TANZANIA ZAMANI

Indexed in EBSCO databases

ISSN 0856-6518
Volume XI No. 2, 2019

A JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING

Published by
The Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam
and
The Historical Association of Tanzania (HAT)

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

General

Tanzania Zamani is a journal published twice a year by the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, and the Historical Association of Tanzania. It publishes scholarly articles and reviews on all aspects of Tanzania's past, provided they are presented as historical material and follow the generally agreed rules for history writing. Scholarly articles on geographical areas in Africa other than Tanzania may be accepted provided that they are properly introduced to exhibit relevance to Tanzanian history.

House Style

Submissions should be in either American or British English, as long as consistency is maintained. They should start with an abstract not exceeding 250 words. The main text should have a maximum of 7,500 words (excluding notes) and should be double-spaced throughout in font 12 Times New Roman. Contributors should submit both hard and electronic copies, formatted in MS Word. Illustrations such as maps, diagrams and photographs should show their respective sources and evidence of copyright permission, where applicable. Captions should be short and clear.

Quotations of more than thirty words should begin on a new line, indented from the left-hand margin. Italics should be used only for titles of publications and for words in languages other than English. Footnotes, rather than endnotes or in-text notes, should be used in all submissions. They should be

numbered consecutively throughout the work. A separate bibliography is not required.

After an article has been accepted for publication and has been typeset, page proofs will be sent to the respective contributors for final corrections. Such corrections must be kept to a minimum and should not include introduction of new material into the work. Authors whose work is published in *Tanzania Zamani* will receive two free copies of the journal issue in which their articles are published.

Peer Review Process

Upon receipt of a contribution, the editors will assess its scholarly quality and relevance to the journal. If the submission is found to be potentially publishable, it is subjected to a double blind peer review process involving a minimum of two independent reviewers. Based on the reviewers' reports, the article is either accepted for publication, or sent back to the author with recommendations for improvements, or rejected effectively. Editors will normally inform contributors on the status of their articles within two months since the date of submission.

TANZANIA ZAMANI

Journal of the Department of History,
University of Dar es Salaam
and
The Historical Association of Tanzania
Published twice a year

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Yusufu Q. Lawi

ASSOCIATE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Bertram B. Mapunda

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS:

Albertus K. Onyiego	-	General Administration & Correspondence
Frank Edward	-	Mobilisation of Articles, Book Reviews & Visibility
Samwel Mhajida	-	Quality Control & Gate Keeping

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Prof. Abdul Sheriff	-	Former Secretary of the Historical Association of Tanzania and former Professor of History at the University of Dar es Salaam
Prof. James L. Giblin	-	Professor of History, University of Iowa, USA
Prof. Gregory G. Maddox	-	Professor of History, Texas Southern University, USA

Prof. Arnold Temu	-	Professor of History, Tumaini University, Tanzania
Prof. Jamie Monson	-	Professor of History and Director of the African Studies Centre, Michigan State University, USA

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

Prof. Juhani Koponen - University of Helsinki, Finland

Prof. Frederick J. Kaijage - University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Prof. Jose Arturo S. Casco - El Colegio de Mexico, Mexico

Prof. Joseph Mbwiliza - Archbishop James University College, Tanzania

Prof. Peter O. Ndege - Moi University, Kenya

SUBSCRIPTION RATES PER COPY

Price: Tsh. 5,000

Annual subscription within Tanzania: Tsh. 10,000, including postage.

Institutions outside Tanzania: USD 25 or its equivalent, including postage.

Individuals outside Tanzania: USD 15 or its equivalent, including postage.

CORRESPONDENCE

Manuscripts, editorial correspondence, books for review, advertising, inquiries and subscription requests should be addressed to:

Editor-in-Chief, *Tanzania Zamani*,
Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam,
P.O. Box 35050, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania,
E-mail: history@udsm.ac.tz

EDITORS' NOTE

This last issue of *Tanzania Zamani* for 2019 features four articles as has been the norm in recent years. The articles vary in terms of their time framing and thematic focus. While two of them mainly focus on methodological and theoretical issues, the rest unquestionably fit within the broad area of Tanzania's economic history. In terms of time framing, one of the articles focuses exclusively on the pre-colonial period, one on both postcolonial and colonial periods, one on the British colonial era while one deals exclusively with the post-colonial period.

The first article by Albertus Onyiego falls in the category of methodology of history. Here, the author makes a successful attempt to demonstrate that, despite recent neglect by historians of Africa, mythical traditions remain an important source of the continent's pre-colonial history. Using one particular tradition from the Luo people in northern Tanzania, the author shows how careful interpretation of mystical traditions can reveal important aspects of Africa's past, such as cultural dynamics, economic processes and gendered power relations. In yet another contribution to scholarship on the methodology of history, the second article on the list by Emmanuel Lema shows how fiction writing closely relates to the reconstruction of pasts. Referring to M.G Vassanji's novel, *The Magic of Saida* (2012), Lema demonstrates how Vassanji's story about a character, Kamal Punja, who returns to Kilwa in search of his childhood lover, Saida, reveals a wide range of processes and episodes in the history of this ancient East African city. Through this artistic production, Vassanji is able to map the main contours of Kilwa's history, including its pre-

colonial developments, its involvement in the Indian Ocean slave trade and slavery, and aspects of its history under German colonialism.

The third article by George Ambindwile falls in the category of economic histories of colonial Tanzania. It examines the history of irrigated rice farming in the Usangu Plains of southern Tanzania. The article provides details of how irrigated rice farming evolved in the plains mainly through the ingenuity of indigenous people, and how this local initiative blossomed further with the influence of the British colonial administration. Also in this category is the fourth article by Juma Paresso who addresses one of the most critical issues in post-colonial Tanzania, namely land-related conflicts. In this article Paresso focuses particularly on border conflicts between pastoral and peasant communities in the northern district of Kiteto in Arusha Region. His analysis points at the failure of government authorities to take into account socio-cultural realities and local histories in border making decisions as the main explanation for the protracted conflicts.

The editorial team hopes that the contents of this issue will appeal to the intellectual appetite of our esteemed readers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Symbolism and Gender among the Late Pre-Colonial Luo People in Northern Tanzania: Lessons on How to Interpret African Mythical Traditions
Albertus K. Onyiego 1

Fictional reconstruction of history of Kilwa in M.G Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida*
Emmanuel P. Lema 30

Reinstating Local Agency: Origins and Development of Irrigated Rice Production in the Usangu Plains, 1920s to 1960
George K. Ambindwille 63

Administrative Boundaries and Manifestations of Conflict between Pastoralists and Peasants in Kiteto District, Northern Tanzania, 1970 to 2016
Juma M. Paresso 110

Book Review:
Giacomo Corneo. *Is Capitalism Obsolete? A Journey through Alternative Economic Systems* (translated by Daniel Steuer). Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017.
Gasiano G.N. Sumbai 142

Symbolism and Gender among the Late Pre-Colonial Luo People in Northern Tanzania: Lessons on How to Interpret African Mythical Traditions

Albertus K. Onyiego
Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract:
Unlike the historical studies undertaken in Africa during the 1950s and 1960s, there has been a declining interest among historians to employ mythical traditions in understanding African past. While this trend can be viewed as a response to theoretical, methodological, and thematic shifts that have taken place in African history over the last few decades, it is my submission that there is a need to reincorporate mythical traditions in historical analyses so as to broaden the horizon within which African past can be understood. This article seeks to analyse implicit gender constructions among the Luo people of northern Tanzania as unveiled through the story of a mythical woman called Nyamgondho. I argue that, in the final analysis, it was wife's productive and reproductive labour that sustained the economic well-being and social stability of the Luo society. This argument is substantiated by the sequence of events in the respective tradition depicting crucial contribution made by Nyamgondho in her husband's homestead in terms of wealth creation and sustenance. The material presented in this paper comes from library research conducted in 2012 when I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa (USA) and the main

objective was to demonstrate how symbolic information can be discerned from mythical traditions.

Key words: symbolism, mythical tradition, gender, lake, marriage.

1.0 Introduction

The main objective of this article is to contribute to the ongoing debate about African gender relations. However, unlike other studies that have tended to approach the gender question using empirical evidence and other quantitative methods, this article addresses the question from a qualitative point of view, using a mythical tradition as its major source of information. This approach is advantageous because it encourages an interdisciplinary dialogue between history and anthropology and enables us to engage symbolic knowledge embedded in mythical traditions. As indicated below, the structure of the Nyamgondho tradition displays conventional historical features, including the chronological flow of events, but its content is rather mythical and symbolic, creating a space for anthropological intervention. This kind of methodological blending is both a strength and a challenge at the same time, particularly when it comes to handling symbolic data which is beyond the grasp of the common historical practice. I must admit that I personally do not have formal training in the interpretation of myths and symbols but I have been carefully reading and following the footsteps of Jan Vansina, Bethwel Ogot, Steven Feierman, and other historians who have successfully handled mythical traditions and transformed them into meaningful historical texts. It should also be noted that the foregoing interpretation of the Nyamgondho tradition has been

done in line with the available information concerning gender roles among the Luo people.

This article is organised into four major parts. Following this opening part is a section that conceptualises the term "symbolism", which is key to the interpretation of the Nyamgondho tradition, with a view to enabling the readers sketch out the relationship between symbolic and physical realities. The next part presents a literal version of the Nyamgondho tradition. In order to grasp discussion in the succeeding part – the part containing analysis of the Nyamgondho tradition – readers should pay special attention to the links and transitions between abstract and concrete ideas in the literal version so provided. After the literal version of the tradition comes the analysis part, where the literal and implied features of the same tradition, including gender relations, are juxtaposed to one another and the meanings of symbols uncovered.

2.0 Conceptualising Symbolism

The concept "symbol" is multivariate in nature and it has multiple levels of meanings. One basic feature that defines this concept is its representative nature as opposed to something actual or real. According to anthropologist Edwin Bevan, "something [that] seems to represent or stand for some reality other than itself"[1] qualifies as a symbol. Building on a similar platform, a British anthropologist, Victor Turner, noted in his work among the Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia that,

[1] Edwyn Bevan. *Symbolism and Belief* (New York: Kennikat Press, Inc, 1938), p. 275.

"One aspect of the process of ritual symbolisation among the Ndembu is…to make visible, audible, and tangible beliefs, ideas, values, sentiments, and psychological dispositions that cannot directly be perceived."[2] This clarification implies that cultural symbols are meant to uncover surreptitious ideas and float them to the surface so as to give them voice and assign them meanings.

In the early decades of the 20th century, an Austrian psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, introduced the concept "condensation" that won currency among contemporary anthropologists as an important vocabulary in defining the term "symbol."[3] Sometime later, anthropologist Edward Sapir employed the same concept when he defined symbols as "highly condensed forms of behavior that substitute for direct action, allowing for the release of emotional tension in conscious or unconscious form."[4] Condensation property of a symbol, as applied here, refers to the ability to express complex ideas in a brief and succinct manner. Another important concept arising from Sapir's definition is "emotional tension." This concept suggests that cultural symbols are capable of expressing intrinsic power struggles and contestations between the parties concerned or within the larger system. This aspect is particularly important in understanding symbols that reflect gender relations like the one addressed in this article.

---

[2] Victor Turner. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornel University Press, 1967), p.50.

[3] See Mari Womack. *Symbols and Meanings: A Concise Introduction* (New York: Altamira Press, 2005), p.2.

[4] *Ibid*.

Recently, anthropologist Mari Womack suggested a more practical definition of the word "symbol." Womack's definition might seem to replicate similar ideas already discussed above but it extends the conceptual horizon of the word "symbol" by introducing another vocabulary that is equally analytical and illustrative. According to Womack, "symbols are images, words, or behaviors that…stand for concepts that are too complex to be stated directly in words."[5] The word "complexity", which in some ways echoes back to Sapir's idea of "emotional tension", portrays something akin to "contradiction." The latter concept (contradiction) loomed large in anthropological theorisation of symbolism around the mid-20th century as depicted in the works of prominent French anthropologist of the time, Claude Levi-Strauss. Levi-Strauss applied the word "contradiction" at functional level when he made an assertion that "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming contradictions."[6] This is to say, in other words, that the symbolic aspect does not just reveal but it also explains and resolves contradictions embedded in mythical traditions.

The next aspect in this part involves the interpretation of symbols with a view to unveiling the approximate meaning(s) of these "hidden transcripts." This aspect takes us back to Victor Turner who proposed three types of data necessary for understanding the meanings of symbols. The first type of data represents the observable features of a particular symbol. The second type of data reflects significant social and behavioural context surrounding the symbol. The third type of data

[5] *Ibid*., p.1.
[6] *Ibid*., p.2.

encapsulates the local usage of the symbol itself.[7] The last two aspects, that is, context and usage, suggest that the meanings of symbols are culturally assigned rather than inherent in the symbols themselves. This point is clearly substantiated by the anthropologist Tzvetan Todorov who has noted that the role of a symbol lies in the relationship between the symbol itself and its users, producers or consumers.[8] Adding weight to the above point, Womack argues that: "Because the symbolic representations predate the development of writing, we cannot say with certainty what they meant to the people who compiled them, what images they intended to communicate, or what entity—human, animal, or spirit—they were addressing."[9] Despite the fluid nature of symbolic interpretation captured in the discussion above, the theoretical linkage between "observable" and "contextual" attributes of a symbol, as proposed by Turner, still reminds us a logical connection between the symbol and the thing it represents.

3.0 The Nyamgondho Mythical Tradition: Literal Version

The Luo people, like many other communities in Africa, have maintained the tradition of storytelling since time immemorial. That tradition started way back during the pre-colonial period and it still continues down to the present. Those stories vary in length, themes, characters, and objectives. As historians David W. Cohen and E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo have pointed out, such stories were normally told to young boys and girls between early childhood and puberty as a way of provoking their critical

[7] Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p.200.
[8] Tzvetan Todorov. *Symbolism and Interpretation*, translated by Catherine Porter (New York: Cornel University Press, 1982), p.119.
[9] Womack, *Symbols and Meanings*, p.15.

social intelligence as well as imparting morals and social values in their tender minds.[10] Those stories would also help children to broaden their awareness about the social and natural environments surrounding them. The stories covered multiple themes, including relations, sexuality, marriage, death, and dangers. The narrators of those stories were mainly the elderly men and women, especially grandparents and paternal aunts, but in some cases, parents and older siblings could also take the charge of telling stories to their own children or young ones. Traditionally, storytelling took place during the late evenings or early nights after the normal routines of the day were complete and people had gone to sleep. As Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo have observed, the role of nurturing Luo boys and girls was an important old-age occupation and sometimes mentors, known in Luo language as *pim*, were drawn from outside the familiar kin network and geographical space. This was particularly true for poor or desperate old women who were moving around looking for support outside their own kin. Through her service as a *pim*, the old woman would be assured of shelter, food, support, companionship and protection and thereby saved from "social death."[11]

One famous example of such stories is a legendry tale of an old woman popularly referred to in Luo traditions as Nyamgondho. This story exists in multiple and sometimes contradictory versions so it should be noted that the version used in this article is just a representative sample and where necessary comparison with other versions has been made for further

[10] David W. Cohen & E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo. *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1989), p.92.
[11] *Ibid*.

clarification or to provoke further thought.[12] The story is about a poor fisherman called Maye who did not have a wife. One day, when Maye was fishing in Lake Victoria, he came across an old woman called Nyamgondho, who purportedly commanded him to take her home and never tell anybody where he had found her. Stricken with fear, the tradition says, Maye agreed and took her home. The other version authored by Joel Oswago and Gallery Watatu does not share the idea that the old woman forced Maye to take her home; instead, it shows that they negotiated and agreed to marry. This version also suggests that the old woman was brought to that place by a floating islet of papyrus – the type of water grass commonly available in River Nile and Lake Victoria – and that she had a female goat.[13]

Within short time wealth began to accrue at Maye's home and, with the help of Nyamgondho, he married other wives. According to tradition, Maye had so many cattle and other domestic animals that he built a huge stone fence around his home with one gate facing the lakeshore. Because of his wealth and influence, Maye gained many friends and he was frequently invited to beer parties. Some of these parties ended late at night, so Maye's family asked him to come home a little earlier because they were afraid his life might be in danger. However, Maye kept coming home late despite his family's pleas. One day, Maye came home late and found all the gates had been closed; he began calling his wives to open the gates for him but there was no response. He then began to call each of his wives

[12] Henry O. Ayot. *A History of the Luo-Abasuba of Western Kenya from A.D. 1760-1940* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), p.136.
[13] Joel Oswago & Gallery Watatu. *Nyalgondho wuod-Ombare and the Lost Woman from Lake Victoria* (Nairobi: Jacaranda Designs, Ltd., 1991; reprint 1993), p.7.

by name. He shouted for his first wife (Nyamgondho) repeatedly, and when he still did not receive an answer, he questioned: "Have you all refused to open the gate for me, even Nyamgondho whom I found in the lake?" Hearing this, the old woman answered: "I told you not to say that you had found me in the lake. Tonight I am going to leave with all the wealth I have brought you." Maye then realized that he had made a mistake in breaking the promise and he burst into tears.[14]

Nyamgondho came out of the homestead and set off to the lakeshore. Other members of the homestead plus all the livestock followed her, representing the idea that Maye lost all the good fortune and wealth which he had accumulated while he lived with the old woman. According to this version of the story, the footprints of human beings, cattle, sheep, goats and chicken were permanently inscribed on the lakeshore and they can still be seen. Maye followed behind as the family members and livestock were led away to the lake by Nyamgondho. Upon reaching the lakeshore and seeing them disappear beneath the deep waters of the lake, Maye stood by the lakeshore with his cheek resting on his walking stick. He remained there forever and turned into a huge fig tree in the shape of a human being leaning on a stick.[15]

This story raises some important issues related to gender, material production and wealth control. It is among the dosens of similar stories in the Luo community which depict old women as powerless, helpless and pitiful. On the other hand, such stories associate old womanhood with magic or other

[14] Ayot, *Luo-Abasuba*, *op.cit*.
[15] *Ibid*.

forms of supernatural powers. Other stories under this tradition include *Simbi Nyaima* and another one on the "bead of migration." The story of *Simbi Nyaima*, which is pretty much a variant of the story of Nyamgondho, tells about a deluge that befell a certain part of the Luoland in western Kenya after that place had been visited by an old woman who purportedly had rainmaking powers.[16] The story of the "bead of migration" explains how the Luo people got dispersed from their cradleland which is thought to be located somewhere at the confluence of the Nile and Sobat rivers in modern South Sudan. This story narrates the incident of a hungry old woman who lived in a dense jungle uninhabited by human beings. The same old woman is portrayed in the story as the mother of elephants.[17]

4.0 The Meaning of the Nyamgondho Tradition Unveiled:

Legends and other forms of "spoken wisdom" have been used as alternative evidence for analysing the African past for at least five decades now. Steven Feierman's analysis of the myth of Mbegha provides a concrete example of how such "spoken transcripts" can be transformed into a meaningful historical text. That myth is a hero tradition which tells about a hunter

[16] Paul Mboya. *Customs, Beliefs and Practices of the Luo* (1938), translated by Jane Achieng' and approved by the Luo Council of Elders (Nairobi: Atai Joint Ltd., 2001), p.197.

[17] Steven Feierman. "Economy, Society and Language in Early East Africa." In *African History: From the Earliest Times to Independence, 2nd Ed.*, edited by Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson and Jan Vansina (London: Longman, 1995), pp.101-128; see also Benedict Onyango-Ogutu and Adrian A. Roscoe. *Keep My Words: Luo Oral Literature* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1974), pp.133-138.

called Mbegha who came from the wilderness to live among the Shambaa people of northeastern Tanzania. While in Shambaai (the land of the Shambaa people), he killed wild pigs using his dogs and spears. Because of his generosity, wisdom, and skills in killing wild pigs, he was welcome by the Shambaa and given a wife. One night, at a place called Kihitu, a lion attacked some cows that were kept in an outdoor enclosure. Mbegha appeared with his dogs and spears and killed the lion. The next morning the Shambaa people decided to make him their chief.[18] In Feierman's analysis, the myth of Mbegha is an account on the founding of the Shambaa Kingdom. He views the humanisation of Mbegha as a changing variable and traces the implication of that change towards state formation among the Shambaa. For instance, Mbegha appears as a wild, obscene and dangerous creature at the beginning of the story but ends up as a kind and protective prince. These changes in the humanisation of Mbegha go along with qualitative changes and compromises in the scenes of the story, social roles and relationships, until Mbegha finally becomes a hero (king).[19] This article builds on similar analysis and attempts to draw the implicit gendered meanings implied in the story of Nyamgondho.

The portrait of Nyamgondho in the foregoing story suggests several assumptions about the powers and capabilities of women in the pre-colonial Luo society. The pre-colonial Luo women were variably portrayed as producers, reproducers, wealth creators, and more importantly, the source of social stability and prestige. To get a better sense of the symbols

[18] Steven Feierman. *The Shambaa Kingdom: A History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), chp.2.
[19] *Ibid*.

employed in the story of Nyamgondho and their meanings, it is crucial to establish a logical congruency between a particular symbol and the cultural context to which it is attached. One symbol that is worth examining in this tradition is a "lake." The role of a lake in the story can be analyzed in three different episodes. The first episode represents the experiences that happened prior to the contact between Nyamgondho and her husband, Maye. The second episode encompasses the events that took place during their contact. The third episode captures the experiences that followed after the couple had separated. Before contact, the lake supplied them with food and basic means of livelihood. This is represented by Nyamgondho who is portrayed as a desperate old woman living in the floating islets of papyrus inside the lake. Maye is also portrayed as a poor fisherman living close to the lake. During contact, the lake acted as a meeting point between Nyamgondho and Maye and when the couple erected stone enclosure, the entrance was located on the lakeward side. At the end of the story, when marriage breaks-up and the couple separates, Nyamgondho returns back to the lake carrying with her all the wealth. In this case, the concept "lake" is used in this tradition to epitomize a mediating ground for Luo movements, contacts, means of livelihood, wealth creation, and indeed, a factor in their identity formation.

The link between Luo identity and lacustrine environment is well captured in their folklore and foundation narratives. Lake Victoria, in particular, is such a potent force in Luo cosmology that it features prominently in their personal and collective recollections. Benedict Onyango-Ogutu and Adrian Roscoe observed the frequent use of words like *janam*, meaning "son of

the lake", or *nyar nam*, meaning "daughter of the lake", among the Luo people to distinguish themselves from the members of other societies. Even the name "Luo", which defines their collective identity, is thought to have originated from the words *luwo* or *lupo* associated with fishing activities in the lacustrine or riverine environments. With regard to the creation of Lake Victoria, Onyango-Ogutu and Roscoe recorded an interesting tradition among the Luo elders that: "in the distant past there lived a giant [man] called Lolwe. He was so huge that whenever he went outside to urinate, great ponds and pools were formed. One night Lolwe urinated so torrentially that when the people awoke next morning, they found a pool of such vastness that its farthest shores were lost in the mist. This is how Lake [Victoria] was formed."[20] This tradition suggests that the Luo people are autochthonous to Lake Victoria area, a claim that lacks historical basis. It is well established in historical literature that the Luo people first occupied and settled on the eastern shores of Lake Victoria only from about the 15th or 16th century.[21]

In Luo cosmology, the concept "lake" also symbolized the abode of spirits. Like the case with African communities elsewhere, some of those spirits were thought to be benevolent and rewarding but others were thought to be malignant and punitive. Commenting on such traditions among the Luo people of western Kenya, Owlar Oryare, who is a "born again" Christian, testifies to have seen the "talking spirits," popularly known among the Luo people as *nyawawa*. He notes that: "I have been hearing stories about the so called nyawawa. So this

[20] Onyango-Ogutu and Roscoe, *Keep My Words,* p.45.
[21] See, for example, Bethwel A. Ogot. *A Political and Cultural History of the Jii-Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa* (Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd, 2004), pp. 24-25.

particular morning...I was awoken by unusual wails like for those going for a funeral...Believe it. I literally saw a group of men, women and children. I even noticed that one woman was pregnant. They were headed for the lake, as believed that the nyawawa always retreat back into the lake after causing havoc in the land."[22] Jan Knappert recorded a typical account on how encounters with such spirits could be both rewarding and punitive. The account comes from the Luo-speaking Alur people found in northwestern Uganda on the shores of Lake Albert:

> One day [a youngman called Anguza] went out on the lake in his boat to catch fish. He rowed and rowed until he was far away from the shore, for he had been told that the fish were bigger there and more numerous. Suddenly he saw that the water-drops on his oar had changed into pearls. Each time he swung the blade out of the water there was a spray of shining pearls. He baled some of the lake water into his boat and pure pearls rattled over the bottom. He looked with attention at the water of the lake and saw big white fish swimming below the surface. He saw that the fish were as big as goats....He jumped out of the boat and into the lake, lower, lower, lower he sank. Then he stood on the bottom and saw lush green grass everywhere. And there were goats- hundreds of them. They belonged to the Lake God, Jokinam, who came forward to welcome the young earthling. He made him

[22] Owlar Oryare. *Luo Traditions and Christian Warfare: Dancing with Devils* (Kenya: Ofra Christian Publications, 1990), p.45.

> his shepherd, and so Anguza tended the goats of the lake-bottom and lived a good life, with plenty of meat to eat and milk to drink. One day he said to the Lake God: "I want to go home to my people." The Lake God said: "As you wish, but on one condition: if you tell the people on earth what you have seen here you will die at once." Then the Lake God took him back to the surface. But one day, at a beer party, he forgot himself, and began to boast: "I have lived on the bottom of the lake. I have been the herdsman of the Lake God's goats..." At once he fell down, as dead as stone.[23]

Although the cases offered by Oryare and Knappert primarily address the cosmic worldview of the Luo people, they also provide important insights in understanding gender composition of the Luo universe. The account by Oryare, for instance, shows the continuity of gender structure and gender roles in the Luo cosmic world. By acknowledging to have seen men, women, and children in the group of "talking spirits," Oryare suggests the prevalence of a familiar gender structure in the Luo pantheon. Again, by claiming to have seen a pregnant woman in the group, he suggests the existence of similar reproductive roles of women in the Luo cosmic world. This observation resonates a similar belief among the Igbo people of West Africa as recorded by Charles Ebelebe below:

> There is a constant interaction between the world of man and the world of the dead, the visible and

[23] Jan Knappert. *Myths and Legends of the Congo* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1971), pp.2-3.

> invisible forces. In the Igbo conception, the world of the "dead" is a world full of activities [and] its inhabitants manifest in their behavior and thought processes that they are "living." The dead continue their lineage system as they are organized in lineages with patrilineal emphasis just as those on the earth. The principle of seniority makes the ancestors the head of the lineage, and gives the lineage its stability and continuity.[24]

The account by Knappert offered above suggests the paternalistic nature of the Alur underworld. By portraying the Lake-God as masculine, wealth owner, and benevolent, that account echoes familiar paternalistic roles among the Luo adult males. Such roles are elaborated by Paul Mboya in his handbook on the Luo customary law and traditional practices.[25] According to Mboya, all livestock in a Luo homestead belonged to the male head of the homestead. The latter divided his milch cows among his wives, with the first wife receiving slightly more than the others. The rationale for this inequality was based on the "principle of seniority" as discussed by Betty Potash in her study among the Luo people of western Kenya. The meaning and implications of this principle are covered in the next part of this article. Apart from his wives, the household head also gave heifers to his sons who were already married and, here too, he followed the order of their marriage seniority. Once he had given out a cow to his wife or sons, he could not

[24] Charles A. Ebelebe. *Africa and the New Face of Mission: A Critical Assessment of the Legacy of the Irish Spiritans among the Igbo of Southeatern Nigeria* (New York: University Press of America, 2009), p.18.
[25] Mboya, *Luo Customs, Beliefs and Practices*, p.127.

take it back or use it without permission. All the other livestock remained under his direct control and he kept them for various reasons, including donation to the sons of his brother for their bride wealth. The first-born son in a homestead paid bride wealth with cows from his mother's possession but his father also donated a certain number of cows collected from the rest of his wives. This way, the son would learn idea of sharing wealth with others. The last-born son in a household inherited all the cows under his mother's possession whereas the last-born son in a family inherited all the remaining cows under his father's custody.[26]

The story of Nyamgondho raises three important questions that should be critically examined and answered. First, what was the measure of wealth among the pre-colonial Luo people? Second, what was the link between Nyamgondho and Maye's wealth? Third, why did Maye rebuke Nyamgondho despite the promise he had made? The first question requires us to consider the gendered meanings of production, reproduction, and material relations in a pre-colonial Luo society. Responding to the meaning of wealth, Henry Ayot has found that: "the wealth of man was measured by the number of wives, children and cattle he had. If a man had many cattle he married many wives. In such a home there were many children, and women and children together cultivated large pieces of land, for in those days there was plenty of land to be utilized. It followed, therefore, that there was plenty of food to feed everyone."[27] This definition suggests a complex combination of things that

[26] *Ibid*.
[27] Ayot, *Luo-Abasuba*, p. 179.

collectively defined man's wealth. Women, children, livestock, labour, land, and food – all were property under the disposal of the male head of the household. However, the above definition does not state the rights, obligations, expectations, and limitations associated with women and children being defined as part of man's wealth. Implicitly, wives and children were counted as property because wives were exchanged for a bride wealth while children were the product of that transaction. In other words, the value of a wife was somehow equated with the value of the bride wealth (usually cattle) spent at marrying her.

Regarding the second question, it is not difficult to establish the link between Nyamgondho and the wealth that accrued in Maye's homestead. At the beginning of the story, Maye is depicted as poor, helpless, and destitute. After getting married to Nyamgondho, he turns out to be wealthy, prestigious and powerful. At the end of the story, when marriage breaks-up and Nyamgondho disappears back into the lake, the husband becomes desperate and loses wealth, prosperity, and prestige. This chain of events should not be understood in magical terms but it reminds us about the productive and reproductive roles of women among the pre-colonial Luo people. To disentangle the complexity of this question, we need to remind ourselves about the hierarchy of work between men and women in such a patriarchal and polygynous society. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch argues that: "A woman's value and status depended first on her fertility and second on her cooperativeness, initiative, and ability to work. A man was judged in terms of his courage and even capacity of aggression, his ability with words,

and his physical prowess."[28] Jeanne Koopman reinforces that argument by adding that: "Women usually carried out all the major farming tasks – breaking up the soil, planting, weeding, harvesting, and carrying the harvest home – with little or no male help."[29] Two points can be summarized from the above observations. First, however hard Luo men could work in a pre-colonial household setting, their efforts would bear little fruit because the traditional spheres in which they were operating had less economic value. Second, the role of Luo men as heads of households was only meaningful if they had the productive and reproductive capacities of women under their control. In that case, Maye could not realize major achievement without such resources under his disposal.

Thus far, it is evident that women's labour dominated the pre-colonial African farming. Because of that, some scholars have termed African shifting agriculture as a "woman's farming system."[30] In line with this point, Coquery-Vidrovitch recorded a famous Luo proverb that "herding is better than farming as the man is better than the woman."[31] Some of the farming roles she observed among the Luo women include sowing grains and beans, daily hoeing, harvesting, transporting and storing surplus, milking cows and caring for smaller animals, pounding millet and preparing cassava flour and millet beer.[32] In his

[28] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch. *African Women: A Modern History*, translated by Beth Gillian Raps (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.16.
[29] Jeanne Koopman. "Women in the Rural Economy: Past, Present, and Future." In *African Women South of the Sahara, 2nd Edn*., edited by Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stitcher (New York: Longman, 1995), p.4.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, p.12
[32] Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, p.12.

research among the Luo, Taban lo Liyong came up with an interesting account justifying how women came to dominate the farming activities. According to that account:

> [A]t the beginning the Luo did not dig. For a man or woman to dig was a taboo in those early days. All that they did was to take their hoes to the garden and leave them there. The hoes dug the garden without the aid of man. When the hoes had done so, the Luos went and planted seeds. When the crops were ready for weeding, they took the hoes again and left them in the plantation and they weeded the gardens on their own without man's interference. One day, a new bride was asked to take the hoes to the garden and to leave them there as had been the procedure. She did so and came back home. The following day she went back to the garden and found that the hoes had dug the garden. She was amazed. In her curiosity she then tried to dig the adjacent garden in order to see what would happen. Poor woman! She broke the taboo of the Luos. The hoes could not dig on their own any more. There was no way out but direct digging.[33]

This account sounds very interesting but the problem is that it is too fanciful to be real. This limitation creates a caveat for future research and my opinion is that the attempt for that question should contend with the larger problem concerning the subordinate status of women in African communities. The

[33] Taban lo Liyong, *Popular Culture of East Africa* (Nairobi: Longman Kenya Ltd. 1972), p.58.

study by Iris Berger and E. Frances White, which discusses biological and sociocultural theories pertaining to the women's status, might serve as a useful starting point.

The last question raised by the story of Nyamgondho requires us to consider the concept of marriage among the pre-colonial Luo people and some of the meanings and assumptions attached to it. The story shows that Maye's wives warned him about coming home late but he did not change his behaviour. On top of that, he broke the promise by rebuking Nyamgondho, something that offended the old woman and made her disappear into the lake with all the wealth. One way of approaching this question is by examining gendered spaces occupied by Luo men and women in a pre-colonial setting. Coquery-Vidrovitch observed that "male supremacy was both ideologically and effectively a reality, and the public sphere, considered the most prestigious, was reserved for men. Women's domain was domestic life in its broadest sense."[34] Building on this observation, it could be argued that Maye was manifesting the rights and obligations associated with the Luo patriarchal system.

Apart from male supremacy, the other way of approaching the question as to why Maye rebuked Nyamgondho is by analyzing the Luo concept of marriage. It is well documented in the local histories of the Lake Victoria region that the period from about the 15th or 16th century was characterized by population movements, encounters, and resettlements. That period is particularly important for this study because it was the point of time when the Luo people started occupying the shores and

[34] Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, p.11.

islands of Lake Victoria.[35] Although it is not directly stated in the story, the circumstances surrounding the earlier life of Nyamgondho suggest that she might have been a slave or refugee. With this kind of desperate and vulnerable background, and bearing in mind that Nyamgondho had no kin network to seek support, it is possible that Maye could have looked down upon her after some time.

Generally speaking, the union between Nyamgondho and Maye did not qualify as marriage in the proper sense of the word under the Luo customary practice. The Luo, like other African communities, conceived marriage as a process and not a one-time-event as it happened for the case of Nyamgondho and Maye. The process of marriage involved negotiations between the families, lineages, and clans of the groom and the bride. Each stage of those negotiations involved reciprocal rights, obligations, and commitments. From this point of view, it is hard to categorize the relationship between Maye and Nyamgondho as authentic marriage because it did not follow the necessary procedures. Such procedures are well stated in the Luo customary law below:

> When a father considered his son old enough to marry, he allowed him to look for a wife. He advised the son to propose to a girl from a good family where people were known to be of good character and whose lineage had a good name. This kind of info was obtained from a go-between, *jagam*. The go-between, chosen by the boy, was usually his aunt or his cousin or uncle or any

[35] Ogot, *Jii-Speaking Peoples*, p.25.

other relative who knew the girl and her parents well. All info and messages from either side was passed through the go-between. He should know all matters concerning the bridewealth, how many cows went to the girl's home and what kind of livestock was slaughtered for the guests. The girl should also have a go-between, a relative who knew the boy and his parents well, their habits and behaviours. The go-betweens were important witnesses especially later if the dowry was to be returned. After the two go-betweens had finished the negotiations and both sides had accepted, the man could visit the girl. He went with the go-between and another man. If the girl accepted the proposal, the go-between would report back to the parents of the girl and seek their approval. After the bridewealth had been paid and all other formalities completed, the bride could join the groom's home. At night, three married women and two married men were chosen to witness if the girl was a virgin. The groom was allowed to penetrate the bride once, then the witnesses pulled him off so that they could be able to see the woman's 'virginity', blood. After this, the maids who accompanied the bride sang and danced, to celebrate the fact that their girl had kept her virginity and dignity.[36]

This narrative shows that marriage among the pre-colonial Luo people was a collective issue as opposed to the western type which is largely a personal affair. Several important aspects

[36]Mboya, *Luo Customs, Beliefs and Practices*, pp.65-67.

were lacking in the "marriage" between Maye and Nyamgondho and these could affect their marital relations in some ways. First, that "marriage" did not involve community agents (go-betweens) who could be called upon during difficult times. Second, the negotiations that culminated into that "marriage" did not involve kin networks from both sides. Third, that "marriage" did not involve the traditional exchange of bride wealth. Coquery-Vidrovitch views bride wealth as "[payment] by the groom's family to the family of the bride-to-be for their loss of the double wealth in work and children that she represents."[37] Finally, that "marriage" was not formally confirmed in line with the Luo customary practice. According to the Luo customary law: "This was done to celebrate the fact that the girl's parents had granted the boy permission to marry the girl. If his parents accepted, he would get a big bull which the bride would accept…After slaughtering the bull and cutting the breast piece…the groom's father took it and placed it to the side of the bed of the groom's mother…When the meat was shared out, the girl was invited to witness…the meat that would be taken to her parent's home…When the party came back from the bride's homeland, they were accompanied by up to 20 girls…"[38] Missing all these formalities in the foregoing "marriage" partly explains why Maye could not value his relationship with Nyamgondho, particularly after he had become wealthy.

One question still remains, so far. In the last part of the story, the "marriage" breaks up and Nyamgondho disappears back to

[37] Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, p.18.
[38] Mboya, *Luo Customs, Beliefs and Practices*, pp.74-75.

the lake with all the wealth and Maye becomes so desperate that he turns into a fig tree. On the one hand, this question takes us back to the discourse on the productive and reproductive roles of women in the pre-colonial Luo society. But on the other hand, it echoes something related to the powers bestowed on a senior wife among the pre-colonial Luo people, especially at the old age. The role a senior wife among the Luo people has attracted the attention of historians over the last few decades, particularly the historians dealing with women and gender studies in Africa. In her study among the Luo people, Betty Potash proposed "seniority principle" as an additional construct in defining gender roles within the family. She summarizes her findings that:

> ...seniority determines the order in which sons should marry and placement of wives' houses within the compound. It also has ritual importance... The senior wife of the household should initiate each stage of the farm cycle, with co-wives and sons' wives following in turn according to their position. A man can only be buried in front of his senior wife's house. Senior wives should also initiate the opening of a new homestead when men move out of their father's compound...In the past there were some homes where a particularly competent senior wife was given authority by her husband to organize her co-wives into a cooperative

> farming unit. She could not do so on her own, however, but only as his agent.[39]

Apart from ritual and administrative roles of a senior wife among the Luo people, Potash observed that such wives also acted as intermediaries in arranging sexual visits between the husband and the junior wives.[40] Given that Nyamgondho was a senior wife to Maye, her disappearance could broadly mean loss of family stability in terms of labour organization, production planning, social reproduction, and family rituals. But, how could all this be the case? Why did the Luo people concentrate so much power in the hands of a senior wife? These questions require us to consider the Luo concept of junior wife, particularly junior wives who came from communities other than the Luo.

We have already seen that among the pre-colonial Luo people, a senior wife was the core of family stability and for that matter such a wife could not come from a different community. The position of a senior wife was carefully safeguarded from being occupied by an "outside" woman, and this partly explains why marriage procedures among the Luo people were very strict and community-based. Because of the privileges associated with that position, it was generally thought that a senior wife could hardly be manipulated by "outsiders" to lobby against the secrets of the Luo community. By contrast, junior wives were thought to be somehow "care-free" and could easily be

---

[39] Betty Potash. "Women in the Changing African Family." In *African Women South of the Sahara, 2nd Ed.*, ed. Margareth Jean Hay and Sharon Stitchter (New York: John Willey & Sons, Inc.1995), p.74.
[40] *Ibid.*, p.75.

manipulated by the enemies. These perceptions, coupled with the competitive nature of polygynous marriages, made the pre-colonial Luo people believe that a junior wife was less trustworthy and could be easily influenced from "outside." Hans-Egil Hauge recorded a famous account among the Luo of western Kenya that summarizes the perception of the Luo people about junior wives:

> A long time ago, there were giant warriors. In Kano Location at a place called Sidho there was a fierce man by the name of Luanda [Magere], son of Ochinjo. This young man became famous after the war between the Kano and the Masai. Luanda was born clever and he was a *jabilo* (medicine man). When Luanda when to fight he could not be speared or beaten by clubs. No weapon could penetrate his skin. The Masai people were, of course, very much amazed at this wonder. They tried hard to kill him, because they knew if they succeeded they would be able to defeat the Luo people of Kano. After much debate and disagreement, the Masai persuaded him to marry one of their most attractive girls. When this girl came to Luanda's home, she tried to find out where his strength was hidden. One day Luanda was taken ill. His Masai wife stayed at home with him, while his first wife (who was a Luo) went out to do the farm work. Then his second wife asked him, 'What can I do to cure you?' Luanda answered her, 'Cut my flesh so that blood is shed.' When she cut Luanda's flesh, however, no blood came out and the sharp iron blade she used buckled. Then Luanda told her, 'Go and cut my shadow.' When the

> woman did so, the blood started streaming from his body…After this secret had been revealed to them the Masai people at once started war against their old enemy, the Kano people. The Masai made straight for Luanda and speared his shadow with all their might. Soon Luanda fell down with a thud and turned a rock. The rock is still standing the spot where Luanda fell and is still held in awe by the people of Kano.[41]

5.0 Conclusion:

The purpose of this article was to demonstrate the skills of analyzing mythical traditions and assigning them historical meanings. We have seen in the tradition how Nyamgondho's husband, Maye, underwent transformation in different parts of the story. Initially, he was depicted as a poor, destitute and powerless man. Once he gets married to Nyamgondho, his life improves and his status rises from a marginal to a wealthy and influential person. Similarly, in the last part of the tradition when conflict arises between Nyamgondho and Maye and the couple eventually separates, the husband loses all the wealth. The foregoing sequence of events leads us to appreciate gender roles among the late pre-colonial Luo people, particularly the pivotal role of Luo wives in material production and social reproduction in the households and families.

Together with a detailed analysis of gender roles in the pre-colonial Luo community, this article has also reiterated the need to look at gender as a problem beyond the traditional

[41] Hans-Egil Hauge. *Luo Religion and Folklore* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974), pp.37-38.

binaries of men-versus-women. It suggests that gender roles should be broadly understood as complex set of relations and practices permeating the lives and experiences of men-versus-men, women-versus-women, old-versus-young, senior-versus-junior and so forth. Such an alternative outlook will rescue the risk of perpetuating the already dominant stereotypes that gender problem is only confined within the spheres of manhood and womanhood. While we cannot ignore the two categories in gender analysis, the new constructs can still function as sub-categories of analysis and that way gender discourse can be more concrete, closer to people, and more practical in understanding their daily interactions and relations.

Fictional reconstruction of history of Kilwa in M.G Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida*

Emmanuel P. Lema
Department of Literature, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

This paper explores M.G Vassanji's novel, The Magic of Saida (2012). It draws on the idea of reconstruction of history used in anthropology[42] *and utilizes it as an approach in carrying out textual analysis of the novel and exploring how the novel reconstructs the history of Kilwa. Additionally, it employs Stephen Greeblatt idea of New Historicism, whereby appreciation of the text history and textuality of history is done on the assumption that the novel is a closely-knit fabric composed of both historical and literary threads. The paper argues that Kamal Punja's story about his return to Kilwa to look for his childhood lover, Saida is well intertwined with accounts and varying versions of stories of old Kilwa, slavery and slave trade in Kilwa, German intervention in Kilwa and African resistances. It is further argued that Vassanji is not only writing Kamal's story but also allowing Kamal to revisit his past and reconstruct the history and in that way through the novel fiction and history have been used by Vassanji to propose a view that there are differences between actual historical events, varying perceptions of the events and the histories about the events, thus Vassanji has provided readers with a room to question the process by which we represent ourselves and our world and to become aware*

[42] F.C Bartlett. "Anthropology in Reconstruction." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* 73, 1/2 (1943): pp. 9-16. Also available on https://www.jstor.org/stable/2844354

of the means by which we make sense of and construct our history.

Key words: history of Tanzania, reconstruction of history, African resistance, Kilwa history

1.0 Introduction

History is an unending dialogue between the present and the past, a dialogue between the events of the past and progressively emerging future ends. In other words it can be said that history is the living past of man and in a conventional sense a record of "real" events that happened in the past.[43] It is generally taken for granted that there is truth in everything history supplies to the world. The fact is that the past is not very lucid. What is reported to us about the past has been made available only in pieces and remains in a form of fragmented recordings presented to us in many ways including literature. As Enoch argues, the "past [history] might be put together coherently by an imaginative."[44] This view means that the past can best be scrutinized and presented by filling in the gaps with imagination.

Tom Quirk and Gary Scharnhorst are of the opinion that different as they may be, literature and history are natural allies.[45] Expanding this view, the two scholars capitalize on the American poet, Wallace Stevens' observation that a poem is the

---

[43] R. Enoch. "Chronicles of time present and time past: fictional narrative and history-fiction in Post-independence India" (Pondicherry University: Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 2012), p. 41.

[44] *Ibid*. p. 42.

[45] T. Quirk and G. Scharnhorst (eds.). *American History through Literature 1870–1920,* 1st Edition (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006).

"cry of its occasion" by arguing that all sorts of imaginative expression be it novels, short stories, speeches, sermons, histories, plays, biographies and autobiographies; all are in some measures stemming from a deep-seated set of interests and convictions. This view suggests that literature is all about issues of a particular context which is inevitably unique and incomparable and always in some measure historical. Furthermore, it should also be known that traditionally, history is considered as a branch of literature.

Arguing from the above views it can, therefore, be said that literature handles events of the past and present. It allows artists to have a collective source of memories of events from the past. When literature handles history it allows readers to develop beyond one stage of thought by building on what has happened before. Literary works can make large and sometimes impersonal historical, political, and social forces vivid and palpable. Therefore, it can be argued that literary artists reconstruct the past/history in various ways and manifest the same in their works of art. Reconstruction of the past/history is a literary enterprise used for artistic and political purposes and which leads to multiple interpretations of a historical event.[46] When a historical event is reconstructed in a literary text it is, therefore, considered to be an invitation to readers to approach the event from multiple perspectives or as Enoch suggests, the reconstruction makes a "fictional text open-ended with multi-layered semantic/political structures [of meaning]."[47]

[46] Enoch, Chronicles of time, *op. cit*., p. 72.
[47] *Ibid*. p. 77

M. G Vassanji is a renowned East African writer and editor who was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1950 and raised in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania before taking residence in Canada. His writing career started in 1980's when he published his first fictional work, *The Gunny Sack* (1989). So far he has published eight novels including *No New Land* (1991), *The Book of Secrets* (1994), *Amriika* (1999), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), *The Assassin's Song* (2007) and *Nostalgia* (2016), two short story collections which are *Uhuru Street* (1991) and *When She was Queen* (2005) and three non-fictional works, *A place Within: Rediscovering India* (2008), *Mordecai Richler* (2008) and *And Home was Kariakoo: a Memoir of East Africa* (2014). In all his works Vassanji draws his readers' attention to his incessant task of trading on peoples' past. All his fictional works have handled themes of identity, displacement, race relations, rediscovery of self and longing for one's past and in doing so he has necessarily used story characters to dig into the past events as part of his larger mission to work into the past in order to determine the present but also and more importantly to give historical events a room for alternative perspectives.

Vassanji's digging out the past seems to have gained much influence from his mixed heritage and his great desire to re-write people's histories as he once confessed in an interview that some people feel their histories to have been forgotten or neglected and they would like them to be told so once a writer does so they feel that they (the writer) have done something[48]. Given his South Indian origin and his childhood in East Africa, Vassanji seems to have a great passion with the history of East

[48] An interview with Canadian newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, 2013.

Africa and India and to be aware of the fact that knowledge about the past is not easily comprehensible, thus he plays his role by revisiting it through imagination in order to collect and give meaning to shreds of historical information. Further than that his interest in history could be resulting from his desire like of many other artists to freely "use the available historical materials and try to find gaps in historical narratives and fill them up through their imagination."[49] In this way, Vassanji creates another literary history which provides truth-value to history. To Vassanji like to Faulkner, the past or history is never dead and it is not even past.[50]

Although Vassanji's works have generally received significant critical attention, *The Magic of Saida* can be said to be somewhat overshadowed by his other works. *The Magic of Saida* is Vassanji's seventh novel published in 2012. It is a story of Kamal Punja, a well off middle aged and mixed heritage doctor who lives and works in Edmonton, Canada. The narrative takes readers in a journey back to Kamal's childhood and in this journey they learn that Kamal is born of an African mother, Hamida and an Indian father, Dr. Amin Punja who abandons them when Kamal is young, hence Kamal is raised by his mother in Kilwa.

Hamida's close friendship with Kulthum whose husband is dead brings Kamal close to Kulthum's daughter, Saida whose relationship grows and as the two are about to take first steps from childhood platonic intimacies into the larger world of

[49] Enoch, Chronicles of time, *op. cit*., p. 70.
[50] W. Faulkner. *Requiem for a Nun* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1950), p. 75.

adult relationship and when that idyllic relationship is enjoying an evident fondness Kamal got from Mzee Omari Tamim - Saida's grandfather and Kilwa's eminent poet - Kamal is sent to live with his father's extended family in Dar es Salaam to be taught how to live like an Indian. He later moves to Canada, gets married to an Indian lady and they have two children. However, thirty five years down the line, the memories of his childhood and the people he has left behind still haunt him and he returns in search of them. In particular, memories of Saida strike him so powerfully that it awakens feelings long forgotten, raw and unresolved. Kamal embarks on a mission to revisit his past despite having learnt from one sorcerer, Akilimali when he was a boy and living in Kilwa that, "The past is a dangerous business. It is best to keep it buried."[51] This paper is inspired by the fact that Kamal's life story is intertwined with the lost and untold stories of the colonial occupation of Kilwa and some other coastal and interior parts of Tanganyika as well as the stories about India. History books can have rich and lengthy information on the history of the town of Kilwa and of some coastal places especially about the arrival of Arabs and Indians, the running of slave trade and colonial activities as well as stories about Africans during those times but a literary work like this novel has a room to offer readers stories which may not have been included in history books for lack of scientific justification. Such stories are well given room in this novel and they are presented as a product of characters' imaginations, feelings as well and shared rumors.

[51] M.G. Vassanji. *The Magic of Saida* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), p. 78.

These stories in *The Magic of Saida* are shared in a fluidly and non-linear storytelling approach that brings the past and the present, the recounted and the shown, the known and the neglected into a crystalline narrative immediacy. Kamal is an important character in the novel since he is the main source of the story and the main witness to the history of the region as well. Being older and well educated he desires to make a logical narrative and to re-write the history of Kilwa for his own family and for his people. To do so he has to recall past events, identify people even dead ones and search for physical evidence of past events. The composition of Mzee Omari Tamim and the stories of his mother, Kulthum and Saida are varying versions of history the young and naïve Kamal was persuaded to believe but having grown up he begins to question the stories and upon his return to Kilwa he begins to piece together this story. In reading this novel one is tempted to see it as partly fictional, historical as well as autobiographical. This paper chooses to focus on the representation of interconnection between fictional representation and reconstruction of history in Vassanji's novel.

The paper, therefore explores how Vassanji in *The Magic of Saida* reconstructs social, political, ethnic and personal history. Specifically the paper traces how the novel, being expansive and inclusive as it is incorporates an extensive body of the history of colonialism specifically about Kilwa and some other parts of the Eastern coast and the interior of Tanganyika. The idea of reconstructing history is well known in anthropology, history and literature. In anthropology study of man and his culture (history) involves construction of causal sequences and

relations between phenomena in the field.[52] In history reconstruction is an inevitable process as historians reconstruct forces, choices and circumstances which have brought people to their current situations in order to offer them a better understanding of them. Reconstruction is, therefore done generally to historicize past events in order to subvert the past structured on hierarchical patterns of power.[53] In literature the idea of reconstructing history can be looked at as both a practice and an approach. As a practice it considers a work of art to be performing fictional reconstruction of history for its own sake and in the service of the story being told and the characters being revealed.[54] As an approach it permits the reading of a text that locates fictional narrative in a broader context and allows one to understand a work of art as a historically situated practice whose aim is to provide an imaginative power to the shreds of the past and allow for multiple layers of meaning or manifold perspectives regarding what is being reconstructed.

Moreover, while in this paper the focus is on the fictional reconstruction of history, ideas of Stephen Greenblatt on New Historicism are well utilized. In this regard the novel is looked at as something transparent and which provides an immediate grasp of the reality to which the words are referring. New Historicism is employed on the ground that, "A text is in fact a

[52] Bartlett, "Anthropology in Reconstruction", op.cit.
[53] Enoch, Chronicles of time, *op. cit*. p. 76.
[54] R. Issensee. "Fiction as Reconstruction of History: Narratives of the Civil War in American Literature" http://www.asjournal.org/53-2009/narratives-of-the-civil-war-in-american-literature/

closely-knit fabric composed of both [literary and historical] threads"[55]

Fictional reconstruction of history is, therefore employed as an approach in this paper to explore how Vassanji's writing of *The Magic of Saida* reconstructs history and in doing so offers imaginative power as an alternative interpretive form of history while New Historicism in this paper calls for an appreciation of the history of the text and the textuality of history presented in the novel.

2.0 Memories about old Kilwa

The first task Vassanji assigns his characters as the story begins is to set the agenda and the pace of the story. I have already hinted in the introduction that the story is fluidly and non-linear in style allowing readers to learn from different sources and to be taken back and forth by the work of memory and author's whim as well. Setting the agenda of the narrative demands Vassanji to bring forth hints about what contours of his narrative will be about. The prologue introduces Michael Kigoma, a publisher who visits Kamal when he is sick and admitted in hospital and who gets introduced to the story of Saida and a trip to Kilwa. Chapter one introduces Vassanji's other agenda which is to reconstruct the history of Kilwa. Here he lets Kamal give a bold beginning when he announces to readers that, "Kilwa was all history" and he goes on explaining that, "The past haunted from the ruins and graves; it was there in the references to the Germans who had ruled here once, and

[55] Jan R. Veenstra. "The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt: On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare." *History and Theory*, 34, 3 (1995): pp. 174-198. Also available on https://www.jstor.org/stable/2505620.

the slaves who were sold here."[56] The author of this fictional work sets clearly what the agenda is laying beneath the telling of the story of Kamal. He takes readers' minds to Kilwa and specifically to the remains of two major historical events which he later on revisits and use as threads to weave a complete literary fabric. At this early stage of the narrative as well Vassanji makes known of Kamal's mission which is to revisit the history of Kilwa.

Right after introducing readers to Kilwa, Kamal introduces Mzee Omari Tamim who was his main source of stories about Kilwa when he was a boy. This introduction is vital because the agenda of revisiting and reconstructing the history of Kilwa depends very much on the stories which were shared by this prominent poet. Kamal introduces him alongside his grand work, *The Composition of the coming of the Modern Age* and he confirms to readers that what he heard from Mzee Omari had also been gathered from the past since the composer himself testified so once when he requested his djinn Idrisa:

> [M]y friend and servant, fly me to days past, so that, looking down upon this land, I can see again what transpired and complete my verses about the coming of the modern age when European met the African and how people followed their leaders and like the wind fighting the ocean took up arms against the Germans.[57]

[56] Vassanji, *The Magic of Saida*, *op.cit*., p. 9.
[57] *Ibid*. p. 10.

This opening of a narrative is an eye opener to Kamal's thinking. As he embarks on a mission to piece together threads of history from versions of stories he collected by re-visiting his distant past through recalling memories, reading about Kilwa and visiting Kilwa, he provides readers with the accounts of Mzee Omari which he later on questions their authenticity and try to counter them in his attempt to fill gaps and piece up a fragmented story.

Upon arriving in Kilwa Kamal sees new Kilwa and he confesses the place to have changed but he finds it important to let readers know Kilwa of his time, thus as the narrator says Kamal fails to stop the images of the past to flit through his mind to allow readers a knowledge of Kilwa he knew thirty five years ago. For example, he says:

> This plaza would fill with people come to relax and catch the breeze on an evening or a Sunday afternoon. Vendors went around selling goodies to eat. In the morning, the sun just peeping out from the horizon, the town's Indian men came in their singlet to do exercises. Some evenings Mzee Omari would sit on a tree trunk (Kamal couldn't see it now) and recite to an audience of rapt admirers in the dark...[58]

Kamal's task of introducing Kilwa continues even when he gets to Kilwa masoko, a place he stays during his search for Saida. The narrator quickly slinks from the story about Kamal's arrival

[58] *Ibid*. p. 11.

in Masoko as he informs about Kilwa giving readers a quick view of its past as he says:

> There were actually three Kilwas: the Island, called Kisiwani, the ancient stone city now a collection of ruins; Kamal's Kilwa, which saw its heyday in the nineteenth century trading ivory and slaves; and Masoko, the Markets, having all the look of an afterthought, scattered about the main road to the harbor. [59]

Adding to these details Kamal says:

> Kilwa is now – nothing. But Kilwa then: big mosques, big castle. Houses of stone and marble – no bandas like this one here I live with Mama, making a racket when it rains and leaks through. Ai, but we are poor! But Kilwa of old! Gold from Rhodesia! Silk from India! Perfumes from Arabia![60]

There are other crucial details regarding Kilwa that Vassanji includes in the narrative. For example Lateef, a man Kamal meets at a tea shop when he arrives in Kilwa and who eventually turns out to be his guide in Kilwa is introduced by the narrator that his family had lived in Kilwa for many centuries after arriving in Kilwa with the first sultan of Persia, Ali bin al-Hassan. The story also informs the ancestors of Mzee Omari Tamim to have come from Baghdad meaning that they were Arabs. These are small but crucial details in relation to the

[59] *Ibid*. p. 14.
[60] *Ibid. p. 25.*

history of Kilwa especially when they are put along other details such as those of Hamida that she was a *Matumbi* and Makunganya that he was a *Yao*. All these details in their complete sense give a picture of Kilwa to be home to many and of varied origins. Vassanji calls attention to the fact that Kilwa can be claimed to be home by many regardless of their origin.

What Kamal is doing in the narrative makes Vassanji become both a sort of a historian who narrates histories of a forgotten past and a literary artist who shares history while giving it a literary taste. To Vassanji, knowing Kilwa's past is crucial for it registers the importance of history which is to give value to humanity. As Enoch observes, such "novelists exhibit [a] sense of place and time, thereby creating a sense of history."[61] Reading about Kilwa just at the onset of the narrative, therefore gives readers an experience and a sense of place and time through setting, emotional, psychological and intellectual states of mind of Kamal the main character.

3.0 Slavery and slave trade in Kilwa and beyond

Although Vassanji's story is about Kamal's trip to Kilwa and his search for Saida, he allows Kamal to take his readers to indulge into the stories about slavery in chapter four of the novel. There is a feeling by Kamal that the history of Kilwa and especially about slavery activates on the Eastern coast of Tanganyika are either not very much spoken about or not well presented. This thinking is evident in the narrative as readers are informed that while in Edmonton Kamal had started to collect a small library on the subject of Kilwa intending to write family and people's

[61] Enoch, Chronicles of time, *op. cit*., p. 71.

history.[62] Even further, Kamal decides to expose some details about slavery and slave trade in Kilwa, Zanzibar and along the entire Eastern coast from an African perspective. He begins by sharing the story about his grandfather which he had learned from his mother, Hamida and inform that he had gone to Zanzibar for trade and having worked under the Sultan of Zanzibar for years, Kamal's grandfather was sent to Kilwa on a special mission which was control trade because Kilwa had become an important place for trade and that caravans were arriving all the way from Zimbabwe, Bagamoyo and Zanzibar and from as far away as Congo.[63] These details disclose the contribution of Indians and Arabs in slavery and slave trade long before the coming of Europeans at the coast of East Africa.

The novel further exposes the history of slavery by giving yet another African perspective on the engagement of local leaders. Hamida, Kamal's mother informs her son about Makunganya by saying:

> You have heard Makunganya. Also known as Hassan bin Omari. He was of the Yao people and a wealthy businessman. Compared to them these Indians of Kilwa are nothing. His agents went to Dar es Salaam, they went to the south, they went to the interior of the country where barbarians lived. They also captured slaves and sold them at the market, here in Kilwa.[64]

[62] Vasanji, *The Magic of Saida, op cit*., p. 26.
[63] *Ibid*. p. 21.
[64] *Ibid*. p. 37.

The history that Hamida is restructuring here does show the contribution of local leaders as well as the mentality created by these local leaders to their own people. Hamida's use of the word barbarians exposes her slave ancestry and shows the mentality created through local leaders' involvement in slave trade. It can also be thought that Vassanji extends one of the common elements of his stories – character feeling of being split between two cultures –but this time by showing how Hamida, an African character and a slave descendant is split between two worlds as she lives in her past at present which is an evidence for another common element in Vassanji's stories that no one can escape their past. Hamida exhibits that no matter how hard Africans can try to carve a new life and new history, the history about their involvement in slave trade cannot be buried.

Furthermore, the story informs Hamida to belong to the line of slavery by exposing that even Hamida's grandmother was captured and sold by Makunganya to an Indian. Based on what the narrator shares after being informed by Kamal it can also be understood that even Kamal can be considered to be in the line of slavery given how his parents met. The narrator confirms that when Punja's grandson, Dr. Amin got to Kilwa after the death of his grandfather he liked the town, stayed and opened a clinic and married a woman called Hamida whom he later abandoned with a four years old boy (Kamal) and left.[65]

Such details matter to Kamal because as he recalls them in the narrative they help in the reconstruction of the history of slavery in Kilwa and along the entire Eastern cost of

[65] *Ibid*. p. 21.

Tanganyika. The details are even significant to the body of history because they provide fresh insights and understanding of the history of Kilwa and slavery in Tanganyika. Through fiction it is learnt from a local Matumbi character that some African leaders were so powerful so rich and well established in slave trade compared to foreigners long before the coming of Europeans whose involvement has been well documented in other historical sources. We are also informed of details we probably couldn't get from historical records about how African women ended up becoming slaves and descendants of slaves in Kilwa. Kamal at this point does not only write about slavery and slave trade in Kilwa. He desires to share also the feeling that local Africans had. He allows his mother, a Matumbi woman, a descendant of slavery and who had been traded to the Indian for pleasure to inform the word how it was and how it felt long before the coming of Europeans. Kamal, at last understands that his mother's present results from the pain and humiliation of the past she had suffered.[66]

Through this narrative Kamal puts all the details he had collected from the locals about slavery in Kilwa against known details of European involvement in the trade. Kamal brings on board too what he had read from Europeans records about slavery in Kilwa. For example he says:

> In November 1776, French ship owner Captain Morice arrived at Kilwa and signed a treaty with Sultan Hassan bin Shirazi by which every year he would take away a thousand blacks. A hundred years later, in 1878, an Englishman, Capt. J.

[66] *Ibid*. p. 23.

> Frederic Elton, departed from Zanzibar on Her Majesty's service to inspect the towns along the coast of Africa for slaves owned by Queen's Indian subjects...[67]

These details to Kamal cannot explain the thriving slave trade that existed in East Africa for many years and long before the coming of Europeans. Details given by Hamida are vital for the lost history he is trying to recover. Kamal's mission is to re-write the history of Kilwa by collecting threads from different sources and he knows that there are crucial details given by the locals and which are not part of the main stream history. That is why for example, Kamal remembers about one day when he was still a boy and alongside his friend, Saida when they found a bone and a skull of a man and thought it was the work of sorcerers but his mother disclosed the news as saying;

> The sea holds many secrets...
>
> Kilwa is an old town. Slaves were brought here, from the south. Many died.
>
> Others sent off to Zanzibar, Bagamoyo, Arabia, India. Those are the bones of our ancestors.[68]

Thinking about all these details in a novel one has to think about how history and literature work. They both make sense of our world and as Linda Hutcheon argues "there is no question of a hierarchy, implied or otherwise" between literature and history as they are both part of the signifying

[67] *Ibid*. p. 22.
[68] *Ibid*. p. 36.

systems of our culture.[69] However, the power of literature lies on its deconstructive nature of language. When these details about slavery are handled in this novel Vassanji employs literary language and uses characters who re-dress the events and exhibit a different interpretative nature of history.

4.0 German colonial occupation in Kilwa and the rest of the Eastern and Southern coast

Details about colonial occupation of Tanganyika are well exposed by Mzee Omari Tamim. His major work, *The Composition of the coming of the modern Age* is in fact about the history of colonialism. What is interesting about these details is that they represent a point of view of local Africans. For example we learn in the story that Mzee Omari was receiving most compositions from his older brother Abdelkarim who was in the hiding for many years for fear of being captured by the Germans. It is said that Mzee Omari would just add a few details and fine tune the compositions. Chapter eleven is very crucial in giving details about this history. It introduces a preamble to Mzee Omari's composition which details about the coming of Germans. Details are given about how Kaiser's priests beseeched Kaiser with information from all religious books that another land must be sought for Kaiser's people. Kaiser was informed about Azania which Mzee Omari informs to be, "our land of Africa in the east, the Swahili coast from Lamu and Mombasa and Zanzibar then to Kilwa and Lindi..."[70]

---

[69] H. Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 28.

[70] Vassanji, *The Magic of Saida*, *op. cit*., p. 48.

This preamble is rich with details about the coming of Germans and how eventually Karl Peters used low tricks and lies and thumbprints of foolish leaders of the coast to deceive Sultan Bargash to plant the flag of the Germans on the land. The section of the narrative, further provides details about colonial enterprise in general which according to Mzee Omari forced the people of Tanganyika to react. In the last paragraph Mzee Omari informs about varying experience the people of Tanganyika went through under the Arabs, the Germans and the British, "Not for nothing we remember the Germans as mkono wa damu: the hand of blood. As the song says, the Arabs put us in chains, the Germans whipped us raw, and the British sucked our blood."[71] This description is vital to the history of colonialism in Tanganyika for it shades light on the nature of activities each colonial master engaged local people in. Although historical details provided by Mzee Omari are historically known, Vassanji provides these historical facts with a literary context and taste which is a convenient way of giving people ownership of their history by allowing them to produce that history as a product of their imaginations, feelings and experiences.

The narrative has further used Mzee Omari to add more crucial details regarding colonial occupation. His composition does bring information about Africans from other countries which had supported colonial mission in Tanganyika. At this point Kamal who used to sit among Mzee Omari's audience during his childhood informs readers that Mzee Omari had explained that after seven years of fighting Mkwawa was betrayed. He

[71] *Ibid*. p. 49.

further describes German askaris to be, "the Somali, the Sudanese, the Zulu..."[72] and how they fulfilled German mission. These facts are evident in history books but in this novel when they are integrated they call for a new and different understanding all together. To Vassanji what is important is the role played by some Africans in supporting colonial mission. That is why he allows his main character Kamal to be drawn into a pool of questions like, "Why would Africans fight fellow Africans on behalf of the Germans."[73]

This question about some Africans betraying their fellows is asked by a young naïve boy who by that time he was just learning about the history of Kilwa by attending Mzee Omari's sessions. The question remains unanswered for many years since Vassanji is using it to prepare Kamal to become older and able to grasp meaning of what he had learnt. To include these details in the narrative Kamal continues with his mission to revisit the past and to reconstruct the history. One day an adult Kamal is able to go through historical information and at last piece together the details and realize that, "...many African peoples, having tasted heavy defeat, took the prudent decision to cooperate with the Germans."[74] The conclusion that Kamal gives to the question he posed when he was a child seems to be further exposing Kamal's confussion over certain accounts and personalities of his past including that of Mzee Omari Tamim as the narrator informs readers that as the story of Kamal unfold, "We [readers] were approaching the real story behind Mzee Omari and his muse, the djinn called Idris."

[72] *Ibid*. p. 56.
[73] *Ibid*. p. 57.
[74] *Ibid*. p. 57.

It is at this juncture that the narrator brings forth details about Mzee Omari's involvement in the colonial process as a puppet for the Germans. This exposition although done by a madman, Salemani Mkono it significantly allows readers a fresh perception of the colonial enterprise as a historical fact and an understanding of how African sided with colonialist. Salemani Mkono who one day and by the time mzee Omari was reciting he was crossing the square shouted, "And weren't you his slave, you Omari bin Tamim? Didn't you sing praises to the Germans? Wasn't the white man your master? Didn't you betray your own blood?"[75] These details are later on beefed up in the narrative. It is Hamida who begins to disclose to Kamal that long ago when Mzee Omari recited a poem in honour of the Germans bigwig Salemani Mkono wa his student. The narrator further provides information that Omari Tamim was once sent by the Germans to study at the elite German school in Tanga.

It is vital to note that at one point Kamal is presented to be young and naïve and persuaded by the words of Mzee Omari who was much admired in Kilwa but having grown up, Kamal begins to question his stories. He collects fragments of stories and recalls the old versions and realizes that having received colonial education, Mzee Omari could not think of a better way to honour the new order other than taking from its achievements, strength and superiority by composing poems which appreciate the Germans and by betraying his older brother, Abdelkarim.[76] Regardless of the affection which existed between the two, Kamal allows a swing of a pendulum so that

[75] *Ibid*. p. 58.
[76] *Ibid*. pp. 99-100, 104, 107.

the narrative exposes the truth about Mzee Omari as he declares that:

> It was when he [Kamal] first read in the anthology that brief biography of Mzee Omari, together with his eulogy of the German governor, that, Kamal began to grapple with the mystery of Kilwa's poet laureate and the dark side of his career.

All these details are crucial at two levels. First, they provide the historical fact with a point of view of a young naïve boy which allows readers to see the difference between actual historical event and varying perceptions of the event and the histories about the event. Secondly, the details allow readers to engage in questioning the process by which we represent ourselves and present history.[77]

5.0 African resistance towards German intervention.

G.C.K Gwassa is of the opinion that the history of African resistance has not been well presented especially outside the continent. Most historians especially in the past have tended to regard the Africans as a lesser member of the human race and along that line they have dismissed African resistance as merely foolish, fanatical and retrograde or simply as the work of the uncivilized. In most cases such erroneous historical interpretation arose from the mistaken practice of looking at the resistances through European eyes.[78]

---

[77] J. Pivoto, "Reconstructing History in Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida*" https://auspace.athabascau.ca/handle/2149/3425

[78] I.N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu (eds.). *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), p. 85.

There are fine details about how Africans resisted colonial occupation both at the coast and in the interior. Kamal makes good use of memory and different sources to collect bits of these historical events and through the narrative he reconstructs the history of resistance in Tanganyika. Kamal informs readers that Mzee Omari's story heroes were "Africans like Al-Bushiri and Makunganya and Kinjikitilé of Ngarambe"[79] and it is true that more often Mzee Omari's recitations and stories would take his listeners' minds to the times when Africans fought colonialists as he says:

> And Africans made war. From Tanga down to Pangani and Bagamoyo, from Kilwa down to Lindi, we made war. And the tribes, the Ngoni and Matumbi, the Hehe and Yao, they too made war. Bushiri bin Salim and Mwana Heri, Hassan Makunganya and chief Mkwawa all made war. Kinjikitilé of Ngarambe through his water magic and his spells inspired these people, and they brought out their spears and went to war.[80]

Although this sounds like a normal claim, it is the details about the wars which give readers a different perspective and an African perspective. Mzee Omari details about wars in the interior as he claims that, "In the interior of the country, Mkwawa of the Hehe, the bravest of warriors, whose equals you

[79] Vassanji, *The Magic of Saida, op.cit*., p. 30.
[80] *Ibid*. p. 49.

will look in vain, also fought"[81] and he also narrates about wars in the southern coast saying:

> In Kilwa Kivinje too Makunganya, celebrated even in our day, began to gather weapons and men. A thousand strong warriors rippled their muscles, hungry for battle. When these majitus stood up in a straight line, a wall of shields and spears extended as far as the eye could strain to see, their voices rose like thunder in the sky and this land called Tanganyika itself trembled with pride.[82]

Vassanji uses these details to form part of the entire story's fabric for a mission. Through Mzee Omari's narration he justifies that the resistances initiated by Africans cannot be studied as isolated episodes in Tanzanian history and that since they are an element of continuity they form one of the important background themes to Tanzanian nationalism. Furthermore, Vassanji draws a picture that attempts to correct the misrepresented stories of resistance Gwassa claims to have existed before. Readers can see how Vassanji attempts a reconstruction of history in the narrative as he further claims that:

> The Majimaji vita – War of the waters – was called a rebellion in our school books: the image cultivated was of gangs of half – naked, chanting, superstitious Africans foolishly pitting their

[81] *Ibid*. p. 56.
[82] *Ibid*. p. 58.

> spears and bows and arrows against the most modern machine guns.[83]

The narrator plays the role he is assigned by Vassanji. The role of correcting such historical details by informing that Maji maji war involved large swathes of the country which means it was not an ethnic war. He further claims that the war claimed about three hundred thousand African lives – some ten to fifteen percent of the population which according to the narrator is the best way of explaining the measure of destruction and death brought by this war. From these details about African wars of resistance there are things this story is highlighting. First as the narrator observes, Kamal turns the attention of the readers of the fictional work not to the loss but to those who worked for the colonizers and took arms against fellow Africans and this is not accidentally brought up for the second time in the narrative. The novel accords history the right literary atmosphere and through that brings to light this shameful past of history which has been glossed over in silence and the historical details about traitors who hunted the Mau Mau in Kenya and ANC in South Africa and it takes readers down the memory line with fresh and fine details of these wars in order to accord readers an opportunity to relate these wars with independence and to acknowledge the vital role played by Africans during wars of resistance against colonial intrusion and occupation across the continent. The idea developed by Vassanji is to situate these wars of resistance and their heroes and heroines within the larger picture of independence struggles in Africa. That is why Kamal himself declares in the

[83] *Ibid*. p. 69.

narrative that, “Mkwawa, Makunganya, Kinjikitilé. These were heroes. How could you not be proud of them when we were on the verge of our Independence?”[84]

Arguing along the same line it is also noted how Saida, a character in the novel and Kamal’s best friend celebrates Kinjikitilé as one of African heroes by assuming his name. It is the name she would proudly identify herself with and let Kamal and other people call her by. During their childhood as they were playing Saida would majestically proclaim:

> I am Kinjikitilé. The magician of Ngarambe, who went by that name, had also immersed himself in water, before emerging to inspire men and women to make war against the Germans.[85]

Moreover, as the story nears the end and Kamal has arrived at Minazi minne village where he was told Saida was living he inquires about her by her name Saida but he is told that a woman with such a name doesn’t exist there. He learns although very late in the story that Saida who was known as Bibi Ramzani at Minazi minne also calls herself Kinjikitilé.[86] As it has been shown before, Vassanji does not only revisit history for the sake of reconstructing it but also for the aim of sharing its literariness which can be obtained from characters’ imaginations.

It is important to see that although Kamal goes back to Kilwa to look for his lost childhood love, Saida, he also revisits all these

[84] *Ibid*. p. 69.
[85] *Ibid*. p. 36.
[86] *Ibid*. p. 223.

past accounts against what he sees in Kilwa upon arriving after been away for 35 years in order to re-dress the history of Kilwa. Images of old and new Kilwa are significant in reconstructing the history of his home town which Kamal believes to have been under represented and its heroes under acknowledged. For example, the narrator says when Kamal arrived:

> [H]e took the few steps to the old German monument around which he had played as a child. It stood now forlorn amidst a dump and parking space, a tall white stone memorizing two foreign gentlemen, Herr Krieger and Herr Hessel, who died in 1888.[87]

The above quotation suggests that when Kamal arrives in Kilwa he finds it too difficult to learn the history of Kilwa. There is nothing left for him to remember the African heroes but ironically there is still a monument to memorize two Germans who mean nothing to Kilwa. At this point Vassanji uses fiction to register a crucial concern over the neglected history of Kilwa and its heroes while at the same time he questions the value of the history of our colonizers to our children. He is in a way putting the history of Kilwa in its right context through fictional work.

5.0 Stories of Africans and Indians collaboration during Resistance

Apart from reconstructing the history of resistance by focusing on the actual wars, *The Magic of Saida* also collects fine bits of stories which are probably kept underrepresented. There are

[87] *Ibid*. p. 11.

stories on how specific people and groups of people collaborated during wars of resistance which greatly influenced the attainment of Independence. The contribution of some local Africans and Indians who were in Africa is well intertwined in the story of Kamal. The story acknowledges how some Indians collaborated with Africans by taking part in plotting against the Germans. Hamida informs how arms and ammunitions , smuggled from Zanzibar were stored behind Punja Devraj's – Kamal's grandfather – shop and how Punja in collaboration with other four Indians worked hand in hand with Abdelkarim – mzee Omari's older brother – to support Makunganya's attacks against the Germans.[88] The Indians are said to have been specialists in cutting telegraph lines and spying and smuggling ammunitions for Makunganya.

It is evident that while the role of some Indians in African resistance wars may not have been reported in other historical records, this novel shares bits of stories about their contribution. This can help readers to understand why Mzee Omari in his narration at one point and upon seen Kamal among his listeners he declared that Kamal's grandfather, Punja was a lion and that his tale too belonged to his composition.[89] Mzee Omari who is the main source of historical information in this novel creates space for the Indians in his compositions about African resistance which is crucial as it adds important bits of information to the stories he is narrating and the history that Vassanji through Kam al is reconstructing.

[88] *Ibid*. pp. 95-96.
[89] *Ibid*. p. 29.

The story also brings to light the contribution of some African individuals during these wars. Abdelkarim is a character who portrayed to have spent most of his time in hiding. On the surface he could be seen to represent fearless and committed Africans but looking at his portrayal in relation to Vassanji's focus we learn that Abdelkarim fulfills two missions in the story. He is used by Vassanji to evangelize the 'gospel' of African resistance to those who never took part or to those who don't believe Africans resisted the colonial intrusion vigorously but more importantly he is used to give an answer to the question Kamal posed regarding some Africans who betrayed their fellow Africans. Kamal had asked, "Were they traitors or simply practical and realistic?"[90] When Abdelkarim is visited by his young brother, Mzee Omari shortly before he was sold to the Germans, Abdelkarim puts across the following speech which well depicts the two missions Abdelkarim is assigned in the novel:

> I have seen much in the forests. Enough for a full time. I have seen terrible things, my brother. I have seen men cut open and left for the hyena, and I have seen men in the hundreds fall to the bullets just as... when a swarm of locusts rushes in and razes a field in moments. I have seen hunger and grief there were unbelievers who showed the utmost courage, took steel in their chests and believers who betrayed them to the German's mercenaries.[91]

[90] *Ibid*. p. 69.
[91] *Ibid.* p. 103.

Abdelkarim continues to say:

> Our Book tells us to resist oppression; but there comes a time to submit and leave the fighting to Allah. He sent us the plague, as though we were the Pharaoh, when in reality it is we who are the slaves. But He knows best. It seems to me now, my young brother, that the path you chose to walk in life was well considered and had its merits. There is no harm in learning new ways even if they are of the oppressor. Still I must walk on the path that I took. There was no other way for me. And I must live in hiding now [92]

The speech allows readers to see into Kamal's mind. Kamal poses these details about other African heroes. Stories he got from Mzee Omari praised the likes of Makunganya but no one spoke about the like of Abdelkarim. As Pivote remarks, Kamal realized that no one had given him all the information about the history of Kilwa. While on one hand the speech shows Abdelkarim speaking on behalf of all African heroes, those who carry the true gospel of resistance in Africa, on the other hand it helps readers ostensibly see the art being used to give history a new ink and a new life. Abdelkarim leads readers to an answer to the question Kamal posed. It is like Abdelkarim is suggesting that some of those who betrayed their fellow Africans had chosen to be practical including his brother, Mzee Omari. While there still could be a debate about this view, the novel renders an alternative perspective towards the issue of betrayal

[92] *Ibid*. p. 103.

during colonial resistance. Vassanji, being educated and having been raised in Africa where he feels to belong ponders whether Africans could have managed after wars of resistance without some people being practical. This perspective gives readers a room not only to study the history but to debate over these new contour lines Vassanji offers to the history of resistance in Kilwa and Tanganyika in general.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper has observed that Vassanji's novel, *The Magic of Saida* has intertwined history in the story of Kamal as part of Kamal's mission to recollect stories of his past in Kilwa. My reading of the novel has shown that Vassanji narrates the story of Kamal Punja, a middle aged and well off doctor who lives and works in Edmonton, Canada and he who returns to Kilwa in search of his childhood lover Saida. This journey back to Kilwa which is inspired by yearning for lost love sends Kamal on a mission to unbury his past and to complete his 35 years of research on the history of Kilwa. Vassanji uses Saida to be a pulling factor to make Kamal go back to Kilwa. She possesses as the novel title suggests, the magic power which Kamal fails to resist as he confesses in the narrative upon arriving in Kilwa that, "We leave so many things behind, why not this one, why not her?[93] It is the power that Saida possesses that draws Kamal back to Kilwa and under the haunt of spirits which the story acknowledges to be guardians of Kilwa he is made to travel through memory to his past and share stories of what he saw and what he heard while in Kilwa while at the same time trying

[93]*Ibid*. p. 11.

to reconstruct the fragmented and underrepresented history of Kilwa.

I have demonstrated how Vassanji has used the novel to reconstruct the history of Kilwa and at the same time how he has given the history to the text and textuality to history by showing that history and fiction are two threads of the same fabric in this novel. Kamal who arrives in new Kilwa takes his readers on a ride through memories of the old Kilwa to allow them to know and enjoy his old Kilwa and probably ignore the new one which does not exist to him. Vassanji uses Mzee Omari whose story is brought forth by Kamal to restructure colonial history of Tanganyika. He carefully handles stories about slavery and slave trade at the Eastern and Southern coast of Tanganyika exposing accounts given by the colonialists against accounts of the same given by the locals including Mzee Omari and Hamida. All these accounts express how foreigners and locals benefited from the trade. Accounts about German colonial rule and how vigorously Africans staged resistance against them have also been given and the novel has allowed readers to learn that resistances were well organized, continuous and non-ethnic.

Resistance is also drawn to have played a great role in awakening people to carry out continuous wars of liberation. It has also been shown that Vassanji uses Kamal to unearth stories about how some Africans and Indians collaborated with African heroes like Makunganya against the Germans but on the other hand how some Africans decided to honour the new order by betraying their fellow Africans. The later has left readers with more to debate as whether some of those who

betrayed fellow Africans were trying to be practical or they were simply traitors.

I have also argued that Vassanji's use of fiction and history allows him to use imagination to restructure historical information and in that way fictional characters and literary language accord history an alternative interpretative form as well as a literary taste. I have also argued that fiction and history are used by Vassanji to propose a view that there are differences between actual historical events, varying perceptions of the events and the histories about the events. Vassanji is viewed to have used both fiction and history to provide readers with a room to question the process by which we represent ourselves and our world and a room to become aware of the means by which we make sense of and construct our history. It is evident in the narrative, therefore that Kamal being older and well educated revisits his past with the intention of piecing together all versions of every story and authenticating the details he was privileged to learn about as a young and naïve boy. Kamal himself informs readers through the handling of history in *The Magic of Saida* that one cannot avoid trading on the past since one's past is not past.

Reinstating Local Agency: Origins and Development of Irrigated Rice Production in the Usangu Plains, 1920s to 1960

George K. Ambindwille
Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

Many colonial scholars in the 20th century pointed out that agriculture was introduced in the continent from outside, basically Europe and Asia. They refused to accept that African ingenuity had a role to play in the development of agriculture. Premised on this line of thinking, many scholars who studied the Usangu Plains attributed the introduction and development of rice production in the plains to the Baluchi. Drawing from archival, oral and secondary written sources, and working within the framework of local agency and political economy theories, this paper argues that contrary to the popular notions that have attributed irrigated rice farming to the Baluchi community, the establishment of irrigated rice farming in the region was primarily an indigenous initiative of the Sangu. It further recognizes the role-played by the British colonial state in the expansion of irrigated rice farming which has seldom been accounted for by scholars who studied the area under study.

Key words: local agency, canal, local knowledge, transplanting, broadcasting, environment, irrigation.

1.0 Introduction

Many colonial scholars in the 20th century pointed out that agriculture was introduced in the continent from outside basically Europe and Asia.[94] They refused to accept that African ingenuity had a role to play in the development of agriculture.[95] Premised on this line of thinking, many scholars who studied the Usangu Plains have solely attributed the introduction and development of rice production in the plains to the Baluchi. This is partly due to the perennial problem of insufficient research and chronic weakness of "received wisdom" which always involves a very static conception of African agriculture. Taking these weaknesses on board, this paper examines the origins and development of irrigated rice farming in the Usangu Plains from the 1920s to 1960.

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first section the paper describes Africans' initiatives to establish irrigated rice farming in the Usangu Plains. It argues that contrary to the popular notions and studies that have attributed irrigated rice farming in the plains to the Baluchi community, the

---

[94] Mat Widgren. "Mapping Pre-Colonial African Agricultural Systems" (2016), from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255653306_Mapping_precolonial_African_agricultural_systems accessed on 20th February, 2020; see also Erik Green. "Production Systems in Pre-Colonial Africa: The History of African Development" (2016) from https://aehnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Green.Production-Systems-in-Pre-Colonial-Africa.pdf accessed on 13th February, 2020.

[95] David Niemeijer. "The Dynamics of African Agricultural History: Is It Time for a New Development Paradigm?" *Development and Change, Vol. 27, Issue 1* (1996): 87-110 from https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1996.tb00579.x accessed on 10th February, 2019; see also James McCann. "Agriculture and African History" in the Journal of African History, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1991) from https://www.jstor.org/stable/182667 accessed on 25th February, 2020.

establishment of irrigated rice farming in the region was primarily an initiative of the indigenous Sangu. The initiatives were a response to the colonial demands and to the environmental conditions of the plains in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly floods and drought that were disastrous to crops such as maize. The second section of the paper locates the development of rice farming in the Usangu Plains in the 1940s and 1950s in the context of the British colonial government's efforts to confront the capitalist crisis by creating alternative sources of food, especially oil and grain crops. Government policy was, therefore, expected to support the demands of most progressive farmers by encouraging the replacement of customary land tenure by individual land freehold. This was aimed at commercializing agriculture for the benefit of the British metropolitan economy. The imperial initiatives were also framed within the framework of irrigated agriculture. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Colonial Office in London, international institutions and the colonial state in Tanganyika conducted studies to understand the agricultural potentials of the plains. These studies expanded the potential of irrigated rice farming in the plains and expanded its production. The last section concludes the paper by emphasising the main argument.

2.0 The origins and development of rice farming in the Usangu Plains, 1920s - 1940s

There have been several indigenous farming systems in Tanzania since the pre-colonial times, each farming system having its own practices which positively defined man-environment relations. The systems include those of the Iraqw

of Mbulu district,[96] the Matengo of Mbinga district,[97] the Ukara of Ukerewe district,[98] the Ufipa Mounds of Sumbawanga[99] and the slopes of Kilimanjaro extensive irrigation system.[100] The literature analyzing these systems corroborates Allnutt's and Unomah's discussions on rice growing in Sukumaland. They both attribute the origins of rice growing in this region to the initiatives of the people of western Unyanyembe around the turn of the 19th century.[101]

Unlike the other indigenous systems where the agency of indigenous people has been fully researched, the Usangu farming system in the Usangu Plains has received scanty attention from researchers. Furthermore, many scholars who

---

[96] E. T. Liwenga and J. G. Lyimo. "The Relevance of Traditional Farming Systems in Sustaining Agricultural Production: The Case of Iraqw Farming System in Mama Isara." A Report submitted to ENRECA, (University of Dar es Salaam: IRA, 1997), p. 5; see also Y. Q. Lawi. "May the Spider Web Blind Witches and Wild Animals: Local Knowledge and the Political Ecology of Natural Resource Use in the Iraqwland, Tanzania, 1900–1985" (University of Boston: PhD Dissertation, 2000).

[97] H. W. Basehart. "Cultivation Intensity, Settlement Patterns and Homestead Farms among the Matengo of Tanzania." *Ethonology*, Vol. 12 (1973); E. G. Hallsworth. *Anatomy, Physiology and Psychology of Erosion*, (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 1987).

[98] D. Thornton and N. V. Rounce. "Ukara Island and Agricultural Practices of the Wakara." *Tanganyika Notes and Records I* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printers, 1936); H. Kjekshus. *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850 – 1950* (London: James Currey, 1996).

[99] M. Lunan. "Mound Cultivation in Ufipa, Tanganyika."*East African Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 16 (1950); also Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, op. cit.

[100] T. Spear. *Mountain Farmers: Moral Economies of Land and Agricultural Development in Arusha and Meru* (London: James Currey Publishers, (1997), p. 9.

[101] R.B. Allnutt. "Rice Growing in Dry Areas." EAAJ VIII (1942): 103-108; and A.C. Unomah. "Economic Expansion and Political Change in Unyanyembe" (University of Ibadan: PhD Dissertation, 1972).

studied the Usangu Plains[102] have attributed the origins and development of rice production in the plains to the Baluchi. According to them, the Baluchi introduced rice farming into the plains in the late 19th century, when they began living in the region. According to the narrative, the Baluchi were welcomed by their fellow Baluchi known as Jemadar, who was by then the chief advisor on matters of war to Merere, the leader of the Sangu at the time. At the end of the 19th century, the Baluchi entered and settled in the Usangu Plains, at the same time establishing rice production.[103] In this regard, before Martin

[102]Thomas Spear in his book aptly titled *Mountain Farmers: Moral Economies of Land and Agricultural Development in Arusha and Meru* ((1997) critically argued that colonial history holds that agricultural development in Africa has long been viewed as synonymous with intervention by outside experts who seek to replace indigenous practices with imported ones.

[103]Most of the scholars who have studied the Usangu Plains' agricultural development have generalized that the Baluchi's enguinity/initiative was responsible for the origin of canal construction and rice irrigation, among others. The scholars are: Marcia Wright. *German Missions in Tanganyika, 1891–1941: Lutherans and Moravian in the Southern Highlands,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); C. B. Jespersen. *Paddy in Usangu Plains: A Farm Management Survey of the Production with Development Proposals* (Mbeya: Agro-Economic Section, MARTI, 1973); J. S. Mwakipesile. *Mila na Desturi za Wasangu, Wasafwa na Wasagara* (Dar es Salaam: Idara ya Utafiti na Mipango, Wizara ya Utamaduni wa Taifa na Vijana, 1975); J. S. Mwakipesile. "Peasants and Migrants: A Case Study of the Usangu Plains." (University of Dar es Salaam: M.A Thesis, 1976); Knut Pipping. *Land Holding in the Usangu Plain: A Survey of Two Villages in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania* (Uppsala: Scandnavian Institute of African Studies, 1976); A. Hazlewood and I. Livingstone. *The Development Potential of the Usangu Plains of Tanzania.* Vol. 1 (London: The Commonwealth Secretariat. Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, 1978); A. Hazlewood and I. Livingstone. *Irrigation Economics in Poor Countries: Illustrated by the Usangu Plains of Tanzania* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982); Susan Charnley. "Cattle, Commons and Culture: The Political Ecology of Environmental Change on a Tanzanian Range Land" (University of Stanford: PhD Thesis, 1994); Reuben M. J. Kadigi. "Rice Production Economics at the Local and National Levels: The Case of Usangu Plains in Tanzania" (Sokoine University of Agriculture: RIPARWIN Project, 2003), accessed on 24th April 2013, www.r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Output/Water/R8064-Report-

Walsh's innovative study published in 1984, the African role in the Usangu Plains rice economy had been downplayed. Innovations, such as conversion of swamps and other lands into productive lands as well as the use of sophisticated techniques in water management and irrigation, were attributed to the Baluchi's ingenuity and imagination. Besides, the Baluchi were glorified as the first people to dig a modern canal in the plains for irrigation purposes.[104] Using what Helge Kjekshus calls "local agency approach"[105] this paper traces the origins of rice farming in the Usangu Plains. It challenges and discredits the idea that the Baluchi introduced rice production in the region.

This study disagrees with ideas that romanticise the role of the Baluchi in initiating rice farming for a number of reasons. First and foremost, irrigated agriculture is as old in the plains as the Sangu communities in the area. Geographically and environmentally, Usangu is crisscrossed by many big rivers such as Ruaha, Mbarali, Chimala, Ndembela and Mkoji. This gave the Sangu an advantage in the use of water as Usangu is basically a flat plain that surrounds mountain ranges. Until

---

ELEBWU_3_Report.pdf; Sarah Seme. "The Role of Indigenous Environmental Knowledge in Sustainable Resourse Utilisation and Environmental Management in Tanzania: The Case of Irrigation Scheme in Usangu, 1945–2000" (University of Dar es Salaam: MA Dissertation, 2006); E. Friis-Hansen. "The Socio-economic Dynamics of Farmers Management of Local Plant Genetic Resources: A Framework for Analysis with Examples from a Tanzanian Case Study." *Tanzania's Forgotten Farmers*, CDR Working Paper, 99, 3 (2009), from htpp://ww.cdr.dk, accessed on 20th July 2014 and other government reports such as FAO, (1961), *op. cit*.

[104] *Ibid*.

[105] Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, op. cit.

recently, several of the rivers in Usangu flowed all year round, thus providing reliable sources of water during both the wet and dry seasons. For this reason, the plains became geographically well-suited for irrigated agriculture. Although the Sangu relied heavily on rain-fed agriculture, they have used irrigation techniques in cultivation since the late 19th century, particularly during drought years. Heese who writes on the Sangu cultural practices mentioned the use of furrows for the irrigation of vegetables and for domestic water use, not only by the German missionaries in Brandt but also by the local people who irrigated their gardens, *fiuvula* and farms in Masasi, near Brandt, in the 19th century.[106] Before the Baluchi dug furrows in the 1940s, the Mbeya District Commissioner also acknowledged the Sangu people's knowledge of irrigated agriculture by saying:

> The Wasangu, who are rich in cattle, have the added advantage of possessing a good water supply in the southern part of the country. The threat of food shortages occasioned by the locust invasion has encouraged them to proceed with irrigation works, with which they are familiar. They should always, therefore, be in a position to secure ample food reserves and find a steady market in the Lupa Goldfield, which is at their door, for any surplus.[107]

---

[106]Von Missionar Heese. "Site und Brauch der Sango." *Archiv fur Anthropologie*, XL (Braunschnuig, 1913), pp. 134–146, as translated by Martin Walsh for me; see also Seme, "Indigenous Environmental Knowledge", *op. cit.*

[107]TNA *Mbeya (Iringa and Southern Highlands Provinces) Provincial Book I*, 1932, p. 146.

One of the important attributes in development of irrigated rice agriculture in Usangu was canal construction for irrigation. And many authors have purposely created a heroic Baluchi man who is said to have constructed the first ever irrigation canal in the Usangu Plains. This hero was Mulla Abdallahim Premohamed and his offsprings still live at Rujewa to date and continue with irrigated rice production. In 1941, Mulla constructed a furrow in only eleven months. However, many respondents refuted this kind of glorification. For example one respondent recalled "maybe it was the first registered canal by the colonial government, but not the first canal in Usangu."[108] The historical sources I consulted showed that even the idea of constructing the furrow was given by sub-chief Mjengwa of Isunura, and then Mulla applied to the government for permission (this is because he was a bit educated). After the permission was granted, the planning and construction of the furrow was supervised by the sub-chief's technical team, which was used to doing 'water works.' Sangu labour, especially that of prisoners who had failed to pay taxes (tax defaulters), was used in the construction of the furrow. The sub-chief made them available to Mulla, who paid their taxes (2/-) in exchange for the construction of the furrow.[109] Cementing on this observation Mwanjonjomi who worked in one of the Baluchi families in Rujewa had this say:

[108]Interview with Ramadhani Ally Mhongole, at Masasi village, on 13th September 2010. He also confirmed that Masasi was the first place in the region to construct a canal for irrigation purposes.

[109] Interview with Edmund Mjengwa, a son of Sub-chief Minzi, at Nyelegete village, on 20th June 2011.

> I am always surprised by those who credit Mulla with the construction of the Mulla Canal, instead of praising Lipangala Minzi, who gave the idea and his technical team, which supervised the whole activity. More significantly, it was the team that suggested where the canal should pass. This is because it was used to constructing furrows and knew well the geography of both River Mbarali and the surrounding areas of Igawa and Rujewa. You see, it was Sangu manpower, knowledge and skills that facilitated the construction of the furrow. That's why this river is similar to the other Sangu furrows of Madibira, Nyeregete and Masasi constructed before... I remember I was 20 years old then, working as a houseboy for a Baluchi family. The Baluchi knew a lot about trade, but nothing else. In all other activities, they used Africans because they had money. Most of the labourers Mulla used were prisoners who failed to pay taxes (2/-). He paid the taxes for them. The prisoners constructed the furrow in eleven months.[110]

Africans' immense contribution to the construction of the canal can be deduced from Mzee Mwanjojomi's account.

Moreover, canal construction was not new in southern Usangu. With frequent floods, the Sangu always developed stable, known environmental friendly mechanisms to control their

[110]Interview with Mzee Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit.*

impacts. According to oral history, they dug big canals to drain water to the rivers from the areas that had been affected by floods. The canals were known as *maluluja* in Kisangu. Apart from digging canals, the people sometimes diverted stubborn rivers from one area to another so that their settlements, herds and fields could not be affected. This practice was characterised by water diversion from a river to a canal which became a river and which is called *lyamile* in Kisangu. Not every person could construct both *maluluja* and *lyamile*. Instead, specialists and experts constructed them under the supervision of the chief himself. This activity was associated with the performance of rituals and the offering of sacrifices during the dry season. It is, therefore, incongruous to regard the construction of canals in Usangu as a 1940s innovation by outsiders, instead of regarding it as an old activity performed by the Sangu.[111] Most of the then *maluluja* and *lyamile* are now used as canals for irrigating rice in the region. However, water no longer flows on other canals because they were constructed very close to the newly established settlements, for instance the *lyamile* near Rujewa, Nyeregete and Ubaruku villages. Its banks still exist, but it is not used for irrigation. Instead, it is used to drain excessive rainwater from homes to areas near certain fields whenever necessary.

Despite this fact, most of those who have researched into irrigated agriculture in Usangu downplay the role of the indigenous people in the construction of canals. Instead, they

[111]Interviews with three elders, namely Chekecheke, Gongo and Mlilwo, at Rujewa village, on 10th and 11th October 2010.

portray the Baluchi as innovators and Africans as passive recipients of these innovations, as Moffet does:

> The Sangu are primarily pastoralists, inhabiting the flats north of the Elton Plateau. Following the lead given by the group of Baluchi settlers... they are now showing great interest in irrigation and the paddy crop during the last few years has extended enormously. This is a promising feature in a tribe which hitherto has been noted for its resistance to progress.[112]

These authors also argue that the Baluchi, who arrived in Usangu in the 1920s, introduced rice irrigation in the plains in the 1940s. Then, the practice spread rapidly among indigenous farmers all over the area.[113] "The Baluchis were not", Martin Walsh rebutted as "sometimes assumed, the sole authors of agricultural innovation in Usangu. Artificial irrigation had long been practised in the south of Usangu."[114] In 1943, official attention was first drawn to the local production of rice,[115] although its cultivation appeared recent introduction into Usangu.[116] It is said that it was brought to Utengule from

---

[112]J. P. Moffett. *Handbook of Tanganyika* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1958), p. 33.
[113]*Ibid*.; Mwakipesile, "Peasants and Migrants", *op. cit*., p. 12.
[114]Martin Walsh. "The Misinterpretation of Chiefly Power in Usangu, South-west Tanzania (University of Cambridge: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 1984), p. 61.
[115]ARPC (Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioner), Mbeya Province (1944), p. 72.
[116]An episode mentioned by David Livingstone. See *The Last Journal of David Livingstone in Central Africa from 1865 to His Death: continued by a narrative of his last moments and suffering, obtained from his faithful servants, Chuma and Susi* (New York: Harper an Brothers, 1874), p. 218; cf. Heese. "Sitte und Brauch

Rungwe by a Mswiswi man, Falamugoda Malisa, who is linked to his conversion to Islam.[117] A more accepted oral account of rice growing in Usangu is that which presents Masasi as the centre of its development. Brandt and Masasi found in Ilongo division near Chimala village, have always been associated with early local irrigated rice production in Usangu from around the late 1920s and early 1930s. Stories indicate that rice was brought from Rungwe and Kilwa by a man from Masasi called Mtiganjola, who is associated with Swahili culture. One respondent associated Mtiganjola's family with the Ngindo of Kilwa who were conceived as Swahili by the Sangu. The family came to Masasi with rice and started growing it there, as the environment was suitable for farming.[118] Oral history found this account invalid because it is not only ahistorical but also many elders and Mtinganjola's family refuted it, arguing that Mtiganjola was an indigenous of the area even before the 1900s.

This study supports the second account that Mtiganjola had brought rice to Usangu from Rungwe, specifically Kyela. Many narratives have been consistent with this account as they implicitly expose the movement and spread of rice farming from Kyela to Usangu. Importantly, rice farming began in Kyela

---

der Sango." *Archur fur Anthropologie*, XL, (1913): 9–10; P. H. Gulliver. "Land Tenure among the Nyakyusa." *East African Studies No. 11* (1958): 12–13, where rice is associated with the development of long-distance trade in the 19th century, then no any other mention till the 1920s.

[117]Interview with 5 elders, at Utengule, on 10th December 2011. Rice has always been linked to Islam/Swahili, as the people of Usangu believed that Islam was a festival-oriented religion that demanded delicious food during the festivals and Ramadan. Thus, at the beginning rice was much associated with Islam and Swahili culture; both Malisa and Mtiganjola were Moslems.

[118]Interview with Mama Hamza Mgangaluma, at Chimala and Ubaruku, on 12th and 14th October 2010, respectively.

earlier than Usangu. This account is further furnished by the following narratives. Mtiganjola is described as an agro-pastoralist, an entrepreneur, a hard worker and a respected man in the village. By the village standards, he was rich and indulged in irrigated agriculture for a long time, possessing both a good number of cattle and sizeable farms of yams, maize and vegetables (garden). Besides, Mtiganjola knew the region's environment and climate that enabled him to grow crops twice a year. This permitted him to have surplus (especially maize) for sale.[119] Mtiganjola always sold his surplus to Mr Yusufmia (an Indian), who was a sole buyer of crops in Usangu and had a rice-milling machine in colonial Rungwe district at Kyela in the 1920s.[120] These two friends trusted each other. One day in the late 1920s, Yusufmia took Mtiganjola to visit Kyela. In Kyela, Mtiganjola became interested in rice production, because he knew that rice was a favoured luxurious and delicious crop, which was sold at a very high price during festivals. Equally important, he found that the crop needed a lot of water, and therefore he learnt how to cultivate it and went back home, taking with him some rice seeds, namely Kahogo and Faya. Then, in the late 1920s he started cultivating rice on half an acre, as they did in Kyela by flooding. He took the same farm practices such as direct rice seeding. In areas where there were more seedlings, they were uprooted and transplanted in swamps.[121] By 1930, a good number of Masasi farmers had

[119]Interviews with Mzee Saidi Bahai Mwambalafu, at Songwe Imalilo, on 19th October 2010; Mzee Njalukwao, at Chimala, on 21st June 2013; Mzee Ramadhani Ally Mhongole, at Masasi, on 17th November 2010; Mzee Laurent Mwang'ombe, at Chimala, on 23rd October 2010.
[120]*Ibid*.; interview with Hamza Mtiganjola, at Chimala/Ihahi, on 12th June 2011.
[121]*Ibid*.; interview with Mama Hamza Mgangaluma, *op. cit*.

adopted this kind of rice production, which spread steadily to Chimala, Igurusi, Mswiswi and Ilongo-Igarako.[122] From flooding they gradually developed an indigenous system of rice production using irrigation.[123] Irrigated rice farming developed from transplanting of excess siblings in swamps to an exactly transplanting system. In this regard, Mtiganjola's nephew testified:

> Our grandfather gradually found that transplanting seedlings in swamps was better than direct planting of seeds as maize. By comparing the yields of the two areas, he found that transplanted rice had by far higher yields than the seeds planted directly on the farm For example, he told me that in 1930 half an acre produced 12 bags of rice, while two small swamps produced 7 bags of rice (combined together they were less than a quarter of an acre). Better still he found that transplanted rice had fewer and/or no weeds at all. With this experience, he started irrigated rice farming taping water from the old River Chosi and all other villagers imitated what he did. So, by the 1930s the irrigated rice farming had been well developed.[124]

Environmental factors played an important role in this process. The presence of water bodies and clay alluvial soils improved the process. While Masasi had already adopted irrigated rice

[122]*Ibid.*; interview with Mzee Ngitaga Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit*.
[123]Interview with Mzee Ramadhani Ally Mhongole, *op. cit*.
[124]Interview with Hamza Mtiganjola, *op. cit*.

farming, the nearby villages of Chimala, Ihahi and Igurusi adopted the Kyela rice cultivation method by direct seeding of rice in early November before the rainy season.[125] Rice production during this period was largely for domestic consumption, with very little for sale. Family was a basic unit of labour. A hand hoe was the main tool of production. During the 1930s and early 1940s, rice production was profoundly localised in very few remote areas, mainly eclipsed by maize which was the main food and cash crop in Usangu, thus very little is known about rice production during this time.[126]

Conversely, the Baluchi's irrigated rice farming came to Usangu in the 1940s. It was the decline of the Lupa goldfields in the late 1930s which forced the Baluchi to diversify their income generating strategies by engaging in farming.[127] As argued earlier, trade rather than farming was the Baluchi's main economic activity in the Usangu Plains until the late 1930s. The maize and rice that was locally grown by the Sangu were bought by the Baluchi and sold for almost twice the original price in the Lupa goldfields.[128] At the same time, they sold various kinds of wares to the local inhabitants. With the decline of the Lupa goldfields and markets for commodities, they saw agriculture as a substitute for trade. Thus, in the 1940s they began engaging in agricultural activities and retail trade. One Baluchi, Suleiman Bimu, said:

---

[125]*Ibid*.; interview with Wazee Njalukwao, *op. cit*.; and with Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit*.
[126]*Ibid.*
[127]*Ibid*.; cf. Martin Walsh, (1984), *op. cit*., p. 61.
[128]Marius Fortie. *Black and Beautiful: A Life in Safari Land*, (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1938), p. 276; cf. interview with Mzee Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit.*

> In the early 1940s, the Baluchis started irrigation-based crop farming of various kinds of crops (vegetables, fruits, wheat, maize and rice) at Rujewa. Rice became the most important crop, as it had both dietary and commercial value. So, almost all Baluchis cultivated it, using the Mulla's furrow for irrigation. The indigenous Sangu system of planting seeds does not involve the transplanting of seeds. We, however, transplanted rice, in Usangu, differently to Sangu who planted rice as they did maize...[129]

Legitimating innovation, Bimu credits the Baluchi for introducing rice transplanting into Usangu, which is not true as I have argued above. However, he notes that the Sangu people started to engage in rice production earlier than the Baluchi and refers to it as "the indigenous Sangu system of planting rice like maize." Evidence from SMUWC (Sustainable Management of the Usangu Wetlands and its Catchment) also indicates that rice farming began before the Baluchis started engaging in it. For instance, in 1930, more than 101 ha were under rice cultivation.[130] With indigenous efforts, the area under rice cultivation expanded maximally when rice farming expanded from Masasi to other areas, such as Chimala, Ilongo and Igarako. Land under rice cultivation increased to 263 ha in 1935 and 1822 ha in 1940.[131] Oral accounts attribute this rise partly to the suitability of the environment for irrigated rice farming.

[129]Interview with a Baluchi elder, Suleiman Bimu, at Rujewa village, on 18th September 2011.
[130] SMUWC, Report on Irrigation Water in the Usangu Plains, 2001, p. 12.
[131] Ibid.

With localised drought and unpredictable rainfall, irrigated rice production was seen as an alternative to maize farming, which was vulnerable to the two environmental problems. Besides, maize did not need much water, compared to rice. In this regard, Mrs Mgao revealed that "with irrigated rice, the Sangu had a new form of prosperity."[132]

Besides, maize farming was capricious because of unpredictable rainfall. This area was characterised by localised droughts and floods, which were unfavourable for maize production. For example, almost all the cited accounts about one of the much-felt droughts of the 1940s, which was famously referred to as *Njala ya Malale*.[133] People say that the drought had immeasurable ecological and economic impacts on the environment. Its main immediate impact was famine (*njala ya malale)*. This drought affected not only the people, but also cattle. As a result, people who did not have cattle in the Usangu Plains were forced to go to Uwanji to search for food (locally known as *kuhemela*) in exchange for labour services. One old man, Yusufu Mlwilo, had this to say:

> My son, the situation was terrible. In my life, I have never witnessed drought of that kind, although droughts were very common here. In

[132]Interview with Mama Mgao, *op. cit*.

[133] *Njala ya malale* was famous famine which occurred in the 1940s in the Usangu Plains because of the total crop failure and which had hard-felt effects not only on the ecology and economy, but also on the lives of the Sangu people. I was told the famine claimed a good number of peoples' lives. It is literally called *Njala ya Malale* because the drought wrought insects called *malale*, which destroyed crops, especially immature crops such as maize, beans and rice by cutting down plants.

> 1949, none of us harvested either maize or millet (or even sorghum). Maybe a few people who were living near rivers down there (points towards Ibohora, which is near River Mbarali)... We were hit by *njala ya malale*. There was no way out, apart from going to Uwanji to ask for assistance (*kuhemela*). We went there and were given pieces of land to till in exchange for food (maize). Wherever we went, we went in groups. My son, if that kind of drought happens again, no one will survive for sure![134]

According to this oral history, this drought also opened new prospects for irrigated rice production, as water was immensely abundant in the area. For example, rice irrigation activities at the Majenje scheme were started to overcome famine following the drought of the 1940s. Oral interviews with famers at Majenje identified the late Paul Helihano as the founder of the canal construction. Mr. Helihano surveyed River Luanyo and designed a canal from the river to his farms. He mobilised labour power using public parties (*mgowe*; people coming together to work for the public good) in constructing the canal. The benefits of irrigation made more villagers practise irrigated agriculture.[135] Ecologically, rice was well adapted to many parts of the Usangu Plains and perhaps started spreading in the area

[134]Interview with Mzee Yusuf Mlwilo, at Rujewa village, on 25th September 2011. Interestingly, this observation seemed uniform all over the Usangu Plains and the drought affected almost each and every person in the plains. Most of the respondents remembered it.

[135]Interview with Mzee Mwang'ombe, at Chimala village on 23rd September 2010 and other elders in an informal interview, at Chimala Club, on 23rd September 2010.

in the 1950s. Only the uppermost highlands and the dry lowlands lied outside its range as a significant crop by the 1950s. Rice did not compete seriously with maize in the areas where the latter crop thrived well. However, it competed very successfully with maize farming in the wet low-land.[136]

Indigenous rice farming through irrigation began before the 1940s as shown earlier, but its development occurred in the 1940s, when irrigation activities spread over large areas, especially in the east and south of the Usangu Plains. Although through most of the colonial period maize was the major cash crop in Usangu,[137] indigenous irrigated rice production grew steadily and in 1954 paddy growers pressed for the registration of a cooperative society. One of their main objectives was to break the monopoly enjoyed by Baluchi and Indian middlemen traders. Their application was refused, ostensibly on economic grounds.[138] From this point on, no doubt rice attracted considerably more official attention than maize in response to developments at Mbarali.[139]

The thriving of rice farming was also due to the better prices offered, compared to the price of maize. Most of the elders could not remember the exact prices, but they managed to mention a comparative exchange advantage between the two crops. For example, they consistently argued that, by the late

---

[136]*Ibid*.
[137]Tanganyika Territory, *ARPC* (Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioner), *1941* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printers, 1942), p. 74; ARPC, 1943, p. 72; ARPC, 1944, p.76; ARPC, 1947, p. 111; ARPC, 1949, p. 127; ARPC, 1950, p. 138; ARPC, 1952, p. 139; ARPC, 1953, p. 1150.
[138]ARPC (Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioner), 1954, p. 143.
[139]ARPC, 1955, p. 140; ARPC, 1956, p. 158; ARPC, 1957, p. 141 and ARPC, 1959, p. 166.

1930s and early 1940s one bag of paddy could be exchanged for two bags of maize.[140] Comparatively, rice became more valuable than maize and its production started being market driven.

Even the colonial government played a role in the promotion of rice farming by using price as an incentive to peasants. To stimulate and encourage the peasants in the Usangu Plains to produce rice, the colonial government raised the price of the crop. In the 1940s, rice production in Usangu increased, with the result that a few tons were sold outside Usangu. It is evident that the good prices offered for this crop had encouraged the indigenous people of Usangu to undertake rice growing with a new zeal. For instance, in 1943 the price of a kilo of rice was 18 cents, while that of maize was 11 cents.[141] This price incentive is apparent in the following dummy table 1.1. All the prices are given in cents for both maize and rice per kilogramme (kg) and production is given in tons.

Table 1.1: Prices (in Shillings) of Rice and Maize and Tons of Rice Produced (T) and Marketed in the Usangu Plains from 1954–1959

Crop/Year	1954		1955		1956		1957		1958		1959	
	T	Shs	T	Shs	T	Shs	T	Shs	T	Shs	T	Shs
Rice	875	-/24	1100	-/25	561	-/50	1000	-/55	1000	-/60	2400	-/43
Maize	-	-/20	-	-/21	-	-/22	-	-/22	-	-/24	-	-/35

Source: T. N. A., Acc 3/35/*II* Agricultural Monthly and Annual Reports 1952–1960.

[140]Interviews with almost all Sangu elders who lived in the late 1930s and 1940s showed that the Sangu valued rice twice as much as maize.

[141]Tanganyika Territory, ARPC (Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioners) for the year 1945 – Mbeya (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1946), p. 7.

Table 1.1 shows that there was a tremendous rise in the prices of rice and maize between 1954 and 1958. The prices of the two crops dropped in 1959 probably due to bumper yields. If one compares the prices of paddy and maize, the price of paddy was higher than that of maize. This motivated peasants to grow more paddy than maize, which, at first, was seen as a cash crop. The prices shown above were average prices because there were higher and lower prices than those which are indicated in the table. For a standard type of rice like Faya and Kahogo, the price was high and for low quality rice the prices were low.[142] Therefore, economic forces had an upper hand in compelling the peasants in Usangu to grow more rice than maize and other crops during the last decade of colonialism. Equally noteworthy, harvests were significantly different between the two crops as the same size of land provided more rice than maize. According to Jespersen, in the 1950s and 1960s, an average of 15 bags of rice was produced from a single acre whereas an average of 5 bags of maize was produced in the same area (one acre).[143] This situation, which was mainly the result of the ecology of the area, made the peasants prefer cultivation of irrigated rice to maize.

3.0 Irrigated rice farming and indigenous methods of water drainage and control

Rice cultivation requires careful attention to drainage and water control, since rice seedlings are vulnerable to both

[142] Interview with with Mzee Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit*.; and with Mzee Saidi Kilasi, *op. cit*.
[143] Jespersen, *Paddy in Usangu Plains*, *op. cit*., p. 43.

excessive floods and drought.[144] The peasants in Usangu were consciously aware of this sensitivity and thus the first important activity was the preparation of fields. Eliud Mwashikamile, one of the earliest rice farmers, argued that inland swamps were turned into water reservoirs by constructing bunds and ridges (*matuta*), leaving a farm between bunds and ridges.[145] This process produced a bunded plot, which stopped rainwater and floods from the rivers into the fields. This was also a device used to control field flooding, an important technique for weed control. Small holes were made in plot bunds (each plot with two holes) and plugged with mudded thatch, which permitted rudimentary control of water inflow and outflow. Depending on the type and duration of the groundwater available in an area, inland crop cultivation in swamps generally extended the cultivation season beyond the rainy season. This kind of irrigated farming was dominant in the 1930s and 1940s. It involved the use of sophisticated techniques to farm in the swamps (famously called *makorongo*). These swamps were very fertile areas and therefore very productive.[146]

According to oral accounts, not all the swamps were suitable for irrigated rice farming. Only the swamps that permitted

---

[144]Megan Sweeney and Susan McCouch. "The Complex History of the Domestication of Rice." *Annals of Botany*, No. 100 (2007): 951–957, accessed on 20th April 2013, www.aob.oxfordjournals.org; interview with Mzee George Muhango, the first African field officer and assistant to the British Manager at the Mbarali Irrigation Scheme, at Mkombwe, on 8th January 2002.

[145]Interview with Eliud Mwashikamile (88 years old), at Kapunga village, on 22nd August 2011.

[146]*Ibid*.; interview with Mzee Anael Chaula, at Songwe Imalilo, on 19th September 2010.

water flows (in and out) were developed as farms. More importantly, it was the fertile swamps[147] that were turned into farms. If there was no *malolo*, a swamp was considered unsuitable for agriculture, and therefore it was left for other uses, such as animal grazing and fishing.[148]

At the beginning, broadcasting (popularly known as direct seeding) was used as a rice growing method in the swamps. Under this system, the swamps were prepared before the rainy season and then rice seeds were sown. When rainfall came, it found rice already in the soil. After a month, farmers started weeding the watered rice farms. However, this system was unproductive, as it encouraged germination of weeds. Hence the peasants opted for transplanting of rice in the inland swamps.[149] Confirming this, Saidi Bahai Mwambalafu said:

> You see, it was just like experimenting but we used *makongoro* to grow rice pretty successfully. We started by clearing small pieces of land and ended up with somewhat big areas like 2 acres, for instance, in the ravine of Urunda. I had two acres, my brother had three acres and other

[147] The fertility of land was measured by the presence of certain species of vegetation called *malolo* in it. *Malolo* is a type of vegetation always found in the swamps and signifies that the soil is fertile and that there is a lot of fish in an area. Its leaves were sometimes used to make mats, besides being used as roofing material in the region.

[148]Most of the elderly interviewees agreed that the swamps with *malolo* were very fertile because the plants' roots produce enough space for fish and other living things such as worms to live in the soil. The worms produce soil components that fertilise the soil in one way or another.

[149]Interviews with with Mzee Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit*.; and with Mzee Saidi Kilasi, *op. cit.*

> farmers had small pieces of land. The area was very fertile. A small piece of land provided many bags of rice. The source of soil fertility was different deposits from floods and rice stalks buried in soil so that they could decompose during the process of cultivation. These were wet for a long period of time in a year. Sometimes, it involved reclaiming land so as to reduce the effects of floods. Ditches were dug to drain water and land was banded with dikes. Look at Mohamed Juma's farm (pointing at a piece of land adjacent to the interview arena). He worked there very hard in 1948 and ultimately got those 10 acres.[150]

The swamp farms were planted with rice varieties (*kahogo* and *faya*) that grew rapidly. This was because they could withstand floods, while shorter ones were vulnerable to swamp floods which always occurred due to low rainfall.[151]

The other form of irrigated rice farming was the one that involved the use of canals. The agronomic knowledge and engineering expertise of indigenous farmers revealed their sophistication in rice cultivation using canals along riverine flood plains, some extending up to 20 miles from the main river to rice furrows. Many rivers flowed through Usangu from the mountains. Therefore, many canals were dug from the rivers and were used for irrigating farms in the plains. The indigenous

[150]Interview with Mzee Saidi Bahai Mwambalafu, op. cit.
[151]*Ibid.*

rice irrigation system was technologically simple, but represented a remarkable human achievement. A series of streams rose high on the Livingstone Mountains and descended to Usangu, where they flowed into six big rivers and other numerous streams. There were some 1500mm of rainfall on the mountains and only 700-600 mm in the plains.[152] Water was diverted from these rivers using logs, brushwood and mud into mud channels. Grass was planted on the banks. The uniqueness of the traditional 'water intake system' was that it was set a bit higher than the lower level of a river's water to allow water to go downstream for other biodiversity during the dry season.[153] It allowed water passage only when the level of water in a river was higher. The irrigation furrows were also steep and used simply constructed but ingenious engineering structures (for example, aqueducts/conduits made of wood, mud and leaves) to carry water to its destination.[154] Residence and land tenure were organised on a chiefdom basis and on the basis of the location of fields in the 1950s. In turn, this dominated the water allocation system.

As noted by Maganga and Juma who studied the practices of irrigation in the Usangu Plains, the Sangu had laws and customs that guided the use of water. Under the traditional laws and customs, the construction of irrigation canals and furrows was controlled by the chief and, although a single

[152]Tanzania government. *Annual Regional Provincial Report for Mbeya, 1970* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printers, 1971), p. 3. Interestingly, this is the document which also showed that the Mbarali Irrigation Scheme had stopped operating and then handed over to the Chinese in 1970.
[153]Interview with Colonel Edmund Mjengwa (son of Sub-chief Minzi), at Nyelegete village, on 23rd October 2012.
[154]*Ibid.*

individual could tap a stream for personal use without first consulting the chief, the latter could prohibit the construction or use of any canal.[155] Once constructed, a canal exclusively belonged to the people who had constructed it until they abandoned it. It was then controlled by the chief.[156] This traditional law underwent certain changes and two ways of obtaining such a right were established. In the case of the traditional irrigation, one obtained the right as defined in customary regulations, which were administered at the various levels where customary law operated (local water committees, councils of elders, village authorities, etc.). But one obtained the formal water rights by applying for them to the recognised authorities, the state.[157]

For example, the Nyeregete canal was constructed in the 1940s under the customary system of obtaining irrigation water. People organised themselves informally and constructed a canal to divert water from River Kiyoga. Then each member of the canal construction team constructed a smaller furrow to tap water from the main canal to his/her field. Such canal construction teams were started by a single person, but later they became big canal construction committees which, according to the respondents, had a membership of 100 by 1970 and covered a distance of 20 miles. The canal committees and sub-committees oversaw the allocation of water to members as

[155]F. P. Maganga and I. H. Juma, (1999), "From Customary to Statutory Systems: Changes in Land and Water Management in Irrigated Areas of Tanzania", (a study of Local Resource Management Systems in the Usangu Plains), UNRECA WORKSHOP – Dar es Salaam on 15th December 1999), p. 46.
[156]Interview with Mr. Gabriel Lujaji, a village chairman, at Nyeregete, on 4th October 2002.
[157]*Ibid*.; also interview with Col. Edmund Mjengwa, *op. cit*.

well as the maintenance of the canals. The Nyeregete canal was cleaned every year from August to December and if a member abstained from such activities, he or she was liable to a fine.[158] Traditional irrigation groups were widespread in the plains, thus leading to the increase in the production of rice.

The first recorded indigenous rice canal was constructed in 1935.[159] This was the Masasi/Chosi canal, which irrigated rice in Masasi. Since then, Usangu has witnessed an increase in the construction of intakes from different rivers for rice irrigation. Between 1930 and 1969, there were 39 locally constructed intakes furrows in Usangu.[160] This development is presented in table 1.2

Table 1.2: Installation of Intakes on Rivers over Time

Period	No. of intakes per 10 years
1930-39	5
1940-49	7
1950-59	15
1960-69	12

Source: SMUWC, "Report on Irrigation," (2001), p. 14.

Another remarkable indigenous practice was construction of embankments. Mzee Msavano said that the preparation of a flooded rice field in the seasonally flooded areas began with some kind of land reclamation. A site was selected and enclosed

[158] *Ibid*.
[159] SMUWC, "Report on Irrigation", *op.cit*., p. 12.[160]SMUWC, "Report on Irrigation", *op.cit*., p. 14.
[160]SMUWC, "Report on Irrigation", *op.cit*., p. 14.

using an earthen embankment that was parallel to the riverine arm of the river.[161] Usually, the embankment was more than a metre high and wide and usually stretched over 5 kms or less (for example, the embankment in Ibohora and Mayota ran parallel River Mbarali by 5 km to control the flooding of rice farms down the river and loss of water).[162] Soil excavation for the construction of an embankment enabled people to determine the location of the principal drainage canal. A series of lower embankments or dikes were also constructed in inland and perpendicular to the main one, which divided the perimeter into individual rice parcels that constituted small plots popularly known as *majaruba*.[163]

After a water control system was completed, drainages were constructed to transport water to a farm for irrigation purposes. On a farm, each plot had a water inlet and outlet made of grass and mud so as to control water flows in plots (*majaruba).* Grass was purposely used to control the removal of soil from one plot to another. Therefore, at the end of each last farm, farmers plugged a trunk with either vegetal materials or a plank, so that water flowed in only one direction from a rice farm back to a river. This was to avoid wastage of water so that downstream users could enjoy the same quantity of water as those in the upstream.[164] This was a common practice even in non-flooded areas.

---

[161]Interview with Mzee Athuman Msavano (85 yrs), at Ibohora village, on 7th October 2010.
[162]*Ibid*.
[163]*Ibid*.; and Interview with Mzee Anael Chaula, *op. cit*.
[164]*Ibid.*; interview with five elders (Chief's Council) at Utengule-Usangu village, on 23rd January 2011.

Usually, rice farm preparation was highly labour intensive. For example, in the construction of embankments and the digging of big canals, communal labour (*mgowe*) was supervised by a chief or sub-chief before independence.[165] On the contrary, the making of plots on every farm was the obligation of a farmer with his/her family. The making of plots in all kinds of rice farms involved the making of small bunds to keep and control the water supplied by both rainfall and a canal. The family was the basic unit of production in the preparation of the clay hardpan soil and the construction of bunds. Traditional tools were used in flood control as well as in the construction of drains, embankments, hardpans and bunds.[166]

Various types of rice were grown in the plains; however, *Kahogo* and *Faya* were the favourite types. These two types of rice were preferred for such reasons as high yields, palatability, height, water usage and maturation. Solomoni Mlali's recollection of this was quite revealing:

> We liked *Faya* and *Kahogo* because they were delicious, produced high yields, and their height prevented them from falling down (and therefore their quality was good) and made their threshing easy harvesting. Also, the colour of their covers and hardness made birds perceive them as wild rice. Because *Kahogo* had three kinds of colour, i.e. red, black and white *Kahogo* with black and

[165]*Ibid*.
[166]*Ibid.*; this is also a shared experience of most of the elderly interviewees I interviewed. However, machines were now more common than the manual tools.

> red colour was perceived as wild rice by birds. *Faya*'s cover was so hard that it could not be broken by birds. Thus, birds didn't eat that variety. Interestingly, both had a very good tearing in the farm once planted making it economic in seed preparation and spacing in the field (one tin of paddy was enough to plant one acre which was equivalent to 20 kgs). So, every peasant preferred these two types of rice to others at the time.[167]

In most cases, the varieties of rice were mainly planted in pure stands to prevent mixture. This was to maintain seed and paddy purity because peasants used their own harvests as a source of seed for the next agricultural season. Seeds were not bought from other sources as the government proposed.[168]

Here were no fertilizers used in rice production. The peasants knew that their loamy soil was so fertile that crops could be grown on it for up to 10 years. Rice was not grown in just every piece of land. Instead, the peasants selected the most fertile land called *ngundu* (soil resulting from deposits from the mountains). They also used green manure, their method of soil fertilization since the pre-colonial period.[169] When asked, the peasants seemed to hesitate using something they were not

[167]*Ibid*.
[168]*Ibid*; Tanzania Government, Annual Report District Commissioner-Mbeya, 1963 (Dar es Salaam: Government Printers, 1964), p. 13.
[169]Interview with Mzee Mohamed Juma, *op. cit*.; and with Mzee Kimata, *op. cit*; MZA AGR 1/10, *op. cit*., p. 6.

sure of, given the nature of their environment.[170] Equally significant, the peasants made a distinction between land management in relation to the current crop and land management designed to secure future crop production. They focused particularly on the creation of physical field structures that were aimed at creating capital 'form the future maintenance of land capability', such as green manure, field drains and water meadows.[171] This process substantially 'saved' labour and other inputs for future production.

4.0 The Colonial State and Development of Rice Farming in the 1940s and 1950s

The British began having a direct interest in the Usangu Plains in the late 1940s. The interest was stimulated by the impact of the Second World War, which transformed Britain's relationship with East Africa in general and Tanganyika in particular. Britain perceived Tanganyika as a place that could resolve its growing economic crises and food shortages. The historian John Iliffe captured the role of Tanganyika in resolving British imperial crises thus:

> With an exhausted economy, colossal debts, and a disintegrating Asian Empire, Britain at last needed even Tanganyika's meager resources, if they could be extracted. The post-war decade

[170] *Ibid*.
[171] Lowe Börjeson. *The Anti-Thesis of Degraded Land: Toward a Greener Conceptualisation of Landesque Capital* (Stockhom: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2014), p. 214; P. Blakie and H. C. Brookfield. *Land Degradation and Society* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 9.

> therefore saw a "second colonial occupation" embodied in the development planning and secondary industry, cash crop expansion and agricultural improvement schemes, educational advance, constitutional progress and local government reform.[172]

African colonies, including Tanganyika, became important to Britain in the 1940s because her traditional colonies in Asia could no longer help her meet her needs. Fuggles-Couchman, the Director of Overseas Food Corporation (OFC), which was responsible for exploiting Africa's potential to produce food, made it clear that Britain could no longer rely on India to resolve shortages in oils and fats. He lamented that India and China, which used to export about 1,000,000 tons of those products per year, were by 1950 virtually non-exporters because India used almost all its products and China had been disrupted by internal wars.[173] Fuggles-Couchman emphasised that Britain looked to African colonies to fill the gap. He notes:

> Essentially, we must look to Commonwealth countries to fill the gap… [because] as previously mentioned, India cannot contribute, Australia has suitable land but no labour; the Far East is in

[172]John Iliffe. *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 436; and John Iliffe. *Agricultural Change in Modern Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971).

[173]N. R. Fuggles – Couchman. *The Work of the Overseas Food Corporation in Relation to the British Diet, Vol. 4* (London: The Overseas Food Corporation, 1950), p. 74; see also John Profumo. "The Secretary of State for the Colonies." *Tanganyika Agricultural Corporation Bill, HC Deb 05 July 1957, Vol. 572 cc 1527-51–1527: Order for Second Reading.*

> a seriously troubled state; we are left with Africa, with its great empty areas, although not all suitable for agriculture and its 50–60 million Africans.[174]

The quotation conveys the OFC's perception in the 1940s and early 1950s of Africa as a solution to Britain's economic crises. The corporation considered the possibility of opening up large tracts of land in East and Central Africa, for the production of grains and oilseeds, especially groundnuts. This plan was in line with the corporation's strategic mission of ensuring the production of enough grain food and oils in the colonies. It set up a mission to investigate these possibilities. The report presented a plan for opening up 3,210,000 acres of bush land in East and Central Africa for the production of grains and oilseeds, something that the OFC would oversee.[175] The production of crops such as groundnuts, soya beans, rice, maize and simsim was contemplated and the recast plan was aimed at producing 600,000 acres of cultivable land by 1954.[176] Responding to these developments, in 1946 the Tanganyika colonial government tasked the then director of agriculture, A. J. Wakefield, to investigate and select lands for agricultural developments. Wakefield spent six days flying over the bush and eventually proposed that the government should take up some 975,000 ha at Nachingwea, Kongwa and Urambo on the central railway. Wakefield also recommended the

[174] *Ibid*., p. 75.
[175] *Ibid*.
[176] *Ibid*.

mechanization of crop production due to the scarcity of labour and estimated the capital cost at 24,000,000 sterling pounds.[177]

The colonial initiatives to use colonies in promoting British economic interests were framed within the narrative of environmental conservation. Efforts to protect natural resources, to expand production, to promote soil conservation and to control diseases were all emphasized during this time.[178] The FAO report of 1961 categorically noted that all basins in Tanganyika had to be developed into irrigated agriculture whereby river banks would be constructed to control floods and that the environment had to be made hospitable and habitable.[179] In the same vein, Gregory Maddox wrote that after the 1950s colonial governments began to promote 'development' as a goal of their policies. Throughout Africa, development schemes sought to irrigate new lands, increase mechanization in agriculture, halt soil erosion and increase the amount of land under government in the form of reserved forests and parks.[180] In Tanganyika, irrigation was considered paramount in development policy. This showed the various assumptions brought to Africa by colonial administrators and their desire to transplant foreign agricultural knowledge into local farming systems. Despite occasional failures, such as, for example, the failure of the groundnuts scheme in Tanganyika in the 1940s and 1950s, the power of the narrative to link African

[177] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, *op. cit*., p. 440.
[178]*Ibid*., p. 156; see also FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations). *The Rufiji Basin, Tanganyika, FAO Report to the Government of Tanganyika on the Preliminary Reconnaissance Survey of the Rufiji Basin* (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 1961).
[179]*Ibid*.
[180] Gregory Maddox (2005), *op. cit*.

peasants to poor soil management gave soil experts the confidence that they sustained all the time. For example, in 1949 the British survey team reported that the then irrigation systems in Usangu had been poorly constructed, and thus caused wastage of water. It, therefore, recommended formal supervision of these schemes to prevent soil erosion and water wastage.[181] To achieve this aim, it concluded:

> Economic and environmental policies must be based on the realization that the development of Tanganyika basically depends on the extent to which the indigenous population can, with the help of necessarily small numbers of immigrant peoples, be integrated into world economy.[182]

Government policy was, therefore, expected to support the demands of most progressive farmers by encouraging the replacement of customary land tenure by individual land freehold. This was aimed at commercializing agriculture for the benefit of the British metropolitan economy.

The imperial initiatives were also framed within the framework of irrigated agriculture. Concrete ideas on irrigation in Tanganyika can be traced to the report by C. Gillman, former Chief Engineer of Tanganyika Railways and Water Consultant to the Tanganyika Government in the 1940s. In his report on the water resources of the country, he pointed out that nothing

[181]TNA 48/12 *Mbeya Regional Administration File*, "Land Surveys – Initial Applications for Land – Usangu Chiefdom."
[182]*Ibid*., see also John Illife (1971), *op. cit*., p. 48.

was then known of the flow of the main rivers, including River Rufiji. He pointed out that the rivers were not suitable for either major irrigation schemes or navigation, which justified the cost of gauging their flow.[183] In 1948, G. Lacey and B. Watson, as members of the East African Rice Commission, included in their report recommendations for the undertaking of hydrological studies and establishment of bench marks and river gauges in the Rufiji and Kilombero valleys.[184] In the same year, Sir F. Debenham, in his report on Water Resources in East and Central Africa, including the Rufiji Basin, stressed the importance of making hydrological observations for irrigation purposes and overcoming shortages of water.[185]

The discussion on the economic viability of the colonies to produce grains and oils led the then Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Edward Twining, to hold discussions with the Director-General of FAO on a number of proposals to conduct investigations in the territory in 1952, one of which was a reconnaissance survey of the possibility of developing the Rufiji Basin.[186] In 1953, further discussions were held at the Colonial Office in London between A. Trotman, Minister for Natural Resources in Tanganyika, Sir Geoffrey Clay, Agricultural

[183]C. Gillman, former Chief Engineer of Tanganyika Railways and Water Consultant to the Tanganyika Government in the 1940s.
[184]Gerald Lacey and R. Watson. *Report on Rice Production in the East and Central African Colonial Territories – 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1949), p. 7.
[185]F. T. Crimes. "Paper 6: Land Tenure, Population, Education, Agriculture and Communications", Section III In FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations), *The Rufiji Basin, Tanganyika, FAO Report to the Government of Tanganyika on the Preliminary Reconnaissance Survey of the Rufiji Basin* (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 1956), p. 1.
[186]FAO (1961), *op. cit*., p. 4.

Adviser to the Colonial Office, G. Lacey, Advisor on Irrigation and Drainage to the Colonial Office, and N. Simansky of FAO. They reached a decision to conduct preliminary investigations on the possibility of developing the Rufiji Basin to see if there was a need for a comprehensive reconnaissance.[187] As part of implementing the decision, N. Simansky, accompanied by W. Mathewson of the Department of Agriculture in Tanganyika, visited the Rufiji Basin to inspect the ongoing investigations from October to December 1953. In 1954, FAO issued a first interim report which recommended the main lines of the reconnaissance survey, including an examination of the soil, geology, topography and water control. The inspection of 1953 was followed by another in 1954, when N. Simansky was accompanied by D. Astafieff and W. R. Collett, who were Irrigation Surveyor and Agricultural Officer in Tanganyika, respectively. This party looked into the possibility of introducing trial farms and pilot irrigation schemes into the area.[188]

In 1955, the Government of Tanganyika made a formal request to FAO for help in conducting the reconnaissance survey of the irrigation potential of the Rufiji Basin for over a period of 5 years. It was agreed that this should be done by forming a team of technicians engaged by FAO, with assistants and subordinates recruited from Tanganyika, both Africans and Europeans.[189] The team would study the Rufiji, Ruvu and Pangani Basins for the purpose of opening irrigation schemes in

[187] *Ibid*.
[188] *Ibid*., pp. 5–8.
[189] *Ibid*.

the basins. The Usangu Plains were part of the Rufiji Basin catchment area. In 1954, the colonial government in Tanganyika formed the Tanganyika Agriculture Corporation (TAC) that took over the responsibilities formerly carried out by the Overseas Food Corporation. TAC set up four pilot irrigation schemes at Beta, Lumemo, Mtanza and Mbarali in the Usangu Plains with the objective of obtaining experience with pump irrigation, determining water utilization, investigating a double cropping system and general agronomic problems, and later testing out methods of land tenure appropriate to the local population.[190] Generally, these irrigation schemes were aimed at producing food and oil seeds from Africa in general and from Tanganyika (the Usangu Plains) in particular, for the British Empire. These schemes, together with the studies conducted in the Usangu Plains and along the River Rufiji Basin, convinced the colonial government that the Usangu Plains were best suited for irrigation agriculture.

Therefore, in the 1950s Usangu became a target of the British colonial agricultural development. The studies conducted made the colonial government officials appreciate the suitability of the land and geography of the Usangu Plains to any kind of agriculture.[191] Thus, the government started groundnut and cereal production in the region. The Rufiji Basin Project started the project in 1954. At the end of the year, a preliminary survey and the demarcation of a 5000-acre block near River Mbarali had been done. However, preliminary discussions focused on the establishment of a pilot scheme, which was expected to

[190] *Ibid*.
[191] Charnley, "Cattle, Commons and Culture", *op. cit*., p. 73.

have far-reaching effects in developing the productivity of Usangu.[192]

In 1955, the Rufiji Basin survey carried out hydrometric and land surveys in the Usangu Plains, but mainly in the east of Chimala. A 5000-acre experimental farm was surveyed at Urunda and Rujewa villages, but due to financial constraints this size was later reduced to the initial pre-pilot farms of 100 and 400 acres for the undertaking immediate experimental and trial work. The 100 and 400-acre farms were managed by the TAC.[193]

In 1956, the 100 acres allocated to the Agricultural Department at the Mbarali River Basin were cleared by the TAC and a European farms manager by the name of C. H. Kirschstein (famously known as *Mwendauchi*) took up residence there. Two diesel pumps, each with a capacity of 180 cusecs, were installed in the area to pump water from River Mbarali. The main furrow to the 100-acre farm and some of the minor furrows were completed. By the end of the year, the planting of experimental crops had started on a few acres.[194] By 1958, TAC had made good progress on their 100-acre trial irrigation plot at Mbarali. The most promising results had been obtained from several varieties of cotton, maize, simsim, sunflower, groundnuts, soya beans and grass. The next stage of development was the

[192]Tanganyika Territory. *Mbeya District Annual Report – 1954* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1955), p. 2.
[193]Tanganyika Territory. *Mbeya District Annual Report – 1955* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1956), p. 20.
[194]Tanganyika Territory. *Mbeya District Annual Report – 1956* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1957), p. 5.

opening of the first 7000-acre block of land for the Mbarali Irrigation Scheme (MIS). Five thousand (5000) acres were prepared and planted for the 1959 season and buildings for the scheme management were under construction at the end of the year. Compensation was paid to some 300 people for moving out of the 7,000-acre block of land.

In 1959, on the economic front, TAC made good progress with their irrigation scheme at Mbarali. The main weir and the canal had almost been completed by the end of the year and the first 500 acres of the land were allocated to tenants as a tenant-farming scheme.[195] This tenancy system was based on the recommendation by F. T. Crimes, in which he stated that:

> The Bohoro flats have a large proportion of population engaged in cattle rearing and trading, and it may well be that for large scale irrigation agricultural development, tenants would have to be brought from other areas after the local population had been given the first opportunity to join irrigation schemes.[196]

The government wanted the people of Usangu to learn modern agriculture on those farms from government agricultural officers. Most of these tenants[197] were indigenous Sangu, each

[195]Tanganyika Territory. *Mbeya District Annual Reports – 1959* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1960), p. 1.
[196] Crimes, "Paper 6", *op. cit*., p. 3b.
[197]The tenancy system brought other people from Njombe and Mbeya (Tukuyu), but the majority were Sangu (from around the scheme (southern part) and eastern part of Usangu, mainly Madibira. As was conceived by the British, this was viewed as a new direction that would bring about modern agriculture

of whom got three (3) acres, mainly for growing groundnuts. However, drawing on their indigenous environmental knowledge of irrigated agriculture, the tenants convinced one agricultural officer to allow them to grow rice, instead of groundnuts. At the beginning, the agricultural officer hesitated, but when he found that a great number of tenants wanted rice, he let them grow rice. Joseph Ngitaga Mwanjonjomi and Anaeli Chaula were among the first tenants who started growing rice in the area. Mwanjonjomi provided the following testimony:

> More rice was grown after TAC established an irrigated farm at Mbarali. I am not pretty sure about where it (TAC) came from, but I remember we were told that it had come from Mpwapwa and/or Nachingwea in 1954, with the aim of cultivating groundnuts. I (Njonjomi) came from Madibira and was recruited as a tenant here in 1956. In 1957, when preparing our farms, we (tenants) requested our manager, *Mwendauchi*, to allow us to experiment with rice production because groundnut farming was not doing fine due to excessive water and hard soils (clay soils). He refused. We, therefore, planted many crops, but with groundnuts as the dominant crop. We got very low yields. We pressed our manager in 1958 to allow us to grow rice. He agreed in 1959 after a very long and hot debate. We planted rice, mainly *Kahogo* (white and *motomoto*) and *Faya*

supervised by the British. In short, it was believed that this would be a prime mover of change in the region.

> taken from Masasi, where our fellow Sangu had already begun irrigated rice farming. At the end of the season, tenants had bumper harvests of rice (an average of 35 bags of rice per acre). This result made the manager decide that rice should be grown on the farm. Since then, we enormously expanded rice production in Usangu and we tenants were its prime movers.[198]

It was under this system that the production of rice grew steadily in the Usangu Plains, especially in Mbarali. After TAC found that rice was the preferred crop in Mbarali, it decided to emphasise more on the production of rice than on any other kind of crop. By 1959, the Usangu Plains were producing very high yields, so that about 2,400 tons were available for outside consumption.[199] Some of this rice was sold to the urban population, especially in Mbeya. Most of this rice was produced in Mbarali, Chimala and Masasi. The agricultural economy of the Sangu, however, continued being dominated by two primary food crops, rice and maize, which were grown in ecologically different kinds of environment. Between 1958 and 1960, rice did better than other common crops such as maize,

---

[198]Interview with Mzee Ngitaga Mwanjonjomi, at Mkombwe village, on 23rd September 2010. The information and testimonies given by this interviewee looked very similar to the information and testimonies given by another interviewee, Anael Chaula, at Songwe, on 19th September 2010. They both emphasized that groundnuts, the crop preferred by the TAC officials was not accepted by the tenants who were mostly the indigenous people of Usangu. These felt that groundnuts could not thrive in clay alluvial soil through irrigation; therefore they suggested rice which by the 1950s had already spread throughout the region and was suitable for the watery and clay alluvial soil. So, their suggestion was based on their knowledge of the environment.

[199]Tanganyika Territory, *Mbeya District Annual Reports – 1959*, *op. cit*., p. 1.

eleusine and sorghum. The Mbeya District Commissioner in 1958 said:

> Paddy (with 1,000 tons as last year for sale) and eleusine were only really successful crops. Maize as already mentioned suffered from drought. About 1,000 tons were produced for sale a little down on last year. Sorghum suffered from head smut as well. In general weather was not good because the rains started late and ended early. This meant poor crops harvest of beans and maize without any shortage of food, however.[200]

By 1959, it was clear that rice was a favourite crop in the Usangu Plains and that it thrived better than other crops such as maize. This can be gleaned from the District Commissioner's report, which suggested that rice production exceeded the demand for it in the Usangu Plains. The Commissioner wrote:

> Paddy has done extremely well, yields being excellent with the result that there are some 2,400 tons available for outside consumption. Unfortunately Mr. Yusufmia who has for many years been the chief buyer of the Usangu paddy crop has decided not to buy this year and todate Mr. W. Kirk another buyer has failed to enter the market this season.[201]

---

[200]MZA AGR. 1/10 *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Advisory Services: Annual Reports for Mbeya Region, 1959*, p. 3.
[201]MZA AGR. 1/10 *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Advisory Services: Annual Reports for Mbeya Region, 1960*, p. 4.

More striking were the District Commissioner's remarks in the 1960's report. He argued that paddy did extremely well because the harvest was above average and far more than that of the other crops: maize (native) 1,000 tons sold @25 cents per kilo, maize (estate) 100 tons sold @25 cents per kilo, paddy 2,000 tons sold @45 cents per kilo and groundnuts 50 tons sold @1 cent per kilo. Defending this as a super season, the Commissioner remarked that many people either grew less rice or did not grow it at all as a result of the good harvests of 1959, as they had sufficient food which could see them through 1960.[202] This report seems true, as many respondents referred to the boom harvests of the 1950s and early 1960s that made them practise a forceful fallow sometimes.

In 1960, FAO officially withdrew from Tanganyika and left the future development of irrigation activities in Usangu and other parts of the Rufuji Basin to the department of Water Development and Irrigation. The FAO team argued that 519,000 acres of land in Usangu (or 13.5% of its total area) were suitable for irrigated agriculture.[203] They identified Usangu as a high priority area for irrigated agriculture. The independence period was to see the realization of much of this potential, with the ever-increasing alienation of lands in Usangu for the undertaking of state-sponsored irrigation development projects. With the so-called modernization of African agriculture in Usangu, the FAO report provided a foundation, upon which future efforts were built.

---

[202]MZA AGR. 1/10 *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Advisory Services: Annual Reports for Mbeya Region, 1961*, p. 18.
[203]FAO Report (1961), *op. cit*., Vol. I.

However, the changes engineered by the colonial state did not alter two fundamental features of the pre-colonial economy and environmental orientation: its basic agricultural rite, the *lioto*[204] ideology and offerings. The *lioto* controlled the agricultural practices, especially at the beginning of the season in November, which was under the chief since pre-colonial period. They also did not cause any major changes in rice agricultural practices and its technology as Chief Merere was reporting to the District Commissioner in 1959 "our farmers have expanded acreages, they cultivate; they work harder. But almost everywhere they are still using the hand hoe, axe and *panga* (machete). They have not yet changed the tools they work with."[205]

Generally, for years the people of Usangu developed rice farming practices that appeared sustainable as well as a worldview and related practices that had a balanced relationship with the ecosystem. The agricultural system operated as an artificial ecosystem with many characteristics of

[204]It was regarded as knowledge, a belief and a practice among the Sangu which was very significant for a number of reasons. First, it shaped their understanding of their agricultural season, as it informed them of the time for starting, and therefore setting a proper timing of agricultural activities which would produce good harvests. Secondly, through this practice, forests were preserved, and therefore the environment was conserved and rainfall was abundant. This is because only the waste (*mabelege*) from farms was burnt using this fire. This signified the beginning of a new cultivation season. But also the clearing of farms and the burning of waste meant the killing of all harmful pests and insects. Lastly, this practice brought a sense of togetherness to the Sangu. Everyone observed it as a cultural practice and belief, without which their lives would be 'destroyed' because there would be no good health, no rain and no crop production. The Sangu agricultural prosperity was entirely the result of this practice.

[205]MZA AGR 1/10 Agriculture: Mbeya District Annual Report – 1957–1981, p. 31.

a natural ecosystem. It had biodiversity, although much less than in the alluvial fan ecosystem it had replaced. Rice farms were home to frogs, fish, worms and ducks that could be caught and, with dragonflies; help keep the number of insects down. Weeds were picked and buried on the paddy farms as green manure. Rice straws were left in the fields to decompose and provide nutrients, or were burned to discourage pests. Ducks (popularly known as *swiriri*) consumed weeds, snails and insects and provided fertilizer, but the farm owners controlled them from eating rice plants, especially during the transplanting period.

The peasants replicated natural cycles, flooding and draining rice paddies over a large area. The system was sustainable; there was no significant load of erosional materials in the run-offs, little development of gullies and no fertility decline.[206] Historically, food supplies were adequate; there were few crop failures for years. A long experience of trial and error was preserved in rituals and a sacred calendar.[207] As Martin Walsh (1984) put it, "A complex ecological order was both reflected in and shaped by an equally complex ritual order, which at once grew out of it and was imposed upon it."[208] In Usangu, the old *lioto* doctrine controlled the agricultural system, although with some insignificant changes. The government never had control over rice farming, but it directed their efforts to building permanent weirs and lining canals as well as making other

[206]Interviews with Mzee Muhango, *op. cit*.; and with Mwanjonjomi, *op. cit*.
[207]*Ibid*.
[208] Walsh, "The Misinterpretation of Chiefly Power in Usangu", *op. cit*., p. 84.

improvements on the MIS that did not affect the traditional system much.

5.0 Conclusion

This paper has surveyed the complex nature of the development of irrigated rice farming in the Usangu Plains during the period from the 1920s to around 1960. In the first place, the paper has explained the indigenous peoples' role in the origins and development of irrigated rice farming which has always been downplayed by many scholars. Particularly, the paper has shown the key traditional practices that were associated with irrigated rice farming and its development.

More importantly, the British food crisis, especially shortages of fat and oil, which occurred immediately after WWII has been associated with new development prospects in the region. The crisis forced the colonial state to invest on developing Usangu for agricultural development. Hence, since the 1950s, the British government provided exploration and development funds through various international organizations, such as OFC, TAC and FAO to develop the region. This paper, however, argues that despite the Baluchis and the colonial government's efforts to develop and modernise irrigated rice farming in the Usangu Plains, the local people's agency predominated in the rice production in the Usangu Plains.

Administrative Boundaries and Manifestations of Conflict between Pastoralists and Peasants in Kiteto District, Northern Tanzania, 1970 to 2016

Juma M. Paresso
Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

After her independence in 1961, the new government of Tanganyika (now called Mainland Tanzania) embarked on the establishment of new administrative units, namely regions, districts, wards, villages, and hamlets as well as establishing political and administrative boundaries. The government expected that local communities would peacefully utilize the existing resources within the respective administrative units. Contrary to that, the newly established administrative units and their respective boundaries caused conflicts in different parts of Mainland Tanzania. The reviewed literature suggests that conflicts emerged over pieces of land that separated the borders and ethnically created boundaries. Using archival sources, interviews, newspapers and documentary reviews, this paper argues that boundary conflicts between peasants and pastoralists in Kiteto District were caused by political and administrative decisions of the post-colonial government which ignored the traditional land administrative units and boundaries. The new boundaries were set up for political interests; they ignored traditional boundary settings and violated land laws and procedures during the installation of the boundary marks. The

paper is thought to be significant as it contributes to the existing scholarship on border disputes.

Keywords: boundaries, conflict, peasant, pastoralists.

1.0 Introduction

This paper examines the establishment of new administrative units and their respective boundaries and, the extent to which such boundaries caused conflicts between peasants and pastoralists in Kiteto District from 1970s to 2016. From the 1970s, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania embarked on *Ujamaa* and villagization programmes which intended to put together communities to simplify the provision of social services. Villagization programme was featured by the creation of administrative and political boundaries. Scholars such as Shivji, McHenry Hyden, and Walwa have addressed the impact of the villagization programme, land reforms and lack of sustainable village land use plans and their contribution to land-use conflicts.[209] However, no study seems to have examined how administrative units and their respective created boundaries caused conflicts between pastoral and peasant communities which practise different land-use systems. This

[209] See for example, I. Shivji. "A Legal Quagmire: Tanzanian's Regulation of Land Tenure (Establishment of Villages) Act, 1992." International Institute for Environment and Development Paper, London; Contended Land in Southern and Eastern Africa: An Oxfarm Working Paper, 1994, pp. 241-242; Mc Henry. *Tanzania's Ujamaa Villages, The Implementation of Rural Development Strategy* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1979), p.140; G. Hyden. *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania, Underdevelopment and Uncaptured Peasantry* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1980), p.129; John William Walwa "Land use Plan in Tanzania: Repertoires of Domination or Solution to Rising Farmers-Herders Conflicts." *The Journal of Eastern African Studies, Vol. 9, No.9 (2017):* 411-418.

paper indicates that conflicts between peasants and pastoralists in Kiteto District have persisted for years because the state introduced administrative units and boundaries without considering differences in land-use systems between peasants and pastoralists. The state overlooked the existing local boundaries between pastoralists and peasants based on their shared resources as well as socio-cultural matters.

2.0 Conceptual Discussion

Some scholars group boundaries in two categories; the symbolic and social categories of boundaries. Lemont and Molner, for example, state that the symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices and even time and space.[210] Boundaries are also considered to be tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and agree upon the definition of reality. Symbolic boundaries are also used to separate people into groups and make them develop feelings of similarities and group memberships. They are essential medium through which people acquire status and monopoly of the resources.[211] On the other hand, social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences which manifest in unequal distribution of resources (materials and non-materials) and social opportunities.[212] The boundaries make it easier to determine what is different and similar about the community. Social boundaries also constitute means of domination, discipline, segregation and distancing. They subject people to antagonism, which may be transformed

[210] M. Lemont and V. Molner. "The Studies of Boundaries in the Social Sciences" (Prince Town University: Department of Sociology, 2002), p.165.
[211] *Ibid*
[212] *Ibid*

into conflicts. The two forms of boundaries in some cases operate together because when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon, they form pattern of social interaction and become social boundaries. They can also lead to social exclusion or class and racial segregation.[213] The Kiteto boundary question cuts across both symbolic and social aspects. The Maasai pastoralists had traditionally interacted with peasants in pre-colonial period regardless of their local boundaries which were established under the traditional leaders based on socio-cultural matters. Such boundaries were never contested as the two communities co-existed for a long time. The colonial and post-colonial interventions caused the separation of the two communities through political and administrative decisions. That separation culminated in conflicts over the boundaries between the two communities.

3.0 Location of the Study Area and the Overview of the Boundary Issues

The current Kiteto District is one of the five districts composing Manyara Region in Northern Tanzania. It is situated in the southern part of the region. The administrative headquarters of the district are located at Kibaya Township; 210 kilometres from Babati, which is the regional headquarters of Manyara Region. The district borders Kongwa District of Dodoma Region in the south, Kilindi District in Tanga Region in the east, Simanjiro District in Manyara Region in the north and Kondoa District in Dodoma Region in the west.[214] Kiteto District comprises of five divisions, namely Sunya, Kibaya, Dosidosi, Ndido, Kijungu, and

[213] *Ibid*. p. 169.
[214] *Ibid.*

Olboloti. The district has twenty three wards and sixty three villages.[215]

Before colonial occupation, the Maasai community scattered in many parts of the present day Manyara, Arusha and Kilimanjaro regions. They occupied Ngorongoro, Arusha, Kiteto, Monduli, and Western Kilimanjaro areas. The Maasai were joined by the Nguu farmers who migrated from Tanga Region and settled in the southern Maasai territory during the German and British colonial period respectively. Other groups were the Gogo, Kamba, Iraqw, Rangi, Bena and Turu farmers who penetrated the area in the early post-colonial period.[216] In the pre-colonial period, the Maasai rulers controlled the grazing land and water sources. Before settling at a particular area, some communities had to seek the consent of other families of their community already settled in such areas. Access to pasture was considered a fundamental right to every Maasai. Nobody was denied access to pastures except when the range condition was bad whereby newcomers were advised to return where they came from or to search for another locality with better pasture. Among the Maasai, the *Laigwanan'*s administrative areas were separated by the cultural boundaries which had no restriction for livestock movement. The cultural boundaries were mainly for local matters such as rituals and socio-cultural ceremonies.[217] In pre-colonial period, the Maasai did not move into new places blindly. Rather, they sent their scouts to investigate the condition of the new range in

[215]*Ibid.*
[216]Interview with Mohamed Mwinyimvua, Kibaya Village, 5th January, 2018.
[217]Interview with Yohana Ole Bakari, Namelock Village, 10th September, 2017.
[217] TNA: Arusha Regional Report, 1930.

advance.[218] This strategy was very useful as it served to minimize conflicts. There were almost no boundary disputes in the pre-colonial Maasai community due to their customary land use and modes of production which allowed flexibility of individuals with their livestock to move around in search of pasture and water.

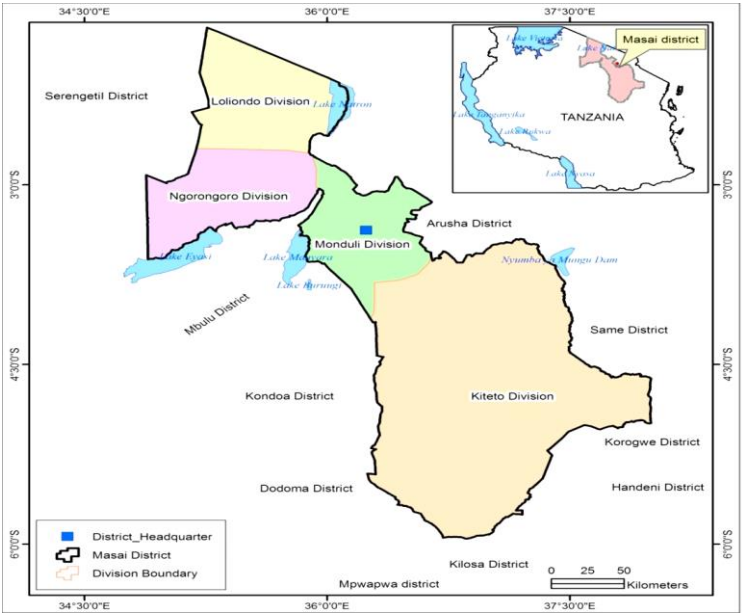
After the German occupation in 1890, the Maasai territory was divided into three sections, the national parks, white settlers' areas, and the Maasai reserve. According to Kunay, the German colonial government organized occasional effort to control the Maasai land and remove the Maasai from their prime land to allow German settlement.[219] Most of the potential grazing land with permanent water sources was taken and given to the white settlers and indigenous smallholder agriculturalists like Waarusha and Wameru.[220] The Germans restricted the movement of the Maasai across their respective boundaries in favour of the national parks and white settlers.

During the British colonial period, the Maasai Reserve was regarded as a potential land for colonial projects and the landless peasants. In this regard, the Maasai Reserve was transformed into Maasai District in 1926 and the administrative boundaries which separated the Maasai from other ethnic groups were created. The Maasai district was formed by four divisions which included Loliondo, Ngorongoro, Monduli and

[218] *Ibid*.
[219] O.R. Kunay. "Pluralism and Ethnic Conflicts in Tanzania's Arid Land: The Case of Maasai and Waarusha Nomadic People." *White House Press, 1994*, p.542.
[220]FOS: The Administrative Survey of Maasai Land, pp. 8-9.

Kiteto. These divisions were dominated by the Maasai communities who engaged in pastoral activities.

Map 1: Map of Maasai District in 1926



Source: Geographical Information System (GIS) Unit, University of Dar Salaam, 2017.

The boundaries of the Maasai District restricted the Maasai movement with their livestock into settler reserves and peasant dominated districts. Oral interviews with respondents showed that during the creation of the boundaries of Maasai District the future of the Maasai community was not taken into account.[221] This was also realized in the words of Colonel Hallier, the Provisional Commissioner of North Province in

[221] Interview with Gabriel Simon, Kibaya Village, 17th September, 2017.

1945 who reported, "In the establishment of the districts of the Northern Province, the boundaries were fixed largely in favour of the districts which took what they wanted and the residual of 13,000 sq. miles became parts of the Maasai District."[222] In the views of Hallier, the majority of the Maasai were not conscious of their ownership of this huge area. During the fixing of the boundaries, colonial authorities believed that the Maasai had no idea about the fixed boundaries at all. The administrative boundaries between Maasai reserves and Arusha District which were established during the German period were abolished by the British colonial government. The aim of the British colonial government was to allow the infiltration of the other ethnic groups such as the Meru, Arusha, Iraqw, Gogo and Nguu and Rangi in Maasai District.

After securing power in 1962, the Nyerere's government nationalized land and vested control over it in the president as the executive head of the government. Nationalisation aimed at abolishing the capitalist system of land ownership to reduce the gap between large and small landowners. In the 1970s, the land of the Maasai pastoralists of the current Manyara Region was grabbed by the state and allocated to the parastatal organizations to bring about economic control under the prevailing socialist ideology.[223] This period was followed by the neo-liberal economy of the mid-1980s and 1990s which was featured by influx of commercial farmers into pastoralists land

[222] Interview with Gabriel Simon, Kibaya Village, 17th September, 2017.
[223] Nelson *et al*, "Land Grabbing and Political Transformation in Tanzania: Paper Presented to the Global land Grabbing II Conference (New York: Cornell, University, Department of Development Sociology, 2012), p.4.

in different parts of Tanzania.[224] In the 1990s, land reforms were done in Tanzania after the Commission of Inquiry on Land Matters which was appointed by President Ali Hassan Mwinyi to investigate on the matter and submitted its report. The commission reported several problems including shortage of grazing land, grabbing and alienation of customary land as well as insecurity of customary land that existed among pastoralists and peasants.[225]All these state interventions did not consider the inter-community boundary question as well as different land-use systems between peasants and pastoralists.

4.0 Boundary Conflicts between Peasants and Pastoralists in Kiteto District

The inter-village boundary conflicts in Kiteto District began after state intervention through *Ujamaa* and Villagization programme of the 1970s. In 1975, the government introduced the Village Land Act which empowered the district governments to allocate land to the respective village members and draw village boundaries. The Act ignored and undermined the existing traditional land tenure regimes.[226] During the implementation of *Ujamaa* programme, the district land committees in different parts of a country has established village boundaries without considering the different interests of land users, particularly the peasants and pastoralists.[227] The district government changed the former grazing land into agricultural land in the name of *Ujamaa* farms. Also, peasants

[224] J.T. Mwakyusa. "Communities Rights and Land Use Policies: The case of Pastoral Communities." *Journal of African Law, Vol.37:2 (1993)*: 144-160.
[225]*Ibid*. 43
[226]*Ibid*.
[227] File: United Republic of Tanzania, Vijiji vya Ujamaa, Mkoa wa Arusha, 1971.

from Kiteto and the neighbouring districts used such an opportunity to acquire land in what was formerly called grazing areas.[228] The drawing of the village boundaries did not consider the interest of pastoralists. For example, Kibaya was given the status of being the village in 1957 during the British colonial rule when Kiteto was a sub-district of southern Maasai.[229] In 1961, it acquired the status of being a ward and in 1967 it became one of the divisions of the southern Maasai sub-district and in 1974, Kibaya became the capital of Kiteto District. In 1976, Kibaya was divided into two villages whereby northern Kibaya (peasant dominated village) retained its name and southern Kibaya (pastoralist dominated village) was named Partimbo Village.[230] Kibaya village was given full registration on 1st April 1976 with registration number AR.KIT.06. It had a population of 1575 villagers and 600 households. The village boundaries were demarcated by beacons. Kibaya village was allocated 20,000 acres of land and the new Partimbo Village with 90 per cent of her population comprising the Maasai was given 100,000 acres.[231]

After the demarcation of the boundaries between Kibaya and Partimbo, conflicts emerged between the two villages in 1983 when Kibaya villagers tabled two complaints. First, they protested that they were not involved in the establishment of boundaries which separated Partimbo and Kibaya. Their major

---

[228]Ibid.

[229] Interview with Major Ramadhani Mhina of Partimbo Village on 12th January, 2018.

[230]Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania, Ofisi ya Waziri Mkuu na Makamu wa Pili wa Rais, Maendeleo ya Mkoa wa Arusha, Migogoro ya Mipaka, 1975.

[231] TNA: Mgogoro wa Mipaka kati ya Kijiji cha Kibaya na Partimbo: Barua ya Katibu Mkuu kwa Mwenyekiti wa Kijiji cha Kibaya, 28/1/1983.

claim was that the boundaries established favoured Partimbo Village and the Maasai community in general. Secondly, Kibaya peasants claimed that they had owned farms in Partimbo before it was declared an independent village but they were no longer allowed to work on their farms found in Partimbo.[232]Then, the peasants started to question the establishment of Partimbo Village claiming that the division of Kibaya Village to form the new Partimbo Village denied them their land rights and sources of water. About 114 Kibaya peasants lost 1154 acres of land which they formerly owned.[233]

After being evicted from their farms in Partimbo, peasants reported their complaints to the Kiteto District Commissioners' office. The DC of Kiteto responded by asking them to respect the existing boundaries and to re-apply for new farms whereby approval was not guaranteed. Therefore, applications could either be considered or rejected. However, a few peasants adhered to the DC's guidelines while the rest continued to remove boundary marks and reclaimed their former pieces of land. In 1984, conflicts erupted between peasants and pastoralists. The conflicts were triggered because peasants from Partimbo removed beacons and grabbed the grazing land. The notable one involved two peasants, namely Husein Musa and Said Marijani against Partimbo villagers. In January 1987, the two peasants jointly invaded pastoralists' grazing land in Partimbo Village by removing the beacons which separated Partimbo and Kibaya villages.[234] Although the case was reported to the District Commissioner's office, no immediate

[232]*Ibid.*
[233] *Ibid*.
[234] *Ibid*. pp. 20-23.

action was taken. As a result, peasants continued to expand their farms in Partimbo Village. They claimed that they had farms in Partimbo before the village was divided into two villages.[235] In October 1987, Husein Musa and Said Marijani were arrested and given seven days to stop any activities in the area of dispute. The fact that the area in question had been already declared the grazing area, Musa and Marijani had to surrender.

In the 1990s, the Kibaya peasants changed strategies of demanding their land rights and boundary claims. Some peasants involved themselves in open violence against the pastoralists of Partimbo Village by destroying the boundary marks while others took the matter to the court and at the same time they wrote a letter to the Prime Minister's office.[236] The centre of the conflicts between the two villages was allegedly the "illegal occupation of land" by Kibaya peasants in Partimbo, lack of people's involvement in decision making during the creation of the boundaries and corrupt village government leaders who allocated land to the peasants in Partimbo without following the proper procedures such as surveying the boundaries and involving the two parties in the creation of the boundaries. Furthermore, lack of compensation for the peasants whose pieces of land were taken after the division of Kibaya Village and the creation of boundaries intensified the conflicts between the two villages. The government's response to Partimbo-Kibaya conflicts escalated more conflicts instead of resolving them because of what

[235] *Ibid*.
[236] *Ibid*.

informants called unfair decision in putting the boundary marks.[237] The District Commissioners used force to arrest any peasant who attempted to occupy land in the new Partimbo Village.[238] He also ordered the division officers to inform people about respecting laws and orders as well as accepting the newly established boundaries and to instruct them to request the land to Partimbo Village subject to the approval of Partimbo Village Assembly.

The question which arises is 'Why did the villagers decide to report the conflicts to the Prime Minister instead of submitting it to the District Commissioner and the Regional Commissioner?' The present study found that there was inefficiency on the part of local government authorities and District Commissioner's office. There was lack of involvement of local communities in resolving the boundary related conflicts. There was also no proper approach in resolving conflicts especially at the level of local government, namely village, ward, division, and district levels. Referring the border-related grievances to the Prime Minister's office implied that the Kibaya villagers did not trust their local government authorities.

Furthermore, this paper observes that the division of the two villages, Kibaya and Partimbo was done on ethnic basis, between the Maasai and non-Maasai groups. The division was supported by Maasai pastoralists who wanted peasants to be prohibited from farming in Partimbo and to remain in Kibaya. The Maasai pastoralists' interest was to preserve Partimbo as

[237] Interview with Mohamed Mwamba, Kibaya Village, on 10th January, 2018.
[238] *Ibid*.

their grazing land and to stop the encroachment of peasants from both Kibaya and outside Kiteto. Their desire did not take into account the prior existence of peasants' farms in Partimbo which they had obtained legally. On the other hand, peasants who had their farms before the division of Kibaya wanted to maintain their farms because they had obtained them legally. Concomitant to that, the increase of population in Kibaya (the district headquarters) meant the need for more land for agriculture. The Kibaya population increased due to the commercial activities whereby Kibaya acted as the hub of the economy between Arusha, Manyara, Dodoma, and Tanga. This caused tension over boundaries between the two groups in Partimbo, which was in the vicinity of Kibaya Town.

From 1994, there was involvement of several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in land matters and the boundary question in Kiteto District. Their activities included allocating the village boundaries and educating local people about their land rights, land titling, and sustainable land use.[239] These NGOs were given a tender by the government to campaign for drawing and demarcating the village boundaries and provision of title deeds to each village. The Arusha Diocese Development Organization (ADDO) was given a tender for demarcating village boundaries and educating the people on the importance of land titles.[240] ADDO was involved in the establishment of the boundaries among Kibaya, Kimana and Ndaleta villages which were separated from Kibaya Ward in 1995. The boundaries established by ADDO contradicted with

[239] Interview with Bakari Maunganya, Kibaya Village, 23rd January, 2018.
[240] Interview with Yohana Ole Bakari, Namelock village, 12th September, 2017.

the 1976 boundaries, drawn when Kibaya was established as a fully registered village.[241] Worse enough, during the establishment of boundaries between Kibaya, Kimana, and Ndaleta, villagers were again not involved. As a result, they did not recognize the established boundaries claiming that the boundaries were established in favour of the Maasai pastoralists.[242] This caused conflicts between the two sides in question to continue. This paper argues that boundary conflicts between Kibaya, Kimana, and Ndaleta villages were caused by inequality in terms of the size of village land where the pastoralists' villages were given bigger land compared to the peasants' villages. This was partly caused by political interests and irresponsible village leaders.

ADDO was followed by another private organization called the Community Research Development Services (CORDS) which was engaged in reviewing the boundaries formerly drawn by ADDO in the 2000s. CORDS demarcated the settlement, grazing and agricultural areas.[243]Although CORDS perpetuated awareness to the Maasai on understanding the value of land and its ownership, it failed to involve both groups of the peasants and pastoralists in the process of dividing grazing and agricultural land. Through CORDS, the Maasai started to change their attitude from depending merely on the livestock

[241] Interview with Mwanaidi Masawe, the Partimbo Village Executive Officer, 28th August, 2017.
[242]Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania, Ofisi ya Waziri Mkuu na Makamu wa Kwanza wa Rais, Kikao cha Kujadili Mipaka ya Vijiji vinavyozunguka Kata ya Kibaya, 1992. See also JMT: Malalamiko ya Wananchi wa Kibaya Kiteto kuhusu Mipaka ya Kijiji, 29th January, 1992.
[243] Interview with Maurice Humo, Kiteto District Land Surveyor, 11th September, 2017.

economy and started to engage in the agricultural economy.[244] These changes went hand in hand with ownership of land and the establishment of new more villages as a means of acquiring more land for both agriculture and grazing activities.[245] This diversification of economy among the Maasai was the landmark of boundary conflicts between peasants and pastoralists in Kiteto District because the Maasai were very bitter on the boundaries question.

Boundary conflicts between peasants and pastoralists continued to be a thorny issue in Kiteto between 2003 and 2004.[246] For instance, there were intense boundary conflicts between the Mbigiri peasants and Olpopong' pastoralists in 2003. The centre of conflicts was where to set the actual boundary marks to separate the two villages. Traditionally, the two villages used physical features such as big trees particularly (baobab trees) and Olpopong' mountain as boundary markers. However, under the modern system of boundary marking, the district land officials used beacons to separate the villages. According to the district land officers, the boundaries which were set by the Kiteto Surveyors team in 2002 lied between Sugutu and Kilikala hills. However, this boundary was bitterly opposed by Olpopong' villagers because it took their grazing land to Mbigiri Village.[247] In this conflict, there was no consensus because the Olpopong' villagers did not accept the decision reached during the meeting of the two villages.

---

[244] Interview with Emanuel Gwacha of Kibaya Village on 30th of August, 2017.
[245] Interview with Emanuel Tarmo of Kibaya Village, on 26th August, 2017.
[246] Interview with Abedi Athumani, Olopopong Village, 11th January, 2018.
[247].KDC: File, Ardhi, Muhtasari wa Kikao cha Ujirani Mwema Kusuluhisha Mgogoro wa Mipaka kati yaVijiji vya Mbigirina Olpopong' 20/7/2003.

The formation of new villages and hamlets and the creation of boundaries in 2004 were influenced by political leaders who used ethnic affiliation in their decision making. For example, Nabilikunya the Maasai and Ndorobo/Akie dominated area with only a few Maasai *bomas* (homesteads) were given hamlet status while Kidango and *Pori Namba Moja* areas with more than 200 people were not given hamlet status.[248] The reason given by both the Maasai and government officers on such controversies was that the peasants' settlements in the area were illegal and they did not deserve to be recognized by the government.[249] On their side, peasants claimed that they deserved recognition because they had been there for over ten years.[250] From this controversy, this paper reveals that the centre of disputes between the two groups was the land question. Each side wanted to be politically recognized as a hamlet to have right to access more land. Similar controversies also emerged during the establishment of Loolera, Lesoit and Loltepes villages which were the Maasai strongholds in 2004. They were given a larger piece of land than Kijungu and Sunya which were inhabited by peasants .[251] This continued to trigger hostility between the two groups over the land use and boundary question. The pressure on land was partly caused by the expanding peasants who demanded more agricultural land. Although the peasants complained that they were unfairly treated in the process of creation of new village boundaries, they were not given extra land. On their side, the Maasai who

[248] Interview with Mohamed Mwamba, Kibaya Village, on 10th January, 2018.
[249] Interview with Paulo Serenda, Nabiligunya Sub-village, on 28th January, 2018.
[250] Interview with, Bakari Maunganya, Kibaya village, on 21st August, 2017.
[251]Interview with Retired Major Ramadhan Mhina, Kibaya Village on, 10th February, 2018.

depended largely on livestock economy demanded more land during the creation of new village boundaries.

Another boundary conflict caused by the establishment of new administrative units was between Njoro and Chang'ombe villages. This conflict emerged after the division of Njoro to create the new Chang'ombe Village.[252]Njoro villagers complained about being given a small piece of land compared to the new Chang'ombe Village. The Njoro villagers' complaints were directed to the village chairperson who failed to defend their agricultural land. The conflicts among Longohoklai, Lerug and Olkitikiti villages were caused by the controversy over hamlet boundary which cut across the grazing land.[253]A similar problem was witnessed between Nkaiseri and Ndotoi whereby the two sides debated over lack of fairness in terms of the size of the land needed to be owned by a new Ndotoi Village. Nkaiseri which was peasant dominated village complained of being given small size of land while Ndotoi, the pastoralists' village was given a bigger size of land. The informants claimed that corruption and favouritism among the village and ward officers dominated the whole process of boundary marking.[254] Table 1 shows the land distribution between old and new villages in some parts of Kiteto District:

[252] HMW/KIT/M/114/Kiteto: Migogoro ya Ardhi, 2005.
[253] *Ibid*.
[254] Interview with Mohamed Mwinyimvua, Ndotoi Village, 24th September, 2017.

Table 1 The Land Distribution between Old and New Villages in Some Parts of Kiteto District

S/N	Old Village	Dominant Group	Hectors	New Village	Dominant Groups	Hectares
1	Kijungu	peasants	1,385	Loolera	pastoralists	127,120
2	Lengatei	peasants	8,710	Losoit	pastoralists	15,560
3	Mbigiri	peasants	6,000	Kimana	pastoralists	8,000
4	Kibaya	peasants	20,000	Partimbo	pastoralists	100,000

Source: Kiteto District Council, the Villages Land Use Plan, 2012-2023. See also Personal Archives for Bakari Maunganya Accessed in September 2017.

Table 1 shows clearly that in the establishment of the new villages the land was unevenly distributed between the two communities of peasants and pastoralists. The pastoralist villages were given more land compared to peasant dominated villages. As a result, the peasants complained of being neglected by the government officials in the whole process of establishing boundaries and the size of villages. On their side, pastoralists also demanded more land because of their claim that the available land could not sustain their needs. Both groups claimed that the whole process of establishing new villages and the creation of boundaries was dominated by corruption among government officials, particularly Village Executive Officers and Ward Executive Officers.[255] The process of marking boundaries was also dominated by politicians who expected to use land as a means of fulfilling their political interests in acquiring the leadership positions in their respective villages and wards.[256]

[255] Interviews with Bakari Jera, Ndaleta Village, on 8th February 2018 and Yohana Ole Bakari, Namelock Village, on 23rd September, 2017.
[256]Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania, Ofisi ya Waziri Mkuu na Makamu wa Pili wa Rais, Maendeleo ya Mkoa wa Arusha, Migogoro ya Mipaka, 1975.

Similarly, the boundary conflict was also witnessed in the process of application for the hamlets to acquire full village status in 2006. In establishing new hamlets, legal procedures were violated. For example, some hamlets had no qualifications of acquiring the status of being villages because of the small number of people they had but because of political interests, they were approved while some other areas which had qualifications of being villages were not approved. Politicians such as the village chairpersons and ward councilors used the boundary question as their political capital as they repeatedly promised the villagers to resolve the conflicts if they could elect them. For that reason, politicians were biased in creating boundaries and the peasants complained that the pastoralists were favoured by being given a larger part of land than peasants.[257] However, the reality on the ground is that the Maasai pastoralists needed a larger piece of land due to the nature of their nomadic way of life. Some of them owned between 500 and 1000 cattle. Therefore, during the creation of boundaries, there was a serious pressure for grazing land from the Maasai. The fact that there were no clear systems of land administration and management established by the government in accommodating the interests of the two groups meant that boundary conflicts were unavoidable.

[257] File: HMw/Kit/M/114, Kiteto: Migogoro ya Ardhi, Mgogoro wa Mipakakati ya Kijiji cha Changombe and Njoro, 2006.

Table 2: Applications of Hamlets to Get Village Status in 1999

Hamlet	Population	Dominant group	Recommendations
Mbeli	2,700	peasants	Rejected
Pori No.1	1000	peasants	Rejected
Pori No. 2	500	peasants	Rejected
Kisima	1500	peasants	Rejected
Ngitatini	3 bomas (homesteads)	pastoralists	Accepted
Nga'roji	450	pastoralists	Accepted

Source: File, Land Kimana Village (1999)

The data in Table 2 shows that in application for hamlets to get the village status, the Kiteto District Council rejected the peasants' applications and accepted the applications of the pastoralists. By considering the qualifications, the peasants' hamlets qualified to be villages because of their population. In spite of having the qualifications, they were rejected. The argument given by the Kiteto District Council (KDC) was that the peasants had established illegal hamlets, contrary to the land law.[258] However, it was the same KDC that collected revenue from what they called illegal hamlets. It was also the same KDC which had been reluctant in taking measures when the said peasants established their settlements in the areas in question. It was from this contradiction that peasants claimed that the pastoralists were favoured. This caused negative feelings towards each other between the two communities and the situation planted the seeds of grievances against the established boundaries.

The use of unauthorized organs such as hamlets' chairpersons in surveying and placing boundary marks heightened the

[258] Interview with Maurice Humo, Kiteto District Land Surveyor, 11th September, 2017.

conflicts between 2006 and 2010. In the process of establishing boundaries between one hamlet and another, the procedures were violated because the chairpersons of those hamlets were given the task of surveying and identifying the boundaries between one hamlet and another.[259] This was contrary to the land laws because they were not the authorized organs to survey the boundaries. This was followed by the creation of boundary marks which was done by District Land Officers guided by the same chairperson of the hamlets. The survey and identification of boundaries by the chairpersons of the hamlets created boundary related conflicts between peasants and pastoralists because it was done in favour of one group over the other. One conflict of such nature was experienced in the Twanga hamlet which had been planned to be part of Njiapanda Village but due to the contradiction and lack of fairness in terms of boundary allocation, the villagers refused to join Njiapanda Village in 2007. They wanted to remain in their old village of Namelock.[260] The centre of the conflict was that the question of identifying boundaries was not properly governed by the district land authority. Rather they left the task to the hamlets chairpersons who had different interests over land and boundaries. This line between hamlets chairpersons and the district government land authorities over the boundaries caused conflicts.

Boundary conflicts between Ngabolo pastoralists' (dominated village) and Ndaleta peasants' (dominated village) in 2010 were caused by contradiction between the 1976 boundary and that of

[259] KDC: File, Ardhi, Barua ya DED kwa VEO Njiapanda, Mgogoro wa Kitongoji cha Twanga, 7/6/2010.
[260] *Ibid*.

2010. In 1976, Ngabolo Village was registered as a village in Ndido Ward and the boundary was drawn to demarcate Ndaleta and Ngabolo villages under Government Notices of 1976 (GN. 1976).[261] In the 1980s, Ngabolo Village was attacked by anthrax which killed many of the Maasai's cattle. This caused many Maasai people to migrate from Ngabolo to Ndido searching for anthrax free zones.[262] The migration of the Maasai with their cattle led to the collapse of Ngabolo Village in the 1980s. As a result, the government changed the status of Ngabolo from a village to a hamlet.[263] From the 1990s to 2000s, the Ngabolo population increased due to the return of many Maasai from Ndido and the penetration of peasants from the neighbouring districts such as Kondoa and Mpwapwa.[264] In 2010, Ngabolo Village was re-established after qualifying to be a village. In the same year, the Kiteto District land officers established a new boundary which contradicted with the 1976 boundary.[265] Ngabolo village leaders continued to recognize the 1976 boundary while the Ndaleta village leaders based on the 2010 boundary. The contradiction emerged because the 2010 boundary was drawn in favour of Ndaleta Village by taking some parts of Ngabolo which were changed into grazing land. Conflicts between the Ngabolo peasants and Ndaleta pastoralists emerged because about 19 peasants from Ngabolo lost their land after it had been taken by the Ndaleta Village

[261]Kijiji cha Ngabolo: Taarifa ya Kikao cha Ujirani Mwema Halmashauri ya Vijiji vya Ngabolo na Ndaleta: Walalamikaji 19 Wakiongozwa na Iddi Kunambi, ili Kujadiliana na Kumaliza Mgogoro Baina ya Vijiji Vyote Viwili 8th February, 2017

[262] Interview with Bakari Jera, Peasants Ngabolo Village, 9th February, 2018.

[263] Interview with Daniel Ngoropili, VEO of Ngabolo Village, 9th February, 2018.

[264]Ibid.

[265] Interview with Hamisi Ramadhani, Peasants Ngabolo Village, 9th February, 2018.

and then changed into grazing land.[266] Among these peasants, Mr. Bakari Jera alone lost 15 acres of his farms. Different boundary reconciliation meetings were conducted without any success. For example, the first boundary meeting was held between the Ndaleta and Ngabolo on 23rd October 2013.[267] In that meeting, Ngabolo villagers refused to recognize the new boundary. The second meeting was held on 26th August 2014 which included the people from the villages and the Kiteto District Land Officers. In this meeting, Ngabolo Village refused the proposed boundary because it affected the grazing land in Ngabolo Village. The third meeting was held on 12th October 2014. Again, Ngabolo Village refused to agree with the proposed boundary.[268] Up to the period of this study, the two villages had never reconciled about the boundaries.

Ngabolo Village refused to accept the new boundaries due to a number of factors. First, apart from affecting Ngabolo peasants' farms, they placed the Loseiya dam, which hitherto belonged to Ngabolo pastoralists in the domain of Ndaleta. Furthermore, the new boundaries affected the Maasai bomas which became part of Ndaleta Village. Generally, the new boundaries were contrary to the old ones which were established on Longai Hill based on the GN 13 of 1976.[269]

Concerning this conflict, the present study puts forward three major issues. One is that the authorities which established new villages used a top-down approach because boundary marks

[266] Interview with Richard Reuben Peasants NgaboloVillage9th February, 2018.
[267]Kijiji cha Ngabolo: Taarifa ya Kikao cha Ujirani Mwema, *op.cit*.
[268] *Ibid*.
[269] *Ibid*.

were placed without clear involvement of the people of the two villages. Secondly, corruption and political interests among the village leaders intensified the conflicts. For example, the Ndaleta Village chairperson promised his voters during the 2009 local government election that he would allocate more land to them by expanding the boundary toward the north which bordered Ngabolo Village boundary.[270] This intensified land pressure from the Ndaleta villagers from 2010 onwards which triggered the boundary conflicts in those villages. Thirdly, the establishment of Makame Wildlife Management Area (MWMA) took almost 80% of Ngabolo Village land.[271]Although pastoral activities were allowed in the reserved areas, the few peasants in the village were affected by the establishment of MWMA because they lost their land. This made them expand beyond their village boundaries by penetrating Ndaleta pastoral grazing land.

Another conflict occurred between Ngabolo and Olpopong villages over the demarcation of boundaries between the two villages in 2008. It should be noted that Ngabolo was among the villages which surrendered larger parts of land to Makame Wildlife Management Areas which affected peasants' land. Therefore, the Ngabolo Village leaders moved the boundary mark (beacon) some kilometres inside Olpopong' Village in favour of their peasants.[272] The result was that between 2013 and 2014 the farms owned by Ngabolo villagers were damaged

[270] Interview with Richard Reuben Peasants Ngabolo Village, 9thFebruary,2018.
[271] Interview with Bakari Jera, Peasants Ngabolo Village, 9th February, 2018.
[272]Interview with Zama Tamba, Athumani Sarika, Abubakari Waziri Olpopong Village, 7thFebruary,2018.

by the cattle owned by pastoralists from Olpopong'.[273] Similarly, the boundary conflict between Engusero Sidan and Chang'ombe villages was caused by pastoralists from Engusero Sidan who grazed their cattle beyond their village boundaries and entered Chang'ombe agricultural areas. On this, Benson Kinyunyu, a peasant from Engusero Sidan condemned the government for her failure to establish permanent boundary marks. The existing boundaries were weak because they involved trees which were painted in red showing the boundary marks. These trees were simply cut by pastoralists to hide evidence which could show their grazing land limit.[274]

The committee formed by the Regional Commissioner of Manyara Region in 2014 to investigate the boundary conflicts in Lolera Ward discovered that out of 131 surveyed peasants' farms, 129 were established after illegal invasion of the pastoralists' grazing land and uprooting the boundary marks at different times.[275] Only two peasants had been given land by the village government though they had no proper documentation showing ownership. The available documents they had were lacking the approval of the Village Assembly. Sara Losurutia, a resident from the given area stated that village leaders also technically delayed to work on land applications to prepare ground for corruption.[276] In reaction to that, the boundary marks (beacons) were uprooted by peasants during the farming process. Uprooting of beacons was deliberately

[273] Interview with Zama Tamba, Athumani Sarika, Olpopong Village, 7thFebruary, 2018.
[274] Interview with Benson Kinyunyu, Engusero Sidan on 17th September, 2017.
[275]HMw/Kit/M/114, Kiteto*: Migogoro ya Ardhi*, 2014.
[276] Interview with Sara Losurutia, of Partimbo Village, on 22nd of August, 2017.

done to conceal the evidence of boundaries that caused conflict with the pastoralist communities. Political leaders in Lolera and Amei were also blamed for providing fake promises to the villagers during campaigns that they would be given enough land from the reserves by extending the boundaries.[277]As a result, pastoralists uprooted the established boundaries and invaded agricultural reserves.

5.0 The Fights in Katikati, Mlongia and Itolwa Borders

Boundary conflicts were also witnessed between the peasants of the neighbouring districts and the pastoralists of Kiteto District. In those conflicts, people lost their lives due to use of weapons between pastoralist and peasant communities when fighting for land in 1999. Historically, the peasants of Itolwa and Mlongia villages of Kondoa District have co-existed for a long time with the Maasai pastoralists of Katikati Village of Kiteto District. Their co-existence was due to fair sharing of natural resources particularly water and land.[278] The Katikati Village of Kiteto District had potential land for agriculture that attracted peasants from Itolwa and Mlongia villages of Kondoa District. On the other hand, the Itolwa and Mlongia villages had permanent water sources that attracted pastoralists, especially during dry seasons. The uneven distribution of natural resources made the peaceful co-existence between pastoralists of Kiteto District and peasants of Itolwa and Mlongia villages of Kondoa District possible for a long period.

---

[277] Interview with Bakari Hemed Said, a SULEDO Secretary, 10th September, 2017.

[278]Ofisi ya Kijiji cha Katikati: Barua ya Wananchi wa Kijiji cha Katikati kwa Mkurugenzi wa Haki za Binadamu Dar es Salaam, Kulalamikia Uvamizi Uliofanywa na Wananchi wa Vijiji vya Mlongia na Itolwa kwa Nia ya Kupora Ardhi, 1999.

The conflicts between the two parties emerged in 1999 where peasants were alleged to have killed the Village Executive Officer, Mr. Maingwa Lembuniti.[279] Also, the Maasai cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys were taken by force and several Maasai *bomas* were burnt.[280] This conflict happened because of arguments over the boundaries and invasion of the former grazing land by peasants from Itolwa and Mlongia villages. The pastoralists became very defensive as they feared that their grazing land would be controlled by peasants. In 2003, the same peasants from Itolwa and Mlongia villages invaded Katikati Village and set ablaze five Maasai *bomas* in Kibuku Hamlet. In this conflict, two Maasai children from Mr. Orng'idi Sunguyas' family were allegedly killed. Apart from that, ten cattle, three goats and one donkey were killed.[281] Although the government took initiatives to address the boundary conflicts by visiting the villages and conducting mediation meetings, the conflict of Kiteto-Kondoa villages intensified. This was because the government took a weak decision of establishing a new boundary separating the villages contrary to the old boundary of 1961 which had been respected by both sides. According to the new boundary, the larger part of Katikati Village was placed into Kondoa District. This resulted in the persistence of boundary conflicts between the two groups. The pastoralists claimed that many parts of their land had been taken by the Kondoa peasants under the new boundary established in

[279]Ibid.

[280] The Reports of Division Secretaries to the Regional Commissioner of both Dodoma and Manyara titled "the Causes of Boundaries Conflicts between Katikati Village of Kiteto District and Mlongia and Itolwa Villages of Kondoa District, 1999.

[281]*Ibid*.

2008.[282] The hamlets' chairpersons Lodombo, Thomas, Baraka, Robert, and Lengima were accused of being corrupt. They were accused of having collected money from peasants promising to extend the boundary in favour of the peasants. Due to the failure in keeping political promises made by contestants, the peasants such as Mr. Duano Kasi and Mr. Karmu Mbundu destroyed the boundary and invaded the pastoralists' land in Katikati Village.[283]

The conflict over boundaries between Katikati Village of Kiteto District and peasants from Itolwa and Mlongia villages of Kondoa District took new shape in the late 2009. Both sides started to prevent each other from using resources particularly water and fertile land which were unevenly distributed among the three villages involved in the conflict. The Itolwa and Mlongia villages of Kondoa District restricted Katikati villagers of Kiteto District to access water in their villages by attacking the donkeys and cars which were used by the Maasai to fetch water. The pastoralists of Katikati Village (Kiteto District) revenged by driving away the peasants from Itolwa and Mlongia villages who owned land in Katikati Village. The conflicts intensified following the killing of four people of Katikati Village by peasants from Itolwa and Mlongia villages of Kondoa District.[284] The killed people included Mbilikimo Tasati, Yeyoi Kwesenge, Maria Kwesenge and Ndelegei Kwesenge. All those were pastoralists of Katikati Village in Kiteto District. They were shot dead by Mr. Kaimu Iteu. The Kiteto District Police

[282] *Ibid*.
[283] *Ibid*.
[284] *Ibid*.

Commander (OCD) and the District Commissioner (DC) visited Katikati Village and held a meeting with the Katikati villagers. In January 2010, the Itolwa and Mlongia villagers invaded Lalarai Hamlet in Katikati Village and killed two children (Ngaranasi Matia and Makandule Matia), four people were injured, 32 Maasai *bomas* were burnt and 32 cattle were stolen.[285] Again in 2011 Itolwa and Mlongia villagers invaded Katikati Village and cleared the area with the intention of opening farms. About 5000 acres of land were taken by Itolwa and Mlongia peasants in Alaikara, Irikolokor, Emukuiani, Lengumur, Nadoong'ajijick, Nomeuti, Illaiperak and Engumumwa hamlets.[286] Up to the period under the review, the boundary conflicts between peasants and pastoralists of the Katikati, Itolwa and Mlongia villages were not resolved as they remained dormant.

6.0 Conclusion

The experience from Kiteto District on boundary conflicts indicates that the establishment of new administrative units and creation of new boundaries in Tanzania is intended to bring about socio-economic services closer to the local communities and peaceful utilization of the available resources, particularly land. However, such an expectation brings about anger and frustrations between peasant and pastoralist communities in Kiteto District as it results in boundary conflicts. Historically, the establishment of new hamlets and villages as well as the creation of boundaries during the *Ujamaa* villages caused conflicts because they were established without

[285] *Ibid*.
[286] *Ibid*.

taking into account different land-use practices between the two communities. The *Ujamaa* programme was hurriedly done without any clear judicial guidelines. Its implementation lacked grassroots' involvement. While the peasants were encouraged to open village farms and personal farms, the pastoralists were forced to destock their livestock and adopt modern livestock keeping which was based on zero grazing. The reactions from the pastoralists were considered to be betrayal of *Ujamaa* programme and were coercively suppressed. The post-*Ujamaa* period in Kiteto District continued to witness boundary conflicts due to the weaknesses of state apparatus and government officials at both village and national levels. Some of the leaders were allegedly involved in corruption. There was lack of justice and use of top-down approach in decision making during the establishment and marking of the boundaries. All those intensified the conflicts. Closer to that, the pressure over land by the peasants from the neighbouring districts who thought that Kiteto District was a place where arable land was plenty and cheap also triggered the boundary conflicts between Kiteto pastoralists and peasants from the neighbouring districts. Peasants from Kondoa, Handeni and Simanjro Districts extended the farms inside Kiteto District despite the existence of boundaries that had been respected for a long time. The cross-border migration of peasants and their encroachment of the pastoralists' grazing land were not properly addressed by the government officials. As a result, both groups attacked each other to protect grazing land (for pastoralists) and farming land (for peasants).

Reports from other parts of Tanzania have shown that boundary conflicts between peasants and pastoralists always tend to result in bloodshed. Kiteto District has also witnessed death cases which as an outcome of the failure on the part of the state apparatus to address the boundary question in their initial stages. The analysis done in this study has shown that inappropriate methods of resolving boundary conflicts that were externally drafted and implemented to the villagers resulted in the persistence of the conflicts. When responding to boundary conflicts, the decisions of the government were not participatory. They were drafted at the district levels and enforced through coercive apparatuses particularly the police force. The Regional and District Commissioners have always believed in the centralization of peacekeeping processes and conflict resolution rather than using decentralized approaches which could use traditional institutions of both sides involved in conflicts. This top-down approach has marginalized local authorities such as families, clans and the councils of the elders in conflict resolutions. As a result, boundary conflicts persist in many areas while in other areas they remain dormant.

Book Review

Giacomo Corneo. *Is Capitalism Obsolete? A Journey through Alternative Economic Systems* (translated by Daniel Steuer). Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. 304, ISBN 9780674495289.

Gasiano G. N. Sumbai
Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Giacomo Corneo is a professor of Social Policy and Public Finance at the Free University of Berlin, Germany. He starts his analysis by arguing that capitalism is increasingly becoming unpopular in Europe due to its being wasteful as demonstrated in widespread unemployment, injustice and alienation. He points out that high level of inequality in wealth possession is a real threat to both shared prosperity and democracy in Western Europe. His main problem is how to make the world a better place where people share wealth and prosperity. This ideal world could be achieved through adoption of an alternative economic system that would eliminate the basic contradiction found within capitalism, namely that between the social nature of production and the private mode of appropriation of wealth. Although capitalism applies advanced science and technology in creating more wealth, its ironic nature is such that a few people enjoy power, wealth and privileges over the poor who are the majority. This creates a polarized society based on appropriation of wealth- the rich on one end and the poor on the other. Corneo engages us in a debate to find out an alternative economic system that will do away with these imbalances in the appropriation and distribution of wealth.

Currently, wealth, power and privileges are concentrated on few capitalists with powers to make decisions affecting billions of people in this world. Capitalist principles, laws and institutions promote and protect the right to private property and power.

Debates in search of an alternative economic systems have always featured in political economy, but have gained a new impetus since the 1990s following the disintegration of the Bipolar World Order and the rise of a new world order. Capitalism emerged as a dominant economic system. The financial crisis of 1997 and 2008, the growing unemployment and widening of the gap between the rich and poor in the world lead to the rise of ideas an alternative economic system that would do away with these problems. In this light, Corneo approaches the problems of capitalism as both economic and moral in nature. He discredits capitalist the economic, political and social institutions that cannot solve current social problems, but yet does not believe that capitalism as obsolete. He argues that though capitalism faces the problems inequalities, alienation and wastefulness, there is a need to make it human-centered; an economic system that would make it work for all people, not for the few capitalists only.

In his search of a new and viable alternative economic system, Corneo critically examines different economic systems with their limitations in practice. He strongly suggests that there must be systemic and institutional reforms to address the malpractices of capitalism. Corneo analyses the principles and practicality of various alternative economic systems ranging

from Plato's Republicanism through Utopian Socialism, Anarchism, Planning, Self-Management, Market and Socialism, Shareholder Socialism, Universal Basic Income and Basic Capital and Market Economy as well as Welfare capitalism. After surveying all these alternatives, he proposes a pluralist market economy under an effective and the guidance of a generous welfare state as the best economic system.

Although like Marxists Corneo challenges Utopian Socialism, he does not acknowledge the successes made by socialist minded people in the USA in the 1840s and 1850s. These people operated under a variety of theoretical principles such as those epitomised iconic names such as Mormonism, Transcendentalism, Amana, Noyes and Oneida communities. American industrialization in the 1830s and 1840s led to a new economic system which dislocated poor Americans. As a result, many American reformers wanted to test their theories by establishing experimental communities focusing on social reorganization with principles based on small scale units. For example, the Oneida Community developed manufacturing skills in the 1840s and 1850s. The Mormons led by Joseph Smith established a community in Ohio in 1831 before moving to Missouri and Illinois and establishing Nauvoo town in 1839. The Mormons established a semi-independent state within the Federal Union, with a paramilitary organization called Nauvoo Legion. They devoted to cooperative and hardworking spirit which turned Utah Territory into a prosperous agricultural area through irrigation. John Smith was murdered by a mob after announcing that he was a candidate for president of the US. Along similar lines, Emerson Ralph Walden established

Transcendentalism which established the Brook Farm in New York. Transcendentalists prospered through communal farming and light industrialization. However, the US government banned the communitarian organizations based on the argument that it worked contrary to the country's constitution, which upheld the right to individual properties. To some extent they succeeded in distributing wealth among members.

In analyzing Shareholder Capitalism, Corneo shows three versions of it, which are market socialism, municipal market socialism and coupon market socialism. He shows their strengths and weaknesses. However, Shareholder he noted that capitalism cannot address inequalities, unemployment and reduction of the gap between the rich and poor. According to Corneo, Shareholder capitalism is a compromise between capitalists and the working classes. It portrays capital as human-centred and collectively owned. This led to fallacy of democratization of capital and people's capitalism as few people are able to buy shares from enterprises. The majority of workers are poor and cannot make any significant savings to buy more shares that will make them have power in decision making in enterprises as they are not board members. Most of shares are owned by the central or local governments which claim to represent poor people. Governments receive dividends which are used to provide welfare services to the poor. These reforms focus on distribution while ownership and production remain capitalistic. This reflects the fact that the state is not a neutral institution; it is a class in itself with its own ruling interests.

Furthermore, Corneo suggests a Pluralist market economy with an effective and generous welfare state as the best economic system. He proposes that revitalizing welfare state requires a committed political programme to bring about meta-reform to create justified trust in the state and to stop the mechanisms that lead to instability of the welfare state under capitalism. He maintains that Germany's social market economy is no longer a predatory form of capitalism. He asks the question as to how best people can exploit this economy with its motivational forces to turn it into more efficient, just and humane form. He continues to argue that German social insurance system is recognized in the world for its success and has been copied by other nations. The German model of capitalism which combines market economy and welfare plays a distributive role and building a buffer against the income uncertainty that comes with market process. However, the system cannot address chronic capitalist problems such as unemployment, inflation and unequal distribution of wealth. What it has done is to undertake reforms that are aimed at mitigating adverse effects of capitalism. This economic system minimizes possible conflicts between enterprises and the working class as the state tries to minimize the effects of the market economy on the disadvantaged people in the society.

In Corneo's book, most of the debate rests on reforms and not radical measures to address the adverse effects of capitalism or to make it a majority-centered economic system or abolish it completely. According to him, a system can be humane but not majority-centered. He differs radically with Marxism which believes in the elimination of capitalism through revolution.

The capitalist state makes political and economic reforms such as developing welfare system to appease the mass so that it is seen to have a human face. Yet the capitalist state cannot be silent to allow the reforms that would endanger capitalist power and wealth control. Sometimes the capitalist state applies force to crush the reactionary forces. Reforming capitalism certainly cannot eliminate the basic contradictions found within capitalism, the biggest contradiction being between the social nature of production and the private mode of appropriation. Capitalists apply soft and hard powers as well as national and international institutions and platforms such as the UN to sabotage reforms that are threats to their interests.

In his discussion Corneo portrays capitalism as a uniform system. Yet Hall and Soskice identify two types of market economies that implement capitalism. These varieties of capitalism which are dominant in this world are Coordinated Market Economy (CME) and Liberal Market Economy (LME) differing on ways of organizing capitalist economy, distribution of income, industrial relations, vocational training and education and corporate governance. The Coordinated Market Economy (CME) is dominant in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. The Liberal Market Economy is practiced in the USA, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. While firms in LMEs turn to market institutions to solve their problems, the firms in CMEs turn to non-market institutions. In CME there is a strategic interaction between profit-oriented firms and non-market institutions. Corneo concentrates on reforming CME, citing Germany as a case study. He does not

discuss the liberal economic system which is followed by the USA and whose impact is more felt in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Furthermore the position of African in this discussion is not visible in Corneo's analysis as it marginalizes the African continent. The author does not show interest in discussing how capitalism is perceived outside Europe where the LME system is dominant. Africa has been a victim of capitalism. It needs its own version of economic system that will make it benefit from its huge wealth of fertile land and other natural resources. This makes us believe that the author still maintains a belief that Western Europe is a nucleus from which viable changes must come.

Overall, the book makes a significant contribution to the historiography seeking not only an alternative economic system but a better economic system that would make this world a happier place to live for everybody. It is our submission that while a new economic system is possible, capital ownership and distribution whether under market economy and socialism, shareholder socialism and market economy plus welfare, cannot end wealth-poverty polarity. It can only reduce the gap between the two poles and minimize conflicts between the 'haves' and 'haves-nots'.