamics are not always visible, they are critical to the ways in which memory, communication, cultural knowledge, and values are embodied through movement (Sklar 2008, 88). A group can learn how to dress well, sing beautifully, and compose socially relevant songs. But in *tufu*, how well one performs “the *feeling* of gesturing” (Noland



FIGURE 3.3. Estrela Vermelha de Pebane performing a gesture that mimics holding AK-47s during their performance for Mozambican Women's Day, 2017. (Photo by author)

and Ness 2008, xx), which is both body- and culture-specific (Sklar 2008), is determined by the speed and force of shoulder movements, and a dancer's gestural vitality, evident in the way she "shows off" (*gingar*).

The politics of mobility are often revealed through movement's constitutive parts: motive force, velocity, rhythm, route, experience, and friction (Cresswell 2010). In this EVP rehearsal, debates over force, speed, and vitality of gesture revealed how the politics of kinetic dynamics are embedded in broader hierarchies of knowledge. Several group members devoted significant attention to correcting the movements of a new dancer, Regina, who was moving her shoulders up and down with too much enthusiasm—a telltale sign of a novice, yet one that could threaten the reputation of the entire group if not corrected. They first described the quality of the movement's feeling to Regina, then tried to physically manipulate her right arm posture by pulling her fist back, prying her clenched fingers apart, and drawing the elbow away from the body. But nothing worked, and soon she was moved to the back row, a technique used to hide inexperience within the group ranks. Later, my friend Isa explained that for the dance to be considered *tufo*, "you can't move the shoulders with too much force. The up and down movement must be subtle." These must be pious, controlled movements, and when a group—or group member—betrays their ignorance of these kinetic dynamics at a *carrama*, other groups gossip about their poor performance and dismiss them as amateurs.

As Yolanda Covington-Ward (2016) shows in her work on gesture in Congo, micromovements of the body can have broader consequences for social and political life. Similarly, the politics of force, vitality, and speed of gestures in *tufo* are

connected to women's sociospatial movements. A dancer's ability to embody and correctly perform the kinetic dynamics that define the practice can determine their inclusion or exclusion from the wider network of *tufu* groups. When they fail, the results can be disastrous for the group. For example, one of the four groups that attended EVP's *carrama* in Pebane performed with sloppy choreography onstage during the opening ceremony. Their collective movements were not synchronized and one of their dancers moved from her waist. This revealed the group's ignorance, and the general consensus among dancers was that the group did not know how to dance *tufu*. Exasperated by their lack of discipline, the queen of another visiting group declared, "This isn't even *tufu*! This is something that they just invented now." While this reflects poorly on the hosting group for inviting such amateur dancers, the implications are far more severe for the offending group. Several of their members reported that they overheard people insulting their dancing, and their president considered leaving early with the group in protest. But it is the longer-term consequences of their breach of protocol that might have the most impact—it was later decided by EVP that they will not invite this group to future events.

When contrasted with the overwhelming success that the group from Nacala enjoyed after their performance at the same *carrama*, the disparity in group experience and reception underscores why EVP was so anxious about their upcoming performance in Nampula. EVP's song selection was strategic—they chose a seated dance taken from the Islamic repertoire that would permit them to show off their knowledge of the culturally encoded kinetic dynamics of movement that form the basis of evaluation at a *carrama*. Ideally, this would raise their profile and make a lasting impression on those in attendance, leading to future invitations. In this context, groups must draw on the genre's roots to ensure future success, because as Sabir, a *tufu* trainer, told me, "Without these events, a group will disband. They would have nothing, or no one to dance for."

*Example 2: Sound Politics as the Struggle Continues  
(A Luta Continua)*

Group preparations for a political event highlight different aesthetic choices as dancers appropriate an alternative skill set. In July 2017, Mozambique's vice minister of fisheries came to Pebane for a meeting with provincial leaders, and EVP was one of four groups invited to perform. The two groups designated to close the meeting waited outside for four hours to be ushered into the meeting room to dance three songs for the distinguished guests, who spent most of the performance playing on their smartphones. During the performance, the *chefe do bairro*, a local neighborhood authority, presented several wrinkled 100 meticaís notes to a dancer in the front row as a tip.<sup>14</sup> Afterward, I commented to an elder dancer that it was nice the group was presented with money after waiting for so long to dance. She shook her head and whispered that the *chefe do bairro* was only trying

to encourage the others to give, but to no avail. After our performance, the dancer gave him back his money.

*Tufo* performances are critical components of these political events because they mobilize audiences: the drums signal an event is taking place, calling community members across great distances. Moreover, dancers work hard to energize (*animar*) these political gatherings and official meetings, despite little to no material reimbursement. Their participation is often obligatory: with eleven groups in Pebane Vila, the district's administrative headquarters, competition between groups is intense, and declining an opportunity to perform for a prestigious visitor means an esteemed group might lose their place at the top of the list, putting future invitations at risk.

At rehearsal several days after performing for the vice minister of fisheries, the dancers were abuzz with excitement. Amina was beaming when she told the group that the minister liked their songs and wanted to bring the group to perform at the eleventh Frelimo Convention in Maputo, Mozambique's capital city, in September. EVP was invited to perform at the Frelimo party headquarters in Pebane two days later to showcase their potential as the right group to be selected for this honor. At this rehearsal, they were learning a new song to unveil at this audition. The lyrics had been written by a group member's husband who is literate in Portuguese, the required language at government events. Their poetic strategy was flattery, praising government officials to show off the group's political ambitions and performance abilities.

With pride, we salute Engineer Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, father of the Mozambican nation, son of the Mozambican people, master of national unity and peace, enemy of hunger, poverty, injustice, discrimination, and malice.

To speak about Nyusi is to speak of national unity and peace, of real change, of development and of the eradication of poverty.

Association Estrela Vermelha of Pebane, a *tufo* cultural group, and the community from this fishing capital of Mozambique, believes that they will have everything with Nyusi ...

The women sang each line slowly, trying to set the lyrics to a melody they frequently use. Equilibrium between the lyrics and melody are an important component of communication in *tufo*. While groups have more aesthetic control over the performance of political songs, in that they often compose new lyrics and incorporate choreographic innovations, thematically they are confined to nationalist sentiments. Moreover, setting political content sung in Portuguese to Islamic melodies originally used in religious celebrations where songs were sung in Arabic or Swahili, often results in aesthetic incongruence.

This was the problem the women of EVP were having today. While the first phrase of the lyrics worked well with the melody, they ran into problems when they reached the line "master of national unity and peace." The lyrics did not fill

up the entire melodic line. Normally when this happens, they repeat a phrase or important word, a strategy that allows them to fit the lyrics within the melodic structure without sacrificing content. Occasionally, they will even cut superfluous words, but this was a political praise song where every word mattered. Finally, with frustration building, Amina decided to try the lyrics with a different melody. The lyrical phrases fit more naturally within the contours of this melody. Pleased, the rest of the group agreed that this would be the song they sing at the Frelimo headquarters, and they continued with their rehearsal until the song was committed to memory.

While the group members felt they performed well at their audition, the Frelimo Convention came and went and their formal invitation never arrived. It was not the first time this had happened: EVP often captured the attention of potential patrons, who extended invitations to perform at events that never materialized. This underscores the contingency of motility and the limits of aesthetic agency. While aesthetics present possibilities for movement, the actual movement is contingent on larger social, economic, and political forces over which they have no control. For EVP, however, this is no deterrent. It was still an opportunity to make themselves known—signaling possibility for future movement, while adding another song to their repertoire for the next Frelimo event.

### *Example 3: Swahili Cover Songs and Creativity*

Several weeks before I finished fieldwork, EVP asked me to record them with my camera dancing at several important sites around Pebane. They wanted to capture their talent on film for local circulation, with broader ambitions to sell these recordings and raise funds for group travel. But they were also cognizant that an American audience might one day watch the recordings, and ideally, they hoped for an invitation to someday perform in a foreign country. We devoted an entire afternoon to this recording session, and EVP dancers chose several iconic sites around Pebane where they wanted to be filmed: the beach, the airport, the port, and in front of the Petromoc petrol station—significantly, all places of coming and going. This was also a unique performance sequence for the group in that there were no thematic restrictions like there are with political or ritual events. They were therefore able to select songs that were meaningful to them as a group.

The repertoire that EVP selected was a combination of traditional *tufu* songs and original songs in Makhuwa-Moniga—the local language—imbued with locally meaningful messages. Notably missing were political songs and revolutionary hymns, yet in their absence, alternative historical alignments were made audible. After a year of learning as a group, I was familiar with the songs they performed during the recording session, with the exception of one. When I later asked Amina about it while we were reviewing the recordings with the group, she labeled it as a *baile*, or dance song. Another dancer added that, “It’s Swahili music called Sina Makosa. This is a song we dance to at *Veterano*,” referring to the

50+ dance club in Pebane where elders partner-dance to dance-band music from the 1960s–1980s. “Sina Makosa” is a hit song released in 1979 by the Kenya-based group Les Wanyika, popular in East Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. In their cover version, EVP adapted the song to work within the conventions of *tufu*—slowing down the tempo, replacing instrumental accompaniment with the interlocking rhythm of the four *tufu* drums, and singing the song as a call and response—revealing the flexibility of the genre to absorb outside influences and songs.

While a *carrama* demands a mastery over kinetic dynamics, and political events are thematically restrictive, other community events like weddings, circumcision ceremonies, or parties are far more entertainment-oriented. A group wants to get noticed, make an impression on the crowd, and cultivate a celebratory atmosphere. Performing the popular songs that circulate through local dance clubs is a strategy that *tufu* groups have adopted in recent decades to reach the widest possible audience and develop their fan base. Regional pop songs by Makhuwa artists like Dama Ija are a favorite, as is Swahili music, and increasingly, Brazilian hits.

However, in national culture discourse, policy makers express concern for protecting *tufu* as an example of Mozambique’s intangible heritage for the purposes of attracting international tourists, and pop songs are described as a corrupting element. During an interview in 2013, one cultural program officer based in Maputo described *tufu* as being “at risk” of losing its traditional characteristics because there were no civil or social organizations in place to protect it—ignoring the important work that *tufu* associations themselves do to preserve and innovate the genre. They complained that some *tufu* groups have started to integrate *samba* into their performances, citing an example of a Roberto Carlos song they had heard performed by a *tufu* group during a recent visit to the north. “Young people like this modern *tufu*,” they argued, “so there is an urgent need to safeguard the original *tufu* by implementing a standard practice of professionalism.” For the cultural officer, this was a problem to be solved through policy work. Innovations that challenge the idea of *tufu* as national folklore, moreover, were rebellious acts and threatened the stability of the national cultural imaginary.

Song choice is an act of political and historical alliance. By selecting and adapting a Swahili pop song rather than a *marrabenta* song,<sup>15</sup> for example, EVP was acknowledging spheres of sonic and choreographic influences based on ethnic, religious, and regional identities that betray the unifying rhetoric of “national culture” developed after independence. Instead, many of the songs that EVP selected to perform during the recording session exemplified what Anne Pitcher terms, “memory-from-below” (2006, 89) because they conveyed locally meaningful historical cultural narratives that do not conform to ideas of Mozambicanness (*moçambicanidade*) disseminated from Maputo. Jesse Weaver Shipley writes that in the Ghanaian genre of *hiplife*, “Musical products accrue value through newness, but this newness is carefully groomed to appear to have links to the past” (2013, 269). In *tufu*, as well, performance innovation must still conform to the historical

conventions of the genre, but newness is often incorporated through these cover songs that have specific social value for dancers and audiences at the periphery of the nation-state.

Aesthetic creativity and programmatic innovation are skills that can be appropriated for a group's social advancement or geographic movement. Mussa, the secretary of EVP, told me one day on our walk to rehearsal that other groups in town complain that EVP is always invited to perform at events. Many claim this is politically motivated because EVP supports Frelimo, and both the Head of Culture and *chefe do posto* (district authority) grew up in the group and still have strong family ties. "But that's not the reason," Mussa explained. "Estrela is the only group that writes new material. They perform new songs. *That's* why they get all the invitations, because they advance *tufu*."

### CONCLUSION

These examples, drawn from one association's *tufu* repertoire, reveal the ways in which *tufu* aesthetics, as a form of embodied knowledge, are appropriated in different contexts as possibilities for movement, or motility. When the intended audience are those in the dance community, dancers demonstrate skill through performing the histories of movement that define the genre. With politicians, in contrast, praise and political recognition are deployed, as song crafting skills might materialize into actual movements. Dancers articulate their knowledge of Mozambique's political past and present through language, lyrics, and melody, in order to present model patriotism as a strategy to secure longer-term political patronage that might fund their activities. Finally, a group may tap into regional histories of cultural circulation to show off their creativity. Their talent is highlighted through song diversity, reinforcing their reputation as a knowledgeable group that accurately captures the life experiences of people in the region.

What is also apparent through these processes of negotiation, debate, and appropriation is the ways in which dancers envision music and dance as connecting to other forms of mobility across form and scale. Choreography is connected to social advancement; melodic movement to travel. In rural, impoverished areas like Pebane where decrepit infrastructure limits physical movement, and gender norms often constrict women's social and economic mobility, the "aesthetic agency" of *tufu* represents possibilities for movement, regardless of whether or not actual movement takes place.

Histories of the Indian Ocean arena emphasize how ritual practices have transformed as social, political, and economic alliances have been formed, broken, and reconfigured. *Tufu*, as a case study, prompts us to think about these connections and movements across different scales and consider other forms of capital that circulate, such as song, gesture, and melody. Historical migrations, whether for religious, social, or economic reasons, have shaped the sonic and choreographic

landscape along the coast of East Africa. The religious celebrations that moved people in Saudi Arabia, and are still moving people in Zanzibar, have acquired new meanings in Mozambique.

Amid today's economic precarity and recurrent political instability, mobility as an adaptive technique for survival is critical. *Tufo* aesthetics offer strategies through which women pursue these critical forms of actual movement. One popular *tufo* song from Pebane district recalls that "our men earn their livelihood from fishing"—a line that is always met with an enthusiastic response from the audience. Everything that has sustained these communities, from past and present, has come from the Indian Ocean, whether religion, culture, or food needed to survive during the civil war. *Tufo* dancers do the same, using choreography, song, rhythm, and melody from the Indian Ocean to quite literally move them forward.

#### NOTES

1. *Carrama*, or *karama*, derives from the Swahili word *karamu* (feast/party). Feasts were a central part of *ngoma* competitions, religious rituals, and life-cycle events throughout the western Indian Ocean (Gearhart 1998, 110).

2. I use the real names of *tufo* associations and their elder group leaders to document the history and development of the genre in Pebane, but I have used pseudonyms for current group leaders, drummers, and dancers in my ethnographic descriptions.

3. Firstcomer status is historically and socially significant in northern Mozambique's coastal communities, and, along with matrilineal clanship (*nihimo*), has been an important criterion for determining authority (Bonate 2007).

4. The accommodation between individual and collective control within the dance—as well as shared aesthetic features such as sacred texts and pious movements, matching uniforms, competition and spiritual elation, and grounded, seated dancing that synchronizes moving bodies en masse—are noted in Gearhart's (2000) account of a *rama* group in Lamu, Kenya, and Lambek's description of *mawlid al-Barzanji* in Mayotte (Lambek 2006, 173). These similarities in sound, choreography, text, and dress, speak to what Prita Meier and Allyson Purpura describe as the "aesthetics of cosmopolitan mobility" (2018, 13) that are prevalent throughout the material culture and performing arts in the Indian Ocean arena.

5. For overviews of *mawlid* in East Africa, see Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975, 216–17) and Knappert's *Traditional Swahili Poetry* (1967, chap. 5). See Loimeir and Seesemann's edited volume, *The Global Worlds of the Swahili* (2006) for discussions of *mawlid* in Mayotte (Lambek 2006), Kenya (Kreese 2006; Seesemann 2006), and Zanzibar (Nuotio 2006).

6. *Ngoma* (*ikoma*, *nsoma* in Mozambique) is a form of competitive popular culture that was historically a mechanism for expressing clan disputes and neighborhood rivalries. There are different types of *ngomas*, though they have common features like team competition and rivalry, music, drumming, dance, theater, and costuming. See studies by Ranger (1975), Strobel (1979), Franken (1987), Geiger (1997), Gearhart (1998), Fair (2001), Askew (2002), Ntarangwi (2003), Meintjes (2017), and Gunderson and Barz's edited collection *Mashindano! Competitive Music Performance in East Africa* (2000).

7. The Arabic terms *Turuq* (pl.)/*tariqa* (sing.) refer to the organizations or brotherhoods devoted to mystical aspects of Islam.

8. Like in Tanzania and Comoros, there is a distinction made in Mozambique between the purely religious *mawlid* that is performed in mosques and on religious occasions by *tariqa* initiates and a

secular or semiseccular *mawlid* that is open to everyone during religious and life-cycle celebrations. The flexibility of the practice may also explain its survival in a religiously tense, colonial context, at a time when Islam in northern Mozambique was suppressed by the Catholic colonial authorities. See Bonate (2007, chap. 3).

9. Frelimo is the acronym for Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, or the Mozambican Liberation Front, which has been in power since 1975.

10. For example, the launch of the interdisciplinary social science journal *Mobilities* in 2006 marked the formalization of what has been called the “mobile turn” (Urry 2007) or “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006).

11. Labor migration is a prominent theme in scholarship on southern Africa because it has been a significant driver of societal change during the twentieth century. However, it has largely been studied as a masculine phenomenon, reflecting a broader historical treatment of women as immobile, while mobility, travel, and migration are naturalized as men’s domain (See De Bruijn, Dijk, and Foeken 2001; Barnes 2002).

12. The term *motility* has a much earlier history in musicology, as well, when in the early twentieth century it was adopted to describe and analyze the relationship between music and bodily motion. See, for example, Hornbostel’s comparative study of European and African music (1928, 49) and Adorno’s critique of Stravinsky (1980, 178).

13. While music and mobility has received considerable attention in studies of sound, migration, identity formation, and globalization (Granger et al. 2016), the relationship between music and immobility is still largely unexamined. Notable exceptions include Titus (2016) and Steingo (2015; 2016).

14. Tipping (*kutunza* in Swahili) is common practice at *ngoma* events in coastal East Africa. For more on tipping and its politics, see Askew (2002, 139–42); Gearhart (1998, 48–49); and Edmondson (2007, 2, 44–46, 92).

15. Marrabenta is a popular dance genre from Maputo with influences from South Africa, the United States (jazz and soul), and local rhythms such as Magika, Xingombela, and Zukuta (see Laranjeira 2010).

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