



Smithsonian

*National Museum of Natural History*

Guide to the Paul Sully films of Tangoma  
graduation ceremonies, 1980-1981

Human Studies Film Archives  
Museum Support Center  
4210 Silver Hill Road  
Suitland 20746  
hsfa@si.edu  
<http://www.anthropology.si.edu/naa>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Human Studies Film Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Paul Sully films of Tangoma graduation ceremonies
<b>Date:</b>	1980-1981
<b>Identifier:</b>	HSFA.1983.07
<b>Creator:</b>	Sully, Paul, 1949- (Filmmaker) Gardsbane, Diane (Sound designer)
<b>Extent:</b>	Film reels (3 hours 12 minutes; color sound silent; 3500 feet; S8mm) Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	Undetermined .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Received from Paul Sully in 1983.

### Processing Information

Titles are supplied by the archivist for untitled films.

### Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

### Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

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## Scope and Contents

Footage depicting ceremonies of "graduation" of diviners in Swaziland, Southern Africa, taken in 1980 and 1981.

Collection also includes associated texts, still film, sound recordings, annotations (recorded narratives), production logs, and field notes.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

## Bibliography

Sully, Paul. "An Account of Fieldwork among Tangoma in Swaziland." MA thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1982.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Swazi (African people)

Cultures:

Swazi (African people)

Types of Materials:

Sound films  
silent films

Places:

Africa, Southern  
Eswatini  
Gege (Eswatini)  
Lubombo (Eswatini)

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## Container Listing

Tangoma Graduation Ceremony, Lomahasha, Swaziland, 1980

3 Film reels (2 hours 20 minutes; color sound silent; 2100 feet; S8mm)

Notes: Full film record depicting the three-day initiation and graduation rites of tangoma, Swazi diviners and herbalists who are acknowledged for their ability to communicate with the ancestors and to diagnose and treat illness. Footage includes scenes of an all-night session of singing, drumming, and dancing in the chief sangoma's homestead; preparations of food, medicine, and an altar; the consumption by initiates of food prepared with medicine followed by ritual emesis; ritual interrogations of candidates to test their divinatory powers; riverbank ceremony at which initiates become possessed by ancestors; and final processional dance of tangoma, graduates, and kinsmen.

Legacy Keywords: Mr. and Mrs. Mahlalela diviner "sangoma" Swaziland; Ceremony drumming dancing singing ; Ritual altar ancestors colors symbolic objects medicines ; Ritual animal sacrifice purification blood confession vomiting ; Drumming drums double membrane kettle drums ; Ritual preparations space medicines ; Ritual vomiting induced feather "washing the stomach" ; Adornment initiates hairstyle plaiting rubbed with red clay ; Adornment ceremony initiates necklaces leg rattles beads vests ; Speech stylized initiates diviners interrogation "goo-peng-mula" ; Rites of passage separation testing reincorporation ; Drumming polyrhythms drumming techniques entertainment ; Ceremonial dress headdress feathers red royalty clanship ; Spirit possession drumming water spirits shaking ; Ritual animal sacrifice blood bath ; Feasting food preparation cooking goats chickens ; Taboo ritual animal sacrifice disposal of bones ; Rites of passage transition spirit possession initiates crawling return to homestead ; Rites of passage initiates seclusion hut ; Dancing ceremony choreography counterclockwise processional ; Dancing ceremony staffs headdresses animal pelts ; Ceremony conclusion moral instruction chief diviner ; Rites and ceremonies ; Music ; Instruments musical instruments ; Language and culture

HSFA 1983.7.2

Tangoma Graduation Ceremony, Gege, Swaziland, 1981

Film reels (52 minutes; color silent; 1440 feet)

Notes: Full film record documenting the rites of initiation and graduation of *tangoma*, Swazi herbalists and spirit mediums who are respected for their ability to communicate with ancestral spirits. Tangoma (singular sangoma) provide information about illness and misfortune and, through their training, heal with the use of herbs and other traditional medicines. Footage includes session of all-night drumming, singing, and dancing in the chief sangoma's homestead;

processional dancing in the open compound; interior shots of the sangoma's dwelling showing ritual paraphernalia; test during which initiates must find a lost goat; and ritual interrogations of the trainees by tangoma.

Legacy Keywords: Ceremony drumming dancing singing ; Ritual colors symbolic objects medicines ; Ritual animal sacrifice adornment goats bladders ; Drumming drums double membrane kettle drums ; Ritual preparations space medicines ; Alcoholic beverages beer drinking ritual specialist ceremony ; Adornment initiates hairstyle plaiting rubbed with red clay ; Adornment ceremony initiates necklaces leg rattles beads vests ; Speech stylized initiates diviners interrogation ; Rites of passage separation testing reincorporation ; Drumming polyrhythms drumming techniques entertainment ; Rites of passage initiates seclusion hut ; Dancing ceremony choreography counterclockwise processional ; Dancing ceremony ritual specialist whistles whigs ; Ritual dancing paraphernalia staffs fly wisks vests ; Animal sacrifice spear blood basin ; Rites and ceremonies ; Music ; Instruments musical instruments ; Language and culture

HSFA 1983.7.1