

Juhani Koponen

PEOPLE AND PRODUCTION  
IN LATE  
PRECOLONIAL TANZANIA

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PRODUCTION IN  
LATE PRECOLONIAL  
TANZANIA

History and Structures

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Helsinki, June 1988

Juhani Koponen



# Guide to abbreviations

## Archives and institutions

AAKA	— Auswärtiges Amt, Kolonial-Abteilung (German Foreign Office, Colonial Department)
APB	— Archives of the White Fathers
AStEsp	— Archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers
FO	— British Foreign Office
LSM	— London Missionary Society
LSMA	— Archives of the London Missionary Society
RKoLA	— Reichskolonialamt (German Colonial Office)
TNA	— Tanzania National Archives
UMCA	— The Universities' Mission to Central Africa
ZStA	— Zentrales Staatsarchiv (German Democratic Republic)

## Journals and publications

AEH	— African Economic History
AHS	— African Historical Studies
AKGA	— Arbeiten aus dem Kaiserlichen Gesundheitsamte
AST	— African Studies Review
AmA	— American Anthropologist
ArA	— Archiv für Anthropologie
ASTH	— Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropenhygiene
AQ	— Anthropological Quarterly
BSG	— Bulletin de la Société de Géographie
BPP	— British Parliamentary Papers, Irish University Press Series
CHA	— Cambridge History of Africa
CHM	— Cahiers d'histoire mondiale
CMI	— Church Missionary Intelligencer
DKB	— Deutsches Kolonialblatt
DKZ	— Deutsche Kolonialzeitung
EAAJ	— East African Agricultural Journal

EAMJ	— East African Medical Journal
GJ	— Geographical Journal
GHA	— General History of Africa (UNESCO)
HA	— History in Africa
HEA	— History of East Africa
IJAHS	— International Journal of African Historical Studies
JAH	— Journal of African History
JAS	— Journal of the African Society
JAI	— Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
JRAI	— Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
JRGS	— Journal of the Royal Geographical Society
KHR	— Kenya Historical Review
KUAS	— Kyoto University African Studies
MDS	— Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten
MGGH	— Mitteilungen der geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg
MGGJ	— Mitteilungen der geographischen Gesellschaft zu Jena
PM	— Petermanns Mitteilungen
PRGS	— Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society
SWJA	— Southwestern Journal of Anthropology
TNR	— Tanganyika/Tanzania Notes and Records
TJH	— Transafrican Journal of History
ZE	— Zeitschrift für Ethnologie
ZVRW	— Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft

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Cover. Nyamwezi men threshing and a Nyamwezi woman cutting sorghum, 1861

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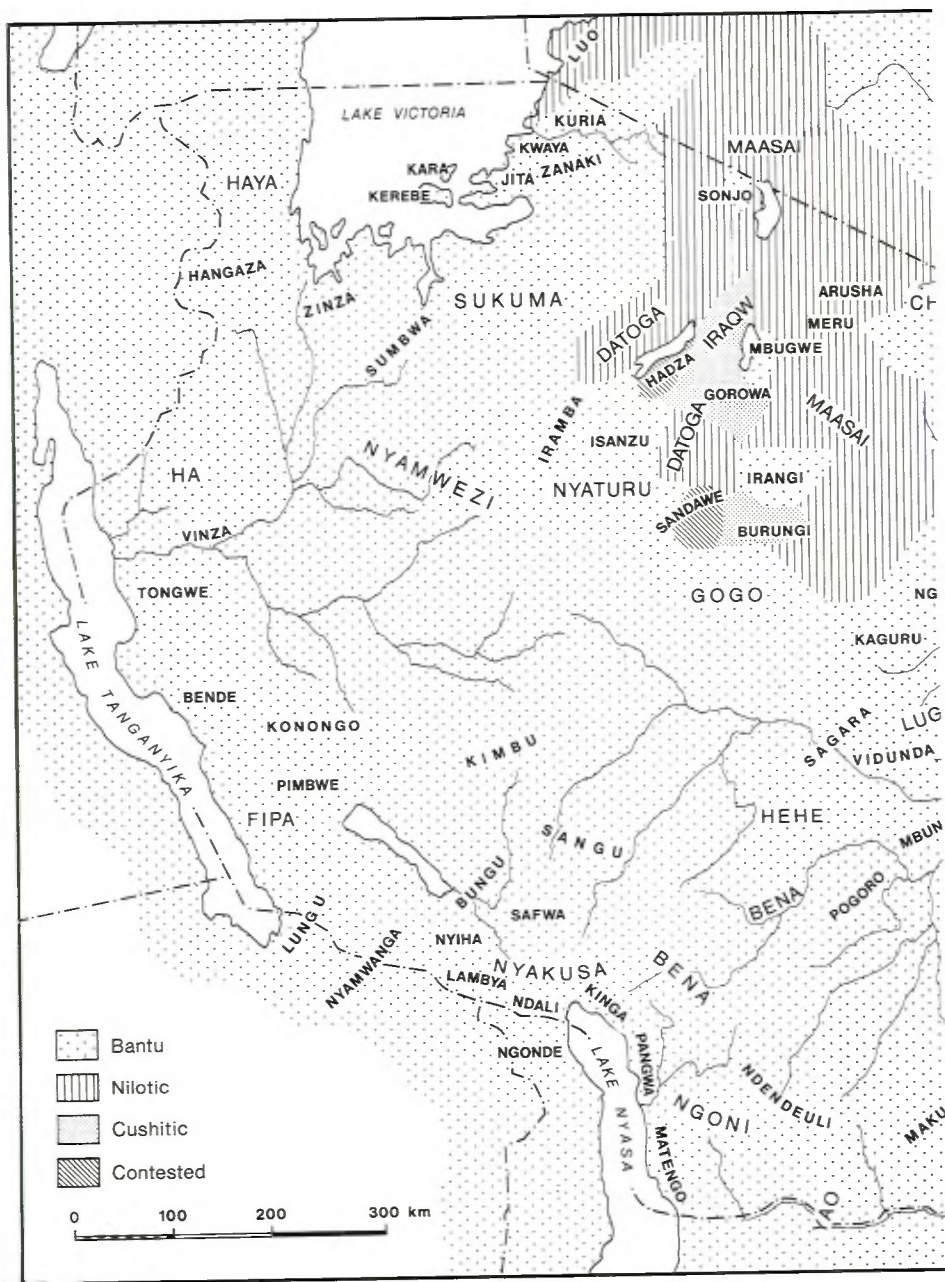
**Cover** from John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. Edinburgh, London, 1863, facing p. 115 (from a drawing by J. A. Grant); **plate 1** from Richard Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, I. New York, 1860, p. ii (ivory porter) and Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, I. New York, 1878, p. 63; **plate 2** from Carl Claus von der Decken, *Baron Carl Claus von der Decken's Reisen in Ostafrika*, ed. Otto Kersten, I. Leipzig, Heidelberg, 1869, pp. 80, 82; **plate 3** from Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone*. New York, 1872, facing p. 632; **plate 4** from Jérôme Becker, *La vie en Afrique*, II. Paris, Bruxelles, 1887, p. 161 (Mirambo — drawing by Césaire dell' Acqua), J. F. Elton, *Travels and Researches among the Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa*. London, 1879, p. 361 (Merere) and Franz Stuhlmann,

*Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika*. Berlin, 189, p. 109 (Sukuma chief — drawing by Wilhelm Kuhnert); **plate 5** from Hans Meyer, *Ostafrikanische Gletscherfahrten*. Leipzig, 1893, facing p. 215 (Kilimanjaro — drawing by H. Riffarth) and Jérôme Becker, *La troisième expédition belge au Pays Noir*. Bruxelles, n.d., p. 255 (Karema — drawing by Heins); **plate 6** from Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, facing p. 240 (cattle breeds — drawing by Kuhnert) and Meyer, *Gletscherfahrten*, p. 106 (goats and sheep); **plate 7** from Speke, *Journal* (from a drawing by Grant); **plate 8** from Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 1; **plate 9** from Becker, *La vie*, II, p. 401 (Tanganyika women — drawing by Charles Verlat) and Speke, *Journal*, facing pp. 86, 115 (Nyamwezi women — from a drawing by Grant); **plate 10** from Decken, *Reisen*, II, p. 3 (Pare smith), Becker, *La vie*, I, p. 393 (hunter — drawing by A. Heins), *ibid.*, II, p. 97 (man guarding harvest — drawing by J. Dierickx) and Oscar Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle*. Berlin, 1894, facing p. 184 (Gorowa herdsman — drawing by R. Bacher); **plate 11** from Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 225 (Ha homestead — drawing by L. H. Fischer; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 749 (Nera), 676 (Zinza — drawings by Kuhnert); **plate 12** from Karl Weule, *Negerleben in Ostafrika*. Leipzig, 1908, p. 363; **plate 13** from Stanley, *Livingstone*, facing p. 3 (Zanzibar) and Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, facing p. 28 (Swahili town); **plate 14** from Stanley, *Dark Continent*, II, facing p. 3 (Ujiji) and Victor Giraud, *Les lacs de l'Afrique Équatoriale*. Paris, 1890, p. 139 (Kalenga — drawing by Riou); **plate 15** from Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 71 (Buzinza), 229 (Unyamwezi), 116 (Mbulu — drawings by Fischer); Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 253 (Ugogo); and *idem*, *Dark Continent*, I, p. 92 (Usagara); **plate 16** from Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 41 (Zaramo); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, p. 82 (Nyamwezi wife); and Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 189 (Nyakusa couple — drawing by Riou).

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Map 1. Language groups and peoples, ca 1890.





# 1. Introduction: history and historical knowledge

This book is not a comprehensive history of precolonial Tanzania. Its aims are much more modest. It is an outgrowth of my studies on colonial Tanzania. 'Precolonial' is a residual category, definable only through the notion of 'colonial', and if one is interested, as I am, in Tanzanian development and the impact of colonialism on it, one obviously needs a baseline: an idea of the point of departure, the situation as it was when colonialism began. I have not endeavoured to write the history of precolonial Tanzania in any meaningful sense; rather I have studied some major aspects of it with the aim of exploring and understanding the late precolonial societies and the subsequent colonial impact in more concrete terms.

This is important to state not because historians usually study the past for its own sake but because the purposes of their studies condition their approaches and influence their results. Historians are traditionally committed to show 'how it really was',<sup>1</sup> but increasingly many of them will concede that such a task is lofty but impossible. The past can never, and nowhere, be reconstructed fully, and such an exercise would be pointless in any case. All cognition is by its nature selective, and historiography, as a highly specialized branch of social cognition, is so in a multiple sense. Among the innumerable aspects of the past the historian has to select some on which to focus and then decide how to focus on them. Historians often speak of 'reconstructing' the past; but what they do in practice is to construct representations of some aspects of the past, or, as some prefer to

---

1. This celebrated phrase comes, of course, from the conservative 19th century German historian Leopold von Ranke, who is regarded as the founder of the modern source-based academic historiography. An alternative translation of the original "wie es eigentlich gewesen" would be "how things actually were."

say, produce historical knowledge of them.<sup>2</sup> Right from the beginning, in order to select the aspects on which to focus, the historian needs some criteria for selection, and because the historian belongs to the present and not to the past, it is natural to choose the criteria from our present interests and purposes. It is in this sense that Croce's famous dictum that all history is 'contemporary history' can be understood.<sup>3</sup>

This means that history, as presented in historiographical works, cannot be the same as the past, or even the surviving past. It cannot be a total reconstruction of 'how it really was'. Rather it is a picture in which some features of the past have been denoted; it consists of representations of aspects of the past the historian deems relevant for the questions he or she is interested in, or "facets of past phenomena which happen to relate to the preoccupations of historical inquirers at the time of their inquiries."<sup>4</sup> Even if the term "model" is ambiguous and usually reserved for higher-level abstractions than those the historians are constructing, one can well agree with the British historian E. H. Carr who said that the "world of the historian ... is not a photographic copy of the real world, but rather a working model which enables him more or less effectively to understand and to master it."<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this study is to provide such a 'working model' of Tanzania on the eve of colonization and thus offer a basis for a discussion on the impact of colonialism on Tanzanian development.

In the broadest terms, this study is concerned with the developmental levels and potentialities of Tanzanian precolonial societies. Such an issue could be discussed from an explicitly evolutionary and comparative point of view, but that is not the approach of this work. I aim to describe and analyze the social and economic systems in precolonial Tanzania at a lower level of generalization and to assess their functioning and the level of

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2. Henry Bernstein and Jacques Depelchin, 'The Object of African History: A Materialist Perspective', *History in Africa* (hereafter *HA*), 5 (1978), esp. pp. 8—9; Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, 'How Is Historical Knowledge Recognized?', *HA*, 13 (1986), pp. 331—344.

3. Quoted in E.H. Carr, *What is History?* Harmondsworth, 1975, pp. 20—21 (1st ed. 1960).

4. M.M. Postan, *Facts and Relevance*. Cambridge, 1970, p. 51, as quoted in John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*. Burnt Mill, 1984, p. 114.

5. Carr, *What is History?*, p. 30.

material welfare they produced. I depart the journey from the existing historical interpretations, which can be conveniently approached with the help of A.G. Hopkins' famous pair of concepts, 'Primitive Africa' and 'Merrie Africa'. Hopkins presented these two "myths" as caricatured pictures of interpretations of African precolonial history. 'Primitive Africa' sees the inhabitants of the continent living like textbook savages "under the domination of custom and impulse... never forecasting the distant future," only waiting for the Europeans to come and confer on them the benefits of Western Civilization. 'Merrie Africa' paints a precolonial Golden Age, in which "generations of Africans enjoyed congenial lives in well-integrated, smoothly functioning societies... The Europeans, so it is alleged, disrupted a state of harmony... and ruthless exploitation reduced the indigenous peoples to a degree of poverty they had not known in the past..."<sup>6</sup>

That 'Primitive Africa' and 'Merrie Africa' are not only myths but models put forward by serious historical inquiry was brought home by the publication of two major works of Tanzanian history which appeared in the late 1970s when I was beginning my research: Helge Kjekshus' *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History*,<sup>7</sup> and John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika*.<sup>8</sup> Being books of a very different nature, they also gave very different interpretations of precolonial Tanzania. For Kjekshus, it was Merrie Tanzania. Precolonial societies were pleasant places to live in. Most of the communities were permanently settled, sophisticated agricultural systems were producing an assured surplus, cattle were abundant and tsetse-fly was no more than a nuisance in this safely man-controlled ecological system. Population was growing and people were content to work harder and develop new technologies to feed the rising numbers. This system was maintained till the 1890s when the Great Rinderpest destroyed cattle and prosperity, and colonial disruptions took care of the rest. Tsetse invaded the country, most

---

6. Concepts and quotations are from A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*. London, 1975, p. 10.

7. Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History. The Case of Tanganyika 1850—1950*. London, 1977.

8. John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. Cambridge, 1979.

areas were never able to recover and the result was not only underdevelopment but actual “de-development.”<sup>9</sup> Iliffe was much closer to Primitive Africa, if not actually going that far. He emphasizes the harshness of the environment and the “historic poverty” caused by “distance, disease, and underpopulation.” Only capitalism could have provided the means to escape it, and some help was indeed provided by the penetration of “capitalist relations” along with long-distance trade in the 19th century. But this was not enough. By 1800 Tanzania was a virgin frontier area where people were continuously moving in. If the population grew, it was because of this migration (called “colonization” by Iliffe). Agricultural systems were defensive in nature. Famine was an overhanging threat; Tanzanian cultivators were engaged in a continuous and basically foredoomed battle against it. Diseases were rife. People believed in witches and treated them cruelly. “They were naked before evil.” After ninety years, by 1890, a structural change had happened, but whether it was a positive or negative one is an unanswerable question.<sup>10</sup>

As a fledgling historian of Tanzania, I had not planned to undertake research on the precolonial period based on primary sources. I thought I was fortunate to have the provocative reinterpretation by Kjekshus and the erudite and careful synthesis by Iliffe to draw on in reconstructing the precolonial point of departure. My expectation turned into exasperation when I realized that instead of providing a well-articulated and fine-tuned view of Tanzania on the eve of European colonization these two books challenged each other and raised more questions than they answered. Still worse, it was impossible, on the basis of the books themselves and their reception, to judge whose interpretation was to be preferred. Both works were received quite favourably although unevenly by the research community. Kjekshus’ book gained wide popularity inside Tanzania and became swiftly one of the most quoted works among the country’s social scientists. Iliffe, while obtaining a not unfavourable reception in Tanzania, was

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9. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, esp. pp. 3, 5, 6, 27–28, 46–48, 56, 126, 143–144, 160–161, 181, 185.

10. Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 3, 8, 10–17, 27–32, 45, 77, 135 (quotations pp. 135, 3, 28, 32).



given the highest praise among outside Africanist historians. His book was proclaimed not only as the best work on Tanzanian history but as the best of any of its kind; if this was not 'how it really was', then at least it was as "near as we are likely to get."<sup>11</sup> However, the picture given by Kjekshus was irreconcilable with that by Iliffe, and I found no other way than to go to the sources myself and look at the evidence on some of the questions Kjekshus and Iliffe had discussed in the precolonial parts of their works. And in order to elucidate the sources I had to attempt an alternative interpretation which gradually expanded into this book.

## Problems of method: data and facts

Although the interpretations, the pictures drawn by historians, can be seen as divergent models serving different purposes, they do not differ at random, nor can they all be declared equally adequate or inadequate. The interpretations are arrived at by following certain rules and practices which are conveniently called the methodology of history. But observing the rules of methodology does not lead to identical end results for at least two reasons. First, the methodological rules usually embody only the broadest principles to be applied in each particular case; they are seldom clear-cut and unambiguous but leave a good deal to the individual discretion of the historian. Second, there are some issues of a more theoretical nature crucial to the process of historical reconstruction on which the methodology of history prefers to keep silent. While this is hardly the place for an extended discussion on problems of historical methodology in general, a brief overview of some of the main problem areas is useful because of what it reveals about the potentialities and the limitations of historical knowledge in general and in precolonial Tanzania in particular.

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11. C.C. Wrigley in a review in *Journal of African History* (hereafter *JAH*), 21 (1980), p. 280.

## Sources and data

Much of the discussion on the methodology of history concentrates on the question of sources. This is most natural. The historian can never face the past directly, but has to be content to study surviving traces and signs of the past, from which he or she then can make probabilistic inferences about the past itself. Thus, historiography is a source-based discipline; the most elementary requirement for every historian is that he or she must get his or her data from a source which can be documented and the most vital resource to the historian is access to sources. Concomitantly, a fairly elaborate set of rules, known as 'source criticism', has been developed to assess the reliability and accuracy of the sources and the data contained in them.

That the question of sources is also vital to precolonial history in Tanzania should not be difficult to appreciate. A major factor giving rise to differences in interpretation is sheer lack of data owing to the lack and unreliability of the sources. Though by no means nonexistent, they are relatively scanty, unevenly distributed and of dubious quality. This is obviously true of written sources, the staple of historians trained to work with documents. For our purposes the most important are what can be called 'written ethnographic sources', mainly synchronic descriptions of the social, economic, cultural, and political life of various African peoples which were based on firsthand observation and information.<sup>12</sup> Such descriptions are very rare for the earlier period. Until the mid-19th century they refer almost entirely to the coastal area.<sup>13</sup> The earliest

---

12. For a more detailed discussion, see my 'Written Ethnographic Sources and Some Problems Connected with their Use in African Historiography', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 11 (1986) pp. 55—69.

13. The most important and best-known of the older documents are printed in English in G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, ed., *The East African Coast. Selected Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century*. London, 1975 (1st ed. 1962). See also G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, *The French at Kilwa Island*. Oxford, 1965. Also in existence are many still inadequately known documents in Swahili and Arabic. The first European work with detailed firsthand material concentrating on the East African coast is C. Guillain, *Documents sur l'histoire, la géographie et le commerce de l'Afrique Orientale*, 3 vols. Paris, 1856.

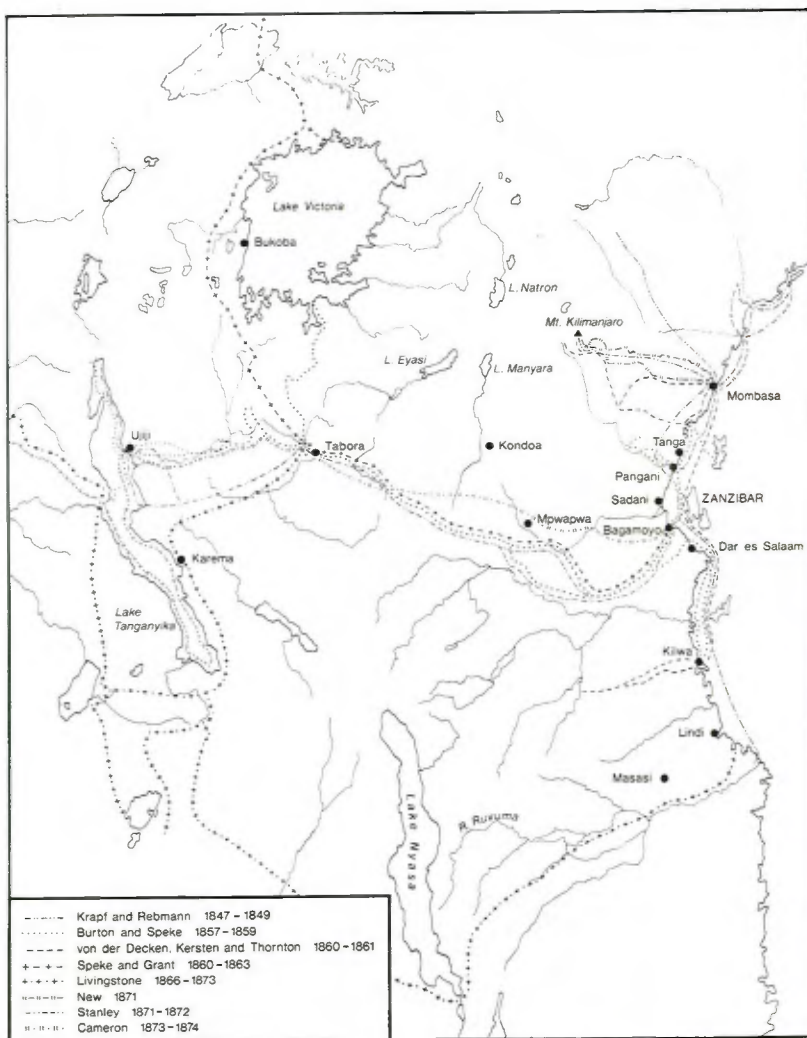
firsthand documents from inland, i.e. reports by the first European missionaries and travellers, are, with a few exceptions, results of the 'opening up' of the interior, and date from as recently as the 1850s.<sup>14</sup> Although travelling and missionary work accelerated notably from the 1870s onward, written sources, while invaluable as our first firmly datable source material, can give only detached and random flashes of information from various quarters of a huge area.

Few people nowadays doubt that the corpus of early ethnographic sources is seriously flawed in a qualitative sense. These sources are based on the observations — inevitably superficial and coloured by strong preconceptions — of travellers who had passed quickly through certain parts of the country (maps 2—4), or on the experiences of foreigners who had stayed for a long period of time in an environment which they did not know or understand. When the unfamiliar reality was communicated through the eye-pieces of an Europe desirous of expansion and further distorted by the personal predilections of the authors, the result was often strongly biased, magnifying one side of African societies and minimising or overlooking others. Furthermore, in the absence of independent checks, whatever experiences the observers had could easily be shaped in the process of writing to give the desired impression.

That travellers' account suffer from serious defects is immediately recognizable. In some cases, though they are exceptional, travel reports were later challenged, and it has

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14. The first European who travelled in the Tanzanian interior and left a brief report behind him seems to have been the Portuguese Gasparo Bocarro, who visited the southern parts in 1616, see John Gray, 'A Journey by Land from Tete to Kilwa in 1616', *Tanganyika Notes and Records* (hereafter *TNR*), 25 (1948), pp. 37—47. There are no further firsthand reports until those of the German missionaries Johann Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann. They went to Kilimanjaro (Rebmann) and Usambara (Krapf) in 1848 and published detailed descriptions of their journeys first in missionary journals, then in a book in German in 1858 (J.L. Krapf, *Reisen in Ostafrika ausgeführt in den Jahren 1837—1855*. Stuttgart, 1858). An abridged English translation appeared two years later (J.L. Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an eighteen years' residence in Eastern Africa*. London, 1860).



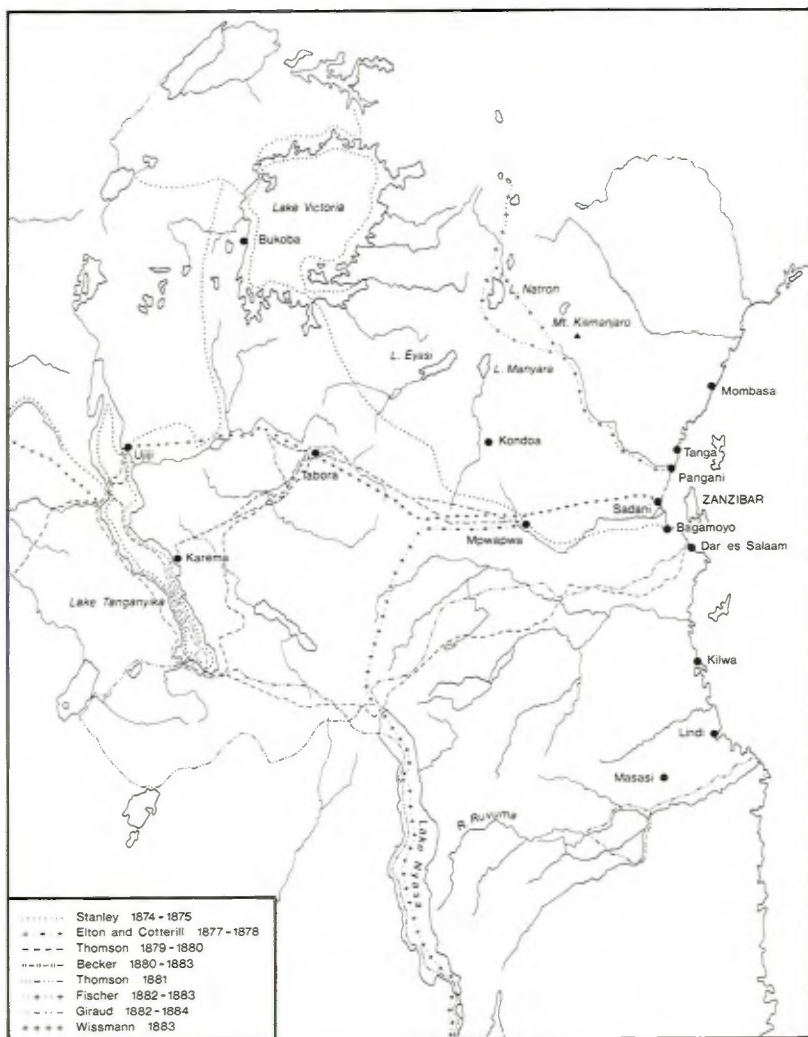
Map 2. Major explorations 1847—1874.



remained unclear whether the events described in them ever happened,<sup>15</sup> and whether the travellers actually went to all the places they claimed to have visited.<sup>16</sup> Even when factual information is less glaringly unreliable, reports by early travellers rest on shaky foundations. The opinion they formed of a certain part of the country depended much on the period during which they happened to pass through it. Ugogo was depicted in a very different light depending on whether it was visited during the rainy or dry season.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes our 'eye-witnesses' were so disabled by attacks of diseases that they were literally unable to see anything but "mist and glare."<sup>18</sup> More often they were irritated by the difficulties they encountered on the way and poured their irritation into their diaries. As noted by Joseph Thomson, who travelled across the southern parts of the country in 1878–80, "most travellers under the influence of fever and the thousand troubles attendant on African travelling, have much maligned and unjustly abused the natives."<sup>19</sup>

This criticism applies in particular to what are superficially the most valuable of the early sources, the detailed, fluent writings of

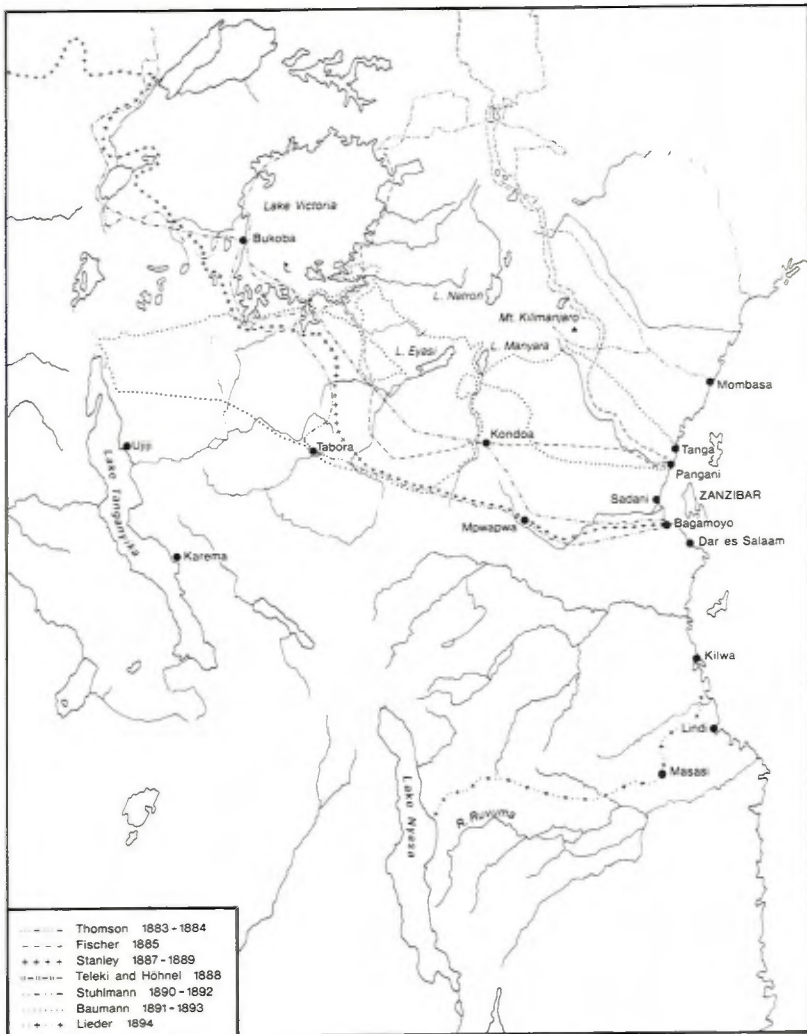
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15. Roland Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*. London, 1957, pp. 64–66, shows that the battle described on pp. 117–119 in Johnston's book *The Kilima-Njaro Expedition*. London, 1886, did not happen in reality.
  16. Victor Giraud, *Les lacs de l'Afrique Équatoriale*. Paris, 1890, pp. 137–142 gives a quite plausible description of his encampment inside Kalenga, the fortified capital of the Hehe king Mkwawa (see also the picture on p. 351). The Africans, while not denying Giraud's visit to Uhehe, insisted to the missionary Basilius that no white man had ever entered the fort before it was invaded by the Germans, Basilius, 'Ein Spaziergang nach Uhehe', *Missions-Blätter*, 1897, p. 206.
  17. As noted by Franz Paulssen, 'Rechtsanschauungen der Wagogo', *Baessler-Archiv*, 6 (1922), p. 175.
  18. This was John Hanning Speke's first impression of Lake Tanganyika, Speke, *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. London, 1967 (1st ed. 1864), p. 203.
  19. Joseph Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes and back*, I. London, 1881, p. 238.



Map 3. Major explorations 1874—1884.

Richard Burton.<sup>20</sup> In addition to his own acute observations he acquired much of his information from the local Arabs.<sup>21</sup> He moulded his data according to his own predilections and wrote of African peoples with a particular venom, behind which one of his biographers detects "an element of envy" of things like the reputed sexual superiority of the Africans.<sup>22</sup> Be that as it may, while the sharpness of Burton's observations is generally acknowledged, many of his judgements have later been strongly challenged. As Bishop Steere said, Burton's *Zanzibar* was "just what an ill-conditioned coarse-minded man with the fever would be likely to write. There is truth at the bottom of it, but the general result is wholly untruthful."<sup>23</sup> Strong personal predilections were by no means exclusive to Burton among the early explorers. David Livingstone, it has been suggested later, was suffering from a manic depressive disorder that sometimes verged on the psychotic. This "led him to disregard unwelcome facts and modify unacceptable evidence to fit in with the Holy purpose."<sup>24</sup> The works of Henry M. Stanley, who was first sent to Africa in search of

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20. The most important is a description of a journey, undertaken together with John Hanning Speke, from Zanzibar to Lake Tanganyika 1857—58, 'The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa ...', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* (hereafter *JRGS*), 29 (1859), pp. 1—464 and its book version *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 2 vols. London, 1860 (new ed. New York, 1961). Twelve years later, based on the same journey, appeared *Zanzibar; City, Islands and Coast*, 2 vols. London, 1872. It, too, contains valuable material, but, as a retrospective work is even more unreliable and misleading than previous works.
  21. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 20, 27; idem, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 296.
  22. Fawn M. Brodie, *The Devil Drives. A Life of Sir Richard Burton*. London, 1967, pp. 149—152.
  23. Bishop Steere to Ann Steere, 17 July 1872, quoted in Henry M. Stanley, *Stanley's Dispatches to the York Herald 1871—1872, 1874—1877*, ed. Norman R. Bennett, Boston, 1970, p. 169, fn. 4. For further criticism of Burton's works from various standpoints, see Mrs Charles E.B. Russell, ed., *General Rigby, Zanzibar and the Slave Trade*. London, 1935, pp. 241 ff.; Fridolin Bösch, *Les Banyamwezi*. Münster, 1930, pp. 525—526; Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa 1856—1890*. London, 1939, p. 127.
  24. Oliver Ransford, *David Livingstone. The Dark Interior*. Southampton, 1978, pp. 1—5, 111—112.



Map 4. Major explorations 1883—1894.

Dr Livingstone but who then became a major traveller and a colonial *conquistador* in his own right, have been shown to be altogether extravagant in places with their journalistic colour and circumstantiality.<sup>25</sup>

However, it is important to stress that neither were most reports of longer-staying residents based on anything approaching all-round knowledge of the 'native life'. Missionaries, living 'in the bush' apparently near the Africans (map 5), built small worlds of their own and did not usually penetrate the surrounding village life.<sup>26</sup> The Anglican missionaries in the southern parts of the country, from whom many travellers received much of their information,<sup>27</sup> complained in their internal correspondence constantly of the vast "secret life" of the Africans to which the missionaries had been unable to secure access.<sup>28</sup> They, as well as later ethnologists and anthropologists, received much of their information from a few 'informants', usually older men who often had an axe to grind and knew how to manipulate their interrogators. Sometimes these "elder gentlemen" may have played deliberate tricks on the researchers,<sup>29</sup> but more often, particularly in their more retrospective accounts during the later colonial period when indirect rule had become the dominant colonial ideology, they probably just presented a reified version of the past, idealizing "a circumscribed power and influence which they had lost," thus buttressing their own position against junior men and

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25. For criticism of Stanley see e.g. E.C.Hore, *Missionary to Tanganyika 1877—1888*, ed. James B. Wolf. London, 1971, p. 104 and Herrmann, 'Ugogo, das Land und seine Bewohner', *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten* (hereafter *MDS*), 5, (1892), p. 192.

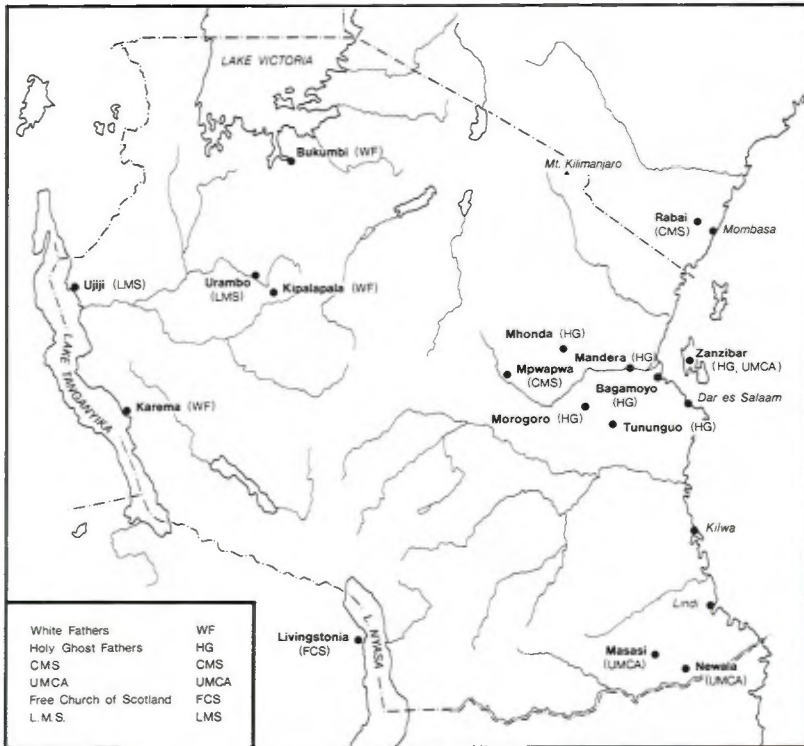
26. This point was made explicitly with regard to German evangelical missionaries in the early colonial period in south-western Tanzania, S.R. Charsley, *The Princes of Nyakusa*. Nairobi, 1969, p. 49.

27. G. Lieder, 'Reise von der Mbampa-Bai am Nyassa-See nach Kiswera am Indischen Ozean', *MDS*, 10 (1897), p. 123.

28. Terence Ranger, 'From Humanism to the Science of Man: Colonialism in Africa and the Understanding of Alien Societies', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 26 (1976), p. 119.

29. As claimed by one of Ranger's informants in the case of the German ethnographer Karl Weule who visited southern Tanzania in 1906, Ranger, *From Humanism*, p. 134.





Map 5. Mission stations to 1884.

women.<sup>30</sup> One way to achieve this effect was to conflate social norms with social practices, to present what ought to have been done as what was done. As Sally Falk Moore has noted, old ethnographies are full of legal rules stated as practices.<sup>31</sup>

Scarcity and limited reliability are problems also with other types of sources. Despite repeated exhortations to inter-

30. Terence Ranger, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983, pp. 254–259; Paul Richards, 'Ecological Change and the Politics of African Land Use', *African Studies Review* (hereafter *ASR*), 26 (1983), p. 11 (quotation).

31. Sally Falk Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications. "Customary" Law on Kilimanjaro, 1880–1980*. Cambridge, 1986, p. 39.

disciplinarity in research about the African past,<sup>32</sup> African history never really became the “decathlon of social science” it was once claimed to have been.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, disciplines like archaeology and linguistics have established their positions as major approaches to the African past, and their practitioners believe that both of them still have much untapped potential. “Archaeology’s problem is that the workers are relatively few, the continent is vast, and the forces of decay are especially pervasive. Linguistic historians and history-minded linguists are even fewer in number than archaeologists...”<sup>34</sup> Insights from more esoteric disciplines such as physical anthropology, plant genetics, serology or astronomy have also been occasionally employed, in particular for the purpose of dating events whose occurrence is originally known from other sources. But historians of Africa have learned that the interpretation of archaeological, linguistic and other non-documentary material holds many difficulties and pitfalls on whose significance not even experts can agree among themselves and, accordingly, much of the information produced by these fields of scholarship should be understood rather as hypotheses than as attested ‘hard’ data.<sup>35</sup>

This leaves oral tradition as the main alternative source. However, the high expectations attached to it have had to be

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32. E.g. J. Ki-Zerbo, ‘General Introduction’, in idem, ed., *General History of Africa* (hereafter *GHA*), I. Paris, London, 1981, pp. 16–19.
  33. Wyatt MacGaffey, ‘African History, Anthropology, and the Rationality of the Natives’, *HA*, 5 (1978), p. 103.
  34. ‘Introduction’, in Christopher Ehret and Merrick Posnansky, eds, *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1982, p. 1.
  35. For archaeology and its limitations in East African history see Peter Garlake in *JAH*, 20 (1979), pp. 457–459 and Robert Soper, ‘Bantu Expansion into Eastern Africa: Archaeological Evidence’, in Ehret and Posnansky, eds. *Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction*, p. 223; for the use of linguistics in African history see Franz Rottland and Rainer Vossen, ‘Sprache und Geschichte’, in Bernd Heine, Thilo C. Schadeberg and Ekkehard Wolff, eds, *Die Sprachen Afrikas*. Hamburg, 1981, pp. 479–512 and Derek Nurse, ‘Bantu Expansion into East Africa: Linguistic Evidence’, in Ehret and Posnansky, eds, *Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction*, esp. pp. 199–204, 220–211; for expressions of scepticism by historians see e.g. Jan

considerably reduced. The early optimism and confidence in the value of oral tradition as historical source in the 'Golden Age' of African historiography in the 1960s has given way to qualifications, serious doubts and outright dismissals. What was to become the "massive collection of tradition" has been abated and in many places largely aborted.<sup>36</sup> True, extremely 'fundamentalist' works in which oral tradition is taken at its face value and exact chronologies going back hundreds of years are constructed on its basis have continued to appear in print.<sup>37</sup> But, in the words of a perceptive critic, such compositions are "acts of faith not binding on other historians."<sup>38</sup> At the other end of the spectrum there have been 'iconoclastic' attacks on oral tradition which strongly question its historical value if not totally deny it. Such attacks have emanated from anthropologists and historians influenced by variants of functionalism and structuralism. They depart from the fact that while traditions purport to deal with the past they are essentially phenomena of the present that are being presented for purposes of the present, and that there is nothing in-built in them which guarantees the historicity of their content. Functionalists viewed oral traditions as social charters designed to legitimate the present institutions of the society, while structuralists explained them in terms of the universal symbolic categories created by the human mind. More concretely, it was suggested that many oral traditions may represent rather more general 'social' than particular 'historical' truths and historians should not try to grapple with them, especially without proper anthropological training, but should leave their decoding to antropologists and sociologists.<sup>39</sup>

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Vansina, 'The Bantu in the Crystal Ball', 2, *HA*, 7 (1980), pp. 314—317 and T.O. Ranger, 'Towards a Usable African Past', in Christopher Fyfe, ed., *African Studies since 1945*. London, 1976, esp. pp. 20—21.

36. See Roland Oliver in *JAH*, 27 (1986), pp. 393.

37. A major work of this 'Dalhousie school' is J.B. Webster, ed., *Chronology, Migration and Drought in Interlacustrine Africa*. London, Dalhousie, 1979.

38. David Henige, *Oral Historiography*. Burnt Mill, 1982, p. 97.

39. T.O. Beidelman, 'Myth, Legend and Oral History: A Kaguru Traditional Text', *Anthropos*, 65 (1970), esp. pp. 74—77; W.G. Clarence-Smith, 'For Braudel: A note on the 'Ecole des Annales' and the Historiography of Africa', *HA*, 4 (1977), pp. 275—281.



The limitations of oral tradition as a historical source have become widely acknowledged among Africanist historians. This is evident from the new, self-critical version of Jan Vansina's pioneering study<sup>40</sup> and a number of articles. Oral traditions are now seen to be extremely selective, ethnocentric and elite-oriented in their topics. In passing from one generation to another, they have been open to the influences and requirements of later periods and have been shaped and distorted in the course of time; there are very few, if any, 'uncontaminated' traditions.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, their time structure is shallow and their chronology unreliable, even at best only relative.<sup>42</sup> A further point widely agreed on is that oral traditions are more than a 'raw' source; they are also history, interpretations similar to those of literate historians.<sup>43</sup> But beyond that, the broad agreement begins to crumble, and one can discern differences of opinion as to what the 'presentist' nature of oral tradition entails for its historical interpretation. Vansina insists that oral traditions are "the representation of the past in present," a type of historical source in its own right, in principle equal with other types of sources. They can, and must, be used in conjunction

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40. The reference is to Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition as History*. London, Nairobi, 1985, which now supersedes his pioneering *De la tradition orale*. Tervuren, 1961, known in an English translation as *Oral Tradition*. Chicago, 1965. In particular, see *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. xii—xiii, 23—24, 92, 94 ff., 117—118, 156—160, 174 ff., 186 ff., 196—99.

41. For contamination of tradition, see David Henige, 'Truths Yet Unborn? Oral Tradition as a Casualty of Cultural Contact', *JAH*, 23 (1982), pp. 395—412, and idem., *Oral Historiography*, pp. 81—87, where the influence of written sources on oral tradition, termed 'feedback', is documented in detail. For examples from Tanzanian history, see Israel K. Katoke, *The Karagwe Kingdom*. Nairobi, 1975, p. xv and Alison Redmayne, 'The War Trumpets and Other Mistakes in the History of the Hehe', *Anthropos*, 65 (1970), pp. 98—109.

42. On this point, see also David Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera*. London, 1974.

43. Thomas Spear, 'Oral Tradition: Whose History?', *HA*, 8 (1981), pp. 165—181; for examples from Tanzanian history see Beverly Brock, 'The Nyiha', in Andrew Roberts ed., *Tanzania before 1900*. Nairobi, 1968, pp. 63—64 and P.H. Gulliver, 'A History of the Songea Ngoni', *TNR*, 41 (1955), pp. 16—17.

with other types of sources to correct other perspectives, as other perspectives correct them.<sup>44</sup> They have to be used because only they can give us historical information “from the inside” on preliterate societies. And they can be used with the resources of the historian.<sup>45</sup> Others maintain that traditions cannot any more be taken as analogous to historical documents. Instead of the words of tradition one has to concentrate on how, and from which evidence, oral historians construct their message.<sup>46</sup> We need not pursue the matter further here; let it suffice to note that such differences in interpretation are obviously dependent on the theoretical ideas the historians rely on, and a more adequate use of oral tradition still requires sustained theoretical effort.<sup>47</sup>

## From data to facts: dialogue between concept and evidence

The problems of scarcity and unreliability of sources for precolonial history are obvious and well known, but there are a host of other problems of methodology which are far less appreciated. They are not as much concerned with the ‘raw’ data of the sources as with the ways of making historical inferences on the basis of the data, or turning the data into ‘historical facts’ at a higher level of abstraction. In spite of its crucial nature this whole area is poorly served and much neglected in the more general methodological discussions by historians. The problems connected with inferences are debated mainly in specific contexts, often by arguing for or against a particular source, or type of source, allowing a particular inference. In this perspective, the methodology of history is reduced to source criticism coupled with a ‘fair reading’ of the sources thus scrutinized, as if there were

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44. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 196, 160.

45. See also Patrick Pender-Cudlip, ‘Oral Traditions and Anthropological Analysis: Some Contemporary Myths’, *Azania*, 7 (1972), pp. 3—23, which includes material on Tanzanian peoples.

46. Joseph C. Miller, ‘Introduction: Listening for the African Past’, in idem, ed., *African Past Speaks*. Folkestone, 1980, esp. pp. 2—4, 46 ff.

47. As argued by Elizabeth Tonkin, ‘Investigating Oral Tradition’, *JAH*, 27 (1986), pp. 203—213.

no more theoretical and conceptual problems involved in constructing the 'historical facts'. However, if the above distinction between data and facts is agreed to, it can be argued that, in the last analysis, there are no 'hard' historical facts at all but judgements accepted as facts by the research community.

While not wishing to deny or underplay the need and importance of thorough source criticism I feel that turning 'data' into 'facts' is an operation of a different order from ascertaining the accuracy and reliability of data, and this is where most of the real methodological difficulties of the historian lie. Few historians will agree with writers like Henry Bernstein and Jacques Depelchin, and others in the Althusserian tradition, who believe that what matters is what they call 'problematic' and that "every problematic *produces* its own facts." Yet, one can acknowledge that 'facts', in the complex sense defined above, are not given directly by the data either but must indeed be 'produced' by recombining the data within a theoretical framework and applying concepts and models of explanation to it.<sup>48</sup> In E. P. Thompson's elegant expression, historical research is a disciplined discourse, consisting basically of "a dialogue between concept and evidence."<sup>49</sup> And major concepts and explanatory models are to be found beyond evidence, in what can be loosely called theory.

Historians are normally among the least reflective of social scientists (if they consider themselves such) and there is a wide spectrum of opinion among them on the relation between history and theory.<sup>50</sup> Extremely few practising historians believe they have

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48. Cf. Bernstein and Depelchin, *Object of African History*, esp. pp. 8—11 (quotation p. 10, emphasis in the original). The idea that scientific knowledge cannot be empirically 'given' but must always be 'produced' by theoretical work was developed by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (see in particular his and Étienne Balibar's *Reading Capital*. London, 1975, pp. 34 ff.). It was popularised among English-speaking Marxists by Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*. London, 1975, esp. pp. 2—3, 308 ff. For criticism, see Robin Law, 'For Marx, but with Reservations about Althusser: A Comment on Bernstein and Depelchin', *HA*, 8 (1981), pp. 247—251.

49. E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*. London, 1978, p. 39.

50. I draw here freely on Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chs 7 and 8.

found a social theory which can be used to explain the course of history. At the other end of the spectrum a much greater number of historians continue to reject any use of theory. They argue that human behaviour can be influenced by such an immense variety of factors that no single theory of historical explanation is possible. There may be patterns and regularities in social life but these are not amenable to historical inquiry which is concerned with supposedly unique phenomena. However, there is also a relatively sizeable and probably growing group of historians who realize the usefulness of theory as a heuristic device. Although in their view historians may explore unique phenomena, they are ultimately not interested in uniqueness but in universality, i.e. in what is universal in the unique. Theory can then be productive in stimulating hypotheses and directing research to new questions and approaches. It is also valuable in explicating the unstated assumptions and prejudices of the historian. Nevertheless, according to this view, there are too many competing and inadequate theories for one of them to be chosen as the chief means of explanation.

## This study — a working model of precolonial Tanzania

The approach of this study is largely consonant with the last-mentioned view. This is a historical study, aimed at constructing a working model of social and economic life in the Tanzanian area before the colonial period. As a study of history, it is based on and constrained by the sources which are available: on the one hand direct written ethnographic accounts, on the other works of later historians based on mainly oral tradition or, in some cases, archaeological and linguistic material. Because of their relative scarcity sources must be used accurately, and because of their unreliability the principles of source criticism must be applied as far and as rigorously as is practically possible. None of the sources are new in the sense of having been previously unavailable, and only a few are used for study purposes for the first time here. Since I have not had the facilities to do my own local research based on a



combination of oral and written sources, this study can perhaps be regarded as a re-reading of old sources. But it is a re-reading with new questions from a partly new angle, and I have derived my questions from outside the sources, ultimately from theory. This study is inevitably informed by a variety of theoretical ideas which have also led to a number of theoretical problems.

My problematics stem from two main sources. The first can be loosely called the development discourse and the second the 'Marxist' or 'materialist' theory of history. By development discourse I mean that discussion on the causes and mechanisms of 'underdevelopment' which has been conducted in multifarious forms in a variety of fora since the 1960s and in which ideas of evolutionary 'modernization' have been pitted against those of 'dependency' and 'blocked' or 'distorted' development. When I began my research Tanzania seemed, with her indigenous post-Arusha development policies avowedly drawing on her own African tradition, to have embarked on a development path worthy of serious study and support. At the time I regarded the 'Marxist' or 'materialist' conception of history, in spite of its obvious inconclusiveness, as the most adequate tool with which to approach large historical processes. I still believe that Engels' suggestion that "the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life"<sup>51</sup> is worth taking seriously and other aspects of society have to be related to these "ultimately determining elements." That is also what I try to do in this study. But this is, despite its importance, only one element in Marxist theory. I have realized that there were many strands in Marx's own theory of history, not to mention the theories of his followers, which can be given different emphases in interpretation. I have grown suspicious of the basic evolutionary assumptions underlying the theory and think that its viable elements must be sought in its more structural propositions.<sup>52</sup>

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51. Engels to J. Bloch, 21 September 1890, as quoted in Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, p. 138.

52. I owe much of my present understanding of Marx's theory of history to works of two very different scholars: G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History. A Defence*. Oxford, 1978 and Maurice Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*. Cambridge, 1977 (*Horizon, trajets marxistes en anthropologie*. Paris, 1973) and idem, *The Mental and the Material*. London, 1986 (*L'idéal et le matériel*. Paris, 1984).

However, a further pursuit of these questions is not essential to the present work. I have become convinced that *all* our conceptual apparatuses and theoretical approaches, Marxist and non-Marxist alike, are entirely inadequate to describe let alone to explain social realities so deeply different from those of 19th-century Europe, where most of our basic concepts and approaches were developed. My foremost problem in studying Tanzanian history has been one of inadequate concepts stemming from inadequate theories. As Marc Bloch noted, an appropriate language, "capable of describing the precise outline of the facts, while preserving the necessary flexibility to adapt itself to further discoveries ... a language which is neither vacillating nor ambiguous" is the first tool needed by the historian — but such a language does not exist.<sup>53</sup> Historical concepts are elastic and malleable because they are derived from historical practice; they change as history changes (if not in the same tempo).<sup>54</sup> The concepts of our historical discourse are derived not from precolonial African history but, basically, from 19th-century and earlier European history, and their inadequacy for the purposes of this work will become evident as the study proceeds. Even the most general categories — 'production', 'reproduction' — have to be subjected to critical scrutiny. Contributions by later anthropologists and other modern social scientists, derived from fieldwork and other firsthand research experience in the societies concerned, may be more to the point than the earlier evolutionary or diffusionist conceptions. But based as they mostly are on contemporary conditions divorced from their historical context, they are not easily applicable to the study of history. And ultimately they too often fall back on older notions. This inadequacy of concepts has entailed serious problems. My

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53. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*. New York, 1953, pp. 156 ff. (quotation p. 157).

54. This is, of course, a large and inaccurate claim in a short sentence. The nature of historical concepts is an area of crucial importance which still requires a great deal of painstaking theoretical work. For some attempts in that direction, see e.g. Wolfgang Küttler, 'Zur Frage der Begriffsbildung und Begriffsgeschichte in der Geschichtswissenschaft', in Ernst Engelberg and Wolfgang Küttler, eds, *Probleme der geschichtswissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis*. Berlin (GDR), 1977, pp. 183—193 and Thompson, *Poverty of Theory*, pp. 43—46, 110.



basic methodological solution consists of a rejection of any attempt to develop new concepts and a reliance on the old inadequate ones, rendering the latter as usable as possible by devoting some effort to their discussion, disaggregation and partial redefinition.

One of the major problems, also partly conceptual, was finding the proper unit, or units, of study. This was a problem because the study focuses on a national unit but has no nation to deal with. Tanzania as a single definitive social, let alone national, unit did not exist in the precolonial period. In other words, there was no such things as 'precolonial Tanzania' as a historical phenomenon, a living social entity. The use of the concept 'Tanzania' for that period is mainly geographical, a reference to the area that corresponds to today's Tanzania. Hence, 'precolonial Tanzania' is more a contemporary than a historical concept, an area defined through its later history; it is a working model not only in the sense of a mentally reconstructed historical reality but also in a stronger sense of a deliberate historical construction. From this it follows that 'precolonial Tanzania' can only be the result, not the starting point, of a study. In reality it was an area inhabited by a large number of ethnically and socially constituted units during a long period of time and it can be (re)constructed only by a careful study and comparison of its constituent units and an analysis of the time dimensions involved — not by listing random scraps of information gathered from one group of people here and another group there at haphazard points of time.

The crux of the problem is that while it is impossible to try to speak intelligibly about social life in precolonial Tanzania without making generalizations, we have no explicit methods for arriving at them or for synthesising a great deal of basically local source material. One has to resort to comparison and the crucial choice has to be made: what to compare? What are the proper units of comparison? In a work of history, the aim of which is to produce empirical historical knowledge, an ideal solution might appear to be a careful study of selected aspects of each of the major social units in the area of precolonial Tanzania followed by inductive generalizations based on comparison of all the relevant cases. But, as will be evident, in practice such an attempt will face insurmountable obstacles: the units are too many and too varied in kind and the information concerning them is too scanty. However, even if the units were fewer in number and information

concerning them was ampler, the situation would not necessarily be any better. This question has a much deeper dimension than that of operational researchability; it is intimately connected to the question of what were the major units of social action in the area of precolonial Tanzania?

Contemporary Europeans, of course, believed that Africans belonged to 'tribes' led by 'chiefs'. This was the mental framework with which they perceived African countries and peoples and took down their notes which they bequeathed to us as our ethnographic and historical sources. As a result almost all our contemporary data is couched in ethnic, or rather tribal, terms. As is widely held today, the early observations were in this respects misconceived. Basic social units in precolonial Tanzania were not those based on ethnicity, called 'tribes' or 'ethnic groups'. What the basic units were is less widely agreed on; it will be argued in chapter 5 below that they were units determined by political and economic criteria which I propose to call 'societies'. It was within the latter that social relations were functioning and reciprocal social action took place. Precolonial ethnicity was extremely amorphous and fluid; many of what we in retrospect think of as ethnic 'groups' were not functioning groups but ethnic categories created by outsiders to grasp and simplify the bewildering variety of ethnic affiliations and identities. It must, then, be asked whether this makes our data fundamentally flawed and whether it is at all permissible to use ethnic terms in the description and analysis of the precolonial societies, or whether we should rather take the 'society' as the basic unit of study?

There are two possible answers. The first is simple if unsatisfying. What is desirable is not always practical. Whatever the worth of data couched in tribal terms, there is nothing to replace them. It would be quite impossible to write the study without resorting to them and without speaking of ethnic groups in the sense of ethnic categories as defined above. In an ideal world it would certainly be advisable to gather information from most, if not all, societies among the same ethnic group before making any generalizations. However, in practice this is impossible in a study like the present, which covers a large area and is based on pre-existing sources. This clearly is one of the major limitations of the study. We have to do not only with deficient information but also with ethnic terms because it is in those terms that the data are

provided and we have no way of breaking them down.

The second answer is more comforting. There evidently *were* ethnic differences between Tanzanian peoples, even if the differences did not correspond to the colonial idea of 'tribe', and a case can be made that the use of ethnic terms is permissible when it takes place with a clear awareness of their deficiency and relativity and when excessive generalizations on the basis of slender data are avoided. From the methodological point of view the important thing is not whether the ethnic terms employed in the study refer to integrated self-conscious ethnic groups, which they obviously often do not, but whether they function as ethnic categories and thus help to depict similarities and dissimilarities in the characteristics of different peoples, which may be a more plausible idea. There is no denying that operating with ethnic labels involves considerable risks in any case. The internal uniformity of peoples falling into such categories must never be taken for granted but has always to be established (or demolished) by the comparison of available sources.<sup>55</sup> More particularly, when speaking of precolonial peoples we must bear in mind that terms such as 'Hehe', 'Chagga', etc. do not refer to the modern populations with these names, perhaps not always even to their ancestors, but to people who happened to live in the areas which the modern peoples currently inhabit. The latter-day ethnic names will be used as geographical shorthand to avoid the tedious repetition of phrases like "the ancestors of the people who are now known as Hehe" (or Chagga etc.).<sup>56</sup> In addition, it is important to think of ethnicity not only in terms of 'tribes'. Even if information relating to one society cannot be automatically generalized within its own ethnic group, let alone outside it, it may nonetheless be possible to find structural features in common not only among the societies in the same ethnic group but often among several ethnic groups in larger 'cultural areas' which can also be taken as units of analysis.

Yet it must be stressed that ethnic criteria alone cannot define the units of a study of precolonial Tanzania, and the procedure I

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55. I have discussed these methodological problems in more detail elsewhere, see Koponen, *Written Ethnographic Sources*, esp. pp. 65–68.

56. The point was originally made by Alison Redmayne, 'The Hehe', in Roberts, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*, p. 38.

am following in this book does not give them such a role. Ethnic terms are indispensable as idioms of discourse, but they cannot be used for analytical purposes in this study because they do not reveal differences in the organizational structures of the groups. This is a study of developmental levels and potentialities of precolonial Tanzanian societies, and what matter here are not ethnic identities but economic and social structures. Basically, I employ ethnic terms to get at these structures and locate them. Was the economy of the people known as X based on cultivation, cattle-raising or hunting and gathering; were they grain-growers or banana cultivators, pastoralists, agropastoralists or mixed farmers; was their social organization based on matrilineal or patrilineal or other kinship systems? What about the people known as Y? It is only when ethnic categories are connected with economic and social categories that units for meaningful comparisons relevant to the questions of this study are found and the basis for generalizations of varying scope is laid. Then it also becomes clear that we do not always have to strive for 'total' country-wide generalizations but can often be quite satisfied with more restricted propositions, applying specifically to a certain type of society.

Another major difficulty in studying precolonial Tanzanian societies arises from the conflict between the historically changing nature of the societies and the static manner in which they are depicted by most sources. Because the central purpose of this study is to establish a baseline for colonial change, and because of the strict constraints imposed by the sources, the focus is quite explicitly on 'late precolonial Tanzania', say roughly from the late 1850s to the 1890s, or in some areas to the turn of the century when colonial changes began to make themselves felt. However, colonialism was far from being the first factor to affect these societies. Seen in retrospect it is clear that precolonial societies were not permanent, unchanging structures, as was often thought in colonial times. We now know that whatever their 'pre-contact' dynamics (or statics), precolonial societies were in a violent state of ferment and subject to strong pressures and processes of change as they came in contact with Europeans — which is the very time from which most of our earliest ethnographic sources emanate. This creates profound implications for the study of these societies. Features we observe in them may have been either genuinely



'traditional', caused by continuity of structure, or 'new', brought about by a recent change, or, as was probably a very common case, old and new amalgamated and articulated — traditional forms affected to a varying degree by change, recent importations appearing in a traditional guise. One of the main tasks of an empirical analysis then is to distinguish the 'traditional' influences from the more recent ones and to determine in what proportion new and old overlapped and how they were articulated.

Such methodological and theoretical considerations have largely determined the structure of this study. I begin with a narrative review of the forces of historical change, distinguishing a slow 'endogenous' development process from the quite recent 'opening up' of the East African interior and its integration into the emerging world market through the penetration of merchant capital in the form of long-distance trade over the coast of the Indian Ocean. The next chapter is a summary of the basics of those processes. The two subsequent chapters discuss the most immediate and dramatic effects of the trade-induced changes: the growth of slavery and portorage, and the intensification of war, famine and pestilence. From chapter 5 onwards I switch over to a more structural approach. First I try to define what I see as the main social units in the area, 'societies' constituted according to social, political and economic criteria. I also look at how these units were affected by the more recent changes. Only after that I go into what I regard as the most basic, most substantial processes and relations of these, or any, societies. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to processes and relations of production and chapters 8 and 9 to those of reproduction, with some observations on the changes which took place in them. In the concluding chapter the major points made in the course of the study are combined with some new empirical material and brought to bear on an attempt to confront the underlying question of the study: developmental levels and potentialities of Tanzanian precolonial societies, understood as the ways in which these societies functioned and the levels of material welfare they provided.

## 2. Endogenous and exogenous historical processes

If we wish to determine to what extent the social, economic and cultural patterns and institutions of Tanzanian precolonial societies in the late 19th century were due to structural, endogenously generated processes, and to what extent they were influenced by historically more recent and external factors, we obviously need some understanding of these processes and factors. While it is far beyond the scope of this study to attempt a detailed, systematic and substantive discussion of the history, or rather histories, of Tanzanian precolonial societies, we need a review of some of the main historical processes and factors working in those societies. In this chapter I seek to provide such a review. I am aware of the risks involved in an attempt to compress rich and enduring historical phenomena with all their real-life zigzags and ramifications into a few pages of narrative-dominated discussion. Yet those risks must be taken if we are to have any sort of historical basis for later discussion of the properties and workings of precolonial Tanzanian societies.

The argument of this chapter is that we can discern two simultaneous historical processes of differing origins superimposed in the Tanzanian area in the late 19th century: on the one hand a long, slow development of evolutionary type arising from the inner dynamics of African societies; on the other a rapid change spurred by external agents and direct intervention. The first type of development, *la longue durée* in Braudelian terms, can also be called endogenous if this concept is understood in the broad sense of African-based social development and external stimuli are not excluded. Its main driving forces flowed from within Africa, if not always within the Tanzanian area itself, and it was geared to satisfy the endogenously derived needs of African societies. The second type of development was propelled by outside historical agents. The best known, and by far the most important of them, was the penetration of merchant capital in the form of vastly increased long-distance trade into the Tanzanian societies. It created new economic structures which provided new



opportunities and new hazards for the inhabitants of the area. They could now become traders or porters, slavers or slaves. But there also emerged what might be called African outside agents: an African people now known as the Ngoni invading the area from the south not as peaceful settlers but as warriors and conquerors.

## Endogenous development — the main lines

It is not necessary to study Tanzanian precolonial societies very long to see that their endogenous development proceeded on the same evolutionary lines as everywhere else: advancement of forces of production, growth of population, settlement of new land. There occurred a change from hunting and gathering to food production and thus from a migrant way of life to more permanent habitation as well as an advancement from primitive technology to higher skills, and from simple political and social organization to more complex forms. However, when one turns from grand evolutionary conceptions to the history of the actual precolonial societies, the main lines vanish. Early East African history appears as “a story whose plot is unknown.”<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to say for how long the various peoples now inhabiting Tanzania have lived in their present locations. Oral tradition, the principal source of their history, extends for only a few centuries at best, while archaeological remains and philological and botanical evidence show that in many places settlement is far older. Thus, there emerges a great gap in the history of precolonial Tanzanian societies for those times. We do not even know whether the gap is real or apparent; whether, that is, the region contained earlier societies which have been completely replaced by later ones, or whether the historical continuity of these societies is simply impossible to determine by research methods presently available. To be sure, the well-known structural deficiencies of oral tradition

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1. Stanley H. Ambrose, ‘Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions of History in East Africa’, in Ehret and Posnansky, eds, *Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction*, p. 139.

in dating events make the latter alternative quite probable,<sup>2</sup> but we have no way of gauging the extent of the possible gap.

Nor is it known when and how the 'great transitions' occurred. Results of recent research indicate that both food production and the use of iron may in some parts of the region have been practised for much longer than has been thought. Research results are not free of ambiguities, however, and their interpretations change constantly. While some estimates suggest that food production started in the form of livestock raising in the Great Rift Valley in northern Tanzania as early as the sixth millennium b.c., other researchers wish to hold such estimates in abeyance until better substantiation is available. In East Africa they locate the earliest securely dated evidence for domestic stock in Kenya around the beginning of the second millennium b.c.<sup>3</sup> As for iron smelting, Peter R. Schmidt has argued in a series of influential publications that highly skilled techniques for iron production were in use in Buhaya at a very early date. However, he no longer suggests that iron smelting might have been an established technological system before the first centuries of our era.<sup>4</sup> Matters of similar controversy are questions such as whether some of these fundamental innovations were developed independently within the region or whether they came from the outside; if the latter, did they come with immigrants or through intermediaries, and how? The general

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2. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 23—24, 117—18, 168—69. Cf. the discussion above in the introduction, pp. 33—36.

3. Cf. Gadi G.Y. Mgomzulu, 'Recent Archaeological Research and Radiocarbon Dates from Eastern Africa', *JAH*, 22 (1981), p. 441 and Peter Robertshaw, 'Archaeology in Eastern Africa: Recent Developments and More Dates', *JAH*, 25 (1984), p. 371.

4. Peter R. Schmidt, 'New Look at Interpretations of the Early Iron Age in East Africa', *HA*, 2 (1975), pp. 127—136; idem, *Historical Archaeology*. Westport, 1978, pp. 152 ff.; Peter R. Schmidt and D.H. Avery, 'Complex Iron Smelting and Prehistoric Culture in Tanzania', *Science*, 201 (1978), pp. 1085—1089; Peter R. Schmidt and S. Terry Childs, 'Innovation and Industry during the Early Iron Age in East Africa: the KM2 and KM3 Sites of Northwest Tanzania', *The African Archaeological Review*, 3 (1985), pp. 53—94, esp. pp. 67—68. For further discussion, see below, ch. 6, pp. 262—263 and Roland Oliver's review in *JAH*, 20 (1979), pp. 289—290.

view favours the migration model: the first food producers included speakers of Cushitic languages who had moved from the north, and the first iron producers were immigrants speaking Bantu languages. However, all suggestions on this issue are based on slender and contradictory evidence which is open to various interpretations.<sup>5</sup> Recently, the possibility of independent indigenous innovation has been considered with increasing seriousness.<sup>6</sup>

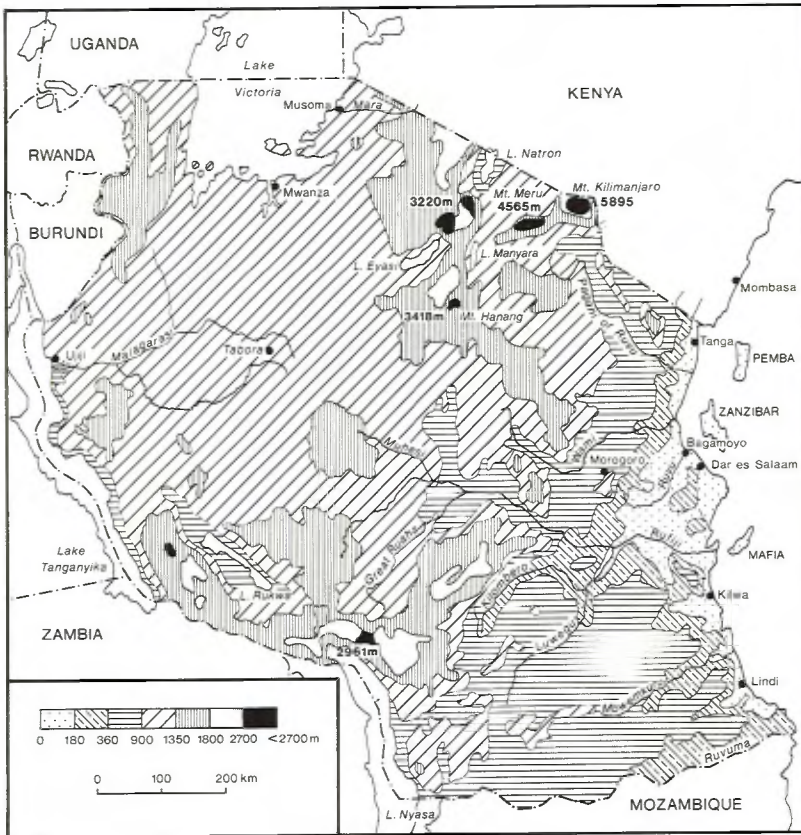
In any case we know that this 'African-born' development was a process lasting centuries and millennia and not only very slow but also very uneven. In most Tanzanian areas the transition to food production and the use of iron occurred much later than the first archaeological datings indicate; many inhabitants of the Tanzanian area remained hunters or gatherers and used stone implements long after food production and the use of iron had started elsewhere. As J.E.G. Sutton has recently remarked for Africa in general, "the old idea of a 'neolithic revolution', neatly dividing farming communities from more 'primitive' hunter-gatherer existence, is being abandoned as too simplistic."<sup>7</sup> After the first producers of northern Tanzania the next sure signs of food production are to be found among the first iron users, while the use of iron seems for a long time to have been limited to scattered locations mainly in the mountains and on the shores of lakes and rivers. It is only after 1000 a.d. that food production and iron seem to have spread more freely to different parts of the country. In many areas divergent technological and economic systems co-

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5. For a slightly different version, see Ambrose, *Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions*, esp. pp. 138—144; for development of the theory of 'Bantu expansion' see Colin Flight, 'Malcom Guthrie and the Reconstruction of Bantu Prehistory', *HA*, 7 (1980), pp. 81—110 and Vansina, *Crystal Ball*, *HA*, 6 (1979), pp. 287—333 and *HA*, 7 (1980), pp. 293—325.

6. As by Schmidt in the works cited in fn. 4 above. See esp. *Innovation and Industry*, pp. 54—55, 92.

7. J. E. G. Sutton, 'Irrigation and Soil-Conservation in African Agricultural History', *JAHS*, 25 (1984), p. 26.



Map 6. Relief and topography.

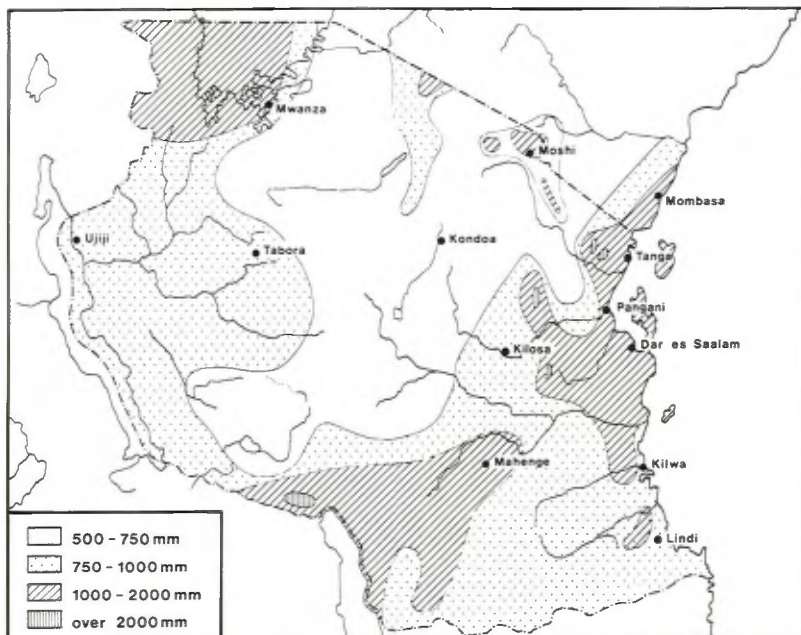
existed until the colonial times.<sup>8</sup>

Another way of looking at the broad lines of historical development is to determine what we know about the development of the ethnic structure of the area. The most salient ethnic differences were — and are — those between main language groups, which in turn often coincided with differences in the

8. For summaries of the early history of the Tanzanian region from various viewpoints see J.E.G. Sutton, 'The Pre-History of East Africa', in Ki-Zerbo, ed., *GHA*, I, pp. 452—486; David Phillipson, *The Later*



modes of production. Thus, one can discern a few great 'language-production groups'. These groups can also be thought of as representing different layers in Tanzanian history. Modern knowledge indicates that the original inhabitants of the area were hunters and gatherers possibly speaking Khoisan languages;<sup>9</sup> after



Map 7. Rainfall probability.

*Prehistory of Eastern and Southern Africa*. London, 1977; Roland Oliver, 'The East African Interior', in idem. ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa* (hereafter *CHA*), III. Cambridge, 1977, esp. pp. 625—630. For a reconstruction based on linguistic arguments see e.g. Christopher Ehret, 'Agricultural History of Central and Southern Africa c. 1000 BC to 500 AD', *Transafrican Journal of History* (hereafter *TJH*), 4 (1974), pp. 1—26.

9. However, it is problematic whether the few remaining hunter-gatherers in Tanzania can be regarded as direct descendants of 'original' hunters. Assumptions of kinship between the Sandawe and

them appeared Cushitic and Bantu farmers and stockraisers; finally came Nilotic herdsmen.<sup>10</sup> Speakers of Bantu languages were by far the most widespread, and eventually composed the bulk of the population.<sup>11</sup> Only in the central areas there remained a sizeable section intruding from the north where speakers of Cushitic, Nilotic and other languages were interspersed with Bantu speakers (map 1, pp. 24—25).

The process of endogenous development was shaped, though by no means entirely determined, by the basic ecology of the area (maps 6 and 7). The variety of peoples and economies came almost to match the variety of ecosystems. The farming population sought — or was born in — districts whose water supply was assured and soil fertile: the coast and offshore islands, volcanic mountain slopes, shores of great lakes. Livestock raisers and hunter-gatherers accepted also lands with less rain and fertility (which is not to imply that the lands they occupied were always unsuitable for cultivation).<sup>12</sup> However, genuinely good farming land was limited. Over most of the area rains were too capricious, evaporation was too high and soils were too poor to support a sizeable cultivating population. Thus, when cultivators gradually moved to drier areas they had to spread themselves out widely. In this way there emerged a regional structure whereby areas peripheral in present-day Tanzania became much more densely populated than central ones. The population density was highest on the shores of the Indian Ocean and Lakes Victoria Nyanza, Tanganyika, Nyasa and Rukwa, in the north-eastern mountains and later in parts of the southern highlands. These regions differed in their economy from those which were thinly populated. Perennial plants, especially

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Hadza peoples, or of their common kinship with the Khoisan peoples of southern Africa are open to the strongest doubts. See James L. Newman, *The Ecological Basis for Subsistence among the Sandawe of Tanzania*. Washington, 1970, pp. 17—19.

10. Cf. Roland Oliver, 'The Nilotic Contribution to Bantu Africa', *JAH*, 23 (1982), pp. 433—442.

11. From precolonial times, naturally, no numerical estimates are available. Among later data the most precise are from the 1957 census, according to which Bantu languages were spoken by 94.2 % of the Tanganyika population and non-Bantu languages by 5.8 %. See Edgar Polomé and C.P. Hill, eds, *Language in Tanzania*. Oxford, 1980, p. 4.

12. Cf. Peter Rigby, *Persistent Pastoralists*. London, 1985, p. 96.



the productive banana, were cultivated in damp, populous areas; in drier localities of sparse population the main crops were annual cereal plants. Although livestock was kept in both types of district, its concentration was relatively higher in the sparsely populated ones. It will be argued below that these ecological and economic differences go far to explain the precolonial history of the Tanzanian region. Banana cultivation demanded a settled, stable population, while millet growers and livestock raisers were obliged to move from one place to another when the fertility of the land or the possibilities for grazing was exhausted. This conditioned the development of many social and political institutions.<sup>13</sup>

## Change from outside: long-distance trade and 'opening up'

Forces of endogenous change were still shaping African societies at the end of the 19th century, but they were then joined and surpassed by a transforming process which clearly flowed from sources outside Africa. This was the 'opening up' of the East African interior and its integration with the emerging world market through long-distance trade over the coast of the Indian Ocean. The matter has been discussed in numerous books on the history of East Africa and the original, heavily coast-centred approach, " 'the long tyranny of the coast' over the historiography of Tanzania,"<sup>14</sup> has duly given way to a more balanced view. The active part played by African traders in the emergence of long-distance trade routes connecting the coast with the interior has long since been acknowledged.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, despite the

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13. For development of political institutions, see below, ch. 5, pp. 197 ff.

14. Andrew Roberts, 'Introduction', in idem, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*, p. v.

15. The best short introductions are: Edward Alpers, 'The Coast and the Development of Caravan Trade' in I.N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu, eds, *A History of Tanzania*. Nairobi, 1969, esp. pp. 46—56 and Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 40—52.

emphasis on activities of African traders, not much evidence had been brought to light to challenge the thesis that the long-distance trade system was based on increased demand and interference from outside Africa. As argued by Abdul M.H. Sheriff,<sup>16</sup> it was the mounting demand for two major East African products, ivory and slaves, combined with a coincident fall in the prices of manufactured goods popular in East Africa that provided an economic foundation for the opening up of the East African interior. This process was managed from the coast, from Zanzibar. Omani Arabs, led by Sultan Saiyid Said allied with Indian merchants and financiers, built there the centre of a 'commercial empire' and a plantation economy kept going by slave labour imported from the mainland.

It was not that external trade was new, nor that ivory and slaves were new export items for East Africa. What was new was the scale and intensity of the operations, above all the forceful penetration to the far interior of the effects of the mounting external demand in the form of direct long-distance trade and the concomitant integration of the interior with the coast and the outside world. However, our present knowledge of Tanzanian precolonial history strongly warns against stressing the exogenous element too much. It was certainly not a question of the flutes in Zanzibar making the Africans on the mainland dance, as the old saying put it. It was a much more complex process of initiative and counterinitiative, stimulus and response, taking place under specific but rapidly changing historical conditions. To quote Steven Feierman, even if the "pervasive forces" were those of the world market "the historical actors were indigenous people working in their self-interest."<sup>17</sup> While the outside factors and structural forces shaped

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16. Originally in his pioneering thesis, 'The Rise of a Commercial Empire: An Aspect of the Economic History of Zanzibar, 1770—1873'. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1971, esp. pp. 208—217. The argument is reiterated and backed up with some new statistics in his 'Ivory and Commercial Expansion in East Africa in the Nineteenth Century', in G. Liesegang et al., eds, *Figuring African Trade*. St. Augustin, 1983, pp. 416—449 and in the book based on the thesis, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*. London, 1987, esp. pp. 2, 101 ff.

17. Steven Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom. A History*. Madison, 1974, p. 172.

the conditions in which historical processes took place, the outcome was not predetermined by them. Rather it emerged as the sum total of the historically conditioned activities of all the participants.

## Zanzibar: the art of buying cheap and selling dear

Ivory and slaves had been exported from East Africa to Arabia and Asia from the 'time immemorial'. We have no way to gauge the quantitative dimensions of the early trade but there are not many grounds for believing that, as far as the Tanzanian area is concerned, it could have been more than a fraction of what it rose to at its height in the 19th century. True, this is a matter of some historiographical controversy. Much of the disagreement, however, stems from the tendency, particularly accentuated with earlier writers, to treat East Africa as a block failing to distinguish between different regions within it. There is fair unanimity among scholars that ivory was the principal export of the East African coast since the early centuries of our era.<sup>18</sup> However, the economy of those Tanzanian Swahili towns which grew prosperous after the 12th century, notably Kilwa Kisiwani, was based on their middleman position in the trade of Zimbabwean gold.<sup>19</sup> This implies that the ivory resources which were exploited and traded must have been rather limited. As far as we know, ivory was to a large extent procured in the vicinity of the coast. When ivory came from further inland, it seems that much of it, including some exported through Tanzanian ports, originated from the areas of present-day Mozambique and Malawi rather than from Tanzania.<sup>20</sup>

The case of slaves is even more clear-cut. It is extremely doubtful that slave exports could have appreciably affected the

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18. E.g. Abdul M.H. Sheriff, 'Trade and Underdevelopment', in Bethwell A. Ogot, ed., *Hadith 5. Economic and Social History of East Africa*. Nairobi, 1975, pp. 10, 12; Neville Chittick, 'The East Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean', in Oliver, ed., *CHA*, III, p. 215.

19. For the ancient Kilwa see Neville Chittick, *Kilwa*, 2 vols. Nairobi, 1974 and idem, *East Coast*, esp. pp. 205 ff., for trade esp. pp. 215—216.

20. See Edward Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1975, esp. pp. 45—46, 61, 121—126.

development of Tanzanian population or economy before the end of the 18th century. The writers who argued, like the great colonial historian Sir Reginald Coupland, that the slave trade ran "like a scarlet thread through all ... history of East Africa"<sup>21</sup> failed to notice two things. The first is that what evidence there is from the pre-18th-century slave exports from East Africa is from the north, mainly from the Horn of Africa.<sup>22</sup> The second is that no one has been able to explain satisfactorily where the vast masses of slaves supposedly exported to the north could have ended up. That there were, and had long been, a number of African slaves in several Arabian and Persian Gulf countries, India and even China is beyond doubt. But their numbers are a matter of speculation and there is not much to suggest that it ever could have been very large. Rather, there is more reason to believe the contrary. In particular, it is most unlikely that the demand for them could have been vigorous. They were used mainly as domestic servants, concubines, soldiers and labourers on public works and smaller estates, not on plantations geared towards an expanding world market.<sup>23</sup> As a high British official noted, the East African slave

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21. Reginald Coupland, *East Africa and Its Invaders*. New York, 1965 (1st ed. 1938), p. 17. For modern writers in similar vein, see R.W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa*. London, 1976, esp. pp. 2—5; Esmond B. Martin and T.C.I. Ryan, 'A Quantitative Assessment of the Arab Slave Trade of East Africa', *Kenya Historical Review* (hereafter *KHR*), 5 (1977), pp. 71—91. Even such a careful scholar as Fredrick Cooper echoes this position, without providing documentation, in his otherwise excellent *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*. New Haven, London, 1977, p. 39.
  22. See Chittick, *East Coast*, pp. 215—216 and G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, 'The Coast, 1498—1840', in Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew, eds, *History of East Africa* (hereafter *HEA*), I. Oxford, 1963, pp. 154—155.
  23. Ralph Austen has gathered some available references in the appendix tables 7.1 and 7.2 in his 'From the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean: European Abolition, the African Slave Trade and Asian Economic Structures', in David Eltis and James Walvin, eds, *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Madison, 1981, pp. 133—135. This can be taken to represent a maximum statement because Austen believes in the great magnitude of the trade. For more cautious estimates, see Sheriff, *Trade and Underdevelopment*, pp. 11—12; idem, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 35—41; and Edward Alpers, *The East African Slave Trade*. Nairobi, 1967, pp. 4—5.



trade as observed in the 1870s was "the growth of the last half-century."<sup>24</sup>

Old patterns were transformed because of new demands and responses. Yet this does not imply that there was a total break with the past or that old networks of trade were completely replaced by new ones based on demands from the emerging capitalist world market. Rather, much of the old trade continued to exist and even intensified, but at the same time it was greatly augmented by the new trade generated by new demands. This process began in the late 18th century. The first to accelerate seems to have been the slave trade. This was evidently caused by the French who began in 1735 to establish sugar plantations on the islands now known as Mauritius and Réunion. The demand for labour was strong; the slave population grew from nothing to about 100 000 in 1799. From the 1770s part of the slaves, anything between a few hundred and a few thousand annually, were transported from the coast of southern Tanzania. This trade continued till the 1820s. Whether the slave trade to Oman and the Persian Gulf grew at the same time, as speculated by some scholars, is impossible to say in the absence of sources.<sup>25</sup> As to ivory, the rise in demand occurred somewhat later, in the beginning of the 19th century. Most of the East African ivory had been exported to India. Much of it was used there in the production of luxury articles, the most important of which were probably bangles that Hindu and Muslim women of both upper and lower classes wore during their wedding ceremonies.<sup>26</sup> The demand for such purposes must have been relatively modest even if steady. Now, as Europe and North America grew rich, the demand for ivory rose steeply. Its field of

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24. Sir Bartle Frere, 'Memorandum on the Position and Authority of the Sultan of Zanzibar', inclosure in Frere to Granville, 7 May 1873, *British Parliamentary Papers*, Irish University Press Series (hereafter *BPP*), Slave Trade 91, 'Correspondence respecting Sir Bartle Frere's Mission to the East Coast of Africa, 1872—73', 1873 (c.820) vol. LXI, p. 116.

25. C.S. Nicholls, *The Swahili Coast*. London, 1971, pp. 196—201; John Gray, *History of Zanzibar from the Middle Ages to 1856*. Oxford, 1962, pp. 91—96; Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 38 (for the suggestion of increased exports to Oman, the Persian Gulf and India).

26. Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, pp. 118—120; Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, pp. 86—87.

use extended to the combs and piano keys of the newly rich in the western world. As one student puts it, "(i)n many ways, ivory played the same part in the nineteenth century as plastics do in the mid-twentieth century, but it was much more expensive and was always considered a luxury article."<sup>27</sup>

External demand was carried to the interior of East Africa by Omani Arabs under the lead of Saiyid Said ibn Sultan, the ruler of Oman since 1806. Seafarers of great renown, raiders and traders across the Indian Ocean for centuries, the Omani were well fitted to the task. To be sure, we do not know what exactly were the considerations which made Said subdue the main Swahili towns on the Tanzanian coast and gradually between 1828 and 1840 move his court, without an official announcement, to verdant Zanzibar. As C.S. Nicholls says, it is "unlikely that Said originally made a definite decision to expand in East Africa. It is much more likely that, as years went by, so his involvement with the Swahili Coast developed its own momentum, and ... this produced an ever increasing interest and implication in the problems and opportunities of East Africa."<sup>28</sup> However, from what we know it appears evident that among his main motivations must have been the 'pull' of commerce on the one hand and the 'push' of intra-Omani struggles and intrigues on the other. It also seems plain that much of his success was due to his skill in exploiting the new constellation of economic and political forces: the increased demand for East African products and the competition between Britain and France in the waters of the Indian Ocean. All these factors and developments have been discussed at great length by a number of political historians.<sup>29</sup> For us, more important questions are the nature of the 'commercial empire' Said built up and its functioning.

Said's empire was grafted onto the old Swahili communities of

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27. R.W. Beachey, 'The East African Ivory Trade in the 19th Century', *JAH*, 8 (1967), p. 288.

28. Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, p. 133.

29. See Coupland, *Invaders*, esp. chs 5, 8 and 9; Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, chs. 3—9; Norman R. Bennett, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar*. London, 1978, esp. pp. 14 ff.



the East African coast.<sup>30</sup> Its heart was at Zanzibar. The Omanis had controlled the island from about 1700, but it was in Said's time that an entirely new social system based on Arab political domination, Indian capital and plantation slavery was established there. From Zanzibar arteries of the new system led to the main Swahili towns on the mainland in which Said, often after securing the cooperation of some of the traditional ruling groups, appointed governors and custom collectors and even established garrisons. Having been born as a result of centuries of interaction between indigenous elements and outside influences,<sup>31</sup> the Swahili towns had the resilience to accommodate new arrangements. Settled at least from the ninth century a.d. onwards,<sup>32</sup> these towns had been engaged as *entrepôts* in the monsoon-carried maritime trade across the Indian Ocean to Northwestern India, the Persian Gulf and Oman (map 8). They had developed a rhythm of their own, largely independent of interior societies, and learned to live with foreigners, whether they came as peaceable traders, or as raiders and conquerors like the Portuguese and then the Omani. Even if the measure of control which Said established not only in Zanzibar but over many coastal towns was probably greater than had been achieved by any foreign invader before,<sup>33</sup> outside Zanzibar the Omani empire remained a network of ports, later complemented by a few inland *entrepôts*, which was held together more by shared

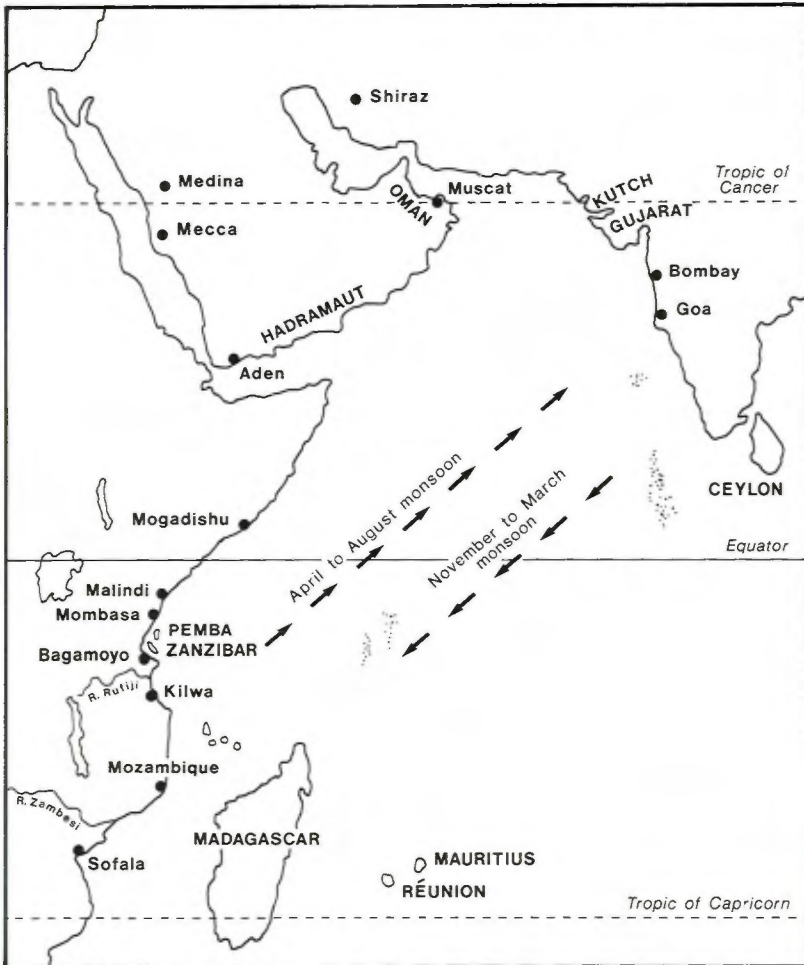
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30. When not otherwise indicated I have drawn on the above-mentioned standard works by Cooper, Coupland, Nicholls and Sheriff as well as Sheriff's article 'Tanzanian Societies at the Time of the Partition', in M.H.Y. Kaniki, ed., *Tanzania under Colonial Rule*. London, 1980, esp. pp. 35—48.

31. It may not be unfair to say that the Swahili civilization is still better known than understood. For recent reinterpretations and overviews giving more weight to the African contribution in the emergence of the Swahili, see James de Vere Allen, 'Swahili Culture and the Nature of East Coast Settlement', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* (hereafter *IJAHS*), 14 (1981), pp. 306—34; Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili*. Philadelphia, 1985; Randall L. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*. Cambridge, 1987.

32. As indicated by recent excavations. See Robertshaw, *Archaeology*, p. 386 and Nurse and Spear, *Swahili*, p. 21.

33. This has been analysed by Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, esp. pp. 28, 38 ff., 312 ff., 379.



Map 8. Western Indian Ocean and monsoon winds.

commercial interests than by a state structure.<sup>34</sup> "I am nothing but a merchant," Said once exclaimed.<sup>35</sup> It was much too modest an interpretation but true in the sense that he wanted to govern trade, not a territory.

As is well-known, the Zanzibari commercial empire was based on long-distance trade and plantation slavery. What is not known is to what extent its construction was far-sightedly planned and actively initiated by the Omani and their Indian financiers, and to what extent they merely seized opportunities as they came along. But the odds are heavily in favour of the latter. A lively trade was already developing when Saiyid Said arrived. Zanzibar, with its fine harbour, had become an important slave market in the closing decades of the 18th century. Both French and Omani dealers were operating there. At the same time an increasing part of the East African ivory trade was directed to Zanzibar. One reason for this was that the Portuguese authorities had abruptly doubled the export duties on ivory at the former ivory exporting centre, the island of Mozambique.<sup>36</sup> Basically, what Said set out to do was to further the existing trade and to attract it to Zanzibar.

The commercial system was strengthened by policy measures aimed at encouraging overseas trade and streamlining the facilities servicing it. The first among these was the encouragement of immigration from Arabia and Asia to form the basis of an entrepreneurial class. The result was a heavy inflow of immigrants. The number of Arabs, mainly from Oman, grew from a few hundred or at most a thousand at the beginning of the century to at least 5 000<sup>37</sup> in the mid-19th century. Even more remarkably, the number of Indians, both Hindu and Muslim, rose from "a few adventurers" — very few Zanzibari Indians trace their ancestors' permanent

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34. To paraphrase Cooper's original argument which refers to the pre-Said Omani empire, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 32.

35. To the French traveller de Gounibeaue shortly before his death, according to Coupland, *Invaders*, p. 299.

36. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, pp. 177—178, 191; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 78—82.

37. Visitors estimated in 1854, 1857 and 1872 that 5 000 Oman Arabs were in Zanzibar. For estimates and sources see Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 54.

settlement to before the 19th century — to perhaps 6 000 in 1885.<sup>38</sup> In the early 1870s it was estimated that in the whole coastal region of East Africa there were 7 000 — 8 000 Indians, about as many Arabs and a far greater number of people partly of Arab origin.<sup>39</sup> While the Arabs became the land-owning planter class, the Indian capitalists were indispensable to commercial expansion. On the one hand, they possessed the required mix of capital, entrepreneurship and patience to finance such long-term high-risk ventures as trade caravans into the interior of Africa; on the other hand, as British subjects they were forbidden to participate in plantation economy involving slave labour. In a few decades the Indian financiers such as Taria Topan gained control of the bulk of the Zanzibari external commerce. Much of the 'new' trade, in particular that of ivory, continued to be directed through India, above all Bombay.<sup>40</sup> "(A)ll trade passes through Indian hands," reported the British envoy Sir Bartle Frere in 1873. "Their silent occupation of this coast from Socotra to the Cape Colony is one of the most curious things of the kind I know. It has been going on for forty years but I had no idea ... how complete their monopoly has become."<sup>41</sup> And he was a former Governor of Bombay.

The Indian domination of the Zanzibari trade was due not only to the entrepreneurship and financial acumen of the Indian merchants or even to India's continued middleman position in East African foreign trade but also to Said's pro-Indian policies.

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38. Thomas Smee, 'Observations during a Voyage of Research on the East Coast of Africa', printed in Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 512; Justus Strandes, *The Portuguese Period in East Africa*. Nairobi, 1968, p. 81; Martha Honey, 'A History of Indian Merchant Capital and Class Formation in Tanganyika c. 1840—1940', Ph.D. thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1982, pp. 51—52; Guillain, *Documents*, II, 1, p. 80; Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa*. Oxford, 1971, p. 36; Kirk, 21 August 1885, according to Coupland, *Exploitation*, p. 433.

39. Sir Bartle Frere, *Eastern Africa as a Field for Missionary Labour*. London, 1874, p. 20.

40. For the intermediary position of Bombay, see Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 85—86, 249—252.

41. 'Memorandum by Sir B. Frere regarding Banians or Natives of India in East Africa', inclosure in Frere to Granville, 7 May 1873, *BPP*, Slave Trade 91, Frere's Mission, p. 98.



The Sultan entrusted them with the key posts of Zanzibar state finances, above all the office of customs master. Immigration policies and personal appointments were backed up by more direct measures designed to attract and control trade. Foreign merchants were barred from direct trade with Swahili towns from Tanga to Kilwa, and goods coming from there were subjected to a heavier duty than those coming from further north or south. Previous, widely varying import taxes were replaced by a flat five per cent duty on all imports, levied by Indians at ports. The tax collector forwarded a fixed sum contractually agreed in advance to the Sultan and pocketed the rest himself. Currency was also developed with help from India. Large 'Maria Theresia dollars' were complemented by the introduction of small copper coins, called 'pice', from Bombay. But Said was not to become too dependent on the Indians or anyone else. He put his diplomatic skills at the service of commerce. Besides the Indians, and their mentors the British, American, French and German Hanseatic merchants, all increasingly active in Zanzibari waters, were guaranteed equal rights to operate by signing treaties with their home governments between 1833 and 1844.

How Saiyid Said and his Arab followers became a plantation-owning class cultivating cloves, a crop entirely new both for them and for Zanzibar, is a more complex and less-known story. Abdul Sheriff and Frederick Cooper have in their theses, which still represent basic work on the issue, discussed this spectacular process by which a plantation economy dominating the world market of a major spice product was created in a few decades seemingly from nothing. But these historians faced the major handicap of having to do without sources telling directly of the motivations and ideas of the planters: diaries, correspondence, etc.<sup>42</sup> This has left important gaps in our knowledge. It is not accurately known when and how the first cloves were introduced to Zanzibar or how clove cultivation spread among the bulk of the Arab population. There is some controversy about the respective roles of Said's policies and economic market forces, in particular the extent to which clove cultivation was actively encouraged by

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42. A point made by Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 38, fn. 60.



Saiyid Said and the extent to which its spread can be explained by the extremely high prices cloves were commanding in the early decades of the 19th century.<sup>43</sup> A most intriguing question is that of the relation between the vicissitudes of the slave trade and plantation economy: was it a surplus in the supply of slaves caused by British-induced restrictions in the international slave trade in 1822 that gave the initial stimulus to expand the few existing plantations and to build up a plantation economy? This was suggested by Sheriff and, independently of him, by Nicholls, but doubted by Cooper.<sup>44</sup> I am hardly competent to join the debate, but I cannot see how Cooper's main ground for his objection, the fact that the peak of clove planting occurred later, between 1835 and 1845, would necessarily invalidate the thesis. It is a question of the beginnings and not of the reasons for the general popularity of clove plantations. And in any case the British were fairly slow to enforce the treaties.<sup>45</sup>

Historiographical controversies notwithstanding, a rough sketch of the rise of the clove economy on Zanzibar and its sister island Pemba can safely be presented.<sup>46</sup> There was a long tradition of slave labour on plantations both in Oman and on the East African coast. What was new in Zanzibar was the clove as the main crop and the large size of the operations. In Oman, the plantations had been small, with a few exceptions, and planted with date palms; in East Africa slaves had been used to cultivate food grains in some

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43. Saiyid's role was emphasised by colonial writers such as Coupland, *Invaders*, p. 314. See also Esmond Bradley Martin, *Zanzibar*. London, 1978, p. 29. Prices and other market forces have been given more prominence by later writers such as Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, pp. 181 ff. and Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 47.

44. Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, p. 181; Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, p. 203; Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 39, fn. 61.

45. For the last point, see Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, ch. 9 and Abdul M.H. Sheriff, 'The Slave Mode of Production Along the East African Coast, 1810—1873', in J.R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, II. London, 1985, p. 163.

46. When not otherwise indicated, I follow mainly Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 48 ff. and Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 48 ff. For production figures, see Cooper's tables 2:3 and 4:3 in *Plantation Slavery*, p. 61 and p. 131.

Swahili towns.<sup>47</sup> In Zanzibar Arabs planted first coconuts and experimented with crops like sugar cane and even coffee but the high prices attracted investments to cloves. Plantation cloves seem to have been introduced by an obscure Omani slave trader and interpreter to the Governor called Saleh bin Haramil al-Abray sometime in the 1810s.<sup>48</sup> What happened between this and 1828 when Saiyid Said began regular visits Zanzibar is not known. The great expansion appears to have begun only when Said took the lead after having confiscated Saleh's plantations. Even if, as stated above, what he in concrete terms did to encourage clove cultivation is unclear, his personal interest in the issue is beyond doubt. Saiyid Said was said to have ended up with 45 plantations. How many slaves he had he hardly knew himself<sup>49</sup> — but they must have numbered thousands. Following Said other Arab immigrants took up the cultivation *en masse*. A British resident related in 1838 that coconut trees were being cut down to make room for cloves which were already the "principal article cultivated," with nearly 300 000 trees planted.<sup>50</sup> An American whaler reported in 1842 that most of the plantations were owned by wealthy Arabs possessing 200 to 300 slaves. Planting seems to

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47. For Oman, see Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 35—36; for East Africa e.g. Morice in Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa*, p. 107 and Chittick, *East Coast*, p. 209.

48. The American traveller W.S.W. Ruschenberger dated the introduction of cloves from Mauritius in 1818, *A Voyage round the World*. Philadelphia, 1838, p. 51. The date was later repeated by Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, p. 361. Neither one mentions Saleh, but J. Gray, *History of Zanzibar*, p. 153, does. However, the French linguist Fortuné Albrand saw in 1819 in Zanzibar clove trees reportedly planted seven years earlier. They had been imported by a Frenchman or a Creole from Mauritius or Réunion but it is not clear who planted them. See Albrand, 'Extrait d'un (sic) Mémoire sur Zanzibar et sur Quilwa', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (hereafter *BSG*), 2. ser., 10 (1838), p. 69. Sheriff thinks that Saleh may have been working in cooperation with the French and responsible for the planting of the first seedlings in the early 1810s, *Commercial Empire*, pp. 176—180.

49. As he himself expressed it, he did not know how many people were living in his house, Guillain, *Documents*, II, 1, p. 80.

50. J.S. Leigh, 'The Zanzibar Diary of John Studdy Leigh', ed. James Kirkman, *IJAHS*, 13 (1980), p. 299.

have reached its peak, later called clove “mania,” between 1835 and 1845.

A result of planting activities much of the medium to better quality land of Zanzibar was taken up by clove forests. The expansion was reflected in a steep rise in clove export figures. Annual exports rose from 8 000 *frasila* in 1839–40 to 200 000 *frasila* in 1860. After that, overproduction depressed prices and production of the hurriedly planted and thereafter largely ignored trees sagged. The hurricane of 1872 undid overproduction overnight. It flattened most of the ageing Zanzibar plantations situated on lands of lower quality and led to feverish replanting, mainly on Pemba. This was a still more fertile island than Zanzibar, and cloves had been planted there since 1840. Now much of the best forest land on the hillsides was cleared to create a clove belt *par excellence*.<sup>51</sup> In the early 1880s the annual clove exports reached a new level, ranging from 140 000 to 300 000 *frasila*. Three-fourths came from Pemba which had ceased to be a rice exporter.

Ivory and slaves were the staples of long-distance trade and thus played a leading part in the ‘opening up’ of the East African interior. However, they were only two among a long list of Zanzibari export items. The islands exported a number of other products which were acquired not from the distant interior but nearer the coast, from the coastal hinterland and the islands themselves. Such products ranged from copal, copra and cowrie shells to timber, hides, sesame and grain.<sup>52</sup> For a long time, the most important in terms of export value, sometimes even more important than ivory, was gum-copal, “the only article convertible into the fine varnishes now so extensively used throughout the civilised world.”<sup>53</sup> It was extracted by working parties from sandy soils where it had been fossilised from remnants of the extinct

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51. For discussion of the land question, see Abdul M.H. Sheriff, ‘The Zanzibari Peasantry Under Imperialism’, *Maji Maji*, 28 (1976), pp. 4–5.

52. For detailed accounts of the exports and imports of Zanzibar, see Guillain, *Documents*, II, 1, pp. 304 ff. and Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, app. 1, pp. 387 ff.

53. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, app. 1, p. 403.

copal forests.<sup>54</sup> It too had been long exported in modest amounts, but it was the increase in demand from overseas, mainly from America beginning in the 1830s, that made it a major export item.<sup>55</sup> In the 1860s a notable new export was provided by natural rubber. After the prohibition of the slave trade in 1873 the importance of natural rubber increased to the extent that in 1879 it was the most valuable export of Zanzibar.<sup>56</sup> And naturally the trade also flowed in the opposite direction. The mainland acquired its import goods through Zanzibar, at first mainly cotton cloths and beads, later to an increasing degree firearms.

It would be tempting to argue that Saiyid Said and his successors Saiyid Majid and Saiyid Bargash were in a sense the first 'developers' in Tanzanian history. After all, they introduced a much more intense and systematic exploitation of Tanzanian resources than had occurred earlier and even established a new mode of production in Zanzibar. But this is a facile argument. The essence of the Zanzibari system was that of merchant capital: buying cheap and selling dear, a procedure also known as unequal, or, still more accurately, non-equivalent exchange. This is not a place to go into detailed discussions on empirical data on price formation of goods circulating in Zanzibari trading networks, which is an endless maze because of the differing measures and the lack of general monetary equivalents. But there can be little doubt of the central mechanisms which endowed the system with its momentum. First, calculated in whatever measure, ivory and slaves sold in African societies much cheaper than in entrepôts inland or even along the coast, and they sold cheaper in entrepôts than in Zanzibar itself. As Beverly and Walter T. Brown put it, "(s)lave and ivory prices mounted steeply as one moved east. There was often a 50 to 100 per cent difference in costs between Ujiji and Tabora, and a similar jump from Tabora to Zanzibar."<sup>57</sup> Second, whereas the price of ivory at Zanzibar and in the foreign

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54. Ibid., pp. 403—408; J.F. Elton, *Travels and Researches among the Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa*. London, 1879, pp. 78—79; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, pp. 140—142.

55. Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, pp. 359—360.

56. Coupland, *Exploitation*, pp. 230—232, 320—321.

57. Beverly and Walter T. Brown, 'East African Trade Towns: A Shared Growth', in W. Arens, ed., *A Century of Change in Eastern Africa*. The



markets rose steadily as the 19th century progressed, the price of East African imports, in particular that of cotton cloths, showed a decline, resulting in extremely favourable terms of trade for Zanzibar merchants.<sup>58</sup> This is not to claim that every caravan trader became rich — in fact, many did not — nor that all Indian financiers netted fabulous sums for each caravan. But it is plain that the whole system was living off these marked price differentials. All the profits the traders gained as well as all the considerable cost and wastage the system involved could be covered only by these price differentials. Even what looked like the productive side of the system, the clove economy of Zanzibar was based on the expectation of high monopoly profits from a scarce commodity to be produced by a labour force which may have initially been brought to life, at least in part, incidentally. If one wishes to call such a system developmental, one has to employ a very narrow concept of development indeed.

## Coast and inland: the emergence of trade routes

The Zanzibari commercial empire gained its stimulus and its organising agents from outside Africa. Its resources had to come from inside. Thus it would be logical to expect a heavy penetration from the coast inland. And such a penetration occurred in the form of caravans of porters carrying the required goods to the coast. As is well-known, three major trade routes, or rather sets of routes, emerged: the southern diverging from Kilwa or other southern ports towards Lake Nyasa and beyond, the central from Bagamoyo

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Hague, 1976, p. 189. In addition to sources mentioned there, see e.g. R.N. Colomb, *Slave-Catching in the Indian Ocean*. London, 1968 (1st ed. 1873), pp. 55—59 (slave prices 1844—1871); Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, pp. 209—211 (slave prices in the 1840s and 1850s) and p. 356 (ivory prices in 1831); Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 62 (slaves — “nearly 500 per cent” profit) and app. 1, pp. 409—411 (ivory — smaller profit margins); Paul Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Leipzig, 1892, p. 471 (slaves in the 1880s).

58. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 101—104, 252—256. However, for slave traders this trend was somewhat offset by the decline in the price of slaves at Zanzibar. Prices fell by half in 1817—22 and the 1860s but rose later, *ibid.*, pp. 67—69.



or other towns opposite Zanzibar to Lake Tanganyika, and the northern from Tanga or Pangani along the Pangani valley (or alternatively from Mombasa through the *Nyika* country) to Kilimanjaro and farther on. But it would be a mistake to credit the coastal traders all the initiative in opening these routes. All that we know about the development of long-distance trade routes leaves no doubt that African traders from inland had pioneered many long-distance routes some of which reached to the coast. Even here Said and his followers set out to exploit the pre-existing commercial structure and develop it for their own purposes.

One of the major mysteries of East African history is the nature of connections between Swahili towns and inland peoples before the time of large-scale long-distance trade, i.e. in most parts of the country before the 19th century. If the towns were selling ivory, or slaves for that matter, their traders must have obtained their stock-in-trade from somewhere. Unfortunately it is unknown where. When in most parts of the country there is no evidence of direct long-distance trade routes between the coast and inland, two possibilities suggest themselves. Either the trade goods were procured in towns themselves or in their immediate vicinity; or else they were brought from further inland by some sort of a relay system. Among the historians there appears a broad consensus that both these methods were used. Procurement in the vicinity is often implicitly assumed while relay systems are explicitly mentioned and discussed.<sup>59</sup> This is surely a reasonable view but it must be pointed out that it is based on very few and scattered sources, most of which, moreover, date from well within the 19th century. Evidence of coastal slave trade can be found e.g. among the Zigua<sup>60</sup> and of trade networks extending inland from Swahili towns in the southern part of the coast.<sup>61</sup>

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59. See e.g. Freeman-Grenville, *Coast*, pp. 152—154; Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, pp. 61, 130 ff.; A.C. Unomah and J.B. Webster, 'East Africa: The Expansion of Commerce', in John Flint, ed., *CHA*, V. Cambridge, 1976, pp. 271—272.

60. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 100.

61. See e.g. 'The History of Sudi', in Freeman-Grenville, ed., *East African Coast*, pp. 230—232. The Kiswahili original 'Khabari za Sudi' is printed in Carl Velten, ed., *Prosa und Poesie der Suaheli*. Berlin, 1907, pp. 279—284.

But we now know that the first direct long-distance trade routes between the interior and the coast were opened much before the 19th century. The earliest routes were situated in the south and pioneered by the Yao from the east of Lake Nyasa. Yao traders took their trade goods by land to Kilwa, whence local Swahili traders transported them by sea to Zanzibar. The original impetus to coastal trade was clearly internal. According to oral tradition, the Yaos had for years been engaged in long-distance trade selling tobacco, hoes and skins, and bying calico, salt and beads. Gradually they widened their sphere of operations until they reached the coast. There they encountered the rising demand for slaves and ivory to which they then switched. It is not quite certain when exactly this happened but Edward Alpers, the historian of the Yao trade system, dates the beginning of the Yao trade with Kilwa around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.<sup>62</sup> When the first coastal traders went inland is even less clear, but it seems plain that what became known as the 'southern route' between Kilwa and Lake Nyasa was the earliest to be penetrated. Even if Arabs as a rule appear to have stayed on the coast until a fairly late period, there are indications that Swahili traders visited areas situated deep in the interior at an earlier date. Our main literate witness, Morice, a French slave trader operating at Kilwa in the late 1770s, left us with contradictory statements on the matter. He claimed first that neither Arabs nor "Moors" (the latter meaning the Swahili) were allowed to "go inland" from the coast, but added then that "Moors can go everywhere" and even Arabs went disguised as far as the "sweet (-water) sea."<sup>63</sup> On the basis of Morice's formulations Sheriff speculates that Swahili traders did in fact operate up to Lake Nyasa. Alpers goes even further and suggests that Swahili caravans were crossing the whole continent to the Atlantic coast, something which Morice attributed to

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62. Yohanna B. Abdallah, *The Yaos*, ed. and trans. Meredith Sanderson. London, 1973 (1st ed. 1919), pp. 26—31; Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, pp. 58—64.

63. Morice in Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa*, pp. 109, 137. See also *ibid.*, p. 106.

interior traders only.<sup>64</sup> The next firsthand witness, a British lieutenant called Hardy visiting Kilwa and Zanzibar in 1811, was told that traders from the coast went into the interior as far as 45 days' march behind Kilwa.<sup>65</sup> Further elucidation may be sought from oral tradition. The Swahili histories of coastal towns collected by Germans in the late 19th century are disappointing in this respect. Most mention 'trade' among the main occupations of the inhabitants, but tell little of its development. Only from Kilwa Kivinje we learn that the trading community of the town was established by a stranger originating from Nyasa.<sup>66</sup> Abdallah, a Yao historian, is more informative. He tells that it was only after the Yao had reached the coast that the coastal traders came to Yaoland to exchange cloth, brassware, beads and salt for ivory and slaves.<sup>67</sup> But as is always the case with oral tradition, none of these sources provide any dates. However, if Alpers' chronology of the Yao reaching the coast no later than the early 17th century is even broadly reliable, the coastal traders must have penetrated the interior well before the 19th century and Saiyid Said.

Even if the Yao were the first in business, the greatest fame among the Tanzanian trading peoples was eventually acquired by the 'Nyamwezi'. The name has to be put into inverted commas because it was applied to all peoples from the central plateau including several sub-groups and even other peoples in addition to those now called Nyamwezi.<sup>68</sup> Among the earliest to reach to coast,

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64. Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, p. 62; idem, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 160; Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 161. The information on caravans crossing the continent does not come directly from Morice but through another Frenchman, Cossigny, writing some 20 years after Morice's death. He refers to "Africans," by which was meant interior peoples. See Cossigny in Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa*, p. 102.

65. Hardy, as quoted in Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, p. 129.

66. 'Habari za zamani za Kilwa Kiwindje', in Velten, ed. *Prosa und Poesie*, pp. 254—255. This is not included in Freeman-Grenville's translations in *East African Coast*, but commented upon in his article in Oliver and Mathew, eds, *HEA*, I, p. 154. An English translation is provided by Neville Chittick, 'The Early History of Kilwa Kivinje', *Azania*, 4 (1966), 153—159.

67. Abdallah, *Yaos*, pp. 32—33.

68. Depending of course on what is meant by a 'people'. The question of ethnicity will be discussed below in ch. 5.

for instance, were the Sumbwa.<sup>69</sup> But the popularity of the Nyamwezi among the Europeans dates back only to the late precolonial and colonial period. They seem to have undertaken long-distance trade journeys in the interior for a considerable period but reached the coast much later than the Yao. Only Burton maintained that the contact of the Nyamwezi with the coast must originate from "time immemorial."<sup>70</sup> Other sources fail to give support to such a claim. Early German travellers and residents recognized the antiquity of Nyamwezi long-distance trade — the German missionary Wilhelm Blohm thought it was "centuries old"<sup>71</sup> — but believed that direct coastal trade was much younger and had probably begun in the late 18th century.<sup>72</sup> The historian of the Nyamwezi trade, Andrew Roberts, concludes that the direct contacts of the Nyamwezi with the coast were established only "around 1800."<sup>73</sup>

From this follows that the penetration of the inland area through the central set of caravan routes must have taken place considerably later than via their southern counterpart. A French visitor was told as late as 1819 that the Arabs would not go beyond the coastal belt because of the fear of "savage and inhospitable tribes."<sup>74</sup> There was probably much exaggeration in such statements to Europeans because of the advantage gained by the Arabs in keeping European rivals away from the interior. But it is also possible that here as in the south the Arabs did stay on the coast while the Swahili traders went inland. The first reference to coastal traders penetrating inland at the level of Zanzibar was provided by the above-mentioned Lt. Hardy in 1811. According to him the traders, whose identity is unknown, went for no less than

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69. Andrew Roberts, 'The Nyamwezi Trade', in Richard Gray and David Birmingham, eds, *Pre-Colonial African Trade*. London, 1970, pp. 48—49; Oscar Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle*. Berlin, 1894, pp. 234—235.

70. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 405.

71. Wilhelm Blohm, *Die Nyamwezi*, I. Hamburg, 1931, p. 166.

72. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 346 said that the Nyamwezi had been visiting the coast for "at least a century." Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 233—234 spoke also of about 100 years.

73. Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 49.

74. Morice in Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa*, p. 109; Albrand, *Mémoire*, pp. 80—81.



two months and nineteen days inland from the Wami river.<sup>75</sup> If correct, this would have taken them perhaps some 600 kilometres inland. Hardy's report tallies interestingly with Burton's retrospective account. Before the beginning of the full-scale Zanzibar-based caravan trade through Unyamwezi in 1830–35 the termini for coastal traders were according to him 'Usanga' and 'Usenga' somewhere in the border region of the present-day Iringa and Singida regions.<sup>76</sup> There the coast traders met caravans from Unyamwezi who brought ivory and slaves collected from the inner countries. Burton makes clear that this was a makeshift and thus probably a very recent arrangement. "The caravans made no stay; they built neither house nor store, but lived in tents and under hides, and after hurriedly completing their barter they returned coastwards."<sup>77</sup>

The opening of the northern set of routes is least known and most shrouded with mystery. The Swahili caravans from Tanga to Kilimanjaro seem to have been started around 1840. The first *mzungu* to visit Kilimanjaro, the missionary Johannes Rebmann in 1848, found in Machame a Swahili as a personal medicine-man to the king and was told that he had been there for six years.<sup>78</sup> But there are several indications of earlier long-distance trade on Kilimanjaro and elsewhere in the north. Sally Falk Moore has suggested that the expansionist drive of chief Orombo from the eastern side of Kilimanjaro in the opening years of the 19th century must be seen in connection with the developing ivory trade to the coast.<sup>79</sup> This argument deserves to be taken seriously in spite of its quality of indirect inference. More direct evidence is available elsewhere. Gerald Hartwig dates the commencement of long-

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75. Hardy, according to Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, p. 208.

76. Aylward Shorter, *Chiefship in Western Tanzania*. Oxford, 1972, p. 240 locates them "on the Kimbu border."

77. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 300.

78. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 251. See also John Lamphear, 'The Kamba and the Northern Mrima Coast', in Gray and Birmingham, eds, *Pre-Colonial Trade*, p. 87: "By at least as early as 1844 the Swahili residents of Mombasa were beginning to form their own trading caravans to go up-country to Uchagga."

79. Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, pp. 29–30 and idem and Paul Puritt, *The Chagga and Meru of Tanzania*. London, 1977, pp. 9–10.



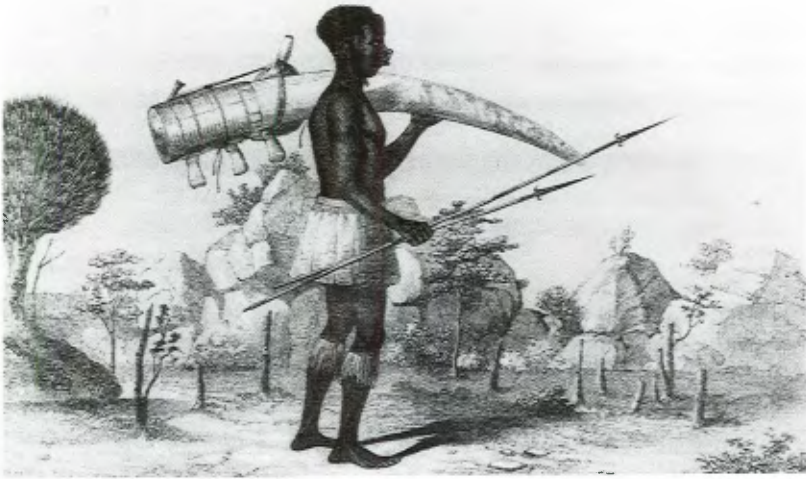


Plate 1. Key figures in the long-distance trade system: an ivory porter, probably from Unyamwezi, in the late 1850s and a Zanzibar-based Indian merchant capitalist, Taria Topan, whose business interests ranged from China to London, as depicted in 1874.

distance trade in Bukebere between 1780 and 1820. Ganda traditions, as interpreted by Roland Oliver, point to trade contacts between Buganda and the coast in the late 18th century.<sup>80</sup> We do not know how this early trade was organized and who were the middlemen: sources are lacking. But it is not impossible that there were African traders from the vicinity of the northern coast coming up to Lake Victoria Nyanza. Hartwig thinks, admittedly on rather speculative grounds, that the traders with whom the Kerebe went to exchange their goods, mainly ivory, were coming from the east.<sup>81</sup> He assumes the traders were Nyamwezi but if other speculations are correct, they might have been other people, e.g. Kamba who were developing into major traders in the northern area in the early decades of the 19th century.<sup>82</sup>

Further evidence for the view that even here Saiyid Said and his followers grafted their commercial empire onto pre-existing patterns is provided by the fact that, once begun, the establishment of the Zanzibar-based caravan trade took place so swiftly. The earliest attempts were evidently accomplished by enterprising individuals. The first non-Africans to reach Unyamwezi appear, interestingly enough, to have been not Arabs but two Khojas, Saiyan and Musa Mzuri, who undertook their journey in about 1825. What was called the "Arab line of traffic" to Tanganyika was opened almost simultaneously by a certain Saif bin Said al Muamერი. A more organized dispatch of caravans inland, however, seems to have started on a larger scale only in 1830—35, i.e. around the time Said was actively taking over Zanzibar.<sup>83</sup> This happened above all on the central route, which now rose to pre-eminence. Zanzibari caravans were financed by Indian merchants and led either by Arabs or Swahili. Properly capitalized, they could hire returning Nyamwezi as porters and pay their way through Ugogo to Unyamwezi. Some of the coastal traders settled

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80. Gerald W. Hartwig, *The Art of Survival in East Africa. The Kerebe and Long-Distance Trade, 1800—1895*. New York, 1976, pp. 65—73; Roland Oliver, 'Discernible Developments in the Interior, c. 1500—1840', in idem and Mathew, eds, *HEA*, I, pp. 190—191.

81. Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 71, 77—78.

82. Cf. Lamphear, Kamba, pp. 77—79, 83. This is, of course, speculation.

83. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 223—224; idem, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 292; idem, fn. 77 above.

there, sought accommodation with local African rulers and established entrepôts to cater for the new up-coming caravans. In this way the central route was redirected and established roughly from Bagamoyo to Tabora. Zanzibaris also went further to Lake Tanganyika and Karagwe. There too the coastal traders maintained a commercial and sometimes a quasi-political presence. From the 1830s onwards there are more caravans on record; one from Zanzibar to Lake Tanganyika left in 1831 and was led by Lief bin Said, a 'Nyamwezi' from Zanzibar (possibly the son of a Nyamwezi slave mother).<sup>84</sup> At Saiyid Said's death in 1856 journeys over the interior of central Tanzania had become commonplace. The first Europeans, Burton and Speke, followed the central route inland in 1857 and found "a beaten path."<sup>85</sup>

## The Ngoni — a different form of outside influence?

Caravan trade was not the only outside force interfering in the endogenously propelled development of Tanzanian societies during the 19th century. Another one, with major consequences in the southern parts of the country, was the irruption of the people who became to be known as the Ngoni. As is well-known, originally they were groups fleeing the violent disorders in Southern Africa known as *mfecane*. They trekked fighting to the north, and some of them ended up in the Tanzanian area. They were warlike people who had adapted the Zulu military organization with short stabbing spears and big shields of cowskin to be employed when fighting in formations of 200—300 men. The young men formed a military age-set which lived apart from the

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84. J. Macqueen, 'Visit of Lief ben Saied to the Great African Lake', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* (hereafter *PRGS*), 15 (1845), pp. 371—374.

85. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 292.

rest of the society under strict discipline and continuous drilling.<sup>86</sup> The first Ngoni groups are known to have crossed the Zambezi in 1825; the Tanzanian area was reached in the 1840s. They pushed into Ufipa and Buzinza in the north before they were contained and turned back. After settling down in their present location of Songea they established two separate kingdoms, Mshope in the north and Njelu in the south. From there they raided not only their surroundings but also areas hundreds of kilometres away. The Ngoni military organization was effective and they did not meet much resistance from the disunited southern peoples, with the major exception of the Hehe. As Iliffe says, it is quite possible that their militarism may have been exaggerated by later historians but “the terror which the Ngoni warriors inspired is beyond dispute.”<sup>87</sup>

However, the picture of Ngoni hordes sweeping from Natal to Lake Nyanza while overrunning and destroying vast tracts of Central Africa is greatly oversimplified. A most interesting and intriguing aspect of the Ngoni invasion is the way in which the group both grew and ramified as it advanced. The main group rolled on like a snowball and grew fat by incorporating new members, mainly women and children, from the conquered peoples. It is estimated that at the beginning of colonialism there were 16 000 — 20 000 ‘Ngoni’ in the Tanzanian area of which only 300—400 had Southern African origin.<sup>88</sup> It was “no longer a uniform tribe ... the main part of it (was) a variegated horde recruited from the war prisoners of a great variety of tribes, from bought up parties of slaves of both sexes, from adventurers enticed by the hope of booty, from disaffected elements seeking refuge for

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86. The best short source for the history and society of the Ngoni is Elzear Ebner, ‘Die Wangoni — einst Krieger, heute friedliche Bauern’, in Frumentius Renner, ed., *Die fünfarmige Leuchter*, II. St. Ottilien, 1971, pp. 181—197.

87. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 55. Cf. Ebner, Wangoni, p. 195.

88. Patrick M. Redmond, ‘A Political History of the Songea Ngoni from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Rise of the Tanganyika African National Union’, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1972, pp. 93—94; John Booth, ‘Die Nachkommen der Sulukafern (Wangoni) in Deutsch-Ostafrika’, *Globus*, 88 (1905), p. 223.



unknown reasons.”<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere, the invasion sometimes triggered off a chain reaction leading to formation of new Ngoni-type societies. There emerged several new groups modelled on the Ngoni way of living and fighting which probably had no or very few ‘true’ Ngoni among them. Such were e.g. the Mbunga in Mahenge. They seem to have originally been Ndendeuli subdued by the Ngoni who had migrated in the 1860s to the Ulanga valley, established three Ngoni-type chiefdoms there and begun raiding the surroundings. There they had been joined by “all kinds of people” mainly from the matrilineal peoples living north of them. Their societies consisted of both free men and slaves, and missionaries reported that they were particularly interested in capturing women either for sale or for incorporation into their own societies as wives, concubines and cultivators.<sup>90</sup> Other groups of Ngoni imitators operated in the Ruvuma valley and went pillaging up to the vicinity of Kilwa.<sup>91</sup>

Plainly, the Ngoni were not agents of expanding capitalism and international economy, and the external force of change they represented in 19th-century Tanzanian history can thus be regarded as different in kind. Yet a closer look suggests that the activities of the Ngoni and their impact can be adequately studied only in the context of the ‘opening-up’ of the Tanzanian interior and its integration with the world market. To begin with, the Ngoni participated in long-distance trade, even if this happened relatively late. It appears that the Ngoni did not sell their captives as slaves in the early years when they were building up their own societies and needed to incorporate domestic slaves in these. It was only in the 1870s or 1880s that the coastal traders came to

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89. Capus, ‘Eine Missionsreise nach Uha und Urundi’, *Petermanns Mitteilungen* (hereafter *PM*), 44 (1898), p. 122.

90. Lorne E. Larson, ‘A History of the Mbunga Confederacy ca. 1860—1907’, *TNR*, 81&82 (1978), pp. 35—42; *Bulletin Général de la Congrégation du St. Esprit et de l’Immaculé Coeur de Marie* (hereafter *Bulletin Général*), 13 (1886), p. 1127, Archives Generales des P.P. du St.Esprit, The Archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers (hereafter *AStEsp*).

91. Chauncy Maples, ‘Masasi and the Rovuma District in East Africa’, *PRGS*, 2 (1880), p. 344; Edward Steere, ‘Extracts from a Memorandum ...’, 1873, *BPP*, Slave Trade 91, Frere’s Mission, p. 131.



work in Ungoni<sup>92</sup> and the Ngoni began to sell slaves to the Zanzibari network. Most of these were obviously procured from the southern side of Ruvuma, i.e. mainly among the Yaos, while most of the slaves incorporated into Ngoni societies had been acquired among the peoples in the Tanzanian area. Beginning from this time, there is increasing evidence, both from the interior and among slaves on the Zanzibar islands, regarding Ngoni slave raiding and trading.<sup>93</sup> A British scholar learned later that some slave caravans had even been taken to Kilwa by the Ngoni themselves.<sup>94</sup> But there was a marked difference between the Ngoni kingdoms in respect to long-distance trade. The southern kingdom, Njelu, seems to have been more fully involved in the coastal trade; Mshope was far less active. In Njelu the coastal traders received the cooperation of the Ngoni leaders and established their first settlements in the late 1880s.<sup>95</sup> However, it can be argued that the most important connection between the Ngoni and the expansion of the world market may not have been, after all, their direct participation in long-distance trade but the fact that all the Ngoni activities took place in an economically and socially destabilized situation created by the expansion of external trade. The Ngoni made their influence felt in an area badly

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92. Prince implies that the Arab trader Rashid bin Masaud had begun the slave and ivory trade in Ungoni around 1873—1874, Tom Prince, 'Geschichte der Magwangwara nach Erzählung des Arabers Raschid bin Masaud und des Fussi, Bruder des vor drei Jahren verstorbenen Sultans der Magwangwara Mharuli', *MDS*, 7 (1894), p. 217. Redmond dates the first contact between the Ngoni and the Arabs in 1878 (*Political History*, p. 165) and Booth tells that the coastal traders came to the country in the 1880s (*Nachkommen*, p. 200).

93. E.g. Steere in Henry Rowley, *Twenty Years in Central Africa*. London, n.d., p. 243; Booth, *Nachkommen*, p. 200; Hans Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen und traditionelles Handwerk der Pangwa von SW.-Tansania*. Freiburg, Sw., 1976, p. 35; J. E. E. Craster, *Pemba, the Spice Island of Zanzibar*. London, 1913, pp. 93—94. See also William Percival Johnson, *My African Reminiscences 1875—1895*. London, 1924, pp. 62—63 for the involvement of the Malawi Ngoni in the slave trade.

94. Gulliver, *History*, p. 22.

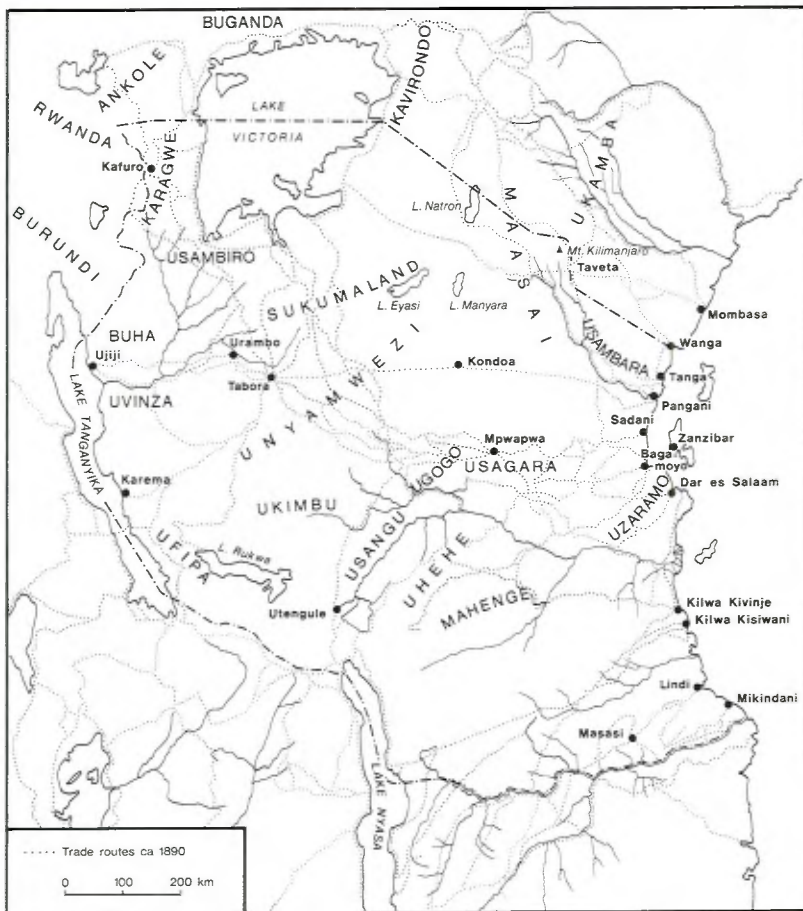
95. Prince, *Geschichte*, pp. 217—219, 221—222; Redmond, *Political History*, pp. 165—168.

afflicted by slave raiding and trading, where much was in a disorderly condition already before the Ngoni came along. This may well provide one clue as to why the Ngoni were so succesful both in spreading terror in their environment and in incorporating new elements into their societies.

### 3. Restructuring of trade and slavery

While the societies in the Tanzanian area may never have been hermetically sealed from the rest of the world but had always received indirect influences and stimuli and perhaps even direct contributions from outside, their development until the beginning of the 19th century can be seen as a result of the process which I called endogenous. External influences were accepted or rejected according to whether they met local needs and requirements. It was only during the 19th century that the needs of the outside world asserted themselves as paramount and led to the emergence of long-distance caravan trade and, in some parts of the country, plantation economy. The Tanzanian interior was then integrated through the coast with the emergent world market and the processes of endogenous development were surpassed by forces propelled from outside. But, as argued in the preceding chapter, this was by no means a total replacement of the old societies and economies by new ones. Rather it was an articulation of old and new. Even if both long-distance trading and the plantation system served foreign rather than African needs, they could work only through Africans; the participation of the indigenous inhabitants of the area was an absolute requirement for their functioning. And participate they did, in several guises and in varying degrees: as slaves and slavers, porters and traders, full-time or occasionally and marginally. They also participated for different reasons: some because they were forced, others because they gained, or thought they gained; and they must have experienced the effects of the system in very different ways.

To reconstruct the experiences of people would be a fascinating historiographical task, but we have no data or other resources for it; we have to be content to discuss the change in social and economic structures which conditioned the popular experience. Even that is exacting. In view of the wide extent of the trade system we may suppose that its effects were considerable, but its complexity makes them difficult to pinpoint in a concrete and



Map 9. Long-distance trade routes.

detailed manner. Even if plantations were established only on the coast and at some inland trading points, the tentacles of the trading system stretched further and deeper. When long-distance trade was in full swing in the latter part of the 19th century the region of Tanzania was traversed by several trading routes, most of them in the east-west direction but some also north-south (map 9). In practice, they were paths along which caravans of porters travelled, bringing ivory and slaves to the coast and carrying Indian, American and European manufactured goods to the interior. But we do not know the exact magnitude of the slave trade; nor who exactly were the enslaved; neither do we know to what extent the slave trade resulted in a loss of population or merely its relocation. Even more vague are the estimates serving as a basis for notions of how many Africans took part in the trade system as porters, or as cultivators of food for porters, and who they actually were. Interest in this aspect of the trade system did not arise till later, and porters were not registered or counted in their time. However, our sources show that it is beyond dispute that with the increase of long-distance trade both trade and slavery underwent a profound restructuring, amounting to a partial transformation. This chapter is devoted to an analysis of that process.

## The slave trade: towards a quantification

Discussion of the 19th-century East African slave trade has concentrated on the number of slaves exported from East Africa and their destination. This is no doubt a relevant issue. Contemporary European opponents of slavery and the colonial historians such as Coupland who followed them maintained that tens of thousands of slaves were removed from the country and shipped mainly to Arabia and Asia every year.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the

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1. Missionaries such as Horner and New estimated the number of slaves exported annually from the country as 70 000—80 000 in the 1860s and 1870s, see A. Horner, *Reisen in Zanguebar in den Jahren 1867 bis*



most impassioned anti-slavery propagandists such as Livingstone let it be believed that in wars and during slave transports the number who died was five or ten times as many as the number of slaves who reached the coast. Such estimates were widely accepted.<sup>2</sup> However, modern research has shown these figures to be highly inflated. Resistance to slavery was one of the motives advanced in support of imperial conquest of East Africa, and the temptation to broadcast trumped-up figures was obvious.<sup>3</sup> There has never been full agreement, however, on how much the figures relating to the slave trade should be reduced, and there are several competing estimates available.

To arrive at a more realistic quantification of the slave trade it is best to start with estimates of slave exports from the mainland and slave imports to Zanzibar. Early reports by travellers and naval officers from the years 1811–1860 speak of 7 000–20 000 slaves brought yearly to Zanzibar, most of whom were reportedly sent on to Arabia and still further. These figures were not based on statistics or systematic calculations, however, and the highest at least are now considered exaggerated.<sup>4</sup> More reliable estimates compiled from customs statistics of Kilwa and Zanzibar are available from the 1860s and early 1870s when the slave trade was at its peak before its prohibition by an agreement in 1873. These

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1870 von P. Horner, ed. Gaume. Regensburg, 1873, p. 42 and Charles New, *Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa*. London, 1971 (1st ed. 1873), p. 492. Coupland accepted the equally unrealistic estimate of 40 000, *Invaders*, p. 500.

2. Livingstone's estimate referred to the area of Lake Nyasa in the early 1860s, see Charles and David Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries ... 1858–1864*. London, 1865, p. 391. The estimate that only one fifth reached the coast was accepted at face value by a House of Commons committee on the slave trade, see *BPP*, Slave Trade 7, 'Report from the Select Committee on Slave Trade (East Coast of Africa)', 1871 (420) vol. XII, esp. p. v.
3. For a discussion of the connection between opposition to slavery and colonial conquest see R. M. A. van Zwanenberg, 'Anti-slavery, the Ideology of 19th Century Imperialism in East Africa', in Ogot, ed., *Hadith* 5, pp. 108–127 and Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters*. Nairobi, 1981, ch. 1.
4. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 43; Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, pp. 159 ff.

figures, mostly produced by British consuls at Zanzibar, show that in the late 1860s and early 1870s the official exports from Kilwa were between 16 800 and 22 300 slaves annually. Most of them were brought to Zanzibar which also imported slaves from elsewhere, mainly from the Mrima coast, and received during the same time a total of 11 900 to 20 600 slaves yearly. An additional few thousand were smuggled or delivered free of customs charges to the sultan's family. Although the bases of these estimates are not entirely clear either, there is fair unanimity on their broad reliability among researchers.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of them Sheriff has estimated the average annual Kilwa exports and Zanzibar imports in the years preceeding 1873 at 17 800 and 19 800 respectively. These must cover the bulk of the East African slave trade because the numbers of slaves going from other places in the mainland to other destinations was much smaller. Thus, Sheriff places the total East African legal slave trade in its most intense period at an annual average of 23 000.<sup>6</sup> When contraband and other invisible trade is added to this, the figures suggest that the yearly slave trade in and through the Tanzanian area grew from a few thousand in the yearly decades of the 19th century to perhaps some 25 000 in the late 1860s and early 1870s.

Some of the slaves brought to Zanzibar remained on plantations established there, others were taken further, and it is not easy to determine the proportions. It has been necessary to revise the old belief that the great majority was taken further, but no agreement has been reached on a new interpretation. What is known for sure is that opportunities for slave exports were increasingly narrowed down as the century proceeded. Britain, "ripe for free labour ... kicked away ... the ladder by which she had risen, and she made slavery, for which she had shed her best blood in the days of Queen Anne, the sum of all villainies in the reign of King George."<sup>7</sup> In East Africa the British urged the Sultan of Zanzibar to undertake progressive restrictions in the slave trade if not yet in slavery. In 1822 slave export was forbidden to 'Christians', that is mainly to

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5. Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, pp. 198—199; Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, pp. 439—440; idem, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 226 ff.; Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 115—116.

6. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 226—231.

7. Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, p. 456.

the French and Portuguese who had been the main customers. After 1847 export to the north also became illegal except for the territories of the Sultan of Zanzibar.<sup>8</sup> There were many loopholes in the agreements. The export of labourers from Kilwa to Réunion continued in 1843—1864, but, ingeniously enough, the exported were called ‘free labourers’ and not slaves.<sup>9</sup> Also the northward traffic continued. Surviving statistics show only ‘legal’ export to the coast of East Africa. This varied from some 5 000 to over 9 000 yearly from 1862 to 1872. It is hardly possible that all these remained in the Sultan’s territories: part were certainly taken further, and undoubtedly also the smuggling of slaves northward past Zanzibar continued. How many went to Arabia and beyond is impossible to assess, however.<sup>10</sup>

Help may be sought from examining the population development of Zanzibar which obviously was affected by the slave trade, but the problem is that our knowledge of the demography of Zanzibar under Omani rule is shaky. The only thing which can be said with fair certainty is that the population of Zanzibar and Pemba grew rapidly in the 19th century, and that the growth must have been due to the import of slaves. But estimates cover a wide range and all figures are speculative. It seems that at the beginning of the century the islands had a few tens of thousands of inhabitants, whereas in the early 1870s before the slave trade was prohibited the number was much higher. But what the figure was is very difficult to say. Contemporary estimates vary from 300 000 to 400 000, of whom 200 000—300 000 were thought to be slaves.<sup>11</sup> These estimates sound somewhat high but not entirely impossible, in view of the fact that the first proper count of the population of Zanzibar and Pemba in 1910 gave a total number slightly below 200 000.<sup>12</sup> The only reasonably safe inference from

8. An agreement was made in 1845 and came into force two years later.

9. Coupland, *Invaders*, pp. 429—437.

10. Cf. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 116—117 and Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 228—229, 231.

11. Martin and Ryan, *Quantitative Assessment*, p. 81 and sources mentioned there; Sheriff, *Commercial Empire*, p. 446; James Christie, *Cholera Epidemics in East Africa*. London, 1876, pp. 397—418.

12. A total population of 197 199 (Zanzibar 114 069, Pemba 83 130), of whom 8 987 were non-Africans. R.R. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, II. London, 1949, p. 651, fn. 3.



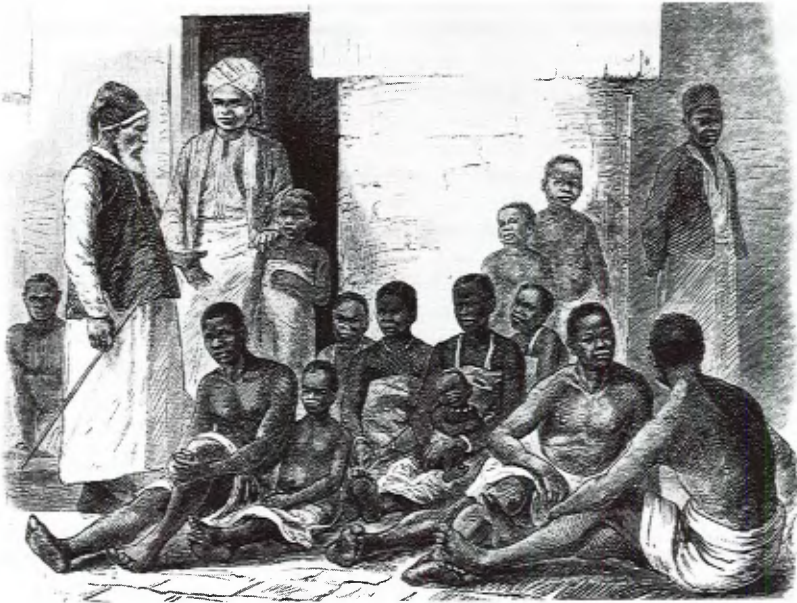


Plate 2. Two faces of the slave trade and slavery in Zanzibar in 1859: bargaining in 'black goods' at the slave market and slave women at their domestic duties.



these figures seems to be that the population of Zanzibar, including Pemba, grew during the half a century from the 1820s to the 1870s by at least 100 000 inhabitants and probably more. From other sources we know that this was mainly due to slave imports.

In fact, slave imports must have been greater than the increase in population because there is every reason to believe that the Zanzibar slave community was not fully capable of reproducing itself,<sup>13</sup> and a part of the slave imports went thus to cover a 'natural' loss of population. But even here we are lacking detailed information on the demographic dynamics of the slave population. Judging from the scattered and probably unrepresentative data, slave mortality seems to have been fairly high and the birth rate extremely low. The first British consul Hamerton estimated in 1844 that the yearly mortality rate among the agricultural slaves was 22 to 30 per cent. To cover the loss by mortality and desertion he apparently repeated the figure 30 per cent to Burton, who reported it further.<sup>14</sup> The British Consul Rigby estimated in 1869 that perhaps a mere five per cent of slave women actually gave birth.<sup>15</sup> The reasons for these demographic anomalies need further research. They cannot be attributed to sex structure which on the East African coast was not as skewed as among many comparable slave populations elsewhere. Roughly half the coastal slaves were reported to have been women; females probably dominated among shamba slaves.<sup>16</sup> High mortality was not necessarily due to wretched working and living conditions only; it must have been heavily affected by severe cholera and smallpox epidemics which afflicted the coast and islands on several occasions, striking the slave population most heavily.<sup>17</sup> Also the low birth rate may have

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13. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 220—225 casts doubt, not without reason, on early reports of the instability of family life and promiscuity among the slaves, but makes no serious effort to claim that the slave population was in fact self-reproducing.

14. Hamerton to FO, 2 January 1844, PRO, FO 84/540, 177—179 (also FO 54/6, 121); Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 377, *Zanzibar*, I, p. 463.

15. Rigby, 'Report on the Zanzibar Dominions', in Russell, ed., *General Rigby*, p. 337.

16. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 221—223; Francois Renault, *Lavigerie, l'esclavage africain et l'Europe 1868—1892*, doctoral diss., University of Paris, 1971, I, p. 94.

17. Below, ch. 4, pp. 159—163.



been due partly to these catastrophes and their later effects. Rigby's estimate just quoted (fn. 15 above) emanates from a cholera period. But deliberate birth control was also practised. Visitors were told that slave women had no wish for motherhood and eagerly resorted to devices like abortion.<sup>18</sup>

Numerical estimates of slaves retained in Zanzibar are crucially dependent on total population figures and slave depopulation estimates, both of which we have found extremely speculative. Yet it seems probable that the islands could not have taken much more than 10 000 slaves save in a few exceptional years, and that the annual intake could have approached such numbers only during the most active slave trade period in the late 1860s and early 1870s. If this is correct, it would mean that perhaps half of the approximately 20 000 slaves who arrived at Zanzibar were taken further. But this does not mean that they were all sent to Arabia or further East; thousands remained on the coast of the East African mainland.<sup>19</sup> In addition, when discussing loss of population through the slave trade it is good to remember that most of the few thousands of slaves 'liberated' by British anti-slavery naval patrols during their campaign from the late 1860s to the 1880s were lost from East Africa; they were sent to Mauritius or South Africa as so-called free labourers, "bound to a term of service on a white man's estate." As Bishop Steere wryly commented, surely this was "the strangest possible way of giving a man his liberty, and no wonder the Arabs disbelieve our talk about philanthropy."<sup>20</sup>

If data regarding the slave trade are uncertain and contradictory until the early 1870s, they are even more problematic after 1873. In that year an agreement was made between Britain and Sultan Bargash forbidding the slave trade by sea and closing the infamous slave market in the city of Zanzibar. In 1876 Sultan Bargash also prohibited the slave trade by land. The effect of these agreements has been subject to some controversy. Consul Kirk, the main

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18. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 464.

19. See Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 228—229, who estimates the average number of slaves retained annually in Zanzibar in the 1860s at about 12 000.

20. Sheriff, *Slave Mode of Production*, p. 163; A.C. Madan, 'Introduction', in *idem*, ed., *Kiungani*. London, 1887, p. 11; *UMCA Report for 1881—82*, p. 11.

driving force behind them, thought that the agreements worked well and reduced the East African slave trade "to the very smallest limits."<sup>21</sup> Coupland, who based his study on Kirk's papers, accepted this view.<sup>22</sup> Later historians such as Norman R. Bennett and Fr Francois Renault have challenged it. From a variety of observations from the coast and inland Bennett maintains that the slave trade in fact continued after 1873 at levels roughly equal to past years. Kirk, "the proud Briton," did not like to admit shortcomings in policies put into operation through his urging. Renault claims that the slave trade was remodelled but went on quantitatively unabated and in fact increased after the onset of the European scramble in 1884.<sup>23</sup>

Bennett's and Renault's case is not without attraction, but much of the evidence, frail and contradictory as it is, appears to support Kirk and Coupland, at least as far as the coastal trade is concerned. The prohibition of the sea trade in 1873 seems to have effectively curtailed slave export to the island of Zanzibar. Some smuggling certainly continued; new slaves were still sold in the city of Zanzibar in the 1880s. But that the massive slave inflow was considerably reduced is suggested by the fact that the island's population ceased to grow and turned to a decline which may have been quite considerable.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere the immediate effects of the treaty were more mixed. The slave trade did continue not only over land but over sea as well.<sup>25</sup> Pemba became a new main market area. Having escaped the hurricane which struck the coast in 1872 it developed during the early 1870s into the main production area for cloves. As it had just recovered from an epidemic of smallpox its labour needs were immense and urgent. At this period over ten

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21. Kirk to FO, 23 February 1880, PRO, FO 84/1574, 103—108; also quoted in Norman R. Bennett, *Arab versus European*. New York, 1986, p. 58.

22. Coupland, *Exploitation*, pp. 182—234.

23. Bennett, *Arab versus European*, pp. 54—59 (quotation p. 58); Renault, *Lavigerie*, I, pp. 277—290, 345—349.

24. G.A. Fischer, *Mehr Licht im dunklen Weltteil*. Hamburg, 1885, pp. 64—65; Fritz Weidner, *Die Haussklaverei in Ostafrika*. Jena, 1915, pp. 67—68, 74; K.W. Schmidt, *Sansibar*. Leipzig, 1888, pp. 24—25, Oscar Baumann, *Der Sansibar-Archipel*, II. Leipzig, 1897, p. 21.

25. V.L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, I. London, 1877, p. 277.

thousand slaves were shipped to Pemba in one year.<sup>26</sup> But this seems to have been the last fling rather than the beginning of a new development. Thereafter, the numbers of imported slaves declined. It is only in connection with the famine of 1884—1885 that we hear of a transient revival of the trade of several hundreds of slaves on the coast.<sup>27</sup> According to a British estimate, there were some 78 000 slaves brought into Zanzibar and Pemba between 1873 and the early 1890s. On the average this would make some 4 000 per year but it is known that the number was proportionally higher in the earlier years.<sup>28</sup>

The effect of the prohibition of the slave trade by land in 1876 was at first glance not very dramatic. The Sultan's actual power did not extend beyond the Swahili towns of the coast, and slave dealing continued inland. But on closer inspection it appears likely that initially the prohibition was instrumental in diverting the slaves to new destinations and in the longer run in making a contribution towards the decline of the slave trade. This, at least, is the general impression created by travellers' accounts. Even after making due allowance for idiosyncracies there is a marked contrast in descriptions of the slave trade between pre-and post-1876 period. Whereas Verney Lovett Cameron reported from Lake Tanganyika in 1874 that the slave trade seemed to continue "spreading ...until it [was] put down with a strong hand, or (died) a natural death from the destruction of the population,"<sup>29</sup> Joseph Thomson saw in 1878—80 "no sign ... of the horrors of slave trade ... beyond meeting an occasional delinquent in chains." He

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26. Cf. Holmwood, 24 September 1874, according to Coupland, *Exploitation*, p. 221, who put the export to Pemba at 15 000 in 1873—74 and Prideaux to Derby, 9 March 1875, *BPP*, Slave Trade 54, 'Correspondence relating to the Slave Trade', 1876 (c. 1588) vol. LXX, p. 95, who thought that this was "overestimated to a very considerable extent." Kirk adopted the figure of 12 000 in 1875, Coupland, *Exploitation*, p. 221.

27. *UMCA Report for 1883—84*, p. 12; Kirk to FO, 24 October 1884, PRO FO/84 1679, 93—97; *ibid.*, 20 December 1884, PRO FO 84/1679, 277—282; Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 126—128.

28. Hardinge, 26 February 1895, according to Weidner, *Haussklaverei*, p. 68. For further figures, see Bennett, *Arab versus European*, p. 58.

29. L.V. Cameron, 'Examination of the Southern Half of Lake Tanganyika', comp. C.R. Markham, *JRGS*, 45 (1875), p. 212.

thought that the slave traffic was “practically nothing” compared with former years.<sup>30</sup> But some of the trade certainly went on. Two years later Thomson himself travelled the more slave-dominated southern route and found that the slave trade was still alive even if on a much reduced scale. He estimated that the number of slaves brought by the Yao traders to the coast yearly was about 2 000.<sup>31</sup> In 1887 slave caravans were met on the western side of Lake Tanganyika, heading eastwards.<sup>32</sup> Also the southern trade continued to an unknown extent. In 1891 the Yao caravans no longer took their slaves up to the coast but distributed them to colonies of coastal merchants behind the littoral.<sup>33</sup>

A major new element in the post-1873/76 slave trade was a marked shift in destinations and patterns of use. Even where slaves were still being procured *en masse*, they were no longer shipped so much to Zanzibar or even Pemba, but retained on the mainland. Two new sources of demand had emerged. First, slaves were increasingly bought by Arab and Swahili plantations on the coastal mainland. The missionary Charles New argued that the effect of the 1873 prohibition treaty was “just to remove slavery from one place to another,” from the islands to the coast. Thomson claimed a few years later that “there perhaps never was a greater demand for slaves along the coast” owing to the extension of plantations there.<sup>34</sup> The origin of such plantations is obscure but they were not necessarily ancient institutions. Most were cultivating coconut and grains, like those in Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo.<sup>35</sup> But there

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30. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, pp. 18, 272.

31. Joseph Thomson, ‘Notes on the Basin of the River Rovuma, East Africa’, *PRGS*, 4 (1882), p. 78.

32. Hermann Wissmann, *Meine zweite Durchquerung Äquatorial-Afrikas vom Kongo zum Zambesi*. Frankfurt a.O., 1890, pp. 192—193.

33. Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 131.

34. Charles New, ‘Journey from the Pangani, viá Wadigo, to Mombasa’, *PRGS*, 19 (1874—75), p. 318; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, p. 272.

35. ‘Report by Vice-Consul Elton on the Country traversed by him between Dar-es-Salaam and Kilwa’, inclosure in Prideaux to Granville, 6 April 1874, *BPP*, Slave Trade 91, ‘Further Reports on East African Slave Trade’, 1874 (c. 1062) vol. LXII, p. 16 (Dar es Salaam); E. Baur and A. Le Roy, *A travers le Zanguebar*. Tours, 1899, pp. 120, 123 (Bagamoyo).



were also places such as the Pangani estuary where slaveowners, Arab and Swahili, had established plantations for sugar, a classic slave crop.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, an increasing proportion of slaves appears to have remained inland, either on plantations established by the Arabs in trading locations or alternatively in African societies. In the latter slaves were mostly assimilated into local households and domestic groups but in some places like Uzaramo and Unyanyembe African leaders established plantations worked by slaves.<sup>37</sup> Kirk and some travellers believed that the majority of slaves from the Congo never reached the coast but were sold, escaped or perished on the way.<sup>38</sup> Inland trading communities certainly grew. In Kondoa the coastal merchants were said to have “imported a great number of slaves from distant places”; Tabora was described as a “second Zanzibar without the sea” and visitors complained that it was hard to find a native Nyamwezi amidst all the slaves; and even in Ujiji the majority of the inhabitants were slaves.<sup>39</sup>

The data discussed above refer to slaves who actually reached

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36. Charles New, ‘Journey from the Pangani, viá Usambara, to Mombasa’, *JRGS*, 45 (1875), p. 415; H.F. von Behr, *Kriegsbilder aus dem Araberaufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Leipzig, 1891, p. 216; G.A. Akinola, ‘Slavery and Slave Revolts in the Sultanate of Zanzibar in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6 (1972), pp. 225—226.

37. Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 113 and Marja-Liisa Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol in Transitional Zaramo Society*. Uppsala, 1970, p. 102 (Zaramo); A.C. Unomah, ‘Economic Expansion and Political Change in Unyanyembe’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan, 1972, pp. 104—105 (Unyanyembe); below, pp. 98—99.

38. Kirk to Salisbury, 7 November 1879, PRO, FO 84/1548, 244, as quoted in Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 74; Cameron and Wissmann, as quoted in Beverly Brown, ‘Muslim Influence on Trade and Politics in the Lake Tanganyika Region’, *African Historical Studies* (hereafter *AHS*), 4 (1971), p. 625.

39. J.T. Last, *Polygotta Africana Orientalis*. London, 1885, p. 10 (Kondoa); “a missionary” as quoted by Unomah and Webster, *Expansion of Commerce*, p. 307 and Jérôme Becker, *La vie en Afrique*, II. Paris, 1887, p. 28 (Tabora); Hermann Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika von West nach Ost*, 4th ed. Berlin, 1889, p. 234 (Ujiji).

their destination on the coast or elsewhere. To assess the full effects of the slave trade one would need to know the losses indirectly caused by it, especially the number of those who were obliged to flee from home or who were killed in wars waged for slave procurement. This is quite impossible to find out. However, it seems advisable to take statements which claim that many times more slaves died on the road than arrived at the destination with more than a pinch of salt. There is no doubt that many slaves did die on the road, and several travellers believed that the weakest were killed while travelling.<sup>40</sup> But mass deaths of slaves during transportation seem to have been the exception rather than the rule. New slaves, it is clear, were generally in weak condition on arrival at Zanzibar, especially if they came from further inland,<sup>41</sup> but there is very little to indicate that most of those who set out usually perished. In fact, very few travellers saw acts of mass violence and much of what they reported was hearsay. Their reports are conflicting, the more horrifying accounts by Livingstone<sup>42</sup> are juxtaposed with more balanced statements by people like Burton, Stanley and Thomson. Burton said that "the horrors of slave-driving rarely meet the eye in East Africa" and that the lot of the transported slave was better than that of the free porter; Stanley had to travel "very far" before he saw the "violence, murder ... and fraud" which he attributed to slave procurement and not to slave transport; and as seen above, Thomson concurred.<sup>43</sup> Of course, all statements may be equally accurate as the observations were made in different places during different periods, but the overall picture is scarcely one of wanton de-

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40. Alfred J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters in Central Africa*. London, 1910, pp. 49—50.

41. James Christie, 'Slavery in Zanzibar as It Is', in H.A. Frazer, Bishop Tozer and James Christie, *The East African Slave Trade*. London, 1871, p. 32.

42. David Livingstone, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death*, 2 vols, ed. Horace Waller. London, 1874, *passim*.

43. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 367; *idem*, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 348; Stanley, *Dispatches*, pp. 318—325 (quotations p. 318 and p. 325); Thomson, *fn.* 30 above in this chapter. See also Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 479—482.

struction during transportation. However, even if this was the case, there is no reason to belittle the havoc left by the slave trade. Many of its secondary effects were evidently ruinous, in particular famine.<sup>44</sup>

The purpose of this short discussion cannot be to establish reliable total figures on the extent of the slave trade in the Tanzanian area during the 19th century, but one obvious conclusion must be spelled out. If the above considerations are broadly correct they mean that many estimates of the extent of the trade are highly exaggerated. This does not apply only to the old and altogether fantastic figures of Livingstone and other anti-slavery propagandists — if they had been right, the whole country would have been emptied in a few decades — or to the more moderate but still obviously inflated numbers quoted by colonial historians;<sup>45</sup> it also applies to figures produced by certain modern researchers like R.W. Beachey and Ralph Austen. Beachey's estimate of two million East Africans enslaved during the 19th century appears too high even when making due allowance to the fact that besides Tanzanians other East African are included in that number.<sup>46</sup> Also Ralph Austen's longer-term retrospective estimates of one and a half to almost two million slaves taken out of East Africa during a 400-odd year period sound inflated.<sup>47</sup> For Tanzania's part the figures discussed above suggest much lower total numbers of slaves, to be expressed in hundreds of thousands rather than in millions during the peak 19th century. Though a far cry from the wildest claims, it is no mean amount in itself.

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44. Famine will be discussed below, ch. 4, pp. 127—139.

45. See fns 1 and 2 above in this chapter.

46. Beachey, *Slave Trade*, esp. pp. 260—262.

47. Austen bases his argument on an unpublished paper which has not been available to me. In his *African Economic History*. London, 1987, pp. 59 and 275 he indicates that some 1.5—1.9 million slaves were taken out from the East African coast during 1500—1920, but on p. 67 he observes that the East African slave trade involved more relocation than export of the slaves captured in the interior.

## Origins and uses of slaves

In the above considerations are valid, several hundred thousand people were brought as slaves from the East African interior to the coast during the 19th century, and thousands more met their death in the turmoils of the slave trade. These are large numbers, and such a haemorrhage was bound to affect the economy and society of the areas from which slaves were brought. But a fact extremely relevant to Tanzania's later history should be mentioned: the most important areas from which slaves were procured were located beyond the frontiers of present-day Tanzania or adjacent to them, and there were many societies which lost few or none of their members as slaves. The great majority of slaves were brought from the southern parts of Tanzania and the northern parts of present-day Mozambique and Malawi. The busiest slave export harbour from the end of the 18th century until the slave trade was declared illegal was Kilwa, to which caravans always brought more slaves than ivory. In the 1860s more than three-quarters of the slaves of Zanzibar came through Kilwa.<sup>48</sup> At first these slaves came from nearer the coast and from Yaoland. As demand grew they were brought from further and further away, mostly from west of Lake Nyasa.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the southern routes, slaves also reached the coast along caravan routes in the central and northern parts, but there ivory remained a more valuable commodity.<sup>50</sup> It was only in the last illegal years of the slave trade that export from the northern harbours grew brisker. Slaves arriving along the central caravan route came mainly from west of Lake Tanganyika or north of Lake Victoria but also from inside of Tanzanian territory.<sup>51</sup> Slaves travelling the northern caravan routes were obtained chiefly from northeastern societies, in particular from the Pangani valley and to

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48. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 120.

49. Von der Decken reported that most slaves brought to Kilwa in 1860 were 'Bisa' and 'Hiao' (Yao). With the former he probably referred to peoples west of Lake Nyasa. Claus von der Decken, *Baron Carl Claus von der Decken's Reisen in Ostafrika in den Jahren 1859 bis 1861*, I, ed. Otto Kersten. Leipzig, Heidelberg, 1869, p. 185.

50. Christie, *Slavery in Zanzibar*, pp. 61—63.

51. Unomah and Webster, *Expansion of Commerce*, pp. 277, 299—300; Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 59—60.



a lesser extent from the Chagga chiefs who sold their captives.<sup>52</sup>

An idea of the geographical origins of the coastal slaves can be obtained from an estimate by Kirk, the British consul. According to him in 1870 half the slaves of Zanzibar came from the region of Lake Nyasa. The largest group, 29 % of the total, were Yao. The next largest (14 %) were known by the name 'Nyasa' (Wanyasa) which indicated the peoples from both east and west of Lake Nyasa. 19 % of the slaves came from the coastal hinterland, the biggest groups being 'Ngindo' (9 %) and 'Zigua' (7 %). About one fifth of slaves were born in Zanzibar; the rest originated from other peoples of the mainland.<sup>53</sup> When slavery in Zanzibar was abolished in 1896 most of the freed slaves were still 'Yao' and 'Nyasa', but new and important groups had now emerged: the 'Manyema' from west of Lake Tanganyika and, to a lesser extent, the 'Ganda' from present-day Uganda, 'Nyamwezi' and 'Sukuma' from inland Tanzania and 'Zaramo' from near the coast.<sup>54</sup>

A historiographical puzzle must be noted here. It is difficult to find concrete evidence of the destruction the slave trade must have wrought: sources dealing with local conditions in a systematic long-range sense simply do not exist. The indictment against the slave trade was usually founded upon references to villages left empty and other signs of depopulation encountered in travellers' reports,<sup>55</sup> but I shall argue later in this work that a not inconsiderable part of the observed depopulation must have been due more to new or newly spreading epidemics than to the slave

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52. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 135 ff., 168 ff. (Pangani valley); A. Le Roy, *Au Kilima-Ndjaru*. Paris, n.d., pp. 41—42, 188, 279; Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, p. 28; and Kathleen M. Stahl, *History of the Chagga People of Kilimanjaro*. The Hague, 1964, pp. 47—50, 71, 132, fn. 29, 166, 171, 248, 287, 329 (Kilimanjaro).

53. Kirk, memo, October 1889, PRO, FO 84/2005, 268 ff. esp. 277.

54. Baumann, *Sansibar-Archipel*, II, p. 21; Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 125, fn. 40.

55. E.g. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, I, pp. 88, 97—98 (Nyasa area at end of 1860s); Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, p. 277 (Tanganyika 1874); Thomson, Notes on Rovuma, p. 78 (Umakonde early 1880s); E.C. Hore, *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa*. London, 1892, p. 232 (Ulungu on Lake Tanganyika 1883).

trade.<sup>56</sup> In addition, there are also accounts by competent observers of areas thought to have been the liveliest in slave procurement which give a less dismal picture of the conditions.<sup>57</sup> Traditional data afford little help in forming a general picture of the effects of the slave trade. Yet it is hardly to be doubted that the slave trade reduced population in areas most severely tried by it; that is, around Lake Nyasa, some parts of the south, Usambara and the Pangani valley after the mid-1870s.<sup>58</sup> Population may naturally have decreased also in areas which on the surface did not appear to have suffered as much. However, as we saw above, not all slaves were taken out of East Africa: to a large extent the slave trade meant a redistribution of labour between different parts of the country. Demographically speaking, while some parts lost population, others gained from the slave trade. As already explained, perhaps half the slaves brought to Zanzibar may have been transported further, but since a considerable part of them stayed in the Sultan's East African territories it is very difficult to say exactly what proportion of slaves left Africa. Most Tanzanian slaves of course went to plantations on Zanzibar, Pemba and the coast, as well as to trading points like Ujiji and Tabora, where the Arabs had established plantations.<sup>59</sup> But as already noted in passing, not all slaves, not even all cultivating slaves, were assigned to plantations, Arab or African-run. Many were employed in smaller African households and domestic groups. When this custom started is impossible to say, but it seems to have greatly expanded towards the end of the 19th century. An increasing number of slaves originally intended for plantations or overseas trade were sold in or otherwise left with African societies during the journey to the coast. This had probably been happening during the whole period of the extensive slave trade from the beginning of

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56. Below, pp. 177—178.

57. E.g. 'The Last Journals of Rev. C.A. Janson', *UMCA Occasional Papers* 1867—1882, No. 19, esp. pp. 36—37 and the relevant parts of Elton's incomplete diary, Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, 2nd part, ch. 3, pp. 291 ff. (both from Nyasa area ca 1870—1880).

58. For Usambara and Pangani valley see Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 168 ff.

59. Above, pp. 85 ff.; A. Burdo, *Les Belges dans l'Afrique Centrale*. Bruxelles, 1886, pp. 268 ff.

the 19th century, but it seems to have especially escalated in the 1870s, when the trade was curtailed on the coast by international treaties while inland slave capturing continued unabated. At that time there evidently arose a slave surplus which made the acquirement of slaves easier for peoples like those of Lake Tanganyika or the Nyamwezi, Gogo and Makonde.<sup>60</sup>

Notions of the concrete measures taken to obtain slaves are uncertain and contradictory, and a thorough elucidation of the matter would require the kind of first hand research which, for want of sources, may well be impossible. But it seems evident that slave trading was a specific form of trade, with rules of its own, conducted between the Africans of the interior and the Arabs and Swahilis of the coast. There is very little evidence of plundering expeditions from the coast to obtain slaves, although they were not unknown.<sup>61</sup> Otherwise coastal merchants, Arabs and Swahilis, were obliged to buy slaves from the interior Africans, at first mainly merchants who themselves brought slaves to the coast,<sup>62</sup> and later to an increasing extent also from African chieftains and other leaders in the interior. It is difficult to obtain a clear idea of how easily slave buyers found willing sellers and an abundant

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60. E.C. Hore, 'On the Twelve Tribes of Tanganyika', *Journal of Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (hereafter *JAI*), 12 (1883), p. 11 (Tanganyika); Becker, *La Vie*, I, p. 226; *ibid.*, II, p. 28; P. Desoignes, 'Die Msalala', in S.R. Steinmetz, ed., *Rechtsverhältnisse von eingeborenen Völkern in Afrika und Ozeanien*. Berlin, 1903, p. 270; and A.C. Unomah, 'Vbandevba and Political Change in a Nyamwezi Kingdom Unyanyembe during 1840 to 1890', Universities of East Africa Social Science Conference Paper, 1970, pp. 9—11 (Nyamwezi); *A l'assaut des Pays Nègres*. Paris, 1884, p. 141; Heinrich Claus, 'Die Wagogo', *Baessler-Archiv*, suppl. 2, 1911, p. 60; J.E. Beverley, 'Die Wagogo', in Steinmetz, ed., *Rechtsverhältnisse*, pp. 205, 213; and Paulssen, *Rechtsanschauungen*, pp. 166—167 (Gogo); Holmwood to Kirk, 20 January 1880, PRO, FO 84/1574, p. 190 (Makonde).
61. See Lyndon Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose Texts*. London, 1965, p. 184 and Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 128—129 for the coast of present-day Kenya.
62. Morice, in Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa*, pp. 106—110. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 49.

supply. In the anti-slavery propaganda a picture was eagerly painted of guileful Arabs who by deceit and trickery enticed African chieftains to supply and sell slaves,<sup>63</sup> and tradition tells us that in many cases this may have happened.<sup>64</sup> In areas where the slave trade was brisk, on the other hand, it seems to have developed into a system which worked by its own impetus and in which Africans played an active part. African leaders who joined in the slave trade easily became dependent on it, because only through it could they acquire the goods needed to support their position: the first of these were beads and fabrics; later and above all came firearms. In the first phase war prisoners or criminals taken as slaves could be sold. As demand grew, it was possible to engage in wars for the express purpose of acquiring slaves, using firearms obtained from slave traders and sometimes with the direct assistance of the latter.<sup>65</sup> It was related from the south in the 1870s that "the greater part of the slave traffic has been carried on by native chiefs on their own account."<sup>66</sup> Tippu Tip, the greatest ivory-cum-slave trader in the west, explained to a visitor that prohibition of the slave trade was a venture doomed to failure because the African dealers did not wish to give it up.<sup>67</sup>

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63. For a summary of the argument see Beachey, *Slave Trade*, pp. 184—185.

64. E.g. in Sukumaland, see C.F. Holmes, 'Zanzibari Influence at the Southern End of Lake Victoria: The Lake Route', *AHS*, 4 (1971), p. 485. See also Speke, *What Led*, pp. 211—212.

65. Johnson, *Reminiscences*, p. 62 (Lake Nyasa); K.I. Tambila, *A History of the Rukwa Region (Tanzania) ca 1870—1940: Aspects of Economic and Social Change from Pre-Colonial to Colonial Times*, doctoral diss., University of Hamburg, 1981, p. 76 (Lake Tanganyika); Steere in Rowley, *Twenty Years*, pp. 242—243 (Ungindo); Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 160 ff. (Pangani valley); Horner, *Reisen*, p. 83 (Uzaramo).

66. Steere to the Committees of the University Mission, *UMCA Occasional Papers*, no. 6, p. 2.

67. Becker, *La Vie*, II, pp. 45—46.



## Restructuring of trade and exchange

It is clear that the slave trade profoundly affected the life of many African societies in the Tanzanian region, but, as seen above, it was only one part of the 19th-century trading system. A second important commodity in the long-distance trade was ivory. Its export figures rose sharply as the century advanced. Soon after 1800 it appears that a few dozen tons were exported from Zanzibar, but by 1850 the amount had increased to 200 tons. It stayed at that level, or slightly lower, until the end of the century, with temporary variations.<sup>68</sup> Such quantities required the slaughter of perhaps tens of thousands of elephants yearly,<sup>69</sup> and ivory suppliers were obliged to penetrate further and further into the East African interior to satisfy the demand. This led to “a woeful tale of destruction. Twenty years ago the lands between Tanganyika and the coast were rich in ivory ... Now they are completely despoiled. Over that vast region hardly a tusk of ivory is to be got.” This is how Thomson wrote in the early 1880s.<sup>70</sup> Oscar Baumann prophesied ten years later that “very probably our grandchildren will marvel at the African elephant in museums — in departments for extinct animals.”<sup>71</sup> Although Baumann’s words may be coming true only now, the 19th-century decimation of the elephant population in the Tanzanian area may have had ecological effects which are not fully understood to this day. The main short-term consequence, and the most important for this study, of ivory hunting and export, however, was not ecological

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68. Beachey, *Ivory Trade*, p. 287.

69. According to Fischer’s estimates, 10 000 elephants had to be killed yearly in order to produce the 200 tons of ivory Zanzibar exported in the 1880s, *Mehr Licht*, p. 9. Stuhlmann claimed that the number of elephants killed annually in the yearly 1890s was 40 000 to 50 000. Franz Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika*. Berlin, 1894, p. 857.

70. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, pp. 17–18. For corroborative evidence of earlier abundance see Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 297–298.

71. Oscar Baumann, *Usambara und seine Nachbargebiete*. Berlin, 1891, p. 283.

but economic and social. It was the enormous expansion of trade in every form and the resultant transformation of its nature. New demands and stimuli also gave rise to a considerable increase in regional and local trade which dovetailed and interacted with long-distance trade in slaves and ivory.

## Forms of trade and spheres of exchange

Trade was nothing new in East Africa; we saw in the preceding chapter how Swahili towns had for centuries traded with inland peoples. Neither was trade new among inland Africans themselves. Despite the fact that market-places, and market as an institution, were absent over most of the Tanzanian area,<sup>72</sup> trade was conducted on specific occasions and in the form of trading expeditions. But I suspect that 'traditional' trade, or rather exchange, was a more intricate and complex phenomenon than is implied by those historians of Africa who regard it as a direct predecessor of the later market-oriented foreign trade, "an intermediate category in which sectors of the economy were tentatively beginning to respond to market opportunities."<sup>73</sup> Even if these writers may have noted the many forms and inner dynamics of precolonial trade, they saw all of them in the final analysis as basically similar; 'trade' was, for them, a universal category, an exchange activity undertaken with rational calculations of the comparative advantages of the participants in mind. This view overlooks the fact that precolonial Tanzanian economies and the exchange within and between them were in some crucial respects different from modern market economies from which our notion of trade is derived. As Maurice Godelier puts it, one cannot directly apply theories and concepts on modern capitalist economies to economic phenomena in precapitalist societies such as those in precolonial Tanzania. The "uncritical

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72. In general, see Willy Fröhlich, 'Das afrikanische Marktwesen', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (hereafter *ZE*), 71 (1939), esp. pp. 238—240, 267.

73. Gray and Birmingham, 'Introduction', in idem, eds, *Pre-Colonial Trade*, p. 4.

application of these theories obscures the primitive economy more than it illuminates it, as it provides only superficial resemblances while concealing significant differences.”<sup>74</sup> Even if the sources are particularly ambiguous here, because it is extremely difficult to distinguish the more recent influences and developments from long-standing patterns, it seems evident that we are dealing not with uniform ‘trade’ but with several types of economic exchange and trade coexisting with and succeeding each other.

On the face of it, the differences between old forms of exchange may not have appeared great. Most local and regional exchange was always conducted without markets;<sup>75</sup> only peoples in the north-eastern mountains like the Chagga and Pare had institutionalized markets for the exchange of their surplus food for other foodstuffs on a barter basis. The best-known of them, visited by European travellers from the 1860s onwards but probably of much older origin, were the Chagga ‘women’s markets’ on Kilimanjaro. There were several market places in which markets were held every third day and women from neighbouring chiefdoms bartered foodstuffs amongst themselves. For regional trade the Chagga had ‘Maasai markets’ where they traded with the Maasai and other neighbouring peoples for milk, skins and other animal products; later in the colonial period livestock was traded for agricultural produce and honey.<sup>76</sup> A similar local market system appears to have been operating in the Pare mountains. Baumann reported local food markets run “mainly by women.” Isaria N. Kimambo, on the basis of oral tradition, indicates that these markets were of long standing and also iron goods were

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74. Maurice Godelier, ‘The Object and Method of Economic Anthropology’, in David Seddon, ed., *Relations of Production*. London, 1978, pp. 85, 88 (emphasis deleted).

75. For scattered references to the exchange of foodstuffs see e.g. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 167 (Nyamwezi); Feerman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 34 (Shambaa).

76. Bruno Gutmann, ‘Feldbausitten und Wachstumsbräuche der Wadschagga’, *ZE*, 45 (1913), p. 502; idem, *Das Recht der Dschagga*. Munich, 1925, pp. 425 ff.; A. Widenmann, ‘Die Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung’, *PM*, suppl. 129, 1899, p. 69; Georg Volken, *Der Kilimandscharo*. Berlin, 1897, pp. 239—240; Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, pp. 21—23.

exchanged at them. To what extent trade took place within societies and to what extent between them is not clear from the accounts. Kimambo notes that even if each Pare chiefdom had its own market-place, "visits to these markets defied all chiefdom boundaries." In addition, there were fixed border markets where Pare iron was exchanged mainly for livestock with the Maasai, Chagga and Shambaa.<sup>77</sup> Pre-Kilindi Usambara is reported to have had some local markets as an adjunct to barter within the village and between neighbouring villages.<sup>78</sup>

We have no data from elsewhere on local markets before the 19th-century rise of such entrêpôts as Tabora and Ujiji, and we must assume that exchange took place on more *ad hoc* occasions. Although sources are lacking, it may be conjectured that exchange must have taken place on a basis of direct reciprocity, mainly barter, and cannot have been very uncommon. Besides food, an important exchange item may have been seed. We are told from Unyamwezi that people used to renew their seed supplies at intervals of a few years by obtaining new seeds from a longer distance, e.g. from Lake Tanganyika or Ugogo. In addition, they bartered high-quality seed from neighbours. "The negroes are well aware that field produce easily degenerates otherwise,"<sup>79</sup> commented Paul Reichard.

As for regional trade, it was naturally liveliest between regions with differing productive bases and specializations. At least three major forms can be distinguished. First, trade between coastal urban dwellers and people from the hinterland. From the early 19th century onwards we have from the vicinity of Mombasa and Tanga reports on period markets, or *magulio*, which provided a venue for such exchanges.<sup>80</sup> Yet the markets may have been older

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77. Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 236; Isaria N. Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania c. 1500 — 1900*. Nairobi, 1969, pp. 21—22 (quotation p. 21); idem, 'The Pare', in Roberts, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*, pp. 25—27.

78. A. Karasek, 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Waschambaa', *Baessler-Archiv*, 7 (1918—1922), pp. 69—71.

79. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 376.

80. James Giblin, 'Famine, Authority and the Impact of Foreign Capital in Handeni District, Tanzania, 1840—1940', Ph. D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986, pp. 85—86.



and more widespread. Second, there appears to always have been some exchange between agricultural, pastoral and hunting-gathering peoples, even if it is difficult to determine its antiquity and regularity. Although most sources refer to 19th-century situations involving famine or other disturbance, they often imply more long-standing trade relations. The Datoga remember having lived in a peaceful co-existence with their agricultural neighbours for a long time. The relations between the Maasai and their neighbours depended essentially on the amount of cattle among the latter: the less cattle they had, the more prone Maasai were to establish peaceful, trade-based relations instead of cattle-raiding.<sup>81</sup> Third, there was regular reciprocal exchange of handicrafts and other African non-agricultural items between those who produced them. Major examples were iron, native cotton and salt. Salt was exchanged for iron hoes between Kinga and Bena and between Nyaturu and Zinza, among others.<sup>82</sup> Basically, this was exchange between regions or sub-regions specialising in the production of certain items. An excellent case is provided by the present-day Rukwa region where there was long-standing trade between the iron working centres of the Sumbawanga plateau, cotton-weaving regions of the Rukwa valley and the Ivuna salt pans. A traveller noted (in 1896 but apparently reflecting on an older situation) that “all the men and women round Rukwa” wore native cottons but few were exported. “A portion is traded to the Afipa of the plateau for iron hoes, and a small quantity ... gets as far as the Mweru

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81. Morimichi Tomikawa, ‘Locality Groups of the Datoga’, *Kyoto University African Studies* (hereafter *KUAS*), 1 (1966), p. 215 and Finn Kjaerby, ass. William Baynit, *The Development of Agro-Pastoralism among the Barabaig in Hanang District*. BRALUP Research Paper no. 56, Dar es Salaam, 1979, p. 9 (Datoga); John L. Berntsen, ‘The Maasai and Their Neighbors: Variables on Interaction’, *African Economic History* (hereafter *AEH*), 2 (1976), pp. 5–6; Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 92–94 (Zigua); P.H. Gulliver, ‘The Evolution of Arusha Trade’, in Paul Bohannon and George Dalton, eds, *Markets in Africa*. Evanstone, 1962, pp. 432–436.

82. Friedrich Fülleborn, *Das Deutsche Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*. Berlin, 1906, p. 253; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 189–190.

marsh for the purchase of salt.”<sup>83</sup>

Our knowledge of indigenous African long-distance trade is even scantier. However, there is all the reason to agree with Hartwig that long-distance trade cannot and should not be understood merely as an ‘economic’ phenomenon.<sup>84</sup> As far as can be seen, early long-distance trade gained its momentum not from an attempt to reap monopoly profits from unequal exchange and still less from a drive to realize comparative advantages in the costs of production, but from a desire to secure access to rare goods valued highly for their symbolic properties. “Commerce has for ages been a necessity to the East African, who cannot be content without his clothing and his ornaments,” Burton wrote in 1859.<sup>85</sup> Trade was not open to everyone. The first Nyamwezi traders to the coast were sons of chiefs, and in general trading expeditions were strictly controlled by chiefs through rituals and redistribution of the acquired goods.<sup>86</sup> It was, in Karl Polanyi’s terms, not reciprocal exchange nor market trade but ‘administered trade’ regulated by the political leaders through pooling and redistribution of trade goods.<sup>87</sup>

This suggestion might appear to conflict with the common belief that the first staples of East African long-distance trade were salt and iron.<sup>88</sup> However, two things must be noted. First, traded salt and iron had not only utilitarian but also symbolic value.<sup>89</sup> Second, the evidence for their dominance in the early long-distance trade is not conclusive. Archaeologists have shown that salt and iron were

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83. L.A. Wallace, ‘The Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau’, *Geographical Journal*, 13 (1899), p. 613. For an argument for the antiquity of this trade, see Roy Willis, *A State in the Making. Myth, History and Social Transformation in Pre-Colonial Ufipa*. Bloomington, 1981, p. 14.

84. Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 65.

85. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 421.

86. Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 48–49 (for Nyamwezi sons of chiefs going to the coast); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 71–74 (Kerebe); Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, pp. 19–22 (Yao).

87. Karl Polanyi, ‘Economy as Instituted Process’, in Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, eds, *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*. Glencoe, 1957, esp. pp. 250, 256, 262.

88. E.g. Gray and Birmingham, Fagan and Roberts in their contributions in Gray and Birmingham, eds, *Pre-Colonial Trade*, pp. 1, 25 ff., 44.

89. Cf. fn. 101 below in this chapter.

indeed exchanged during very early phases of East African history, and from written sources we know that both of these items were widely traded in the 19th-century trade networks. Yet there are strong indications that this exchange occurred for a long time on a regional basis, and that salt and iron developed into major items in trade over longer distances only with the rise of the Zanzibar-based trade system. The main source of salt over much of western Tanzania, the Uvinza salt springs, had been in use for centuries, but their exploitation did not reach its peak till much later, most probably during the 19th century.<sup>90</sup> As for iron, there are several indications that in many parts of the country wooden tools and arms began to be commonly replaced by iron ones only during the 19th century, when the latter were introduced by traversing caravans.<sup>91</sup> Hence, it is possible that early African long-distance traders were interested in goods with even more pronounced symbolic qualities. Glass beads had found their way into the interior of East Africa for centuries.<sup>92</sup> One of the earliest known items in the inter-African long-distance trade in East Africa was Katangan copper, imported by the Ha who used it for royal regalia (spear and bracelet) of the Heru kingdom.<sup>93</sup> According to oral tradition the first Yao traders went to the coast after imported white calico, while the first Nyamwezi and Kimbu traders to the coast were looking for conus-shaped disc shells to be used as

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90. J.E.G. Sutton and A.D. Roberts, 'Uvinza and its Salt Industry', *Azania*, 10 (1975), p. 61; Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Le Commerce du sel de l'Uvinza au XIXe siècle. De la cueillette au monopole capitaliste', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 65 (1978), p. 404. Cf. J.F. Mbwiliza, 'Chunyonyu and the Nineteenth-Century Salt Trade in the Kingdom of Heru in Buha', who reports, without an attempt at dating, the original "antiquity" and the subsequent "intensification" of the use of Uvinza springs, *Kale*, 2 (1973), p. 47.

91. Below, p. 240, fn. 77.

92. Claire C. Davidson and J. Desmond Clark, 'Trade Wind Beads: An Interim Report of Chemical Studies', *Azania*, 9 (1974), pp. 83—85; Burton, Lake Regions, p. 325.

93. Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Le Buha à la fin du XIXe siècle: un peuple, six royaumes', *Etudes d'Histoire africaine*, 7 (1975), pp. 22, 17; J.F. Mbwiliza, 'The Hoe and the Stick: A Political Economy of the Heru Kingdom c 1750—1900', *La civilisation ancienne des peuples des Grands Lacs*. Paris, 1981, p. 108.

symbols of chiefs.<sup>94</sup>

An important item in 19th-century and earlier regional trade was tobacco. Originally an American crop, it had spread in the interior so effectively that some travellers refused to believe it had been introduced to Africa only by the Portuguese.<sup>95</sup> It was cultivated predominantly for local use — tobacco was chewed and sniffed in the coastal and western parts of the country, smoked in pipes in the central parts — but in some places a surplus was regularly sold outside as a cash crop. On the coast and its hinterland the most popular of African tobaccos was the Shambaa variety. It was widely traded at least in the 1850s and possibly much earlier. Tobacco was taken either directly to the coast, or from one market place to another by different traders. Shambaa tobacco was reported to have reached places as distant as Ethiopia by relay, though the Shambaa traders themselves did not go further than Udigo.<sup>96</sup> Yao tobacco was also widely known and well respected. In the south, trade in goods such as tobacco and hoes is reported to have preceded the long-distance trade in goods specifically designed for export such as ivory, slaves and later rubber. Even after the emergence of the latter commodities, the trade in tobacco was continued parallel with the 'new' export trade.<sup>97</sup> Towards the interior, people known as the 'Kutu' or 'Sagara' were cultivating tobacco and exchanging it for salt with the Gogo. Tobacco was widely cultivated but less traded elsewhere in the southern and central parts of the country.<sup>98</sup>

From the above, two major characteristics of the more long-standing African exchange and trade can be discerned. First, much

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94. Abdallah, *Yaos*, p. 26; Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 48; Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 225.

95. E.g. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 385.

96. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 268; Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 7 (1918—1922), p. 71.

97. Abdallah, *Yaos*, pp. 27—29; Karl Weule, 'Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse meiner ethnographischen Forschungsreise in den Südosten Deutsch-Ostafrikas', *MDS*, suppl. 1, (1908), p. 45; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 156.

98. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 404—405; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, pp. 165—166; Herrmann, *Ugogo*, p. 198; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 156 ff.; Baumstark, 'Die Warangi', *MDS*, 13 (1900), p. 52; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 384.



of it was 'marketing' rather than 'trading' proper, in other words, selling one's own products and buying one's requirements instead of transporting goods from a distance with the overt intention of making a profit.<sup>99</sup> The dominant mode of exchange in local trade was based on reciprocity: one-to-one exchange between representatives of social groups such as kinship groups. As the famous Kilimanjaro missionary Bruno Gutmann put it, the Chagga women's markets were lacking the very middlemen which are essential to the western market concept. "Yet the value of the Chagga market lies in the very fact that equal-ranking feminine representatives of a completely uniform and equally endowed living sphere exchange the fruits of individual economy, primarily for the purpose of varying the diet and disposing of surplus agricultural produce before it succumbs to the ruin which so quickly occurs in the tropics."<sup>100</sup> Reciprocity was evidently involved in much regional and long-distance trade, too, but there it was complemented by redistribution, i.e. circulation of trade goods through the leaders of the societies.

The second major characteristic of early indigenous trade and exchange was that it took place largely within distinct spheres. That is, on the basis of the above descriptions I wish to propose that in Tanzanian precolonial economies, as in so many other 'primitive' economies, goods fell into distinct and hierarchical categories, roughly into 'subsistence goods' and 'prestige goods'. As goods circulated within each category much more easily than from one category to another, separate 'spheres of exchange' were formed and the economies became 'multicentric'. Subsistence goods, that is goods to be consumed for immediate needs (in our case mainly foodstuffs) were exchanged for other foodstuffs, while prestige goods, i.e. goods of greater durability and of more symbolic than subsistence value (cloths, ornaments, stimulants, iron, trade salt<sup>101</sup>) were exchanged for goods in the same category.

99. Bohannon and Dalton, 'Introduction', in idem, eds, *Markets in Africa*, pp. 10—13; Paul and Laura Bohannon, *Tiv Economy*. Evanston, 1968, p. 241.

100. Gutmann, *Recht*. p. 425.

101. It clear from the list that the borderline between subsistence and prestige goods is not physiological but historical and social. Salt is, of course, no prestige item as such but a highly necessary ingredient of any human diet. What I am implying here is that commercial salt,

Such an economy represents a stark contrast to the 'unicentric' capitalist market economy in which the compartmentalization of goods has broken down and all goods — and services — can be freely exchanged for others through the mediation of all-purpose money.<sup>102</sup>

## Growth of portage

During the 19th century trade not only expanded tremendously but also changed in nature. This is equally true of long-distance and of regional and local trade. To be sure, long-distance trade remained to a great extent 'administered trade', organized and controlled by chiefs, and was still largely confined to the prestige sphere. However, when the sets of long-distance routes, discussed in the preceding chapter, began to operate, long-distance trade became open to a vastly increased number of participants and a very different range of articles. The increase in long-distance trade had widespread effects because of its peculiar form, caravan trade. For reasons which have not been entirely explained, the wheel was not used in eastern and other parts of Africa.<sup>103</sup> Loads were moved from place to place mainly by human energy, on the heads and

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procured over longer distances, was accorded a status akin to other trade goods as a functional equivalent of locally produced salt. As we will see in chapter 6, salt could be procured either locally from soliferous soils, ashes etc. or over longer distances from known centres of salt production (below, pp. 255—257). Many trade goods can in fact be seen as functional equivalents for earlier locally made or procured goods: metal for wood as raw material for tools and arms, imported cloths and beads for domestic ones.

102. Godelier, *Marxist Anthropology*, p. 108; Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*. London, 1974, p. 277; Bohannon and Dalton, Introduction, pp. 3, 12. For a model analysis, see Bohannon and Bohannon, *Tiv Economy*, esp. ch. 16.

103. For attempts at an explanation for West Africa see Robin Law, 'Wheeled Transport in Pre-Colonial West Africa', *Africa*, 50 (1980), pp. 249—261; and Hopkins, *Economic History*, pp. 73—75. For occasional use of wheel in East Africa, see Hamed bin Muhammed, *Maisha ya Hamed bin Muhammed el Murjebi yaani Tippu Tip*. Nairobi, 1974, p. 105.

shoulders of men and women. The expansion of trade over longer distances increased the need for porters in unprecedented proportions. The *pagazi* (porter) was, in Stanley's words, "the camel, horse, mule, ass, train, wagon and cart" of East Africa, without whom "Salem would have got no ivory, Boston and New York no ebony."<sup>104</sup> Porterage had an immediate economic linkage to the rest of the economy. Porters had to be fed on the way. They were supplied with cloths, beads etc. which were exchanged for foodstuffs from local suppliers. In this way subsistence goods (foodstuffs), as well as goods which previously had had no commercial value (ivory and slaves) were turned into valid trade items that could be exchanged for, and converted into, prestige goods, or 'trade goods' (imported cloth, beads, wire etc.)<sup>105</sup> 'Marketing', based on barter and reciprocity and involving very little conversion was more and more replaced by 'trading' conducted according to market principles over the borderlines of the old spheres of exchange. At the end of the century, along the caravan routes, where most of our sources originate from, exchange of subsistence items, above all foodstuffs, for prestige items was reported to be a rule and not an exception, and older principles of exchange seem to have given way to market principles.

Caravans of porters varied greatly in size. Regional caravans were as a rule smaller than long-distance ones but also among the latter there was appreciable differences. On southern routes controlled by the slave trade caravans were usually bigger, and size seems to have grown everywhere as the end of the century approached. Some caravans contained only twenty or thirty porters, others several hundred. At the end of the century long-distance caravans could contain even a thousand or two thousand men. In such caravans the rear part reached camping places four or five hours after the front part.<sup>106</sup> A caravan was a "curious and picturesque spectacle." On their backs or heads the *pagazi* carried

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104. Stanley, *Dispatches*, p. 10.

105. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 65; Unomah, Vbandevba, pp. 8—9 and Unomah and Webster, *Expansion of Commerce*, pp. 284—285 (Nyamwezi); Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 19 (Yao).

106. Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 86; Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 341; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 16—17; Beachey, *Ivory Trade*, p. 273.

loads of twenty or more kilos for hundreds of kilometers; the most common load was some 25 kilos plus food and other necessities.<sup>107</sup> At the head of a caravan was a *kirangozi* (guide); next came the "aristocracy of the caravan," the ivory-carriers with tusks poised upon the shoulders; then carriers of cloths, beads, copper wire; and "in the rear a rabble rout of slaves corded or chained in file; women and children in separate parties, idlers and invalids, carriers of lighter goods with rhinoceros tusks, hoes, cones of salt and tobacco, baskets, boxes, beds, tents, calabashes, water gourds, bags, pots, mats and private stores ... A mganga (healer -JK) almost invariably accompanies the caravan, not disdaining to act as a common porter ..." No wonder that travelling was slow and laborious. Burton and Speke spent seven and a half months on the journey to Lake Tanganyika but reported that the normal time was four to six months.<sup>108</sup> The southern route was faster; Lake Nyasa could be reached from Kilwa in a month.<sup>109</sup> The central route also seems to have taken less time in the early 1880s.<sup>110</sup>

The caravan trade was brisk, but it is very difficult to determine how many took part in it, in what manner and who exactly they were. At the beginning of the colonial period it was estimated that over 100 000 porters covered the caravan routes yearly.<sup>111</sup> In Bagamoyo alone, the main port of the central route, it was calculated that 80 000 porters came and left yearly. Nor was it considered unusual for 30 000—40 000 porters to be in the town at a time, waiting for a load.<sup>112</sup> The accuracy of these figures is

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107. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 414 (quotation); S.C. Lamden, 'Some Aspects of Porterage in East Africa', *TNR*, 61 (1963), pp. 157—158; Robert Cummings, 'A Note on the History of Caravan Porters in East Africa', *KHR*, 1 (1973), esp. pp. 110 ff.

108. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 414 (quotation); idem, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 55. For a more detailed description, see idem, *Lake Regions*, I, pp. 337—365.

109. John Gray, 'History of Kilwa', *TNR*, 32 (1952), p. 34.

110. Swann, *Slave Hunters*, p. 73.

111. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 16; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 199. Reichard maintains that 400 000 — 500 000 porters passed through Ugogo yearly, but he is counting the traffic in both directions, *ibid.*, pp. 327—328.

112. Rochus Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstands in Ostafrika*. Frankfurt a.O., 1892, p. 185; von Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, p. 138.



questionable, however, and even if approximately correct, they cannot be projected without more ado backwards to the pre-colonial time. It is obvious in fact that the beginning of the colonial conquest increased caravan traffic.<sup>113</sup> But there are only scattered figures available from earlier years. A missionary estimated that in the 1880s between 15 000 and 20 000 'Nyamwezi' went yearly to the coast as porters. Some ten years earlier it was calculated that 6 000 Nyamwezi porters were to Bagamoyo at the beginning of the caravan season in September.<sup>114</sup> Whatever the accuracy of these particular figures, it seems evident that the caravan trade employed yearly tens of thousands, probably more than a hundred thousand people. It may also be reasonable to suppose that the number grew towards the end of the century. Although the amount of ivory exported from Zanzibar remained much the same as before, the journeys required for fetching it became longer.

Notions as to how the porters were recruited have varied and are still varying; the general term 'porter' concealed persons who differed a great deal in social status. During anti-slavery campaigns at the end of last century there was wide acceptance of the picture of 'black ivory', of slaves who besides themselves carried ivory to the coast. Later research has demolished this picture. As Roberts says, portering of ivory was "a skilled and arduous task best performed by fit and experienced young men; undisciplined and demoralized captives would have been of very little use." In addition, traders needed many porters to convey from the coast to the interior the beads, cloths, weapons and other trade goods used to buy provisions and to be offered to those who sold ivory and slaves.<sup>115</sup> Yet the impression created by some later historians that portering was wage labour comparable to colonial migrant labour does not seem particularly well-founded. Rather, I should like to argue that among porters more important distinctions than those between slaves and free labourers were, first, between what might be called 'trader-porters' and 'worker-porters' and, second, between those who worked on their own and those who acted as

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113. See Heinrich Schnee, ed., *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, II. Leipzig, 1920, pp. 70—71.

114. Francois Coulbois, *Dix années au Tanganyka*. Limoges, 1901, p. 41; Horner, *Reisen*, p. 121.

115. Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 61; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 485.

commercial agents for their political leaders. The proportion of slaves among porters was always quite substantial, but those concerned were not so much new 'raw' slaves as old established slaves of coastal, and later, increasingly, inland societies. They travelled one way with one caravan and returned with another. Both 'traditional' slaves and free men could act as traders who carried goods for sale either as independent entrepreneurs or agents of their political leaders of masters, or as worker-porters who hired themselves to the caravans of others.

It is no longer possible to obtain a complete picture of the organization of the caravans, but it obviously varied according to the trade route and to whether the caravan originated from the interior or from the coast. Caravans starting from the interior appear to have often been controlled by the political leaders of the societies concerned. In the south, dominated by Yao ivory and the slave trade, smaller coast-bound caravans consisted mainly of Yao "who (carried) their own exports for sale, but (would) not act as porters on the up journey."<sup>116</sup> At least during the first half of the century there may have been more such traders than slaves in many Yao caravans.<sup>117</sup> The role of the chiefs in sending Yao caravans in the late 19th century is not clear; earlier they are known to have played a major ritual role.<sup>118</sup> On the central route the majority of caravans came to consist of 'Nyamwezi', including actually many Sumbwa, Kimbu and (towards the end of the century) Sukuma. Here the role of the chiefs was prominent. They obviously furnished people willing to act as trader-porters with ivory and other trade goods and also redistributed many of the goods brought from the coast.<sup>119</sup> But the background and status of

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116. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 406.

117. The French ethnographer de Froberville reported in 1847 on the basis of his interviews with slaves in Mauritius that in small caravans captives were "often as numerous as their masters." Eugène de Froberville, 'Notes sur les mœurs, coutumes et traditions des Amakoua, sur le commerce et la traite des esclaves dans l'Afrique orientale', *BSG*, 3. ser., 8 (1847), p. 323.

118. See Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 19.

119. Unomah, Vbandevba, p. 27, fn. 16 (Nyamwezi); C.W. Werther, *Zum Victoria Nyanza*. Berlin, 1895, p. 164 and Holmes, *Zanzibari Influence*, pp. 480—481 (Sukuma); Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 137 (Kimbu).

the 'Nyamwezi' porters may have been more heterogeneous than is commonly thought. Many travellers, and later historians following them, suggested that they were predominantly free adolescents. Burton relates that portage was considered "a test of manliness" by the Nyamwezi. The British missionary Alfred Swann found 30 years later that "not one of them was allowed to marry before he had carried a load of ivory to the coast, and brought back one of calico or brass-wire."<sup>120</sup> However, the German missionary Blohm, writing in the yearly colonial period, indicated that many precolonial Nyamwezi porters were more mature, married men, independent entrepreneurs who carried their own goods on their own responsibility.<sup>121</sup> Burton said elsewhere that Nyamwezi caravans made up large parties of men, "some carrying their own goods, others hired by petty proprietors" and Roberts, on the basis of his field research, draws a picture of a young man earning his first cloth as a worker-porter and moving on to independent trade thereafter.<sup>122</sup> Many among the 'Nyamwezi' porters were slaves. Indeed, "commercial travelling" was sometimes mentioned among the main duties of male slaves in Unyamwezi, even though others maintained that Nyamwezi slaves could act as porters without the permission of their masters.<sup>123</sup> In any case, what made the 'Nyamwezi' popular among the European travellers was that, unlike the Yao, they were usually willing to hire themselves to other caravans on the way back.<sup>124</sup>

Slaves probably made up an even larger proportion of porters in caravans starting from the coast. Again they acted in many different guises. Coastal caravans, organized by Arab and Swahili entrepreneurs, were mostly relatively small. They appear to have

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120. Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 337; Swann, *Slave-Hunters*, p. 58. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 45 refers to both to show the youth of the porters.

121. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 167—170.

122. Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, pp. 339—340; Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 67.

123. See Wilhelm Blohm, *Die Nyamwezi*, II. Hamburg, 1933, p. 37 and Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 465 respectively.

124. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 405 ff.; idem, *Lake Regions*, I, pp. 337 ff.; ibid., II, pp. 30, 38—39; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 300, 325—326; Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 61, 65—67; Christie, *Slavery in Zanzibar*, p. 63.

been of two main types. The first consisted chiefly of hired porters, either slaves or people from other "lower classes."<sup>125</sup> The others were made up of small independent traders. Slave caravans were found especially on the northern routes. Their leaders acquired trade goods as advances from Indian traders and recruited the porters themselves. Whether the slave porters were their own slaves or hired from other slave-owners is not clear from the accounts. Dr Christie reported in 1871 only that "the greater number" of porters in bigger caravans heading from the coast towards the interior were slaves.<sup>126</sup> In addition, it appears that the importance of slaves as porters grew again at the end of the pre-colonial period when export channels for slaves were blocked.<sup>127</sup> But smaller caravans composed of independent trader-porters remained important till colonial times. While they were not lacking in the north they were mostly encountered on the southern coast. "If anyone wished to go into the interior, it was made known locally," it was related from Kilwa. "Whoever wished to join the caravan did so. Caravan people were quite poor. The richest of them had barely 100 rupees worth of goods." Such caravans went to Lake Nyasa or Ungindo and Uyao. In Nyasa coastal traders might have acted on their own, buying slaves and ivory. Among the Ngindo and Yao they had to work through local 'friends' who followed them back to the coast with trade goods.<sup>128</sup> The arrangement may have been similar in Unyamwezi. At least in Unyamwezi Swahili caravans had to engage local agents to be able to trade.<sup>129</sup>

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125. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 58.

126. Christie, *Slavery in Zanzibar*, p. 63.

127. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, p. 274; Swann, *Slave-Hunters*, p. 49; Dr Pruett, 'Slavery in East Africa', *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 13 (1888), pp. 661—665.

128. Hans Meyer, *Ostafrikanische Gletscherfahrten*. Leipzig, 1893, p. 294 (north); v. Eberstein, 'Ueber die Rechtsanschauungen der Küstenbewohner des Bezirkes Kilwa', *MDS*, 9 (1896), pp. 175—177 (Kilwa).

129. Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, pp. 184—185.



## Expansion and change of regional and local trade

Regional and local exchange increased and changed with long-distance trade. The Chagga added 'Swahili markets', i.e. dealings with coastal caravans, to their indigenous market structure and the Pare did the same. New regional market places like Tabora and Ujiji emerged, and old markets as those in Bondei gained new importance. More fully-fledged inter-regional trading networks or circuits developed in which goods from several parts of the country were circulated, often with the mediation of a currency. In many of them goods were transported by small caravans and market-places functioned as mediating links or centres for networks. But more important than the change in the outward forms and the overall volume of trade was the transformation of its underlying principles. There was a drastic shift away from reciprocity and redistribution towards market trade. Above all, conversion from one sphere of exchange to another became now an integral part of much of the trade. As the Africans exchanged grain, and other foodstuffs, for trade goods, the net result was a steady process of conversion of subsistence goods to prestige goods. This break-down of the borderlines between the old spheres of exchange can in fact be seen as the major indicator of the commercial transformation.

In the coastal area regional trading networks gained much of their momentum from the food required by plantations on the coast and in Zanzibar. One such network linked the northern coast with its hinterland up to the Shambaai. In addition to grain, this network carried Shambaa tobacco.<sup>130</sup> One can suspect that much of the late 19th-century trading network on the northern coast and in its hinterland may have been modelled after earlier tobacco trade. Trade here was conducted predominantly by African expeditions or small caravans, and relayed through market places in Bondei, where "as many as a thousand men and women (were) often to be found with their wares set out in groups and rows for sale: mtama, maize, some amount of rice, chickens, eggs, woven mats, objects

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130. Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 289; O. Warburg, 'Die Kulturpflanzen Usambaras', *MDS*, 7 (1894), pp. 183 ff.; Feerman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 132.

carved in wood such as plates or low three-and four-legged stools in one piece, also tobacco in small quantities ..."<sup>131</sup> In the 1880s and early 1890s Digo and Zigua trading parties were taking grain to regional markets or coastal towns, while coastal Swahili traders were visiting the hinterland. Much of the grain ended up in Zanzibar. Who exactly organized the caravans is unclear. James Giblin's Zigua informants usually denied that their ancestors ever engaged in sales of staple grains to coastal merchants. It is possible that sellers were leaders who, anyway, had larger stores of grain. What is known more firmly is that as like the long-distance ivory and slave trade, this trade was financed and financially dominated by Indian merchants in coastal towns.<sup>132</sup>

How trade operated elsewhere on the coast is more sparsely documented, but the basic pattern must have been similar. Burton noted that in the Mrima settlements, roughly between Bagamoyo and Rufiji, grain was brought in from the interior by "the wild people after the great rains," that is in June or thereabouts. Burton leaves the impression that this grain was consumed on the mainland but adds elsewhere that Zanzibar imported a lot of grain from the coast. From later accounts we know that there was a steady export of grain, including rice from Rufiji and other food crops such as cassava, from this part of the coast as well as from Kilwa to Zanzibar and the northern Swahili coast.<sup>133</sup>

In the Lake Tanganyika region the most famous trading network was centered on the market of Ujiji, held daily. According to Livingstone it was "an institution begun and carried on by the natives in spite of great drawbacks from unjust Arabs." It was attended every day by about 300 people.<sup>134</sup> Opinions on it differed. Thomson was "most disappointed." He found "very few people," principally local Jiji and Arab slaves, at the market place which

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131. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 190.

132. Ibid.; Cado Picarda, 'Autour Mandéra', *Les Missions Catholiques*, 18 (1886), p. 249; Baumann, *Usambara*, pp. 40—41, 97, 126, 273, 289; Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 89, 112—119.

133. Above, p. 104; Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 48, 446; Guillaing, *Documents*, II, 1, pp. 312—315; Elton, *Country between Dar-es-Salaam and Kilwa*, *BPP*, Slave Trade 91, *East African Slave Trade*, p. 18.

134. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, II, pp. 182—183.

was almost entirely for the sale of foodstuffs.<sup>135</sup> He may have visited the market at an exceptionally depressed time. Stanley, the journalist, gave a more vivid description of the extent of trade which in spite of its eloquence is not basically dissimilar to several others:<sup>136</sup>

Uhha daily sends to the market of Ujiji its mtama, grain (millet), sesamum, beans, fowls, goats, and broad-tailed sheep, butter, and sometimes oxen; Urundi, its goats, sheep, oxen, butter, palm-oil and palm-nuts, fowls, bananas and plantains; Uzigé — now and then only — its oxen and palmoil; Uvira, its iron, its wire of all sizes, bracelets, and anklets; Ubwari, its cassava or manioc, dried, and enormous quantities of grain, Dogara or whitebait, and dried fish; Uvinza, its salt; Uguha, its goats and sheep, and grain, especially Indian corn; rural Wajiji bring their buttermilk, ground-nuts, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, bananas and plantains, yams, beans, vetches, garden herbs, melons, cucumbers, sugar-cane, palm-wine, palm-nuts, palm-oil, goats, sheep, bullocks, eggs, fowls and earthenware; the lake coast Wajiji bring their slaves, whitebait, fresh fish, ivory, baskets, nets, spears, bows, and arrows; the Wangwana and Arab slaves bring slaves, fuel, ivory, wild fruit, eggs, rice, sugar-cane, and honey from the Ukaranga forest.

In other networks trading expeditions were more important than markets. Such was the case in the interlacustrine region. Karagwe and the Haya kingdoms were connected by trade routes with each other and the rest of the interlacustrine states, in particular Buganda. Besides ivory, goods circulating in this regional trade network were cattle from Ruanda; bark cloth, most of it made in Buganda; iron tools and arms from Karagwe and Ussuvi; and coffee beans grown in Buhaya. The network had a currency of its own which was unique in the whole Tanzanian area (but extending to Buganda). It consisted of cowrie shells tied in strings in batches of one hundred. They were imported from the coast where they had been collected.<sup>137</sup> Yet, much of the trade still remained outside

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135. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, p. 90.

136. Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, II, New York, 1878, pp. 3—4. For corroboration, see e.g. Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, p. 244.

137. Wilh. Junker, *Reisen in Afrika 1875—1886*, III. Vienna, Ölmütz, 1891, p. 646; Richter, 'Einige weitere ethnographische Notizen über den Bezirk Bukoba', *MDS*, 13 (1900), pp. 72—75; Hermann Rehse, *Kiziba*.

institutionalized markets. As Roberts noted for western Tanzania, trade was usually conducted “not through regular markets but in *ad hoc* gatherings at a caravan halt, or by visiting a particular place of commercial interest, such as a centre of salt or iron production.”<sup>138</sup> This may have been true even where markets and trading networks were present, as indicated by Feierman’s account from Usambara, based on oral tradition and apparently referring to the 19th-century situation:<sup>139</sup>

One did not have to wait for market day to trade. Trade took place anywhere people gathered. In a village it was quite natural for a man with a surplus of seed to sell some to a neighbour who did not have enough. Men also went on longer trips, to trade in villages outside Shambaai. Shambaa men would go to trade their livestock for iron implements at the villages of Pare smiths. Trade with the Kwavi (probably Parakuyu -JK) was possible only if one had a Kwavi blood partner. Otherwise it was considered too dangerous. The Kwavi sold livestock and bought Shambaa tobacco. At times five or six men banded together to make the three-day journey to Pangani, at the coast, to sell samli (a kind of butter -JK) or tobacco for cowrie beads. Once at the coast they could either visit traders privately, or wait for the market day.

An additional type of 19th-century trade was that connected with famines. Such trade differed from the more normal exchange of foodstuffs between or within societies in several respects. It was not regular but depended on the incidence of shortage. The setting of prices was not regulated by the same moral constraints, but prices were to a great extent determined by short term market considerations, i.e. demand and supply. This type of trade also involved a different kind of conversion than the cases discussed so far. Whereas people in the regular trade responded to new opportunities to convert their subsistence production into prestige items or wealth and in this way undertook a ‘conversion up’,

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*Land und Leute*. Stuttgart, 1910, pp. 79—80. Schmidt’s information that Buhaya was a centre of regional trade in iron goods (*Historical Archaeology*, pp. 40—41) is not supported by these contemporary sources from the late precolonial and early colonial period.

138. Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 64. Cf. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 167.

139. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 131.



famine trade entailed also a 'conversion down'. The seller of foodstuffs converted up, as in the case of regular trade; but the owner of goods belonging to the prestige sphere who sorely needed products of the subsistence sphere in order to survive had to convert his wealth 'down', to trade off his livestock, slaves or even children for the subsistence items required.<sup>140</sup> In such a situation the needy part was left in an extremely vulnerable position, exposed to extortion. Kwimba elders in Sukumaland still remember a late 19th-century famine during which the Kerebe merchants demanded exorbitant prices for grain. They call it "the famine of the profiteers."<sup>141</sup> There is no reason to suppose that this kind of trade was entirely new because there is no reason to suppose that famines were new; but it may have increased because famines probably increased. It was reported, or implied, to have been common among such diverse peoples as the Shambaa, Chagga, Iraqw, Rangi and Kerebe.<sup>142</sup> However, it was intriguingly reported from Pare in the early colonial period that famine prices were charged only when transactions took place in cash, not when it happened in livestock — and cash was new.<sup>143</sup>

## Currency and cattle

A revealing indication of the intensity of exchange and the replacement of old principles by new ones was the development of currency, or rather currencies. But nowhere did it lead to the

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140. For the general argument, see Bohannan and Dalton, Introduction, pp. 13—14. For some Shambaa evidence, see Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 133.

141. C.F. Holmes and R.A. Austen, 'The Pre-Colonial Sukuma', *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* (hereafter *CHM*), 14 (1972), p. 388.

142. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 34, 130; Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 64; E.H. Winter, 'Livestock Markets among the Iraqw of Northern Tanganyika', in Bohannan and Dalton, eds, *Markets in Africa*, p. 460; Baumstark, Warangi, p. 53; Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 47, 106—107. For the increase in famine, see below, pp. 129 ff.

143. Ernst Kotz, *Im Banne der Furcht*. Hamburg, n.d. (but ca 1926), p. 151.

emergence of 'all-purpose money', breaking down the resisting barriers between the spheres of exchange. What happened was rather that certain goods assumed some of the functions of currency, such as being a means of payment or standard of value. In Buhaya and Karagwe (as well as in Buganda) it was cowrie shells, one of the most widespread international currencies of the time. It appears to have been introduced relatively recently, perhaps in the late 18th or early 19th century.<sup>144</sup> But usually it was the most common trade goods, cloths or beads, which came to function as currencies. Porters were often paid wages in cloth<sup>145</sup> and provisions were bought with both cloths and beads, regarded by Europeans as 'notes' and 'coins' respectively. Travellers' accounts are full of complaints of the great demand of these items.<sup>146</sup> Perhaps the most advanced cloth cum bead currency system was encountered in the Lake Tanganyika trade network centered at Ujiji. Apparently during the latter half of the 19th century there developed what a scholar calls "a bead currency based on a cloth standard." This meant that market transactions were done with the mediation of beads in a certain relation to cloths. Hore observed in the early 1880s that the main currency units were strings of blue and white cylindrical beads, each string containing 20 beads, further combined to form bunches of ten strings. They were exchanged for calico in rates varying daily according to the quantity of cloth in the market.<sup>147</sup> Other goods

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144. Herrmann, 'Die Wasiba und ihr Land', *MDS*, 7 (1894), p. 55; A. G. M. Ishumi, *Kiziba: The Cultural Heritage of An Old African Kingdom*. Syracuse, 1980, pp. 29, 49; Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 185. Merrick Posnansky, 'Connections between the Lacustrine Peoples and the Coast', in H. Neville Chittick and Robert I. Rotberg, eds, *East Africa and the Orient*. New York, 1975, p. 218 dates the introduction of cowrie shells to Buganda to the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

145. Roberts, Nyamwezi Trade, p. 67.

146. E.g. R. Burton and J.H. Speke, 'A Coasting Voyage from Mombasa to the Pangani River', *JRGS*, 28 (1858), p. 215; Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 189—190; J.A. Grant, *A Walk across Africa*. Edinburgh, London, 1864, pp. 86—87; Gebhard Schneider, ed., *Die Katolische Mission von Zanguebar*. Regensburg, 1877, pp. 166—167; Emin Pascha, *Die Tagebücher von Dr. Emin Pascha*, IV, ed. Franz Stuhlmann. Braunschweig, Berlin, Hamburg, 1927, p. 385.

147. Brown, *Muslim Influence*, p. 621; Hore, *Twelwe Tribes*, p. 9.

could function as currency, too, notably iron hoes.<sup>148</sup> The hoes manufactured in the interior, in particular in Geita, were carried down by the caravans to the coast. They became "a circulating medium amongst the races along the great trunk line" and were taken in exchange for provisions and for the payment of *hongo*, or passage tax. In average years two hoes were procurable for a cloth in Unyanyembe, and they doubled in price between Unyamwezi and the coast.<sup>149</sup>

Also 'European' money, much of which in fact was Indian, appeared in the Tanzanian area well before the onset of German colonialism. At first, it was confined to the coast and its immediate hinterland. According to Baumann, Maria Theresia dollars and Indian rupees and copper pice had been common on the coast from about 1860. In 1885 all commercial transactions in Zanzibar and on the coast were reported to have been undertaken in money. Speaking of coins, it was those of the smallest denomination, namely pice, taken into use only under Saiyid Said, that penetrated most effectively inland along the caravan routes. All coins were rarities in Usambara in 1857; at the end of the 1880s they were circulating widely.<sup>150</sup> Money was received with pleasure, even demanded among peoples like the Kwere and Zigua in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Catholic missionaries thought this was mostly due to their influence.<sup>151</sup> The French traveller Giraud managed in 1883 to go seven days inland before he had to change his means of payment from coins to cloths. In Lindi and up-country the value of much of the barter goods was expressed in dollars. "The Wadigo bear the stamp of culture to a point where they will rarely sell their goods for anything but money," observed

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148. E.g. Junker, *Reisen*, p. 662; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 168; Unomah and Webster, *Expansion of Commerce*, pp. 287—288.

149. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 397 (see also p. 269); Speke, *What Led*, p. 300; Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 52—53.

150. Burton and Speke, *Coasting Voyage*, p. 215; Oscar Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika während des Aufstandes*. Vienna, Ölmütz, 1890, p. 168 (Usambara); idem, *Usambara*, pp. 151 (Udigo), 182 (Usambara), 284 (coast in general); Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, p. 13.

151. E.g. *A l'assaut*, pp. 75—76; Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 249; Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 265.

Reichard in the late 1880s.<sup>152</sup> Yet, even here, the coins did not function as all-purpose money; they merely looked like it. The use of coinage was restricted to a minority of Tanzanian societies and with all probability to a minority of persons inside them. In addition, we have no evidence that the coins could have gained a role essentially different from other precolonial currencies; they, too, fulfilled only some subsidiary functions of money in a market economy.

Among the most important, intriguing and least understood questions in precolonial economic history is the emergence of livestock, particularly cattle, as a major store of value and means of exchange. How and when cattle acquired their economic and social value is not clear, but it can scarcely be doubted that the new opportunities provided by trade were bound to raise that value. During the 19th century cattle appear, in fact, to have acquired a double value. They became a commodity, regularly driven to the Tabora market and to the coast to be sold there. Their price was said to have increased four to eight times between Sukumaland and the coast.<sup>153</sup> Inside African societies cattle established their position as the main prestige item, mediating not only the circulation of goods but also that of human beings. Trade goods such as cloths and beads could be converted into livestock, and livestock itself, through bridewealth, into control of women (and men). As Feierman found in the Shambaa kingdom, "(l)ivestock — goats, cattle and some sheep — were the characteristic form in which wealth was kept. Other goods such as ivory, or, in the late nineteenth century, quantities of trade cloth, were counted as wealth, and could readily be exchanged for livestock." Bridewealth was also paid in livestock.<sup>154</sup> Many porters may have

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152. Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 58; T. Lupton Taylor, 'The People of Masasi', *Central Africa*, 1890, p. 75; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 190.

153. E.g. Speke, *What Led*, pp. 268, 333; Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 235; Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, p. 180; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 168; G.A. Fischer, 'Bericht über die ... Reise in das Massai-Land', *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* (hereafter *MGGH*), 1882—83 (1884), p. 97; A. Schynse, *Mit Stanley und Emin Pascha durch Deutsch-Ostafrika*, ed. Karl Hespers. Cologne, 1890, p. 44.

154. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 33—34.



been interested in acquiring livestock. At least the terms of trade between portage and cattle were favourable for such a purpose. A young Sukuma man working as a caravan porter in the late 19th century could earn cloth up to the value of 15 cows and three bulls on a single trip to the coast.<sup>155</sup>

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155. A. Buluda Itandala, 'A History of the Babinza of Usukuma, Tanzania, to 1890', Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1983, p. 229.

## 4. Intensification of famine, war and disease

To many outsiders who arrived in the Tanzanian area in the middle of the 19th-century convulsions, life in African societies appeared to be close to the Hobbesian state: “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short.”<sup>1</sup> One typical description was given by a medical missionary named Southon from Unyamwezi in 1880. He wrote: “The average life of males does not exceed 20—25 years. Every year many men are killed in battle, and great numbers fall victim to epidemics and famines.”<sup>2</sup> Similar gloomy statements can be found in plenty from other contemporary sources, and they have been echoed by a great number of more recent writers. Even such a guardian of precolonial virtues as Julius Nyerere has claimed that the African precolonial family was “poor, insecure and frequently fear-ridden.”<sup>3</sup> And indeed, our sources strongly challenge Kjekshus’ case that precolonial Tanzanians effectively controlled their environment until the now well-known catastrophes of the 1890s. While there is no doubt that many of the early travellers and inhabitants had a strong tendency to exaggerate the dark side of African societies, it is only by overlooking source information or by declaring it entirely fraudulent that one can maintain the view that life in many African societies in the latter part of the 19th century was not extremely tough, plagued by the ravages of the Apocalyptic Horsemen: famine, war, pestilence and death.

Yet I also think that the contrary view, represented most authoritatively by Iliffe, that famine and disease were always rife in Tanzania, not sparing even the most favoured regions, and that they were the main reasons for the “underpopulation” of the

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1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I, ch. 13 (originally 1651), as quoted in Sahlins, *Stone Age Economy*, p. 177.

2. Southon, ‘The History, Country and People of Unyamwezi’, London Missionary Society Archives (hereafter LMSA), School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Central Africa 1880 3/4/C, p. 10.

3. Julius Nyerere, ‘Introduction’, in idem, *Freedom and Unity*. Dar es Salaam, 1966, p. 12.

country,<sup>4</sup> can and must be questioned. I do not wish to deny the reality of pre-documentary famine and pestilence, but it seems evident that calamities like famine, disease and war all increased during the build-up of the 19th-century commercial system, and that the conditions of those turbulent times cannot be automatically projected backwards to more normal and peaceful periods, whatever they may have been like. The process of 'opening up' which began in the Tanzanian area in the 19th century (and continued well into the 20th) was clearly a time of increasing militancy and the spread of new and perhaps not-so-new diseases. These factors, separately and together, had dramatic results in many societies. Just as Hobbes wrote in the middle of the English Civil War, so our precolonial Tanzanian sources emanate from a very exceptional historical period.

## Famine

There are no grounds for claiming that famines were unknown in pre-19th-century Tanzania. Famine looms large both in oral tradition and early ethnographic sources. Even a superficial acquaintance with the traditional histories of Tanzanian peoples reveals that famine plays a central role in them. It is often mentioned as a causative or contributory factor in social development and not seldom credited with central importance as an explanatory category at some critical historical junctures. Some major famines were still in fresh memory when first literate observers took notes and published them as our written ethnographic sources, and the observers themselves encountered more or less severe food shortage on several occasions. But while there is no denying that times of famine and dearth occurred in precolonial societies, categorical statements on their disastrous demographic effect need some qualification.

When considering famine in oral tradition, the main point to note is that its incidence is not random. On the contrary, it is very clearly patterned. Famine, often linked with drought, is credited

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4. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 13.

with central explanatory importance at least in two historical junctures. First is the very beginning of history. The charters of origin and other myths of a wide variety of peoples tell of migrations by forefathers to the current place of residence. The most common cause given for migration in the myths is famine, sometimes connected with war.<sup>5</sup> Another historical period at which famine often emerges as a major factor is marked by political turning points and transformations. In more centralized polities this often happens when ruling dynasties change. In several interlake kingdoms and in Pare, for instance, certain old rulers were depicted as discredited by drought and famine and the successful new rulers as blessed with several generations of good weather and abundant food supply.<sup>6</sup> In the case of the more decentralized Yao, a famine represents the watershed between the old peaceful and prosperous days and the new era of war and

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5. E.g. Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, p. 7 (Karagwe); Mbwiliza, *The Hoe and the Stick*, p. 106 (Ha); A.O. Anacleto, 'Serengeti: Its People and Their Environment', *TNR*, 81 & 82 (1978), pp. 28, 32 (Serengeti peoples); A. Buluda Itandala, 'Ilembo, Nanda and the Girls: Establishing a Chronology of the Babinza', in Webster, ed., *Chronology*, p. 152 (Binza Sukuma); J. Gus Liebenow, *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania: The Case of Makonde*. Evanston, 1971, p. 42 (Makonde); Kannenberg, 'Durch die Marénga Makali', *MDS*, 13 (1900), p. 9 ('Aássi'). Cf. Webster et al. in *Chronology* who go much further and claim to have been able to establish a detailed chronology of interlacustrine migrations on the basis of drought and famines, a claim to be most strongly doubted (see David Henige's critique of the book in *IJAHS*, 14 (1981), pp. 359—363 and above, p. 34).
  6. Richter, 'Der Bezirk Bukoba', *MDS*, 12 (1899), p. 74; Fredrick J. Kaijage, 'Kyamutwara', *CHM*, 13 (1971), p. 551; and Otto Mors, 'Geschichte der Bahinda des alten Kyamtware-Reiches am Victoria-Nyanza-See', *Anthropos*, 50 (1955), p. 707 (Kyamutwara); Ishumi, *Cultural Heritage*, p. 28 (Kiziba); Paul Betbeder, 'The Kingdom of Buzinza', *CHM*, 13 (1971), p. 743; Kimambo, *Political History*, p. 88 (Pare). Cf. G. C. K. Gwassa and J. F. Mbwiliza, 'Social Production, Symbolism and Ritual in Buha: 1750—1900', *TNR*, 79 & 80 (1976), p. 17 for shortages of grain "characterising" the interlacustrine area during the 18th and the early 19th centuries and Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, p. 64 for a tradition in which a king survives a famine.



dispersal. For the Kimbu, the terrible *ilogo* famine in the 1840s was “a point of no return” in their decline.<sup>7</sup>

One does not need to have a particularly structuralist mind to think that famine, or drought, is used in such myths as a metaphor. As Feierman has explained for the Shambaa, famine formed an integral part of the cultural and political idiom of the society. Strong kings were associated with fertility, weak and contested kings with famine. Famines, in turn, were explained in terms of conflicts between the king, the chiefs and the subjects.<sup>8</sup> No one disputes that metaphors can refer to historical ‘facts’, but some writers have suggested in similar contexts that a part of such statements may have nothing to do with famine or climate. Rather, they may represent culturally determined descriptions of political events in an idiom which is consistent with the way in which people viewed kingship, namely as a mediating force between men and the forces of nature and the supernatural.<sup>9</sup> And while there seems to be no *a priori* ground for denying the historicity of the mythical famines, and one may well imagine that people who never experienced a real famine are scarcely likely to accord it a high place in their fundamental symbolic structures, to prove, or disprove, that such famines actually happened is quite another task. There is no reason why every reference to ‘famine’ should indicate a historical famine. Of the epoch-making famines mentioned above only the Kimbu *ilogo* is reasonably well documented.<sup>10</sup> For the rest sources are simply lacking and I make no attempt here to argue further.

Turning to those famines on which we have more immediate information one will readily recognize that they appear to have increased towards the end of the 19th century. Now, much of the reported increase must be more apparent than real and due to such factors as a clearer memory of more recent events and increased

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7. Abdallah, *Yaos*, pp. 34—36; Shorter, *Chiefship* p. 249.

8. Steven Feierman, ‘Concepts of Sovereignty among the Shambaa and Their Relation to Political Action’, D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1972, pp. 1—2, 377 ff.; idem, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 87—88, 182.

9. Randall Packard in a review of Webster, ed., *Chronology*, in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 16 (1982), 204 and Richards, *Politics of African Land Use*, p. 45.

10. Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 249 ff.

reporting because of the presence of literate observers. But this does not mean that no real increase could have occurred; as will be argued below, there are grounds for thinking that it did. In any case, few peoples remember more than one famine before the 19th century, whereas there were many more during it. The early famines have a more or less 'mythical' character. In addition to those already mentioned we have references to two late 18th-century or early 19th-century famines on the southern coast (Lindi and Kilwa Kisiwani)<sup>11</sup> and one in Usandawe. These famines are said to have lasted for seven years and to have been accompanied by an invasion of locusts, something which may arouse a suspicion of biblical influence on the informants but which does not necessarily preclude the historicity of the data. The Gogo and Sandawe recall one pre-1850 famine which was traditionally the worst. In the latter part of the 19th century the Gogo are on record as having on the average at least one famine in a decade and the Sandawe little less.<sup>12</sup> An increasing frequency of famines is discernible in Iramba, too.<sup>13</sup> The same trend has been documented in Sukumaland. In Bukwimba there was one horrible famine "associated with the dimly-remembered past" and three famines in

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11. 'The Ancient History of Kilwa Kisiwani', in Freeman-Grenville, ed., *East African Coast*, p. 223; 'The Ancient History of Lindi', in *ibid.*, p. 228. One famine on Kilwa is dated before the visit of the French slaver Morice in 1776 and another, obviously smaller, famine is said to have occurred simultaneously with the visit. Famine in Lindi is dated to the reign of Sayid Said in Zanzibar, ca 1820—1856.
  12. Théobald Schaegele, 'La tribu des Wagogo', *Anthropos*, 33 (1938), p. 201; Clarke Brooke, 'The Heritage of Famine in Central Tanzania', *TNR*, 67 (1967), p. 20; and Peter Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship among the Gogo*. Ithaca, London, 1969, p. 21 (Gogo — Schaegele dates the first famine 150 years back; Rigby excludes it); J.C. Trevor, 'The Physical Characters of the Sandawe', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (hereafter *JRAI*), 77 (1947), p. 62; and Eric Ten Raa, 'Bush Foraging and Agricultural Development: A History of Sandawe Famines', *TNR*, 69 (1968), pp. 36—37 (Sandawe — Trevor's informants place the first famine 450 years back; Ten Raa thinks the beginning of the 19th century is as good a guess as any).
  13. Daudi Kidamala, 'A Brief History of the Waniramba People up to the Time of the German Occupation', ed. and trans. E. R. Danielson, *TNR*, 56 (1961) pp. 72, 77.

the 19th century. During the long reign of a Shinyanga *ntemi* in the late 19th century (reportedly ca 1859—1902) no less than eight famines and other calamities struck the society. In Sukumaland as a whole, there are no recollections of ntemis having been deposed because of failure to bring rain in the 17th century or the first three-quarters of the 18th, but thereafter such cases increase sharply.<sup>14</sup> In the hinterland of the northern coast famine surfaced on at least two occasions, in the mission station of Magila in Bondei, for instance, in 1876 and 1884.<sup>15</sup> In the Rufiji valley, food was reported “very scarce and dear” in 1880.<sup>16</sup> A closer look at Feierman’s claim that famines occurred in Usambara at intervals of some fifteen years reveals that in effect he is speaking of the late 19th-century situation.<sup>17</sup> From 1884 onwards an increasing number of famines was observed in particular in the coastal hinterland and along the central caravan route.<sup>18</sup>

However, counting the frequency of the term ‘famine’, or its equivalents, in the sources is in the final analysis more misleading than illuminating. This is because of the essential vagueness of the concept. In actual fact, the concept ‘famine’, or the still wider concept of *njaa* in Kiswahili, can cover a wide variety of phenomena. As suggested above, in some cases it may be no more than a symbolic metaphor, referring to a political failure or collective trauma. When rooted more directly in reality, as it presumably was in most cases, it may, and does, reflect realities of a very different kind. In order to discuss ‘famines’, the first step is

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14. Charles F. Holmes, ‘The History of the Bakwimba of Usukuma, Tanzania, from the Earliest Times to 1945’, Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 1969, p. 146; Hans Cory, *The Ntemi: Traditional Rites of a Sukuma Chief in Tanganyika*. London, 1951, pp. 60—62; Holmes and Austen, *Pre-Colonial Sukuma*, p. 386.

15. Eduard Kremer, ‘Die unperiodischen Schwankungen der Niederschläge und die Hungersnöte in Deutsch-Ost-Afrika’ *Aus dem Archiv der Deutschen Seewarte*, 33 (1910), pp. 30—32; *Central Africa*, 17 (1899), p. 69.

16. William Beardall, ‘Exploration of the Rufiji River under the Orders of the Sultan of Zanzibar’, *PRGS*, 3 (1881), pp. 642, 652.

17. Judging from Feierman, *Concepts*, pp. 43—45, 93, 100, n. 6.

18. Kremer, *Die unperiodischen Schwankungen*, pp. 33—34; *UMCA Report for 1884—1885*, pp. 32—33.

to make a rough distinction between at least two types of situations: on the one hand were local periods of food shortage with no or only a few actual deaths; on the other were wider, serious famines which killed many.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, historical evidence suggests strongly that the former were much more frequent than the latter.

In the 19th century, before the 1890s, there appear to have been two general and severe periods of famine, one in the 1830s and the other in the 1860s. The first-mentioned afflicted large areas in the eastern and north central parts of the country, from Uzigua to Bukerebe. It can be dated fairly precisely from both ethnographic sources and the Maasai age-set chronologies. On the Kenyan side, Krapf noted that Kamba refugees from "the great famine of 1836" had settled behind the coast. Baumann reported from Pare in 1890 a famine "about two generations before." The pastoral Maasai remember having lost many people and cattle because of a drought which appears to have occurred in the 1830s. Another group of Maa-speakers known as the Iloikop (or 'Kwavi') are reported as having been attacked by swarms of locusts so that "not a blade of grass" was left in the ground. To compensate their losses both the Maasai and the Iloikop turned on each other and other neighbours. A result of these skirmishes was the expulsion of the Maa people now known as the Parakuyu to the east of the river Pangani and the outbreak of a famine among the latter.<sup>20</sup> Many other parts of north-

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19. Cf. Harold K. Schneider, *The Wahi Wanyaturu*. New York, 1970, p. 83: "Famine years ... must be distinguished from the disastrous years when no one profits and even the cattle die."

20. Elisabeth Grohs, *Kisazi*. (West)Berlin, 1980, p. 35; Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 142; Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 238; Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 137; Alan Jacobs, 'The Traditional Political Organisation of the Pastoral Masai', D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1965, pp. 62—63; Richard Waller, ' "The Lords of East Africa." The Maasai in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (c1840—c1885)'. Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1978, pp. 86—97, 136, 378 ff.; Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, 3rd. ed. London, 1968, pp. 240—243 (1st ed. 1885). That this famine affected Uzigua is doubted, on the basis of his careful study, by James Giblin (personal communication, September, 1988), but he notes that all his informants knew the legends of an ancient, undatable famine, *Famine, Authority*, p. 77.



central Tanzania suffered from drought and locusts at about the same time. Even Bukerebe, normally well-endowed with rain and fertility, was said to have been afflicted in the early 19th century by a two-year drought and severe famine, combined possibly with a locust invasion, smallpox and an outbreak of intestinal disease.<sup>21</sup> Also the famine preceded by locusts which is reported, without dating, among the Iramba may be connected with this larger famine.<sup>22</sup>

Another widespread famine occurred apparently in the 1860s. Speke reported, without actually seeing much of it himself, widespread starvation among the Sagara, Gogo and Nyamwezi along his march route in the early 1860s.<sup>23</sup> That there had been a famine in those regions is attested by tradition but the datings are very confused. The lists of Gogo famines compiled by Clarke Brooke and Peter Rigby both include one which somehow affected the legs, but the former dates it at about 1850 and the latter at 1860.<sup>24</sup> In Ungulu and Ukaguru as well as in Usandawe a famine, caused mainly by drought but in Usandawe combined with a locust invasion, is remembered as having followed a great comet.<sup>25</sup> The Nyaturu elders too recollect that drought and famines, connected with comets, occurred several years before the Germans came.<sup>26</sup> Scholars date these famines mainly in the 1860s, and indeed the brightest 19th-century comet (Tebbutt) was seen in

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21. Information is confused but at least one drought and famine, possibly combined with epidemics, appears to have occurred in the 1830s. There may also have been another period of drought. Cf. Henryk Zimon, 'Geschichte des Herrscher-Klans Abasiranga auf der Insel Bukerebe (Tanzania) bis 1895', *Anthropos*, 66 (1971), pp. 366, 368, 372 and Gerald W. Hartwig, 'Demographic Considerations in East Africa during the Nineteenth Century', *IJAHS*, 12 (1979), pp. 659—660.

22. Kidamala, *Brief History*, p. 71.

23. John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. London, 1975, pp. 48, 51, 52, 56, 72, 82—83 (1st ed. 1863).

24. Brooke, *Heritage*, p. 20; Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship*, p. 21.

25. G.L. Mkunduge, 'The Ukaguru Environment: Traditional and Recent Responses to Foodshortages', *Journal of the Geographical Association of Tanzania*, 8 (1973), p. 66; Ten Raa, *Bush Foraging*, p. 37.

26. Marguerite Jellicoe, 'The Turu Resistance Movement', *TNR*, 70 (1969), p. 6.

June-July 1861. But there were fairly bright comets also in 1835 (Halley), 1843, and 1882,<sup>27</sup> and the possibility that some of the reminiscences may have been linked with some of them cannot be excluded.

Most 'famines' were definitely much more localized and less destructive affairs. Usually they afflicted only a few areas among a people and although they might have entailed loss of human life, their effects were generally less severe. Arguably it would be better to call them not 'famines' at all but, for instance, 'localized food shortages'. The extreme variability in rainfall even within a short distance often led to partial crop failures in the climatically more vulnerable regions. But such vacillations of rain and ensuing shortages were expected and survivable. As will be seen below, African societies had evolved methods of coping with partial failures and stopping them short of disaster. The agricultural systems of precolonial Tanzania were geared to minimize the risks of a total crop failure rather than to maximize output, and much of agricultural output was stored.<sup>28</sup>

If, instead of listing famines, we take a comparative look at the societies in the Tanzanian area we find that some societies hardly knew food shortages due to crop failure at all while others were much more frequently plagued with famine. Here we should remember the distinction between different kinds of agricultural systems: banana-based and grain-based.<sup>29</sup> In banana regions the food supply seems to have been quite reliable; what interruptions there were happened for very specific reasons exogenous to the cultivation systems. In Bunyakusa the first travellers were unanimous that there was "abundant food for all." A German researcher observed that the area "seems never to have suffered from severe famine caused by drought."<sup>30</sup> True, the Nyakusa were

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27. Personal communication with Mr Reino Anttila of the University of Helsinki, September 1987. Cf. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3, p. 483.

28. Below, ch. 6, pp. 225 ff. and ch. 7, pp. 297 ff.

29. Introduced above, pp. 52—53. These systems will be discussed in more detail in ch. 6 below, pp. 220 ff.

30. D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 6 (1890), p. 284; Kremer, *Die unperiodischen Schwankungen*, pp. 28—29.

concerned with rain in their rituals, but the inhabitants of the plains were much more so than those of the valley, and a prayer from an unspecified location at an unspecified point of time can scarcely be regarded, as Iliffe does, as sufficient evidence for recurring killer famines ravaging the whole region in the precolonial time.<sup>31</sup> On Kilimanjaro the first European inhabitants did not believe that there could have been shortages sufficient to threaten the lives of people who lived there. Tradition tells only of infrequent famines long before.<sup>32</sup> Grain-based systems were naturally much more insecure; indeed, all the cases of famine discussed so far come from regions where such systems prevailed. Where one traveller found "abundance of food ... everywhere" another was struck by the frequency of famine.<sup>33</sup> But it was exactly in these regions that defences had been built up; a crop failure was not automatically a demographic disaster. "Crop failures constantly occur, but as a rule only here and there, so that one district can help out another," the German missionary Blohm wrote from Unyamwezi.<sup>34</sup> In Uhehe, Alison Redmayne found out

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31. Monica Wilson, *Communal Rituals of the Nyakusa*. London, 1959, pp. 43, 48; Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 13. Iliffe's source is a thirdhand one, John S. Mbiti, ed., *The Prayers of African Religion*. London, 1975, p. 85 and appears to refer not as much to the people now known as the Nyakusa as to the Ngonde on the lake shore. Whether it applies to the precolonial or the colonial period cannot be inferred.

32. Volken, *Kilimandscharo*, p. 240; Kathleen M. Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, p. 172. Iliffe's case for the recurrence of famine in Kilimanjaro is based on a passing remark by Bruno Gutmann that the Chagga believed that a red glow on Kilimanjaro's summit presaged great famine. Apart from the ethnographic question of who 'the Chagga' were, the metaphoric nature of the statement is revealed by another remark in the same book by Gutmann, not noted by Iliffe, according to which a red glow could also be a sign of "fatal disease," Bruno Gutmann, *Dichten und Denken der Dschagganeger*. Leipzig, 1909, pp. 6, 149.

33. For Unyamwezi cf. e.g. Swann, *Slave-Hunters*, p. 58 and Southon, *History of Unyamwezi*, LMSA, Central Africa 1880 3/4/C, p. 10.

34. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 126. This refers to the early colonial period when crop failures were probably more frequent than in the precolonial time because of a decline in the art of cultivation due to the heavy outflow of males as migrant labour.

that Mkwawa organized the redistribution of food supplies during famine. "In an area as large and varied as that which he ruled, it is virtually certain that famine never affected all parts of the chiefdom at the same time."<sup>35</sup> Normally, of course, famine relief was less systematic, and in times of need, there were two main resources. Additional food could be bought from more fortunate, or enterprising, neighbours.<sup>36</sup> Or alternative foods could be obtained by hunting and gathering.<sup>37</sup> As a Pangwa recalled:<sup>38</sup>

Even when swarms of locusts devoured the whole of our harvest in earlier times, no one starved. We had to restrain ourselves and eat medicines, of course, in order to drive hunger away. But no one was forced to die. We old women know many bulbs and roots in the bush which can be dug up, juicy herbs and leaves, berries and wild fruit which can be gathered and eaten.

## Causes of famine

A key issue in any discussion on famine is its causes. The case for an increased frequency of famines in 19th-century Tanzania would lose much of its persuasiveness if it were not supported by a review of possible causes. Famines, in the sense of severe food shortages leading to starvation and in extreme cases to mass deaths, are apparently due to the unavailability of food, but it is not always sufficiently appreciated that this unavailability can come about in a wide variety of ways and with widely differing effects. As pointed out above, the direct link between adverse weather and famine needs some qualification. Drought does not have to lead to total crop failure if the agricultural system is working properly, nor does crop failure immediately lead to

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35. Alison Redmayne, 'Mkwawa and the Hehe Wars', *JAH*, 9 (1968), p. 427.

36. E.g. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 34, 130; Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 64; Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 47, 106—107.

37. E.g. Speke, *Journal*, p. 56; H.H. Johnston, 'British Central Africa', *PRGS*, 12 (1890), p. 732; Cory, *Ntemi*, p. 61; A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott, 'Ngindo Famine Subsistence', *TNR*, 50 (1958), pp. 1—20.

38. Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 49. Cf. also pp. 192 ff.



famine if storage facilities are adequate and the social and political system is working properly. On the other hand crops may fail for reasons outside the cultivation system. They may be destroyed by a disease or in war. Moreover, a food shortage may arise with no crop failure at all. As Amartya Sen has argued, what is decisive is not the total food availability but the entitlement to food, i.e. the ability of people to secure food. Starvation comes when entitlements shift, when some people lose, for one reason or another, their entitlement to food. In Sen's words, "(s)tarvation is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough food to to eat. It is not the characteristic of there *being* not enough to eat ... A person starves ... because he does not have the ability to command enough food."<sup>39</sup>

This is not to deny the role of adverse weather in the emergence of famines in a natural, technological and social environment like that of precolonial Tanzania, but to suggest that the role was not as overwhelming nor as straightforward as is often assumed. Weather certainly was, in the form of drought, linked in one way or another with many well-known cases of famine. But the importance of drought as a cause of famine evidently varied. Usually drought interacted with the more adventitious factors exogenous to local economy. Drought has been held accountable — exclusively or at least mainly — not only for many mythical famines recorded by tradition but also for the devastating famines of the 1830s. Even records of the annual Nile floods, though not uncontroversial, support the case for a widespread drought in East Africa in the mid-1830s.<sup>40</sup> However, as we saw, in that case also factors outside actual systems of cultivation were involved, such as war, locusts and, possibly, new diseases.<sup>41</sup> There were other famines in which drought seems to have played no part whatever. In the Kimbu *ilogo* famine in the 1840s the catastrophe was caused by "a blight or mildew of some kind" which affected the grain after it had been

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39. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines. An Essay of Entitlement and Deprivation*. Oxford, 1982, pp. 1, 45. Emphasis in the original.

40. R.S. Herring, 'Hydrology and Chronology: The Rodah Nilometer as an Aid in Dating Interlacustrine History', in Webster, ed., *Chronology*, p. 61; Hartwig, *Demographic Considerations*, p. 659.

41. Above, pp. 132—133. See also below, pp. 173—174.

harvested and rotted it while it was drying.<sup>42</sup> The famine among the western Sandawe in about 1875 was attributed solely to a cattle epidemic, either bovine pleuropneumonia or rinderpest.<sup>43</sup> Some interlacustrine famines are even claimed to have been deliberately created by culturally-sanctioned denials or refusals to cultivate during mourning periods.<sup>44</sup>

There is also reason to think that the Tanzanian agricultural and social systems were becoming more vulnerable to famine towards the end of the 19th century. Many of the lesser shortages of which we have information seem to have been caused by failure of a single crop.<sup>45</sup> Now, if the people concerned had as sophisticated agricultural systems and adequate storage facilities as I suggest they had, a food shortage could have developed, in a peaceful situation, in two main ways: either the systems of cultivation and storage for some reason failed, or the food in stores was prematurely sold out. I think there are grounds for believing that these things were increasingly occurring in late precolonial Tanzania. A factor raising the risks of crop failure and complicating storage can be sought in the spread of maize. A high-yield crop, maize is less resistant to drought than the traditional African millets and sorghum and also more difficult to store.<sup>46</sup> However, not too much should be made out of the spread of maize. Its distribution remained very uneven in the 19th century, and in some places maize was accompanied by the spread of the highly drought-resistant cassava. In most of the country maize did not become a staple in the 19th century but was rather regarded as a delicacy.<sup>47</sup> Yet it is interesting to note that Bondei, one of the areas

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42. Shorter, *Chieftship*, p. 250.

43. Ten Raa, *Bush Foraging*, p. 37; below, p. 169.

44. Kaijage, Kyamutwara, p. 553 (Kyamtwara — no cultivation during mourning for the executed); A. Schynse, *P. Schynse's letzte Reisen*, ed. Karl Hespers. Cologne, 1892, p. 24 (Buzinza — no cultivation of sorghum during years of mourning for a prince).

45. E.g. the famines in Magila and the Rufiji valley mentioned in fns 15 and 16 above in this chapter.

46. For the characteristics of East African grain crops, see e.g. Harold K. Schneider, *Livestock and Equality in East Africa*. Bloomington, London, 1979, pp. 70—71.

47. Below, pp. 225, 239.

from which we have information of increasing food shortages in the 1870s and 1880s, is one of the very few areas where maize had become a staple food.<sup>48</sup> The sale of foodstuffs is potentially a much more important reason for the increase of food shortages. As we saw in the preceeding chapter, many Tanzanian peoples, including the Bondei, Zigua, Gogo and Nyamwezi, briskly sold foodstuffs in the 19th-century trade system. I will argue below that there is some evidence to suggest that much of what they sold did not originate from a production growth but from the normal surplus which could otherwise have been consumed or stored.<sup>49</sup>

## War

Inter-African war, greatly emphasized by colonial writers, has not been a fashionable subject in post-colonial historiography. Some writers would even lead us to believe that the frequency of precolonial wars was a colonial myth.<sup>50</sup> I do not think it was. The extent and intensity of fighting varied from region to region, of course, but there is no doubt that the level of organized violence in the late precolonial period in the Tanzanian area was relatively high. Slave trading and raiding, intensified in the early decades of the 19th century and reaching a climax in the late 1860s and early 1870s, obviously slackened in the 1880s but continued on a smaller scale beyond the colonial conquest. It afflicted mainly southern and southwestern parts of the country, as well as countries around Lake Tanganyika.<sup>51</sup> Southern and southwestern parts were in turmoil for other causes, too. The Sangu, who had been the first to acquire firearms and begin raiding in the 1830s, fought successively with the Ngoni and the Hehe and towards the end of the century turned increasingly on less militant peoples to

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48. J. P. Farler, 'The Usambara Country in East Africa', *PRGS*, 1 (1879); p. 92.

49. Below, p. 238.

50. In particular Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, ch. 1.

51. Above, ch. 3, pp. 96—97.



Plate 3. The Gogo on the warpath in 1872. Henry M. Stanley encountered a force of nearly a thousand Gogo warriors armed with spears and assegais and was told that the Hehe used to make frequent cattle raids on the inhabitants of southern Ugogo.

acquire slave labour for themselves.<sup>52</sup> The Ngoni and the Hehe fought two major wars before they made a truce in the early 1880s. After that the Ngoni and related peoples such as the Mbunga, branched off from the main body and modelled on the martial Ngoni way of life, continued to raid their surroundings and seize captives, while the Hehe directed their raids also towards the north and the central caravan route.<sup>53</sup> More isolated mountain peoples like the Nyakusa and the Bena were reported as being

52. Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 245 ff.; Marcia Wright, 'Chief Merere and the Germans', *TNR*, 69 (1968), pp. 41—43; *Maji Maji Research Project*, Collected Papers, ed. John Iliffe, 4/68/4/3 (Kidugala); Elise Kootz-Kretschmer, *Die Safwa*, II. Berlin, 1929, pp. 174, 271 ff.

53. Ebner, *Wangoni*, pp. 182 ff.; Redmayne, *Mkwawa*, pp. 412 ff.; Booth, *Nachkommen*, p. 199; Otto Dempwolff, 'Beiträge zur Volksbeschreibung der Hehe', *Baessler-Archiv*, 4 (1914), pp. 119—120.



occasionally attacked by some of the military peoples but also engaged in sporadic inter-chiefdom raiding among themselves.<sup>54</sup> In Unyamwezi and Ukimbu, the process of political unification by conqueror-chiefs like Mirambo or Nyungu-ya-Mawe was effected only through much bloodshed. For a decade beginning in the early 1870s, Mirambo sent his *ruga rugas* to goals sometimes hundreds of kilometres away to conquer other African societies or to fight Arabs in Tabora and their African allies, while Nyungu subjugated ruthlessly the Kimbu chiefdoms weakened by famine and carved out an empire of his own.<sup>55</sup> Other indigenous 'warlords' such as Mhelamwana and Kisabengo in Uzigua and Uluguru or Kimalaunga in Ufipa raided captives and carved out personal spheres of influence by means of firearms obtained through the control of trade.<sup>56</sup> In Usambara, the political disintegration of the kingdom induced a rebellion which led to twenty years' fighting and the increase of the slave trade.<sup>57</sup> The interlacustrine kingdoms, especially Karagwe, were afflicted by violent succession crises.<sup>58</sup> In the north, the Maasai cattle raids against neighbouring agricultural peoples and clashes between different Maa-speaking

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54. Alexander Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit am Njassa, Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Berlin, 1894, pp. 130, 136—140 and Godfrey Wilson, 'The Nyakusa of South-Western Tanganyika', in Elizabeth Colson and Max Gluckman, eds, *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa*. Manchester, 1959, p. 285 (Nyakusa); Marc J. Swartz, 'Continuities in the Bena Political System', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 20 (1964), p. 244 (Bena).

55. Southon, *History of Unyamwezi*, LMSA, the relevant parts also printed in Bennett, *Studies*, pp. 81—88; Norman Robert Bennett, *Mirambo of Tanzania, 1840?—1884*. New York, 1971, pp. 37 ff.; Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Mirambo (c. 1840—1884) L'unificateur des Banyamwezi (Tanzanie)', *Les Africains*, 65, esp. pp. 136 ff.; Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 279 ff.

56. For Mhelamwana and other Zigua chieftains, see Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, ch. 2; for Kisabengo, Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 76 and T. O. Beidelman, *The Matrilineal Peoples of Eastern Tanzania*. London, 1967, p. 27; for Kimalaunga, G. Lechaptois, *Aux Rives du Tanganika*. Algiers, 1913, pp. 59—63; Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, pp. 86—87; and Willis, *State*, pp. 89—94.

57. Feierman, *Shamboo Kingdom*, p. 160 ff.

58. Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, pp. 86 ff.

groups culminated in the famous 'civil war' between two major sections of pastoral Maasai in the early 1890s.<sup>59</sup> The Chagga internecine fighting reached such proportions that the traveller Harry Johnston was led to bemoan: "Why, in the midst of such superb scenery, with smiling plenty exhibited on every hand, could these silly savages think of nothing but mutual extermination?"<sup>60</sup>

What was more of a colonial myth was that this level of warfare was taken as a perpetual state of affairs in precolonial Tanzania owing to the innate bellicosity of the Africans, and was assumed to lead to depopulation, or "mutual extermination." Johnston, and many others, failed to realize that much of the visible violence was, historically speaking, fairly new, and directed to ends as 'rational' as warfare anywhere. Of course, this does not imply that there had been no violence among African societies before. Although some traditions tell us that even such militant peoples as the Maasai and Hehe passed through a mythical period when wars were unknown,<sup>61</sup> there is hardly reason to doubt that a degree of outward violence must have been part of the permanent social behaviour of most societies. Other traditions are full of recollections of 'wars' between neighbouring clans, neighbouring polities and neighbouring peoples.<sup>62</sup> This 'traditional' violence continued alongside the new, recently induced type of warfare till the colonial period. It was itself intensified and affected by the new forms of warfare. But very rarely did even the 'neotraditional' hostilities amount to anything which can be compared with

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59. Moritz Merker, *Die Masai*, 2nd ed. Berlin, 1910, pp. 348—349; Alan H. Jacobs, 'Maasai Inter-Tribal Relations: Belligerent Herdsmen or Peaceable Pastoralists?', in K. Fukui and D. Turton, eds, *Warfare among East African Herders. Senri Ethnological Studies*, 3 (1979), pp. 40—45; John L. Berntsen, *Maasai and Iloikop: Ritual Experts and Their Followers*. African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Occasional Paper No. 9, July 1977, pp. 38—42.

60. Decken, *Reisen*, II, p. 271 and Gutmann, *Dichten und Denken*, pp. 45 ff.; Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro Expedition*, p. 177.

61. Jacobs, *Traditional Political Organization*, p. 54; Dempwolff, *Beiträge*, p. 119.

62. E.g. Kidamala, *Brief History*, pp. 67—78; the Nyiha traditions as collected by Brock, *Nyiha*, p. 63; and the Chagga traditions as collected by Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, *passim*.

modern warfare. As the German researcher Bernhard Ankermann concluded on the basis of wide ethnographic material collected in the early colonial period, common 'wars' were "not very bloody as a rule. When it comes to battle the contestants first insult and mock each other, and after a few have been wounded or killed the two armies return home. Often the war ends at that, in other cases it is resumed ..." <sup>63</sup>

If modern warfare is the continuation of politics by another means, as Clausewitz' famous dictum runs, much of precolonial African warfare can be seen as the continuation of economics, or economic interaction, by another means. True, in the more centralized polities there were cases of 'political' violence, rebellions and counterrebellions. <sup>64</sup> Even 'boundary disputes' or 'invasions' geared to conquer some of the area of the neighbouring polity are retrospectively reported. <sup>65</sup> But most traditional 'wars' appear to have been raids and counterraids for the plunder of cattle or, in some cases, captives. At least this is the specific motive, if any, mentioned in the sources. Even the clashes in which the dreaded Maasai indulged were, at least till the early 1890s, mostly cattle raids, directed against both other Maa-speaking groups and neighbouring cattle-keeping agricultural peoples. By means of such raids, "invariably small-scale ventures, rarely involving more than 20—30 warriors," the pastoralists tried to increase their stocks or replenish them when thinned by diseases and other catastrophes. <sup>66</sup> Among the Sukuma, several pre-19th-century conflicts are remembered "mainly for cattle," as are the clashes with the intruding Maasai. <sup>67</sup> Cattle raiding is reported to have been

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63. Bernhard Ankermann, *Das Eingeborenenrecht. Ostafrika*, ed. Erich Schultz-Ewerth and Leonhard Adam. Stuttgart, 1929, p. 43.

64. Kaijage, Kyamutwara, p. 555 and Abel G. Ishumi, 'The Kingdom of Kiziba', *CHM*, 13 (1971), p. 723 (Haya kingdoms); Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, pp. 61, 104 ff. (Karagwe); Feierman, fn. 57 in this chapter (Shambaa kingdom).

65. E.g. Robert F. Gray, 'The Mbugwe Tribe', *TNR*, 38 (1955), p. 44; Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, pp. 61 ff.

66. Fischer, Massai-Land, p. 62; Merker, *Masai*, p. 348; Jacobs, *Belligerent or Peaceable*, pp. 44—45 (quotation).

67. J. M. Kadaso Mange, 'Mfumo ya Bukwimba: The Origin of Bukwimba', ed. C. F. Holmes, trans. E. S. Kadaso, *AHS*, 4 (1971), p. 127 (quotation); Holmes, *History of the Bakwimba*, pp. 97, 133—134.

the main motive for hostilities among peoples such as the Chagga, Shambaa, Nyakusa and Sangu. For the Chagga and Sangu, the abduction of women is also mentioned.<sup>68</sup> The agricultural peoples of the north-central parts of the country in whose economy cattle manuring played a great role were renowned for their "reciprocal raids to seize cattle."<sup>69</sup> It is scarcely an accident that matrilineal peoples who did not have or desire cattle were observed to be less logical in their militancy. The southeastern peoples "hardly waged wars" except to defend themselves against slavers. In the eastern matrilineal belt the greatest fighting in memory before the late 19th century was the obscure war of the 'Kamba' against the Doe and Zaramo, which happened at a time when the commercial economy was already being built up and which was beaten back, among other means, by threats of Doe cannibalism.<sup>70</sup> But there certainly were smaller skirmishes among the local people. As observed in the 1880s, it was often "a matter of jealousy and rivalry between two villages, and one shrap word spoken in a *pombe* is enough."<sup>71</sup> It is natural that a more long-standing enmity, caused for instance by competition for scarce natural resources, was often behind clashes which took the form of cattle raids.<sup>72</sup>

The sources are fairly unanimous that among most peoples the

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68. Fitch, *CMI*, 11 (1886), pp. 560—561 and Bruno Gutmann, 'Die Frau bei den Wadschagga', *Globus*, 92 (1907), p. 31 (Chagga); Feierman, *Concepts*, pp. 327 ff. (Shambaa); Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 136 and G. Wilson, Nyakusa, p. 285 (Nyakusa); J. S. Mwakipesile, *Mila na desturi za Wasangu, Wasafwa na Wasagara*. Dar es Salaam, n.d., p. 22 (Sangu).

69. Eberhard von Sick, 'Die Waniaturu (Walimi)', *Baessler-Archiv*, 5 (1916), p. 27. See also Marguerite Jellicoe, *The Long Path. Social Change in Tanzania*. Nairobi, 1978, p. 21 and for Iramba, Kidamala, Brief History, pp. 73—77.

70. J. A. R. Wembah-Rashid, *The Ethno-History of the Matrilineal Peoples in Southeast Tanzania*. Vienna, 1975, p. 54 (quotation); Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 123; Ramadhani Mwaruka, *Masimulizi juu ya Uzaramo*. London, 1965, pp. 4 ff.

71. Picarda, Autour Mandéra, p. 260.

72. For examples, see Holmes, History of the Bakwimba, p. 134 and Godfrey and Monica Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*. Cambridge, 1968, p. 35 (1st ed. 1945).



level of militancy increased decisively during the 19th century and the situation sketched above was new. The intensification of violence was reported to have happened at different times: in Karagwe in the 1820s, in the southern highlands from the 1830s and in Uzigua from the 1840s onwards, in Unyanyembe and Sukumaland after the mid-century, on the eastern side of Kilimanjaro in the early years of the century, in Usambara in the late 1860s and in Arusha only in the 1880s.<sup>73</sup> Datings are not very precise, but on their basis it is clear that much, if not all, of the increase of fighting can be attributed more or less directly to long-distance trade. That the slave trade was conducive to hostilities is not hard to appreciate. Also the growing 'legitimate' trade provided ample incitement to violence both directly and indirectly in those parts of the country that the slave trade did not reach. Trade contributed towards increasing violence both by providing an impulse for ambitious African leaders to strengthen their own power and by giving them a means of doing so and in this way helped to fuel already existing succession disputes or other internal power struggles. Incitement came mainly from the desire to acquire highly valued prestige goods through the control of trade. The means to build a position of power were provided by the very same prestige goods. Obtained from trade or booty, they were redistributed through the political leaders who could exercise patronage in a more lavish manner and on a larger scale than before.<sup>74</sup> The commercial role of cattle may have been greater than

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73. Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, p. 41—42, 60 ff., 66; Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 227 ff. (Sangu and southern highlands in general); Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 155—157 (Uzigua); Dempwolff, *Beiträge* p. 119 and Redmayne, Mkwawa, pp. 410—413 (Hehe); Charsley, *Princes*, pp. 94 ff. (Nyakusa); Unomah, Vbandevba, p. 6 (Unyamwezi); Holmes and Austen, *Pre-Colonial Sukuma*, p. 384 and Holmes, *History of the Bakwimba*, pp. 133 ff. (Sukumaland); Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, pp. 345 ff. and Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, pp. 29—30 (Kilimanjaro); Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 155 ff. (Shambaa); P. H. Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society. A Study of the Arusha*. London, 1963, pp. 150—151.

74. See e.g. Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 137 (Kimbu); J. B. Kabeya, *King Mirambo*. Nairobi, 1976, pp. 44, 57, 67; Redmayne, Mkwawa, pp. 426—427; Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 537 ff. (Kilimanjaro).

is often realized.<sup>75</sup> Particularly suited for the purposes of political aggrandizement were firearms, which became increasingly coveted. In Usambara and Bukerebe it was reported that firearms and other trade goods surpassed cattle as the main form of wealth for chiefs.<sup>76</sup> In 1880 firearms accounted for about a third of Zanzibar's total imports. At that time perhaps some 30 000—40 000 guns were imported into the mainland; in 1888 the number was reported to be 100,000. Although most of them were notoriously inaccurate rusty muzzle-loaders,<sup>77</sup> they largely contributed to the instability and increase of militancy toward the end of the 19th century. The ascendancy of many a war lord and conqueror-chief was based on the possession of firearms.<sup>78</sup>

When speaking of 19th-century warfare it must not be forgotten that Africans were by no means solely responsible for it. Non-Africans who went to the interior were always few, but their numbers grew as the century proceeded and they were backed with increasingly superior fire-power. Coastal caravans passing through the country often got involved in hostilities, and accounts of their travels sound sometimes more like raiding than trading expeditions. Ruthless coastal merchants such as Tippu Tip boasted of organizing bloody encounters with local inhabitants.<sup>79</sup> After unsuccessful improvised military operations in the interior, Sultan Said Bargash of Zanzibar established a regular British-led mercenary army, which was used to 'punish' dissident coastal leaders and finally sent inland to establish military posts along the central caravan route. European travellers complained in 1883 in Uzigua that the Sultan's soldiers had "plundered peaceful villages

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75. Cf. Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, p. 29.

76. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 172; Hartwig, 'Social Consequences of Epidemic Diseases: The Nineteenth Century East Africa', in idem and K. David Patterson, eds, *Disease in African History*. Durnham, 1978, p. 44, n. 25.

77. Alison Smith, 'The Southern Sector of the Interior', in Oliver and Mathew, eds, *HEA*, I, pp. 276—277; Holmes, *Zanzibari Influence*, p. 487; Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 51.

78. Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 151, 246 ff.; Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 136—138; Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 157—159.

79. Hamed bin Muhammed, *Maisha ya Tippu Tip*, esp. pp. 22—25 (Tanganyika westward), 102—105 (Uvinza).

to such an extent that not a hen could be bought there.”<sup>80</sup> Whereas the earliest European travellers proceeded peacefully with the help of the “almighty dollar,”<sup>81</sup> from Stanley onwards they increasingly adopted the habit of shooting their way through when Africans demanded excessive *hongo*, or road tax, or put other obstacles in the way. In Nera in Sukumaland, Stanley is still remembered as *Kihemela Misasi*, or ‘He who makes his living by using bullets’.<sup>82</sup>

It is not easy to gauge the havoc the violence left in its wake. As argued above, one should beware of exaggerating the loss of population by African warfare. True, there are cases in which tradition tells of bloody encounters with thousands or even tens of thousands killed. Yet, many accounts have been shown as highly exaggerated, “poetic justifications” of certain epoch-making battles.<sup>83</sup> That warriors like the Ngoni aroused widespread fear and instability is beyond dispute, but even they were not necessarily the murderous militarists they were often depicted to be. Most of their so-called wars were surprise night attacks on weaker opponents to seize prisoners and cattle. Usually they spared the lives of those who surrendered, in particular women and children, who were incorporated into Ngoni societies or, later on, sold as slaves.<sup>84</sup> The loss of human life from more traditional types of hostility was slighter. A clash costing the lives of a few warriors was remembered afterwards as a considerable war.<sup>85</sup> Like the

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80. Bennett, *History of the Arab State*, pp. 100—101, 110—111, 119; Coupland, *Exploitation*, pp. 241—243, 252—255, 264—266; Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 295 (quotation).

81. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 149.

82. Holmes, *History of the Bakwimba*, pp. 111 ff.

83. Cf. Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, pp. 65, 69, n. 24 and John Ford and R. de Z. Hall, ‘The History of Karagwe (Bukoba District)’, *TNR*, 24 (1947), pp. 21—22; Marcia Wright, ‘Nyakusa Cults and Politics in the Later Nineteenth Century’, in T. O. Ranger and I. N. Kimambo, eds, *The Historical Study of African Religion*. London, Nairobi, Ibadan, 1972, p. 168 (quotation).

84. Booth, *Nachkommen*, pp. 199—200; Ebner, *Wangoni*, pp. 182—185; Steere in Rowley, *Twenty Years*, p. 243; Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 36. According to Ankermann’s information, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 44, the Ngoni might also have killed women and children if these did not surrender.

was remembered afterwards as a considerable war.<sup>85</sup> Like the means of production, the means of destruction were simple among African societies.<sup>86</sup> Weapons were deadly but not mass killers. Most firearms were muzzle-loaders, which caused horrible wounds but were so inaccurate that it required considerable effort to wound someone. In spite of the inflow of firearms, traditional bows and arrows, spears and shields remained the principal weapons even among such dreaded peoples as the Ngoni and Maasai. According to Iliffe perhaps half of Tanzania's peoples used guns as their chief weapons in 1890. These were usually peoples along the trade routes.<sup>87</sup> The capability of African armies for sustained warfare was limited in other ways, too. Mercenary ruga ruga warriors employed by the new warlords, a major 19th-century military innovation, were mobile, but even they had to be fed and maintained. During peacetime they had "the right to live off the country" or their chief gave them women to cultivate for them. On the warpath they had to extract their food from the local people, which might have caused difficulties. Mirambo's ruga ruga, it is told, once returned defeated from Iramba, "very thin because of

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85. E.g. A. T. and G. M. Culwick, *Ubena of the Rivers*. London, 1935, p. 27; Grant, *Walk*, p. 71; Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 260; Hermann, *Wasiba*, p. 56; Fitch, *CMI*, 11 (1886), pp. 560—561.
  86. The insight and the terminology are both by Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa*. Oxford, 1971, passim.
  87. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 51. For the distribution of firearms, see e.g. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 232 (in Unyanyembe and Urambo but not much in Sukumaland); G. A. von Götzen, *Durch Afrika von Ost nach West*. Berlin, 1895, p. 82 (Ushirombo); Heinrich Fonck, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Berlin, 1910, p. 30 (almost no one without a gun in 1896—1902 along the Tabora-Ujiji route); Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 131 (Yao); Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, pp. 77—78 (Lake Tanganyika). For the distribution of traditional weapons, see Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 161 ff. (Maasai and peoples in the north-central interior); Booth, *Nachkommen*, p. 200 and Johannes Häfliger, 'Land und Leute von Ungoni', *Missions-Blätter*, 1901, p. 43 (Ngoni); Karl Weule, 'Ethnographische Karten' in Hans Meyer, *Das Deutsche Kolonialreich*, I. Leipzig, Vienna, 1914, facing p. 74.



shortage of food.”<sup>88</sup> Normal armies, conscripted among the local population, were even more handicapped in this respect. Feerman estimates that an attacking Shamba army could not stay in the field for much more than a week, except during harvest time. Besides food supply, problems were caused by sanitation.<sup>89</sup> A realistic picture of the casualties of the late 19th-century warfare is given by K.I. Tambila who says that forty dead in an army of 6 000 in Ufipa in 1888 was “a very high figure by the standards of the time and area.”<sup>90</sup>

Yet one should not shrug all the wars off as “sport”<sup>91</sup> or as basically harmless spear-rattling. Forty dead is a high figure by most standards and there may well have been even much bloodier battles. But, more importantly, the destruction from war was not limited to direct killing of people. The ruga ruga mercenaries of such conquering chiefs as Mirambo and Nyungu, “wild young men, a heterogeneous collection of war prisoners, deserters from caravans, runaway slaves ... without roots or family ties”<sup>92</sup> wreaked destruction and waste over wide central areas from Ugogo to Buha, from Ukimbu to Shinyanga. Armed with muskets and spears, long hair skilfully adorned, often heavily under the influence of hashish, they rushed to a chosen village, killed the men who resisted and took women and children prisoners.<sup>93</sup> Most of the clashes in which the Maasai were engaged may have been cattle raids, but they are remembered as violent by the peoples attacked.<sup>94</sup> It is certain that the Maasai had long been engaged in hostilities with the other major pastoral people, the Datoga, which were so severe that even the Maasai themselves called them wars.

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88. Storms in Becker, *La vie*, II, pp. 507—508; Kabeya, *Mirambo*, p. 43.

89. Feerman, *Concepts*, p. 341.

90. Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 87.

91. As done by Culwick and Culwick, *Ubena*, p. 27.

92. Shorter, *Chieftship*, p. 276; Storms in Becker, *La vie*, II, pp. 507—508.

93. Löbner and Seibt in Achim Gottberg, ed., *Unyamwezi. Quellensammlung und Geschichte*. Berlin (GDR), 1971, pp. 175, 207; Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 43—44; Kabeya, *Mirambo*, pp. 15—18; Shorter, *Chieftship*, pp. 277—278, 296.

94. E.g. Itandala, *History of the Babinza*, pp. 193—195 (Sukuma); Jellicoe, *Long Path*, pp. 92—93 (Nyaturu); Kidamala, *Brief History*, pp. 74—75 (Iramba).

Some of the smaller groups on the eastern side of Victoria Nyanza, who apparently had at one stage fought together with the Datoga, have a living tradition of having been forced to move to their present dwelling places because of pressure from the Maasai.<sup>95</sup> Also the Maa-speaking Parakuyu were reported to have destroyed villages of cultivating peoples.<sup>96</sup> In general, there is no dearth of accounts of atrocities and massacres, all of which can scarcely be groundless.<sup>97</sup> Many attackers had also adopted the custom of setting their opponents' villages on fire. Burnt villages were seen all over the fighting areas.<sup>98</sup> War arguably had its most severe effects not directly but indirectly, by heightening social turmoil and thus exposing the people to other calamities.

## Pestilence

So far, disease has been lurking in the background of the story, but the deeper one looks into the matter the more probable it appears that, in the final analysis, by far the most lethal Horseman in late precolonial Tanzania was Pestilence. Yet the history of disease in Tanzania remains to be written. In Tanzanian historiography, diseases, when mentioned at all, have mostly been given a passing

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95. Morimichi Tomikawa, 'The Migrations and Inter-Tribal Relations of the Pastoral Datoga', in Fukui and Turton, eds, *Warfare*, p. 20; Jacobs, *Belligerent or Peaceable*, p. 37; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 173; Anacleto, Serengeti, pp. 29—30.

96. Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 260; *A l'assaut*, p. 93.

97. See e.g. Kabeya, *Mirambo*, pp. 49, 97—98 for Mirambo's soldiers and the Ngoni dismembering and torturing women and child prisoners, or Wright, *Chief Merere*, p. 43 for Mkwawa ordering 600 encircled Safwa to be speared to death, or Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 260 for a smaller massacre in Uzigua.

98. Ebner, *Wangoni*, p. 184; Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 277 (Kimbu); Kabeya, *Mirambo*, pp. 21, 33, 71 and Richard Böhm, *Von Sansibar zum Tanganjika*, ed. Herman Schalow. Leipzig, 1888, p. 27 (Mirambo); *A l'assaut*, p. 239 (Sukumaland); Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, p. 231 (Hehe); Beardall, *Exploration*, p. 645 (Mbunga or 'Mafiti'); Maples, *Masasi*, p. 347 (Machemba); Fitch, *CMI*, 11 (1886), p. 833 (Kilimanjaro); Jacobs, *Belligerent or Peaceable*, p. 39 (Maasai).

reference in connection with other themes.<sup>99</sup> Few regional historians, with the notable exception of Feierman, have paid more than fleeting attention to diseases. The only writers who have tackled the question in a more systematic fashion at the territorial level are Kjekshus and Gerald Hartwig, and the work of neither can be regarded as satisfactory. In his demographic discussion Kjekshus managed to gloss over the pre-1890 diseases almost totally,<sup>100</sup> and Hartwig based his far-reaching conclusions on very narrow and partly speculative evidence, which is not unambiguous even for the location of his own field-work, Bukerebe.<sup>101</sup>

It is not difficult to understand why disease has been largely overlooked so far. Here our sources are even more confused than commonly and open to interpretation and give a very vague idea of how widespread and virulent the indigenous diseases were and how the disease balance changed during the 19th century. This is not only because few of the early travellers had received proper medical training but also because the systematic knowledge of epidemiology was in its infancy. In William McNeill's words, "medical theories were crudely empirical and excessively dogmatic ... The major triumphs of scientific medicine lay still in the future."<sup>102</sup> As for the Tanzanian area, the authorities gave conflicting information and disagreed strongly in their overall opinions. Many occasional visitors considered Zanzibar an uncommonly unhealthy place, one of the 'white man's graves', but long-time residents on the island, including a French doctor, maintained that health conditions there were far better than

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99. The best overall account is naturally that of Iliffe, who devotes less than ten of his 576 pages to disease, emphasising the spread of tsetse and sleeping sickness and without displaying full awareness of the complexities involved.

100. The only disease he mentions is smallpox, which he claims, overlooking his own evidence, was re-establishing itself in the 1890s after many years' absence (*Ecology Control*, pp. 24, 132).

101. See above, fn. 21 and below, fn. 195 in this chapter.

102. William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*. Harmondsworth, 1979 (1st ed. 1976), pp. 218, 237.

reputed.<sup>103</sup> No disease was reported in the first known caravan of porters from the coast to Lake Tanganyika, but another source claimed that out of one hundred men sent annually into the interior in the early 1840s by the Sultan of Zanzibar seldom more than twenty or thirty returned, the rest dying on the way because of, if not disease, then “the climate and unfriendly African tribes.”<sup>104</sup> Obviously, much research remains to be done on the part played by diseases in the 19th century both by medically-minded historians and historically-minded medical researchers and I can here attempt only a brief preliminary survey.

The first comparative data, including some details of diseases in more than one part of the country, can be culled from Burton's writings. Lacking medical training and constrained by the common limitations of his age, he made his diagnoses on the basis of visible symptoms only, lumping them together in haphazard combinations, and had some peculiar notions of the causation of disease. However, he was a devoted amateur physician and gave minute and probably fairly precise descriptions of the outward symptoms of diseases as he saw and conceived them in 1857–59, and his writings can be approached with the help of more modern knowledge.<sup>105</sup> Burton's assessment was not altogether gloomy; he observed that in the interior where the population was sparse and lived in simple conditions “the vast variety of diseases which afflict more civilised races, who are collected in narrow spaces, (were) unknown ... even by name.” But there was certainly no lack of diseases. The most widespread was “fever” of which Burton diagnosed two principal varieties, “remittent and intermittent.” It was rife along the coast and in lower-lying parts of the upcountry, not only amongst luxuriant vegetation in coastal heat and

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103. Guillain, *Documents*, II, 1, pp. 90–91; Constantin-Abel Semanne, *Essai d'une topographie médicale sur l'Ile de Zanzibar (côte orientale d'Afrique)*. M. D. thesis, University of Paris, 1864, p. 17.

104. Macqueen, *Visit of Lief ben Saeid*, p. 373; J. Gray, *History of Zanzibar*, p. 154, quoting an American traveller called Michael William Shepard from 1844. The attribution of the causes of casualties to “the climate and unfriendly African tribes” was evidently Gray's own.

105. E.g. C. J. Hackett, ‘Diagnosis of Disease in the Past’, in Edwin Clarke, ed., *Modern Methods in the History of Medicine*. London, 1971, pp. 99–111.



humidity but also “in the dry plateau of Ugogo and in the parched campaigns of Unyamwezi.” If “fever” was the principal endemic disease, the most dangerous epidemic was smallpox. It swept “at times like a storm of death over the land.” All other diseases were eclipsed by these two. To be sure, there were killer epidemics like cholera the ravages of which Burton himself witnessed in Kilwa, plague which had been observed by Burton’s Arab informants in Karagwe in the late 1830s, and dysentery. But Burton implies that these were geographically much more restricted. Other common diseases among the African populations included syphilis, which according to Burton “had found its way from the island of Zanzibar to Ujiji and into the heart of Africa” but which might in fact have long been endemic in non-venereal form;<sup>106</sup> umbilical hernia and prolapsus, and two mysterious sicknesses, “kihindu-hindu” which Burton took to be epilepsy, and “kichyoma-choyma” manifested in “cramps and stitches, ... spasms and lancements ... fits, convulsions, contortions ...” In addition, he observed several types of “boils and blains” and “terrible ulcerations,” in particular in Uluguru and Usagara, and “desquamations, tumours and skin diseases.”<sup>107</sup>

## Endemic diseases and folk defences

It can scarcely be doubted that Burton’s “fever” was mostly malaria. Even if he attributed a host of non-malarial symptoms to it, his description of “a recurrence of shivering and flushing fits, with the extremities now icy cold, then painfully hot and swollen,

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106. It is also possible that many cases Burton took to be syphilis were in fact yaws. In *Zanzibar*, I, p. 183 Burton gives “bubeh” as one of the Kiswahili words for syphilis, while the current word for yaws is *buba*. Syphilis and yaws are close relatives, caused by the same spirochaete.

107. Burton’s observations on disease on the mainland are to be found in *Lake Regions*, pp. 39–42, 61–62, 106, 175, 221, 386–390, 409. Most of them are reproduced, with the major exception of the first passage on coastal diseases, in *Lake Regions*, I, pp. 105, 299, 342 and II, pp. 13–15, 318–323, 352. Disease at Zanzibar is discussed by Burton in his *Zanzibar*, I, pp. 183–196.

indigestion ... languor, dejection" does not leave much room for interpretation.<sup>108</sup> But how far upcountry malaria actually reached is difficult to say; later colonial assessments do not necessarily reflect the situation in the late 1850s. Much of the fever was certainly due to other diseases. For instance, relapsing fever, a tick-borne parasitic disease characterized by successive bouts of high fever and apyrexia, may have long been prevalent in endemic foci and often mistaken for malaria.<sup>109</sup> Judging from Burton's lists of symptoms, malaria appears to have been present not only on the coast but also in Unyamwezi and many other parts of the central plateau. However, it was most probably absent at higher altitudes. The great German parasitologist Robert Koch later found malaria free places even on the coast (coral islands such as Chole) and insisted that in the mountains malaria did not occur at altitudes above 900 metres.<sup>110</sup> Other scattered observations suggested that there was no or almost no malaria in places like Mpwapwa or Singida. The case for Mpwapwa is corroborated by the information that the Gogo used to fall sick when visiting the coast.<sup>111</sup> Of course, because the transmission of malaria is highly seasonal, unsystematic observations are always bound to arouse suspicion. In any case, what seems fairly clear is that the densely populated north-eastern highlands like Kilimanjaro, Usambara and Pare, and perhaps also some lower plateau areas like the Makonde, were free of malaria. This can be inferred from the fact that the inhabitants of these regions were very reluctant to visit lower-lying places for fear of infection. The Shambaa may even have identified the vector of

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108. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 387, 175.

109. Charles M. Good, 'Man, Mileu, and the Disease Factor: Tick-Borne Relapsing Fever in East Africa', in Hartwig and Patterson, eds, *Disease in African History*, esp. pp. 46 ff., 56, 60.

110. Robert Koch, 'Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse von Deutsch-Ostafrika', a paper presented at a meeting of the German Colonial Society, Section Berlin-Charlottenburg, 12 March 1906, printed in idem, *Gesammelte Werke von Robert Koch*, ed. J. Schwalbe in cooperation with G. Gaffky and E. Pfuhl. Leipzig, 1912, II, 2, pp. 1209—1212.

111. E. J. Baxter, *CMI*, 5 (1880), p. 739; E. Obst, 'Vorläufiger Bericht der Ostafrika-Expedition der Hamburger Geographischen Gesellschaft', I, *MGGH*, 25 (1911), p. 95; Wilhelm Langheld, *Zwanzig Jahre in deutschen Kolonien*. Berlin, 1909, p. 42.

the disease before European biomedicine was able to discover it. *Mbu*, the word for mosquito, was also the word for a fever with chills which was common on the plains.<sup>112</sup>

As for other major endemic diseases, at this stage of research one can only offer some more or less educated guesses. Most probably, the more wide-spread included the diseases now known as yaws and leprosy. Many of the boils and blains, ulcers and sores, desquamations and skin eruptions observed not only by Burton but practically every traveller and resident from Krapf and Decken to Livingstone and the German doctors,<sup>113</sup> might have been caused by these two infections. They manifest themselves in the form of open sores and other conspicuous cutaneous disorders and are probably transmitted mainly through direct contact. Both were reported to be common in the late precolonial period. In the early colonial period yaws, under its Swahili name *buba*, was found frequently both on the coast and in inland stations with varying climatical environments, e.g. Tabora, Moshi and Lake Nyasa.<sup>114</sup> That various intestinal helminthiases, like ankylostomiasis, and other parasitoses, like schistosomiasis, were prevalent in some parts of the country can safely be assumed even if they, for understandable reasons, do not figure prominently in travel

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112. Karl Peters, *Das Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Schutzgebiet*. Munich, Leipzig, 1895, p. 39 (Chagga, Shambaa, Pare); Le Roy, *Kilima-Ndjaru*, p. 280 (Chagga); Karl Weule, *Negerleben in Ostafrika*. Leipzig, 1908, p. 316 (Makonde); Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 19–20 (Shambaa).

113. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 388 (Usambara); Decken, *Reisen*, I, p. 331 (coast); Livingstone, *Last Journals*, II, pp. 61, 63 (west of Lake Tanganyika and in general; but for clarification, see Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, pp. 252 ff.); Widenmann, *Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung*, p. 42 (Kilimanjaro).

114. James Christie in T. McCall Anderson, *A Treatise on the Diseases of the Skin*. London, 1887, pp. 393 ff.; Steuber, 'Über Krankheiten der Eingeborenen in Deutsch-Ostafrika', *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropenhygiene* (hereafter *ASTH*), 1902, pp. 112–114, and 1903, pp. 59–61; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 220.

literature.<sup>115</sup> More visible were the diseases propagated via the alimentary canal, like dysentery. This may have been prevalent in one form or another for a very long time even if it is far from sure that all cases reported in the literature as “dysentery” really were it.<sup>116</sup> In any case, dysentery seems to have reached locally epidemic proportions in 19th-century caravan traffic.<sup>117</sup> Even such fatal diseases as bubonic plague and sleeping sickness were probably known in parts of the area. There appears to have been an ancient focus of plague somewhere in north-eastern Africa.<sup>118</sup> Burton tells that when the first coastal traders reached Karagwe, which happened probably in the late 1830s or early 1840s, the population was being decimated by the plague. In the 1880s plague is known to have broken out in Buhaya and spread during Mkwawa’s wars to Uhehe.<sup>119</sup> For sleeping sickness there are no reports concerning the Tanzanian area directly but the existence of tsetse-flies in parts of the country is well attested and oral tradition tells of several foci of the sickness elsewhere in the interlake area of the western Rift Valley.<sup>120</sup>

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115. For a reference to ankylostomiasis, or hookworm, introduced in West-Usambara in the 1890s and “formerly” prevalent in Bondei and on the coast see Karasek, Beiträge, *Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), p. 200 and for schistosomiasis, or bilharziasis, in the Lake Nyasa region in the early colonial period, Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 220.

116. E.g. the mysterious “diarrhoea or dysentery” reported by Katoke from Karagwe in the late 18th century, *Karagwe Kingdom*, pp. 45–46.

117. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 42; Decken, *Reisen*, I, p. 331; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 327.

118. Robert Koch, ‘Über die Verbreitung der Bubonenpest’, in idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, II, 1, p. 651; Georg Sticker, *Abhandlungen aus der Seuchengeschichte und Seuchenlehre*, I, Giessen, 1908, pp. 25, 239, 306. However, his references, such as “Ethiopian countries at the border of Egypt” or “Central Africa,” are extremely vague. See also McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, pp. 119 ff., 150.

119. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 387 and the same passage in *Lake Regions*, II, p. 319; *Medizinal-Berichte über die Deutschen Schutzgebiete*, 1903/04, pp. 59–64.

120. For sickness in the Lake Tanganyika area, see Jan Vansina, *La légende du passé*. Tervuren, 1972, p. 104 and in the Mount Ruwenzori area, van Hoof, as quoted in John Ford, *The Role of the Trypanosomiasis*



While there is no reason to belittle the sufferings caused by the old-established diseases, it appears obvious that the people did not lie helplessly at their mercy but had established several mechanisms to resist them. This was done basically at two levels. There were more biological adaptations leading to a relative tolerance to local strains of parasite and more consciously manipulated curative and preventive measures. Against malaria, populations in the most infected areas had even developed genetic defences in the form of increased frequencies of the so-called sickle cell trait. Those who have inherited such a blood characteristic have more protection from falciparum malaria than those without it (even if they are in greater danger of dying young for other reasons).<sup>121</sup> With this and other mechanisms of biological adaptation the peoples in most malarial areas had developed a high degree of immunity to overt manifestations of the disease if not to parasitaemia.<sup>122</sup> In other cases, like that of sleeping sickness, the endemic foci, being geographically restricted, were well known and avoidable. People and cattle living in their immediate vicinity may even have developed a degree of trypanotolerance; at least the inhabitants of the Sese islands on the Ugandan side in Victoria Nyanza told German researchers that already their fathers

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*in African Ecology*. Oxford, 1971, p. 177. For the antiquity of tsetse fly and trypanosomiasis in Africa, see Frank L. Lambrecht, 'Aspects of Evolution and Ecology of Tsetse Flies and Trypanosomiasis in Prehistoric African Environment', in J. D. Fage and R. A. Oliver, eds, *Papers in African Prehistory*. Cambridge, 1970, pp. 75—98. For the distribution of tsetse, see ch. 6, pp. 248—250 below.

121. See A. C. Allison, 'The Distribution of the Sickle-Cell Trait in East Africa and Elsewhere, and Its Apparent Relationship to the Incidence of Subtertian Malaria', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 48 (1954), pp. 312—318; Frank B. Livingstone, 'The Origin of the Sickle-Cell Gene', in Creighton Gabel and Norman R. Bennett, eds, *Reconstructing African Culture History*. Boston, 1967, pp. 141—166 and Stephen L. Wiesenfeld, 'Sickle-Cell Trait in Human Biological and Cultural Evolution', *Science*, 157 (1967), pp. 1134—1140.

122. Robert Koch, 'Die Malaria in Deutsch-Ostafrika', in idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, II, 1, esp. pp. 316—317; David F. Clyde, *Malaria in Tanzania*. Oxford, 1967, pp. 2, 4, 22—23; Oliver Ransford, "*Bid the Sickness Cease.*" *Disease in the History of Black Africa*. London, 1983, p. 42.

had been bitten by tsetse without falling sick.<sup>123</sup> On the curative side, each community naturally had its own *mganga*, or healer, basically a herbalist with much ritual paraphernalia, who administered drugs some of which had a real and others a placebo effect.<sup>124</sup> In epidemics community-wide countermeasures were resorted to. Plague was so well-known and feared in Buhaya that people immediately left their dwellings when rats began to die. When plague spread to Uhehe in the late 1880s, Mkwawa ordered infected places and dwellings to be isolated and rat deaths to be immediately reported. German medical authorities deplored later that he did not order the burial of the dead, but added that it was “thanks to the steps taken, which were mostly very sensible, that

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123. Robert Koch, ‘Über meine Schlafkrankheits-Expedition’, a paper given at a meeting of the German Colonial Society, section Berlin-Charlottenburg, 24 August 1908, printed in idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, II, 1, p. 574. For further hints of the degree of trypanotolerance, see Georg Lichtenheld, ‘Beobachtungen über Nagana und Glossinen in Deutsch-Ostafrika’, *Archiv für wissenschaftliche und praktische Tierheilkunde*, 1910, suppl., p. 272 (Unyamwezi) and Dr Sander in *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1902*. Berlin, 1903, p. 293 (Moshi — but it is not clear which fly was referred to). For an unsystematic discussion and further evidence, see Ford, *Trypanosomiasis*, esp. pp. 88–89, 134–136, 234–235, 447–449, 481–484.

124. The interest in African traditional medicine among the early travellers and residents was, though not overwhelming, more widespread than is often realised. For general and comparative discussions of the procedures and drugs, see e.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 389–390 and the same passage in *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 321–323; ‘Heilverfahren bei afrikanischen Völkerschaften’, *Arbeiten aus dem Kaiserlichen Gesundheitsamte* (hereafter *AKGA*), 14 (1898), pp. 647–667; and W. D. Raymond, ‘Native Materia Medica’, *TNR*, 2 (1936), pp. 50–54. For more detailed cases, see e.g. Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), pp. 196–207 (Shambaa); Rehse, *Kiziba*, pp. 136–141 (Haya); Dr Weck, ‘Hehe Medicine’, ed. and trans. Alison Redmayne, *TNR*, 70 (1969), pp. 29–40 (Hehe — the German original in 1908); and Merker, *Masai*, pp. 169 ff. and app. 1, pp. 352 ff. (Maasai). For a modern discussion, see J. O. Kokwaro, *Medicinal Plants of East Africa*. Nairobi, 1976.

epidemics became gradually rarer and only sporadic cases of plague occurred."<sup>125</sup>

## New epidemics: cholera and smallpox

However, as far as can be seen from the sources, a change in the disease balance occurred during the 19th century. Severe epidemics which Africans had far less power to resist broke out over large tracts of the country. It is not possible to say with absolute certainty whether the diseases causing them had been known in endemic form in some areas before they broke out in epidemic form, but even if they were not entirely new, their previous visitations seem to have occurred so long ago that their traces had been erased from both social and biological memory. The most apparent of such new or newly reappearing epidemics were cholera and smallpox, present at Burton's time. Both of them are highly contagious diseases which wreak terrible havoc when they attack virgin populations. But they require a fairly concentrated population with close contact between people in order to spread. Even if, as will be seen below, they had multiple origins and spread in many alternative ways making it impossible to always single out particular mechanisms, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that 19th-century long-distance trade and concomitant mobility and turmoil provided an ideal environment for them to spread in.

Cholera had long been endemic in Bengal but, as far as we know, it was recorded on the east coast of Africa for the first time only in 1821. Whether it then reached the Tanzanian area is unclear. What is known for sure is that three severe cholera epidemics struck Zanzibar and the mainland coast in 1836—37, 1858—59 and 1869—70 and at least the last one penetrated deep into the interior as well. All four epidemics were local branches of wider pandemics, originating in India and reaching not only Africa but

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125. Koch, Bubonenpest, *Gesammelte Werke*, II, 1, p. 650; Dr Greisert in *Medizinal-Berichte*, 1903—04, pp. 62—63 (quotation p. 63).

also the rest of Asia and Europe.<sup>126</sup> For East Africa we have a thorough study by James Christie, a British doctor who worked in Zanzibar, that gives us most interesting insights into the spread of the epidemics there. Even though the study was naturally constrained by the level of the epidemiological knowledge of its own age, its main conclusions seem still valid.<sup>127</sup> According to Christie, the cholera epidemics did not usually arrive in East Africa directly from India but from Arabia, where he identified Mecca, with its vast congregation of pilgrims, as the great centre of dissemination. The disease spread from north to south, from the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea ports through coastal shipping and further from the coast inland. However, there was also another major, in some cases perhaps even more important route: by land from north(west) to south(east), through Ethiopia and the Nile valley directly to the East African interior. The last epidemic in all probability reached both the coast and parts of the interior by land from the north through the same link, Maasailand, where it was noted in 1869, introduced through a Maasai cattle raid on the Somali.<sup>128</sup>

The cholera epidemics were as disastrous in East Africa as anywhere. Data on the 1821 and 1836—39 outbreaks are extremely scanty, but the two following are documented in reports by many European travellers and inhabitants. Burton, who had observed cholera since his childhood, visited Kilwa when the epidemic had just subsided in 1859 and related that he had never seen such

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126. August Hirsch, *Handbuch der historisch-geographischen Pathologie*, I, 2nd ed. Stuttgart, 1881, pp. 278 ff.; Robert Stock, *Cholera in Africa. Diffusion of the Disease 1970—1975 with particular emphasis on West Africa*. London, 1976, pp. 14—16.

127. As recognised by Stock, *Cholera*, pp. 16—18 and J. P. N. Davies, 'James Christie and the Cholera Epidemics of East Africa', *East African Medical Journal* (hereafter *EAMJ*), 36 (1957), pp. 1—6. Marc Dawson has criticized Christie's reliance on caravan leaders as sources of information but has failed to produce an alternative explanation for the spread of cholera, Marc Dawson, 'Socio-Economic and Epidemiological Change in Kenya: 1880—1925', Ph. D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983, p. 17.

128. Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, esp. pp. 10, 24—27, 97 ff., 107, 116—117, 236 ff.



ravages by the disease. An idea both of the havoc and the conditions in which the disease spread can be gained from his graphic description, which should be read against the modern epidemiological knowledge that cholera is caused by a bacillus which can live in water for a considerable period and leads to the infection when water, or anything made of it, is ingested.<sup>129</sup>

Soil and air seemed saturated with poison, the blood appeared predisposed to receive the influence, and people died like flies ... The poorer victims were dragged by the leg along the sand, to be thrown into the ebbing waters of the bay; those better off were sewn up in matting, and were carried down like hammocks to the same general dépôt. The smooth oily water was dotted with remnants and fragments of humanity, black and brown when freshly thrown in, patched, mottled and parti-coloured when in a state of half pickle, and ghastly white, like scalded pig, when the pigmentum nigrum had become thoroughly macerated.

Burton believed that cholera killed, in a fortnight, half the inhabitants of Kilwa Kivinje. The British Consul Rigby estimated that the same epidemic in Zanzibar alone claimed some 20 000 human lives "and almost depopulated several towns on the opposite coast." Christie thought that Rigby's estimates were rather understated than exaggerated.<sup>130</sup> Whether this epidemic spread inland is not clear. According to Christie's African informants, it extended three or four days' journey inland but did not reach Unyamwezi or Lake Nyasa. This was probably because the epidemic was so severe on the coast that the caravan trade came to a total standstill for lack of porters. Yet Christie suspects, on the basis of Speke's account from Buganda, that it may have spread along land routes at least to northern areas of East Africa.<sup>131</sup> The last epidemic is known to have afflicted both the interior and the coast. It seems to have reached Zanzibar from Pangani where it had

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129. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, pp. 343—344.

130. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 343; Rigby, *Zanzibar Dominions*, in Russell, ed., *General Rigby*, p. 337 (see also *ibid.*, pp. 78—79); Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, p. 117.

131. Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, pp. 115—117, 234. Speke reported that he had heard from King Mutesa of Buganda of "cholera" which appeared and disappeared mysteriously, *Journal*, p. 309.

come by the overland route. On the island it is estimated to have killed a quarter of the population in the city of Zanzibar and ten per cent of the infected rural population, a total of some 35 000.<sup>132</sup> In Bagamoyo the number of dead was 1 600,<sup>133</sup> nor is there any reason to suppose that losses in other coastal towns were not of the same order. From Zanzibar and Bagamoyo the disease made a secondary spread several hundred kilometres further inland over Ukwere and Uluguru to Ugogo. Figures are not available, but reports by missionaries who travelled among societies just inland from the coast tell of heaps of rotting corpses on all sides and of totally depopulated villages.<sup>134</sup> Another branch of the same epidemic reached the central caravan route from the north through Bukerebe and Sukumaland in 1870,<sup>135</sup> spreading as far as Ujiji. By Christie's estimate this epidemic in its course through East Africa caused the death of "several hundreds of thousands."<sup>136</sup>

Such figures notwithstanding, all authorities agree that the most murderous disease was not cholera but smallpox, obviously in the form of *variola major*, the more virulent variety.<sup>137</sup> However, to trace its origin and the spreading routes on the basis of available sources is, in the absence of a general study like that of Christie's on cholera, an exceedingly laborious task, and I can present only a rough and tentative outline. Whether or not smallpox had been long known in the Tanzanian area or its vicinity is contested, but there are hints to suggest that it may have been. Interlake oral tradition mentions smallpox in Uganda in the semi-mythical

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132. *Bulletin Général*, 7 (1869—70), pp. 652 ff., AStEsp; cf. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, pp. 346—347.

133. *Bulletin Général*, 7 (1869—70), p. 665, AStEsp.

134. Horner, *Reisen*, pp. 249—253 (Ukwere); Schneider, ed., *Katolische Mission*, pp. 155—156, 181—185, 258, 267 (Ukwere, Uluguru).

135. Cory, *Ntemi*, pp. 60, 62 may well refer to this epidemic when he mentions an outbreak of "dysentery" and another one of "dysentery or cholera" in Shinyanga sometime between ca. 1859 and 1902.

136. Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, p. 453 (quotation); Jacobs, *Traditional Political Organization*, p. 75 (Maasailand); Livingstone, *Last Journals*, II, p. 96 (Lake Tanganyika).

137. E.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 318; Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, p. 253.

period several hundred years back.<sup>138</sup> This, of course, may have been merely a projection of a recent disease into the distant past, but the German medical historian August Hirsch also asserted in his handbook of historical pathology that smallpox was endemic in Central Africa before the 19th century.<sup>139</sup> Be that as it may, what is known for sure is that smallpox was introduced into South Africa from India in 1713 and caused three major epidemics at the Cape, in 1713, 1755 and 1767.<sup>140</sup> Whether connected with this or not, smallpox was raging along the eastern coast of Africa from the late 18th century onwards. Morice, the French slaver who visited Kilwa in 1775 and 1776, related that smallpox was an epidemic there and people knew of inoculation against it “even in the interior.” Morice himself lost some 200 slaves because of an outbreak of smallpox on board his slave ship to Mauritius.<sup>141</sup> After that we know from Zanzibar and elsewhere on the northern coast that smallpox was encountered there at intervals from the early years of the 19th century. In 1809 an epidemic broke out in which 5 000—15 000 are believed to have died. After this new disastrous epidemics broke out at intervals of a few years or decades. There is documentation for 1858 and 1868, but no certainty whatever that these were the only years.<sup>142</sup> From the coastal mainland we know of smallpox epidemics in the Bagamoyo mission in 1872 and 1881—82 and in its hinterland from 1883 onwards. Also on the northern coast there was at least one major epidemic in the 1880s.<sup>143</sup>

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138. Iris Berger, *Religion and Resistance. East African Kingdoms in the Precolonial Period*. Tervuren, 1981, pp. 47—48, 108, n. 24.

139. Hirsch, *Handbuch*, I, pp. 91—93. However, his evidence dates from the 19th century.

140. C. W. Dixon, *Smallpox*. London, 1962, p. 207; Robert Ross, ‘Smallpox at the Cape of Good Hope in the Eighteenth Century’, *African Historical Demography*. Edinburgh, 1977, pp. 416—428.

141. Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa*, pp. 11—13, 121.

142. Smee, *Observations*, app. III, in Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, pp. 502, 519; Guillaïn, *Documents*, II, 1, p. 90; Rigby, *Zanzibar Dominations*, in Russell, ed., *General Rigby*, p. 76; J. A. P. Kieran, ‘The Holy Ghost Fathers in East Africa, 1863 to 1914’, Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1966, p. 168.

143. *Bulletin Général*, 9 (1872—73), p. 278, AStEsp; Kieran, *Holy Ghost Fathers*, pp. 184—185; Baumann, *Usambara*, pp. 48—49.

Most importantly, it seems undeniable that smallpox spread in the Tanzanian interior during the 19th century on a scale and in a manner which had no parallels in memory. That it invaded areas where it was not known, and had not been known for ages, is strongly suggested by the very destruction it left in its wake. At the beginning, there was very little defence against it. Inoculation, a simple though by no means entirely risk-free operation in which pus was introduced into an incision on the forehead between the eyebrows, was fairly widespread in India, Arabia and adjoining regions, and obviously known also in the southern parts of Africa, but unknown or a very recent importation in the central and northern parts of the Tanzanian area.<sup>144</sup> According to Burton, even if Arabs had recently introduced inoculation to some of the regions he visited, the people had “no remedy for small-pox: they trust entirely to the vis medicatrix.”<sup>145</sup> With epidemics sweeping over the country, defences were swiftly built up. Inoculation spread and was later found to be common, often together with other ‘medicines’, at least among some coastal peoples as well as the Gogo, Nyamwezi, some Sukuma and Maasai.<sup>146</sup> Contaminated places were abandoned, the sick were usually isolated, and only relatives or others who had themselves undergone the infection

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144. For the distribution of inoculation, see McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, p. 233 and Eugenia W. Herbert, ‘Smallpox Inoculation in Africa’, *JAH*, 16 (1975), pp. 547 ff. See also fn. 141 above.

145. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 387 and the same passage, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 318—319. For corroboration on the absence of inoculation on the coast, see Decken, *Reisen*, I, p. 332.

146. AKGA, 14 (1898), p. 649 (Gärtner, Dar es Salaam, inoculation “not common”), 652 (Zupitsa, Buhaya, only in Bugabo), 655 (Eggel, Maasai), 664 (Schreber, Bondei); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 84—85 (Nyamwezi and, for inoculation, Somali and Zanzibar peoples); Claus, Wagogo, p. 41 (Gogo); Fritz Spellig, ‘Die Wanjamwesi’, *ZE*, 59 (1927), p. 223 and Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 293 (Nyamwezi); Cory, *Ntemi*, p. 63 (Shinyanga — a confused description — people “vaccinated” with a “medicine”); Widenmann, Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung, pp. 40—41 (the Maasai had inoculation, the Chagga did not).



and recovered were allowed to communicate with them.<sup>147</sup> Yet the disease remained virulent far into the colonial period. Two knowledgeable Germans estimated as late as in the 1890s that one out of every two infected died of smallpox. This may have been too high an estimate, but it is difficult to assess its level of exaggeration. According to a standard textbook the overall mortality rate caused by variola major in an unvaccinated population has been found to reach some 30 per cent and to exceed that in special groups.<sup>148</sup>

The sources are unanimous that smallpox was spread mainly, but not exclusively, by traders and porters. Despite the danger of our data indicating the distribution of observers rather than that of diseases, we know that the virus of smallpox usually passes from host to host via the respiratory tract either directly or through clothing and bedding and can thus imagine that 19th-century settlements which had become cross-roads for caravan routes provided likely opportunities not only for spreading the infection but also for sustaining the endemicity of the disease. There were always "reckless young fellows" who thoughtlessly broke quarantine and other regulations and let the disease spread.<sup>149</sup> But whether the direction of the spread was exclusively or even mainly from the coast to the interior is a more perplexing question. Surely, as just noted, our earliest observations of the disease are from the coast. Giraud expressed a common opinion when he wrote that in 1884 smallpox was endemic on the coast the whole year through

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147. E.g. Beardall, *Exploration*, p. 642 (Rufiji); Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone*. London, 1872, pp. 534—535 (in general); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 84—85 (Nyamwezi); Jürgen Franke, 'Die Dschagga im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Berichte 1885—1916', Diss. A., Karl Marx University, Leipzig, 1974, p. 158 (Kilimajaro). Cf. K. W. Schmidt, *Sansibar*, p. 179 according to whom the sick on the island were isolated "only exceptionally."

148. Emil Steudel, 'Die ansteckenden Krankheiten der Karawanen Deutsch-Ostafrikas, ihre Verbreitung unter den übrigen Bevölkerung und ihre Bekämpfung', *Koloniales Jahrbuch*, 7 (1894), p. 197; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 85; Dixon, *Smallpox*, pp. 325—326. Cf. Hartwig, *Demographic Considerations*, p. 667 ("mortality ... exceeded 50 per cent").

149. Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 535.

and was carried from there inland by the Zanzibar caravans.<sup>150</sup> But a look at the patterns of its spread inland suggest a somewhat more complicated picture. As was seen above, smallpox was widespread inland already in Burton's time among porters of the central caravan route. At least in Tabora it had become endemic. No wonder some people thought smallpox was "the disease of the Nyamwezi." Stanley, in the course of his search for Livingstone, saw the bleached skulls of smallpox victims in heaps along the caravan routes and prophesied that the Nyamwezi were dying out altogether.<sup>151</sup> Burton himself was confused about the way the disease was spreading. In one passage he tells that "malignant epidemics, especially small-pox" often attacked caravans as these approached the coast; elsewhere he implies that smallpox was originally brought to the coast from the interior.<sup>152</sup> It seems probable that, regardless of the origins of the disease, some commercially frequented places inland became secondary foci for further diffusion of the infection. A major focus seems to have developed in the 1870s and 1880s in Ugogo. Many European-led caravans, coming either from the coast or from the interior, reported having encountered smallpox there for the first time.<sup>153</sup> In the western part of the country Ujiji assumed the same role. Livingstone noted the presence of smallpox there in 1871 and 1872 and described the death-rate near Tanganyika as "enormous."<sup>154</sup>

Smallpox did not remain confined to the area affected by the central caravan route. One can roughly trace its spread along the other major caravan routes as well as outside them. Already about 1850 a Fipa king is reported to have died of smallpox.<sup>155</sup> In the mountains of the north-east the disease was encountered from the

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150. Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 503.

151. Steudel, *Die ansteckenden Krankheiten*, p. 193 (quotation); Stanley, *Livingstone*, pp. 533—534, 542.

152. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 409, 42 (only the former passage is reproduced in *Lake Regions*, I, pp. 342); idem, *Zanzibar*, I, p. 195.

153. E.g. Cameron in 1873, *Across Africa*, I, p. 106; Reichard in the early 1880s, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 327 and Wissmann in 1883, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 282.

154. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, II, pp. 153, 186; Livingstone to Granville, Ujiji, 18 December 1871, *BPP*, Colonies Africa 66, 'Despatches Addressed by Dr Livingstone', 1872 (c. 598) vol. LXX, p. 19.

155. Willis, *State*, p. 82.

1850s onward. The first information comes from Kilimanjaro where a smallpox epidemic afflicted several chiefdoms in the early 1850s. Thereafter, the disease broke out among the Chagga "at intervals, but then destructively ... usually brought in by caravan porters."<sup>156</sup> The Iraqw are reported to have been attacked by "famine and smallpox" well before the coming of the Germans.<sup>157</sup> In Usambara, where only in 1849 Krapf had noted excellent health conditions, members of the royal family were struck by smallpox at the end of the 1860s.<sup>158</sup> There are also reports of smallpox invading the Pare mountains but it is unclear whether they refer to the same period or to the 1880s.<sup>159</sup> Neither were the southern parts spared. Elton reported a serious epidemic in Usangu in the late 1870s before he himself succumbed while travelling<sup>160</sup> and Safwa traditions tell of entire families dying.<sup>161</sup> In the southern highlands, wars were another instrumental factor in spreading the infection. A Bena army, trying to attack the Hehe, was once "overwhelmed by a smallpox epidemic."<sup>162</sup> Towards the end of the century, we have increasing information on the ravages of the disease in the central and western parts of the country. A headman is remembered to have brought smallpox from the coast to Shinyanga.<sup>163</sup> Halfway through the 1880s the disease was found over wide areas in the west including the Karema mission and

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156. Johannes Schanz, 'Mitteilungen über die Besiedlung des Kilimandscharo durch die Dschagga und deren Geschichte', *Baessler-Archiv*, Suppl. 4 (1913), p. 32; Brehme, 'Bericht über das Kulturland des Kilima-Ndjaru und dessen klimatische und gesundheitliche Verhältnisse', *MDS*, 7 (1894), pp. 129—130 (quotation).

157. F. J. Bagshawe, 'The Peoples of the Happy Valley (East Africa)', *Journal of the African Society* (hereafter *JAS*), 25 (1925—1926), p. 62.

158. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 388; Alington in Rowley, *Twenty Years*, p. 192; Steere in Frere, *East Africa*, p. 35; Abdallah bin Hemedi'lAjjemy, *The Kilindi*, ed. J. W. T. Allen and William Kimweri. Nairobi, 1963, ch. 147.

159. Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 238 and Kimambo, *Political History*, p. 161.

160. Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, pp. 329, 361—362, 367.

161. Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, pp. 296—297; *ibid.* II, pp. 197, 201, 207—208. The time reference of these sources is unclear; they may also refer to the 1890s.

162. Culwick and Culwick, *Ubena*, p. 25.

163. Cory, *Ntemi*, p. 61.

surrounding Ubende, Ufipa, Buhaya and Ungoni.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, coastal caravans, no matter from which town, were dreaded and hated as a possible source of infection almost everywhere, from the shores of Victoria Nyanza to the deep south.<sup>165</sup>

## Cattle diseases

In addition to these fatal human sicknesses outbreaks of cattle epidemics merit much more attention than they have been accorded hitherto. Recent historiography of Tanzania has been so preoccupied with the spectacular Great Rinderpest of the 1890s, which coincided opportunely with the colonial conquest, that earlier cattle diseases have gone not only unresearched but almost unnoticed.<sup>166</sup> As was argued above, sleeping sickness had probably been present in mild endemic form in the interlake region for ages, and it affected, naturally, both human beings and animals. In addition to animal sleeping sickness, or nagana, another major cattle disease of considerable antiquity in the Tanzanian area was East Coast fever, or theileriosis. Carried by cattle tick vectors, it was probably indigenous to eastern and southern Africa, and present at least on the coast, as the name implies, and in parts of the interior, as in Maasailand.<sup>167</sup>

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164. Fr Randabel, 28 December 1885, *Chronique*, 29 (January, 1886), pp. 222—223, Archivio Padri Bianchi, The Archives of the White Fathers (hereafter APB); Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 503; Junker, *Reisen*, p. 654; Redmond, *Political History*, p. 126.

165. G. A. Fischer, 'Am Ostufer des Victoria-Njansa', *PM*, 41 (1895), p. 45; John Gray, 'The British Vice-Consulate at Kilwa Kiwinji, 1884—1885', *TNR*, 51 (1958), p. 189.

166. But not entirely. See e.g. Marcia Wright, 'East Africa 1870—1905', in Roland Oliver and G. N. Sanderson, eds, *CHA*, VI. Cambridge, 1985, p. 575.

167. Schilling, 'Ueber die wichtigsten Viehkrankheiten in den Tropen', *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1905*. Berlin, 1906, esp. pp. 268—271; Ford, *Trypanosomiases*, pp. 208—209; Waller, *Lords*, pp. 36—40. For East Coast fever in Maasailand, cf. Merker, *Masai*, p. 169 and Justin Lemenye, *Maisha ya Sameni Ole Kivasis yaani Justin Lemenye*, ed. Henry Fosbrooke. Kampala, 1953, p. 64, n. 6.



How the old-established cattle diseases evolved during the 19th century cannot be known for sure, but one can draw a parallel with human diseases and suggest that here too a certain balance had been achieved between the hosts, vectors and parasites; as on the human side, the greatest havoc in the 19th century may not have been caused by the old-established diseases but by the new ones which invaded the country. Among the latter ones was contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, or lungsickness. It is known to have been introduced in South Africa in 1853, recorded in Chad in 1870 and observed among East African cattle north of the equator in the 1880s. It was said to have appeared in Karagwe in 1880 and 1884.<sup>168</sup> Rinderpest was possibly also present in Maasailand and perhaps elsewhere in the Tanzanian area in the precolonial period, although its arrival in Africa is conventionally dated no earlier than 1884 or 1889.<sup>169</sup> The early colonialists observed that lungsickness had been present for such a long time that the Maasai had in the 1880s developed inoculation against it, and a later historian of the Maasai was assured by all his informants that rinderpest (*ol odua*) was there first and lungsickness only killed its survivors.<sup>170</sup> In any case, severe cattle epidemics are reported in the 1870s and 1880s from an area reaching from Ubena in the south<sup>171</sup> over Unyaturu, Usandawe<sup>172</sup> and Bukerebe<sup>173</sup> to the

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168. J. B. Peires, '“Soft” Believers and “Hard” Unbelievers in the Xhosa Cattle-Killing', *JAH*, 27 (1986), p. 446; Ford, *Trypanosomiasis*, pp. 337, 395 (Ford dates the arrival of the sickness in South Africa to 1854), 168.

169. See Ford, *Trypanosomiasis*, pp. 138—139 and R. W. M. Mettam, 'A Short History of Rinderpest with Special Reference to Africa', *Uganda Journal*, 5 (1937), pp. 22—26.

170. Merker, *Masai*, pp. 170—171; Berntsen, *Maasai and Iloikop*, p. 42.

171. Edward A. Mwenda, 'Historia na maendeleo ya Ubena', *Swahili*, 33 (1963), p. 109. His informants called the disease *sotoka*, which is Kiswahili for rinderpest, and thought that the disease was introduced by a big fly which was not tsetse. Mwenda hypothesizes it was brought by the Hehe from Ugogo sometime after 1850.

172. Sick, Waniaturu, p. 18; Ten Raa, *Bush Foraging*, p. 37. Also here the disease was called *sotoka*. It was estimated to have occurred in the mid-1870s and remembered as having been even fiercer than the Great Rinderpest of the 1890s.

173. Eugene Hurel, 'Religion et Vie domestique des Bakerewe', *Anthro-*

western<sup>174</sup> and eastern shores of Lake Nyanza<sup>175</sup> and Maasailand in the north.<sup>176</sup> Unfortunately, descriptions are sparse and it is impossible to say whether it was one and the same disease and whether it was lung sickness or rinderpest or both or some other disease.

## Combined and differential effects

So far I have discussed famine, war and disease as separate phenomena, but, as should have become evident in the course of the argument, such a separation can be justified only as a methodological device. In reality all these Horsemen of the Apocalypse rode together and must be considered together. There was hardly any calamity in which at least two of these factors were

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*pos*, 6 (1911), pp. 62, 65. The epidemic occurred in 1880 and was called *magera*. According to Hurel this epidemic was responsible for the depopulation of the interior of the island.

174. Ford, *Trypanosomiasis*, p. 168. Cf. Richter, *Ethnographische Notizen*, p. 67, according to whom rinderpest was called *mubiamo* and *sotoka* referred to a "lung disease."
175. Fischer, *Am Ostufer*, p. 67. Fischer's visit took place in early 1886; more detailed information on the disease is lacking.
176. Firsthand observations are from the Kenyan Maasailand. Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, pp. 204, 209—211, 333 met the disease on the Kinangop Plateau and Nakuru plains in 1883. His biographer diagnosed it as actinomycosis, or 'lumpy jaw', a fungal disease (Robert I. Rotberg, *Joseph Thomson and the Exploration of Africa*. London, 1971, p. 177, fn. 18). Ludwig von Höhnelt, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie*. London, 1894, I, p. 240 reported in 1887 from the northern side of Kilimanjaro that the Maasai had been suffering for the last ten or twelve years from a murrain that had been introduced from the north. He observed that the lungs of the dead oxen were "more or less diseased." See also *ibid.*, I, pp. 236, 284, and II, p. 284. The German veterinarian Sander suggested on the basis of oral communications in the 1890s that "sadoka" had first broken out in Maasailand in 1876 or 1877, but it is not clear what this disease actually was, *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* (hereafter *DKB*), 4 (1893), pp. 543—544.

not acting in cooperation, and frequently all three were present. But they were not always equally important in initiating the calamities nor equally powerful in their effects. Thus we must have a closer look at their internal relationships and their differential and combined effects.

Beginning from the easier end one can argue that war, or rather social dislocation caused by war, must often have been an initiating factor leading to other disasters. At least the relation between warfare and famine seems fairly obvious. As one missionary wrote: "Famine follows war. Drought might be provided against by storing food, but war not only destroys food, but makes all storing dangerous. Property is safe in inverse proportion to its value, for wealth invites war."<sup>177</sup> Livingstone also noted that famine was "the usual effect of slave wars" and that more death was probably caused by it than by slave transport to the coast.<sup>178</sup> In the case of precolonial Tanzania, such general statements can be buttressed with ample empirical source material. In the history of Kilimanjaro the longest known famine, which occurred in the chiefdom of Uru during 1854–58, was caused by "an enemy who, in attacking, destroyed banana trees and seized a great quantity of livestock."<sup>179</sup> A perusal of Sukuma history suggests that famines and wars escalated side by side.<sup>180</sup> The *mnyime* famine which broke out in Pare at the end of the 1880s was not caused by excessive drought but by the collapse of the economy, already undermined by smallpox and the slave trade, when the maize crop was destroyed and livestock plundered in warfare.<sup>181</sup> Severe famines were remembered also in the south in areas ravaged by warfare, mostly by the Ngoni.<sup>182</sup> Taking a more comparative look at the sources one can see that while famine is sometimes mentioned as a cause of war, a good opportunity to

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177. Madan, in idem, ed., *Kiungani*, p. 7.

178. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, I, p. 69. See also New, *Life, Wanderings*, p. 494.

179. Schanz, *Mitteilungen*, p. 31.

180. Holmes, *History of Bakwimba*, pp. 133 ff., 147–148. Holmes himself does not connect these two courses of development.

181. Kimambo, *Political History*, pp. 161, 192 ff.

182. Mwenda, *Historia*, p. 110 (Bena); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, II, pp. 243, 257, 293, 309 (Safwa); Maples, *Masasi*, p. 339 (Masasi).

attack someone,<sup>183</sup> war is more often given,<sup>184</sup> or at least implied,<sup>185</sup> as a major cause of famine.

Sometimes, as noted above, war also helped infectious diseases to spread.<sup>186</sup> Another, more indirect but yet relevant effect of war, which can only be touched upon here, was the increased exposure to infection because of the growth of nucleated settlements. Whatever may have been the 'original' settlement pattern, and I am not sure it was quite so dispersed as is commonly assumed,<sup>187</sup> it is obvious that there was a trend from more scattered settlements or smaller villages towards more nucleated settlement and larger villages in the latter part of the 19th century and this trend must be attributed mainly to war. Such was reported to have been the case for instance in Unyamwezi,<sup>188</sup> Sukumaland<sup>189</sup> and among at least some peoples of the Nyasa-Tanganyika plateau.<sup>190</sup> That such nucleated settlements were of a defensive nature is revealed by the stockades around them. Many villages, in several areas the majority, were protected by some sort of stockades, hedges or palisades which were explained mainly in terms of defence against slavers or the Ngoni.<sup>191</sup> Baumann even met old people in Unyamwezi who remembered that the art of building stockade-like tembes began: at the same time that firearms were introduced into

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183. E.g. in Ufipa, Willis, *State*, p. 73.

184. D. R. MacKenzie, *The Spirit-Ridden Konde*. London, 1925, p. 219 (Nyakusa — but cf. p. 215 — hunger anticipated); Kidamala, Brief History, p. 72 (Iramba); Elise Kootz-Kretschmer, 'Abriss einer Landesgeschichte von Usafwa in Ostafrika', *Koloniale Rundschau*, 1929, pp. 125, 129 (Safwa); Madan, ed., *Kiungani*, p. 54 (Yao).

185. Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 62—63 (Fipa); Brock, Nyiha, p. 72 (Nyiha).

186. Above pp. 160, 167.

187. See the discussion below, ch. 9, pp. 338 ff.

188. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 234; R. G. Abrahams, *The Political Organization of Unyamwezi*. Cambridge, 1967, pp. 12—13; Unomah, Vbandevba, p. 26, n. 3.

189. Holmes and Austen, Pre-Colonial Sukuma, p. 392.

190. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, pp. 285—286 (Nyiha).

191. E.g. C. T. Wilson, 'A Journey from Kagéi to Tabora and Back', *PRGS*, 2 (1880), p. 618 (Shinyanga); Kerr-Cross, *Geographical Notes*, p. 287 (Nyasa-Tanganyika corridor peoples); M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 99.



the country.<sup>192</sup> For us here, the important point to note is that even though direct evidence is lacking there is every reason to think that in such dense settlements people were much more vulnerable to invading infectious diseases.

Like war and famine, disease and famine often coincided. Combining the information presented above on epidemics and famine it can be immediately seen that most major famines on record quite possibly coincided with or were preceded by a major epidemic. For the smallbox it can be speculated that the late 18th-century famines on the coast may have broadly coincided with the smallpox epidemic noticed by Morice. For the cholera and the two major famines in the 1830s and the 1860s the temporal connection is striking: the cholera years 1836—39 were also major famine years. The cholera epidemic of 1858—59 on the coast had hardly subsided when Speke went inland and was told of a severe famine along the central route to Unyamwezi and the Gogo recollect a famine that “tied legs together” so that people could not walk.<sup>193</sup> However, the dynamics of famine and disease are complex. Puzzlingly enough, while smallpox is often mentioned in connection with famine, almost no one has linked cholera with famine despite the obvious temporal connection. In Usambara a long period of wealth and well-being ended and a time of repeated famine began at the beginning of the 1870s, when smallpox spread to the area and the Shambaa kingdom split into warring, slave-plundering chiefdoms after the death of Kimweri. Drought seems to have also played a part in this case.<sup>194</sup> The more frequent famines in the coastal hinterland after 1884 were also preceded by a smallpox epidemic breaking out in 1883. As for cholera, we have no information on the spread of the epidemics of the 1830s and 1858—59 inland and data on the famines of those periods make no reference to cholera. Only in Bukerebe are smallpox and an “intestinal disease,” which *could* have been cholera, mentioned as

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192. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 230.

193. Above, p. 133; Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship*, p. 21. Note, however, that Brooke dates this famine in about 1850.

194. Feerman, *Concepts*, pp. 43—45, 93, 100, n. 6. My interpretation, not Feerman's.

coinciding with the two-year drought of the 1830s.<sup>195</sup> Yet the Maa-speaking peoples, both the main victims and the main agents of the famine in the 1830s, are reported to have contracted cholera only in 1869.

Much of the data regarding the spread of the epidemics is plainly inadequate while the datings based on oral tradition are notoriously inaccurate, and to disentangle the web of temporal and causal relations between epidemics and famine would require a great deal of regional research which I cannot attempt. Let us simply note that the material of this study gives no strong reason to regard famine as a more primary factor than disease, though it is often so regarded. For smallpox in particular the idea has been advanced that it spreads more easily among a population weakened by famine. This however, as pointed out by Marc Dawson in the context of the early colonial Kenya, is a fallacious argument. Famine can naturally weaken the resistance of the body to the effects of a disease but immunity to smallpox is determined solely through a previous infection or artificial vaccination. But Dawson, and Feierman following him, have developed the thesis of the primacy of famine in another direction by suggesting that epidemics may have spread mainly in areas whose population, famine-stricken, was roaming in search of food and congregating in a few places which provided abundant opportunities for transmitting the bacteria or parasites.<sup>196</sup> The argument is logical and one can speculate that something like that must have happened on several occasions. During shortages people certainly were more mobile and went to search for food from distances

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195. Even this is not an agreed case. Of the two major Kerebe indigenous historians, one dates the arrival of the diseases in the 1830s and the other somewhat earlier. See Zimon, *Geschichte der Herrscher-Klans*, p. 366, fn. 90. Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 79, 99, n. 21 speculates that the diseases were introduced at an earlier stage.

196. Marc H. Dawson, 'Smallpox in Kenya, 1880—1920', *Social Science and Medicine*, 13B (1979), pp. 245—250; Steven Feierman, review of Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, *IJAHS* 11 (1978), p. 156.

representing several days' journey.<sup>197</sup> But the source material of the present study contains more cases in which disease or war can be regarded as primary and famine as their consequence. As noted above, the cholera epidemics were, as local offshoots of wider pandemics, certainly imported from outside and, regardless of its origins, the main vector for the spread of smallpox in the Tanzanian interior was by all accounts the long-distance trade system.

No systematic quantitative estimates can be given concerning the effects of war, famine and pestilence — statements such as “severe effects,” “many people died” and “some human casualties” are not translatable into figures. Yet we can reasonably assured of a few major points. The first and most important is that the mortality levels in the latter part of the 19th century must have been extremely high in many if not most parts of the Tanzanian area. If Dr Christie believed, with whatever exaggeration, that a single cholera epidemic had killed several hundred thousand people, it cannot be assumed that the total destruction from diseases, famines and wars was slight. The second point which can be reasonably inferred from the discussion is that these high mortality levels must have been for the main part caused by new or newly spreading diseases which arose from increasing mobility and social turmoil as the interior was ‘opened up’ through long-distance trade. There is not enough evidence in the sources to make a case for violent hostilities or food shortages directly claiming very great numbers of lives except in a few cases. And while it is not unreasonable to suppose that thousands of peoples did perish in catastrophes called famines, these often involved war and pestilence as well. With our data base it is impossible to compare effects accurately, but conclusions drawn from better-analyzed calamities in other parts of the world suggest that disease can be expected to have the most fatal effects in such situations.<sup>198</sup>

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197. The Kwere and Zaramo had the habit of *kuhemela*, of looking for food as far away as Uluguru during shortages. Marja-Liisa Swantz, ‘Economic Resources of Bagamoyo District in a Historical Perspective’, mimeo, Helsinki, n.d. (but 1979), p. 22; Ulla Vuorela, *The Women's Question and the Modes of Human Reproduction. An Analysis of a Tanzanian Village*. Helsinki 1987, pp. 89—90.

198. See e.g. Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, pp. 203—206 for the 1943 Great

I think that the source material presented in this study can be said to point in the same direction. Much of the havoc which was later attributed to the slave trade and to Ngoni or other warfare may in fact have been caused by disease.<sup>199</sup> On Kilimanjaro "almost half" the people were found pock-marked in the 1880s.<sup>200</sup>

It is also evident that the new epidemics were not only much more effective but also more indiscriminate killers than wars or famines. They paid less respect to sex, age or social standing. The loss of life from wars of traditional type was not only moderate but also sex- and age-specific. As long as it was mainly the men who got killed, while women and children were saved, as was the rule according to the sources used in this study,<sup>201</sup> the long-term overall population losses were, for obvious reasons, proportionally far less than the numbers killed. As in all societies, men were used as soldiers, because they are expendable. Likewise, famine was a selective agent of death. But whereas war hit the young and strong, famine struck worst those who were in a weaker position right from the beginning: children and the poor. The infectious diseases, though less selective in their ravages, followed a certain pattern. Cholera and smallpox are, medically speaking, quite different diseases, transmitted in a different manner, and this was reflected in the differing patterns of their spread. It was observed that cholera carried off mainly the poor, whereas smallpox struck all social strata indiscriminately.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, epidemics of both cholera and smallpox, unlike wars and common food shortages,

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Bengal Famine in which "famine killed mostly by magnifying the forces of death normally present in the pre-famine period," i.e. mainly diseases.

199. As Reichard and others suggested, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 486; Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 542 (Unyamwezi); Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, p. 94 (Chole). For a similar argument, see also R. W. Beachey, 'Some Observations on the Volume of the Slave Trade of Eastern Africa during the Nineteenth Century', *African Historical Demography*, pp. 368—370.

200. Wray, *CMI*, 11 (1886), p. 557.

201. For explicit mentions, see fn. 84 above in this chapter and Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 56 (Haya). Cf., however, Ankermann, fn. 84 above.

202. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 330; Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, p. 418.



killed women of reproductive age, which magnified the long-term demographic effect of these diseases. To be sure, younger men such as caravan porters were also heavily afflicted, in particular by smallpox. But in addition to "men staggering along blinded and almost insensible" Burton observed "mothers carrying babes, both parent and progeny in the virulent stage of the fell disease." Stanley found not only caravans decimated but also the villages on the road "more than half-depopulated."<sup>203</sup> As it was said on Kilimanjaro: "May famine come rather than smallpox. Why? The victims of famine are only the poor, those of smallpox are rich and poor alike."<sup>204</sup>

So far the discussion seems to give broad support to the view represented by Hartwig that new diseases invaded the Tanzanian interior during the 19th century and led to a heavy rise in mortality in many places.<sup>205</sup> But whether the late precolonial mortality levels were excessive enough to produce a more sustained and widespread process of depopulation is more hazardous to say. There is certainly evidence of local depopulation from several parts of the country. In the south-east, in the hinterland of Kilwa and along the Ruvuma valley, large tracts that were densely settled in the late 1860s, were found pillaged by the Ngoni, emptied by slavers in the 1870s and 1880s and turned into "solitude" ten years later.<sup>206</sup> A similar process was reported along the south-eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika.<sup>207</sup> Along the central caravan route,

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203. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 387; Stanley, *Livingstone*, pp. 533—534.

204. Schanz, *Mitteilungen*, p. 33.

205. Hartwig, *Demographic Considerations*, *passim*.

206. For earlier settlement, see Decken, *Reisen*, I, pp. 161 ff.; Steere in Rowley, *Twenty Years*, pp. 242—243 and Livingstone, *Last Journals*, I, pp. 22 ff.; for processes of depopulation, Steere and Livingstone, *ibid.* and Thomson, *Notes on Rovuma*, p. 78; for the situation in the 1890s, Alfons M. Adams, *Lindi und sein Hinterland*. Berlin, n.d., pp. 28—30; Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 119 (quotation) and *idem*, 'Zur Kenntnis der Karawanenwege im südlichen Theile des ostafrikanischen Schutzgebietes', *MDS*, 7 (1894), p. 278. For the role of the Ngoni, see Ebner, *Wangoni*, p. 185 and Redmond, *Political History*, pp. 118 ff.

207. Cameron, *Southern Half of Lake Tanganyika*, p. 212; Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 232 and Fr Brideaux, 9th July 1890, *Chronique*, 47 (1890), p. 547, APB.

travellers saw signs of former villages on the trail of Mirambo's ruga ruga from the Itigi bush ('Mkunda Mkali') to Uvinza.<sup>208</sup> Ukwere was observed to be much depopulated, allegedly by the raids of neighbours.<sup>209</sup> Traces of earlier dense populations whose disappearance was attributed to wars or diseases were encountered in the 1880s in Usagara<sup>210</sup> and in the early colonial period in Bukerebe and on Kilimanjaro.<sup>211</sup> However, not all depopulation was due to increased mortality. Part of it, in particular when war was involved, was the result of more or less involuntary migration, the flight of people away from the areas harried by outside warriors. This part may often have been quite considerable. Some writers, both contemporary and later ones, suggest, or imply, that the Ngoni raids caused more shifting than loss of population.<sup>212</sup> Around Victoria Nyanza, many people fled to the islands,<sup>213</sup> and in Unyamwezi, we are told, the balance of population shifted from north and west to south and east.<sup>214</sup>

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208. Becker, *La vie*, I, pp. 203—204; Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 216.

209. Schneider, ed., *Katolische Mission*, pp. 160—161.

210. J. T. Last, 'A Visit to the Wa-Itumba Iron-workers and the Mangaheri, near Mamboia', *PRGS*, 5 (1883), pp. 586, 590. Schynse, *Mit Stanley*, p. 68 was told that the disappearance of the population was due to raids by the Hehe.

211. Hurel, *Religion et Vie domestique*, p. 62 and Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 122 (Bukerebe); Haber to Government, 5 March 1905, app. to Götzen to Auswärtiges Amt, Kolonial-Abteilung, 1 May 1905, ZStA, RKoLA, 700, 101 (Kilimanjaro).

212. Berg, 'Das Bezirksamt Mikindani', *MDS*, 10 (1897), p. 213; Redmond, *Political History*, pp. 118 ff.; Ebner, Wangoni, p. 185.

213. A point made generally for the Victoria Nyanza region by David McMaster, in 'Record of Discussion', *African Historical Demography*, p. 3 and for Bukerebe by Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 52—53.

214. Fr Nolan according to Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 76.

## 5. Societies and social structures

So far, I have discussed the Tanzanian area in general terms and focused on 19th-century change. I have followed the build-up of the long-distance trade system and traced some of its major effects on African societies, in particular on those which came into contact with the commercial system. But as was noted in the introduction, precolonial Tanzania was a geographical area and not a social unit, let alone a 'national' whole. The units in which effective social action took place were the different precolonial societies,<sup>1</sup> and if we wish to understand what was happening in precolonial Tanzania we have to proceed to a closer study of these societies. It was not only that much change took place within them; they also shaped and conditioned change. Societies were underpinned by more permanent structures and frameworks. The functioning of matters essential to the continuity of the society was regulated by structural factors, including environmental constraints and culturally-based social mechanisms which had evolved in the course of the history of the society. Externally-induced change could work only through the internally-developed structures. Tanzanian societies, as they were at the end of the 19th century, were the product of both the continuity of structure and the change brought about by historically more recent factors. Above I have emphasized change and in particular its destructive impact. As we go on, we shall see that Tanzanian precolonial societies, on the whole, were not on the verge of collapse. Their own structures were adapting to change and resisting its more extreme effects.

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1. I do not speak of 'social formation' because I agree with the interpretation that Marx's original notion of social formation is far wider and more abstract than society, referring not to historically existing communities but to their principles of functioning. Cf. Wolfgang Küttler, 'Totalität und Heterogenität konkret-historischer Gesellschaften', *Jahrbuch des Museums zur Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, 32 (1980), pp. 109—125.

The rest of the work is devoted to a more structural analysis of the precolonial societies. I shall argue that precolonial societies were moulded in a complex interaction of forces which we might call ethnic, political and economic. Internally they were far from undifferentiated except in one sense: functionally and institutionally speaking, they had no differentiated levels such as 'economic', 'social', 'political' and 'religious', i. e. they had no separate institutions in charge of different functions. Rather, the same institutions acted simultaneously in several functions. Institutions which today are looked upon as 'political' might in precolonial societies just as well have served 'economic' or 'religious' purposes or the other way around. This gave the societies such solidity that to examine one side of them without taking others into account may be seriously misleading. Yet in order to be able to describe and analyze the societies we have no other option than to separate one 'side' from another and to look at them from different angles. The first task to be undertaken in this chapter is to define what is meant by a precolonial society and to locate some of its basic structural determinants. Other aspects will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

## Ethnicity: the fall of the tribal model

Ethnicity, understood as a sense of common identity derived from sharing a language, culture and ties with a certain area certainly was, and still is, a major force shaping social relations and social consciousness in Tanzania. However, one of the major advances of African social scientific and historical research during the last few decades has been to show the complexity and fluidity of ethnicity in Africa in historical perspective. The simple tribal model, according to which Africans used to live in ethnically uniform 'tribes' ruled by 'chiefs' is now becoming thoroughly discredited. This is not to deny the existence of ethnic differences or even that of 'tribalism', but simply to point out that ethnic boundaries were extremely amorphous and variable in the precolonial time and to argue that much of the current clear-cut ethnic consciousness is in fact largely a product of later, mainly colonial, developments. In the Tanzanian context such arguments were suggested, with



varying degrees of explicitness, by most historians of precolonial societies<sup>2</sup> and generalized by Iliffe in his exposition of the 'creation of tribes' in Tanzania under colonial rule.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the view is not confined to historians of Tanzania. More or less refined variants of it have found their way into recent textbooks on African history,<sup>4</sup> and even 'mainstream' functional anthropologists, who long insisted upon the tribe as their natural unit of study and the major social unit of Africa, have had second thoughts.<sup>5</sup>

As for Tanzania, it is certainly not difficult to show by reference to historical sources that the ethnic groups in which precolonial Africans were living did not correspond as a rule to the standard idea of 'tribe'. Plainly, many of the latter-day 'tribes' were in no way discrete and compact entities in the precolonial period. Even leaving aside the notoriously complex case of the Swahili, definition of which "depends entirely on the context,"<sup>6</sup> there is no dearth of well-documented examples. The 'Nyamwezi', for instance, had "no common myth of tribal origin, and no customs or institutions which are common to them but peculiar to them." The concept of Nyamwezi was used in a variety of senses; at some time even the people later called Ha could be referred to as 'Nyamwezi'.<sup>7</sup> The languages of the 'Nyamwezi' groups, though closely

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2. See e.g. the contributions in Roberts, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*. The major exception is Feierman on the Shambaa, which will be discussed below.

3. Iliffe, *Modern History*, ch. 10.

4. See e.g. Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*. London, 1984, pp. 153—154.

5. For an excellent discussion of the concept of tribe in anthropology, see Maurice Godelier, 'The Concept of the Tribe: a Crisis Involving merely a Concept or the Empirical Foundations of Anthropology Itself?', in idem, *Marxist Anthropology*, pp. 70—96. For 'mainstream' anthropologists, see e.g. Aidan Southall, 'The Contribution of Anthropology to African Studies', *ASR*, 26 (1983), p. 68.

6. A. H. J. Prins, *The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast*. London, 1967, p. 11. Cf. Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi, *The Institution of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba*. Uppsala, 1973, pp. 26—27 on the historical change of the status of the term 'Swahili'.

7. Roberts, 'The Nyamwezi', in idem, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*, p. 117; idem, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 59, fn. 1.

related, were divided into at least three main dialect groups with some marked differences between them. Politically they were fragmented into dozens of small kingdoms or chiefdoms of varying size, grouped into larger entities often called 'countries'.<sup>8</sup> The people later known as the 'Sukuma', for their part, were as much 'Nyamwezi' as any other groups; there was nothing intrinsically different in their social and political institutions which would have made them a separate 'tribe'. There were people calling themselves 'Basukuma' but it was a small group consisting of the inhabitants of the northernmost chiefdom at Lake Nyanza. 'Sukuma' was the word in Nyamwezi languages for 'north' in general.<sup>9</sup> In a similar way, on the western side of Victoria Nyanza only the seashore inhabitants living mainly from fishing called themselves 'Haya'. It was outsiders, ultimately the Germans, who applied this name to all the peoples in the five or six separate kingdoms between the lake and the kingdom of Karagwe.<sup>10</sup> Even people in an area as clearly defined ecologically as the 'Chagga' on the southern and western slopes of Kilimanjaro had reached a fairly low degree of common self-identification. The early German missionaries found that the languages of the inhabitants of Kilimanjaro were so different that the people found it very difficult to understand each other.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the Chagga of Machame spoke a language almost identical to that of the Meru at the neighbouring Mount Meru.<sup>12</sup>

The examples could be multiplied and the main point should be

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8. Spellig, Wanjamwesi, pp. 202 ff.; Abrahams, *Political Organization*, pp. 32—33; Southon, *History of Unyamwezi*, as printed in Bennett, *Studies*, p. 81; N. D. Yongolo, *Maisha na desturi za Wanyamwezi*. London, 1953, p. v (using the Kiswahili word *ukoo* which can mean anything from kinship relation to family). For the early colonial period, cf. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, pp. 16—17.

9. *Chronique*, 114 (March 1905), p. 285, APB; Holmes and Austen, *Pre-Colonial Sukuma*, pp. 377—378, 403, fn. 5.

10. Hans Cory, *History of the Bukoba District — Historia ya Wilaya Bukoba*. Mwanza, n.d., pp. 13—14.

11. H. Adolphi and Johannes Schanz, *Am Fusse des Bergriesen Ostafrikas*. Leipzig, 1912, pp. 8, 11.

12. N. N. Luanda, 'European Commercial Farming and Its Impact on the Meru and Arusha Peoples of Tanzania, 1920—1955', Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1986, pp. 18—20.

clear: in the above cases as well as in the great majority of others the peoples later known as 'tribes' or 'ethnic groups' did not themselves subjectively feel that they belonged to the same group nor did they objectively form ethnically delineated groups. In terms of modern anthropology, the precolonial 'Nyamwezi', 'Haya', 'Chagga' etc. should be understood rather as ethnic categories than as ethnic groups: they lacked the fundamental characteristics of the latter, namely self-identification or self-ascription of the members with the group.<sup>13</sup> The only major exception reported to this rule were the Shambaa. They were the people who lived in what they called themselves Shambaa, a cool highland at an altitude of more than one kilometer in the mountains of West Usambara. That they were seeing themselves in terms of an ethnic group was suggested by early travellers and missionaries and later corroborated by their major historian Feerman. The latter argues that the strong cultural identity of the Shambaa had two main bases: first, the ecological setting or "botanical environment," and secondly, common language and common rites. He stresses the first in particular and at one point even calls the principle of ethnic identification "a botanical one."<sup>14</sup> However, another student of Shambaa oral history, Edgar Winans, has given a clue that even the Shambaa identity was not absolutely clear-cut. The cultural boundaries between the Shambaa and the neighbouring peoples were, with some exceptions, as vague and fluid as elsewhere. On the other hand, the Shambaa had partly retained their older identities. The majority of people did identify themselves as Shambaa, but even at the end of the colonial period Winans was "never able to find an informant who would not qualify this after some reflection by adding that really his ancestors came to Usambara Mountains from elsewhere... Everyone is, in the final analysis, an immigrant."<sup>15</sup>

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13. See Frederick Barth, 'Introduction', in idem, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Bergen, Oslo, London, 1970, esp. pp. 10—15.

14. Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 180; 'F. Heinrich Lang' (in actual fact, F. LangHeinrich), 'Die Waschambala', in Steinmetz, ed., *Rechtsverhältnisse*, p. 218; Feerman, *Concepts*, pp. 25—26; idem, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 17, 22, 31 (quotation).

15. Edgar V. Winans, *Shambala*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1962, p. 16. He employs the alternative forms Shambala and Shambalai.

Yet this is not to argue that there were no ethnic differences among the precolonial inhabitants of the Tanzanian area or that one group would normally have “merged imperceptibly into another.”<sup>16</sup> Ethnic relations were in flux but the basis of ethnicity was not created out of thin air. I argued above that there were, in fact, deep-going ethnic differences among the peoples in the area and these had long roots in history. The most salient dividing lines were between large groups of peoples who shared some basic cultural and economic institutions. Effectively, they formed language groups which simultaneously represented different modes of production: hunters and gatherers speaking their own languages; Cushitic- and Bantu-speaking agriculturalists and mixed farmers; and Nilotic herdsman.<sup>17</sup> It can hardly be doubted that the borderlines between such groups were conceived as real ethnic boundaries. Rather, it can be argued that the presence of the representatives of all these major ‘language-production’ groups made Tanzania, in particular the north-central part of the country, termed by the Germans ‘the area without a river outlet’ (*das abflusslose Gebiet*), into one of the ethnically most varied and colourful parts of Africa. Yet, beyond and within these rather crude divisions there were other, more finely-grained ethnic borders criss-crossing the precolonial peoples of the Tanzanian area. Ethnic groups and ethnic identities were shaped at different levels of aggregation by a number of factors, including cultural similarities and dissimilarities, historical developments and economic variations. However, none of the levels or sets of factors exerted a paramount influence over the others. They acted in differing, and ever changing, combinations with one another.

Let us first take the case of the Nilotes. By cultural criteria (language, customs), three major Nilotic groups of peoples were distinguishable: (1) the Maa-speaking peoples, spread over hundreds of thousands of square miles in the Kenyan and Tanzanian Rift Valley, represented primarily by the pastoral Maasai, (2) the Datoga in the region of Lake Eyasi and (3) the Luo, straddling the modern border between Kenya and Tanzania on the western shore of Lake Nyanza. Both the Maasai and the Datoga

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16. As suggested by Iliffe for 1800, *Modern History*, pp. 8—9.

17. Above, pp. 50—52.



were pastoralist herdsmen, but their languages belonged to different Nilotic sub-groups and they had their own ways and customs.<sup>18</sup> Also their history was quite different; it is probable that the presence of the Datoga in the Tanzanian area pre-dates that of the Maasai by several centuries.<sup>19</sup> The Luo, for their part, were a sedentary people with an economy relying as much on agriculture as on cattle.<sup>20</sup> Each of these peoples were further divided into smaller ethnic groups. To take only the most complicated example, that of the Maa-speakers, at least four groups can be found in the late precolonial period:<sup>21</sup> (1) the pastoral Maasai, 2) the people referred to as 'Kwavi' or 'Iloikop' in early ethnographic sources, also basically pastoral, (3) the Arusha agriculturalists and (4) the hunters and gatherers traditionally known as 'Dorobo' but perhaps

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18. There is no adequate historical ethnographic account of the whole of the Datoga, but see Tomikawa, *Locality Groups*, pp. 207—230 and Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 168—173. Also G. McL. Wilson, 'The Tatoga of Tanganyika', *TNR*, 33 (1952), pp. 34—47 and 34 (1954), pp. 35—56 is useful but concentrates, despite its name, on the Barabaig sub-group of the Datoga. For the question of precolonial Datoga economy, see below, ch. 6, fn. 88, pp. 244—245.
  19. Ambrose, *Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions*, p. 114 and Alan H. Jacobs, 'Maasai Pastoralism in Historical Perspective', in Th. Monod, ed., *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa*. London, 1975, pp. 411—412.
  20. The Tanzanian Luo, called 'Gaia' by the first travellers, are rather poorly documented. The best early source is Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas*. Berlin, 1910, pp. 181 ff.
  21. For a short overview of the ethnic differences among the Maa speaking peoples, see Rainer Vossen, 'Linguistic Evidence Regarding the Territorial History of the Maa-speaking Peoples: some Preliminary Remarks', *KHR*, 6 (1978), pp. 34—52. Cf. John L. Berntsen, 'Economic Variations among Maa-speaking Peoples', in Bethwell A. Ogot, ed., *Hadith 7. Ecology and History in East Africa*. Nairobi, 1979, pp. 108—127 who may downplay the differences between Maa-speakers somewhat too much. The question of the identity of the 'Kwavi' or 'Iloikop' is complicated, but it seems evident that the terms refer to the present-day Parakuyu and other non-Maasai Maa-speaking pastoralists.

more accurately called 'Okiek'.<sup>22</sup> Yet it would be a mistake to regard these as four different 'tribes', culturally homogeneous and self-contained islets in the sea of vague and overlapping groups and group identities. The pastoral Maasai, in particular, were a conglomeration of groups or 'divisions', continuously structuring and restructuring through the processes of fission and fusion. It were rather the Maasai divisions, among which the Kisonko were the strongest in the Tanzanian area, which can be regarded ethnically at par with smaller Maa groups like the Arusha. In fact it appears that the divisions gained their later known shape and the groups like the Arusha, or those now known as the Parakuyu, occupied their living areas, adopted their modes of livelihood and produced their separate identities only in the course of the 19th century as a result of a series of inter-Maa wars.<sup>23</sup>

Similar differences could be found among the Cushitic peoples in the north-central highlands such as those once called 'Fiome' and now known as the Iraqw and the Gorowa,<sup>24</sup> as well as among those peoples whose linguistic affinities are unclear, such as the Sandawe.<sup>25</sup> However, because the great majority of Tanzanians were Bantu-speakers in the precolonial period, I may be permitted to limit my remaining comments to them. The Bantu peoples were not a homogenous group either. They had spread almost all over the coastal, southern, central and western Tanzania. As indicated above, their history is too contentious<sup>26</sup> to be summed up in a paragraph or two, but it is certain that in the late precolonial

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22. For an introduction, see Cynthia Chang, 'Nomads without Cattle: East African Foragers in Historical Perspective', in Eleanor Leacock and Richard Lee, eds, *Politics and History in Band Societies*. Cambridge, 1982, pp. 269—282. For earliest ethnography, see Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 167—168 who distinguished three different groups of 'Wandorobo'.

23. Waller, *Lords*, esp. pp. 115 ff., 270 ff.

24. Cf. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 173—180 and Fritz Jaeger, 'Das Hochland der Riesenkrater und die umliegenden Hochländer Deutsch-Ostafrikas', *MDS*, suppl. no. 4 (1911), p. 96.

25. Cf. Eric Ten Raa's argument about "couth" and the "uncouth" among the Sandawe, 'The Couth and the Uncouth: Ethnic, Social and Linguistic Divisions among the Sandawe of Central Tanzania', *Anthropos*, 65 (1970), pp. 127—153.

26. Above, p. 49.

period they had settled in fairly clearly defined areas and their languages were differentiated enough to form several large sub-groups, speakers of which had developed more or less differing customs and institutions. Their economies and their speech differed and so did their cloths, marks and styles of dancing. Classifications vary,<sup>27</sup> but based on the evidence of modern linguistic research it seems possible to distinguish five main Bantu sub-groups: (1) 'Chagga-Taita' on Kilimanjaro and west of it, (2) 'West Tanzania' covering mainly Nyamwezi-related peoples, (3) 'Lacustrine' around Lake Nyanza, (4) 'Southern Tanzania' from Rufiji and Ruvuma to Ungoni and (5) 'Tanzania-Coastal', a somewhat misleading name because this group stretches from the northern coast through the central parts of the country to the corridor between lakes Tanganyika and Nyasa.<sup>28</sup> Among each main sub-group there were several smaller groups in one way or another discernible. Some of the inter-Bantu ethnic boundaries were conspicuous indeed. Particularly striking was the line separating the interlacustrine peoples from the rest of the country. Several travellers commented on the profound change when crossing from Sukumaland or Busumbwa over to Buzinza and Buhaya — it was "as if East Africa had been left behind."<sup>29</sup> This cleavage was deeply rooted in history — sophisticated political organizations, and probably human settlement as well, were of much earlier origin in the interlacustrine region than in the neighbouring areas.<sup>30</sup>

Yet the 'objective' inter-Bantu differences can scarcely explain how the first travellers and residents were able to catalogue such a number of compact 'tribes' among the Bantu peoples in the Tanzanian area; in general, ethnic boundaries between the Bantu speakers were much more vague and fluid than those separating the interlacustrine societies from the rest. It is here that the model

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27. For older schemes, see e.g. George Peter Murdock, *Africa. Its Peoples and Their Culture History*. New York, Toronto, London, 1959, pp. 342 ff. and Hermann Baumann, ed., *Die Völker Afrikas und ihre traditionellen Kulturen*. Wiesbaden, 1979, pp. 6—32. Cf. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 7.

28. Nurse, *Bantu Expansion*, pp. 205—211.

29. Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 44. See also Götzen, *Durch Afrika*, pp. 129—130.

30. See below, p. 197.

of groups merging imperceptibly into another has relevance and the explanation for the differences has to be sought not among the observed but among the observers. As noted above, the inclusiveness of ethnic categories such as the Nyamwezi, the Sukuma or the Chagga, was not altogether clear, to say the least, and it had not been the peoples themselves but the outsiders who had conceived them as entities and endowed them with the names they became known by. Many of the names seem to have been originally provided by coastal traders or Africans residing on the coast.<sup>31</sup> By reading the ethnographic sources of Tanzanian history one can see how faithfully the first European travellers followed the ethnic definitions they learned on the coast and how these more or less *ad hoc* labels became, through the power of the written word, incorporated into the world of western learning and canonized as the ethnographic map of East Africa. If one takes the earliest known descriptions of the inland peoples compiled on the coast, as summed-up by Shorter,<sup>32</sup> and compares them with Burton's account of his journey from Zanzibar to Ujiji, one finds basically the same 'tribes' constantly referred to with spellings slightly varied. Burton's major contribution consisted of detailed and highly suspect descriptions of differences between these 'tribes' not only in dress, tribal marks, customs, arms, habitations and means of livelihood but also in character: the "ill-conditioned, noisy, boisterous, violent and impracticable" 'Zaramo' were contrasted with the 'Nyamwezi' with "comparative industry ... bodily strength and savage courage."<sup>33</sup> Writers like Stanley who were much less adequately versed in the ethnological knowledge of the day sometimes wondered how Burton had been able to "draw his fine lines ... imperceptible to ordinary men," but ended up employing the same ethnic classification as their predecessors.<sup>34</sup> The more perceptive among the early observers made

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31. See e.g. Mirambo, as quoted by Southon in Bennett, *Studies*, p. 81 ('Nyamwezi'); Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 43 and Richter, Bezirk Bukoba, p. 67 ('Ziba' contra 'Haya'); Willis, *State*, p. 4 ('Fipa'); Adolphi and Schanz, *Bergriesen*, p. 8 ('Chagga'); cf. Kimambo, Pare, p. 16 (the name 'Pare' given by "southern neighbours").

32. Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 241—242.

33. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 87, 96, 196, and *passim*.

34. Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 237.



a distinction between the main Bantu sub-groups,<sup>35</sup> but even they saw 'tribes' proliferating within the language groups without asking on which grounds these were to be regarded as entities.

In this way groups and categories of an entirely different order became eventually to be depicted as 'tribes' on a basically equal footing but with widely varying surface characteristics. The real differences in their nature went unnoticed. In fact, some of the Bantu 'tribes' as accounted for in our sources may have been 'societies' in the sense used in this study, i.e. organic groups constituted according to political and economic criteria. If the Shambaa were both considered and considering themselves as a relatively coherent ethnic group it was not only because of the common location, shared customs and rituals and similar mode of livelihood but also because they had been politically unified in a kingdom. The 'Hehe' emerged separate from other southern highland Bantu or from their own Bena-Hehe-Sangu cluster because of their political unification under Munyigumba and Mkwawa in the latter half of the 19th century.<sup>36</sup> In the Ngoni states in the south-west the Ngoni identity was imposed upon and accepted by the subjugated indigenous peoples to the extent that even the slaves came to be known as 'Ngoni'.<sup>37</sup> But more often, as argued above, the supposed ethnic groups were actually mere names with which outsiders labeled the inhabitants of a geographical location. 'Iramba' meant originally the inhabitants of the Iramba plateau,<sup>38</sup> and 'Makonde' those inhabiting a 'thicket-covered plateau'.<sup>39</sup> The 'Luguru', 'Kutu' and 'Zaramo' had almost everything in common except environment. In fact the term Luguru stood for 'highlanders', Kutu for 'lowlanders' and Zaramo for those who lived still lower, near the sea.<sup>40</sup> 'Chagga' appears to

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35. E.g. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 842 ff.

36. Redmayne, Hehe, pp. 37—58.

37. Booth, *Nachkommen*, p. 197.

38. Patrick Pender-Cudlip, 'The Iramba and their Neighbours', in K. Ingham, ed., *Foreign Relations of African States*. London, 1974, pp. 56 ff., esp. p. 61.

39. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 9. No original source given.

40. Lloyd W. Swantz, 'The Zaramo of Tanzania', M. A. Thesis, University of Syracuse, 1966, p. 1; idem, 'The Role of the Medicine Man among the Zaramo of Dar es Salaam', Ph. D. thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1974, p. 32.

have referred to a place before it became to refer to a people. The Chagga said they were “people living in banana groves.”<sup>41</sup> If such situations were confounded with migration, Terence Ranger argues, ethnicity became “more a matter of role than origin.” A ‘Makua’ could turn into a ‘Yao’ by adapting the agricultural way of life and building houses.<sup>42</sup> Frequently, the early ethnic terms covered a different ground from what they now imply, and there was much variation in their meaning. ‘Sagara’ was commonly employed to refer to almost all the peoples between the Zaramo and the Gogo; Burton included even the Hehe and the ‘Kwavi’ in Sagara “sub-tribes.”<sup>43</sup> ‘Nyakusa’ was originally thought to be only one of the Rungwe ‘tribes’ called together the ‘Konde’ while ‘Ha’ may have been a reference only to the Heru kingdom.<sup>44</sup> Some of the terms used by early writers have since then fallen into disuse. ‘Shashi’, for instance, was popularly used to refer to the majority of peoples on the eastern side of the Nyanza from the Bariadi mountains to the Mara river, who “ethnographically make up a uniform whole, but deviate from each other in individual features and divide into different tribes.”<sup>45</sup>

No doubt the people themselves experienced ethnic identities at several levels of aggregation but it is much beyond this study to try to discuss what they consisted of and how they were formed in the precolonial period. It must suffice here to conclude that while there is no denying of the role of ethnicity as a major factor shaping social relations in precolonial Tanzania, the concept of ‘tribe’, or ‘ethnic group’, when used simply as its modern equivalent, is entirely inadequate in capturing its variations; the indiscriminate manner the concept was used by the early observers has seriously

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41. Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, pp. 38—40; M. Merker, ‘Rechtsverhältnisse und Sitten der Wadschagga’, *PM*, suppl. no. 138 (1902), p. 34.

42. Terence Ranger, ‘European Attitudes and African Realities: The Rise and Fall of the Matola Chiefs of South-East Tanzania’, *JAH*, 20 (1979), pp. 64—65.

43. Burdo, *Les Belges*, p. 198; Last, *Polygotta*, p. 9; Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 130 ff.

44. Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 129; J. H. Scherer, ‘The Ha of Tanganyika’, *Anthropos*, 54 (1959), p. 842.

45. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 197 (quotation); Paul Kollman, *The Victoria Nyanza*. London, 1899, pp. 175 ff.

distorted the picture we have of the precolonial ethnic relations. Instead of such evolutionary or classificatory notions we need a set of finer concepts which could more faithfully distinguish between the different kinds of ethnic borderlines and also account for their historical development. But while the inadequacy of the old concepts and approaches is widely acknowledged, viable alternatives have not clearly emerged, and this is not a place to enlarge on them. As a stopgap I have endeavoured to steer away from the idea of discrete and compact tribes or ethnic groups and followed the presently common custom of loosely using the term 'people' for an ethnically defined unit. Sometimes I have operated in terms of "clusters of peoples with linguistic similarities and shared cultural values."<sup>46</sup> Many of the major 'ethnic' similarities and dissimilarities among the Tanzanian peoples that have been noted above and will be noted below can be conveniently ascribed to such clusters of peoples, while the acknowledgement of the existence of the peoples and their clusters will prevent us from drifting into an unwarranted degree of ethnic relativism.

## Societies and their politics

Another implication of the above discussion on ethnicity is that if we are looking for the units in which structured social action took place, "the product(s) of men's reciprocal action,"<sup>47</sup> ethnic criteria are relevant but we cannot rely on them alone. In most cases ethnically defined peoples or 'clusters of peoples' were not functioning as organic social units; they were passive ethnic categories whose members shared certain basic characteristics without therefore entering into mutual social relations. It is within such peoples that we have to seek the operative social

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46. As suggested by Marcia Wright, *German Missions in Tanganyika 1891—1941. Lutherans and Moravians in the Southern Highland*. Oxford, 1971, p. 25.

47. Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov, 28 December 1846, printed in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations. A Collection*. Moscow, 1979, p. 490.

communities woven together by a multitude of social relations. My suggestion here is that such units were constituted in terms of common leadership and other common public institutions, i.e. according to criteria which can be broadly called 'political'. These units I propose to call 'societies' while their political structures can be termed 'polities'.

## Politics and ritual

However, if the definition of 'political' was derived here from the Weberian concept of state with its claim of "the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force ... within a given territorial area,"<sup>48</sup> we would not find much that is 'political' in these societies. Perhaps even the striving for or exercise of 'power' should not be given so much emphasis as is recommended by some analysts,<sup>49</sup> because, as is well-known, power can be of many different kinds and function in varying ways. I am not claiming that such things as use of force, territoriality and possession of power were not important ingredients in the political systems of precolonial Tanzanian societies. However, to take them in the form shaped by European historical development and to use them for defining purposes in an entirely different African context leads nowhere. Rather I suggest that we regard as 'political' those institutions which provided a platform for the advancement of the common interests of a wider group of people, regardless of the constitution of the group or the degree of autonomy of the institution concerned. In this perspective, a council of elders, a descent group or an age-set can be as much a political institution as a king claiming sovereignty over a given area. In this way, the pseudo-borderline between 'states' and 'non-states', originating from Sir Henry Sumner Maine and other classical evolutionists and canonized in African anthropology in *African Political Systems* by Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard in 1940 can be

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48. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons. New York, 1964, p. 154 (a partial translation of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, 1922).

49. Henri J. M. Claessen, 'Introduction', in S. Lee Seaton and H. J. M. Claessen, eds, *Political Anthropology*. The Hague, 1979, p. 8.



transcended.<sup>50</sup>

In this interpretation also 'ritual' becomes part of 'political', because in an environment like precolonial Africa rituals were among the most powerful means of promoting the interests of a group. Maintaining order and the cohesion in the society and securing the conditions for its reproduction may be seen as the main purposes of political institutions in precolonial Africa as well as elsewhere. This naturally presupposed 'political' action in the sense of the making and carrying out of decisions affecting the society as a whole. But there was always a strong 'ritual' or 'religious' dimension embedded in political action. As A.R. Radcliffe-Brown said, it was "often impossible to separate, even in thought, political office from ritual or religious office."<sup>51</sup> In the precarious ecological conditions and with the relatively low level of productive forces of precolonial Africa, political institutions were thought to require the collaboration of other-worldly forces which were able to communicate with natural forces. In agricultural societies such forces were as a rule spirits of ancestors and natural spirits, and their collaboration was sought in public rituals for which the political leaders often carried the ultimate responsibility. In most societies there was a close connection between political power and rituals for the maintenance of land fertility. Another major source of ritual power was the control of witchcraft which was entrusted to political leaders. In such a situation, ritual responsibility was both a function and a major base of political power, and to juxtapose 'political' and 'ritual' power is beside the point; more fruitfully the latter can be seen either as an integral part or as a special aspect of the former.

To avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, let it be stressed that I am not claiming that 'rain-making' or any other supernatural ability was a *source* of political power in precolonial Tanzania or that the development of political units in the area could be explained in terms of an evolution of rain-making techniques or other ritual innovations. The forces propelling political development must surely be sought elsewhere: in economic and

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50. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Introduction', in idem, eds, *African Political Systems*. London, 1970 (1st ed. 1940), pp. 1—23.

51. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'Preface', in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, eds, *African Political Systems*, p. xxi.

social developments, conditioned by ecology, which created the need for a more elaborate overall control of the society through a political organization. The growth of societies and, in particular, social differentiation must have given a powerful impulse towards political development. This much is agreed by a number of writers of varying persuasions, from Friedrich Engels to liberal American professors of African history.<sup>52</sup> It could also be argued that the myths of origins of Tanzanian polities can be interpreted, partly at least, as symbolic expressions of social divisions in the formation of political institutions; they all depict with remarkable consistency powerful strangers as founders of ruling dynasties, be they wild hunters<sup>53</sup> or pastoralists,<sup>54</sup> cultural heroes bringing with them iron or fire,<sup>55</sup> or strange, aggressive women.<sup>56</sup> In their daily action, political leaders had of course many other functions besides the ritual, namely 'economic' and 'judicial'. As will be discussed in chapter 7, leaders had a crucial economic role in intervening in production and in the division of output between direct consumption and storage.<sup>57</sup> They also adjudicated disputes between people. But I stress that an appreciation of the close bond between politics and ritual is a crucial prerequisite for an understanding of precolonial political systems.

A case can be made that political power is always and everywhere built on the twin pillars of force and consent,<sup>58</sup> but it is also certain that these two are not mutually exclusive and their relative weight varies greatly in different societies and historical

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52. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, reprinted in Marx and Engels, *Pre-Capitalist*, pp. 447 ff.; Philip Curtin et al., *African History*. London, 1978, esp. pp. 35—36.

53. The best analyzed case is the Shambaa Mbegha, see Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, esp. chs 2 and 3.

54. As in the interlake region. See the sources in fns 72—75 below in this chapter.

55. As among the Nyakusa. Monica Wilson, *For Men and Elders*. London, 1977, p. 8.

56. This is the Fipa version. Willis, *State*, chs 3 and 4.

57. Below, pp. 277—281, 300—301.

58. For a short introduction and guide to sources, see Claessen, Introduction, pp. 7—9 and for an insightful discussion, Maurice Godelier, 'Processes of the Formation, Diversity and Bases of the State', *International Social Science Journal*, 32 (1980), esp. pp. 609—616.

situations. In precolonial Tanzania the emphasis seems to have remained more on consent derived from real or putative common interests and their symbolic representations, produced and reproduced in public rituals. Even if the base of political power shifted towards the more open use of force during the 19th-century mercantile penetration, the ritual accent did not disappear. In the control of witchcraft, the leaders' role was probably enhanced by the introduction of the *mwavi* poison ordeal over a wide area of the country from west to east.<sup>59</sup> The maintenance of land fertility continued to be effected through ritual procedures known as 'rain-making'.<sup>60</sup> Leaders performed various cultivation rites,<sup>61</sup> or were "hedged about with archaic rituals" as 'sacred' kings.<sup>62</sup> In any case, supreme responsibility for securing the fertility of the land and the well-being of the society rested with the political leader. To be sure, there were separate rainmakers and other ritual experts in most societies, often of different ethnicity, but they acted in collaboration with secular leaders. The whole matter of rain-making and the changing relations between political leaders and ritual experts was a complex, multifarious issue, still inadequately known. The constellation of forces between leaders and ritual experts must have emerged from a long struggle, but a broad

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59. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 82 and the sources mentioned there; O. F. Raum, 'German East Africa: Changes in African Tribal Life under German Administration, 1892—1914', in Vincent Harlow and E. M. Chilver assisted by Alison Smith, *HEA*, II. Oxford, 1965, pp. 182—183; Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 168—169 (Zigua).

60. Except in cases like the Sonjo whose economy was not based on rain-fed agriculture or cattle-keeping but on irrigation. Robert F. Gray, *The Sonjo of Tanganyika*. London, 1963, pp. 51—52, 122.

61. For descriptions see e.g. Cory, *Ntemi*, pp. 33 ff. (Sukuma); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, pp. 162—163; Henry Cole, 'Notes on the Wagogo of German East Africa', *JAI*, 32 (1902), p. 319.

62. The expression is Peter Lloyd's, 'The Political Structure of African Kingdoms', in Michael Banton, ed., *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*. London, 1965, p. 63. This is not to claim that they were considered as 'divine' kings, "incarnate human gods," as suggested by Sir James George Frazer. For a concise statement, see his *The Illustrated Golden Bough*, ed. Mary Douglas. London, 1978, pp. 53 ff. The original *Golden Bough* appeared first in 1890 and grew to thirteen volumes.

historical trend suggests itself. Among loosely governed peoples, elders or incipient political leaders consulted well-known rainmakers who were often from the outside;<sup>63</sup> in more centralized political systems political leaders themselves assumed a more direct role in rain rituals;<sup>64</sup> while in most sophisticated polities ritual duties were divided between the supreme leader, lower-level chiefs and specialized diviners.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, it seems possible to suggest on the basis of Tanzanian historical material that in precolonial conditions a combination of supernatural and executive powers was a major condition for the emergence of centralized political power.<sup>66</sup>

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63. For the eastern matrilineal peoples, see e.g. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. 34, 50, 57 and M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 151 (Zaramo); for neighbours of the Datoga consulting rainmakers of the latter origin, see e.g. Pender-Cudlip, Iramba, pp. 61–62, 67; Sick, Waniaturu, pp. 43 ff. and Jellicoe, *Long Path*, p. 4 (Nyaturu); A. Buluda Itandala, 'Nilotic Impact on the Babinza of Usukuma', *TJH*, 9 (1980), pp. 5–8 and Holmes and Austen, Pre-Colonial Sukuma, p. 380 (Sukuma); A. O. Anacleiti, 'Cultural Interaction in Tanzania 1750–1980: Some Examples from Mara Region', unpublished paper, n.d., p. 13 (Ishenyi). For further references, see Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 28–29.

64. E.g. Feerman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 59, 61, 87–88, 143, 166 (the early Shambaa kingdom); Kimambo, *Political History*, pp. 71 ff., 81 ff., 88, 95; Henryk Zimon, *Regenriten auf dem Insel Bukerebe*. Freiburg, Sw., 1974, passim; Gutmann, *Feldbausitten*, pp. 483 ff. (Chagga); W. Bryant Mumford, 'The Hehe-Bena-Sangu Peoples of East Africa', *American Anthropologist* (hereafter *AmA*), 36 (1934), p. 211; Hans Cory, *The Indigenous Political System of the Sukuma and Proposals for Political Reform*. Nairobi, 1954, p. 6 and Francis Nolan, *Mission to the Great Lakes*. Tabora, n.d. (but the late 1970s), p. 27 (Sukuma).

65. Steven Feerman, 'The Shambaa', in Roberts, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*, p. 6 and idem, Concepts, p. 354 (the later Shambaa kingdom); Richter, Bezirk Bukoba, p. 97 and Cory, *History of Bukoba*, p. 89 (Buhaya); Chrétien, Le Buha, p. 18 and Audrey Richards, ed., *East African Chiefs*. London, n.d., p. 214 (Ha). For Fipa kingdoms cf. Monica Wilson, *Peoples of the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor*. Cape Town, 1958, p. 24 and Willis, *State*, p. 110, 112, 264, ns 27 and 28.

66. An interesting analogue can be found in the development of Central African cults of kingship, see 'Introduction', in Ranger and Kimambo, eds, *African Religion*, pp. 5–9.



## Unification, disintegration and trade

The actual long-range historical development of the politically defined societies in the Tanzanian area is a subject far too little known and controversial to be properly discussed in summary form here. Only the broadest outlines can be sketched with wide margins of error.<sup>67</sup> It is possible to distinguish a general evolutionary line from smaller and more directly governed units toward larger units more complicated in their government. However, the advance of political concentration was slow and uneven, and towards the end of the 19th century there appeared a simultaneous, strongly opposed tendency for larger units to disintegrate. Nor can we be certain about the time-scale. We know only that in some parts of the country, especially in the interlacustrine region west and south of Lake Victoria, there were sophisticated political units, which can be called 'kingdoms', with a long history of development, at least half a millennium and probably more,<sup>68</sup> while in other parts political institutions remained simpler for a longer time. On the basis of oral tradition it has been estimated that in the mountains of Pare the first kingdom may date from the 16th century,<sup>69</sup> in Ufipa from the same period or somewhat later,<sup>70</sup> and in Usambara perhaps from the 18th century.<sup>71</sup> Remembering the pitfalls in the interpretation of oral tradition, no guarantee whatsoever can be given for the accuracy of these datings, but what is beyond doubt is that all these polities developed before the penetration of caravan trade. The polities of the western and central parts of the country acquired their 'chiefdom' character later. The exact dates are not known, but it is clear that no units of major size emerged there before the era of long-distance trade and the rise of the great war-lords in the latter half of the 19th century. In the eastern, south-eastern and north-central regions, polities remained more rudimentary till

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67. For another discussion, see Andrew Roberts' synthetizing article 'Political Change in the Nineteenth Century', in Kimambo and Temu, eds, *History of Tanzania*, pp. 57—84.

68. Oliver, *East African Interior*, pp. 630—646.

69. Kimambo, *Political History*, p. xiii and ch. 4.

70. Willis, *State*, pp. 14, 100, 197 and 239, n. 29.

71. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 93—94, fn. 4.



Map 10. Major political units, ca 1880.

colonialism, being mostly based on kinship and common residence.

Late precolonial political units were thus not very large. Powerful kingdoms of several hundred thousand inhabitants had probably never existed in the Tanzanian area, as distinct from Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, and many smaller ones broke up as the 19th century proceeded. Even though most of the oldest traditional kingdoms, those of the interlacustrine region, shared a common mythology, and their ruling families were thought to be of the same nomadic descent, they are not known ever to have been under common political leadership. The 19th century fragmented them further, and at the end of it they were found scattered in four different geographic areas. West of Lake Victoria were five or six small Haya kingdoms,<sup>72</sup> and in the interior west of them was Karagwe. In the 19th century the latter was traditionally among the strongest of Tanzanian kingdoms, but in the 1880s it had drifted into a crisis over succession.<sup>73</sup> South-west of the lake several chiefdoms had formed out of the old kingdom of Buzinza,<sup>74</sup> while the kingdom of Bukerebe on the islands and nearby mainland had split into two.<sup>75</sup> Further south on the shore of Tanganyika the two original kingdoms of Buha had divided into six smaller units.<sup>76</sup> The process of disintegration had also severely tried two kingdoms among the mountains of north-east Tanzania in Usambara and Pare. The Shambaa kingdom of Usambara, which early travellers had unanimously found to be peaceful and disciplined, quickly split into quarrelling chiefdoms which raided each other for

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72. Interpretations differ as to which precolonial units are to be considered independent kingdoms and which of them 'Haya' ones, see Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 710—712; Richter, *Bezirk Bukoba*, pp. 71—82 and Cory, *History of Bukoba*, pp. 13—14, 51—52, 63—64.

73. Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, ch. 8; Ford and Hall, *History of Karagwe*, pp. 10 ff.

74. P. H. van Thiel, 'Buzinza unter der Dynastie der Bahinda', *Anthropos*, 6 (1911), pp. 506 ff.; Richter, *Bezirk Bukoba*, p. 72.

75. Zimon, *Geschichte der Herrscher-Klans*, pp. 719 ff.; Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 166 ff.

76. Capus, *Missionsreise*, p. 124; Chrétien, *Le Buha*, pp. 10 ff.; Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, pp. 13—21.



Plate 4. African leaders. Mighty rulers and warlords, such as Merere of Usangu (above, right, in 1877) and Mirambo of Unyamwezi (above, left, in 1882) became widely known because of their raids and conquests and their contacts with the Europeans. Hundreds of lesser and more peaceable kings and chiefs reigned over the societies in the western half of the Tanzanian area. Below, and unidentified Sukuma chief in Bukumbi with his wives in 1890.





slaves,<sup>77</sup> and a smaller kingdom, Ugweni of North Pare, met the same fate.<sup>78</sup> In Ufipa, the two Twa states Lyangalile and Nkansi grew from the original kingdom of Milansi possibly sometime in the mid-18th century. They survived the unrest beginning with the Ngoni occupation in the 1840s and were on the way to recovery toward the end of the 1880s.<sup>79</sup>

But along with the break-up of certain polities in the Tanzanian area there emerged in the latter half of the 19th century an opposite trend of unification. While it was centrally governed kingdoms that became subject to disintegration, unification took place among the administratively less complicated chiefdoms and kin-based polities. The best known of the unifying chiefs was Mirambo. From modest origins he created with his ruga ruga warriors a large union of chiefdoms in Unyamwezi. Because of the geographically central position of his realm Mirambo frequently came into contact with Europeans. Many of them found him congenial, and he was much romanticized later on. In reality his 'empire' was based to a great extent on violence, and it split up almost immediately when the chief himself died in 1884.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps more skilled than Mirambo as state-builder was another Nyamwezi chief, Nyungu-ya-Mawe. With his own ruga ruga troops he conquered a large number of Kimbu chiefdoms weakened by famine, combined them in larger sub-units and placed his own *watwaale* representatives at the head of each. This structure outlived Nyungu himself, and collapsed only after the German colonial conquest.<sup>81</sup> Unification of chiefdoms took place not only in Unyamwezi and Ukimbu but also further south. The clans and lineages later known as 'Sangu' formed a common political unit before the mid-19th century and dominated the caravan routes of the area for some time.<sup>82</sup> After the

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77. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, pp. 274—275, 377—378; Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 168 ff.; idem, *Shambaa*, pp. 10—11.

78. Kimambo, *Political History*, ch. 8; idem, *Pare*, pp. 28—31.

79. Willis, *State*, esp. ch. 12.

80. Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 296; Bennett, *Mirambo*, passim; Kabeya, *Mirambo*, passim.

81. Shorter, *Chiefship*, ch. 8; idem, 'The Kimbu', in Roberts, ed., *Tanzania before 1900*, pp. 109—112.

82. Wright, Chief Merere, pp. 41—42; Shorter, *Chiefship*, pp. 245—249.

'Sangu', the next to be united under the same political leadership were the 'River Bena', ethnically very close to the Sangu.<sup>83</sup> Towards the end of the century the Hehe consolidated into the strongest political unit of the southern highlands under Munyigumba and his son Mkwawa, and their obstinate resistance to German rule raised them to unparalleled fame.<sup>84</sup> On Kilimanjaro a definite trend towards consolidation of smaller political units into larger ones emerged in the 19th century. Some chiefdoms rose above others if only temporarily.<sup>85</sup> Unification of kin-based polities is known to have taken place also among the Zigua. A few major chieftains, referred to as *Mazumbe*, emerged one or two generations before the colonial conquest. Within their spheres of authority they had several headmen of villages, or *Majumbe*, who had developed along with the regional chiefs.<sup>86</sup> It is tempting to assume that the chiefs among other matrilineal peoples such as the Zaramo and Sagara, to be discussed below, were of equally recent origin, but direct evidence is lacking.

The intriguing thing is that both the break-up and unification of polities appear to have been greatly influenced by the same exogenous factor — long-distance trade. But the impact of trade should perhaps not be stressed too much and, most importantly, it must not be assumed to have been direct. Trade-related factors worked through local political and social structures and a considerable part of the explanation must be sought in the special nature of African polities discussed in this chapter. In many cases of disintegration trade merely stirred up previously existing succession disputes or other internally-generated contradictions. In cases of unification trade provided ambitious chiefs with new opportunities to accumulate wealth which could be used for the creation of new social relations and enlargement of the polity. In both disintegration and unification, the main beneficiaries were as a rule traditionally minor but personally able and ambitious leaders or enterprising commoners who exploited the need of

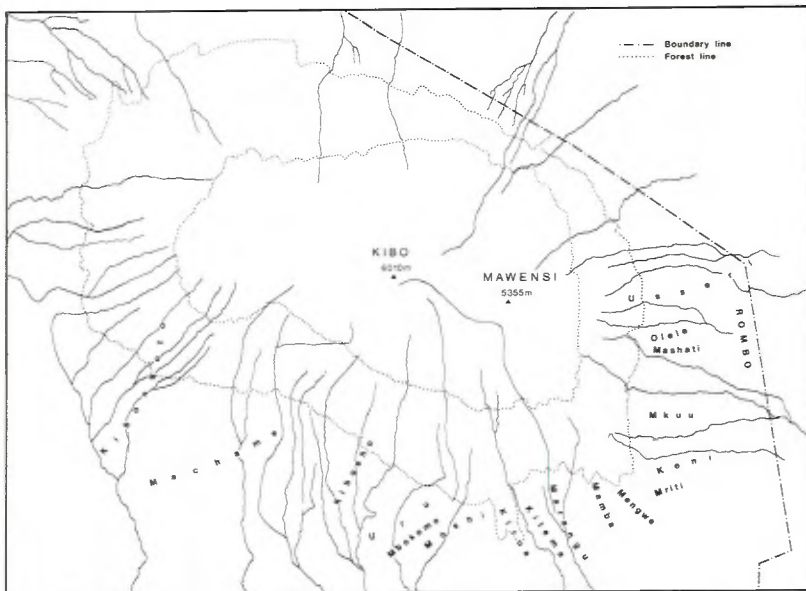
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83. Culwick and Culwick, *Ubona*, pp. 20 ff.

84. Redmayne, Hehe, pp. 42 ff.; idem, Mkwawa, pp. 409—436.

85. Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, p. 13 and passim; fn. 92 below in this chapter.

86. Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, esp. pp. 170—171; Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 297.



Map 11. Main chiefdoms on Kilimanjaro, ca 1890.

coastal traders to find allies in the interior. While there is no denying that both kinds of processes were much hastened by firearms supplied by merchants to their African allies, it is also arguable that the changes were based ultimately not on violence or new wealth as such but on the increased possibilities for the manipulation of existing political and social relations brought about by the new resources.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, the close bond between secular and ritual power was observed not only in 'traditional' kingdoms and chiefdoms, but also in the great confederations of chiefdoms and the new chiefdoms in the 19th century, in the creation and preservation of which violence was instrumental. As Iliffe says, "successful nineteenth-century chiefs

87. Cf. Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 194—195 on the new Zigua chiefs: "The path to power was not the creation of states, but the manipulation of existing relationships of patronage and dependency."

controlled guns *and* rain.”<sup>88</sup>

Nor did caravan trade automatically lead to political processes of unification or disintegration. In most of western and central Tanzania the chiefdom remained the basic type of political organization throughout the 19th century. This was true even in Nyamwezi which included such vast but shapeless units as the ‘empires’ of Mirambo and Nyungu in which the influence of the chiefs extended through military expeditions over hundreds of kilometres from the centre of their realms.<sup>89</sup> Many important Nyamwezi chiefdoms, in particular Unyanyembe where Tabora was situated, remained outside them. In addition, several chiefdoms in northern Nyamwezi experienced a degree of disintegration when lower-level headmen seized the opportunities of trade and made themselves virtually independent of the chief.<sup>90</sup> Elsewhere, few large confederations of chiefdoms developed, Mahenge being one of them.<sup>91</sup> On Kilimanjaro, the Chagga were still divided into 30-odd chiefdoms in the early colonial period.<sup>92</sup> In Ugogo and Sukumaland the reports of late precolonial travellers are full of complaints that caravans were obliged to pay *hongo*, or road dues, to one “petty chief” after another, which implies a good number of small chiefdoms.<sup>93</sup> Political units prevailing in Bunyakusa looked fairly similar but may in fact have been more fluid in territory and internal government.<sup>94</sup> Chiefdom-like polities were also found among smaller peoples living between Lakes

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88. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 53 (quotation), 62. See also Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 314.

89. For borders of ‘spheres of influence’ of Mirambo and Nyungu see e.g. Bennett, *Mirambo*, pp. 131 ff., 160 ff.; Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 313.

90. Abrahams, *Political Organisation*, pp. 42–44.

91. Larson, Mbunga Confederacy, *passim*.

92. Widenmann, Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung, pp. 2–3 says there were 37 chiefdoms in 1899; according to Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 1, the number was 31 or 32 in the early 1900s.

93. E.g. Henry M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa*, II. New York, 1890, p. 443; *A l’assaut*, pp. 129, 242.

94. Cf. Charsley, *Princes*, esp. ch. 3; M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, pp. 8 ff; Wright, Nyakusa Cults, esp. p. 154.



Nyasa and Tanganyika,<sup>95</sup> in societies east of Victoria Nyanza except on the shore itself, where political units were perhaps even more decentralized<sup>96</sup> and in those parts of the Tanganyika shore which did not belong to the interlake or Fipa systems of kingdoms.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, when European colonialism began all kingdoms and most chiefdoms in the Tanzanian area were of medium to small size, and the same cultural area usually included several of them. Exactly how large these societies were is no longer ascertainable, but leaving aside the shaky 'empires' of war-lords like Mirambo and Nyungu, whose frontiers cannot be determined, the numbers of inhabitants in the largest of them could hardly have exceeded two hundred thousand. The population of Karagwe was estimated by a German colonial conqueror at 150 000 and that of the Haya states at 200 000 altogether.<sup>98</sup> The Shambaa kingdom may have had more than 100 000 inhabitants. As a rule the population of Tanzanian societies, however, must have been calculable in tens of thousands and thousands or even in hundreds.<sup>99</sup> The Nyakusa chiefdoms contained from 100 to 300 adult men in the 1930s. Monica Wilson thinks that the smallest south-western chiefdoms

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95. M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, pp. 7, 47 (general), 44 (Kinga); Beverly Brock, 'The Nyiha of Mbozi', *TNR*, 65 (1966), p. 4; Chief Chipasinya, 'The History of the Nyamwanga', ed. Fr Gieringer, *TNR*, 75 (1974), pp. 37—47.

96. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 202; Schlobach, 'Die Volkstämme der deutschen Ostküste der Victoria-Nyansa', *MDS*, 1901, pp. 188—189; 'Einem Berichte des Lieutenants D. R. Meyer über seine Expedition nach Kavirondo', *DKB*, 1893, p. 518; M. J. Ruel, Kuria Generation Classes, *Africa*, 32 (1962), pp. 15—17; Otto Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes of the Zanaki (Tanzania)*. Freiburg, Sw., 1972, pp. 9—18.

97. Hore, *Tanganyika*, pp. 154—158; Avon, 'Vie sociale des Wabende au Tanganika', *Anthropos*, 10—11 (1915—1916), pp. 103—104; Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, pp. 58 ff.

98. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 712.

99. Monica Wilson suggests that the Fipa and Hehe kingdoms included between 50 000 and 300 000 people at the height of their power, but evidence is lacking and the higher figure at least seems rather improbable. M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, p. 54.

embraced some 500 inhabitants.<sup>100</sup> Early missionaries estimated that Unyamwezi and Usumbwa had between them some 250 000 inhabitants divided in 150 chiefdoms in 1891. According to Roberts, many traditional chiefdoms in Western Tanzania can never have comprised more than a thousand people, and many were much less than a thousand square miles in area. Burton thought that the authority of a Nyamwezi chief never extended "beyond five marches."<sup>101</sup>

There were also peoples who were not organized in kingdoms or chiefdoms but among whom the polities remained smaller if by no means non-existent or unchanging. In the first place this was the case among matrilineal peoples of the east and south-east with some of their patrilineal neighbours, and in the second among peoples of the 'area without a river outlet', whether matri- or patrilineal. It was related that eastern matrilineal peoples were traditionally composed of matrilineal living together with followers linked to them in various ways, and the only authority higher than the head of a clan or village chieftain was sometimes a well-known rainmaker without claims to any other kind of power.<sup>102</sup> This basic pattern was in several respects modified, however. The Zaramo lived in villages or in units formed of small villages in groups. They were headed by *jumbe* or *pazi*, and some of the latter might have gained recognition for powers over a wider area.<sup>103</sup> Among the neighbouring peoples power relationships were

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100. G. Wilson, Nyakusa, p. 283; M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, p. 54.

101. Nolan, *Great Lakes*, p. 27; Roberts, Nyamwezi Trade, p. 42; Burton, Lake Regions, p. 169. Cf. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, pp. 16—17 who states that among the Nyamwezi sultanates or kingdoms may comprise anything from 2 000 to more than 100 000 inhabitants.

102. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. xiii-xiv; idem, 'Chiefship in Ukagugu: The Invention of Ethnicity and Tradition in Kaguru Colonial History', *IJAHS*, 11 (1978), pp. 229—230; Roland Young and Henry Fosbrooke, *Smoke in the Hills*. Evanston, 1960, pp. 41—42 (Luguru).

103. Mwaruka, *Masimulizi juu*, ch. 1; Carl Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen der Suaheli*. Göttingen, 1901, pp. 226 ff.; Eugen Krenzler, *Ein Jahr in Ostafrika*. Ulm, 1888, p. 116; Edward Steere, 'A Walk in the Zaramo Country', *UMCA Occasional Papers*, no. 13, p. 14; M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, pp. 98—99.

not much more consolidated. In Uluguru three rainmakers had established their ritual authority without making the villagers otherwise dependent on their services; in Usagara one chief had risen above the others.<sup>104</sup> In the south-east, at Umakonde and elsewhere polities were again fragmented, being made up of interrelated families living together. But these were from time to time organized into larger bodies for ritual purposes.<sup>105</sup> Among the matrilineal peoples in the Lukuledi valley there were people called 'chiefs' with a following of from 30 to 200 combat-ready men. Among the Ngindo, elders of the clan seemed to be the highest leaders, and among the Rujifi peoples most villages were reported to have been "independent."<sup>106</sup> In the north-central 'non-outlet area' only the Mbugwe, who were matrilineal but patrilocal, were reported to have formed themselves into chiefdoms toward the end of the 19th century. The Sandawe, Isanzu, Iramba, Iraqw and other peoples of the vicinity were without chiefs. Here too only rainmakers, usually of Datoga origin, had influence above the local village or clan unit.<sup>107</sup>

Among the latter type of peoples one should perhaps think of the society on two levels and in two senses: one local and political, the other spatially wider and ritual in nature. 'Political societies' were tiny 'clan-villagedoms', comprising a few hundred people at most in one village or its equivalent, and each ethnicity included a

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104. Young and Fosbrooke, *Smoke*, p. 41 (Uluguru); Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, p. 51 (Sagara).

105. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 48, 68 (general); Liebenow, *Colonial Rule*, pp. 41—42 (Makonde).

106. Antonius Rudel, 'Schaury', *Missions-Blätter*, (1898), p. 38 (matrilineal peoples); A. R. W. Crosse-Upcott, 'The Social Structure of Kingindo-speaking Peoples', Ph. D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1956, pp. 147 ff. (Ngindo); Elton, *Country between Dar-es-Salaam and Kilwa*, BPP, Slave Trade 91, East African Slave Trade, pp. 18 ff. and Beardall, *Exploration*, p. 647 (Rufiji peoples).

107. Baumann, *Durch Masailand*, pp. 187—188, 192, 193; Fonck, 'Bericht über meinen Marsch Mwapwa-Ugogo ...', *MDS*, 7 (1894), p. 292; Eric Ten Raa, 'Sandawe Prehistory and the Vernacular Tradition', *Azania*, 4 (1969), p. 97; Otto Reche, *Zur Ethnographie des abflusslosen Gebietes Deutsch-Ostafrikas*. Hamburg, 1914, p. 85; Jürgen Schultz, *Agrarländische Veränderungen in Tanzania*. Munich, 1971, pp. 87—88; references in fn. 63 above in this chapter.

multitude of them. Beidelman, for instance, suggests that there were over a hundred "petty polities," based on clans, in what is now Ukaguru and the "clan areas" were from two to twenty miles square.<sup>108</sup> But it appears that the idea of the possibility of wider territorial powers was unknown in few places if any; it was merely expressed in rituals, not as yet turned into political capital.

The discussion so far has been confined to agricultural societies; the polities and societies of pastoralists, not to speak of hunter-gatherers, were different. No wonder: the latter had an economy and religion quite different from those of the cultivators. They were not settled but mobile and they did not turn to spirits of ancestors but to a high god.<sup>109</sup> Yet the pastoralists had their own ritual leaders and rainmakers, called in the modern literature 'prophets', who communicated not with ancestors but directly with god. The wide ritual power of the Datoga prophets, extending over various neighbouring ethnicities, has been mentioned above; as suggested, it probably stemmed from their position as descendants of the earliest known inhabitants of much of north central Tanzania. Early accounts of the Datoga political system are rather garbled, however, and it is not easy to get a coherent picture of it. They seem to have been divided into several sub-groups, each with fairly specific territory, and into smaller groups based on clanship. The importance of the prophets lay then in the organization of interrelations between the sub-groups.<sup>110</sup> The other major pastoral people of East Africa, the Maasai, came into livelier contact with the intruding Europeans and consequently more is known about their systems of thinking and living. As noted above, they did not form a distinct tribe either but were, like the Datoga, a conglomeration of several sub-groups or 'divisions' (*oloshos*), each independent of the others with its own autonomous political structure and operational area.<sup>111</sup> But in the social and political

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108. Beidelman, *Chiefship in Ukaguru*, p. 230.

109. For earliest sources on pastoralist religions, see Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 163 (Maasai), 173 (Datoga) and Merker, *Masai*, pp. 203—211.

110. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 173; Tomikawa, *Locality Groups*, pp. 217—218; George J. Klima, *The Barabaig*. New York, 1970, pp. 79—81.

111. Jacobs, *Historical Perspective*, p. 414.



organization, clanship was less and age system more important than among the Datoga. The Maasai prophets were called *laibon*; in addition to making rain they performed divinations, administered war charms and prophesized forthcoming events (the latter, *inter alia*, by such means as getting intoxicated with honey beer). Their importance increased in the 19th century and some of them gained recognition over a wide area; the most powerful of all was the last great *laibon* before colonialism, Mbatiany, who united the predominantly Tanzanian Purko-Kisonko Maasai during the inter-Maasai wars in the late 19th century. He was often taken by Europeans as the paramount chief of the Maasai, but it seems that his extraordinary position was mostly due to his vigorous personality and the unsettled conditions of those troubled times.<sup>112</sup> While some similarity can be detected between the pastoral political organization and that of the 'chiefless' cultivators, the pastoral sub-groups seem to have always been much larger than the tiny agricultural 'villagedoms'. Smaller Maasai *oloshos* included thousands of people and larger ones probably tens of thousands.<sup>113</sup>

## Kinship and territory

It is often suggested that the internal relations within African societies were dominated by kinship. Societies like those of precolonial Tanzania are seen as composed of kinship groups and thus based on kinship relations. According to this view kinship, in particular in the sense of descent, i.e. kinship reckoned lineally from a common ancestor, functioned as a most important basis of social and political organization in 'pre-modern' Tanzania. Many

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112. Merker, *Masai*, pp. 67 ff.; Jacobs, *Traditional Political Organization*, pp. 73 ff., 309 ff.; Waller, *Lords*, pp. 192 ff.; A. C. Hollis, *The Masai*. Oxford, 1905, pp. 324—325; John L. Berntsen, 'Maasai Age-sets and Prophetic Leadership: 1850—1910', *Africa*, 49 (1979), pp. 133—146.

113. See Jacobs, *Historical Perspective*, p. 414 but note that his figures originate from the 1960s.

historians of Africa have taken over from social anthropologists the idea that what are called unilineal descent groups, 'clans' or 'lineages', can be seen as the key building blocks of African societies. These groups could be either patrilineal, composed of descendants of a male ancestor by male links, or matrilineal (from a female or male ancestor by female links). In any event, their distinguishing character is seen in their demarcation and separateness: the boundaries between members and non-members were clearly delineated. Because of this quality, it was argued, these groups could become 'corporate' and be endowed with effective jural and political functions.<sup>114</sup>

Looking at the Tanzania data it can hardly be doubted that kinship and descent loomed large in precolonial social and political organization and thinking. "However these small communities may have arisen, they consist of a number of descent groups," Ankermann wrote on the basis of ethnographic knowledge collected by the Germans. "These descent groups are found everywhere as the foundation of social organization and in some tribes, such as the Makonde, as its only form."<sup>115</sup> Later oral historians have unearthed evidence of the crucial role of descent groups even in several of the socially or politically more sophisticated societies. In the coastal Swahili towns peoples identified themselves primarily with patrilineal descent groups

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114. The most brilliant and influential proponent of these views was A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. See his 'Introduction', pp. 1—85 in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, eds, *African System of Kinship and Marriage*. London, 1975 (1st ed. 1950) and 'Patrilineal and Matrilineal Succession' and 'The Study of Kinship Systems', pp. 32—89 in his *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. London, 1979 (1st ed. 1953). Similar views have been advanced in French Marxist anthropology, see e.g. P.-P. Rey, 'The Lineage Mode of Production', *Critique of Anthropology*, 3 (1975), pp. 27—79 (original manuscript in French in 1968) and Seddon, ed., *Relations of Production*. For their adaptation to African history see Curtin et al., *African History*, pp. 83, 157, 158—59.

115. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 6. In common German usage, Ankermann used the term 'Sippe' to denote any sort of descent group. The direct English translation 'sib' would change the meaning and we have translated it as 'descent group'.

called *kabila* or *taifa*.<sup>116</sup> In West Usambara the “constituent parts of the kingdom, the actors who together made up the collectivity, were not individuals; they were patrilineal descent groups,” Feierman writes.<sup>117</sup> In Bukerebe Hartwig found that “each individual’s identity was determined by his membership within a particular clan. For all practical purposes, each clan was a self-sufficient economic, social and political unit.”<sup>118</sup> Both European colonial researchers and later Tanzanian historians assert that the clan structure of the Haya continued to co-exist with and came to function as an administrative part of the new heavily centralized political system.<sup>119</sup> On Kilimanjaro the Chagga chiefdoms were “composed of independent descent groups.”<sup>120</sup> In the politically more decentralized societies the evidence is more scattered, but it can be safely assumed that the importance of the descent groups was still greater. Among the south-eastern matrilineal peoples “importance was based on the clan.”<sup>121</sup> The precolonial Kaguru were reported to have been “organized about matrilineages, which in turn composed clans. Paternal kin were of secondary, supplementary importance.”<sup>122</sup> The same was undoubtedly true of the rest of the eastern matrilineal peoples and among the more decentralized patrilineal peoples. In the core areas of Upangwa the *uloxolo* patrilineage was still thought of as the “basic social unit”

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116. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, pp. 76, 78—79. In present-day Kiswahili these concepts are translated as ‘tribe’ and ‘nation’ respectively, but it is clear from Pouwels’ account that precolonial descent groups were of smaller size.

117. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 31.

118. Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 114.

119. Hans Cory and Mary Hartnoll, *Customary Law of the Haya Tribe*. London, 1971 (1st ed. 1945), pp. 262 ff.; Kaijage, Kyamutwara, p. 556; Ishumi, Kingdom of Kiziba, p. 723.

120. Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 1. Also Gutmann used the term ‘Sippe’, translated here as ‘descent group’. For difficulties in the interpretation of Gutmann’s terminology and for his views of kinship in general, see J. C. Winter, *Bruno Gutmann. 1876—1966*. Oxford, 1979, esp. pp. 15—19, 111—114.

121. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, p. 46.

122. T. O. Beidelman, *Moral Imagination in Kaguru Modes of Thought*. Bloomington, 1986, p. 42.

in the 1960s.<sup>123</sup>

However, this does not imply the absence of territoriality, even if societies based on kinship are sometimes contrasted, in social and political theory, with societies which are based on sharing a common territory. From Tanzanian sources we can readily find evidence to support the assumption that the idea of territoriality was in fact widespread in the late precolonial period. To be sure, there is considerable disagreement as to where territoriality begins, conceptually and historically. Whereas some scholars, such as Austen, propose that its development in Western Tanzania took place only with the growth of caravan trade, others, such as Roberts, think that "territorial chieftainship ... has been present in the region since at least the seventeenth century."<sup>124</sup> But its presence at the end of the 19th century cannot be doubted. Some scattered observations suggest that villages — or other spatially organized units — the inhabitants of which were not necessarily of the same kin played an important part in the administration of many chiefdoms and kingdoms.<sup>125</sup> Even if the frontiers between precolonial societies were vague, often resembling border zones or regions rather than being clear-cut lines of demarcation,<sup>126</sup> they were not lacking. Areas of settlement were as a rule separated by uninhabited wildernesses which, however, were not the frontiers. "In the midst of such a wilderness it is extraordinary how often the natives can state precisely where the area of one or another tribe nominally begins," reported the German physician Dr Fülleborn

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123. Hans Stirnimann, *Die Pangwa von SW.-Tansania. Soziale Organisation und Riten des Lebens*. Freiburg, Sw., 1979, p. 57; cf. p. 52. See also Ankermann on the Makonde, fn. 115 above.

124. Ralph Austen, 'Ntemship, Trade and State-Building: Political Development among the Western Bantu of Tanzania', in Daniel F. McCall et al., eds, *Eastern African History*. New York, 1969, pp. 141—142; Holmes and Austen, *Pre-Colonial Sukuma*, p. 389 and Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, p. 42.

125. A *l'assaut*, p. 239 (Sukuma); E. J. Southon, 'Notes of a Journey through Northern Ugogo ...', *PRGS*, 3 (1881), esp. p. 549 (Gogo); Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, p. 17, fn. 10 (Ha).

126. For a discussion of different types of boundaries, see A. I. Asiwaju, 'The Concept of Frontier in the Setting of States in Precolonial Africa', *Présence Africaine*, 127—128 (1983), pp. 43—49.



from the southern part of the country where polities and societies were usually very small.<sup>127</sup> Shorter explains that the Kimbu “chief’s authority extends to forest as much as to village. The chiefdom is more or less precisely de-limited by a series of hills, steppes and other well-known landmarks which serve as boundaries.”<sup>128</sup> Bishop Steere believed that there was no “such thing as No Man’s land ... in Central Africa.”<sup>129</sup>

The nature and functions of precolonial African territoriality are not easy to determine. That it must have differed crucially from the territoriality of modern European-based states is strongly suggested by the fluidity of the existing frontiers and the ease by which the societies were fragmented, unified and reunified. The fluidity of frontiers was reported even from the most established traditional kingdoms in the interlacustrine area;<sup>130</sup> the processes of fragmentation and unification should be evident from the above discussion. This, plainly, is an area which still needs a great deal of thought and empirical research, and I venture to propose only a tentative hypothesis. I suggest that a major difference in this respect can be understood to be that in African precolonial conditions the territory of a society had to be symbolically ‘created’ and recreated, whereas in the modern state territory is among the basic constants that can be taken for granted.

A clue to this suggestion comes from Robert Thornton’s study of the Iraqw. He argues that “territory and space are ... cultural and conceptual phenomena” and territory becomes ‘political’ after it is conceptually shared by the members of the society. Only then can it be used to define the limit or locus of the use of resources. The Iraqw stated explicitly that they “‘make’ or ‘create’ their land” and the scholar found this being done by means of cultural appropriation — through naming natural objects and ritually controlling and manipulating them.<sup>131</sup> An interesting glimpse of a historical process involving a considerable enlargement of scale in

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127. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 125, fn.

128. Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 100. The time reference of the statement is unclear but it can be taken to apply to the precolonial situation.

129. As quoted by Ranger, *Matola Chiefs*, p. 66.

130. Berger, *Religion and Resistance*, pp. 7, 12.

131. Robert J. Thornton, *Space, Time and Culture among the Iraqw of Tanzania*. New York, 1980, pp. 9, 19, 16—17.

the cultural or social appropriations of nature can be gained from Kimambo's account of the political development of the Pare. He shows how the expansion of the polity was effected through the shift of ritual emphasis from clan- or lineage-based shrines to kingly rain-making shrines.<sup>132</sup> But I suspect that the need for cultural or social creation of space was not due only to conditions of pioneer settlement and abundance of land, but also to more universal mechanisms of political and social control in preliterate societies. Rainmaking, and many other public rituals, had a distinctly territorial dimension; they can be seen, among other things, as means for the definition and redefinition of the area over which the leader concerned claimed some sort of power.

Precolonial kinship was not a simple matter either. The lineage model, in its most simplistic form, has increasingly come under attack during the last decade or two. A number of points have been raised to question its overall validity.<sup>133</sup> To oversimplify a little one can say that even if the prominence of kinship categories in the minds of the people has not been seriously questioned, grave doubts have been expressed as to the presumed nature and functions of the descent groups. One thing which has emerged clearly from the discussion is the social nature of kinship. Although kinship is obviously to a great extent based on 'blood', i.e. biological relations, it can never be reduced to them. Kinship is always also a socially determined relation. Kinship does not depend on biological facts alone but on social definitions as well, and the latter change when societies change.<sup>134</sup> This applies in Africa as elsewhere. An obvious example is adaptation, a social act which establishes a kinship relation.<sup>135</sup> Equally important if not quite so obvious is the fact that many relations which are

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132. Kimambo, *Political History*, chs 5 and 6; idem, Pare, p. 19; idem and C. K. Omari, 'The Development of Religious Thought and Centres among the Pare', in Ranger and Kimambo, eds, *African Religion*, pp. 111—121.

133. See e.g. Jane Guyer, 'Household and Community in African Studies', *ASR*, 24 (1981), esp. pp. 89—97 and Michel Verdon, 'Descent: An Operational View', *Man*, 15 (1980), pp. 129—150.

134. Cf. Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*. Harmondsworth, 1981 (1st ed. 1967), pp. 33—35, 18.

135. As noted by Radcliffe-Brown, Introduction, p. 4.

biological are given different social weights and functions in different kinship systems. Thus, a 'kinship system' is always a part of the social structure. From this it follows that kinship groups cannot be based exclusively on either biological or social relations but must combine both. Kinship is also a powerful idiom, a way of speaking.

This leads to further questions about the structure of African descent groups and the degree of their 'corporateness': First, how were the African descent groups made up? Second, were they really of such a permanent and stable nature and did they function as independently in social life as the model suggests? And when one looks at precolonial Tanzanian descent groups it becomes evident that they were much more complicated than the simple genealogical charts of anthropological textbooks would lead one to believe. To begin with, the structure of descent groups was not static but constantly changing. New groups segmented off while old ones withered away. Moreover, descent groups varied in depth and extent, and their functions varied correspondingly. This is difficult enough in itself and the problem is compounded by the inability of standard anthropological terminology, loosely taken over by historians, to capture the infinite variations. Anthropologists are used to making a distinction between 'clan' and 'lineage', but the actual meaning of these terms is usually not very clear. The use of the terms has been extremely loose. Theoretical definitions are not uncontested<sup>136</sup> and they have frequently been modified. As a result, when reference to a 'clan' or 'lineage' is made it is rarely clear what actual group is indicated. The introduction of auxiliary concepts such as 'sub-clans' and the division of lineages into 'maximal', 'minimal', etc. has provided a way out for individual researchers, but for a general understanding of African descent groups this practice may have been more confusing than clarifying.

The terminological confusion no doubt reflects the fact that most peoples in Tanzania or elsewhere did not make such fine

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136. Most Africanists follow Radcliffe-Brown, who proposed the term clan for a group whose ancestor is a largely mythical figure and the term lineage for a group whose ancestor is at least supposedly known, *ibid.*, pp. 39—40.

distinctions in their own speech, while the genealogical depth of the effective descent groups undoubtedly varied. From the sources it is clear that in the Tanzanian area there was variation not only between peoples but between group functions within the same people. To take an obvious example, the groups ultimately regulating marriage through the rule of exogamy (often but not always called clan in the literature) seem to have been in most cases considerably larger than the groups controlling land use (often but not always called lineage) or paying indemnities.<sup>137</sup> This suggests that the attempt to find a single corporate descent group which can be pinpointed as the basic cell or building block of the social structure of African precolonial societies is doomed from the outset. Rather there was a multitude of descent groups of varying genealogical depth and extent with correspondingly varying functions. One always has to look at the functioning of different groups in different contexts. In the present study I have been content as a rule to take the broad category of 'descent group' as denoting clans and lineages of any order without taking an *a priori* stand as to their functions or degree of corporateness.

Another problem is the fact that not all Tanzanian, or more generally African, kinship systems were wholly unilineal in a mutually exclusive manner. Some were patrilineal in certain aspects and matrilineal in others. This was most pronounced in societies where succession to the highest political office was matrilineal even though most other institutions were patrilineal. This was the case in most Sukuma, Nyamwezi and Kimbu chiefdoms.<sup>138</sup> However, it is not possible to infer from the sources whether these really were what anthropologists call double descent systems or, which is more likely, whether it was a question of 'complementary filiation', i.e. reckoning the complementary

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137. Below, ch. 7, pp. 272—273 and ch. 8, pp. 310—313. See also e.g. Feerman, *Concepts*, pp. 62, 87 (Shambaa) and Schneider, *Wahi Wanyaturu*, pp. 39 ff. (Nyaturu).

138. Cory, *Indigenous Political System*, p. 4 and Corlien Varkevisser, 'Sukuma Political History ...', *Tropical Man*, 4 (1971), pp. 87—89 (Sukuma); Paul Reichard, 'Die Wanjamuesi', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, 25 (1889), p. 255 and Abrahams, *Political Organization*, p. 33 (Nyamwezi); Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 114 (Kimbu).



kinship links not through the long line of descent but deriving them from the other immediate parent.<sup>139</sup> To make the picture still more varied, a few societies had kinship systems that were based not on the descent principle at all but rather on 'cognatic' reckoning, the recognition of links of kinship through both males and females, as in most European kinship systems. Such cognatic kinship systems were found mainly in the troubled south-western parts of the country, for example among the Fipa, Ndendeuli and River Bena. But most of our sources are retrospective<sup>140</sup> and there are indications that also the indigenous south-western peoples may earlier have had a more unilineal kinship organization.<sup>141</sup>

The above discussion warns us against regarding precolonial Tanzanian societies simply as 'kinship societies'. The idea of territoriality was surely present and the nature of kinship was more complicated and socially conditioned than it may appear. However, I cannot see that the acknowledgement of the social nature of kinship, the absence of a single basic descent group-cell, or the great number and malleability of the groups can demolish the notion of the importance of descent groups in the structure of precolonial societies. Descent groups, defined as groups of any depth formed according to the reckoning of kinship along genealogical lines, were surely operating in the societies, and they were not merely the sum of their members. They can even be called corporate in the sense that they were permanent in time and had a life of their own. Thanks to their boundedness and permanence

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139. Thus, in a patrilineal system a man gains his descent-group status from his father, but he is his mother's child and has a 'complementary' kinship relationship with his mother's agnates. See Meyer Fortes, 'The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups', reprinted in idem, *Time and Social Structure*. London, 1970, pp. 67—95 and Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, pp. 131—133.

140. Willis, *State*, pp. 129—142; P. H. Gulliver, *Neighbours and Networks. The Idiom of Kinship in Social Action among the Ndendeuli of Tanzania*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1971, passim. See esp. his theoretical discussion, pp. 4 ff.; Culwick and Culwick, *Ubena*, pp. 186—187.

141. See Joseph T. Callagher, 'Kinship among the Original Ndendeuli of Southwestern Tanzania', *TJH*, 3 (1973), pp. 146—152.

they were able to assume some key political and jural functions. Above all they functioned as the basic units of accumulation and insurance: on the one hand as parties to long-term contracts regulating access to the most vital means of production and reproduction (marriage, land use, transfer of property) and on the other as maintainers of order and rectifiers of wrong deeds, paying units of tributes, fines, debts and indemnities.<sup>142</sup>

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142. For land use and marriage, see below, ch. 7, pp. 271—273 and ch. 8, pp. 310—313; for property transfer, e.g. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, ch. 5, pp. 270 ff.; for tribute and tribute labour, below, ch. 7, pp. 280—281 and for paying fines, debts and indemnities, e.g. Winans, *Shambala*, pp. 132 ff., esp. p. 140 and Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 34—35 (Shambaa); Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, p. 88 (Chagga); M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, p. 6 (Nyakusa).

## 6. Production: the appropriation of nature

To look at how African societies were functioning in the late precolonial period we must now turn to their productive bases or 'modes of production'. Production, after all, is the human society's way of using nature purposefully in accordance with its own requirements, and in an environment like that of precolonial Tanzania, strongly dominated by nature, the importance of production as the basis and regulator of other activities was unusually obvious. It should be pointed out, however, that my concept of 'mode of production' is quite empirical; I do not give it such a basic epistemological meaning as many Marxists have done. I think Marx himself used the concept in a variety of senses and there is no reason to be limited to one interpretation, namely that of the mode of production as the totality of relations and forces of production.<sup>1</sup> The basic notion of this study is that of society; 'mode of production' refers to the ways and means by which the production required to meet the needs of a society was conducted and organized, i.e. patterns of land cultivation, livestock raising, hunting and handicrafts; the interrelation of different livelihoods; and the way work was arranged and divided. Such a mode of production can be conceived as a whole, but empirically it must be approached from different angles. In this chapter I discuss what I take as the basis of all production: ways of using nature, or 'the mode of the appropriation of nature'. Social aspects of the Tanzanian precolonial modes of production will be taken up in the next chapter.

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1. Cf. Cohen for a discussion of the distinction between three different senses of the notion of mode of production as used by Marx himself, *Marx's Theory of History*, pp. 79—84 and Hindess and Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, p. 9 for the mode of production as "an articulated combination of relations and forces of production structured by the dominance of the relation of production," a definition which many English-speaking Marxists still seem to follow.

# Agriculture

In precolonial Tanzanian societies the principal means of exploiting nature was agriculture; most inhabitants of the region were cultivators. On the face of it, cultivation methods seemed simple. All cultivation systems were based on hand tools and human labour. Even though digging sticks may have been used as additional tools in some places,<sup>2</sup> the basic tool was the hoe. Hoes could be of wood or iron, and their size, shape and quality varied greatly, from the small hand-hoes of the coastal area to the spade-like tools used in some parts of the interior.<sup>3</sup> But they all required a considerable input of human energy. Animal-drawn devices such as the plough were not used in Tanzania or elsewhere in Africa (the highlands of Ethiopia being an important exception).

African cultivation took many different forms, and except for the tools its methods were by no means simple and 'primitive'. The old notion of African agriculturalists as an almost undifferentiated mass of 'shifting cultivators' is currently being replaced, in Tanzania as elsewhere, by an appreciation of the considerable local variations in traditional African agricultural systems. Although there is room for argument on the extent of these variations and their causes, which may have been unplanned and unconscious processes of adaptation or the conscious shaping and manipulation of their natural environment by farmers, the diversity of African agricultural systems can no longer be overlooked.

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2. For scattered references, see Vuorela, *Women's Question*, p. 81 (Kwere); G. and M. Wilson, *Analysis of Social Change*, p. 33 (Nyakusa). Some exceptional peoples like the Sonjo are reported to have relied on digging sticks still in the 1950s, R.F. Gray, *Sonjo*, pp. 36—37.

3. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 396 ff. (general); Adams, *Lindi*, p. 39 (Mwera, small hoes); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 102; Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 122 (Makonde, small); *ibid.*, p. 103 (Ngoni, "giant hoes"). See also below, fn. 77 in this chapter.



## Systems of cultivation: grain-based and banana-based

In order to deal with the diversity and reduce it to manageable proportions I suggest that we take two basic ideal typical agricultural systems as starting-points and regard the real-life situations as their variations. The ideal types were, first, grain cultivation with a long fallow period, and second, banana growing. In reality, grain cultivation systems observed fallow periods of varying lengths, and grains and banana<sup>4</sup> could, and did coexist in different combinations with each other and with other crops. Thus, when I speak of grain-based and banana-based cultivation, I do not mean the absence or presence of certain crops but cultivation systems based on different types of crops. I emphasize this distinction because the two systems, in their 'pure' form, can be conceived as having different origins and implications; they were rooted in different ecological environments. Even if the correlation was far from hundred per cent, grain cultivation with a fallow period was practised in the lowlands and plateaus with moderate rainfall whereas banana was predominantly the crop of well-watered volcanic highlands and other pockets of exceptional soil fertility. However, in view of Tanzanian history, even more important was the difference in implications. Banana-based cultivation was conducive to a more settled way of life than grain growing and allowed the existence of higher population densities. This was because the ways of maintaining the fertility of the land, a major productive force in agriculture, were different in the respective systems.<sup>5</sup> When the fertility of the land decreased, the cultivators of grain, an annual crop, were able to allow the fields lie fallow and to move elsewhere. This naturally presupposed the availability of land which was rarely a limiting factor for cultivation systems in precolonial Tanzania. The banana, being a perennial crop, could not be easily be moved from place to place. Banana cultivators were obliged to make more permanent

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4. I follow the common Africanist usage of overlooking the difference between banana and plantain and speak of both as banana.

5. My reasoning here has been influenced by Dieter Graf, *Produktivkräfte in der Landwirtschaft und der nichtkapitalistische Weg Tansanias*. Berlin (GDR), 1973.

settlements and to develop other means of maintaining soil fertility.

Grain growing with a long fallow period is, of course; the model for proverbial 'shifting cultivation'. This label derives its justification from the fact that land was cultivated as long as it bore fruit and then left to lie fallow for years, perhaps generations, to regain its fertility. Another traditionally popular name for this cultivation is 'slash-and-burn' or 'swidden', as land was generally cleared with the aid of fire. Whatever the most appropriate name, grain cultivation with a fallow period was 'extensive', because the maintenance of the fertility of the cultivated soil was ensured by continuously clearing and bringing new land into cultivation instead of developing more 'intensive' methods of increasing yields. Such extensive cultivation was, in various forms, common in most areas, from near the coast throughout the whole plateau from south to north, and it is often described by early travellers as the only or at least the foremost cultivation system.<sup>6</sup> The descriptions, however, conceal the fact that there indeed were many localized, more or less intensive adaptations of it. One of the merits of Kjekshus' work is to point this out explicitly. However, Kjekshus is on much shakier ground when he goes to the other extreme and asserts that "shifting cultivation — rather than being the system pursued by most East Africans — was probably operated only by a small minority of peasants in precolonial Tanganyika."<sup>7</sup> It obviously boils down to the question of what one regards as 'shifting cultivation', but certainly grain cultivation, with a fallow period of varying length, was the rule over most of the lowland and high plateau areas, where the majority of the population lived.

The systems most closely resembling the idea of 'shifting cultivation' were practised in two large but sparsely-populated ecological regions: the central and south-western *miombo* forests and the south-eastern bushlands and thickets. According to contemporary descriptions, the Makonde in the south-east and many peoples in the Nyasa-Tanganyika corridor in the south-west cultivated their

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6. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 396 (general); Grant, *Walk*, p. 30 (Uzaramo, Usagara, Ugogo); New, *Life, Wanderings*, p. 62 (coast); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 851 (general).

7. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, ch. 2 (quotation p. 27).

fields for only one year before letting them lie fallow.<sup>8</sup> In Ugogo, a cultivation period from three to ten years was reported to have been followed by a long fallow.<sup>9</sup> But later accounts have often proved the early observations very superficial and the actual systems appear now considerably more complicated. The Makonde 'bush fallowing' cycle was far from completed when the first year's crops had been harvested and the plot had been left to regenerate. Land was returned to cultivation after only a few months and planted in two successive years with different, less demanding crop complexes.<sup>10</sup> Another people of whose agriculture we have more detailed information are the Nyiha of the south-east. They practised two extensive but rather different agricultural systems side by side. The one was called *masanso* and was similar to the methods known elsewhere as *citemene*. It involved cutting trees over an area about five times larger than the area to be planted, concentrating the brush and burning it to form a bed of ash. Fields created by such a method were used for two or three years before leaving to regenerate. The other system was known as *nkomanjira*, in which only the area to be planted was cleared; there was no concentration of brush or forming of the ash bed.<sup>11</sup> Also along Lake Tanganyika, later historians have found that even if slash and burn-type agriculture was practised on a plot for one or two years only, the fields were not left fallow immediately after that. They were ridged and cultivated by green manuring for several years.<sup>12</sup>

Ridging of fields was, in fact, one of the most popular methods of

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8. H.F. v. Behr, 'Die Völker zwischen Rufiyi und Rovuma', *MDS*, 6 (1893), p. 77; Lionel Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa*. London, 1898, p. 295.

9. Claus, Wagogo, pp. 16—18.

10. H. Gillman, 'Bush fallowing on the Makonde Plateau', *TNR*, 19 (1945), pp. 37—45. The account is from the colonial period without retrospective ambitions, but while the cultivated crops may well have changed the basic principles are likely to have been the same.

11. Brock, Nyiha of Mbozi, p. 5. See also Kerr-Cross, *Geographical Notes*, p. 287. For descriptions of later *citemene* systems in Zambia, see William Allan, *The African Husbandman*. Edinburgh, London, 1965, pp. 66 ff.

12. Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, pp. 25—26. His sources and time reference are not quite clear.

tillage in Tanzanian precolonial grain cultivation. As the colonial agricultural officer N.V. Rounce noted, ridges made it possible to aerate and weed the light tropical soil without stirring it too much or resorting to the arduous process of digging. The ridge served equally well as a drain under waterlogged conditions, and as a water retainer under dry conditions. And it was a handy method of green manuring, i.e. returning the organic matter from weeds and legumes into the soil.<sup>13</sup> Ridging was practised widely over much of Unyamwezi and Sukumaland, in Mbulu, in the southern highlands and in parts of the south. In Unyamwezi several observers described how men hoed the land into parallel ridges 40–50 cm high at intervals of about one metre, the tops of which were then sown with grain. When the ground was prepared next year for a new crop, the ridges were turned over so that they became the trenches of the next season.<sup>14</sup> According to a later account by the German missionary Blohm, the Nyamwezi used to establish higher ridges on moist ground whereas in drier lands beds of only 20–30 cm were made.<sup>15</sup> In the south, Ngoni and the related Mbunga ('Mahenge') used to ridge their fields in a way which evoked praise from passing travellers. "Nowhere in the whole German East Africa have I seen such well-tilled fields as in the Wangoni and Mahenge land. During the hoeing season, people stand in long rows swinging enormous long-handled hoes with both hands, and throw up ridges about 2 metres wide which are then sown."<sup>16</sup> In the mountains as in Mbulu among the Iraqw and in the southern highlands, for instance among the Nyasa, Nyakusa and Kinga, ridges were often laid along the contours of slopes, where they helped to arrest erosion. Others, like the Pangwa, may have favoured ridging up and down the slope.<sup>17</sup> From a distance the contour ridges looked like terraces, as they were often called in the

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13. N.V. Rounce, *The Agriculture of the Cultivation Steppe*. Cape Town, 1949, pp. 12, 37.

14. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 375–376; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 75; Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, p. 133.

15. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 118.

16. Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 103.

17. Jaeger, *Hochland der Riesenkrater*, pp. 99–100 (Mbulu); Lieber, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 96 (Nyasa); Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, pp. 148–149 and Monica Wilson, *Good Company*. London, 1951, p. 7 (Nyaku-



literature, but in most cases proper terracing was obviously not done.<sup>18</sup> Real terraces were encountered in a few exceptional places such as Ukara, the Iraqw heartland of Kainam, and, in the cultivation of sweet potatoes, parts of South Pare.<sup>19</sup>

Grain-based cultivation systems should not be taken to imply a narrow and monotonous choice of cultivated crops. Grains themselves were varied, and they were combined with many other crops in order to form different mixes. By far the most popular crops were the grains of African origin, varieties of millets and sorghum. By the end of the 19th century maize, an American crop giving higher yields than the traditional African grains, had been established side by side with the millets and sorghum in several parts of the country. However, maize was grown mostly as one among many crops in the annual cycle, "more a delicacy than a staple food."<sup>20</sup> In Uzigua, for instance, it was planted repeatedly during the short and long rains.<sup>21</sup> It had become a staple food only in a few places such as Ubende in the extreme west of the country and Bondei near the eastern coast.<sup>22</sup> Another non-African grain, rice, was widespread in the late 19th century, in particular in the Rufiji delta and along the river up to Mahenge.<sup>23</sup> Several other food

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sa); W. Bornhardt, *Zur Oberflächengestaltung und Geologie Deutsch-Ostafrikas*. Berlin, 1900, pp. 82, 326 (Kinga); Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 68 ff., esp. pp. 73—74 (Pangwa).

18. For a discussion on this point, see J.E.G. Sutton, ' "Ancient Civilizations" and Modern Agricultural Systems in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania', *Azania*, 4 (1969), pp. 1—13.

19. Below, p. 235 (Ukara); D. Sturdy, 'Agricultural Notes', *TNR*, 1 (1936), p. 54 (Iraqw); Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 228; Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, p. 152; Kimambo, *Political History*, p. 30 (Pare); J.E.G. Sutton, *The Archaeology of the Western Highlands of Kenya*. Nairobi, 1973, pp. 68—70 (general).

20. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 399, 401—402, 404—405; Grant, *Walk*, p. 30; Krapf, *Reisen*, II, pp. 112, 114; Speke, *Journal*, p. 89; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 378; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 851 (quotation).

21. Gblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 72—73.

22. Avon, *Vie sociale*, p. 98; Farler, *Usambara Country*, p. 92.

23. J.P. Greenway, 'Origins of Some East African Food Plants', *The East African Agricultural Journal* (hereafter *EAAJ*), 10 (1945), p. 251; Stanley, 23 October 1874, in *Dispatches*, p. 145; Beardall, *Exploration*, p. 646; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 189.

crops were commonly combined with grains, both root or ground crops, often of American origin, such as cassava and sweet potato, or legumes, such as several type of pea or bean. In a few places, as in parts of Buzinza, Uzaramo and Udigo, cassava had replaced the older food crops as staple food.<sup>24</sup> Groundnut was a major crop on the eastern side of Lake Nyanza and in many parts of Sukumaland and Unyamwezi.<sup>25</sup> Another locally popular oil crop was sesame, cultivated on the coast also for export.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, precolonial agriculture was not confined to producing food. Crops were cultivated for other purposes as well, for example to serve as stimulants as in the case of tobacco and cannabis. Tobacco was among the more widespread crops in the country. Although cultivated mainly for home use — to be chewed, sniffed and smoked — it was also widely traded in some regions.<sup>27</sup> Cannabis was more rare. Encountered mainly along the central and southern caravan routes and in the western half of the country, it was cultivated for its oil and flavour as a spice but mainly for smoking in water pipes.<sup>28</sup>

For reasons not difficult to appreciate, it is hard to find quantitative evidence of the incidence of various crops in the precolonial agricultural systems of the Tanzanian area. The only example I have come across is from Unyamwezi in the 1880s, where Reichard reported the following crop mix: 60 % sorghum, 18 %

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24. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 211; Krenzler, *Ein Jahr*, p. 119; Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 149.

25. *A l'assaut*, p. 240; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 55, 198.

26. Decken, *Reisen*, I, p. 46.

27. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 404—405 (general); Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 385 (Nyamwezi); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 156 ff. (south); F. v. Luschan in C. Waldemar Werther, *Die mittleren Hochländer des nördlichen Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Berlin, 1898, pp. 338—339, 354, 361, 369 (north-central parts); Warburg, *Kulturpflanzen*, pp. 183 ff.; above p. 108.

28. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 79, fn. and Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 831 (general); Steere in Rowley, *Twenty Years*, p. 240 (Yao, traded); Stirnemann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 64, 99 (Pangwa, for oil, spice and ritual purposes); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 167 (Safwa, smoked); Reichard, *Wanjamuesi*, pp. 328 ff. (Nyamwezi, smoked); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 135 (Bukerebe, smoked), 146 (Sukumaland).

maize, 8 % groundnuts, 7 % legumes, 5 % sweet potatoes, 2 % rice.<sup>29</sup> Even this synchronic cross-cut can be taken as suggestive only, because two indigenous agricultural practices made it impossible to tell the exact area devoted to different crops. First was intercropping. In the Tanzanian agricultural systems very few, if any, crops were planted 'pure', on their own; rather, several different species or different varieties of the same species were planted simultaneously on the same plot. This practice can be regarded as one of the major inventions in African agricultural methods. It was praised by the more insightful colonial agricultural researchers, and a modern student, Paul Richards, has proclaimed intercropping as "one of the great glories of African science" that was "to African agriculture as polyrhythmic drumming is to African music and carving to African art." It indeed provided a number of benefits. The greater shade created by the greater number of plants reduced the exposure of the soil to sun and rainfall and thus to the danger to erosion. In a world without pesticides the spread of pests and diseases was minimized because neighbouring plants were not likely to be of the same species. As different plants had different but complementary requirements the use of available soil moisture and nutrients was maximized.<sup>30</sup> Intercropping was complemented by another sound indigenous agricultural practice, the cyclic rotation of cultivated plants. Crops, or mixes of crops, were planted and reaped in succession one after another. This took place not only within one year of cultivation but also within the whole period of fertility of the plot. The cultivation of a new plot was started, for instance, with legumes or roots. After them grains needing fertile soils, such as maize and millets, were grown for a few years, either simultaneously or in succession with legumes. When the fertility of the plot declined grains were shifted elsewhere and replaced with less demanding roots like cassava before the land was left to lie fallow.<sup>31</sup>

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29. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 384.

30. H.L. Hammerstein, 'Die Landwirtschaft der Eingeborenen Afrikas', *Beihefte zum Tropenpflanzer*, 22 (1919), 2/3, p. 53, as quoted in Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 67; Richards, *Politics of African*

31. For examples of different kinds of cultivation cycles, see Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 372 ff. and Rounce, *Cultivation Steppe*, p. 10

Although methods such as ridging and the green manuring which was an integral part of it, intercropping and cyclic rotation of crops did not obliterate the need to shift fields, they made a considerably more intensive land use possible than is allowed by the simple shifting cultivation model. As a result, the grain-based systems of cultivation came to vary greatly in their extensiveness. Scholars such as William Allan have introduced the category of 'recurrent cultivation' between shifting and permanent cultivation systems.<sup>32</sup> One of the major areas of such recurrent cultivation was the busy heartland of Unyamwezi, where it was observed in the 1880s that lands were left fallow for only three years after a three-year cultivation period.<sup>33</sup> In a few particular areas there developed still more intensive grain-based systems which were basically modifications of the methods described above. In treeless poor soils of Ufipa and among some neighbouring peoples such as the Nyamwanga and Mambwe, cultivators made compost mounds instead of ridges. Soil was collected in heaps which were first sown with beans, peas, etc., then spread after the following year's harvest to serve as a bed for millet. Where wood was still available, the Fipa and their neighbours practised the *citemene* type of slash and burn cultivation side by side with mound cultivation.<sup>34</sup> The Matengo people living in the mountains east of Lake Nyasa

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(Nyamwezi); Gillman, *Bush Fallowing*, pp. 37—41 (Makonde); Traugott Bachmann, 'Das Volk der Banyika in Deutsch-Ostafrika', *Mitteilungen der geographischen Gesellschaft zu Jena*, 1900/1901, p. 43 (Nyiha); Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 69 ff. (Pangwa); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, pp. 158 ff. (Safwa); Willis, *State*, pp. 106—111 (Fipa).

32. Allan, *African Husbandman*, esp. ch. 3. For an alternative attempt to classify tropical grain-based systems of cultivation according to their degree of intensification, see Hans Ruthenberg, *Farming Systems in the Tropics*, 2nd ed. Oxford, 1976, esp. chs 3 and 4.
33. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 381. Cf. Rounce, *Cultivation Steppe*, pp. 10—11 quoting "a general opinion ... in Unyamwezi" that short fallows of two to three years were as effective as, if not more effective than, longer periods.
34. P. Fromm, 'Ufipa — Land und Leute', *MDS*, 1912, p. 90; Roy Willis, *The Fipa and the Related Peoples of South-West Tanzania and North-East Zambia*. London, 1966, pp. 34, 50; idem, *State*, pp. 105 ff.





Plate 5. Different agricultural systems in different environments. Above, an old-established banana shamba in Machame on Kilimanjaro; right, clearing a field by burning at Karema on Lake Tanganyika.

developed what became known as 'the pit system'. A whole hill-side appeared to have been dug full of pits. On closer inspection this was nothing but a skilful combination of horizontal contour ridges with diagonal up and down ridges. 'Pits' were the areas left between horizontal and diagonal ridges composed of a mixture of grass and earth. Nothing was planted in the pit area, but weeds and grass from the ridges were thrown into it to form a compost. In the following year the process was reversed: what had been a pit now became a ridge. This prevented erosion even on the steepest slopes and could be continued for years before a fallow was needed. This system enabled the Matengo to withdraw to inaccessible mountain slopes beyond the reach of military and slave-trading expeditions by the Ngoni and Yao.<sup>35</sup>

The second basic type of cultivation system, based on the banana, was to be found in fertile or at least well-watered districts, mainly in the mountains and in the Lake Victoria basin. The banana, originally an Asian crop, was brought to Africa so many centuries or millennia ago<sup>36</sup> that it has been thoroughly indigenized, evolving dozens of varieties which were skilfully grown and processed. Different varieties served many different purposes. "Whether ripe or unripe, fresh or dried, raw or cooked, pounded to flour or mashed for brewing, the fruit can be enjoyed in all possible forms," reported the German physician Dr Brehme from Kilimanjaro. The Nyakusa cultivated seven different varieties of banana, the Chagga 21, and the Haya no less than 30.<sup>37</sup> In addition

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35. Walter Busse, 'Forschungsreise durch den südlichen Teil von Deutsch-Ostafrika', *Beih. z. Tropenpflanzer*, 3 (1902), 3, pp. 107—109; A.H. Pike, 'Soil Conservation amongst the Matengo Tribe', *TNR*, 6 (1938), pp. 79—80; Franz Zimmer, 'Die Wamatengo', *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 70 (1940), pp. 304—323; Harry W. Basehart, 'Cultivation Intensity, Settlement Patterns and Homestead Forms Among the Matengo of Tanzania', *Ethnology*, 12 (1971), pp. 58—60.

36. The first written reference to banana in East Africa dates from the 10th century. Al-Mas'udi, 'The Ivory Trade', in Freeman-Grenville, ed., *East African Coast*, p. 16.

37. Brehme, Bericht über das Kulturland, p. 126; Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, pp. 147—148; Charles Dundas, *Kilimanjaro and its People*. London, 1968, p. 258 (1st ed. 1924); Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 44.

to these three areas which still today subsist on the banana, there were several others in which the banana was reported as a major staple. Banana appears to have been a late-comer to the Meru mountain but had established itself as the main crop in the 1880s.<sup>38</sup> The case of Usambara is somewhat more contentious. According to some contemporary sources, bananas were in the late 19th century still the most important crop in the mountains of Usambara.<sup>39</sup> However, Feierman, in his retrospective study, plays down the importance of banana and emphasizes that of maize. His account leaves the impression that banana cultivation was concentrated in the royal capital of Vuga and that common Shambaa cultivators were engaged mainly in grain production. He sketches a picture of a very complex agricultural system in which the farmer, "planting dozens of crops to which the environment was particularly suited ... sought to defeat famine, to cheat death." The same crops were grown in the *nyika*, or plains, and *shambaai*, or mountains, but in different cycles. Evidently a shift was occurring in Usambara from bananas to maize. A. Karasek, a German settler with an unusual interest in local ways of life, maintained that in the early 1900s some three quarters of all African crops still consisted of banana but very little replanting was taking place.<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere, as in the Pare mountains or in Karagwe, banana was one among many major food crops.<sup>41</sup> In Bukerebe banana was much cultivated but little eaten; instead it was used for brewing of *pombe* or African beer.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, even the most pronounced banana areas did not depend on the banana alone; the choice of crops was by no means

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38. Paul Puritt in Moore and Puritt, *Chagga and Meru*, pp. 93—94; Höhnel, *Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie*, p. 153.

39. E.g. Farler, *Usambara Country*, p. 92 ("chief diet ... banana porridge") and Warburg, *Kulturpflanzen*, p. 175 according to whom four fifths of the cultivated area in the mountains was taken up by bananas. The latter, however, may refer only to the Mlalo basin, cf. p. 132.

40. Feierman, *Concepts*, pp. 34—35, 39 ff.; idem, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 18—22 (quotation p. 19); Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), p. 176.

41. Kimambo, *Political History*, pp. 67—68 and Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 229 (Pare); Herrmann, *Wasiba*, p. 58 and Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, pp. 6 (n. 9), 14, 42—43 (Karagwe).

42. Hurel, *Religion et Vie domestique*, pp. 94, 279—280.

less abundant than in the grain areas. Common grains, roots and legumes were also grown in them, from millets and maize to pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and groundnuts.<sup>43</sup>

First travellers and missionaries were often very impressed by the banana-based cultivation systems; in their reports one encounters many admiring descriptions of banana areas. And no doubt there was much to admire. Manuring was known and used even if there are conflicting opinions of its extent. It may have varied in the course of time.<sup>44</sup> In Buhaya, which had been settled for centuries, the fertility of the soil may largely be the result of human effort. In addition to cattle manure, land had been continuously treated with large quantities of grass and plant refuse.<sup>45</sup> The most spirited praise was usually evoked by the irrigation installations of the northeastern mountains. "The people are cunning in irrigation," Burton noted. "(F)ertilizing fluid is distributed over the fields by small watercourses, which ... are hollowed lines of raised earth ..., the levels being laid out by the eye."<sup>46</sup> The Usambara farmer was said to be "an excellent hydrotechnician, able to use the rise and fall of the land with exceptional skill."<sup>47</sup> In western Usambara it was estimated that

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43. See e.g. Gutmann, *Feldbausitten*, passim and Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, pp. 146—149.

44. In Usambara, possibly, tobacco alone was manured, see Warburg, *Kulturpflanzen*, pp. 185, 197. On Kilimanjaro reports are conflicting. Sources like Decken who visited Kilema and Machame (*Reisen*, II, p. 270) and Gutmann who lived in Moshi (*Recht*, p. 440) give an impression of wide-scale manuring but according to other writers manuring was confined to one chiefdom, Kibosho. See Hans Meyer, *Der Kilimanjaro*. Berlin, 1900, p. 203. For Bunyakusa, Merensky maintained that cattle manure was used for bananas in the 1890s, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 148. Godfrey Wilson, writing in the 1930s, claimed that the "deliberate use of dung as manure is a novelty," *The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakusa*. Livingstone, 1938, p. 8.

45. Schmidt, *Historical Archaeology*, pp. 33—34. Cf. G. Milne, 'Essays in Applied Pedology. III — Bukoba', *EAAJ*, 4 (1938), p. 19.

46. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 369.

47. Warburg, *Kulturpflanzen*, p. 134. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 197.



several thousand hectares of land was irrigated.<sup>48</sup> The water canals of Pare were called “a magnificent achievement for a primitive people.”<sup>49</sup> The highest praise was usually given to Kilimanjaro. The Chagga constructed long furrows or canals through which water was made to flow from mountain streams to Chaggaland. Branches and sub-branches were dug to gardens and fields from each main furrow. Local Europeans considered it wonderful that Chagga farmers “were able without levelling instruments to make water flow in whatever direction they wished.”<sup>50</sup> To avoid conflicts, the use of Chagga water canals was regulated by a complicated system of rights and duties.<sup>51</sup> The British missionary New thought that the Chagga were “as agriculturalists ... far ahead of most Africans. Witness their gardens laid out in square beds, the artificial watercourses which traverse the hill-sides everywhere, the flourishing state of their plantations, and the perfection which everything attains under their care.”<sup>52</sup>

When looking at the grain-based cultivation systems a little more closely we find that, while less spectacular, they were not necessarily much less sophisticated in their methods of cultivation. Ridging, green manuring, intercropping and crop rotation have already been discussed. These were not the only means of intensification of cultivation in the grain areas. There was also manuring with dung. Contrary to common contemporary belief, cattle manure was used in certain grain areas, as a rule in small amounts and not for the main food crops but for such new non-food crops as tobacco.<sup>53</sup> “More dung means stronger tobacco.”<sup>54</sup>

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48. C. Holst, ‘Die Kulturen der Waschambaa’, *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1893, p. 23; Karasek, *Beiträge*, I, p. 175.

49. Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 229.

50. Volkens, *Kilimandscharo*, p. 240. See also Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro Expedition*, p. 440 and cf. Meyer, *Gletscherfahrten*, pp. 90—91.

51. Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 413 ff.

52. New, *Life, Wanderings*, p. 454.

53. Grant, *Walk*, p. 30 (general); Franz Stuhlmann, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte von Ostafrika*. Berlin, 1909, p. 832, (general); Claus, *Wagogo*, p. 16 (Ugogo); Meyer, *Kolonialreich*, I, p. 188 (Uhehe). See also D.W. Malcom, *Sukumaland*. London, 1953, p. 12 (Sukuma).

54. Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 165.

But among some peoples — the Nyaturu, Isanzu and Iraqw in particular — cattle manure was applied widely and regularly.<sup>55</sup> In fact, manuring of the staple crops was a requirement for a more settled way of life in the arid north-central parts of the country. If the millet fields were not manured, “permanent cultivation would be impossible on the poor soils,” writes Margaret Jellicoe, a student of the Wahi group of the Nyaturu.<sup>56</sup>

Another popular method of agricultural intensification in the grain areas was irrigation. Small-scale irrigation appears to have been much more common among grain growers than is often realized; but because it was undertaken by natural means and with easily perishable materials it did not leave many traces behind. There were several methods of irrigation. It could be occasionally resorted to on an *ad hoc* basis, as was probably the case when the Iraqw were reported to have drawn water for eight days with calabashes for their maize field during a drought.<sup>57</sup> But there were several more systematic and reliable ways to irrigate. In the Rufiji valley, the sub-soil moisture retained in the ground after the floods was used to germinate the seeds in a cultivation system known as *mlau*.<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere water was conducted by means of ditches from a nearby river or lake to the fields. This is what happened for instance on the southern shore of Victoria Nyanza in the parts of Buzinza where both grains and bananas were cultivated.<sup>59</sup> Ditch irrigation of the same sort was encountered in several places along the central caravan route between Tabora and Ujiji.<sup>60</sup> Mountains,

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55. Erich Obst, ‘Das abflusslose Rumpfschollenland im nordöstlichen Deutsch-Ostafrika’, *MGGH*, 35 (1923), p. 281 (general); Sick, Waniaturu, p. 19 and Langheld, *Zwanzig Jahre*, p. 274 (Nyaturu); Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, p. 69 (Isanzu); Jaeger, *Hochland der Riesenkrater*, p. 99 and Schultz, *Agrarländische Veränderungen*, p. 180 (Iraqw).

56. Jellicoe, *Long Path*, p. 8. It is clear from the sources quoted in the previous footnote that the situation was the same in the precolonial period.

57. Jaeger, *Hochland der Riesenkrater*, p. 100.

58. H. Marsland, ‘Mlau Cultivation in the Rufiji Valley’, *TNR*, 5 (1938), pp. 56—59.

59. Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 111—112; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 211.

60. E.g. Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, p. 133; Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 318; A. Leue, ‘Uha (Deutsch-Ostafrika)’, *Globus*, 79 (1901), p. 54.

and the valleys at their foot, were naturally suitable for irrigation. In Usagara, for instance, water was guided down from an upper spring by digging ditches.<sup>61</sup> Other examples of irrigation in the mountains and valleys were reported from Uhehe, Usangu and Usafwa.<sup>62</sup> Two famous cases of irrigation, one historical and the other contemporary, were found in the Rift Valley, below the escarpment where rivers flowed into drier land. The Sonjo, a Bantu people settled in the Tanzanian Rift Valley amidst the Maasai, had, and still have, an irrigation system in which water from a river descending from the rift wall was conducted by furrows to the fields. It has interesting parallels with the cultivation system of the now-vanished mysterious Engaruka which was an abandoned large settlement to the south of the Sonjo in the Rift. Its economy had been based on mixed farming with cattle stall-fed and some two thousand hectares of fields irrigated by means of stone-lines furrows from a similar river. The Engaruka people abandoned their dwellings and disappeared during the 17th or 18th century for reasons which are not clear, but, unlike many others, they left stony ruins behind.<sup>63</sup>

The most intensive cultivation system in the Tanzanian area was actually not based on banana but on grain. It developed on the small secluded island of Ukara in Lake Victoria. A combination of green and dung manuring, irrigation, intercropping, crop rotation and proper terracing produced a system which sustained 300 people per square kilometre and left a surplus of grain for sale elsewhere. An early German visitor told that "the whole area of the island is utilized, nowhere is fallow land to be seen. Wide roads bordered with cactus traverse the land, and man-made irrigation-works raise the carrying capacity of the soil. Positively astonishing is the presence of tree-nurseries." And this happened without new higher-yielding crops like maize or new iron technology; the main

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61. Last, Wa-Itumba Iron-workers, p. 591.

62. Dempwolff, Beiträge, p. 89; Heese, 'Sitte und Brauch der Sango', *Archiv für Anthropologie* (hereafter *ArA*), 12 (1913), p. 142; Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 158.

63. R. F. Gray, *Sonjo*, pp. 19—20 (Sonjo); J.E.G. Sutton, 'Irrigation and Manuring of the Engaruka Field System', *Azania*, 21 (1986), pp. 27—51 (Engaruka and Sonjo). For a more general discussion see idem, *Irrigation and Soil-Conservation*, pp. 25—41.

crops were bulrush millet and bambarra groundnuts and all tools were wooden.<sup>64</sup>

## Long-distance trade, population densities and agriculture

The picture presented above is based on sources emanating mainly from the late 19th century and in some cases from as late as about the turn of the century. As we saw above, this was the period of the penetration of merchant capital and the 'opening up' of the East African interior through long-distance trade. I argued above that the effects of trade on Tanzanian societies were in many respects profound. Yet, I believe that agricultural systems were among the institutions more marginally affected by long-distance trade, and maintain that the systems discussed in this chapter represent, with some noteworthy exceptions, what might be called 'traditional' African agriculture. Of course, I am not suggesting that the systems of cultivation were unchanging; they had been affected and modified by outside influences on several occasions before. But I have found no reason to regard the 19th-century long-distance trade system as decisive in its impact save some exceptional cases.

This view is not universally shared. Some historians of Tanzania believe that, overlooking the slave trade, long-distance trade had decisively beneficial effects on African agriculture and handicrafts. They argue that the increased demand for foodstuffs created by trading stimulated food production in African societies, and that the spread of new, more productive plants and iron technology made higher production possible.<sup>65</sup> I have found such ideas impossible to verify. It is certainly not unreasonable to suppose that the growth of plantation slavery and, above all,

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64. H. Hermann v. Schweinitz und Krain, 'Wanaymwezi, Wassukuma, Wasiba und Wakara', *ZE*, 25 (1893), pp. 481—483 (quotation p. 483); Schlobach, *Völkstämme der Ostküste*, pp. 187—188; D. Thornton and N.V. Rounce, 'The Ukara Island and the Agricultural Practices of the Wakara', *TNR*, 1 (1936), pp. 25—32.

65. Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 57, 62—63; John Iliffe, *Agricultural Change in Modern Tanganyika*. Nairobi, 1971, pp. 8—11.



portage increased the demand for foodstuffs, and that the heightened demand in turn affected production on the coast at a convenient transportation distance from Zanzibar and in places regularly visited by caravans. Travellers' accounts are full of descriptions of Africans briskly selling foodstuffs in the coastal region and along caravan routes. But concrete evidence of both the growth of production and the spread of cultivated plants and iron technology is extremely fragile.

Although it is obvious that there was some growth of commercial food production, its extent is impossible to gauge. The only matter which can be easily documented is the establishment of plantations producing foodstuffs in the coastal region and in caravan centres like Unyanyembe. They usually employed slave labour made redundant by restrictions in the slave trade.<sup>66</sup> Whether, and to what extent, common African farmers increased their own production in addition to this is largely a matter of surmise. It would be logical to expect this to happen, and the known late 19th-century increase of domestic slavery in African households along the caravan routes among the peoples of Lake Tanganyika, and Nyamwezi, Gogo and Makonde may well reflect such an increase of food production.<sup>67</sup> A few contemporary observers even suggested an increase of production due to the increased demand<sup>68</sup> and later oral historians have brought out some further evidence. The most determined attempt has been made by Hartwig who argues, on grounds which are not quite clear, that among the Kerebe from a fourth to a fifth of "family heads," many of whom were members of the royal clan or recent immigrants, were interested in increasing their wealth through cultivation of surplus grain for sale.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps also the references to separate "men's fields," or other commercial grain fields that

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66. New, *From the Pangani, via Wadigo*, p. 318 and Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, p. 272 (general); 'The History of Sudi', in Freeman-Grenville, ed., *East African Coast*, p. 231 (southern coast); Burton, M.-L. Swantz and Unomah, as quoted above, ch. 3, fn. 93 (Zaramo and Nyamwezi).

67. For increased domestic slavery, see above, ch. 3, p. 98—99.

68. Notably Junker, *Reisen*, III, p. 673.

69. Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 106, 130.

were established alongside the normal, women-managed plots can be taken as indications of growth of production.<sup>70</sup> But *all* the increase in production *sold* could hardly originate from production *growth*. Efforts to attribute the increase in the amount of products sold to increased production do not take seriously the possibility that much, if not most, of what Africans sold in the late 19th-century trade system was part of their 'normal' surplus, which would otherwise have been stored or consumed. Direct evidence on this is slender but there is some. Zigua notables, for instance, are known to have removed their food stocks from the networks of redistribution and reciprocity and increasingly turned to selling them from the 1870s onwards.<sup>71</sup>

Our data base is not much firmer on the spread of new cultivated plants. However, it appears that the importance of the 19th-century Zanzibar-based trade system in this respect has been much inflated by those who believe in its beneficence. Among the major crops, only rice and fruit trees such as mango and paw-paw can be proved to have been directly introduced by the 19th-century traders to and from the coast.<sup>72</sup> Rice had been cultivated on the coast before the arrival of the Portuguese. Although it may have spread earlier along the Rufiji river, it is clear that it, or its better varieties, were taken into the interior mainly by the 19th-century coastal merchants. They were reported to have brought rice to Unyamwezi and elsewhere on the central caravan route in the course of the century and to Usangu at the end of the century.<sup>73</sup> On the other

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70. This is admittedly stretching the evidence, especially when our main contemporary sources originate from the beginning of the colonial time. See e.g. Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, pp. 187 (Doe), 261 (Zaramo); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Sawfa*, I, p. 164 (Safwa) and for a historical account, B.S.K. Kiyenze, *The Transformation of Tanzanian Handicrafts into Co-operatives and Rural Small-scale Industrialisation*. Helsinki, 1985, p. 33 (Kwere, Doe).

71. James Giblin, 'Famine and Social Change during the Transition to Colonial Rule in Northeastern Tanzania, 1880—1896', *AEH*, 15 (1986), pp. 94, 96; idem, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 194—195.

72. For fruit trees, see Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 224.

73. Greenway, *Origins*, *EAAJ*, 10 (1945), p. 251; Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 298—399 (who speaks of 'white' rice as contrasted with the supposedly indigenous 'red' variety); Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p.

hand, such major crops of American origin as maize, manioc, sweet potatoes and tobacco were evidently well entrenched when the Zanzibar-based long-distance trade intensified in the mid-19th century. First travellers noted that in the late 1850s and early 1860s maize was grown all over except in the driest regions; manioc in Zanzibar and drier parts of the mainland; sweet potatoes around Lake Nyanza. Tobacco was also widespread.<sup>74</sup> In all probability these crops had spread earlier within the trading network of the Africans themselves, often being introduced by returning traders and porters.<sup>75</sup> It is also obvious that the spread was not only from the east coast westward but also from the west eastward; the latter may often have been even the main direction.<sup>76</sup>

Long-distance trade did not bring anything new into cultivation technology, either. All techniques known in the country in the end of the 19th century had existed already in the beginning of the century. However, there is no reason to deny the impact of long-distance trade on the spread of cultivation technology. It obviously sped up the wider distribution of iron tools and the replacement of wooden ones. As noted in chapter 3, iron hoes became one of the main items of caravan trading as well as one of its 'currencies'. There are indications that wooden hoes were still used in many regions of the country in the latter half of the 19th century. Even in

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378; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 851; Mwakipesile, *Wasangu, Wasfwa na Wasagara*, p. 11.

74. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 399, 401 (maize and manioc in general); Grant, *Walk*, pp. 125 (manioc, Buzinza), 178 (sweet potatoes, Karagwe); Livingstone, *Last Journals*, I, p. 67 (maize, Ruvuma); Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 404—405 and Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 385 (tobacco, in general). References to sweet potatoes on the eastern side of Victoria Nyanza date only from a later period, e.g. J. P. Farler, 'Native Routes in East Africa from Pangani to the Masai Country and the Victoria Nyanza', *PRGS*, 4 (1882), p. 745.

75. There is direct evidence for this among the Kerebe (Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 73) and more indirect among the Sukuma (Itandala, *History of the Babinza*, pp. 231 ff.)

76. For more indirect evidence regarding maize, see Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 853 and the distribution map in Stuhlmann, *Kulturschichte*, p. 207. For more direct evidence for sweet potatoes and manioc, see *ibid.*, pp. 247 and 253 respectively.

areas in close contact with long-distance trade, iron tools were only gradually coming into more general use.<sup>77</sup>

Probably the greatest impact exerted on agriculture by long-distance trade was not direct but indirect: it influenced population densities and patterns of land use. There was a close relation between the density of population and the system of cultivation. Extensive systems were able to sustain a much lower density than intensive systems. According to estimates presented by Allan, an extreme extensive *citemene* type of shifting cultivation system can support some four to six persons per square mile, while the corresponding figure for the irrigated banana cultivation of the Chagga may be no less than 400.<sup>78</sup> Despite the lack of quantitative information in historical sources there is clearly a strong empirical correlation between intensity of cultivation and density of population in precolonial Tanzania. Many of the most densely inhabited regions were those with banana-based or intensive grain-based cultivation systems. But the density of population is dependent not on the number alone, but also on the land area used by the society, and societies do not always, for various reasons, utilize all available land. This was especially true in precolonial Tanzania where societies had by no means exhausted their land reserves. Virgin land was available for clearing even in banana areas such as Kilimanjaro and Usambara.<sup>79</sup> In grain-growing regions land was naturally even more abundant. In Unyamwezi, which was not atypical in this respect, only one to three per cent of the total area

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77. Along the central caravan route in the 1870s hoes were said to have been usually iron but sometimes wood (Baur and Le Roy, *Zanguebar*, pp. 314—315). In Uluguru the rich had iron hoes and the poor wooden, Schneider, ed., *Katolische Mission*, p. 257). At the end of the 19th century wooden hoes were in wide use on Kilimanjaro (Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro Expedition*, p. 440) and in parts of the coast (Alfons M. Adams, *Im Dienste des Kreuzes*. St. Ottilien, 1899, p. 139; Beardall, *Exploration*, p. 652). Towards the end of the German rule a change to iron hoes was reported as a new phenomenon in the south-east (Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, p. 82) and in the north central 'area without a river outlet', (Obst, *Vorläufiger Bericht, MGGH*, 25 (1911), p. 88, fn. 2; 26 (1912), p. 129, fn. 1.

78. Allan, *African Husbandman*, pp. 111—113, 166.

79. Feierman, *Shambara Kingdom*, p. 33; Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 303.



was estimated to have been under cultivation.<sup>80</sup>

Long-distance trade, or rather the social and political turmoil in which trade played so decisive a role, affected population densities, decreasing them in some place and increasing them elsewhere. Sources indicate that this led to many modifications in cultivation systems. Trade triggered off involuntary migrations by people fleeing from the ravages of slave and other wars. It was argued above that this led to some local depopulation.<sup>81</sup> Logically, the depopulation by migration must have been matched by an increase of population elsewhere. One can also think that in parts of the country trade created a situation so insecure and unstable that some peoples preferred to live in inaccessible secluded places. Pierre Gourou's 'siege thesis', which sees extensive systems of cultivation intensifying only under duress, although summarily dismissed by Kjekshus,<sup>82</sup> may, in fact, be quite applicable to cases such as the Matengo. They clearly withdrew to their mountains in order to escape slave traders and developed a more intensive system of cultivation in their new location.<sup>83</sup> Another trade-related factor which may have had a bearing on the systems of cultivation was the increased nucleation and fortification of settlements. By strengthening the permanence of settlements, trade may well have contributed towards finding more permanent and intensive methods of cultivation. At least the methods called above 'recurrent cultivation' often coincided with more permanent and nucleated settlements.<sup>84</sup>

## Livestock

Discussions on African livestock are often focused on cattle and sometimes narrowed down to pastoralism, the latter itself a very

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80. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 383—384.

81. Ch. 4, pp. 177—178.

82. Pierre Gourou, *The Tropical World*, 4th ed. London, 1966, pp. 79, 107—108; Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 27 ff.

83. Above, pp. 226—227.

84. For settlement patterns, see above, p. 172 and below, pp. 345—359.



Plate 6. Varieties of livestock. Above, a specimen of the long-horned interlacustrine cattle with a small hump pictured side by side with one of the shorthorn humped Zebu; below, goats and sheep on Kilimanjaro.



loose category. Evans-Pritchard's exhortation "Cherchez la vache" has been faithfully followed and the 'cattle complex' of Melville Herskovits has continued to haunt latter-day researchers.<sup>85</sup> It is true, of course, that cattle were plentiful in the Tanzanian area, where they were kept by more pastoral peoples as well as by many cultivators. But preoccupation with cattle has tended to obscure the fact that there were also many places where few if any cattle were kept, but instead numerous small livestock such as goats, sheep and poultry were prevalent. The neglect of small stock has resulted in a somewhat distorted view of stock-raising in pre-colonial Tanzania by obscuring the variety of livestock systems and hiding the fact that in spite of the almost total absence of cattle over large tracts very few farming areas were entirely without livestock.

However, also I shall concentrate on cattle because of their major role in the economy and society of several Tanzanian peoples. I begin with the distribution of cattle, in particular the question of whether the areas in which cattle were kept in the precolonial time were more extensive than in the colonial period, as has been claimed by some authors, above all Kjekshus, but also by more moderate writers such as Alison Smith.<sup>86</sup> It is obviously impossible to reach a high degree of certainty on such a matter, but it seems to me that even if there evidently were more cattle in some important localities in the precolonial period than later, the regional breakdown of cattle herds was by and large not very dissimilar from what it is now. This impression is based on early travellers' accounts. They noted with striking consistency that although

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85. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*. London, 1940, p. 16, as quoted in Oliver, *Nilotic Contribution*, p. 440; Melville J. Herskovits, 'The Cattle Complex in East Africa', *AmA*, 28 (1926), pp. 230—272, 361—380, 494—528, 633—664. Herskovits, working in the American culture area tradition, used 'cattle complex' to refer to a number of definite cattle-related traits confined to what he calls "the East African cattle area," see esp. pp. 247 ff., 650 ff. For very different uses of the same concept, see A.O. Anacleto and D.K. Ndagala, 'The Cattle Complex in the Ancient West Lake Kingdoms', *La civilisation ancienne*, pp. 148—159 and Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, ch. 3.

86. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, ch. 3, esp. p. 56; Smith, *Southern Interior*, p. 254.

cattle existed in certain coastal towns, the coastal region in general, and the whole south as far as Songea, were almost devoid of cattle. The best-stocked parts of the country were the north-central region, parts of Sukumaland and the southern highlands on the one hand, and the interlacustrine area from Buhaya and Karagwe down to the highlands of Buha on the other. Also the cattle types seem to have been broadly similar. Most of the cattle in the procolonial period were of the shorthorn humped Zebu breed, which was not notably productive, but highly resistant to drought and common diseases. There had been much intermingling of cattle and consequently there were many local variations of this basic type; the only breed which looked markedly different and were also geographically separated from the smallhorn Zebu, were the long-horned interlacustrine cattle with a very small, or almost non-existent, hump.<sup>87</sup>

The uses of cattle were extremely varied. Cattle were kept in precolonial Tanzania in three types of societies: 1) pastoralist, 2) agropastoralist, and 3) mixed farmer. The first category encompasses peoples normally practicing almost no agriculture and subsisting mainly, though by no means exclusively, on an animal diet, such as the Datoga and Maasai. As argued above, the Datoga had been among the first cattle-keepers in the Tanzanian area, and they still possessed considerable, even if diminished herds in the latter part of the 19th century.<sup>88</sup> Their importance to the cattle economy of Tanzania lay not only in their own herds but also in

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87. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 390—391; Grant, *Walk*, pp. 62—63, 89; Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 549; Livingstone, *Last Journals*, I, pp. 73, 80 and passim; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 314—315, 515; Lieder, Von der Mbampa-Bai, pp. 98, 131. For cattle types, see G. Lichtenheld, 'Ueber Rinderrassen, Rinderzucht und ihre wirtschaftliche Bedeutung in Deutsch-Ostafrika', *Der Pflanze*, 9 (1913), pp. 261—279 and Ford, *Trypanosomiasis*, pp. 480—481.

88. First eye-witness reports from the late 1870s depict the Datoga as a purely pastoral people (P. Dutrieux, *Souvenirs d'une exploration medicale dans l'Afrique Intertropicale*. Paris, 1885, p. 135, and *A l'assaut*, p. 204). Reports from the 1890s found the Datoga as both cattle-herders and cultivators (e.g. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 168—169 and Werther, *Zum Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 260—261). This is the time after the devastating rinderpest epizootic which destroyed



the fact that they seem to have been the main source of cattle for many adjacent peoples. Most of the cultivating neighbours of the Datoga had relatively large numbers of cattle, and it appears that these peoples had originally acquired their cattle from the Datoga. This has been suggested at least for the Sukuma and Kerebe, many of the peoples east of Lake Victoria and the Iraqw.<sup>89</sup> But it was the Maasai who came to be known as the pastoralists *par excellence*; colourfully dressed people driving their rich herds over the vast area extending from central Kenya to central Tanzania.<sup>90</sup> The third major pastoral people were the Tusi, or Hima, who were cattle herders over much of the interlake area, in particular in Karagwe and Buha, and parts of Unyamwezi. They lived in a complicated, and still rather inadequately understood, symbiosis with local agriculturalists and their rulers.<sup>91</sup> By 'agropastoralists' I mean peoples in whose economy both cattle and agriculture were essential but not closely integrated.<sup>92</sup> Such peoples included, besides the Sukuma and many other neighbours of the Datoga mentioned

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most of the cattle all over the Tanzanian area (Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 124 and Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 126—132). While the basically pastoral nature of the early Datoga economy also was attested by Baumann, (*Durch Massailand*, p. 168) it is not entirely clear when cultivation was introduced and whether the Datoga lost many cattle to the Maasai in raids even before the Great Rinderpest (cf. Kjaerby, *Agro-Pastoralism*, pp. 6—10).

89. Itandala, History of the Babinza, pp. 172 ff. (Sukuma); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 47 (Kerebe); Anacleto, Serengeti, p. 29 (peoples east of Lake Victoria); Kjaerby, *Agro-Pastoralism*, pp. 10—11 (Iraqw).
90. Literature on the Maasai is vast but there is no entirely satisfactory history of precolonial or, perhaps better, pre-rinderpest, Maasai. Probably the best early ethnography is that of Merker, and the most solid historical work has been done by John Berntsen, Alan Jacobs and Richard Waller (see bibliography).
91. Richter, Bezirk Bukoba, pp. 70; Analecti and Ndagala, Cattle Complex, pp. 152, 154—55 (Buhaya); Katoke, *Karagwe Kingdom*, p. 4 (Karagwe); Gwassa and Mbwiliza, Social Production, p. 14 (Buha); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 77—78 (Unyamwezi).
92. My definition of agropastoralism differs from that of Brandström et al. who use the concept to denote what I call mixed farming. Per Brandström, Jan Hultin and Jan Lindström, *Aspects of Agro-Pastoralism in East Africa*. Uppsala, 1979, p. 10.

above, peoples like the Gogo, Hehe, Ngoni and Shambaa. Among them animal foods were consumed less than among the pastoralists proper and dung was used less for manuring and more for purposes like heating and building.<sup>93</sup> During the night cattle was housed inside the house or, where buildings known as *tembe* existed, in a common courtyard.<sup>94</sup> Mixed farmers, finally, were primarily agricultural but with cattle effectively integrated into the farming system mainly through large scale manuring. As seen above, such peoples included both banana planters like the Chagga, Haya and Nyakusa, who often stall-fed their animals, and grain growers like the Nyaturu and Kara.<sup>95</sup>

But even if the broad outlines of the distribution and use of cattle seem clear enough, many specific question marks remain for particular regions and peoples. From the coast in the 1870s we have scattered references to cattle “thriving” in places like Kwale in the south and Dar es Salaam and Kunduchi.<sup>96</sup> The presence of cattle in the Pangani estuary was noted in both the 1850s and 1880s.<sup>97</sup> There are also many reports of Zaramo or Zigua chiefs having some cattle in their villages.<sup>98</sup> Yet, according to the sources

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93. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 388 (Usambara); Grant, *Walk*, p. 85 (Unyamwezi); Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 215 (Hehe); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 161 (Ngoni). Cf. Claus, Wagogo, pp. 16, 19, 21 and Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship*, pp. 43 ff. for the Gogo using dung not as much for building or heating as for some manuring and, among other purposes, for making vessels.

94. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 214 (Hehe); Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 369 (central *tembe* regions in general).

95. Above, pp. 229 ff. Cattle were kept in separate stalls by the Chagga (the first reference is Rebmann from the year 1848, Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 243) and the Nyakusa (Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 143). The Haya (Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 52 and Richter, *Ethnographische Notizen*, p. 67) and the Kara (Schlobach, *Völkstämme der Ostküste*, p. 167) kept animals in human dwellings during the night.

96. Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, pp. 89, 104; ‘Report by Vice-Consul Elton on Dar-es-Salaam’, 7 January 1874, inclosure in Prideaux to Granville, 7 February 1874, *BPP*, Slave Trade 91, ‘Reports on the East African Slave Trade’, 1874, [c.946] vol. LXII, p. 12.

97. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 373; Fischer, *Massai-Land*, p. 40.

98. Fritz Bley, *Deutsche Pionierarbeit in Ostafrika*. Berlin, 1891, p. 70; Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 249. Cf. Horner, *Reisen*, p. 83 who implied a more general presence of cattle in Uzaramo.

discussed above, it is virtually certain that there was no sustained large-scale cattle-keeping on the coast or in the coastal hinterland, with the possible exceptions of the northern Uzigua and the Tanga coast inhabited by the Segeju.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, what cattle there were were scattered over a large area. Travellers going inland usually noted the first larger cattle herds in the mountains of Usagara,<sup>100</sup> but even here the cattle keepers may have been immigrant Hehe or Sangu rather than indigenous Sagara.<sup>101</sup> A strong possibility is that the cattle observed nearer the coast had been imported, both from the interior and, perhaps fairly commonly, from abroad, particularly from Arabia or India.<sup>102</sup> Another obscure area is the central and south-central part of the country, from the southern parts of Unyamwezi to Ukimbu and Ufipa. Several travellers' accounts attest the existence of cattle in parts of Unyamwezi.<sup>103</sup> However, they may have been fairly recently introduced.<sup>104</sup> These cattle were not even tended by the Nyamwezi themselves but by the specialized Tusi herders.

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99. For the Zigua, see New, *From the Pangani, via Wadigo*, p. 618 who speaks of "both pastoral and agricultural pursuits" and Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 74—75, 159 whose informants maintained that their cattle were very few in the past and chiefs were their main owners. For the Segeju, see E.C. Baker, 'Notes on the History of Wasegeju', *TNR*, 27 (1949), p. 36 (for pre-1919 cattle) and E. Werth, *Das Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Küstenland*, II. Berlin, 1915, p. 196, fn. 3.

100. E.g. Speke, *Journal*, p. 49; Schynse, *Mit Stanley*, p. 68 (retrospectively).

101. This was reported to have been the case in the early colonial period, see Lambrecht, 'Über die Landwirtschaft der Eingeborenen im Bezirk Kilossa', *Berichte über Land- und Forstwirtschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (hereafter *BLFDOA*), 1 (1902-03), p. 396. Cf., however, reminiscences of an enslaved and subsequently 'liberated' "Sagara boy" in Zanzibar for an "abundance" of oxen, sheep and goats in his home country, Madan, ed., *Kiungani*, pp. 65, 67.

102. For importation from the interior, see above, ch. 3, p. 124 and for importation from abroad, cf. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 413 and Lichtenheld, *Rinderrassen*, p. 266.

103. E.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 7.

104. Unomah thinks there had been an increase in cattle in Unyanyembe in 1840—1880. Unomah, *Economic Expansion*, p. 106.

Reichard, who lived for about one and a half years in southern Unyamwezi in the early 1880s, stated explicitly that cows were never raised by the Nyamwezi "but always and alone by the immigrant Watusi ... The cattle-owning Mnyamwezi always hands over his animals to a Mtusi ... "105 Also the commercial Arab elite of Tabora was reported to have trusted their cattle to the Tusi, in return for "half the produce."<sup>106</sup> It appears that most of the Nyamwezi cattle were in Unyanyembe and the northern parts of the area, and their number tended to diminish towards the south and south-west. Despite recent claims to the contrary, there is not much to show that precolonial Ukimbu ever had large herds.<sup>107</sup> In Ufipa and elsewhere in the south-west cattle seem to have been the almost exclusive prerogative of chiefs and other members of royal clans.<sup>108</sup>

What had caused such an uneven distribution of cattle is an issue as intriguing and important as it is contentious. If we do not wish to think that some peoples were by their inner nature more cattle-loving than others, we must look for more external factors which could have made cattle-keeping difficult or even impossible in parts of the area. In the view of many researchers, the strongest candidate for such a factor is the tsetse fly, the vector carrying the animal sleeping sickness *nagana*. On the face of it this is an attractive suggestion. Tsetse was certainly present in many parts of the country and it was impossible to keep many cattle in areas infested with flies. The British colonial entomologist S. Napier Bax

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105. Reichard, Wanjamuesi, p. 321. See also idem, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 315.

106. *A l'Assaut*, p. 290.

107. For claims, see Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 64—66 and for evidence of the absence of cattle, except for some owned by the chiefs in the 19th century, see Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 66. Cf., however, idem, Kimbu, p. 105 for a statement suggesting larger cattle herds in the 19th century.

108. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 222; G.D. Popplewell, 'Notes on the Fipa', *TNR*, 3 (1937), p. 103 (referring to "old days") and Willis, *State*, p. 120 (Ufipa); Hore, *Missionary*, p. 120 (Ulungu); Willis, *State*, p. 120 thinks, without specifying the source, that "probably a number of important commoners" in Ufipa also owned cattle.



expressed a widely held view when stating that "the distribution of cattle ... forms an excellent index of the presence or absence of the tsetse ... where cattle were not, the tsetse fly was."<sup>109</sup> However, it is advisable to think twice before taking the tsetse as the whole explanation. As Napier Bax was careful to admit, many explorers' accounts do not support the inverse correlation between cattle and tsetse. True, early observations on tsetse are unreliable and unsystematic and as such of doubtful scientific value. Not all the travellers were able to single out tsetse from other, related flies. It is also possible and even probable that travellers often passed through tsetse areas without realising it. Yet many precolonial reports openly claimed that there were wide areas which lacked both tsetse and cattle. Still more interestingly, there may have been areas in which cattle and tsetse came into contact with each other and cattle developed a degree of tolerance against trypanosomiasis.<sup>110</sup>

The actual distribution of tsetse and its stability are impossible to state on the basis of our sources. Still less clear is how the different sub-species of the tsetse genus *Glossina* were distributed over the area. However, what emerges from the sources is a definite impression of relatively few and mostly narrow tsetse belts. There is a host of scattered references to the presence of tsetse in the 1870s and 1880s. Most of them concentrate on a few regions: the coastal area;<sup>111</sup> the south in the vicinity of the Ruvuma river;<sup>112</sup> Donde and Upogoro;<sup>113</sup> the forests of Unyamwezi;<sup>114</sup> and

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109. S. Napier Bax, 'Notes on the Presence of Tsetse Fly, between 1857 and 1915, in the Dar es Salaam Area', *TNR*, 16 (1943), pp. 34—35.

110. Above, ch. 4, pp. 157—158.

111. Kirk to Granville, 18 February 1871, *BPP*, Slave Trade 53, 'Correspondence respecting the Slave Trade and Other Matters', 1872 [c.657] vol. LIV, p. 27 (Bagamoyo hinterland); Kirk to Derby, 12 December 1877, as quoted in John M. Gray, 'Dar es Salaam under the Sultans of Zanzibar', *TNR*, 33 (1952), p. 13 (Dar es Salaam hinterland); Baur and Le Roy, *Zanguebar*, p. 172 (further inland); further references in Napier Bax, Notes, pp. 35—39.

112. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, I, pp. 23—26, 30, 33, 35, 61.

113. Beardall, *Exploration*, p. 655.

114. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 177; Böhm, *Von Sansibar*, pp. 74—75, 82.

southeastern shore of Lake Tanganyika.<sup>115</sup> To be sure, there were areas like those ravaged by Mirambo's warfare where fly belts were reported widening.<sup>116</sup> But most sources stress the locally limited nature of the tsetse areas. Even when the tsetse was found over a wide area, the Spiritan missionaries Baur and Le Roy argued, it was "happily far from being evenly distributed ... it lives in this or that place and cannot live in some other ..." <sup>117</sup> Some observers noted the tendency of tsetse to keep away from settled regions.<sup>118</sup> Where cattle were kept amidst flies, "the dangerous and infested belts" were known and avoided by transporting the animals past them a long safe paths.<sup>119</sup> This is all information that tallies well with our present-day knowledge that much of the later distribution of tsetse is in fact due to its vigorous spread during the colonial era.<sup>120</sup>

Since it may not be entirely warranted to ascribe the whole responsibility for the uneven distribution of cattle in precolonial Tanzania to the tsetse fly, we must ask what might have been the other factors at work. While this is one of several questions which cannot be provided with a satisfactory answer in this study, I wish to state one obvious hypothesis for further research. I feel that the role of other cattle diseases has been unduly eclipsed in both entomological and social research by the attention devoted to the spectacular advance of tsetse under colonial rule. One disease

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115. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, II, p. 247; Becker, *La Vie*, I, p. 259, II, p. 340; E. C. Hore, 'Lake Tanganyika', *PRGS*, 4 (1882), pp. 1—2, 8, 21; Hore, *Missionary*, pp. 106, 108, 120.

116. Thomson to Mullens, 4 August 1878, LSMA, Central Africa 1/3/D. Also quoted in Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 76.

117. Baur and Le Roy, *Zanguebar*, p. 95.

118. E.g. Burdo, *Les Belges*, p. 262; Hore, *Twelve Tribes*, p. 10. Cf. Becker, *La vie*, II, p. 340.

119. Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, p. 404. Cf. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 516—517.

120. Best documented by Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 163—165, 202, 270—272, 315, 350—351 and Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 162—168. However, as I have argued elsewhere, it is not clear to what extent the spreading tsetse was breaking new ground during the colonial time and to what extent the flies were only recapturing areas lost in connection with the Great Rinderpest, see my 'Famine, Flies, People and Capitalism in Tanzanian History', *TNR*, forthcoming.

which seems to merit much more attention than it has hitherto been accorded with is theileriosis, or East Coast fever. Carried by cattle tick vectors, it is a disease probably indigenous to eastern and southern Africa. It was first diagnosed around the turn of the century by the German bacteriologist Koch, but neglected in further research until recent times and its dynamics are still imperfectly understood.<sup>121</sup> It has been suggested that many cattle deaths which Europeans attributed to tsetse and local people to "poisonous grass" (as on the Coast) or to "tiny insects" (as in Unyamwezi)<sup>122</sup> were perhaps due to East Coast fever to a much higher degree than the contemporaries ever realized.<sup>123</sup>

As to the question of small stock we have to be brief; the general neglect of this subject is reflected in very inadequate information. But it seems clear that goats were found all over the country, whereas sheep were lacking in more heavily forested regions. Small stock was kept where there were cattle but also where there were none. Both goats and sheep were of two major species. One goat species was small and beardless while the other, found mainly in the central and western parts of the country, had a "long, waving and jetty" beard. The more widespread of the sheep species was long-tailed, while the tail of the other was described as a "short, ragged flap." Pigs were conspicuous by their absence. The only beast of burden, in addition to man, was the ass, kept mainly by the Maasai and their southern neighbours such as the Gogo, Rangi, Nyaturu and even some Nyamwezi. Also poultry was very wide-spread. Fowls were encountered in most parts of the country,<sup>124</sup> and pigeons in several places in the south, for instance among the Nyasa, Yao and Makua.<sup>125</sup>

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121. Schilling, *Viehkrankheiten*, esp. pp. 268—271; Ford, *Trypanosomiasis*, pp. 208—209.

122. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 390; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 517.

123. See Edwin W. Smith, 'The Earliest Ox-Wagons in Tanganyika', *TNR*, 41 (1955), p. 15 and Napier Bax, *Notes*, p. 36, fn. 8. It should be noted, however, that ixodic ticks carrying East Coast fever do not thrive in unstocked country. See Martin H. Birley, 'Resource Management in Sukumaland, Tanzania', *Africa*, 52 (1982), p. 10. For further discussion, see above, ch. 4, p. 168.

124. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 392 (quotations); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 854.

125. Abdallah, *Yaos*, p. 21; Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, p. 128.

## Hunting, gathering, fishing, salt extraction

There is reason to suspect that the importance of activities such as hunting, gathering and the like has been considerably underestimated in the precolonial economy. The fact that there were very few specialized hunter-gatherers left in the Tanzanian area at the end of the 19th century does not imply that hunting and gathering were not of appreciable economic importance among several peoples whose economy was based on agriculture and stock keeping. Hunting provided an access to a supplementary source of animal food and other animal products, in particular among peoples who had few if any cattle. Similarly, gathered products were used almost everywhere to supplement the available basic diet. Fishing, naturally, had a similar role on the shores of the ocean and the great rivers and lakes. And if we widen the category of gathering to include activities involving some pre-planning, such as bee-keeping, and a degree of processing, such as salt extraction, the major role played by hunting and gathering activities in the precolonial economy becomes quite obvious.

It is often suggested that there were three major hunting-gathering, or 'foraging', peoples in the Tanzanian area in the late precolonial and early colonial period: the Sandawe in the central parts of the country, the Hadza on the eastern side of Lake Eyasi and the 'Dorobo' scattered in the northern Tanzanian (and much Kenyan) Maasailand. This seems broadly acceptable even if all these peoples cannot be considered as descendants of ancient hunting-gathering populations, and even if some of them were not pure hunter-gatherers. The Sandawe, when first met and documented by Europeans, were engaged in agriculture and could not subsist without it. However, their traditions and values place so much emphasis on the benefits of the forest that there cannot be much doubt of their primarily hunting-gathering past, although we cannot be sure when the transformation to agriculture began.<sup>126</sup>

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126. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 192; Newman, *Ecological Basis*, pp. 27 ff. and J.E.G. Sutton's review of it in *Azania*, 7 (1972), pp. 188—190; Ten Raa, *Sandawe Prehistory*, pp. 91—103.



'Dorobo', was, and still is, a common label for a number of disparate groups speaking mostly Maa-related languages but evidently of different origin. Some of them may well have been ex-Maasai deprived of their cattle by the rinderpest and other catastrophes of the late 19th century, while others probably had a longer tradition of hunting and gathering.<sup>127</sup> Only the Hadza could claim a long-standing devotion to hunting and gathering that was still intact. When they were first observed more closely by an outside researcher in 1911, they were found to subsist purely on hunting and gathering. During the dry season, when game animals were dependent on the few available water sources, the Hadza could stay on the same place up to several months. Men were procuring easy meat by killing thirsty animals with poisoned arrows while women and children did the gathering. In the rainy season the Hadza had to leave their settlements and move after the game for weeks. During the hunt their diet consisted predominantly of berries and tubers.<sup>128</sup>

However, as noted, hunting played a major role in the economy of many cultivators and stock-keepers. Only a few peoples, for instance the long-settled Chagga banana growers and stall-feeders of cattle, were singled out for their lack of skill and interest in hunting.<sup>129</sup> But other banana-growing and cattle-keeping peoples such as the Shambaa were reported as going "hunting now and then," some even professionally. Major hunts by nets were undertaken with several villages co-operating.<sup>130</sup> Among the predominantly grain-growing neighbours of the Shambaa, the Bondei, hunting was reported to have been "a very common amusement or occupation," and this obviously applied to a number of other peoples with grain-based economy and a fair

127. Cf. Berntsen, *Economic Variations*, pp. 110—114; Chang, *Nomads without Cattle*, and Roderick H. Blackburn, 'In the Land of Milk and Honey: Okiek Adaptations to Their Forests and Neighbours', in Leacock and Lee, eds, *Politics and History*, pp. 269—282 and 283—305 respectively; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 166—168; R.A.J. Maguire, 'Il-Torobo', *JAS*, 27 (1927—28), pp. 127—141, 241—268.

128. Obst, *Vorläufiger Bericht*, *MGGH*, 26 (1912), pp. 15 ff.

129. Widenmann, *Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung*, p. 80.

130. Karasek, *Beiträge*, *Baessler-Archiv*, 3 (1913), pp. 86 (quotation), 92; Feerman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 23.

number of livestock.<sup>131</sup> But especially in the cattleless south hunting was central to the economy of several peoples. There may even have been cases similar to that of the Sandawe mentioned above, involving a fairly recent shift from a predominantly hunting and gathering way of life towards agriculture supplemented with game. Many Ngindo, for instance, are thought to have been “aboriginal hunters,” mainly trappers, as late as the middle of the 19th century. The Makua had such fame as highly skilled elephant hunters that gradually ‘Makua’ became the generic term for the most professional elephant hunters. The Yao and Mwera both did a great deal of hunting, the Mwera organising large hunts using nets with the participation of several villages.<sup>132</sup> Most of the Nyiha were traditionally famous as predominantly hunters. The Safwa and Fipa combined a strong hunting element with their cultivation-based precolonial economies.<sup>133</sup>

Activities like fishing and honey-procuring, too, seem to have been more popular and economically significant than is often recognized. Fishing was, for understandable reasons, concentrated on the coast, great lakes and rivers. The coastal ‘Swahili’ set out to sea in their outrigger canoes and threw out their fishing-lines while the Digo had a different kind of canoe and used mainly drag-nets. Closer to the shore people fished with basket traps.<sup>134</sup> Similar methods and devices were used by many inland peoples along the lakes and rivers, even if the intensity of fishing evidently varied

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131. Godfrey Dale, ‘An Account of the Principal Customs and Habits of the Natives inhabiting the Bondei Country ...’, *JAI*, 25 (1896), p. 206 (Bondei — quotation); Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 296—300 (general); Hurel, *Religion et Vie domestique*, pp. 62, 74 (Kerebe); Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 97 (Nyamwezi); Itandala, *History of the Babinza*, p. 164 (Sukuma).

132. Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, pp. 37 ff. (general), 86—87 (Makua); Crosse-Upcott, *Social Structure*, pp. 23 (quotation), 50, 71 (Ngindo); Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 16; Lieder, *Von der Mbamba-Bai*, p. 129 and Adams, *Lindi*, p. 38 (Mwera).

133. M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, pp. 28, 31 (Nyiha), 41 (Safwa); Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 261 ff. and Jean Trenchard, ‘La chasse chez les noirs du Süd-Ufipa et du Mambwe’, ms., ca 1920, APB (Fipa).

134. Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, pp. 186—187.

from place to place.<sup>135</sup> A more indigenous method had been developed by the Jiji fishermen of Lake Tanganyika. They caught great amounts of small *dagaa* fish on clear nights by displaying torches in order to entice fish swarms to approach the vessel and scooping the catch up with nets.<sup>136</sup> Honey-gathering was practised in several parts of the country. As Burton observed, honey abounded throughout the country and “near the villages log-hives ... hang from every tall and shady tree. Bees also swarm in the jungles ...”<sup>137</sup> As this implies, honey was produced basically in two ways: either by collecting the produce of wild bees in forests or keeping bees in hives near settlements. The first method was preferred, among others, by the Maasai and Gorowa (‘Fiom’),<sup>138</sup> while active bee-keeping was practised, usually in combination with collecting, by several peoples all over the country.<sup>139</sup>

Salt production can also be touched upon in connection with hunting and gathering even if it often involved a higher degree of processing than these, and many writers have therefore found it more akin to handicrafts. Salt, or its equivalent, was gained from various sources and destined either for local use or, in some specialized cases, to be traded over longer distances. It was extracted from saline plants, earth or water. The most common source for local use were probably plants. Most peoples, in particular in the

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135. E.g. Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 257—261 (south-eastern Tanganyika); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 86 (Buhaya), 124 (Buzinza), 128 (Kerebe), 148—149 (Sukumaland), 201 (Mara); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 43 (Kerebe).

136. Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 258—259. Cf. Hore, Twelwe Tribes, p. 11. For a modern description, see Nobuyuki Hata, ‘Ndagaa Fishing and Settlement Formation along Lake Tanganyika’, *KUAS*, 2 (1968), pp. 39—41.

137. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 287.

138. Hollis, *Masai*, p. 318; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 177.

139. E.g. Dundas, *Kilimanjaro*, pp. 274—277; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 211 (Buzinza and Bukerebe — but cf. Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 112 implying the predominance of collecting wild honey in Buzinza); Reichard, Wanjamuesi, p. 325 (Nyamwezi); Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 268—269 and Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 34 (Lake Tanganyika); Crosse-Upcott, *Social Structure*, pp. 50 ff., esp. p. 60 (Ngindo); Busse, *Forschungsreise*, pp. 104, 114 (south).

southern and western parts of the country, had by trial and error gained a thorough knowledge of saline plants in their areas. These were simply burnt, ashes were collected and salt, or potash, was dissolved from the ash with water.<sup>140</sup> Examples of exploitation of saline earth could be found for example in several parts of Ugogo and Unyamwezi. Soil was collected and hot water filtered through it. The resulting brine was boiled and evaporated, leaving salt behind. This method could sometimes yield salt also for long-distance trade.<sup>141</sup> Sea salt could be extracted from water on the coast. It was done by directing the water into pits or holes dug for the purpose and subsequently evaporating it.<sup>142</sup> However, such ways of producing salt were labour-consuming and often produced only moderate amounts of inferior quality salt. "You may love salt but you hate salt production," it was said in Unyamwezi.<sup>143</sup> This explains the popularity of the great salt works like those at Lake Eyasi or at the Uvinza springs on the river Malagarasi. The surroundings of Eyasi, like the other Rift Valley lakes, contained large quantities of salt and soda left almost bare by natural evaporation in a hot climate. It was collected by sweeping the damp saline soil up with the hands and squeezing surplus moisture out of it. Eyasi salt was gathered not only by neighbouring peoples but also by the Sukuma and perhaps even peoples of the eastern Nyanza hundreds of kilometres away.<sup>144</sup> By far the most important salt works were, however, the Uvinza salt springs. They had been used for centuries

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140. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 102—103. He subsumes all salt production under 'industrial supports', *ibid.*, pp. 92—105.

141. For methods, see Brian M. Fagan and John E. Yellen, 'Ivuna: Ancient Salt-Working in Southern Tanzania', *Azania*, 3 (1968), pp. 30—31 and Herrmann, reprinted in Gottberg, ed., *Unyamwezi*, pp. 104—105. For places, in addition to those mentioned in Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 98—102, see Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 193 (Mahenge) and Lieder, Von der Mbampa-Bai, pp. 118—119 (Masasi).

142. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 402; Bornhardt, *Oberflächengestaltung*, p. 380.

143. Spellig, Wanjamwesi, p. 249.

144. Götzen, *Durch Afrika*, p. 56; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 247; Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 147, Itandala, History of the Babinza, pp. 200—201. For references to other salt lakes, see Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 189, 246—247.



but their busiest period coincided with the height of the caravan trade in the 19th century. The saline brine was moved from the springs, kept in big holes in the ground till it became sufficiently concentrated, and boiled.<sup>145</sup>

## Crafts

Handicrafts were in the European eyes much more conspicuous activities than hunting or gathering. Consequently we know more about them. Activities such as ironworking, cotton weaving and pottery were widely commented upon by early travellers and residents and several records have survived. Yet it is not easy to get a coherent picture or make a balanced judgement of the distribution and state of handicrafts on the eve of colonial conquest on the basis of available sources. Observations by fleeting visitors are again superficial and heavily biased. There is also an interesting diversity of views between the writers. While some bewailed the "primitiveness" of African handicrafts, others were surprised to find their level so advanced. Burton, with all his anti-African prejudice, claimed that Africans were "an unmechanical race" whose industry had "scarcely passed the limits of savage invention."<sup>146</sup> Others, while acknowledging the simplicity of most tools, were genuinely impressed by the skill of Tanzanian craftsmen and women. "As the tool is extremely simple, the dexterity must often be amazingly developed," wrote Blohm from Unyamwezi.<sup>147</sup> No doubt, a considerable part of the variation in comments might be explained by the differing prejudices of the authors, but there is no reason to deny that it also reflects real differences between the crafts themselves. They were far from uniform throughout the country.

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145. Sutton and Roberts, Uvinza, esp. pp. 60—62.

146. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 309.

147. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 137.

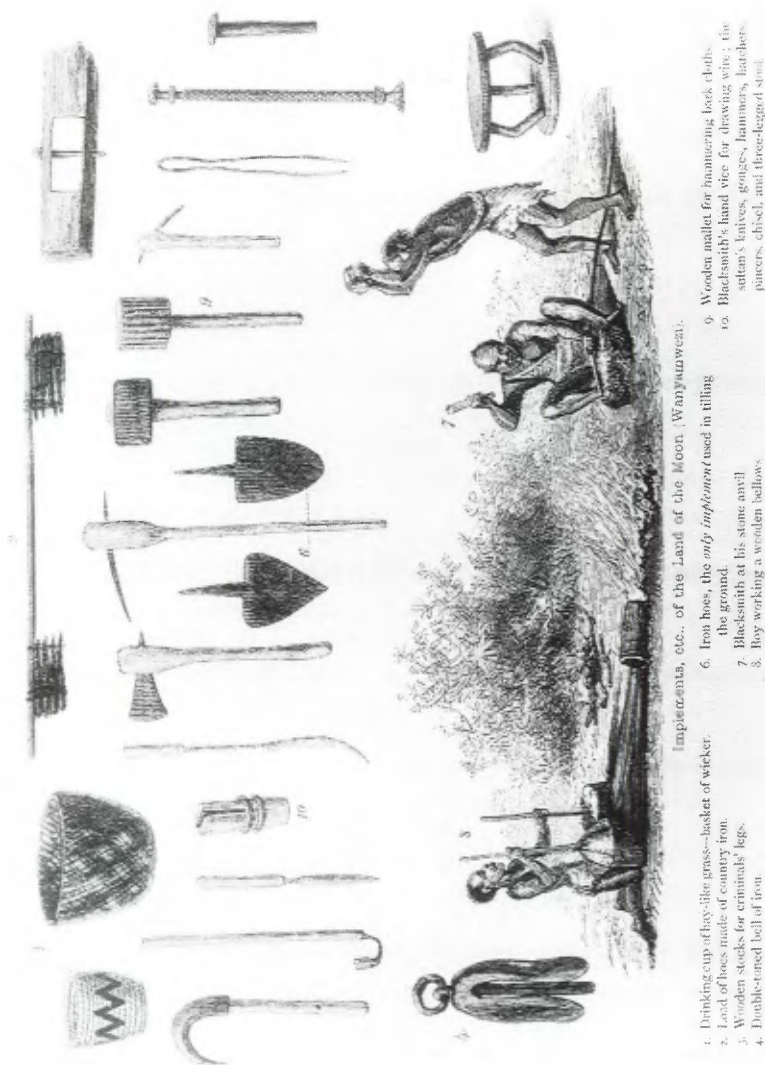


Plate 7. Blacksmiths and products of handicraft from Unyamwezi in 1861. Reproduced with original captions from John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*.

## Ironworking

The most spectacular African craft was ironworking. In the absence of a transitional phase of copper or bronze, ironworking was the major form of metallurgy in precolonial Tanzania. To be sure, considerable amounts of copper were imported into the country in the 19th century at latest, both from Katanga (in bar form) and from the coast (wire), and special craftsmen manufactured bangles, necklaces and other ornaments, as well as chiefly symbols from it.<sup>148</sup> But there were no known copper deposits and no copper smelting in the Tanzanian area. Instead, there were several areas in which iron was available and smelted, and blacksmiths forging iron were present, if not everywhere, at least within the reach of a great number of the inhabitants. The distinction between iron smelting and iron forging, although sometimes blurred in the older literature, is crucial for an understanding of the development of African iron metallurgy. Smelting suffered most during the colonial era, when it practically ceased, but it was less common already in the precolonial period. It was an exacting and highly specialized activity surrounded with much ritual, and could be undertaken only where enough ore was available, either as ironstone or mixed with clay or sand. Such sources were relatively few, yet there were found in various parts of the country.<sup>149</sup>

Iron smelting was done in furnaces which varied greatly in shape and mode of operation. The evidence is fragmentary and the descriptions often confused, and the ethnographic and historical material does not warrant precise classification. The whole issue clearly needs much further research, but to clarify the discussion

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148. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 312—313, 387; Richter, 'Notizen über Lebensweise, Zeitrechnung, Industrie und Handwerk der Bewohner des Bezirks Bukoba', *MDS*, 13 (1900), p. 123 (Bukoba); R. Stern, 'Die Gewinnung des Eisens bei den Nyamwezi', app. to Franz Stuhlmann, *Handwerk und Industrie in Ostafrika*. Hamburg, 1910, pp. 158—160 (Nyamwezi); Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 54—57.

149. For locations of iron smelting and iron deposits, in addition to the sources in the footnotes below, see Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 269; Dantz, 'Die Reisen des Bergassessors Dr. Dantz in Deutsch-Ostafrika in den Jahren 1898, 1899, 1900', *MDS*, 16 (1903), p. 117; Roberts, *Nyamwezi Trade*, pp. 44—45; Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 82—83.

here we can, initially and heuristically, divide the iron smelting furnaces into two basic variants: 1) smaller kilns which functioned with forced draft (produced by bellows), and 2) taller kilns which operated by natural or induced draft (suction). The smaller kilns can be further sub-divided into what can be called pit furnaces and more proper forced draft kilns.

To be sure, descriptions of smaller kilns are usually garbled and the dividing line between pit furnaces and more proper kilns is bound to remain hazy. But I wish to make this distinction because there are several sources from different parts of the country which insist that smelting was actually done in a furnace which was basically a pit or hole in the ground. Often it may have been surrounded with some sort of a wall even if this is not entirely clear from the sources.<sup>150</sup> According to the most detailed descriptions, charcoal was placed in the pit and lighted. Iron ore was added and covered with another layer of burning charcoal. The fire was sustained and the temperature driven up by bellows directing the air to the furnace through tuyères, or pipes. More ore and charcoal was added as smelting proceeded. This, at least, was the process as described by Last among the Itumba smelters of Usagara in 1882. Burton had depicted a similar procedure 25 years earlier without locating it. On the basis of later sources one can speculate that this was the method of iron smelting in the few places where it was practised in the eastern and central parts of the country, namely in central Unyamwezi and the Pare mountains in addition to Usagara.<sup>151</sup> The Irangi iron smelting technique may have been similar but this cannot be determined on the basis of the evasive early descriptions.<sup>152</sup>

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150. Stern, *Gewinnung*, p. 155 is the only source which explicitly mentions walling in pit furnaces of the 'Wanyamweli'. Kotz reports that the Pare furnaces consisted of rudimentary stone walls which were some 30 cm high but mentions nothing of the pit, *Banne der Furcht*, pp. 138—140 (cf. sources in the following footnote).

151. Last, *Wa-itumba Iron-workers*, pp. 587—588; Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 311—312 and *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 311—312; Stuhlmann, *Handwerk*, p. 51 (general); Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 161—162 (Nyamwezi); Decken, *Reisen*, II, p. 19 and Baumann, *Usambara*, pp. 232—233 (Pare).

152. Baumstark, *Warangi*, p. 58; Obst, *Vorläufiger Bericht*, *MGGH*, 27 (1913), pp. 166—167.



More proper bellows-operated forced draft kilns were probably more widespread than pit furnaces. They were of moderate size, usually a little over one metre in height. They were usually built over pits and worked on broadly the same principles as the pit furnace, but in addition to being more properly constructed, some of them employed more sophisticated means of separating the bloom from the slag. Information on the number of smelts required to produce workable iron is conflicting. Many accounts mention, or imply, only one smelt, but others insist on one or more resmelts. Such kilns were built of different materials. The most famous iron-smelters and workers of precolonial Tanzania, the Rongo smiths of Geita, made the walls of their kilns from slabs of termites' nests plastered with mud.<sup>153</sup> Clay and mud were common kiln materials elsewhere in the Lake Nyanza region, from Mpororo and Karagwe to North Mara on the other side of the lake. In Kiziba the kilns were reported to have been made out of stones and mud.<sup>154</sup> On the Kipengere mountains north of Lake Nyasa peoples such as the Pangwa, Kinga, Bena und Matengo were smelting iron in clay kilns about one metre in height.<sup>155</sup> Similar if somewhat smaller furnaces were used in Ungoni. The Masasi and Makua furnaces hollowed out of ant hills can perhaps also be included in the same broad category.<sup>156</sup>

A very different-looking way of smelting iron was that based on the tall *ilungu* kilns utilizing natural draft. They were used by the Fipa, Mambwe, Lungu, Nyiha and other peoples of the Nyasa-

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153. Schynse, *Letzte Reisen*, pp. 38—39; C.C. de Rosemond, 'Iron Smelting in the Kahama District', *TNR*, 16 (1943), pp. 82—83. Cf., however, Grant, *Walk*, pp. 130—131 and Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 117 whose formulations would indicate more of a pit-type furnace.

154. Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, pp. 414—416; Rehse, *Kiziba*, pp. 85—87. Cf. Schmidt, *Historical Archaeology*, p. 271 who claims, without presenting direct evidence, that Rehse's view is "an idealized account with posed, inaccurate pictures." According to Richter, Notizen, p. 122 the Haya furnace was more of a pit type.

155. Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 264 ff., 289; Bornhardt, *Oberflächengestaltung*, p. 80.

156. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 169; Maples, Masasi, p. 342; Steere, in Rowley, *Twenty Years*, p. 236; Lieder, Von der Mbampa-Bai, p. 129.

Tanganyika corridor and to the south-west of it. The cone-shaped kilns were made of anthill mud and placed in the vicinity of anthills. They were more than three metres in height. Bellows may have been used in adjusting the initial fire — sources are conflicting — but the main operating principle was natural draft by suction. The metal produced by an *ilungu* was not pure enough to be forged as such and had to be resmelted in another, much smaller kiln called *kitengwe*. This was similar to an inverted clay vessel with a diameter of 30—40 cm and with about the same height. It was operated by forced draft from bellows.<sup>157</sup>

While the methods of iron smelting varied considerably it is reasonable to suppose that much of the variation reflects differences in the available ores and building materials. Precolonial iron-smelting methods also shared certain basic characteristics. The most striking similarity was that burning materials always included charcoal even if it was often combined with grass or wood (and of course with the ubiquitous *dawa* or 'medicine'). This, obviously, was not only because of its energy content but also because of its chemical properties. But the way the process worked is not entirely clear. In the ancient European iron smelting method the carbon monoxide contained in charcoal consumed the oxygen during the smelting process. Thus the oxide ore was deprived of its oxygen, leaving the metallic iron behind. However, it has been suggested that the African method of iron smelting differed in important respects from the traditional European one and may have been the result of an evolutionary path of its own. The archaeologist Peter Schmidt and his co-workers have developed a hypothesis that the Haya smelters of Kiziba and Kyamtwara some

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157. Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 297; Wallace, Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau, p. 601; Dantz, Reisen, *MDS*, 16 (1903), pp. 138—139; Lechaptois, *Tanganyika*, pp. 235 ff.; A. Wyckaert, 'Forgerons païens et forgerons chrétiens au Tanganika', *Anthropos*, 9 (1914), pp. 373—374, 377; R. H. Creig, 'Iron Smelting in Fipa', *TNR*, 4 (1937), pp. 77—81; R. Wise, 'Iron Smelting in Ufipa', *TNR*, 50 (1958), pp. 106—111; Beverly and P.W.G. Brock, 'Iron Working amongst the Nyiha of Southwestern Tanganyika', *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 20 (1965), pp. 97—100; Marcia Wright, 'Towards a Critical History of Iron-Makers in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania', mimeo, n.d. (but ca 1982).

two millenia ago had employed a very advanced smelting technique based on what is called preheating. By placing the tuyères, or vent pipes, partly inside the smelting furnace the Haya smelters were effectively preheating the air blown into the furnace. According to the Schmidt hypothesis, this pushed the smelting temperature higher, up to 1 400 centigrades, which had the effect of increasing the fuel efficiency of the operation; less wood was needed to produce more iron. Another unique feature of the Haya process was, according to Schmidt et al., that the bloom was formed by different chemical processes and thus the end result was not a spongy bloom but a crystalline substance with higher carbon content, termed by the researchers carbon-steel bloom. They also suggest that in addition to the Haya, other peoples such as the Fipa may have used the preheating technique.<sup>158</sup>

The Schmidt argument is couched in highly technical terms inaccessible to a layman and its internal logic is not easy to follow. On the basis of our brief ethnographic survey let us merely note that if the placement of the tuyères partly inside the furnace actually indicates preheating, then it is not impossible that this technique was in wide use in precolonial Tanzania. The sources are rather evasive in this respect but a few mention, or at least hint at, such a placement.<sup>159</sup> But obviously much more research is needed before such assumptions, and their meaning, can be judged.

Whatever the method and process of smelting, the iron produced was taken over by blacksmiths who forged it with sustained heating and hammering until it was pure and malleable enough to be given the desired shape. In many places hoe blades were a main product. The greatest fame was acquired by the big heart-shaped Rongo hoes, but others such as those from Irangi and smaller ones from Pare also became widely known. Not all the hoes ended up in Tanzanian fields; the hoe blade was also a form of storage in which

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158. Schmidt and Avery, Complex Iron Smelting; Schmidt and Childs, Innovation and Industry, esp. pp. 54—55, 92. Cf. Schmidt, *Historical Archaeology*, pp. 235 ff.

159. For indirect evidence of the Kinga-Pangwa type of kiln, see Bornhardt, *Oberflächengestaltung*, p. 80 and Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 274 and for more direct evidence for the Fipa type of kiln, Wyckaert, *Forgerons*, drawing facing p. 374 and Wright, *Critical History*, p. 8.

iron was kept and transported to be reworked elsewhere. Caravans heading for the coast equipped themselves with hoes and used them as currency on the way. Local smiths were reported to prefer African-made iron to the imported variety. It was, "to be sure, always impure and somewhat flaky in places, but highly resilient and easier to work than our usual wrought iron."<sup>160</sup> It was turned into tools and arms, in addition to hoes mainly axes, knives, spears, assegais, arrow-heads and needles. Also iron thread was manufactured by drawing and worked into ornaments.<sup>161</sup> The tools of the smiths were extremely simple; hammers and anvils were usually big stones, seldom iron bars. But the quality of the products often surprised travellers. Complaints of the low level of African craftsmanship<sup>162</sup> are outweighed by appreciative comments such as this by Stuhlmann:<sup>163</sup>

Despite their primitive instruments many smiths have brought off quite excellent results; consider the beautiful Masai spears, the arrows with fine barbs, delicate tubes for tobacco pipes, decorative iron wire necklets, fine wire coils for winding bangles and other things! The negro has a decided talent for forging. Even before German rule penetrated here I saw people replacing the broken hammer of a rifle from old iron, and even reproducing the broken spring of a modern breech-loading shotgun from parts of an old rifle lock.

## Clothmaking, pottery, woodwork, wickerwork

Another major yet locally specialized craft was cloth-making. There were basically two kinds of cloth, bark and cotton. Bark fabrics had been widespread in the western, central and southern parts of the country but were confined to the north-west in the early colonial period.<sup>164</sup> Cotton-weaving was found mainly in the

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160. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 233—234.

161. For thread drawing, see Grant, *Walk*, p. 87 and Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, p. 420.

162. E.g. Giraud, *Lacs*, pp. 85—86.

163. Stuhlmann, *Handwerk*, p. 52.

164. *Ibid.*, p. 38. For methods of bark-cloth making, see Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 32 and Richter, *Notizen*, p. 124.



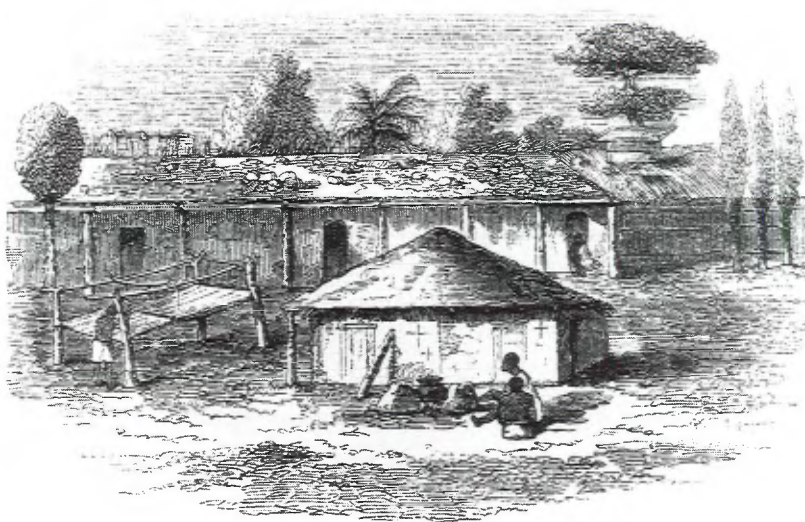


Plate 8. Cotton weaving with a loom (left) in a Nyamwezi village in the late 1850s.

central and south-western parts of the country, between lakes Nyasa, Tanganyika and Rukwa. Major concentrations of cotton growing and weaving were reported from parts of Unyamwezi and Shinyanga, Ujiji and the Rukwa valley as far as Mbozi.<sup>165</sup> Cotton grown there was most probably the bush-like *Gossypium herbacium* which was planted when the field was first taken into cultivation and the left to grow. It was picked and cleaned by hand, spun into a coarse thread<sup>166</sup> and woven into cloth with a simple loom. This was often large enough to be worn as a dress. The most common pattern seems to have been stripes in black and white and in other colours, but checks were also popular. It has been suggested that Tanzanian looms were mostly of the so-called fixed heddle type which was common over a wide area from North Africa to the Zambezi river. Surviving descriptions are not always clear, but on their basis it is not impossible that this indeed was the

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165. Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 318; Götzen, *Durch Afrika*, p. 68; Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 552; Willis, *State*, pp. 14, 152.

loom in use at least in Unyamwezi and the south-west.<sup>167</sup> There were also examples of other, more complicated looms from Unyamwezi. And in a village in Ujiji Hore was impressed to encounter "a method and work far superior" to what he had seen before: the lathe to drive home the weft was worked by two people.<sup>168</sup> There was some disagreement as to the quality of East African cotton cloth. Burton dismissed the Nyamwezi produce by claiming that the "loose texture ... admits wind and rain; when dry it is rough and unpleasant, when wet, heavy, comfortless as leather, and it cannot look clean, as it is never bleached," but Baumann praised it as "an uncommonly stout fabric." The Rukwa cloth was reported to have been "open and heavy, but strong and much more durable than the cheap calico and coloured prints which (were) rapidly taking its place."<sup>169</sup>

Other important crafts included pottery, wickerwork and woodwork. Pots of varying sizes for differing purposes were being made all over the country, but the potters of the west, in particular those on the north-eastern shore of Lake Nyasa and in Buha and Karagwe, were most widely known for the high quality of their work. Because African pot-making was undertaken without the help of a wheel it was an activity demanding great manual skill. Even if there were many local variations in the details, the basic procedure was fairly similar: the clay was collected and pounded, shaped into a pot, decorated, dried in the sun and fired. A special branch of ceramics was the manufacture of pipe-heads in which even Burton found that East Africans "excelled." Most of them were made of a particular type of clay, some, much rarer, of soft stone. Both were hand-made and fired in much the same way as the pots.<sup>170</sup> Wickerwork consisted mainly of baskets and sometimes

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167. For suggestions, see Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, p. 107 and Willis, *State*, p. 159, quoting A. Ling Roth; for descriptions see Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 310; Wallace, *Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau*, p. 613; and Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 511. See also plate 8.

168. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 152—154; Hore, *Tanganyika*, pp. 85—86.

169. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 311; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 232; Wallace, *Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau*, p. 613.

170. For descriptions, see Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 313—315; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 413—417; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 155—158; Willis, *State*, p. 155.

mats. Baskets were plaited throughout the country even if here too some regions were known for their superior products. The early observers were often astonished by the tightness of the baskets, which made it possible to keep liquid in them for considerable periods.<sup>171</sup> Likewise wooden household utensils and stools etc. were made almost everywhere, but some places specialized in products of a certain kind. Chagga bowls, mugs, platters, trays and eating and drinking vessels “in endless variety” were admired for “displaying great taste,” while the regions west of Victoria Nyanza became known for their wooden vessels used for milking.<sup>172</sup>

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171. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 316—317; Kiyenze, *Transformation of Handicrafts*, pp. 56—57; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 148—150; Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, p. 250.

172. New, *Life, Wanderings*, p. 455 (Chagga); Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, pp. 138—146 (Nyamwezi); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 88 (West Lake).

## 7. Social organization of production

Precolonial Tanzanian, and other African, societies are often regarded as 'self-sustained societies' based on 'subsistence economies'. Although these are loose concepts used in a variety of ways, they imply a situation in which the people themselves produced what they needed, division of labour and economic exchange were rudimentary or non-existent, and there was little or no surplus left above the fulfilment of the immediate needs of the producers. These ideas may be suggestive at the surface level, but ultimately they oversimplify and mask some fundamental structural features of African societies. True, there cannot be much doubt that the great majority of the people did indeed produce most of the necessities they had to consume in order to survive. Regardless of whether the society was based on agriculture, stock-keeping or hunting and gathering, or any combination of them, almost all the people were engaged in these major activities and derived their subsistence from them; other economic activities were only subsidiary and complementary. In societies based on agriculture, even master craftsmen were cultivators primarily and craftsmen only secondarily. Only the top leaders of the more centrally governed societies could subsist without direct participation in agricultural production. However, people did not produce everything they consumed nor did they live by necessities alone. We do not know whether there had ever been 'subsistence economies' in the strict sense of the word, but during the 19th century the idea certainly grew obsolete in the Tanzanian area. At the beginning of colonialism no households were encountered which produced and consumed everything they used.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, people did not produce alone, nor did they all participate in production in the same way and to the same degree. There was a well-defined division of labour within the societies. People

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1. Stuhlmann, *Handwerk*, p. 2; Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, p. 136.



produced in groups, entered into certain relations with each other, and there were differences in their access to the fruits of production.

## Groups and relations of production

Production groups and production relations in precolonial societies in the Tanzanian area are not easily defined. They were not exclusive but complex, overlapping with other social groups and relations, in particular with those of kinship and neighbourhood. There are good grounds for arguing that the basic productive unit in most precolonial societies was a group composed of a woman and her unmarried children, to which a man was attached as a 'whole' (monogamous) or 'partial' (polygamous) spouse.<sup>2</sup> There seem to have been communally cultivated fields, too, but they were quite exceptional. I have discovered only three rather obscure references to communal fields. A German officer reported from Dunda in Uzaramo, without additional comment, that the people "usually" worked on common rice, maize or cassava fields and that the products were shared for consumption. Shorter tells in his retrospective account from Ukimbu that communal cultivation was practised outside the fortified villages of the late 19th century and that the food crops were divided. Redmond writes that after the Ngoni had settled down in Songea and forced their captives to cultivate for them, the plots "came increasingly to be communally worked."<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere the matrifocal household or family group — we do not have an adequate concept for it — was reported as the basic unit of not only production but also consumption, tending its own field and consuming most of its own produce. This was the case in agricultural societies, whether as members of the kinship

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2. In general, see Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 53—54.

3. Krenzler, *Ein Jahr*, pp. 116—117; Shorter, *Chiefskip*, pp. 119—120; Redmond, *Political History*, p. 55. For the Ngoni, cf. the statements by Lieder above, ch. 6, fn. 16 and Häfliger, below, fn. 53. Also Krenzler may, in actual fact, refer to cultivation by slave labour, see Burton and M.-L. Swantz in fn. 37, ch. 3 above.

group they were residing with,<sup>4</sup> or whether they gained access to land only through their husbands.<sup>5</sup> Also among the pastoral Maasai the wives of a man maintained separate households within a kraal.<sup>6</sup> Although the strictness of ties binding the man to the family or household group varied with the nature of the society and the marriage, the pre-eminence of the matrifocal, male-supported unit emerges quite clearly.

Yet I should like to object to the labelling of precolonial economies as household or domestic economies consisting of small self-sufficient entities. The dominance of small plots or family herds controlled by matrifocal groups does not mean that there were no economic relations reaching beyond the confines of the primary production groups. On the contrary, such relations were established at several levels and they were essential to the functioning of the economy. Matrifocal household or family groups were not only social units in their own right but also simultaneously embedded in larger social groups and structures. They were constituents of wider groups based on kinship (descent groups), common residence (neighbourhood or domestic groups) and common political institutions (societies). Ultimately such groups could survive only as members of these larger units. They gained access to the most important means of production, land in agricultural societies and herds in pastoral ones, only through kinship and political institutions. Conversely, they handed over a part of their products from household fields and herds to their elders and leaders as a tribute. And in spite of the rarity of communal fields a great deal of communal labour was undertaken beyond the limits of the household units. It took place either

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4. Kiyenze, *Transformation of Handicrafts*, pp. 32—34 (Doe and Kwere; but he speaks of two different plots within the household, one belonging to the man, the other to the woman); Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 60 ff. (south-eastern matrilineal societies).

5. E.g. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 33 (Shambaa); Claus, Wagogo, p. 18 (Gogo); Itandala, *History of the Babinza*, pp. 170 ff. (Sukuma); M. Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 50 (Nyakusa in the 1930s); Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 27 (Rukwa peoples); Willis, *State*, pp. 105—106 (Fipa); Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, p. 16.

6. Merker, *Masai*, pp. 23, 27—28; Jacobs, *Traditional Political Organization*, pp. 183—184.

reciprocally within the framework of individually held fields or as *corvée* labour in public institutions and on the fields of leaders.

## Control of land

I argued above that the ritual control of land was vested with political leaders.<sup>7</sup> Let us now look at the actual control of land. The first point to note is that in the cosmology of precolonial societies there does not seem to have been a clear dividing line between ritual and actual control. I have no direct evidence for this suggestion but infer it from the fact that in many societies territorial powers of rulers appeared not only symbolic but real and strong. It was maintained that all land 'belonged' to the kings and chiefs, or that these 'owned' the land. However, more detailed scrutiny generally shows these assertions to be metaphorical and rooted in the ritual control discussed above. True, there were societies in which political leaders had a strong claim to the area over which they ruled. In some places they held the right to retake land from cultivators under certain circumstances, for instance if these committed a crime or left the land unused for an extended period. The most extensive prerogatives in this respect were exercised by the Haya kings. This is not surprising in the light of what was said earlier of the man-made nature of soils in Buhaya. The Haya kings could not only banish cultivators for fairly trivial reasons but also convert individually held *kibanja* land into larger *nyarubanja* holdings which were handed over to cattle-owning *Hinda* aristocrats as sort of a fief. Yet we are informed that at least in the early colonial period Haya cultivators could transfer land among themselves within a village by selling or pledging. In Kiziba, if someone was evicted from his land by the king but not expelled from the kingdom, he had to be provided with a new banana grove elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Other localities where leaders gained wide powers in land allocation with the development of land

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7. Above, ch. 5, p. 195.

8. Richter, Bezirk Bukoba, p. 88; H. Autenrieth, 'Recht der Kissibaleute (Bezirk Bukoba)', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechts-wissenschaft* (hereafter *ZVRW*), 21 (1909), pp. 375—376; Kaijage, Kyamutwara, pp. 557—558; Rehse, *Kiziba*, pp. 98—99.

scarcity were the Ha kingdoms.<sup>9</sup>

Normally there was no lack of arable land of decent quality. A household group could claim a sufficient plot and have its usufructuary rights guaranteed as long as it kept the land under cultivation. "Land was 'owned' by the chief only in a formal way. In reality the local community through its elders owned and controlled land and various aspects of its use," writes Tambila about what is now the Rukwa region.<sup>10</sup> This seems to have been the common case in agricultural societies. Land was obtained in two main ways: it was cleared from the bush or inherited. Clearing was naturally the main method in those grain areas where shifting or recurrent cultivation was practised. But in the late precolonial period land was still available for clearing also in more densely settled banana regions like Kilimanjaro and Usambara. Members of the community could usually clear land without restriction; strangers had to obtain permission from a local elder or higher leader.<sup>11</sup> In inheritance the guiding principle was that land should remain within the lineage or within whatever descent group was operative in this respect.<sup>12</sup> The Luguru, for instance, were reported to have been composed of about 50 exogamous 'clans' and some 800 'sub-clans', the latter of which were "landholding corporate groups."<sup>13</sup> The Chagga had "non-corporate (but usually exogamous) patrilineal clans" with "corporate" member lineages allocating land (and

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9. Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, pp. 14, 17—18. The question was of middle-level leaders of local origin known as *Buteko*. It is unclear whether they had the power to retake land.

10. Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 51. For further evidence, see Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 222—230 (several examples) and Beverley, Wagogo, p. 216 (Gogo).

11. Above, pp. 222 ff.; Andrew B. Lyall, 'The Social Origins of Property and Contract: A Study of East Africa Before 1918', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1980, pp. 125—128; Storch, 'Sitten, Gebräuche und Rechtspflege bei den Bewohnern Usambaras und Pares', *MDS*, 8 (1895), p. 318; Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, pp. 109—110.

12. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 270 ff.

13. James L. Brain, 'Symbolic Rebirth: The *Mwali* Rite among the Luguru of Eastern Tanzania', *Africa*, 48 (1978), p. 177. The time reference is to the late colonial period but scattered data suggest that the basic set-up was similar in the precolonial period.



cattle).<sup>14</sup> Women, the ultimate cultivators, were allocated land as members of their original descent groups (matrilineal societies) or of those of their husbands (patrilineal societies).<sup>15</sup> The sale and mortgage of land seems to have been possible in some societies but remained relatively rare. It became most common on the coast where the introduction of coconut and other plantations gave land new exchange value.<sup>16</sup> In the banana areas of the interior the man who cleared a new plot could himself decide how to transfer it. However, if he passed it as inheritance to his children, which must have been the most common procedure, it became lineage land and subject to restrictions in transfer.<sup>17</sup> Thus, perhaps with the exception of the vicinity of major coastal towns, it is misleading to speak of 'land ownership' in the sense of exclusive rights, individual or corporate, making land a commodity to be treated at the will of the 'owner'. Rather, access to land was regulated by a complicated "series of retreating and reversionary rights" from the final user through the descent group up to the leader of the society.<sup>18</sup>

## Communal labour

Household or family groups were not self-sufficient in labour either; communal labour was undertaken in a variety of forms in both agricultural and non-agricultural tasks. Sources are scattered but they indicate a fairly wide use of it. In the grain areas communal work was resorted to mainly in such labour-intensive stages of cultivation as clearing, weeding, harvesting and threshing as well as in some non-agricultural works. Much of the work was

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14. Moore, in idem and Puritt, *Chagga and Meru*, pp. 32—35 (quotation p. 32).

15. Above, fns 4 and 5.

16. Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, pp. 48, 194; Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, p. 115; Eberstein, *Rechtsanschauungen*, pp. 170—171 (peoples of the Kilwa coast); Lyall, *Origins*, pp. 244—250.

17. Wohlrab, 'Das Recht der Schambala', *ArA*, 16 (1918), p. 174; Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 302—305.

18. Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*. Oxford, 1982, p. 41 (1st ed. 1965).

undertaken on the basis of reciprocity. Members of households worked successively on each others' fields, receiving food and beer for compensation. As Burton noticed, "(i)n some parts of the country they labour in gangs, each in his turn providing the rest with pombe (beer -JK) and flesh till his fields are ready."<sup>19</sup> People were recruited for communal labour by activating groups based on kinship or neighbourhood, alone or in combination with each other.<sup>20</sup> Also forms of non-reciprocal common labour were developing. The most prominent of the latter were the working-cum-dancing groups of young Sukuma men, in particular in northern parts of Sukumaland. These groups travelled around assisting older people in cultivation and were compensated with grain or cattle.<sup>21</sup> In the banana areas communal labour concentrated on heavier non-agricultural tasks like house-building and maintenance of irrigation canals. Building of houses seems to have been undertaken reciprocally between neighbours or kinspeople.<sup>22</sup> Irrigation canals were as a rule dug and maintained communally by those who benefited from them. On Kilimanjaro the unit responsible for the canals was called "water co-operative" by Gutmann. It was a territorial organization, bringing together

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19. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 396.

20. For descriptions of various incidents and systems of common labour, see e.g. Kiyenze, *Transformation fo Handicrafts*, pp. 32—34 (matrilin-eal peoples); Grohs, *Kisazi*, p. 30 (Zigua); Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 66—67 (south-eastern matrilineal peoples); Gutmann, *Feldbausitten*, p. 489 (Chagga, housebuilding and crop harvest); Grant, *Walk*, p. 86 (Nyamwezi, threshing — see also the cover); John Salaita, 'Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Unyanyembe', M.A. thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1975, p. 3 (Nyamwezi); Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 28 and Willis, *State*, pp. 123—126 (Rukwa peoples); Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 69—71 (Pangwa); M. Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 50—51 (Nyakusa, 1930s).

21. Mwanza (Gunzert) to Government, 20 March 1914, TNA G8/139; Waziri Juma, 'The Sukuma Societies for Young Men and Women', *TNR*, 54 (1960), pp. 27—29. It is not quite clear when such groups were first formed; according to Juma, p. 27, they are believed to have been in existence since the Sukuma learnt to live together in villages.

22. Gutmann, *Feldbausitten*, p. 489 and idem, *Recht*, pp. 264—265 (Chagga).

members of the clan who had originally dug the canal with more recent settlers. Work was done together by all members of the co-operative (*Wassergenossen*), meaning presumably all men of working age. In Pare the whole population, including women, was reported to have taken part in the maintenance of the canals.<sup>23</sup>

The reciprocity involved in cooperative labour was more complex than it appeared at first sight. This was because labour services were mostly exchanged for *pombe*. Participants in occasions of cooperative labour, whether they were recruited among kinspeople or neighbours, were rewarded with a *pombe* party. As Burton observed, "a labourer will not work unless beer is provided for him."<sup>24</sup> This seems to have been practically universal. "He who brews no beer expects no help, such is the saying," reported Elise Kootz-Kretschmer from Usafwa.<sup>25</sup> It is difficult to find any source contradicting this. But the apparent form of exchange, services for goods, should not conceal the fact, hinted by Kootz-Kretschmer's formulation, that what in fact was exchanged here (as ultimately everywhere) was labour for labour: living labour for labour recently embodied in *pombe*. Brewing of beer was hard work, undertaken mainly by women. The normal brewing procedure took five days. Women had to prepare great amounts of flour, fetch the water to mix the flour with, move the liquid in fermentation from one type of vessel to another, stir it regularly and filter the fermented gruel through sacks made of palm strips to get the final product.<sup>26</sup> The obvious implication from this is that the greatest amounts of cooperative labour were allocated to those households which could brew and offer the greatest amounts of *pombe*.

In activities like cattle-herding and hunting, communal, or co-

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23. Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 414—415; Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, pp. 110—112 (Pare). See also Ankerman, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 233 (Arusha) and Lyall, *Origins*, pp. 103—105.

24. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 335.

25. Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 99. For further evidence, see e.g. James Sutherland, *The Adventures of an Elephant Hunter*. London, 1912, p. 202 (south).

26. Reichard, Wanjamuesi, p. 324. The account is from Unyamwezi, but should apply, with local modifications, more generally as well. For another account, see Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 367.

operative, work was evidently even more widespread than in agriculture. Although we have very little contemporary pre-colonial information of work patterns in pastoral societies, we know that among the Maasai the main unit of cattle management was what Jacobs calls the kraal camp (*enjang*). It apparently consisted of several independent polygynous families living and grazing their cattle together. Cattle was 'owned' by the individual male head of the family group in the sense that only he could distribute them, but they were divided into smaller herds, the effective control of which was vested with his wives. The entire kraal's cattle were usually pastured and watered as a single herd and milked by the women who disposed of the product.<sup>27</sup> A high degree of cooperation was probably the rule among most agro-pastoralists and mixed farmers as well; the little we know about their cattle economy indicates that herds with several owners were commonly kept together.<sup>28</sup> But in many stock-raising societies there developed a more complicated system of cattle loans. More well-to-do people handed their 'extra' cattle over to poorer households to be taken care of. The borrowers kept milk and manure while the calves belonged to the owner. This led to the emergence of new relations of personal dependency between loangivers and loantakers.<sup>29</sup>

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27. This is based mainly on Jacobs' account from the 1950s and 1960s, *Traditional Political Organisation*, pp. 149 ff., but according to Waller, *Lords*, pp. 69, 75, the description applies to the 19th century as well. See also Berntsen, *Maasai and Iloikop*, p. 47, n. 53. That kraals usually were composed of several families in precolonial times is attested by Fischer, *Massai-Land*, pp. 64—65, whereas Merker, *Masai*, p. 32 claims that each family had its own kraal before the Great Rinderpest. According to Fischer, only families with several hundred heads of cattle might have kraals of their own.

28. E.g. M. Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 19—20 (Nyakusa).

29. Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 439 ff. (Kilimanjaro); Ernst Johanssen and Paul Döring, 'Das Leben der Schambala beleuchtet durch ihre Sprichwörter', *Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen*, 5 (1914—15), p. 141 (Shambaa); P. Vageler, 'Ugogo', *Beih. z. Tropenpflanzer*, 13 (1912), 1/2, p. 77 (Gogo, cf. Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship*, pp. 50—53 for the modern situation); Obst, *Das abflusslose Rumpfschollenland*, *MGGH*, 35 (1923), p. 228 (Nyaturu); Mbwiliza, *The Hoe and the Stick*, pp. 110—113 (Buha):



Patterns of hunting were extremely varied but there were few, if any, who undertook it without cooperating with others. The peoples whose economy was based on hunting and gathering seem to have worked in relatively independent hordes consisting of kinspeople or sometimes members of two or three kinship groups. This at least was the case with the Hadza when they were first encountered by the Germans.<sup>30</sup> Among most peoples, the traditional way to hunt larger game was in teams of at least fifteen or twenty men, who set out in the dry season with their arms — spears, clubs, bows and arrows, and sometimes nets — protected with appropriate spells, charms and taboos. Much of this underwent a transformation in the 19th century with the increase of firearms and the concomitant emergence of smaller groups of professional elephant hunters.<sup>31</sup> Elephant hunting was turned from an adaptive to an aggressive pursuit. It became “a profitable but highly dangerous profession,” demanding “a special apprenticeship and the best of nerves.”<sup>32</sup> Yet in many places communal methods of hunting survived. From Usambara and from the hinterland of Lindi it was reported in the early colonial period that men from several villages used to join together to hunt antelopes with nets.<sup>33</sup>

## Tax and redistribution

If matrifocal household or family groups were first integrated by control of land or cattle and communal labour into larger groups formed on the basis of kinship, neighbourhood or age, the latter were in turn integrated by taxation and *corvée* work into units I called above societies. In other words, the interdependence within

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30. Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, pp. 20—21.

31. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 297—300; Unomah and Webster, *Expansion of Commerce*, pp. 280—282; Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, pp. 37—40; Gerald W. Hartwig, ‘The Historical and Social Role of Kerebe Music’, *TNR*, 70 (1969), pp. 42—44.

32. Becker, *La vie*, I, p. 259.

33. Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 3 (1913), p. 92; Adams, *Lindi*, p. 38.

a society was not only 'political' or 'ritual' but 'economic' as well and not only reciprocal but also redistributive. Although all the inhabitants of a society may not have been in regular direct contact with each other, they were all in contact with their leaders, who pooled resources collected from the members in order to redistribute them. That is, leaders levied taxes or tribute in the form of food or other natural products and work. The stores accumulated were used not only for the support of the leaders themselves or for the entertainment of their visitors and their workers, but also for reserve purposes.<sup>34</sup>

Storage was essential owing to the instability of natural conditions in the territory. Because the production system was based on the yearly cycle of cultivation, storage was needed within this period to ensure the availability of food as well as seed grain from one harvest to the next. Short-term storage, it seems, was the direct concern of household groups who farmed the land. Yet, because in most districts good years were inevitably followed by bad, a time perspective of one year was insufficient to secure the continuity of a society's existence, and storage for longer than a year was necessary. It was this long-term storage which was the task of political leaders. By storing and redistributing food the leader acted as 'tribal banker' or 'chief grain keeper';<sup>35</sup> he regulated the circulation of the surplus product of the whole society. This arrangement created a concrete reciprocity of interest between leaders and those led, and must be considered a major factor in creating and maintaining the legitimacy of the political institutions.

Actual amounts of taxation can only be conjectured. The sources give no detailed numerical data and their references to these matters are usually quite approximate. However, the general impres-

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34. Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, p. 23 (Zaramo); Kiyenze, *Transformation of Handicrafts*, p. 34 (south-eastern matrilineal peoples); Abdallah, *Kilindi*, ch. 88 (Shambaa); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, pp. 164, 190 (Safwa); Ishumi, *Cultural Heritage*, p. 47 (Haya); Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, p. 18 (Ha); Cory, *Indigenous Political System*, p. 20 (Sukuma).

35. The first expression is Bronislaw Malinowski's, as quoted in Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, p. 189; the second Unomah's, Vbandevba, p. 3.

sion emerging from the reports is that tax in kind was not an economic burden. It is possible that in some smaller societies where political institutions were simpler, no regular tribute, or tax in kind, was collected at all. Instead, taxation took the form of irregular 'gifts' coupled with the more regular cultivation of the leaders' fields.<sup>36</sup> In more consolidated polities a yearly tax in foodstuffs was collected, generally paid by household groups in connection with the harvest. It obviously varied over time but as a rule its amount appears to have been fairly moderate.<sup>37</sup> There are stories of arbitrary collection of tribute amounting to extortion, but they date from the early colonial period.<sup>38</sup> Craftsmen and salt collectors were also obliged to pay a tribute which can be considered tolerable if not light. The Fipa iron smelters paid one hoe per burning of the kiln to the chief,<sup>39</sup> while the Uvinza salt

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36. Franz Stuhlmann, 'Forschungsreise in Usaramo', *MDS*, 7 (1894), p. 229 and Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, p. 231 (Zaramo); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 36 (Doe); Liebenow, *Colonial Rule*, p. 56 (Makonde); Eberstein, *Rechtanschauungen*, p. 170 (Kilwa); Rudel, Schauri, p. 38 (Mwera); Desoignes, Msalala, p. 279 (Sumbwa).

37. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 365—366 (general); idem, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 229; Feierman, *Concepts*, pp. 347 ff.; and idem, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 100—101, 120 ff. (Shambaa); Rehse, *Kiziba*, p. 99, Ishumi, *Cultural Heritage*, p. 47 and Kaijage, Kyamutwara, p. 555 (Haya); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 151 (Kerebe); A. Seibt, 'Fragebogen-Beantwortung', Urambo 1910, printed in Gottberg, ed., *Unyamwesi*, p. 206 (but cf. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 91—92 who claims, referring to Unyamwezi in the late 1880s and early 1890s, that the tribute could in many years consist of almost a half of the harvest. This is the only source I know claiming a considerable tribute in foodstuffs.); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 140 and Cory, *Indigenous Political Organization*, p. 19 (Sukuma); Willis, *State*, p. 168 (Fipa, discounting Lechaptois' account of extortion in *Tanganika*, pp. 94—96); Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 60 (smaller Rukwa peoples); Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, p. 17 (Ha).

38. See references to Lechaptois and Stuhlmann in the preceding footnote and Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 383—384.

39. Willis, *State*, p. 150 (but cf. Creig, *Iron Smelting*, p. 80 who says that only the first hoe made each year was presented to the chief). For estimates of iron production, see below, p. 306.

boilers had to hand over one tenth of their output to local chiefs.<sup>40</sup> More onerous were taxes paid in livestock and ivory. They appear to have increased towards the end of the 19th century. Tribute in livestock was collected at least in Usambara and in Moshi on Kilimanjaro. From the latter place we know that it was collected on a lineage basis which made it possible for the poorer lineage members to evade it.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the most substantial tax in kind afflicted elephant hunters. They became obliged to surrender to the chief one tusk of every elephant they killed.<sup>42</sup> Also peoples militarily subjugated such as many of the neighbours of the Ngoni or Shambaa had to pay tribute in food or salt to their overlords. The former seem to have required a regular tribute while the Kilindi rulers of Usambara were content to receive their dues every two or three years.<sup>43</sup>

*Corvée*, tax in the form of work, was probably of more economic importance than taxation in kind. However, this is also difficult to ascertain, because it is seldom clear how many members of societies actually took part in tax work and whether tax workers were recruited by household groups, descent groups or villages. In any case tax work appears to have been more common than tax in kind; as noted above, it was often required even in those societies where tribute was irregular. However, in most societies the working time for tax payment seems to have been a few days or weeks in the year rather than months. Normally the work consisted

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40. Sutton and Roberts, Uvinza, p. 70.

41. Feierman, Concepts, pp. 348—349 (Usambara); Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 16, 382 and Moore in *Chagga and Meru*, p. 31 (Kilimanjaro).

42. Speke, *Journal*, p. 5 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 366 (general); Feierman, Concepts, p. 350 (Usambara); Roberts, Nyamwezi Trade, p. 70; Shorter, *Chiefship*, p. 136 (Kimbu); Werther, *Zum Victoria Nyanza*, p. 163 (Sukuma); Brock, Nyiha, p. 74; Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 61. In Ufipa, it is said that the hunters had to deliver both tusks to the king but were given hoes or goats in return (Willis, *State*, p. 173). Nyakusa chiefs reportedly claimed no tusks (Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 186).

43. Redmond, Political History pp. 156—159 and Lieder, Von der Mbampa-Bai, pp. 118—119 (Ngoni); Feierman, Concepts, p. 351 (Shambaa).



of cultivating the king's or chief's fields.<sup>44</sup> But in some polities people also had to construct and repair roads and paths as well as houses for chiefs. When large fortresses or other public installations were built tax workers did far longer spells. When Mkwawa established the wall around Kalenga, a large number of men worked on it during the dry seasons for several years, and some men, reportedly brought from further away, worked the whole year round.<sup>45</sup> By far the highest exactions of tax work are reported from Kilimanjaro even though we do not know whether this reflects the real differences or simply greater accuracy in reporting. Requirements varied from chieftdom to chieftdom and changed over time. In the late precolonial period the *Mangi* Sina of Kibosho is remembered to have from time to time summoned up all his people — men, women and children — to cultivate for him. In the early colonial period Gutmann calculated that each African household in Moshi had to work for the chief for more than a month (men for ten to twenty days, women for six to ten days, and youngsters for a little in addition). But he emphasized that this was more than it had been in the precolonial time.<sup>46</sup>

## Division of labour

It is commonplace that division of labour in precolonial societies was largely determined by sex (or gender) and, secondarily, age. Sexual division of labour was a salient feature of these societies, commented upon by many a traveller, and also felt keenly by the people themselves. Apparently it was not confined to the household level but was often applied to communal and *corvée*

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44. E.g. Claus, Wagogo, p. 18; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 375 (Nyamwezi men — six to ten days; cf. Abrahams, *Political Organisation*, p. 34 who says that subjects had to till their rulers' fields for two days each year); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, pp. 190—191; Swartz, *Continuities*, p. 224.

45. Winans, *Shambala*, pp. 134—135 (Shambaa); G. Gordon Brown and A. McD. Bruce Hutt, *Anthropology in Action*. London, 1935, pp. 31—32.

46. Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, pp. 172—173; Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 387 (see also pp. 367—368, 375—376).

labour, too.<sup>47</sup> On the surface, the principles of precolonial sexual division of labour appeared very simple. "The women have control within the house, and over the products of the dairy and the field," Stanley summarized his observations. "It is the man's duty to build the house, tend and milk the cattle, repair the fence and provide the clothing, which is naturally scanty; but it is the women who cultivates the field, makes the butter and does the marketing."<sup>48</sup> We have enough evidence from a variety of societies to state that Stanley's description holds good in broad outline: housework was for women, as was the main responsibility for agriculture and the marketing of cultivated products. Men took care of building and clearing work, stockraising and (unmentioned by Stanley) hunting and trade in other than foodstuffs, especially long-distance trade and portage, as well as politics and administration. Some Africans expressed it more symbolically. It was for men to kill, an old Pangwa woman told a researcher, to kill not only animals but trees too, i.e. to clear, whereas it was for women to bring up life, i.e. to plant.<sup>49</sup>

But even if the domains of man and woman were clearly demarcated, it was rarely true that entire branches of livelihood were the exclusive concern of either of the sexes. Rather, a sexual division of labour was complementary: it was present within the branches and adapted to different tasks. In agriculture, for instance, women may have been responsible for most of the work but the idea which gained wide popularity among the colonialists that men took almost no part in cultivation does not hold good. As a general principle, where the central economic pattern of a society was farming, both men and women worked the land, though longer hours and more tedious work certainly fell to women. In grain growing areas such as Unyamwezi men and women worked together in the sowing season, men preparing the soil for women.

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47. For communal labour contemporary sources are not clear, but they do not contradict the idea. For evidence concerning later periods, see R.G. Abrahams, *The People of Greater Unyamwezi, Tanzania*. London, 1967, p. 53 and the list in Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 70—71. For *corvée*, see Gutmann, in the preceding footnote and Feierman, fn. 73 below in this chapter.

48. Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, II, p. 396.

49. Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 66.

After this, such work as weeding and harvesting was left entirely to women. However, non-food crops, introduced to the agricultural system later and grown not only for personal use but also for sale, such as tobacco and cotton, became 'men's crops' in the sense that they were planted and tended by men.<sup>50</sup> This was the general picture, admittedly with some variation, in places where grain growing played a major role in the economy.<sup>51</sup> In the banana areas of Kilimanjaro and Buhaya it was the banana itself which was the 'men's crop', while the main responsibility for the rest of the field work fell to women.<sup>52</sup>

Naturally, there were many deviations from this 'ideal type', and in both directions. In some places women appear to have been obliged to do almost all the work of cultivation. In the fields of Ungoni only women and slaves were seen.<sup>53</sup> On the coast it was related that men devoted themselves to fishing, trading and portorage, leaving fieldwork to women. "*Ku lima* (farming) [was] a term of abuse to the free coastdweller."<sup>54</sup> In addition, in societies such as Ugogo and Uhehe, where stock-raising was economically at least as important as agriculture, fieldwork was almost exclusively the women's lot.<sup>55</sup> Yet there were also societies in the

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50. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 374—377; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 121.

51. Werther, *Zum Victoria Nyanza*, p. 170 and Kollman, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 160 (Sukuma); Burton and Speke, *Coasting Voyage*, p. 216 and Feierman, *Concepts*, p. 121 (Shambaa); Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 223 (Pare); Sick, *Waniaturu*, p. 18 and Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, pp. 32 (Nyaturu); Kiyenze, *Transformation of Handicrafts*, pp. 32—33 (south-eastern and eastern matrilineal peoples); Adams, *Lindi*, p. 44 (Makonde); Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, pp. 46—47 (Yao). In general, see also Hermann Baumann, 'The Division of Work According to Sex in African Hoe Culture', *Africa*, 1 (1928), pp. 289—318.

52. Gutmann, *Feldbausitten*, pp. 476—479 (Kilimanjaro); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 721; Richter, *Notizen*, p. 115 and Edmond Césard, 'Le Muhaya', *Anthropos*, 31 (1936), p. 99 (Buhaya; cf. Rehse, *Kiziba*, p. 53 who tells that in Kiziba the care of banana groves was also undertaken by women).

53. Häfliger, *Ungoni*, p. 34. Cf. Booth, *Nachkommen*, p. 198.

54. Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 34.

55. Herrman, *Ugogo*, p. 197 (Gogo); Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 150 (Uhehe).

Tanzanian area where agriculture had a central role in the economy and where men were reported to have performed a large part of it. In Unyiha a "considerably larger share" of work fell to men than to women. In Gorowa ('Ufiome') it was asserted that men assumed the main part in both stockraising and cultivation; only cleaning of the house, *tembe*, and gathering of firewood, was said to have been left to women.<sup>56</sup> In Bunyakusa women never touched the hoe. Land preparation was men's work, while women — assisted by men — performed sowing, weeding and harvesting.<sup>57</sup>

Conversely, there were many supposedly men's activities in which women actually played a major role. As noted, herding and milking of cows was usually male work. However, among the pastoralists the main responsibility for milking fell to women.<sup>58</sup> Also among agro-pastoralists and mixed farmers, if cattle were stall-fed women were allocated a considerable workload. A Nyakusa wife had to clean not only the house but the byre too.<sup>59</sup> On Kilimanjaro, a major task of women was to go to the plains at least twice a week to cut grass and carry it up to Chaggaland to feed the cows.<sup>60</sup> In crafts there was a similar sexual division of labour — more complicated than it appeared at first sight. Ironworking, woodwork and much of the cotton weaving were considered male work, whereas pottery-makers were predominantly women and wickerworkers of both sexes. But in the north-west, in Buhaya and Biharamulo, pottery-making was an activity confined to men.<sup>61</sup> More generally, there was one pottery product that was chiefly male-made: the pipe-head. Tobacco and cannabis were, after all, men's crops.<sup>62</sup> Ironworking, often taken as an almost purely male activity, surrounded by heavy sexual symbolism, actually in-

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56. Bachmann, *Volk der Banyika*, p. 44; Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, p. 104.

57. Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 123; M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, p. 131.

58. Merker, *Masai*, p. 32; Klima, *Barabaig*, p. 10 (for modern situation among the Datoga).

59. Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 123; M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, p. 129.

60. Adolphi and Schanz, *Bergriesen*, p. 7; Dundas, *Kilimanjaro*, p. 226.

61. Richter, *Notizen*, p. 72; S.A.C. Waane, 'Ethnographic Insights into the Iron Age of the Great Lakes Region', *La civilisation ancienne*, p. 398.

62. Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, p. 433.





Plate 9. Division of labour — women's duties. Women harvesting maize at Lake Tanganyika (ca 1882); Nyamwezi women brewing African beer, *pombe*; pounding corn by means of a wooden pestle and mortar; and grinding corn upon a slab of stone (1861).



Plate 10. Division of labour — men's duties. A blacksmith from Pare drawing wire (the late 1850s, above, right); a Nyamwezi man guarding the harvest (ca 1881, above, left); a hunter from the central parts of the country (ca 1881, below, left); and a herdsman from Gorowa (the early 1890s, below, right).



volved much female labour. In Pare iron smelting was reported to have been entirely women's work. They collected ironous sand and smelted it in a primitive kiln by making the draft with bellows.<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere women were usually not smelters but still made a considerable contribution to iron smelting. Iron ore, in particular in the form of sand, was often collected by women.<sup>64</sup> Wives and also children took part in the building of kilns and many other preparations.<sup>65</sup>

Sexual division of labour was not fixed. During the 19th century men made major inroads into trade which had traditionally been the office of women, the guardians of the subsistence sphere. We have seen that it was the women who conducted the trade in the food markets of the north-eastern mountains, and the same was true for 'neighbourhood markets' between cultivating peoples and the Maasai.<sup>66</sup> Men were engaged only in trading expeditions to centres of salt or iron production which often involved less exchange than actual production and transportation of the product. However, long-distance trade and the regional caravan trade became the realm of men: they went away as traders and porters and came back with trade goods, to be distributed and redistributed. While this may appear only a modification of the basic pattern in which women stayed home and on the fields, taking responsibility for the domestic sphere while men hunted and fought, men also gained a key role in much of the regional exchange and provisioning of caravans. Information is somewhat conflicting, however. While some travellers related that all provisions had to be bought from the woman,<sup>67</sup> other reports speak of "people" in general or state explicitly that the sellers of food-stuffs to caravans included both women and men.<sup>68</sup> In addition,

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63. Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, pp. 138, 140; Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 233.

64. Decken, *Reisen*, II, p. 19; Last, *Wa-Itumba Iron-workers*, p. 586; Stuhlmann, *Handwerk*, p. 50.

65. Below, fn. 129 in this chapter.

66. Above, p. 103; Fischer, *Massai-Land*, p. 68; Gulliver, *Arusha Trade*, p. 432.

67. E.g. Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, II, p. 396 (general); Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 130 (Uhehe); Price, *CMI*, 11 (1886), p. 755 ("remote Ugogo").

68. E.g. Decken, *Reisen*, II, p. 18; Emin, *Tagebücher*, p. 373.



men went to the regional markets as well. "If the market is near, the woman will go ... If the market is far, generally the man will go alone and buy and sell the same things, possibly in larger quantities," it was told from Bondei. Even if explicit evidence is lacking there is reason to believe that whenever conversion from one sphere of exchange to another was involved trade was a male business; from Bondei it was reported that even when it was the woman who went to the market, the proceeds went to the man because the woman had no money of her own.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to gender, age was another factor shaping the division of labour. It functioned in a variety of ways. There was no society which did not at least informally recognize age grades such as 'childhood', 'adolescence', etc., and few societies which did not formalize some of the grades and generate more or less elaborate rituals to mark the transition from one grade to another. This was necessary because age was a major factor in the allocation of roles within the groups of production and consumption. Also descent groups were organized in a hierarchy according to age: from the ancestor at the apex to children at the bottom. In addition, there were a number of peoples who, alongside their kinship organization, had a formally constituted system of age groups commonly called in the literature 'age sets' or 'age classes'.<sup>70</sup> Such age sets, based on a shared initiation climaxing in circumcision, were most conspicuous among the Maa-speaking Maasai, Parakuyu and Arusha where youngsters formed the dreaded 'warrior' set (*il murrān*). Some of the north-eastern and southern neighbours of the Maasai such as the Chagga, Sonjo and Gogo had adopted an age set system largely resembling that of the Maa-speakers. A few other Tanzanian societies had a fundamentally different type of age organization, composed not of young men who underwent their initiation during the same period but by children, sons and frequently daughters as well, of the members of the preceding set. Such

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69. Dale, *Principal Customs*, p. 204.

70. 'Age set' is the term recommended by Radcliffe-Brown in his influential article 'Age-Organisation Terminology', *Man*, 29 (1929), no. 21 and followed by most English-speaking anthropologists. Whereas Bernardo Bernardi may be correct in his view that 'age class' is a somewhat less diffuse and hence a preferable term (*Age Class Systems*. Cambridge, 1985, p. 17), I stick to 'age-set' to avoid further confusion.



generation classes or groups were mainly found among the Nilotic Datoga pastoralists and the sedentary Bantu agriculturalists living north of them on the eastern side of Lake Victoria Nyanza. The essential difference between age set societies and other societies was that whereas in the latter individuals passed through age grades by themselves or in smaller *ad hoc* groups, in age set societies they did so in principle only in the company of their set mates. This gave age sets a relatively corporate character.

In all societies certain light tasks such as scaring birds and apes off millet fields and herding cattle were allocated to children, mainly boys,<sup>71</sup> whereas girls helped their mothers with domestic duties.<sup>72</sup> Sometimes, as in Usambara, most of the *corvée* labour was done by young men and women, while elsewhere, as on Kilimanjaro, the requirements for adults were in this respect relatively greater.<sup>73</sup> The sources do not leave much doubt that activities like hunting, warring and long-distance trade were predominantly young men's duties while most of the agricultural drudgery fell to younger and middle-aged women. Elders, meaning older married men, were responsible for arranging the affairs of the descent group and the society. In highly organized age set societies division of labour according to age was still more pronounced. The Maasai men, for instance, were forged in a series of rituals into a set with leaders and a name of its own. The set was promoted through the four main age grades, each with a length of approximately 15 years and with different economic and social functions: *il murran* (initiates, military activity, ca 15—30 years), *il moruak* (elders, family and economic activity, ca 30—45 years), *il piron* (elders, decision-making position, ca 45—60 years), *il dasat* (senior elders,

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71. E.g. Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, p. 55 (Pare); Ernst Johanssen, *Führung und Erfahrung in 40 jährigem Missionsdienst*, I. Bethel, n.d., p. 67 (Usambara); Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 377 (Nyamwezi); M. Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 19—20 (Nyakusa cattle herding); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 160 (Sukuma cattle herding).

72. E.g. Hore, *Twelve Tribes*, p. 11 (Lake Tanganyika); Obst, *Vorläufiger Bericht, MGGH*, 25 (1911), p. 92 (Nyaturu); Sutherland, *Elephant Hunter*, p. 197 (south).

73. Feierman, *Concepts*, p. 34; Gutmann, fn. 46 above.

ritual power, from ca 60 years onwards).<sup>74</sup>

Gender and age were not the only principles of social division of labour. As we have seen above, certain types of activities tended to concentrate in certain regions and often within certain groups in such regions. Divisions of this sort were most conspicuous in handicrafts. As has been seen, activities such as iron-smelting and cotton-weaving were restricted to relatively few regions. This may have originally been due to the availability of raw materials such as iron ore or cotton. But it led to the development of more complex forms of economic and social specialization. Frequently, clans or other kinship groups specialized in a certain craft. In Ufipa the profession of an iron-smelter was not necessarily hereditary, but it was still confined to "a few families only who (had) the necessary 'medicines'." The ironworking centre of Ufipa was the kingdom of Milansi while the humid Rukwa valley was the area which specialized in cotton weaving.<sup>75</sup> While difficult to assess accurately, the degree reached by specialization appears to have been high in ironworking. The Rongo of Geita were said to have been "all" smiths, living separately from the rest of the population. This implies that they may have subsisted basically on their ironworking, without resorting much to cultivation. The Turu blacksmith clans of Mara were supposed not to cultivate but to live on their trade.<sup>76</sup> In Ukonongo, a German traveller described in the early 1900s the village of Sara as the centre of a "great industrial district" with "purely industrial population." Iron was smelted in high kilns and forged into hoes and other implements by blacksmiths. Production of charcoal had developed a "branch of industry of its own" in the surrounding small mountain villages. Other craftsmen were drawing wire for ornaments whereas women

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74. I follow here Bernardi's account, *Age Class Systems*, pp. 46 ff. This is naturally a greatly simplified and schematic version of the workings of the system which overlooks the dualism and other important cosmological aspects involved. Bernardi's version is based on a critical reading of the early literature.

75. Wallace, *Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau*, p. 601 (quotation); Willis, *State*, p. 14.

76. Brard, 'Der Victoria-Nyansa', *PM*, 43 (1897), p. 78 (Rongo); Anacleto, *Cultural Integration*, p. 17 (Turu).

were engaged in making pottery.<sup>77</sup> More generally, even in such a widespread craft as pottery there was a fair amount of specialization. Pots were made everywhere, but a few places gained recognition as major pottery-making centres. Probably the most famous of them was Kisi on the north-eastern shore of Lake Nyasa. Exploiting their excellent clay resources, the Kisi women had attained a high level of pottery skills at the time when the first Europeans visited them in 1870s. Thomson was astonished to observe "how quickly, and yet with what geometrical exactness, they formed the ... pots." In Buha and Burundi the short-statured Batwa women were the most renowned pottery makers and had almost monopolized the craft.<sup>78</sup>

In most cases, however, the degree of specialization was much lower, leading to a form of division of labour that can be called temporal. As far as can be seen, the great majority of Tanzanian craftsmen and women remained cultivators, though they were recognized craftspeople at the same time, and they had to combine their craft activities with the requirements of the cultivation system. This was done by allocating different activities to different periods of time, i.e. by concentrating most craft activities in the dry season when there was a lull in the annual agricultural cycle. "In parts of the country where there are two distinctly marked seasons: dry and rainy, one finds also distinctly marked patterns of peoples' activities," writes Wembah-Rashid of the south-eastern matrilineal peoples, an observation which applies to other situations as well. In the rainy season most activities were concerned with agriculture, whereas in the dry season many works of craftsmanship and art were undertaken.<sup>79</sup>

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77. Ernst Diesing, 'Eine Reise in Ukonongo (Deutsch-Ostafrika)', *Globus*, 95 (1909), pp. 327—328. Intriguingly, this well-known description seems to be the only eye-witness account of the village and the district.

78. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, pp. 262—263; Stuhlmann, *Handwerk*, p. 24; K.B. Kalikumaso, 'Pottery in Kibondo', *Kale*, 2 (1973), pp. 1—2.

79. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, p. 72.

# Underutilization of labour or high labour productivity

It is sometimes suggested that economies like those of precolonial Tanzania suffer from 'underutilization' of labour power and concomitant 'underproduction'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, there is much evidence to indicate that labour input in the main branches of Tanzanian precolonial economies was rather modest, both in quantitative terms (working hours) and qualitative terms (intensity of technology). The more recent history of Tanzania has also proved that there was ample room for raising the level of material output. Yet I find the suggestion of 'underproduction' problematic. Even when no definition of 'full' use of labour power and production exists, the criteria utilized carry an obvious bias towards the European historical experience. This hardly helps us to understand the African situation. What matters in a given historical situation is the actual relation between labour input and material output and not their hypothetical potentialities. In my view it is more fruitful to conceive the ratio between labour input and material output in Tanzanian precolonial economies not in terms of 'underutilization of labour' but in terms of indicating a relatively high degree of labour productivity.

## Moderate labour input

Although no agricultural economists were making labour budget surveys during precolonial times, the modest input of labour is beyond dispute. Plenty of evidence, admittedly impressionistic, can be found in reports by the first travellers. Most of them were amazed at the small amount of work with which Africans, especially men, apparently contrived to live. As Burton expressed it, every day for Africans was an "idle day" spent in "talking, laughing, smoking or dozing ... Pombe, when procurable, is drunk from

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80. See e.g. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, ch. 2 (general) and Gavin Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*. New Haven, London, 1980, ch. 1 (for Kenya).



the earliest dawn ..."<sup>81</sup> Descriptions to the same effect are numerous from different parts of the country. The African "seldom suffers from lack of food, and experiences, therefore, no difficulty about feeding his children, while day in, day out, all the year round he himself can drink beer ... (T) his forms a striking contrast to the absolute penury and struggle for a bare existence, among wretched surroundings, that is the lot of the greater part of the working classes in civilized countries to-day."<sup>82</sup> Examples could be extended *ad infinitum*, but their message is unmistakable: Africans were "a people with a large amount of unimproved leisure on their hands."<sup>83</sup>

Now, some such statements have an unmistakably racist tone while others have a ring of romanticism. They overlook the crucial role of women in agriculture and were in some other respects grossly exaggerated. Yet I think that they should not be dismissed out of hand as pure racial prejudice or ethnocentrism. Whatever their bias, I suggest that their assertion of the relatively modest overall labour input in Tanzanian precolonial societies must be taken seriously. It can be hypothesized that Africans did not actually *need* to have more sophisticated cultivation technology or do more manual work in order to achieve a sufficient output; i.e. that the productivity of their work as traditionally organized was high enough for the satisfaction of their needs. Or as Stuhlmann argued, African hoe cultivation had reached a relatively high level, and it may be regarded as "a quite different system of agriculture ... compared with ours it is not inferior but merely different."<sup>84</sup>

Labour requirements appear not to have been altogether excessive even in the coastal plantations. There too work was done by hand and hoe, and nothing resembling the New World work discipline befell the coastal slaves. East African plantation slaves were allotted a piece of land on which to grow their own food. They worked for their masters most of their time but had some time free to devote to their own *shambas*. Usually slaves had to work on the plantation for five days in a week. This was the rule in Zanzibar and Pemba and evidently also on the southern coast, in

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81. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 290, 279.

82. Sutherland, *Elephant Hunter*, pp. 202—203.

83. MacKenzie, *Spirit-Ridden Konde*, p. 30.

84. Stuhlmann, *Kulturgeschichte*, p. 832.

Kilwa and Lindi.<sup>85</sup> On the central coast there reportedly were places in which the slaves worked only for four days for the master and had three days for their own cultivation.<sup>86</sup> Information regarding the work on plantations seems at first glance conflicting. Some reports tell that slaves had to work long days under the threat of physical compulsion, while others maintain that the normal working day was relatively short and work discipline quite lax. A closer inspection reveals that the harsher reports emanate mainly from the present-day Kenyan coast or from Pemba and from a later period, usually the 1890s.<sup>87</sup> Comparative studies suggest that there indeed were considerable local differences in the organization of work and the treatment of slaves.<sup>88</sup> It is also probable, as claimed by the German physician Fischer, that the intensity of the extraction of slave labour was heightened in Zanzibar after the abolition of the slave trade and the concomitant drying up of the supply of imported slaves.<sup>89</sup> Pre-1872 sources on Zanzibar certainly give an impression of a relatively benevolent labour regime. "The slaves employed on the plantations lead an easy life; the Arab is too indolent and apathetic himself to make his slaves exert themselves," claimed Rigby in 1860.<sup>90</sup> A more detailed description was given by Christie at the beginning of the 1870s. According to him, the slaves had to work hard during clearing,

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85. For Zanzibar, see the references in fn. 91 below; for Kilwa and Lindi see Kilwa (v. Eberstein) to Government, 10 September 1897 and Lindi (Ewerbeck) to Government, 14 September 1897, app. in Liebert to AAKA, 23 October 1897, ZStA, RKoLA 1004, 90 ff. (120—124 and 105—114 respectively).

86. Bagamoyo (Sperling) to Government, app. in Liebert to AAKA, 3 March 1900, ZStA, RKoLA, 1005, 132; Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, pp. 207—298.

87. E.g. W.W.A. Fitzgerald, *Travels in the Coastland of British East Africa and the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba*. London, 1898, pp. 28 ff. on which Prins, *Swahili-speaking Peoples*, p. 69 draws; Vice-Consul O'Sullivan, Pemba, 30 May 1896, printed in *Documents relatifs à la répression de la traite des esclaves*, 1895, pp. 215—231; Craster, *Pemba*, p. 94

88. E.g. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 156 ff.; Weidner, *Haussklaverei*, pp. 18—19.

89. Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, p. 68.

90. Rigby, Zanzibar Dominations, in Russell, ed., *General Rigby*, p. 334.

planting and harvesting seasons. During the harvest working weeks could last for seven days and the working day was continued till afternoon. But the slaves were compensated for such extra work. As a rule they rarely did any field work after noon during their five-day week. "(O)ne may ride over the most populous and best cultivated parts of the island for miles during the day without seeing anyone engaged in field work, except on the slaves' own allotments."<sup>91</sup>

### Aspects of output: pombe and storage

It is more difficult to find sources concerning the other unknown quantity in our productivity equation: the amount of output. But although there is no way to gauge it in quantitative terms, some inferences can be made on the basis of estimations concerning levels of consumption and storage. Famine has already been discussed and arguments for its frequent occurrence in more extreme forms challenged. The question of 'normal' food consumption will be taken up in the concluding chapter. Here I deal briefly with the consumption of *pombe*, or African beer, and storage. Many early travellers and residents in Tanzania believed that Africans were living practically from hand to mouth and whatever surplus was left beyond the harvest was immediately consumed in the form of pombe. "The negro lives in the present moment," explained Fülleborn who wrote one of the best ethnographic accounts of the southern parts of the country. "In fat years he does not care to store up for lean years. He keeps to his old customs and invests his surplus in pombe."<sup>92</sup> But a closer look reveals that the patterns of consumption and storage in African societies were much more complex than is implied by such superficial statements.

There is no denying that pombe drinking was widespread. Few travellers failed to see Africans "sitting upon pombe," and Europeans often drank the liquid themselves, even if they disagreed on its quality and effects. Some commended on the "pleasurable sen-

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91. Christie, *Slavery in Zanzibar*, pp. 34—35 (quotation); idem, *Cholera Epidemics*, pp. 314—315.

92. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 43.

sations" it produced, but in others the "dirty yellow-grey liquid" aroused no enthusiasm.<sup>93</sup> The use of pombe was common throughout the country, found even on the coast despite Islamic influence. Burton noticed that Africans celebrated with beer "every event — the traveller's return, the birth of a child, and the death of an elephant — a labourer will not work unless beer is provided for him."<sup>94</sup> But pombe drinking was clearly not the kind of reckless waste leading to general drunkenness that is implied by some travellers' accounts. Rather, it was under a high degree of social control. Pombe was not drunk at any moment but only on clearly defined social and ritual occasions, most often after harvesting.<sup>95</sup> Pombe drinking was often among the privileges of the aged, strictly forbidden for younger people.<sup>96</sup> In any case pombe was a food as well as a drink. It was not particularly intoxicating — the Germans measured the alcoholic contents of one brew as 2, 4 %.<sup>97</sup> However, it was nutritious and, when drunk, often consumed in impressive quantities.<sup>98</sup> Some people, in particular the leaders, continuously drank much more than others and there were conspicuous cultural

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93. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 29, 286; Weule, *Negerleben*, p. 120.

94. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 287, 335. For the coast, see Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 54 and Carl Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli*. Göttingen, 1903, pp. 207—208.

95. This can be inferred from the passage of Burton quoted in the previous footnote. For further evidence, see e.g. Gutmann, *Feldbausitten*, p. 492 (Chagga); Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 248 (Zigua); Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 381 (Nyamwezi); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, pp. 98—99 (Safwa); Baumstark, *Warangi*, p. 53 (Rangi).

96. E.g. Nolan, *Great Lakes*, p. 30 (Sukuma); Jellicoe, *Long Path*, pp. 213—214 (Nyaturu); M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, pp. 92—93 (Nyakusa); Fischer, *Massai-Land*, p. 94 (Maasai).

97. *Naturalwissenschaftliche Wochenschrift*, 1911, p. 531.

98. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 296, 334—335 (general); Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 84 ('Kutu'); Volkens, *Kilimandscharo*, p. 71 and Widenmann, *Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung*, pp. 66—67 (Chagga); Reichard, *Wanjamuesi*, pp. 323—324 (Nyamwezi); Hurel, *Religion et Vie domestique*, pp. 94, 280 (Kerebe); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 116—117, 165 (south).



differences in the drinking habits between Tanzanian peoples.<sup>99</sup> Burton complained about the number of drunken people he came across, but others disagreed. "I have seen people sit and drink all day long, and in the evening they would be only a little talkative," reported Last among the Sagara ironmakers.<sup>100</sup> In fact, one can approach the question of the heavy consumption of pombe from an angle very different from that of the early observers and suggest that far from being a sign of extravagance and short-sightedness of the people it can be interpreted as a concrete indication of the capacity of the African agricultural systems to produce a continuous 'normal' grain surplus.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, whatever the amounts consumed as pombe, the case for the absence of storage cannot be sustained. On the contrary, the wide extent of storage is beyond doubt. Travellers saw storage devices and granaries all over the country. This simple empirical fact has been intriguingly overlooked in many discussions of African precolonial economies. The same Fülleborn who claimed that Africans were living from hand to mouth gave elsewhere in his work detailed descriptions of skilful methods of storage in southern Tanzania.<sup>102</sup> There were many methods of storage, with ample scope for local innovation. The basic distinction was between short-term storage within the yearly cultivation cycle, which seems to have been the task of the household group or larger domestic groups, and long-term storage, for which political leaders were responsible. Household and domestic groups kept their grain and other foodstuffs either in various baskets, boxes and vessels within ordinary dwellings<sup>103</sup> or

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99. Shambaa and Nyakusa, for instance, were considered as 'modest' compared to their 'bibulous' neighbours Digo and Pangwa. Karasek, *Beiträge*, II, pp. 127—128; Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 104 and Klamroth, as quoted in Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 42. For the leaders, see below, p. 380.

100. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 335, 296; Last, *Wa-Itumba Iron-workers*, pp. 583—584.

101. Cf. Allan, *African Husbandman*, p. 44.

102. Cf. above, fn. 92 and below, fns 103 and 104.

103. E.g. Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, pp. 234—235 (Zigua); Warburg, *Kulturpflanzen*, p. 138 (Shambaa — only maize); Grant, *Walk*, p. 67 and Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, pp. 163—164 (Nyamwezi); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 142, 179 (Sukuma, 'Shashi'); Fischer, *Am*

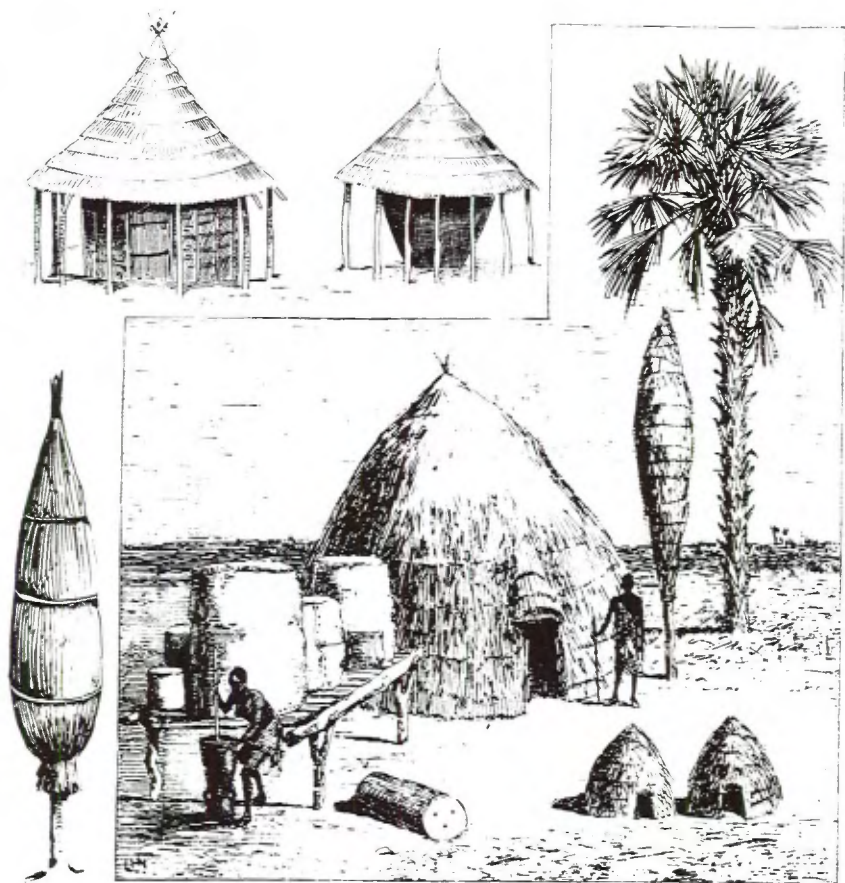


Plate 11. Storing of grain: a Ha homestead (at the bottom, right) with two quite distinct types of granary at the left and right of the hut (and tiny 'spirit huts' in the fore-ground); a hut with a granary from Nera, Sukumaland; and a stack-type Zinza granary. All drawings are from the early 1890s.

in separate granaries. The latter varied from big straw-roofed baskets to cylindrical buildings a metre or more in height, raised on piles or other supports about half a metre above ground surface so that pests and dampness could not reach them.<sup>104</sup> Weule described those he saw in the south-east:<sup>105</sup>

Some have a door in the side, as in stoves used by people like ourselves, others have no door, and if the owner wishes to take out the contents he must lift the roof. To aid him in this he has the most primitive ladder which can be thought of. I have drawn many of them, always with a smile: two branching, curved, twisted poles for the verticals, a few bamboo rungs at intervals of a metre — such is the negro's means of access to the foundation of his economy.

Unfortunately, our sources are very evasive on the question of who, within the household or domestic group, controlled the grain store, and in which way. Only a few passing references to the question can be found, and most of them are open to interpretation, because we do not have a clear idea of what 'control' in this context entails. We must also make a distinction between grain reserved for seed and grain reserved for future consumption. It appears that seeds were kept strictly separate, not to be eaten even in famine times. They were usually under male control and often dug into the soil in earthenware.<sup>106</sup> Grain earmarked for consump-

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Ostufer, p. 43 (Luo); Kannenberg, 'Reise durch die hamitischen Sprachgebiete um Kondoa', *MDS*, 13 (1900), pp. 151, 155, 158, 161, 166 (north-central part); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 108—109 (south), 362 (Nyakusa).

104. E.g. Coulbois, *Dix années*, p. 30 and Claus, Wagogo, pp. 18—20 (Ugogo); Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 237 (Buha); Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 296 (Ufipa plateau); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 239, 661—663 (Mpororo and Karagwe; cf. Kollmann's description of an open granary, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 50); *ibid.*, p. 110 (Zinza), 178 ('Shashi'); Volkens, *Kilimandscharo*, p. 234 (Chagga); Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, pp. 142—143 (Yao, Makua, Makonde); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 90 (Ruvuma), 108 (south in general), 164 (Ngoni), 250 (Hehe-Bena-Sangu); Häfliger, Ungoni, pp. 47—48 (Ngoni); Adams, *Im Dienste*, p. 26 (Hehe).

105. Weule, *Negerleben*, p. 118.

106. Speke, *Journal*, p. 56 (Sagara, Gogo); Vuorela, *Women's Question*, pp. 81—82 (Kwere).

tion may have been mainly dealt with by the women (in spite of the use of 'he' by Weule in the above quotation). Burton reported that "the women take out rations of grain when wanted" from storage bins and it was their office to pay the grain tribute to the leader.<sup>107</sup> In polygynous cases it is not clear, however, whether all the wives had their own stores or whether the main wife of a man controlled a common store for the whole domestic group. Hugo Huber reports that according to Kwaya "traditional practice" wives and female in-laws worked together and shared a granary over which the senior woman, elder wife or mother, had authority.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, it is difficult to say how universal the female control was. We have data from extremely few societies, most of them with more or less accentuated matrilineal features.<sup>109</sup> In some strongly patrilineal societies the control over food stores appears to have been a more complicated arrangement. Among the Chagga, the eleusine basket was controlled by the husband and the wife was not allowed to take out even *ugali* grain for the children without his permission. Also what the uncircumcised girl harvested from the field belonged to the father. Yet Gutmann speaks of the "complete independence in domestic economy" enjoyed by the Chagga wife. She had free access to the products of the banana grove as far as the subsistence of the household group was concerned and within the house the milk calabash was under her exclusive control. Even circumcised girls were free to dispose of their cultivation products.<sup>110</sup>

The stores of political leaders, accumulated by tax or tribute, in kind and by *corvée* work in the ways we saw above, were larger than those of ordinary people; this is shown by all available data, scattered as they are. Leaders, as a rule, had the largest livestock herds and the largest grain reserves, and higher leaders had larger

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107. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 398, 361.

108. Hugo Huber, *Marriage and Family in Rural Bukwaya (Tanzania)*. Freiburg, Sw., 1973, p. 70.

109. In addition to the footnotes above, see e.g. Vuorela, *Women's Question*, p. 83 (Kwere); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 164.

110. Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 64, 175—177 (quotation p. 176).



stores than the lower ones.<sup>111</sup> When the capitals of African leaders were stormed Europeans often discovered foodstuffs in astonishing amounts. The *tembe* village of Mdaburu in western Ugogo, at the edge of the inhospitable Mgunda Mkali thicket, which was captured by a combined Swahili-European force in 1880, offers a graphic example. According to Reichard, who himself took part in the battle, immense quantities of grain were found in the village. In the first place a caravan of 2 500 men lived for eight days on the village grain stocks and continued their journey with a ten-day supply. In addition "from all directions came men and women of the Gogo, hundreds at a time, thousands in all, to obtain grain." On top of that, an Arab leader who settled nearby after the capture found a whole year's supply for his 300 men, with seed grain still left over.<sup>112</sup> This may have been exceptional but it was by no means unique. When the German forces conquered Mkwawa's Kalenga in 1894 they found "several towers" five to seven metres high and some five metres in diameter bulging with grain.<sup>113</sup> In Gorowa, a German *Hauptmann* 'punished' a rebellious leader in 1900 by destroying his largest building, "in which amazing quantities of grain and provisions were hanging; not even the supplies of previous years were fully consumed."<sup>114</sup>

Much of the above evidence is superficial and of anecdotal nature and can be regarded at most as suggestive, but the idea of the relatively high productivity of African agricultural systems does not rest on it alone. It is also supported by observations and

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111. In general, see e.g. Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications*, pp. 59–64 (Chagga); Feierman, *Concepts*, pp. 347 ff. and Winans, *Shambala*, p. 138 (Shambaa). For livestock herds see above, pp. 246–248; Grant, *Walk*, pp. 25, 166–167 (Zaramo, Gogo, Sagara, Nyamwezi); Richter, *Bezirk Bukoba*, p. 89 (Haya). For grain stores see Unomah, *Economic Expansion*, pp. 66 ff. (Unyanyembe); Cory, *Indigenous Political System*, pp. 19–21; Holmes, *History of the Bakwimba*, pp. 148–149 (Sukuma) and the footnotes immediately below.

112. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 328 and a corroborative account, Böhm, *Von Sansibar*, p. 30. For the background of the battle, see N.R. Bennett, 'Mwinyi Mtwana and the Sultan of Zanzibar', in idem, *Studies*, pp. 77–78.

113. Adams, *Im Dienste*, p. 38.

114. Kannenberg, *Hamitischen Sprachgebiete*, p. 163.

calculations made from similar production systems elsewhere at different, even if much later periods of time. A resurvey of such computations concluded, while stressing that the calculations were rough and data bases not always reliable, that "labour productivities in hoe farming assessed in subsistence terms (i.e. simple, not to say crude, order of magnitude calculations of the number of days worth of food earned by one day's labour) are often surprisingly high."<sup>115</sup> While, overall, the evidence is hardly conclusive, this perspective explains many of the puzzling features of precolonial agricultural systems in the Tanzanian area, and I think that the idea of relatively high productivity of labour in precolonial African agricultural systems in terms of the ratio of output to labour input can be accepted as a plausible hypothesis. Nevertheless, two important qualifications must be made. First, 'high productivity' is of course a relative concept; it must be understood in the context of the actual and potential production systems of the time and, in particular, the modest level of needs in African societies. Second, I am speaking of productivity of labour, not of land. As we saw in the preceding chapter, land was rarely a constraint and most Tanzanian agricultural systems, especially the grain-based ones, were using land in a rather wasteful manner. Land-intensive cultivation patterns developed only in exceptional conditions.

Yet I do not wish to resurrect the 'myth of the lazy native' and imply that precolonial societies in the Tanzanian area are to be imagined as an African Arcadia for whose inhabitants "with little effort almost everything [grew] ready for eating."<sup>116</sup> It is not to be thought that there never was need to work hard, nor that the people were incapable of hard work when necessary. A certain work ethic was reflected even in African proverbs. "In idleness one cannot live" is an example from Usambara.<sup>117</sup> In particular the

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115. Richards, *Politics of African Land Use*, pp. 30—34 (quotation p. 30).

See also Gourou, *Tropical World*, p. 186. A similar argument has been extended to Tanzania by Finn Kjaerby, 'Agricultural Productivity and Surplus Production in Tanzania', *Utafiti*, 5 (1980), pp. 59—94.

116. As suggested e.g. by Hans Zache, *Deutsch-Ostafrika (Tanganjika Territory)*. Berlin, 1925, p. 39.

117. Johanssen and Döring, *Leben der Schambala*, p. 139.

cultivation systems which were more intensive in their land use demanded more work, in relation to both land area and yield, than those which were nearer to the ideal types of extensive grain growing and banana cultivation.<sup>118</sup> Even in the latter systems there was much work to be done which was relatively invisible, such as the guarding of traditional grains against attacks by birds. Karasek claimed, no doubt exaggerating, that some Shambaa spent "half their life on the watch" against birds and other vermin.<sup>119</sup> But enough was visible to be commented upon by the more perceptive travellers. The great industry of peoples engaged in banana-based cultivation such as the Chagga and the Nyakusa was often noted. Chagga had to work hard, "much harder than a European would be able to in this country," Meyer observed. Merensky was impressed by "the diligence and success" of the Nyakusa cultivators.<sup>120</sup> The grain-based systems were more seasonal, and consequently the periods of activity and inactivity were also found to be largely seasonal phenomena. In regions with only one rainy season, as was the case over large areas in the southern, central and western parts of the country, much of the activity was concentrated on the time when the rains were about to begin. When signs of rains began to appear, Thomson wrote, in fleeting clouds, occasional showers and almost daily thunder, "the ground was being prepared to take advantage of coming rains. Huts were being re-thatched and repaired, and a general air of industry pervaded the natives, who could hardly spare sufficient time to come and stare at us." It was the time, Blohm noted, when every Nyamwezi was "diligent ... At the time of tillage the negro is possessed by a quite different

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118. Cf., however, Sutton, *Irrigation and Soil-Conservation*, pp. 32, 38—39 who argues that the extra amount of work required by such systems has been somewhat exaggerated. Even such rare practices as terracing and building of stone walls were not necessarily separate exercises but parts of the activity of preparing the ground and clearing it of vegetation and stones as well as a means of disposing of excess stones.

119. Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), p. 181. For evidence elsewhere, see e.g. Gutmann, *Dichten und Denken*, p. 111 (Kilimanjaro); Kotz, *Banne der Furcht*, pp. 147—148 (Pare). Cf. Newman, *Ecological Basis*, pp. 62—63 for modern Usandawe.

120. Meyer, *Gletscherfahrten*, p. 91; Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 146.

mentality. Whoever has learnt to know the people only at times when they sit about the villages in semi-idleness does not know them completely."<sup>121</sup> Work discipline was maintained by means of social control. In Rukwa, for instance, a man who undertook an unnecessary journey during the cultivating season was scorned by his fellow-villagers.<sup>122</sup>

## Labour-intensive handicrafts

It must be kept in mind that the above discussion of productivity was focused on agriculture. Although I have no direct evidence from sources on precolonial Tanzania I believe it can be extended to hunting and gathering<sup>123</sup> and most probably to pastoralism,<sup>124</sup> but certainly not to most other economic activities. Both domestic work by women and handicrafts by men and women were very labour-intensive. More acute observers noticed that in addition to cooking of food and drawing of water women spent much of their time pounding flour in wooden mortars.<sup>125</sup> Among the crafts, even

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121. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 302; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, p. 117. In the same vein see also e.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 290 and Baur and Le Roy, *Zanguebar*, pp. 210—211.

122. Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 42.

123. Cf. 'the original affluent society' of hunter-gatherers as postulated by Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, ch. 1. For some, admittedly more recent, Tanzanian evidence, see James Woodburn, 'An Introduction to Hadza Ecology', in Richard Lee and Irving DeVore, eds, *Man the Hunter*. Chicago, 1968, pp. 52—55 (for a more sceptical view, cf. Bagshawe, Happy Valley, *JAS*, 24 (1924—25), pp. 120—121, 126).

124. For recent claims for a high labour productivity of pastoral production, see Kjaerby, *Agro-Pastoralism*, pp. 94—104 and Hans Hedlund, 'Contradictions in the Peripheralization of a Pastoral Society: the Maasai', *Review of African Political Economy*, 15—16 (1979), p. 18. However, it must be realized that pastoralism is in the dry season a more labour-consuming activity that it seems on the surface. See Merker, *Masai*, p. 32 and Jacobs, *Traditional Political Organisation*, p. 169.

125. E.g. Wallace, *Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau*, p. 600; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 112—113; Fonck, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 314.



pottery making, at first sight a quick, smooth operation, was, on closer inspection, "a quiet, artistic, slow-moving indoor activity that needed patience and demanded constant attention." A qualified Haya potter could produce two or three half-pots a day, whereas the Kisi women were reported to be able to finish two or three pots in the same time.<sup>126</sup> Cotton weaving and iron smelting demanded considerably more time and trouble. Information varies, as undoubtedly did the situation, but it is well established that one cloth of cotton took as a rule several days to weave.<sup>127</sup> To this has to be added the time consumed in the spinning of yarn. According to Fr Wyckaert's estimate from the early colonial period, about one week's work was required to produce the raw material for a cloth of 3 square metres.<sup>128</sup>

The amount of work needed for iron-working varied according to the type of kiln, and we may assume, ore. In any case it was considerable. Sources are confused but there is no doubt that, besides smelting and forging themselves, a great deal of work was required for gathering the ore and preparing the charcoal as well as for building of the smelting furnaces. Such preparations involved considerable groups of people, including women and children, for several days.<sup>129</sup> In a demonstration in the 1930s it was found that to produce iron ore in order to charge a Fipa kiln twice, three men had to dig for eleven days, and to prepare sufficient charcoal for

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126. Ishumi, *Cultural Heritage*, p. 16 (quotation); Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 262. Cf. a quite different present-day technique in S.A.C. Waane, 'Pottery Making Traditions of the Ikombe Kisi of Kyela District', *National Museum of Tanzania. Occasional Paper No. 4*, Dar es Salaam, 1976, pp. 14 ff.

127. For the Fipa and the Rukwa valley cf. Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, p. 255 (four to five days to make a cloth of 2 metres by 1.25) and A. Wyckaert, 'Une Industrie Nègre ressuscitée par la Guerre', ms, APB (15 hours to produce a cloth of 3 by 3 metres); Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 382 (general, "rarely under a week" with three-hour working days); Hore, *Tanganyika*, pp. 85—86 (Ujiji, four days); Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 234 (Nyihä, "very time-consuming").

128. Wyckaert, *Industrie Nègre*, APB.

129. E.g. Wyckaert, *Forgerons*, pp. 371—372, 374; Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, p. 416; Wright, *Critical History*, p. 9; Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 265 ff.

the same purpose was the work of four men for seven days. The actual building of the kiln took no more than two days, preparatory and follow-up operations excluded, but more than 50 men with their wives and children were required for the work. The durability of a Fipa kiln is a matter of some controversy, but obviously it lasted several years. Each burning of the kiln took some three days, after which the slag had to be purified further in the blast furnace (a few hours) and forged into hoes (a whole day from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.). One burning of the tall kiln produced, according to varying estimates, iron at most for a dozen hoes, "which is far from making the fortune of our patient operators."<sup>130</sup> That the expenditure of labour was considerable, even if the pattern was far from identical, in a smelting system based on another type of kiln can be inferred from the one detailed retrospective account we have available, with reference to the Pangwa.<sup>131</sup>

In spite of the high requirements of labour input the quantity of handicraft production was considerable in some places. To attempt more precise quantification is a hopeless task, but magnitudes can be hinted at. For iron some scattered and mostly speculative figures are available. Willis has suggested that Fipa smiths may have produced some 11 000 hoes annually in ca 1880. This sounds reasonable but his grounds for the estimate are not entirely convincing.<sup>132</sup> A missionary estimated in the 1890s the yearly number of hoes produced and sold by the Rongo in Geita, which was probably the most active iron-smelting and forging area in the whole country, at about 30 000. The German military commander of Tabora maintained that in 1890—91 some 150 000 iron hoes were sold in the market-place of the town.<sup>133</sup> The latter

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130. Wise, *Iron Smelting*, passim; Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 239—242 (quotation p. 242); Wright, *Critical History*, p. 5. For a summary, see Willis, *State*, pp. 146—148;

131. See Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, pp. 264 ff.

132. Willis, *State*, p. 148. What makes the number suspect is that it is based on putative demand estimates of a hypothetical population, and some sources maintain that there were annually many more burnings of the kiln than the two Willis postulates (see e.g. Wyckaert, *Forgerons*, p. 376 who speaks of ten chargings).

133. Brard, *Victoria-Nyansa*, p. 87; Sigl, *DKB*, 1892, p. 165.

figure, if accurate at all, must be exceptional. This was a peak time in long-distance trade after a rebellion against the Germans on the coast had largely suppressed trade over the coastline for a year or so.<sup>134</sup> On the basis of such figures one cannot say much more than that tens of thousands of hoes were probably produced in the country yearly. For other handicrafts we have no figures of any sort. We merely know that cotton cloths were so common in the areas where they were manufactured that several thousands of people wore them. Wallace noted that "(a)ll the men and women round Rukwa" wore them and that a portion was traded outside. Cameron observed in the vicinity of Ujiji that nearly a third of the population wore cloths of local make.<sup>135</sup>

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134. Cf. figures for ivory exports: 1889 — 79 000 kg, 1890 — 204 000 kg, 1891 — 208 000 kg, 1892 — 129 000 kg. Meyer, *Kolonialreich*, I, p. 392.

135. Wallace, *Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau*, p. 613; Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, p. 276.

## 8. Aspects of reproduction

Although economic production and exchange of products represent an extremely important aspect of human society, they are still only one aspect. Another basic aspect, Engels suggested, is reproduction, or the "production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species."<sup>1</sup> In research on African societies, too, it has become increasingly fashionable to regard reproduction as ontologically and epistemologically on a par with production. The role of reproduction has in particular been emphasized by French Marxist anthropologists, notably Claude Meillassoux. "If we are to understand how the domestic society operates, reproduction must be taken into central consideration," he argues. "It is evident that reproduction is the dominant preoccupation of these societies. All their institutions are organized to this purpose."<sup>2</sup> It can be argued that this is broadly true of Tanzanian precolonial societies as well. Their institutions were geared to maintaining and ensuring the continuity of human life. Yet the concept of reproduction with its new ambitions is far from unambiguous. It can and has been used in a wide variety of senses. If stretched enough it can be made to encompass a great deal of production as well. In a narrow sense it is barely distinguishable from questions of human fertility discussed in demography. In this study, I understand the concept of reproduction as referring to processes in which human beings engage in relationships with each other in order to ensure the long-term continuity of human life in their society, as distinct from production in which the human society manipulates and exploits nature to fulfill its immediate requirements. In the following I shall discuss what I take to be three major aspects of reproduction in precolonial Tanzanian societies: marriage, fertility and forms of servitude.

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1. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, in Marx and Engels, *Pre-Capitalist*, p. 390.

2. Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money*. Cambridge, 1981, pp. xii, 38 (*Femmes, greniers et capitaux*. Paris, 1975).



# Marriage

The key institution for reproduction was marriage. It is commonly believed, even if it cannot be ascertained, that marriage in precolonial Africa was for all practical purposes universal. All people married, at least for some time. The grounds for this belief stem, not only from empirical observation but also from the idea that marriage was a practical necessity. Even though there is no reason to think that things like sexual attraction and mutual care and affection were more absent in African than in other marriages, in the final analysis marriage must always and everywhere be seen as being based on concrete reciprocity of interests. The carefully specified sexual division of labour, discussed above,<sup>3</sup> was made possible only by the universality of marriage. "A man thinks of marriage mainly in order to get a wife to cook," it was said in Unyamwezi.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, a Nyamwezi woman needed a man to take care of men's work: clearing of forest or building of a house. But a still more important function of marriage was the production of children who were a necessary precondition for survival. Whatever opinion prevailed on the desirability of extraconjugal relations — and, especially from the women's point of view, it was not liberal even in matrilineal societies<sup>5</sup> — the production of children was permitted only within marriage.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, and this is the basic point, precolonial African marriage

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3. Above, ch. 7, pp. 281—288.

4. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, II, p. 7.

5. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, p. 59 (matrilineal peoples of the south-east); Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. 22, 24, 32, 46, 52, 55, 62, 67 (eastern matrilineal peoples); Charles Dundas, 'Native Laws of Some Bantu Tribes of East Africa', *JRAI*, 51 (1921), pp. 245—247 (a general view, many examples); Kollman, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 172 and Hans Cory, *Sukuma Law and Custom*. London, 1954, p. 60 (Sukuma); Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, p. 10 and Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 191 (Chagga).

6. For illegitimate children, see Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 223—225; Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakusa*. London, 1957, pp. 146—148; Marja-Liisa Swantz, 'The Religious and Magical Rites Connected with the Life Cycle of the Women in some Bantu Ethnic Groups of Tanzania', Ph. Lic. thesis, Turku University, 1966, pp. 264—265.

must not be regarded as an alliance of two individuals only. It is clear even from our scattered sources that two married Africans did not usually form a 'couple' living together. The lack of such relationship was conspicuous in polygynous unions, and polygyny was the ideal in the great majority of societies. Only a few peoples, in particular those living in great congestion like the Kara on their small island or the Mbugwe on the scorched salt plain at the southern edge of Lake Manyara, were reported as exclusively monogamous.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, the actual extent of polygyny is not easy to define and it may have been rarer than its frequent occurrence in ethnographic sources indicates. In practice polygyny was confined to elder and wealthier men; it was, in Godfrey Wilson's words, "one of the privileges of maturity and old age."<sup>8</sup> Hence, for many Tanzanian men polygyny remained an ideal to be attained in the future if at all. This was particularly true of matrilineal societies<sup>9</sup> but also in others the incidence of polygyny was relatively low.<sup>10</sup> However, it is of crucial importance for us to note that even in monogamous marriages wife and husband mostly worked and ate separately.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than an alliance between two individuals the precolonial marriage can be, and has often been, seen as an alliance between two descent groups. And that it undoubtedly was. One of the distinguishing qualities of African descent groups was that they were, excluding several ruling lineages, at a certain level exogamic, i. e. marriages between members of the same group were forbidden. Hence, they had to get spouses from outside in order to reproduce and survive. Or as Tylor once put it, they had to marry

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7. Dundas, *Native Laws*, p. 248 (Kara); Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 186—187 and Robert F. Gray, 'Positional Succession among the Wambugwe', *Africa*, 23 (1953), p. 234 (Mbugwe).

8. Godfrey Wilson, 'An African Morality', *Africa*, 9 (1936), p. 77.

9. Adams, *Lindi*, pp. 40, 53 (Mwera); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 61 (south-eastern peoples in general); Baur and Le Roy, *Zanguebar*, p. 320 (eastern matrilineal peoples); Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 227 (Zigua).

10. See e.g. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 388 (Shambaa) and Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 199 (Nyamwezi).

11. E.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 28; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 194; Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 552; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 113.

out in order not to be killed out.<sup>12</sup> There have been several attempts to interpret the origins and functions of this custom. Some scholars think that incest prohibition is universal and has its roots in human nature while others have given it a more social explanation. Among the latter, Claude Lévi-Strauss and his followers have seen marriage not only as creating a bond between two separate or perhaps previously hostile groups but also elevated it to a major integrating device in the system of alliances between a number of descent groups and argued that only marriage can build such groups into larger social entities.<sup>13</sup> Meillassoux, for his part, has emphasized the physical requirements of reproduction: the operative decent groups, which he prefers to call 'domestic communities', are too small to be demographically self-sufficient and hence they simply have to exchange women between them.<sup>14</sup> Whichever of these more theoretical and partly speculative views is accepted, and I tend to think that some of them are more complementary than contradictory, the historical record shows beyond doubt that in Tanzanian precolonial societies marriage was considered a central institution for reproduction and the maintenance of social structure, and that marriage was strictly controlled by elders of descent groups.

## Bride service and bride wealth

Elders could control marriages because what may be called 'rights-in-persons' were in the precolonial societies vested with descent groups. Such rights, usually mutual but not necessarily equal, exist in all societies and in almost all social relationships, for instance between spouses or parents and children.<sup>15</sup> In precolonial

12. E.B. Tylor, 'On a Method of Investigating the Development of Institutions', *JRAI*, 18 (1888), as quoted in Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, p. 176.

13. This is called the 'alliance theory' of marriage and it originates from Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*. Paris, 1949. Feierman has argued that it can be applied to Shambaa history, *Shambaa Kingdom*, p. 79.

14. Meillassoux, *Maidens*, pp. 4, 10—14 (but cf. p. 45).

15. See Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, 'African "Slavery" as an Institution of Marginality', in idem, eds, *Slavery in Africa*. Madison, 1977, pp. 7—11.

Tanzanian societies, rights to children belonged not only to households but also to descent groups. The actual control of marriage was effected through the control of access to marriageable women by the elders of the group. Few societies regulated directly and forcibly who was to marry whom but all placed certain obligations on men before they were allowed to marry the girl they wished. These obligations took the form of 'bride service' and 'bride wealth'. In the former the prospective bridegroom had to work for the kinspeople of the bride for a substantial period, often up to several years; in the latter a set of goods had to be transferred from the groom to the kin of the bride. These are rather conspicuous institutions whose existence has long been known. Especially the latter has generated extensive discussions regarding its origins and functions. A common suggestion has been that bride wealth is to be considered a compensation to the bride's kin for the lost labour and/or fertility of the woman. The argument is logical and not without some merit, in particular for the colonial and post-colonial period from which most of the discussions originate. However, when bride wealth is regarded in conjunction with bride service, it becomes obvious that at least in the precolonial period it must have been much more than a simple lump sum compensation for the lost attributes of a woman.

At the empirical level, the evidence is ample if confused, and it is possible to discern an overall pattern of the extent and incidence of bride wealth and bride service in precolonial Tanzania. Bride service was an institution characteristic of matrilineal and matrilineally oriented societies and it appears to have been much more common in the precolonial period than it is now. In addition to the eastern and south-eastern matrilineal societies,<sup>16</sup> it was widely practised in several other southern and south-western societies.<sup>17</sup> Bride wealth, for its part, was an institution of

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16. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. 31, 44, 52, 61 (eastern matrilineal peoples, excluding the Zaramo who were said to have a bride wealth consisting of hoes and cloths, *ibid.*, p. 21); Grohs, *Kisazi*, p. 43 (Zigua); Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, pp. 59 (Yao), 96—97 (Makonde). Cf. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, p. 56.

17. Crosse-Upcott, *Social Structure*, pp. 202 ff. (Ngindo); Brock, Nyiha, p. 9 (Nyiha); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 48 (Safwa); Heese, *Sitte der Sango*, p. 135 (Sangu); A.T. and G.M. Culwick, 'The Functions of Bride-



patrilineal societies, in particular those which kept much cattle. Yet bride service and bride wealth were not mutually exclusive institutions: they often co-existed. Even in societies in which bride service was long and arduous there could be bride wealth in the form of 'marriage gifts' even if it was little more than symbolic. It consisted of a few hoes, cloths, beads or small stock. That was the case with most of the peoples just mentioned.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, in many of those societies in which bride wealth was higher and thus represented the main obligation, there was a subsidiary bride service. In a fair number of them it was possible to replace the whole bride wealth with bride service. In Unyamwezi a 'cock marriage' without bride wealth was common. In Bunyakusa a "lively tradition of matriliney and marriage with bride service" was reported as recently as the 1930s.<sup>19</sup> But these cases reveal the basic difference in the functions of bride service and bride wealth. It was only in marriages with bride wealth proper, i. e. not in those with symbolic marriage gifts, that the rights to children were completely transferred to the father's descent group; otherwise the mother's group retained a considerable part if not all of them.<sup>20</sup>

It is extremely difficult on the basis of our sources to evaluate the economic significance of bride service and bride wealth. In some societies the suitor was reportedly not required to do much more than build a house for the bride and give some help in the fields of her maternal uncle or parents;<sup>21</sup> elsewhere he was expected diligently to cultivate the fields of the bride's kinspeople for

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Wealth in Ubena of the Rivers', *Africa*, 7 (1934), pp. 142—145; Gulliver, *Neighbours and Networks*, pp. 56—57 (Ndendeuli).

18. See the sources in the two preceding footnotes.

19. Abrahams, *Greater Unyamwezi*, pp. 44—45; M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, p. 51; idem. *Men and Elders*, pp. 6, 59—61 (quotation p. 6).

20. Sources in the above footnote; Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 471 (Chagga); Ishumi, *Cultural Heritage*, p. 90 (Kiziba); Majerus, 'Das Eherecht der Wabende (Deutsch-Ostafrika)', *Anthropos*, 10—11 (1915—16), p. 786 (Bende). Cf., however, the case of the Hehe where bride wealth was not explicitly connected with the affiliation of children. Alison Redmayne, 'The Wahehe People of Tanganyika', D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1964, pp. 63, 65.

21. E.g. in several south-eastern matrilineal societies, Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, p. 56.

several years, in the extreme case of Usafwa up to eight years.<sup>22</sup> But I have failed to find a single detailed account of the daily or monthly amounts of work done for bride service. It is a fair guess that they must have varied a great deal not only between but also within societies. Nor is it much easier to determine the actual composition of bride wealth. Not only was reported variation wide, but our information on the issue is also conflicting and after the outbreak of the cattle epizootics in the late 1870s evidently unrepresentative. These epizootics, culminating in the Great Rinderpest in the early 1890s wiped out the majority of the cattle in the country<sup>23</sup> and thus heavily reduced the main form of wealth in which bride wealth was paid. According to earlier descriptions by Burton and Stanley bride wealth along the trade routes in the interior was from one to ten heads of cattle, chiefs usually paying more than commoners.<sup>24</sup> From other sources it is clear, however, that bride wealth was composed not only of cattle but also of other items, most of which were what I called earlier 'prestige goods': iron hoes, beads, cloths.<sup>25</sup> When the general precolonial levels are compared to those of the early colonial period it is difficult to find essential differences in the overall patterns: the bride wealths reported were still a few cows or other animals combined with iron hoes and other trade goods.<sup>26</sup> But when societies are taken

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22. For the Safwa, see Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 48.

23. Above, pp. 244—245, fn. 88.

24. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 24 (Nyamwezi — from one to ten cows); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, p. 394 (interlacustrine region — from one to five heads of cattle).

25. See Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 114—118 for comparative information compiled during the German colonial period.

26. The following data originate from the late 1890s onwards: Johanssen and Döhring, *Leben der Schambala*, p. 201 and Wohlrab, *Recht der Schambala*, p. 161 (Shambaa — one cow, possibly with four she-goats and two he-goats); Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, pp. 70 (Tusi — three to ten cows, several goats, sheep, iron hoes), 122 (Nyambo — 10—20 goats and "presents", for the poor 2—3 goats), 165 (Haya — one cow and six goats or 2 000 cowries; cf. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 114: more than 12 000 cowries), 224 (Luo — one cow, 20 goats and 40 hoes); Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwuma-gebiet*, pp. 229 (Hehe — one goat, two hoes; Bena — one ox, six goats, ten hoes), 447 (Kinga — hoes, agricultural products and two oxen); Gutmann, *Recht*, pp. 84 ff.

separately the declining trend emerges unmistakably. In Bunyakusa bride wealth declined because of the ravages of rinderpest from 10—12 cows to one to three cows and one hoe even for chiefs; in Sukumaland the change was from five oxen to 20 goats and in Bukuria from 10—12 cows to three — four cows.<sup>27</sup> A most intriguing aspect is that in nomadic pastoral societies bride wealth (also before rinderpest) appears to have been considerably lower than in basically agricultural but cattle-keeping societies. Among the Maasai the bride was, on the contrary, given a generous dowry in cattle when moving over to the groom's kraal.<sup>28</sup>

However, for our purposes the most important point about bride service and bride wealth is not their exact length or amount and economic importance but their social implications. They were institutions embedded in different kind of kinship systems but they had the common function of rendering a degree of control over access to marriageable women to the lineage elders. Bride service was quite openly an instrument of such a control: in the societies where it was prevalent there was no way to marry without fulfilling it. Bridewealth made a similar control possible in a more indirect way. This was because of its physical composition. As a rule, it was made up of items which were beyond the immediate reach of young men and controlled by elders, either directly like cattle, or indirectly like prestige goods earned through trade. Hence, even in cases in which young men earned part of the

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(Chagga — a series of obligations during a long period amounting to a transfer of some cattle and goats and much beer and milk); M.A. Tessler, V.M. O'Barr and D.H. Spain, *Tradition and Identity in Changing Africa*. New York, 1973, p. 48 (Pare — four cattle, two of each sex, and a male and a female goat). Cf. Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 172 and Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship*, p. 229 who give much higher figures, the former for Sukumaland from 13 (commoners) to 50 (chiefs) heads of cattle, the latter for the Gogo more than 30 heads of cattle for the precolonial period.

27. *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, 29 June 1901 and M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, table 4, pp. 80—81 (Nyakusa); Werther, *Zum Victoria Nyanza*, p. 175 (Sukuma); Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, p. 300 (Kuria).
28. Fischer, *Massai-Land*, pp. 64—65. For a later situation, cf. Alan H. Jacobs, 'Maasai Marriage and Bridewealth', *Mila*, 1 (1970), pp. 25—36.

bride wealth themselves they remained dependent on their fathers or/and other elder kinsmen for acquiring the rest.<sup>29</sup>

## Fertility control

The main function of marriage was the production of children, and fertility was the ultimate value of precolonial societies. In the words of Monica Wilson, "(i)n both public and private ritual men were preoccupied with fertility ... What was worshipped ... was ... procreative power." But the common notion of invariably high and uncontrolled fertility needs heavy qualification. As much as fertility was valued and aimed at, it was also strictly controlled. Quoting Wilson further, "procreative power was worshipped but not left to grow wild: it was tamed and controlled."<sup>30</sup> Female infertility was a great misfortune and every attempt was made to cure it but at the same time excessive fertility was shunned. For instance the birth of twins was a dreadful matter in many agricultural societies.<sup>31</sup> Just as the functions of a 'rainmaker'

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29. E.g. Gutmann, *Frau*, pp. 2, 31; M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, p. 52.

30. Monica Wilson, *Religion and the Transformation of Society*. Cambridge, 1971, pp. 31, 67.

31. E.g. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, p. 70 (Zigua); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 38 (Doe); Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, p. 13 and Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 212 (Chagga); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 17; Sick, *Waniaturu*, p. 42; Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, II, pp. 17 ff. and Spellig, *Wanjamwesi*, p. 217 (but cf. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 83 who claims that twins were received "with great joy"); Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, p. 99 (Makonde); Brock, *Nyiha*, p. 8; Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 353—354 and M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 152 ff. (Nyakusa). Peoples approving twins were reported to include the Sukuma (Gottfried O. and Martha B. Lang, 'Problems of Social and Economic Change in Sukumaland, Tanganyika', *Anthropological Quarterly* (hereafter *AQ*), 35 (1962), p. 229); the Haya (Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 724); the Luo (Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, p. 227); the Sandawe (Luschan in Werther, *Hochländer*, p. 343); the Bende (Avon, *Vie sociale*, p. 102) the Fipa (Fromm, *Ufipa*, p. 99) and the Gogo (Claus, *Wagogo*, 43).



included the prevention of excessive rain,<sup>32</sup> so also societies had developed many social mechanism to prevent an excessive birth rate. Although there is no reason not to think that an active sexual life was highly esteemed in African societies, there were many devices designed to break the 'natural' causal chain from the sexual act through conception to the birth of a child. The notion that these societies knew no means of birth control is nothing short of mythical, and the general assertion that their members wished for as many children as possible needs to be qualified. Certainly they wished for children and it may be said that they wished for many children, depending of course on what is meant by 'many'. But their wish was subject to control.

Fertility and procreative power in pre-colonial societies were controlled in two main ways: first, young women and men were subjected to a complicated set of rites and rituals before they were able to begin their mature sexual life, and second, the production of children was regulated by and within marriage. There were few attempts to forbid or stifle the sex life of the young, but precise limits were assigned to it. Initiation rites and rituals had to be undergone before sex life began. Some societies might have permitted more than others,<sup>33</sup> but there was one common limit: no

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32. For East Africa in general, see Zimon, *Regenriten*, pp. 142—143. For scattered references, see also Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 259 (Chagga); Scherer, Ha, p. 893 (Ha).

33. Data on this theme should be treated with more than usual suspicion, as O.F. Raum shows in his Chagga example (O.F. Raum, *Chaga Childhood*. Oxford, 1967, pp. 68—70). The main lines seem clear, however. Among the most permissive were peoples such as the Maasai (Merker, *Masai*, p. 84), the Sukuma (Cory, *Sukuma Law*, pp. 39—40) and perhaps the Nyaturu (Sick, *Wanyaturu*, p. 38), but even with them control existed (cf. Jacobs in Angela Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials for Population Planning in East Africa*, III. Nairobi, 1971, p. 404 and Sick's mention of a thrashing, *Wanyaturu*, p. 38). Examples of societies with the most severe regulations include the Haya (Reining in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 217) and the Hehe (Brown and Hutt, *Anthropology in Action*, p. 188). Premarital intercourse might have been permitted sometimes if the young persons had undergone the initiation rituals, see T.O. Beidelman, *The Kaguru*. New York, 1971, p. 101.

children before marriage.<sup>34</sup> Exceptions to this are difficult to find: even the Maasai, who were regarded as patterns of free love, were obliged to get married if a girl became pregnant.<sup>35</sup> In so-called child marriages, which were comparatively rare and in which the wife herself was still a child, the rule was: no children before the necessary rituals.<sup>36</sup> Once married, the couple was subjected to several rules regulating the occurrence of intercourse.

## Reproductive rituals

The central role of reproductive rituals not only in Tanzanian precolonial but in all preindustrial societies has led to several attempts to account for their incidence and form.<sup>37</sup> Even if they were obviously surrounded by sexuality they included many other dimensions beyond the pure sexual. They contained a number of phases which were undergone at a varying age so that their meaning and function are not always unambiguous. In particular boys' rituals were often public and social celebrations and they had both social and political importance in the maintenance of

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34. Of the Sukuma it is reported that premarital pregnancy "does not cause embarrassment to the man or the parents of the girl," Cory, *Sukuma Law*, p. 91, but this information dates from the late colonial period. Mange, Mfumo ya Bukwimba, p. 137 relates that "virginity was staunchly maintained" in the precolonial period. For other peoples see M.-L. Swantz, *Religious and Magical Rites*, p. 161 (Zaramo — "the stigma was laid on pregnancy, not on sexual relations as such"); Beidelman, *Kaguru*, p. 101; Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 119—120 (south-eastern matrilineal peoples); Claus, Wagogo, p. 46; Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 54; Huber, *Rural Bukwaya*, p. 137; Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 222; Raum, *Chaga Childhood*, pp. 67—69; and Raum, in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 35 (Chagga); Kimambo, *Political History*, pp. 106—107 (Pare); Ishumi, *Cultural Heritage*, p. 70 (Haya).

35. Hollis, *Masai*, pp. 310—311.

36. See e.g. M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 86—87.

37. For a discussion and an attempt at reinterpretation, see Karen Ericksen Paige and Jeffery M. Paige, *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1981, ch. 1 and *passim*.

communal stability<sup>38</sup> and even in the support of ethnic identity.<sup>39</sup> There are indications that they had changed historically more than the rituals for girls, especially in regard to genital operations,<sup>40</sup> and they were almost entirely absent in the western part. Yet I think most of these rituals can be taken, for the most part at least, as methods used by societies to control the sexuality of the young. They conferred a social blessing on the physical sexual maturity of the young girl or boy; after them a young person might marry and have children. They included both rich symbolism and painful mutilation of the sex organs, but one of their main functions seems to have been the communication of sexual knowledge. Through them the young gained knowledge of the society and an understanding of sexual life,<sup>41</sup> while the society gained knowledge of the sexuality of the young.<sup>42</sup> This is at least how the early European scholars interpreted them. "Incomprehensible as many of the ceremonies are — even to natives of the present day — which were used in the initiation of boys and girls, the meaning of

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38. For these, see e.g. Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, pp. 14—15 and Raum, *Chaga Childhood*, p. 295 (Chagga); Feerman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 52, 79 (Shambaa); Kimambo, *Political History*, pp. 69—70 (Pare); Sick, *Wanjaturu*, pp. 9—12; Claus, Wagogo, pp. 44—45; James L. Brain, 'Boys' Initiation Rites among the Luguru of Eastern Tanzania', *Anthropos*, 75 (1980), pp. 375 ff.; Lyndon Harries, 'The Initiation Rites of the Makonde Tribe', *Communications from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute*, 3 (1944), pp. 1—24 (Makonde).

39. As e.g. the Iramba against the 'Asukuma', 'uncircumcised'. Pender-Cudlip, *Iramba*, p. 65.

40. For divergent views of boys' circumcision and the spread of Islam in eastern Tanzania, see Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. 20, 32, 57; L. Swantz, *Zaramo of Tanzania*, p. 39; M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 49; Brain, *Boys' rites*, p. 374.

41. More detailed descriptions are available of initiation instruction given by the Chagga. They are dealt with by Raum, *Chaga Childhood* and Bruno Gutmann, *Die Stammeslehren der Dschagga*, I—III. Munich, 1932—1938 (an English translation of part of the latter is available from Human Relations Area Files). Descriptions of instruction by other peoples are mainly from a later colonial period, e.g. Harries, *Initiation Rites of the Makonde* and Hans Cory 'Jando', I—II, *JRAI*, 77 (1947), pp. 159—168, 78 and (1948), pp. 81—94 (Jando rites of colonial towns).

42. Cf. M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 110.

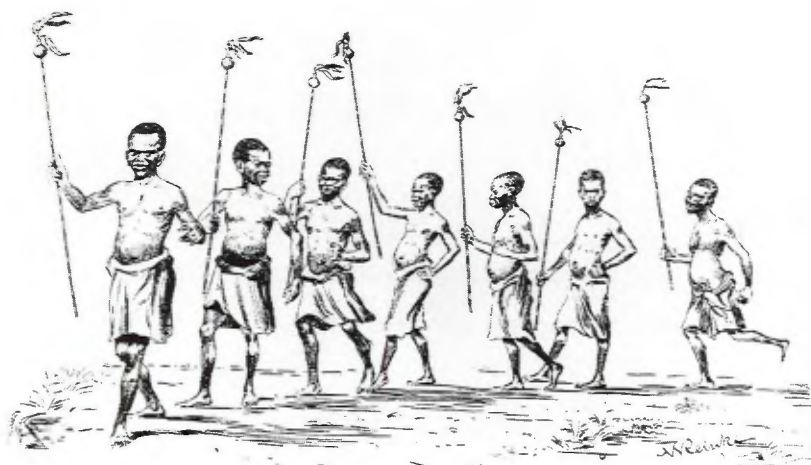


Plate 12. Reproductive rituals: a procession of newly circumcised adolescents dressed in festive loin-cloths during the final phase of boys' Unyago ritual in Newala in 1906.

the ritual as a whole is clear: it is the preparation of those reaching man- and womanhood for marriage and propagation of their species, the most important duty of the adult."<sup>43</sup>

Rituals for girls were far more sexually accented than those for boys — after all, it is women who bear children. They were also more common.<sup>44</sup> They centered on sex, and as such were an

43. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 184.

44. It is reported that rites of initiation for boys and girls were absent among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi (Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 173, 179, 72; cf. Desoignes, Msalala, p. 276) as well as among the Fipa (Willis, *Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. 27), the Nyiha (Brock, Nyiha, p. 8) and the Safwa (Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 44). Only boys' rites are said to have been absent among all peoples living in the corridor between Lakes Tanganyika and Nyasa and some of the southern highlands peoples. See M. Wilson, *Peoples of the Corridor*, pp. 97, 57 (general), 26 (Fipa, Nyamwanga, Mambwe, Lungu), 32 (Nyiha); G. Wilson, Nyakusa, p. 273; Mumford, Hehe-Bena-Sangu, p. 217.



established part of the ritual series which surrounded the woman from her own birth until the birth of her first child.<sup>45</sup> Matters of sex and fertility were always brought to prominence: the whole institution was permeated with sexuality.<sup>46</sup> In cases where elaborate rituals were not known, the coming of girls to sexual maturity was recorded in some manner and girls received instruction from old women.<sup>47</sup> Whereas the rites for boys could be undertaken long before sexual maturity, at the time of it or long after it,<sup>48</sup> the major ritual for girls — or, if performed in stages, the last part of it — was timed to coincide with the beginning of sexual maturity; after it the girl was ready to marry and give birth to children. Circumcision of boys generally meant the simple removal of the foreskin or part of it;<sup>49</sup> operations connected with the ritual for girls<sup>50</sup> affected more sensitive sexual areas, either the clitoris or the labia minora or both.<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that the larger operations were performed

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45. See M.-L. Swantz, *Religious and Magical Rites*, pp. 183, 233.

46. Detailed descriptions are available only for the colonial period. See Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche*, pp. 95—100 (Swahili); Harries, *Initiation Rites of the Makonde*, pp. 24—41 (Makonde); M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 86—129 (Nyakusa).

47. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 179 (Nyamwezi and Nyiha); Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 478; Brock, *Nyiha*, p. 8.

48. See footnotes 38 and 40 above, also M.-L. Swantz, *Religious and Magical Rites*, p. 113.

49. Details are given by Drs Eggel and Schreber in *AKGA*, 14, Berlin, 1896, pp. 656, 659, 664 (Maasai, Chagga and the Pangani district); Merker, *Masai*, p. 62 (Maasai — in Latin); Harries, *Initiation Rites of the Makonde*, p. 24 (Southeastern matrilineal peoples) and N.C. Roles, 'Tribal Surgery in East Africa during the XIXth Century', I, *EAMJ*, 43 (1966), pp. 579—594 (general).

50. I avoid the expression 'female circumcision' which sounds like a rather male-inspired expression.

51. E.g. Eggel in *AKGA*, 14, pp. 656, 659 (Maasai, Chagga); Merker, *Masai*, p. 67 (Maasai); idem. *Rechtsverhältnisse*, pp. 15—16 (Chagga); Sick, *Wanjaturu*, pp. 11—12; Claus, *Wagogo*, pp. 45—46, Beverley, *Wagogo*, p. 212 and Paulssen, *Rechtsanschauungen*, p. 168 (Gogo); Tessler et al., *Tradition and Identity*, p. 58 (Pare); Mumford, *Hehe-Bena-Sangu*, p. 218. See also A.M. Hikororo, 'The Influence of the Church on Tribal Customs at Lukuledi', *TNR*, 54 (1960), p. 3.

in patrilineal societies, the smaller in matrilineal. In some of the latter, on the other hand, girls for initiation were secluded, i.e. shut away from communal life for a long period, even for years. It was mainly the matrilineal peoples of eastern Tanzania as well as some of their western and north-western neighbours who acted in this way.<sup>52</sup> At one level seclusion was of course a symbolic act standing for rebirth; the immature girl was reborn as a marriageable woman. A similar symbolism was employed in many other rituals. But the seclusion time for girls was in this case all too long to be regarded as merely symbolic. The longest times — at least two years and, in extreme cases, reportedly five or even six — seem to have been observed by the Zaramo and Luguru. It is hardly a coincidence that these were matrilineal peoples who mutilated their girls very little or not at all.<sup>53</sup> But it should be noted that there were also peoples among whom sexual organs were not touched and there was no isolation.<sup>54</sup>

## Control within marriage

Control by the society by no means ceased after initiation and marriage ceremonies. Sexual intercourse even between married

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52. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. 20, 33, 49, 65, 70; Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, p. 244 and M.-L. Swantz, *Religious and Magical Rites*, pp. 42—43, 47 (Zaramo); Brain, *Symbolic Rebirth*, p. 180 (Luguru); Beidelman, *Kaguru*, pp. 107—109 (Kaguru); Grohs, *Kisazi*, p. 53 (Zigua); Thornton, *Space, Time and Culture*, pp. 220—222 (Iraqw and generally). Cf. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 111—112 (southeastern matrilineal peoples among whom a seclusion of several months evidently was one stage in the process of initiation). Among the Haya seclusion took place only after marriage (Rehse, *Kiziba*, pp. 115—117 and Reining in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 217).

53. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, p. 20 claims that even among the Zaramo girls “genitals were cut,” but M.-L. Swantz, whose authority must be respected, denies this most strongly, *Religious and Magical Rites*, p. 110 and idem., *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 79; and personal communication, February 1988.

54. Such as the Sukuma, Nyamwezi, Fipa, Nyiha and Safwa mentioned above, fn. 44.

couples was surrounded by a "thicket of taboos."<sup>55</sup> Active relations were not only favoured but demanded in normal circumstances,<sup>56</sup> yet there were many situations where married couples were expected to practise restraint: during mourning, during certain ritual periods, etc.<sup>57</sup> Demographically by far the most important measure of control applied to the time following a birth. In all African societies it seems to have been an unqualified rule that a mother must not become pregnant again while breast-feeding a previous child. When the breast-feeding periods were long, also the spacing between the births of children became long, often several years. Travellers sometimes ridiculed people who claimed to remember having been breast-fed,<sup>58</sup> but breast-feeding periods of at least a year, generally two or three years, often even longer, can be easily documented from ethnographic sources.<sup>59</sup> The chief means of avoiding a too rapid succession of births was a ritually regulated post-partum sexual abstinence by breast-feeding women combined with the physiological preventive mechanisms activated by breast-feeding itself, in particular the period of post-

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55. M. Wilson, *Religion and Transformation*, p. 79. Wilson, to be sure, thinks of taboos as affecting the entire sexual life, which is a broad interpretation.

56. For scattered "rather heroic reports" on this, see Marc J. Swartz, 'Some Cultural Influences on Family Size in Three East African Societies', *AQ*, 42 (1969), p. 77 (quotation — Bena, Hehe, Luo) and Hans Stirnimann, 'Zur Gesellschaftsordnung und Religion der Pangwa', *Anthropos*, 62 (1967), p. 404.

57. E.g. see Molnos, in idem, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 12; Raum, in *ibid.*, p. 28.

58. Werther, *Zum Victoria Nyanza*, p. 175.

59. To be sure, there are some, mainly German references to a breast-feeding period of only a few months (e.g. Baumstark, Warangi, p. 55 for the Irangi and Luschan in Werther, *Hochländer*, p. 343 but for instance the latter is contradicted by Otto Dempwolff, *Die Sandawe*. Hamburg, 1916, p. 139). Most information can be found from footnotes 61 and 62 below. In addition see Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 23 (Nyamwezi); Cameron, *Across Africa*, I, p. 276 (eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika); Zupitza in *AKGA*, 14, p. 655 (Haya) and Sick, Waniaturu, p. 42 (Nyaturu).

partum anovulation.<sup>60</sup> Abstinence was not necessarily complete. It was a social norm but it is very difficult to say to what extent it was a social practice as well. In some societies we know that parents were in 'ritual' sexual contact soon after a birth in order to "complete a child" or to "secure the next," and that only after this did they begin to practise abstinence.<sup>61</sup> Among most peoples an absolute prohibition of intercourse with nursing mothers is reported,<sup>62</sup> but in practice some traditional preventive method

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60. For a more detailed discussion of the mechanism involved, see Juhani Koponen, 'Population Growth in Historical Perspective. The Key Role of Changing Fertility', in Jannik Boesen, Kjell J. Havnevik, Juhani Koponen and Rie Odgaard, eds, *Tanzania. Crisis and Struggle for Survival*. Uppsala, 1986, esp. pp. 43 ff.
61. E.g. the Haya (Rehse, *Kiziba*, p. 119 and Audrey I. Richards and Priscilla Reining, 'Report on Fertility Surveys in Buganda and Buhaya', in Frank Lorimer, ed., *Culture and Human Fertility*. Paris, 1954, pp. 379—380); the Fipa (Fromm, *Ufipa*, p. 98 and J. M. Robert, *Croyances et coutumes magico-religieuses des Wafipa paiens*. Tabora, 1949, p. 55); the Kwere (James L. Brain, 'The Kwere of the Eastern Province', *TNR*, 58&59 (1962), p. 238). Ritual intercourse is also reported for some peoples with no mention of abstinence to follow it; e.g. the Kwaya (Huber, *Rural Bukwaya*, p. 143). Because in connection with the first group (ritual intercourse and abstinence) some sources mention only ritual intercourse (e.g. Rehse and Fromm), it may be supposed, until other evidence is available, that the second group also practised abstinence.
62. L.W. Swantz, *Medicine Man*, p. 133 (Zaramo); Brain, *Symbolic Rebirth*, p. 184 (Luguru); Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. 48, 171, cf. idem, in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 262 (Kaguru); Luther P. Gerlach, 'Nutrition in Its Sociocultural Matrix: Food Getting and Using along the East African Coast', in David Brokensha, ed., *Ecology and Economic Development in Tropical Africa*. Berkeley, 1965, p. 265 (Digo, 1950s); Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche*, p. 12 ('Swahili'); Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 113, 122 and Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 61 (matrilineal peoples of the south-east in general); Thomson, *Notes on Rovuma*, p. 75 and Behr, *Völker*, pp. 78—79 (Makonde); Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, pp. 33—34, 61 (Yao); Reichard, *Wanjamesi*, p. 251, Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 539, cf. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, II, pp. 7—8 (Nyamwezi); Corlien Varkevisser in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 236 and Gottfried and Martha Lang in ibid., pp. 229, 231 (Sukuma); Hermann Feldmann, 'Die Erhaltung und Vermehrung der Eingeborenen-Bevölkerung', Hamburgische



such as coitus interruptus was resorted to in these cases also.<sup>63</sup> Evidently, the main concern was the end result — the securing of an adequate spacing between children — and not the means, among which sexual abstinence, or more accurately, heavy cultural and social stress laid on sexual abstinence of breast-feeding women, was only one.

There is no *a priori* reason to assume that the customs in this respect were any more indentical among the inhabitants of the Tanzanian area than any other customs and there may well have been appreciable differences in periods of post-partum abstinence and the concomitant spacing of the births not only between the peoples but also within them. But on the basis of our sources it is difficult to discover systematic differences between the various societies, not to speak of intrasocietal variations. It is possible that the longest interval between children was desired by peoples such as the Nyakusa, Chagga and Bena, who lived in fertile mountainous surroundings,<sup>64</sup> and that polygynous marriages were generally less fertile per woman than monogamous ones.<sup>65</sup> Available source material is so deficient and contradictory that it does

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Universität, *Abhandlungen aus dem Gebiete der Auslandskunde*, 13, ser. D, 1 (1923), p. 107 (Shambaa); Carl Ittameier, 'Die Erhaltung und Vermehrung der Eingeborenen-Bevölkerung', *ibid.*, p. 13 (Chagga); R.F. Gray, *Sonjo*, pp. 62—63 (Sonjo, 1950s); Claus, Wagogo, p. 43; Mumford, Hehe-Bena-Sangu, p. 216; Culwick and Culwick, *Ubena*, pp. 375—376 (river Bena); Stirnimann, *Pangwa*, p. 265; Dempwolff, *Sandawe*, p. 139; Merker, *Masai*, p. 50; Klima, *Barabaig*, p. 49 (Datoga, 1950s).

63. See Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, II, pp. 20—21; (Nyamwezi); Ittameier, Erhaltung und Vermehrung, p. 14 and Raum in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 28 (Chagga); Feierman, Concepts, p. 131, fn. (Shambaa); G. Wilson, Nyakusa, p. 262 and M. Wilson in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, p. 249 (Nyakusa); Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, pp. 62, 87 (Nyaturu, Isanzu).

64. See M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 131 and *idem*, *Communal Rituals*, p. 197 (Nyakusa); Raum in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, I, p. 70 and *idem*, in *ibid.*, III, p. 27; (Chagga); Swartz, *Cultural Influences*, p. 79 (Bena).

65. Suggested e.g. by Brard, Victoria-Nyansa, pp. 78—80 on the basis of a comparison of the Sumbwa and Sukuma, and Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, p. 12 for the Chagga, but disputed by Ittameier, *Erhaltung und Vermehrung*, p. 11.

not justify far-reaching elaborations without further study. What seems clear anyway is that the end result, the avoidance of a too rapid succession of births, was commonly shared by all peoples, whatever their mode of production or kinship system.

Prevention of pregnancy by abstinence might have been attempted not only when a woman's sexual maturity was beginning or at its height, but also later: it was the custom among some peoples that when a certain social phase had passed, usually when a woman's own sons and daughters began to conceive children, she ceased to give birth although she was still physically capable. This is usually called terminal abstinence, a somewhat misleading term because the point was not abstinence as such but the avoidance of pregnancy. There is no precise picture of how widespread this custom was in the Tanzanian area. In the global scale it is assumed to have been rarer than post-partum abstinence,<sup>66</sup> and the same was evidently true of the Tanzanian area. Among the sources of the present study only a few references to the matter can be found. Among the Nyakusa women were reported to have ceased to give birth after their eldest son had become a father,<sup>67</sup> and Chagga women evidently followed the same practice after their daughter had gotten married.<sup>68</sup> Nyamwezi women were not supposed to bear children after becoming grandmothers, whereas Hehe grandmothers were reported to have observed the same post-partum taboos as their daughters.<sup>69</sup> But even if these are the only references I have come across, lack of mention does not prove, of course, that the practice was not prevalent in many societies. It was far less conspicuous than restrictions of intercourse during the period of breast-feeding.

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66. See Moni Nag, 'How Modernization Can Also Increase Fertility', *Current Anthropology*, 21 (1980), p. 577.

67. M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 137 and idem, *Men and Elders*, p. 249 (Nyakusa).

68. Judging by Raum, *Chaga Childhood*, p. 88, fn. 1 and Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 133. Moore in idem and Puritt, *Chagga and Meru*, p. 68 informs that while senior women (and men) were not allowed to have more children once their own offspring had been circumcised there was no restriction on their continued sexual activity.

69. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 452; Elizabeth Fisher Brown, 'Hehe Grandmothers', *JRAI*, 65 (1935), pp. 94—95.

Thus, there were many situations where pregnancy was socially condemned and every attempt made to avoid it. On the other hand, an active sex life was esteemed and aspired to. Consequently, there was an obvious contradiction "between wanting and withholding,"<sup>70</sup> and besides restraint many other means of preventing unwanted pregnancies had to be developed. Coitus interruptus and the safe period were the best known of these, though it appears, in the light of later research at least, that the latter was not always the safest in the case of some peoples.<sup>71</sup> In most societies *dawa* or 'medicines' were known which were thought to be capable of preventing pregnancy,<sup>72</sup> and the Chagga knew how to use more outward methods. Sterilization was known at least in Busumbwa and elsewhere in Unyamwezi.<sup>73</sup> The effectiveness of these methods is impossible to estimate in retrospect. Unwanted pregnancies happened in any case. Then help was sought from abortion. Information is somewhat conflicting but the ability to perform abortions seems to have been fairly widespread.<sup>74</sup> Herbs were generally used for the

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70. Ittameier, *Erhaltung und Vermehrung*, p. 14.

71. E.g. Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, pp. 14, 16; Raum in *ibid.*, p. 28 (Chagga); Cory, *Sukuma Law*, p. 40, n. 1.

72. E.g. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 172; Beidelman in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 262 (Kaguru); Swartz, *Cultural Influences*, p. 79 (Hehe); Culwick and Culwick, *Ubena*, p. 373 ('River Bena', cf. *ibid.*, p. 374); Raum, *Chaga Childhood*, p. 67 (Chagga).

73. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, pp. 453 ff., 538, 540, Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 348.

74. For general information, see Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 171, 33 and for some suspicion, Otto Peiper, 'Geburtenhäufigkeit, Säuglings- und Kinder-Sterblichkeit und Säuglingsernährung im früheren Deutsch-Ostafrika', *Veröffentlichungen aus dem Gebiete der Medizinalverwaltung*, vol. 9, no. 6 (1920), pp. 18—19 (386—387). Among some peoples abortion was reported to have been rare (e.g. the Maasai, Merker, *Masai*, p. 345) or forbidden (the Isanzu according to Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, p. 87). For the Ufipa, Fromm, Ufipa, p. 90 claimed that abortions were shunned but according to Robert, *Croyances et coutumes*, p. 99, they were undertaken in several situations. In Buhaya abortions were "not explicitly permitted ... but generally taken for granted," Rehse, *Kiziba*, p. 96 (quotation) and Richter, Bezirk Bukoba, p. 85. For the Zaramo, see M.-L. Swantz, *Religious and Magical Rites*, p. 213.

purpose,<sup>75</sup> but more mechanical methods were also known.<sup>76</sup> If abortion was ineffective, unwanted newly-born infants could be abandoned or otherwise killed. This might also apply to births which were considered abnormal, such as a baby born feet first or a case of twins.<sup>77</sup>

## Moderate family size

In the light of such data it does not appear so strange that when Burton first travelled through the Tanzanian area his main informants, the Arabs, maintained that "in spite of their good physical condition women are not prolific," and also Burton's own

75. Eggel in *AKGA*, 14, p. 659 and Ittameier, *Erhaltung und Vermehrung*, pp. 29—33 (Chagga); MacKenzie, *Spirit-Ridden Konde*, p. 282 (Nyakusa); Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 348 (Nyamwezi); Zupitza in *AKGA*, 14, p. 653 and Reining in Molnos, *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 221 (Haya); Gärtner and Schreiber, *AKGA*, 14, pp. 649, 664 (Bagamoyo and Pangani districts).

76. In particular the Chagga. See Ittameier, *Erhaltung und Vermehrung*, p. 14 and Raum in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, pp. 28—29.

77. Baur and Le Roy, *Zanguebar*, p. 320 (general); Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 166—170 (in general and several examples); Dundas, *Native Laws*, pp. 231—232 (in general and several examples); Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 212 and Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, p. 13 (Chagga); Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), p. 188 (Shambaa); Kimambo, *Political History*, p. 107 (Pare); Cole, Wagogo, p. 308 (the Sagara killed twins, the Gogo did not); Weule, *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse*, p. 61 (Yao); Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 116 and Stuhlmann, *Forschungsreise*, p. 230 (Zaramo); Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, pp. 138—139 (Fipa). The custom may have been lacking among the Nyakusa (Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 125) and among the pastoral Maasai, (Merker, *Masai*, p. 345). Also in Buhaya infanticide was reported to have been considered "a serious crime," Richter, *Bezirk Bukoba*, p. 85 and was unknown in Kiziba, Rehse, *Kiziba*, pp. 95—96. The Nyamwezi and Sukuma are unclear cases. Infanticide is sometimes said to have been lacking among them (for the Nyamwezi, see Puder, in J. Kohler, 'Das Banturecht in Ostafrika', *ZVRM*, 15 (1902), p. 36 and Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, p. 169 and for the Sukuma, Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 235) but Spellig, Wanjamwesi, p. 217 and Cory, as quoted in Abrahams, *Greater Unyamwezi*, p. 72 testify to the contrary.



impression was that families were small, except in rare cases of polygamy.<sup>78</sup> The same moderate number of births and size of families was noted at the beginning of the colonial period. True, there were mythical figures like a *jumbe* in 'Ukami', each of whose wives was reputed to have had more than 10 children, adding up to about 200 offspring,<sup>79</sup> but, if there was any truth in this, it was an extremely exceptional case. When the German doctors began to count the number of births and children they found them generally low, even surprisingly so. The average number was from less than one in parts of the coast to four or five in upland districts.<sup>80</sup> Commonly, households were observed to have from two to four children; those with five or six were considered large.<sup>81</sup> There may

78. In his first account he took the statement to apply to the entire East Africa he saw: Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 311. Later he said specifically of the Shambaa: "the Arabs declare that the women are not prolific, six children being a large family," *Zanzibar*, II, p. 230.

79. Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche*, p. 28.

80. Peiper, *Geburtenhäufigkeit*, pp. 4—14; Ittameier, *Erhaltung und Vermehrung*, pp. 5—8.

81. Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche*, p. 28 ('Swahili' — "comparatively few offspring"); Baumann, *Usambara*, p. 151 (Digo — "children few in number"); Reichard, *Wanjamuesi*, p. 255 and Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, II, p. 3 (Nyamwezi — from two to four children); Sutherland, *Elephant Hunter*, p. 197 (south — from one to three); Baumstark, *Warangi*, p. 45 (Irangi — three children per one *tembe*); Majerus, 'Brautwerbung und Hochzeit bei den Wabende (Deutsch-Ostafrika)', *Anthropos*, 6 (1911), p. 894 (Bende — "offspring very scanty"); Hurel, *Religion et Vie domestique*, p. 93 (Kerebe — "a woman who has given birth three times is old"); Sick, *Waniaturu*, p. 3 and Reche, *Zur Ethnographie*, p. 61 (Nyaturu — "rich in children," from four to six children). Information on Kilimanjaro is conflicting. Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, p. 10 tells that most women had from six to eight births; only if a man had four or more wives was the number of births per woman two to three. The highest numbers are not very likely, however. The German official Haber thought that the number of births was rarely higher than three to four (Haber to Government, 5 March 1905, ZStA, RKo1A 700, 120). Ittameier counted in 1912 the births by some 1 800 women in Machame and 460 in Moshi who had passed their menopause: the average for the first was 3.8 in monogamous and about the same in polygynous unions, for the latter 5.7 and 5.6 respectively (*Erhaltung und Vermehrung*, pp. 8—11). Gutmann, *Dichten und Denken*, p. 87 says that the number of births per woman was at most six to seven.

be an element of ethnocentric optical illusion in these estimates, but it is clear that most Tanzanian societies, at least in the late 19th century, were not conspicuous for the high number of their children. The Ngoni, for instance, thought that five children was much. When a traveller told them that in Europe families could have ten or even twelve children, "it seemed to them quite unbelievable."<sup>82</sup>

However, even if this moderate family size is accepted as a historical fact it cannot be automatically attributed to indigenous fertility control. There are at least three aspects which require further research. First, fertility levels recorded in the late pre-colonial and early colonial time may well have been 'abnormal' in the sense that they were depressed by the late 19th-century calamities discussed in chapter 4 above. Reminiscences of 'good old days' when women bore 16 or 17 children should not be taken at face value,<sup>83</sup> but there are hints in several sources that fertility levels might have been higher earlier than they were in the late precolonial period.<sup>84</sup> Second, and related to this, the level of infertility seem to have been unusually high in many parts of the country, in particular on the coast and in Busumbwa. The amount of infertile women was estimated in the German period at 10—22 per cent. This was based on small and unrepresentative samples and it may have been on the high side, but later estimates give some credence to its broad accuracy.<sup>85</sup> Such levels are much higher than those known from other continents and their causes are largely unknown. Deliberate sterilization was known in places in Busumbwa, but it is inconceivable that it could have been the main reason.<sup>86</sup> A more realistic explanation is to be sought in health conditions, but much research remains to be done regarding the

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82. Cyrillus Wehrmeister, *Vor dem Sturm*. St. Ottilien, 1905, pp. 147—148.

83. Abdallah, *Yao*, p. 25. The highest average number of births per woman on record anywhere in the world at any time is slightly over 10, see Koponen, *Population Growth*, p. 47.

84. E.g. Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche*, p. 28 ('Swahili'); Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), p. 189 (Shambaa); Gutmann, *Dichten und Denken*, p. 87 (Chagga).

85. Peiper, *Geburtenhäufigkeit*, pp. 14, 18; Koponen, *Population Growth*, p. 49.

86. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 538.

part played by specific diseases. It is often suggested that the main disease causing high infecundity is gonorrhea through tubal infection and occlusion in women.<sup>87</sup> The history of that disease in Tanzania is, however, virtually unwritten. Burton claimed gonorrhea was so common in Zanzibar in the late 1850s that it was "hardly considered a disease."<sup>88</sup> It was noted again in the German period, but given much less systematic attention than syphilis, which was dreaded more by Europeans.

Lastly, not all sources are clear as to whether they speak of number of births or number of surviving children, which are naturally two different things. In order to estimate the demographic effects of mechanisms of fertility control we should also know the level of 'spontaneous' infant mortality. Of its extent there is no convincing evidence one way or the other. It is certain that infant mortality was shockingly high in the early years of colonialism,<sup>89</sup> but it does not directly follow that it was equally high in precolonial times, as has been readily supposed. It was maintained for instance by Gutmann that "infant mortality figures for the colonial period mainly show the injuries inflicted by modern times and cannot in themselves be used as evidence of living standards in the recent past."<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, if account is taken of disease distribution and hygienic conditions of that time, it is permissible to suppose that infant mortality was hardly as low as in 20th century Europe and that comparisons must be sought among other pre-industrial societies. Among the major diseases, in particular malaria and hookworm must have caused great havoc among the children. As a German doctor noted, "immunity to malaria among adult natives has been bought at the cost of great infant mortality."<sup>91</sup>

The point of the above reasoning is directed against the notion

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87. E.g. Mark A. Belsey, 'The Epidemiology of Infertility: A Review with Particular Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa', *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 54 (1976), esp. pp. 326—329 and Odile Frank, 'Infertility in Sub-Saharan Africa: Estimates and Implications', *Population and Development Review*, 9 (1983), pp. 137—144.

88. Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, p. 184.

89. See Koponen, *Population Growth*, p. 40.

90. Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 144.

91. Steuber, *Krankheiten der Eingeborenen*, II, p. 58.

that pre-colonial Africans in no way controlled their levels of fertility; I have not attempted to maintain that they wished to minimize the size of their families. In the hard conditions of precolonial Africa families with many children and a certain level of population growth in general were not only rational but indispensable. In fact, it can be argued that the purpose of fertility control was to keep the number of *surviving* children as *large* and not as small as possible, by giving protection for the latest-born child.<sup>92</sup> This interpretation is supported by the views of Africans themselves; although the sanctions of their sexual taboos were always based on religion or magic, the background aim was the welfare and security of the suckling child.<sup>93</sup> A typical example was the belief of the Nyakusa that if a woman became pregnant during the breastfeeding period "her breasts (became) rotten,"<sup>94</sup> a mystical punishment, in other words, striking both herself and her child. But there are also indications that in some places at least there was an idea of the best size for a family being a few children,<sup>95</sup> and on the whole it is difficult to believe that people did not realize how the frequency of births caused by their customs affected the number of children. Presumably they realized it very well, for more children were hardly needed. Depending on the length of a woman's fertility and the interval between births, the system outlined above made possible at least six or seven births per woman. Even if a proportion of women were infecund and infant mortality fairly high it is obvious that this number of births would ensure not only the survival of the society but also the growth of the population — barring externally-induced catastrophes.

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92. See R. Lesthaeghe, P.O. Ohadike, J. Kocher and H. Page, 'Child Spacing and Fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview of Issues', in H.J. Page and R. Lesthaeghe, eds., *Child-Spacing in Tropical Africa*. London, 1981, p. 9.

93. E.g. M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 130—131 and *idem* in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, III, p. 249; Lang and Lang in *ibid.*, p. 229.

94. G. Wilson, Nyakusa, p. 262.

95. E.g. Raum in Molnos, ed., *Cultural Source Materials*, I, p. 70 and *ibid.*, III, pp. 30—31 (Chagga); M. Wilson, *Communal Rituals*, p. 197 (Nyakusa).



## Changing forms of servitude: slavery and pawnship

Besides creating alliances with marriage and producing their own offspring the communities reproduced themselves also by re-allocating existing people. This was done to a considerable extent through the social institution which can be called servitude. We saw in chapter 3 above that a plantation economy worked by slave labour was established on the offshore islands as well as in parts of the coast and some inland centres. However, also in the indigenous precolonial African societies there were sometimes an appreciable number of servile people who, or the rights over whom, had been transferred from their own descent groups to new masters. Such people are often called 'slaves'. But this does not mean that the late precolonial slavery was a direct continuation of an earlier social arrangement which had been "an African institution for a 1 000 years."<sup>96</sup> What was loosely called 'slavery' among mainland African societies differed in many ways from prevailing European notions of slavery, formed as they were on the basis of antiquity and the Atlantic slave trade. No wonder contemporary observers were often bewildered. "You may see a party of poorly clad native porters carrying loads and led by an amply-dressed and armed superior, who is, however, a slave, while they are free hired labourers. A most complicated system, the details of which require years to understand." So wrote E. C. Hore from Ujiji in 1892 — rather optimistically, because a full understanding of the workings of the system has hardly been reached even yet.<sup>97</sup> As a German colonial scholar declared, "considering the enormous gamut of dependency relationships within families, clans and tribes, slavery can well be singled out in theory but only with great difficulty in practice."<sup>98</sup>

When we speak of precolonial 'slavery' we in fact refer to several different institutions and a conceptual clarification is called for. Without going into detailed discussion I wish tentatively to

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96. As claimed by Lord Lugard, quoted in Beachey, *Slave Trade*, p. 181.

97. Hore, *Tanganyika*, pp. 73—74.

98. Weidner, *Haussklaverei*, p. 1.

distinguish three main types of precolonial slavery: (1) an old 'traditional' slavery, (2) a 'new' plantation slavery and (3) a transitional type between the two in which slaves were acquired in a new manner but incorporated into traditional domestic units. These distinctions enable us to account for the increase and transformation that slavery underwent during the 19th century. We have sources, based on oral tradition, which mention explicitly that while a sort of slavery may have existed in some places traditionally, its extent was limited before the 19th century.<sup>99</sup> When we now know that slavery was much more widespread at the end of that century, the obvious suggestion is that most of the late precolonial slavery in Tanzanian societies must have belonged to the second and third categories, plantation slavery and 'transitional' slavery created by a sudden abundance of slaves in the interior owing to the restriction of the coastal slave trade.<sup>100</sup>

Even with this qualification, the terms 'slave' and 'slavery' are problematic in the precolonial Tanzanian context. It is a matter for discussion whether these terms with their sombre connotations are at all justified with reference to traditional and 'neotraditional' forms of servitude outside the commercial plantation economies. That the terms are apt to create confusion and misunderstanding is clear. There are writers, like J.A.R. Wembah-Rashid, who maintain that the whole idea of precolonial slavery is a colonial myth and that slavery was introduced to Africa by slave traders. Yet Wembah-Rashid himself informs us that among the south-eastern matrilineal peoples persons condemned for homicide or witchcraft could be given as "replacements" to the family of the deceased.<sup>101</sup> This is the very arrangement in which other writers see one of the origins of what they call African slavery: the transfer of rights over condemned criminals from their own kinship group to elsewhere. In greater political units such rights were not transferred to the kinship group of the injured but to the rulers who then absorbed such peoples as slaves into their courts or armies.<sup>102</sup> Later, with

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99. E.g. Unomah, Vbandevba, p. 8 (Nyamwezi); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 114 ff. (Kerebe).

100. See also the discussion in ch. 3, pp. 92—93, 98—99 above.

101. Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, p. 151.

102. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 174—175 (Shambaa); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, p. 117 (Kerebe).

increasing demand, such people could be sold.<sup>103</sup> To me it also seems permissible to call such peoples 'slaves' and speak of traditional 'slavery', if for no other reason than the lack of better terms. But the terms need to be further refined by distinguishing 'pawnship' from 'slavery' and subjecting the forms of 'slavery' to a critical scrutiny.

In this framework what was common to 'pawns' and 'slaves' was that both were residing outside their original kinship group and were in a servile position to their new masters. The essential difference was not so much that pawns were, by definition, redeemable (slaves could also be), but that new masters had been given fewer rights over pawns than over slaves. The ties of pawns to their kinship groups were far less effectively cut than those of slaves. Pawns remained mostly near their home areas and continued, at least in theory, to be members of their own descent groups, who were committed to redeem them in due course. It was a question of literally pawning people for some reason or another, usually for settling a debt or another claim, and the pawnship was destined to last for the time being only.<sup>104</sup> Hence, what was called 'debt-slavery' by early observers was in most cases what I call pawnship. Slaves, on the other hand, were people over whom almost all rights had been transferred to new masters and who had to be incorporated into new social units, where they were given a new status. They had either been transported far from their homes, or their kinship groups had otherwise broken relations with them. There was no one ready to redeem them, and they were unable to do it themselves by their work. Such slaves may have been criminals who could not pay liabilities, or prisoners of war or those who in some other way had been parted from their relations; later an increasing number of them consisted of common people violently removed from their societies. In any case the core of African slavery, like that of any slavery — and this makes the use of the concept permissible — is to be found in the incorporation into new social or territorial units of persons torn violently away,

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103. As indicated by Burton's remark, "They will not sell their fellows, except when convicted of crime." *Lake Regions*, II, p. 367.

104. See the seminal article of Mary Douglas, 'Matriliny and Pawnship in Central Africa', *Africa*, 34 (1964), pp. 301—313.

or otherwise separated, from their own kinship or other social groups.

In late 19th-century Tanzania, pawnship and slavery seem to have been widespread. Sources are not without ambiguities, but it appears that these institutions were lacking only in Ukara, Bunyakusa and elsewhere in the south-west, in many societies in the north-central highlands ('the area without an outlet') and in pastoral societies.<sup>105</sup> They were present among most other peoples, even if their relative proportions varied greatly. The majority of slaves were probably no longer convicted criminals or pawns left unredeemed. Many of them were evidently war captives. This was reported among agricultural peoples with military fame such as the Hehe and Ngoni among whom a major part of the population was servile or of servile origin.<sup>106</sup> The preponderance of war captives was also reported among several peoples more actively involved in long-distance trade, such as the Bende and others along Lake Tanganyika,<sup>107</sup> the Nyamwezi<sup>108</sup> and the Chagga (whose chiefs also sold a good deal of their captives).<sup>109</sup> Whether captives or pawns, females predominated among interior serviles. Whereas on the coast about half of the slaves were reported to be male, by far most of the pawns and slaves in the interior were female.<sup>110</sup>

105. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 208—209 (several examples, claims incorrectly the lack of slavery also for Kiziba, cf. Rehse, *Kiziba*, p. 97); Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, p. 125 (Nyakusa); Sick, Waniaturu, p. 35 and Jellicoe, *Long Path*, p. 94 (Nyaturu); Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 165 (Maasai), 173 (Datoga), 179 (Gorowa). See also Weidner, *Hausklaverei*, pp. 8—10.

106. Ernst Nigmann, *Die Wahehe*. Berlin, 1908, pp. 65—70 (Hehe); Booth, *Nachkommen*, pp. 198—200 and Capus, *Missionsreise*, pp. 182—185 (Ngoni).

107. Avon, *Vie sociale*, p. 105; Majerus, *Eherecht*, p. 787; Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, pp. 46—47.

108. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 442.

109. Merker, *Rechtsverhältnisse*, pp. 21—22; Widenmann, *Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung*, pp. 89—90; Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, pp. 106, 115 fn. 9, 166, 171, 214, 285, 300, 329, 347. Cf. Dundas who claims that Chagga women were rarely captives and did not become slaves but wives, Dundas, *Kilimanjaro*, p. 302.

110. Above, p. 88; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 485 ("no one buys adult males as slaves"); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 61 and Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 441 (Nyamwezi); Herrmann, *Wasiba*, p. 55 (Haya).



Usually pawnship and slavery coexisted; one was not without the other. But it is probable that pawnship had a wider circulation and more antiquity than slavery even in its more traditional forms. Pawning of children, in particular girls, in times of affliction was reported even among peoples who were said to have no slavery proper such as the Arusha.<sup>111</sup> There are also indications that 'debt-slavery', i. e. in most cases pawnship, may have been the earliest form of servitude in many societies. This has been suggested for instance from Uzaramo and Usambara.<sup>112</sup> Even if it is hard to document, the impression emerging from the sources is that pawnship was more prevalent in matrilineal than in patrilineal societies. In any case it worked differently in different kinship systems. Among the eastern and south-eastern matrilineal peoples it was the mother's brother who was assigned the right to pawn the children of his sister.<sup>113</sup> Among the more patrilineally-oriented peoples the right to pawn children was usually given to the father.<sup>114</sup> In some places, as in Usangu, it was not possible to pawn children, but oneself only.<sup>115</sup> Often, as in Unyamwezi, the claimant could take the initiative and call into requisition the children of the debtor as pawns.<sup>116</sup> But apparently pawns were not regarded as slaves; they became slaves only when they were left unredeemed.<sup>117</sup>

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111. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 208—209, 245.

112. M. Klamroth, 'Das Recht der Saramo', unpublished ms., as quoted in Carl Meinhof, *Afrikanische Rechtsgebräuche*. Berlin, 1914, pp. 131—133 (Uzaramo); Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 7 (1918—22), p. 81 (Usambara).

113. Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, p. 236 and M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 91 (Zaramo); Liebenow, *Colonial Rule*, p. 67 (Makonde).

114. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 57—58 (several examples including the Nyamwezi, Sumbwa, Hehe, Mbunga, Sangu, Nyiha); Kootz-Kretschmer, *Safwa*, I, p. 209 (speaks of "selling" of children).

115. Heese, *Sitte der Sango*, p. 143.

116. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, p. 445.

117. See e.g. Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, p. 206.

## 9. Residence and settlement

For both production and reproduction, people had to come together and live together. But we have a very inadequate idea of the physical forms of residence and settlement in precolonial Tanzania. It is often argued that inhabitants of precolonial societies preferred to live widely dispersed and came together only reluctantly under pressure from external forces such as wars and other calamities.<sup>1</sup> And, as was noted above, there indeed was a trend towards increasing size and nucleation of settlement in the late 19th century in particular along the great caravan routes.<sup>2</sup> However, this does not mean that village settlement as a whole was of a transitional nature in precolonial Tanzania. Settlement patterns in the country were extremely varied but they all represented some degree of grouping and living together; there was hardly any place where each household group lived separately from the rest, entirely on its own. What appears to have happened was that the settlements became larger and more heavily stockaded towards the end of the precolonial period (even if a reverse trend was observable in places like Uzaramo)<sup>3</sup> but this does not mean that villages or other spatially organized clusters of denser settlement did not exist earlier. In addition to defence considerations, the physical grouping of people together is regulated by several factors, most of which seem to have favoured a relatively high degree of co-residence, regardless of whether this was nucleated or not.

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1. E.g. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, p. 50; Holmes and Austen, Pre-Colonial Sukuma, p. 392. Cf. also Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 10, 166 who is clearly sympathetic to the argument.

2. Above, ch. 4, pp. 172—173.

3. Steere, Walk, p. 13; Kirk to Granville, 28 February 1881, as quoted in Coupland, *Exploitation*, p. 303; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, pp. 135—138.

# Residence

Michel Verdon has complained about the reduction of residence to “an epiphenomenon of marriage, kinship or economics” and advocated its “promotion ... to a separate ontological status.”<sup>4</sup> One can sympathize with such an effort; it seems evident that even in societies like those of precolonial Tanzania marriage, kinship and economy were not the only factors which had a bearing on determining the patterns of residence. Social institutions, pawnship and slavery included, had major roles in this respect, too, and residential groups had a high degree of independence. Yet I think that an account of residence in Tanzanian societies must begin with and be organized around a discussion of the relationship between marriage and residence. One can argue that, after all, the residential patterns which were established at marriage and modified during it — the options which were open to spouses when choosing dwelling places for themselves and their children — were the structural factors on the basis of which other residential arrangements had to be made.

## Marriage, servitude and residence

The variety of marriages and the kinship systems in which they were embedded had far-reaching implications for residential patterns and physical forms of settlement. This was because settlements were still to a great extent, with some notable exceptions to be discussed below, based on links of kinship. Oral tradition tells that in the mythical beginning of time clans or lineages were also co-residential groups.<sup>5</sup> This linkage, if it ever was as complete as

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4. Michel Verdon, ‘Shaking off the Domestic Yoke, or the Sociological Significance of Residence’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22 (1980), pp. 109—132; idem, ‘Sleeping Together: The Dynamics of Residence among the Abutia Ewe’, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 35 (1979), pp. 401—425 (quotations, pp. 401, 424).

5. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, pp. xiii—xiv; M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 98; Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 46—48; Winans, *Shambala*, p. 34; Kimambo, *Political History*, p. 4; Katoke, *Karagwe*

tradition implies, was certainly much loosened in the late 19th century. Descent groups, grown large and resegmented, had scattered. Still, many villages or other types of settlement continued to be grouped around one or more descent groups. This tendency was clearest among the matrilineal peoples of the east and southeast. It was also reported among a number of more patrilineally-oriented peoples.<sup>6</sup> Yet the kinship nature of the settlements was in no way automatic or their composition uniform, because there were several, partly conflicting modes of recruitment for their inhabitants.

A main factor in the recruitment to settlements was the decision as to where the household created by marriage was to reside. In particular the question was whether the woman was to stay with her own descent group and take her husband there or move away with her husband, either to settle with the latter's kin group or to go to an entirely new place. Classical, 'mainstream' anthropology has sought to deal with this question in terms of 'rules of residence', and with concepts such as 'matrilocal' (or 'uxorilocality'), 'patrilocal' (or 'virilocality'), 'neolocality', and so forth. Later dissidents have proposed alternative or complementary concepts, such as Meillassoux's 'gynecostatism' and 'gynecomobility'.<sup>7</sup> Although such concepts are of descriptive value, a caveat has to be introduced. When applied to whole societies the classical concepts in particular are too crude and static. This is for two reasons. First, they are ambiguous in themselves. In small-scale societies, where dwellings are built within short distances from each other, the difference between

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*Kingdom*, p. 14; Michael von Clemm, 'People of the White Mountain: The Interdependence of Political and Economic Activity amongst the Chagga ...', D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1962, p. 107; Moore, in *idem* and Puritt, *Chagga and Meru*, p. 29 (Chagga); Cory and Hartnoll, *Customary Law*, 1945, p. 269; Kidamala, *Brief History*, p. 67; Jellicoe, *Long Path*, pp. 7—8.

6. Ankermann, *Eingeborenenrecht*, pp. 6—8; Beidelman, Wembah-Rashid, Katoke, Moore, as quoted in the footnote above; Kimambo, *Political History*, pp. 156—157 (Pare); E.H. Winter, 'Some Aspects of Political Organization and Land Tenure among the Iraqw', *KUAS*, 2 (1968), pp. 2—3 (Iraqw).

7. Meillassoux, *Maidens*, pp. 24—25, 28.



types of residence as distinguished by such rules is by no means absolute. Second, the patterns established at marriage do not need to be final but are often modified later. A case in point is the version of marriage with bride service that allows the husband to take the wife away after the birth of one or more children and/or the completion of the service. In classical terms this means that a matri- or uxorilocal residence for the initial years of the marriage is changed to an entirely different type of residence thereafter, e.g. a viri- or neolocality — an arrangement common enough in Central Africa to induce Audrey Richards to coin the term 'marriage with delayed right to bride removal'.<sup>8</sup> This was a relatively common phenomenon in Tanzanian societies, in particular those whose kinship systems displayed both patrilineal and matrilineal elements. But it was well-known also in some predominantly matrilineal systems.<sup>9</sup>

As will be seen below, villages and other settlements in predominately matri- or uxorilocal ('gynecostatic') societies tended to be smaller than those in patri- or virilocal ('gynecomobile') societies.<sup>10</sup> With the help of the above discussion we can suggest an explanation for the variations in size. One obvious reason was that in patri- or virilocal societies the size of settlements was constantly augmented by the inflow of new women and their children, either by polygyny of elders or by the wives of adult sons taking up residence, whereas in matri- or uxorilocal societies the 'normal' kinship arrangements and residential rules of the society did not produce such a female inflow. In such societies married women stayed in their home villages and their husbands normally resided with them more or less permanently; the size of the settlement and of the whole community was crucially dependent on the number and reproductive capacity of its own women. But it is also reported that there were in such societies "influential and

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8. Audrey I. Richards, 'Some Types of Family Structure amongst the Central Bantu', in Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, eds, *African Systems of Kinship*, p. 209.

9. This was reported to have been a rule or at least a common custom in Umakonde, Ukwere, Sukumaland, Unyamwezi, Bunyakusa, Usafwa and Usangu. See Ankermann, *Eingeborenrecht*, pp. 124—125 (various examples); Liebenow, *Colonial Rule*, p. 45 (Makonde).

10. Below, pp. 350, 352.

senior men" who, while residing with their matrikin, succeeded in forcing or, one may surmise, inducing both male and female affines or relatives by marriage to take up residence with them.<sup>11</sup> One strategy to achieve this in a matri- or uxori-local ('gynecostatic') society would be the so-called 'preferential cross-cousin marriage', in which an elder induced his own offspring to marry to his own clan. There are indications in the sources that this may in fact have been fairly common in the past in Tanzanian matrilineal societies, too.<sup>12</sup>

Also institutions like slavery and pawnship had the obvious effect of bringing together people who would otherwise have remained in quite other corners of the country. Thus, where pawns and slaves were concentrated the density of settlements rose higher than it would have otherwise done. As mentioned above, the great majority of pawns and slaves in the interior were women. The latter were easily fitted into the existing systems of cultivation and integrated into new residential units and societies in general. Pawnship could end not only with redemption or slavery but also with marriage. Slave women could be, and sometimes were, married by their masters. Hence, these two institutions can be regarded as functional equivalents of polygyny in providing an access to extra women, and their presence must have contributed towards increasing the size of settlements. This might help to explain the evident importance of pawnship among the matrilineally-oriented peoples.<sup>13</sup> Plantation slavery and the new type of domestic slavery were, for their part, important building blocks in the 19th-century commercial system. Indeed, if we take a look at the most sizeable towns and villages of precolonial Tanzania — Zanzibar, Swahili towns on the coast, Tabora and Ujiji, capitals of Mirambo, Mkwawa and chief Sina of Kibosho on Kilimanjaro — it is hard to find one in which slaves were not at least a considerable minority; in most of them they were evidently a majority. Although direct sources are lacking, it is safe to assume

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11. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, p. xiii.

12. M.-L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, p. 92 (Zaramo); Grohs, *Kisazi*, p. 43 (Zigua); Beidelman, *Kaguru*, pp. 64—66 (Kaguru); Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 56—57 (south-eastern matrilineal societies).

13. Above, p. 337.

that pawnship and slavery were at least in part factors behind the overall increase in settlement sizes towards the end of the 19th century.

## Age and residence: the Nyakusa puzzle

A further factor which might have had a bearing on residence is age. The most extraordinary residential arrangement was reported among the Nyakusa on the plains and mountains north of Lake Nyasa. The anthropologists Godfrey and Monica Wilson argued that the Nyakusa were unique in the sense that their age groups were at the same time residential groups. A group of coevals not only did things together but lived together for most of their lives in what the Wilsons called 'age-villages'. According to the Wilsons, when the boys of a village reached the age of 10–11 years, they were given a piece of land by their fathers on the outskirts of the village. There they, perhaps together with some friends, built small huts of their own and planted bananas. Gradually the huts were upgraded and the banana plantations extended, but the boys continued to work for and eat with their parents. When the young men began to marry in their late twenties they took their wives with them to the new dwelling place and established full-scale homesteads there. In a chiefdom-wide handing-over ceremony, termed 'coming-out', a new chief came to power and the young men's quarters became new 'age-villages' with new leaders.<sup>14</sup>

The Nyakusa case has triggered off a lively discussion in the historical and anthropological literature. Some gaps and other problems have been pointed out in the Wilsons' analysis and several modifications have been suggested. It seems to me that the Wilsons created much unnecessary confusion by their use of the term age 'village' with its connotation of a discrete settlement. On

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14. In the voluminous production of the Wilsons, the best discussions on the 'age village' system are to be found in G. Wilson, Nyakusa, esp. pp. 269 ff. (also published as 'An Introduction to Nyakusa Society', *Bantu Studies*, 10 (1936), pp. 253–291) and M. Wilson, *Good Company*, esp. chs 2 and 3.

the basis of other accounts it is very doubtful that the Nyakusa residential groupings could ever have been such. None of the early travellers or missionary sources noticed the existence of separate age villages. Instead, they related that young boys of a village used to sleep in a common, large oblong house at one end of the village. It was only after the young men had married that they built huts of their own in the 'boys' quarter'. "The next generation (settled) in the same way at the other end of the village. Thus the locality (expanded) in the course of time."<sup>15</sup> Godfrey Wilson himself noted that the boundaries between the "villages" were not "always apparent to the stranger, a solid hundred acres or so of houses and bananas may turn out to consist of two or three villages, each with its own organization."<sup>16</sup> The Nyakusa term *ikipanga*, translated by the Wilsons as 'age-village', applied to many other groups of people as well, from the followers of a chief to the local congregation of a church. Monica Wilson recorded the Nyakusa saying, "A village consists in men, not in land."<sup>17</sup>

If the Nyakusa residential groupings thus were 'age-quarters' rather than 'age-villages' the degree of their uniqueness must be somewhat scaled down. It was a widespread custom in Tanzanian precolonial societies that the more mature children lived separately from their parents. The Maasai warrior villages (*ilmanyata*) are only the most famous example of this. In a number of other societies, boys and girls were reported to have slept in common houses. Even among the Nyakusa, adolescent and younger girls used to sleep in a girls' house (*isaka*).<sup>18</sup> Boys and girls had houses of their own also among many other peoples in the south-west,<sup>19</sup> in large areas of Unyamwezi<sup>20</sup> and in some north-

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15. Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit*, pp. 143—144. This compares interestingly with the present-day situation in which the boys continue to move to their quarter but return after marriage nearer to their parents in order to be able to take over the father's land. Rie Odgaard, 'Alderslandsbyer i Tanzania', *Jordens folk*, 20 (1985), esp. pp. 169—172.

16. G. Wilson, Nyakusa, p. 276.

17. M. Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 43, n. 2 and 45 (quotation).

18. M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, pp. 115—116.

19. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 505 (Nyiha); Stirnimann, *Existenzgrundlagen*, p. 294 (Pangwa); Fromm, Ufipa, p. 82 (Fipa).

20. Bösch, *Banyamwezi*, pp. 334, 478; Desoignes, Msalala, p. 271.



eastern societies.<sup>21</sup> Within such a context the Nyakusa residential patterns appear as an elaboration of the more common principles of age organization rather than an entirely new departure. Moreover, the age basis of the Nyakusa residential groupings is not quite clear. As noted by Michael G. McKenny, there is no adequate discussion by the Wilsons of the relationship between kinship and village lay-out, and as long as this is lacking the precise role of the age cannot be fully determined.<sup>22</sup> Yet these critical remarks do not necessarily invalidate the crux of the Wilsons' thesis. It has not been disproved that there *was* a close relationship between age and residence in Bunyakusa, and that the Nyakusa *were* unique in the fact that this relationship was sustained through life.

## Settlement patterns

A common way to discuss Tanzanian patterns of settlement is to contrast 'dispersed settlement' with 'nucleated villages'. But this is misleading in precolonial conditions. Both contemporary observers and most later writers have used these terms in a very loose manner and failed to pay close attention to the internal structure of the settlements. Early observers repeatedly referred to 'villages' they saw and visited, but with a closer look at their accounts it becomes readily apparent that their villages could have included almost any sort of a settlement from kinship compounds of a few huts to towns of thousands of inhabitants ruled by mighty kings. Moreover, there were areas in which travellers explicitly commented on the absence of villages but which actually were much more densely populated than many areas dotted with villages. In order to clarify the picture I propose to take two variables into consideration, (1) the overall density of the settlement and (2) the degree of its nucleation, and to correlate

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21. Feierman, *Concepts*, pp. 118—119; Karasek, *Beiträge, Baessler-Archiv*, 1 (1911), p. 162 (Shambaa); Dale, *Principal Customs*, pp. 196—197 (Bondei).

22. Michael G. McKenny, 'The Social Structure of the Nyakusa: A Re-Evaluation', *Africa*, 43 (1973), pp. 94—95.



Plate 13. Coastal towns. Zanzibar as seen from the sea in 1871 (above) and a Swahili town on the coast in the late 1850s (below).



them with production systems. By doing this we find that dense settlement, in a variety of forms, was without doubt fairly common in the late 19th century. However, it is not easy to say what the 'original' settlement patterns may have been like; as we know from our earlier discussion, there had been a trend towards the growth in size and nucleation of settlements in the 19th century.<sup>23</sup>

The Swahili settlements on the coast were culturally apart from the rest of the country. With an economy based on a combination of trade, fishing and cultivation, they were mostly nucleated and on the average much larger than those inland. In addition to the biggest town of the region, Zanzibar, whose population was claimed to have swollen from 20 000—25 000 in the 1840s to perhaps 80 000 in the 1880s,<sup>24</sup> the island of Zanzibar had other sizeable villages of 1 000 inhabitants or more, as well as several with populations of some 500.<sup>25</sup> On the coastal mainland the major towns were Kilwa and Bagamoyo. In the early 1870s the former had 10 000—15 000 inhabitants and the latter some 5 000. After the ban on the slave trade Kilwa declined but Bagamoyo grew to a town of perhaps 10 000 permanent inhabitants that was multiplied by the influx of temporary sojourners, mainly porters from inland during the caravan season. Bagamoyo was reputed to have had twenty stone houses already in the 1860s. On the northern part of the coast the biggest towns were Tanga and Pangani, each perhaps with 4 000—5 000 inhabitants in the 1870s. The population of most Swahili settlements on the coast, however, seems to have been roughly a thousand or a little less.<sup>27</sup> This was the case even

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23. Above, ch. 4, pp. 172—173.

24. Guillaïn, *Documents*, II, 1, p. 80; Schmidt, *Sansibar*, pp. 24—25. For further estimates and sources, see Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, table 4.7, p. 138.

25. Alfred Bellville, 'A Trip round the South End of Zanzibar Island', *PRGS*, 20 (1875—76), p. 74.

26. *Bulletin Général*, 5, p. 838, AStEsp.

27. Schneider, ed., *Katolische Mission*, pp. 6, 11, 14; *Bulletin Général*, 5, pp. 835, 838; *ibid.*, 12, p. 45, AStEsp; Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, p. 145. For Pangani, cf., however, Keith Johnston, 'Notes of a Trip from Zanzibar to Usambara, in February and March, 1879', *PRGS*, 1 (1879), p. 546 who puts the number only at 1 000.

with Dar es Salaam where Sultan Majid of Zanzibar had built a palace but which had been abandoned after his death.<sup>28</sup> On the whole, the outlook of most of these places was not very urban, and most of them are to be more properly called villages than towns. As noted by Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, dozens of smaller fishing and farming villages scattered the length of the coast, always greatly outnumbering the towns. Literary descriptions of Swahili towns often omit the vastly larger number of mud and wattle houses surrounding the coral houses at the town centre (and the farmers, fishermen and craftsmen living there).<sup>29</sup> Only Zanzibar had the unmistakable qualities of a medieval town: overcrowding and filth. Most of the better houses were of Arab type, built of coral rag, situated on "deep and winding alleys, hardly 20 feet broad" but fairly clean. The "native town" struck Burton as "a filthy labyrinth, a capricious arabesque of disorderly lanes, and alleys, and impasses, here broad, there narrow; now heaped with offal, then choked with ruins." These were flanked with wattle-and-dab houses "hovels ... hardly less wretched than the west Ireland shanty."<sup>30</sup>

Up-country looked very different and definitely rural. In the banana areas settlement was dense but not necessarily nucleated. The Chagga country on the slopes of Kilimanjaro was probably the most densely populated part of the country: the whole area looked "like a great banana grove." But there were no villages. Each domestic group lived "apart from others, near or in the midst of a banana shamba."<sup>31</sup> Some of the mightiest chiefs, like Orombo in the early 19th century and Sina in the 1870s built large stone-walled fortresses.<sup>32</sup> In most of Buhaya it seemed that "huts (were) scattered among banana shambas." "Village formation" was discernible only in parts of the area.<sup>33</sup> However, the huts were "always grouped in considerable numbers into villages ... (i)n

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28. Clement Gillman, 'Dar es Salaam, 1860 to 1940: A Story of Growth and Change', *TNR*, 20 (1945), pp. 1—3.

29. Nurse and Spear, *Swahili*, p. 22.

30. Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, pp. 82 ff. (quotation p. 96). See also Christie, *Cholera Epidemics*, pp. 303 ff.

31. Gutmann, *Dichten und Denken*, p. 58; Volkens, *Kilimandscharo*, p. 230.

32. Stahl, *History of the Chagga*, pp. 165—167, 347—350.

33. Richter, *Ethnographische Notizen*, p. 64.



some instances ... of a really remarkable size." Such villages were separated by small fields which immediately adjoined the banana groves.<sup>34</sup> In those banana-growing areas in which several grain and other crops were also cultivated the villages were more clearly discernible. Shambaa settlements were roughly of two kinds: smaller and more dispersed villages on the bottom of the valleys, larger and more concentrated villages perching on the hilltops. Smaller villages contained usually from 20 to 50 huts, bigger ones more than 100.<sup>35</sup> By far the biggest in the 1870s was Kimweri's capital Vuga with an estimated 500 huts and 3 000 souls.<sup>36</sup> The Nyakusa villages were many, small, prosperous and clean. "All weeds, garbage and things unsightly are swept away by little boys ... Each house is built of bamboo ... The roof is of thatch, which greatly overlaps in mushroom form, while the door is so large that a man can walk in upright."<sup>37</sup> The majority of banana areas were located on highlands, and settlements were usually open, without hedges or palisades around them. Only in Buhaya did common people have a fair number of stockaded settlements.<sup>38</sup>

In the grain-growing areas the variation in size and shape of the settlements was still much wider. Some were more or less like towns. The caravan trade brought fame to two interior junctions of trade routes, Tabora in Unyamwezi and Ujiji at Lake Tanganyika. Inhabited by representatives of the coastal merchant community with their followers and slaves, they had grown around the trade entrepôts established probably in the early decades of the 19th century. However, as numerous travellers came to learn, neither Tabora nor Ujiji was a genuine urban centre. Tabora was composed "of a number of scattered farmsteads ... in which the Arabs with their adherents (lived), and which all (had) an individual name."<sup>39</sup>

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34. Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 67—68. See also Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 47 and Rehse, *Kiziba*, p. 11.

35. Baumann, *Usambara*, pp. 161—167; Wohlrab, *Recht der Schambala*, p. 161.

36. Burton and Speke, *Coasting Voyage*, p. 216.

37. Kerr-Cross, *Geographical Notes*, p. 283. For an equally enthusiastic account, see Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, pp. 331—332.

38. Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 68 (Buhaya); Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 228 (Karagwe).

39. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 59.

A later missionary observer held that Tabora received its urban character only under colonial rule; before it was a "a foreign body in the country, untouched by natives" which "had ... the importance of a great caravanserai."<sup>40</sup> Ujiji, the supposed "metropolis of Tanganyika" with "an appearance not unlike a coast village," was a disappointment to many a traveller. In the 1880s it was found to be "a deserted village" with "ruinous" houses and "many deserted and half collapsed tembes."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, some capitals of African leaders seem to have been larger and more compact than these world famous 'trade towns'. One of Mirambo's capitals at Isela Magazi was, perhaps with some exaggeration, described as "a large square enclosure ... nearly half a mile square ... (A)bout two hundred round huts — well built and some of them fifty feet in diameter — (giving) habitation to about 10 000 inhabitants; quite another 5 000 (living) in the houses built against the wall."<sup>42</sup> Mkwawa's Kalenga was thought to contain 4 000—5 000 inhabitants in the early 1890s, Merere's Utengule not more than 2 000.<sup>43</sup> But most of the settlements in the grain-growing interior were much smaller. They ranged from carefully fortified villages situated strategically on caravan routes to tiny hamlets and dispersed homesteads withdrawn to the bush away from the passing traffic. Also many smaller villages were surrounded by hedges or wooden palisades.

In the coastal hinterland behind the Swahili towns there was an uninhabited no-man's-land of a dozen or so kilometers after which the settlements of the inland peoples began. They differed greatly from the Swahili ones, being much smaller and composed predominantly of round mud-and-thatch huts. The Zaramo, the

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40. Blohm, *Nyamwezi*, I, p. 175.

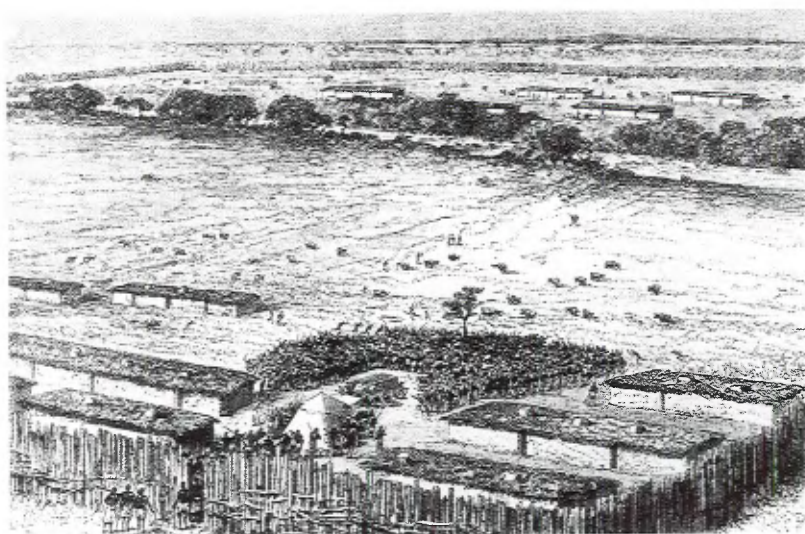
41. Hore, *Twelve Tribes*, p. 12; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, pp. 88, 91; Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 234.

42. Southon to LMS, 8 September 1879, LSMA, Central Africa Box III, as quoted in A. Smith, *Southern Interior*, p. 281. Cambier in Becker, *La vie*, I, pp. 418—419 estimated in 1878 the size of Isela Magazi as 200 x 200 metres containing the king's court and a hundred smaller huts.

43. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, pp. 258—261. The reference is to new Utengule in Usafwa. Merere had another capital earlier, also called Utengule, on the Usangu plain. Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, p. 368 and Wright, *German Missions*, pp. 29 ff.



Plate 14. Up-country towns and forts. Ujiji, looking north from the market place in 1876 (above) and Mkwawa's Kalenga in 1883 (below).





Kwere and other eastern matrilineal peoples were living in small and fugitive hamlets, composed of a few huts almost covered by forest. At some places, however, larger open villages of up to 200 inhabitants were found.<sup>44</sup> In the Rufiji delta there were only a few nucleated villages; dwellings were mostly dispersed among vast rice fields. Along the river itself small villages were more clearly discernible.<sup>45</sup> The south-eastern matrilineal peoples like the Makonde and Makua had hidden their small villages in the bush, the Makua ones being distinguished from the rest "by the cleanliness and careful construction of the houses." According to a later oral historian such "communalistic settlement clusters" contained up to 100 inhabitants.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere in the south only the Ngoni inhabited as a rule larger open villages; it was claimed that the capital of Njelu, the southern kingdom, contained 1 000—1 200 huts.<sup>47</sup> The other southern peoples, not least out of the fear of the Ngoni, either lived in smaller scattered villages or alternatively had concentrated in a few larger settlements under great chiefs. When Livingstone passed through the country in the late 1860s he met one or two sizeable towns, several smaller villages and many abandoned village sites. Thirty years later a town was still there, now under the Yao chief Matola. For the rest of the southern part, a scattered settlement in tiny hamlets amidst large depopulated areas was reported to have been the norm all over the region.<sup>48</sup>

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44. Speke, *Journal*, p. 29; Horner, *Reisen*, pp. 83, 250; Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 238; *A l'Assaut*, p. 86; Steere, Walk, p. 8; Cameron, *Across Africa*, II, pp. 45—46; Bley, *Pionierarbeit*, p. 68; Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, pp. 257—259; Marja-Liisa Swantz, 'A Stretch of Village History', *Habari*, 4/1984, pp. 20—22.

45. Ziegenhorn, 'Das Rufiji-Delta', *MDS*, 9 (1896), p. 82; Beardall, *Exploration*, *passim*.

46. Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, pp. 119—120, 125, 127 (quotation), 128; Wembah-Rashid, *Ethno-History*, pp. 47—48 (quotation).

47. Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, pp. 100, 102, 105.

48. Livingstone, *Last Journals*, II, e.g. pp. 17—18, 28, 31—32, 38, 60, 68, 72 ff. (Mataka's town — 1 000 houses), 86, 88, 97; Thomson, *Notes on Rovuma*, pp. 65—79; Lieder, *Von der Mbampa-Bai*, pp. 96—98, 105, 108, 113 and fn. 46 above. For the Yao, see also Edward A. Alpers, 'Trade, State and Society among the Yao in the Nineteenth Century', *JAH*, 10 (1969), pp. 409, 417—418 and Abdallah, *Yaos*, pp. 24—25.



In the central parts of the country the settlements looked very different. The dominating house type from the Hehe-Bena-Sangu cluster in the south through Ukimbu, southern Unyamwezi, and Ugogo to the north-central highlands was not the round mud-and-thatch hut but the *tembe*, a large hollow square building inhabited by several family groups, sometimes like a village in one building. In Stuhlmann's description:<sup>49</sup>

A tembe consists of a rectangle whose sides vary from 30 to 100 metres in length; its entire space is taken up by a lengthy house some 2 metres high and 3 metres broad with walls composed of wickerwork of poles and brushwood plastered with loam; the flat roof slopes only a little outward and bears a thick layer of loam spread over closely laid beams. These lengthy buildings are divided by partition walls into many small rooms, each with a door ... The whole inner space of a tembe consists of a courtyard which serves as a cattle pen at night. One often finds villages which are not completed or which accommodate a small community and consists of only one or two lengthwise structures, the missing sides replaced by a pole fence. Such a tembe serves a whole community, often as a dwelling for 100 people or more; in the courtyard a fire of dried cattle manure burns all the night ...

Like other houses, the tembes were often grouped together, but because of their size they seldom formed a clear cluster. "Oh! These African villages! Two or three wretched tembes spaced 500 metres from each other," exclaimed Giraud from Ubena. Similar scattered tembes were reported from neighbouring Uhehe.<sup>50</sup> But the pattern was not uniform. Elsewhere, as in Mbugwe, the distance between tembes was only a few dozen metres.<sup>51</sup> As for the size and shape of the buildings, local variation was great. Some tembes of kings and chiefs were much bigger than the ones described by Stuhlmann. The 'tembe town' Gawiro in Ubena had an estimated length of 600 metres and breadth of 200 metres.<sup>52</sup> In the north-central highlands, where timber was scarce, the tembes

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49. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 49—50. For a description 30 years earlier but in substance remarkably similar, see Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, pp. 366 ff.

50. Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 162; Redmayne, *Wahehe People*, p. 181.

51. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 182—183.

52. E.g. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 49.

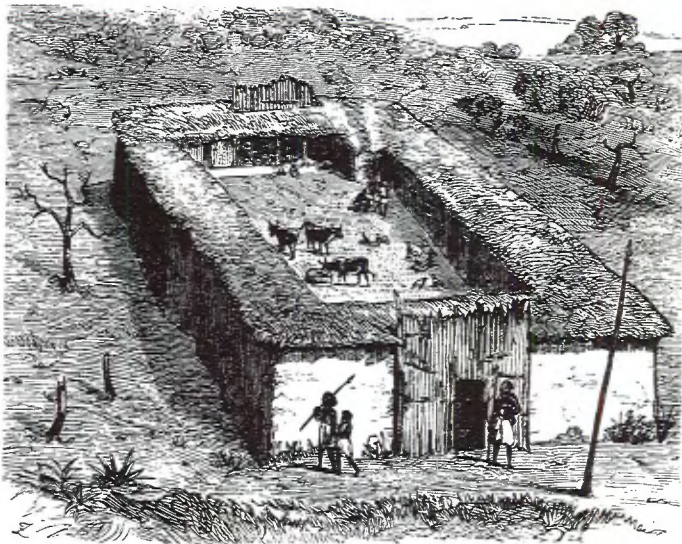
53. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 254.



Plate 15. Rural settlements. Villages composed of different types of round hut were prevalent in Buzinza (above, left — note granaries and spirit huts), Usagara (above, centre), Unyamwezi (next on right — note granaries, spirit huts and palisade while *tembe* dominated in Ugogo (extreme right, top) and, in a modified form, in Mbulu (extreme right, bottom).







were lower than elsewhere, in some places partly dug into the earth.<sup>54</sup>

Beyond the tembe region villages with circular huts reappeared but both the settlements and the buildings took varying forms. Where the Nyamwezi did not have tembes their land was "thickly strewn with villages."<sup>55</sup> Some were of enormous size, as seen above in connection with Mirambo's capitals. Almost all Nyamwezi villages were surrounded by hedges of euphorbia or strong palisades or both. The huts, often numbering from 100 to 200 in a village, were "shaped like corn-stacks, supported by bare poles, 15 feet high, and 15 to 18 feet in diameter." The roof was "descending till it almost touched the ground, and with a little kind of verandah running all round."<sup>56</sup> Still in the late 1890s Unyamwezi and Usumbwa north of it were "distinguished by especially beautiful villages. What gives them a particular charm in our eyes is the ample shade they provide for the wanderer."<sup>57</sup> Nearer Lake Victoria, the Sukuma were also grouped to villages. A few of them were large, most were small, and usually situated on high ground. They "stand almost always on the slope of a single rocky hill ... and are surrounded with thick hedges of euphorbia ... Near each hut lies a small field surrounded by euphorbia hedge, so that every settlement has its own complete system of hedges."<sup>58</sup> In Buzinza villages were fenced in the south but open in the north. Most were small and scattered amidst the fields.<sup>59</sup> On the eastern side of the lake settlements were small as well. The people south of the Mara river were living either in single homesteads or grouped in small village communities. Both kinds of settlement were protected by high hedges of euphorbia or thorn.<sup>60</sup> North of the Mara the Luo and the Kuria had strongly fortified villages. These were fairly small, among the Luo from 10 to 15 huts.<sup>61</sup> Such fortifications were

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54. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 175 ff.

55. Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 336.

56. Hore, *Twelve Tribes*, p. 7; Grant, *Walk*, p. 65, 67 (quotation); Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 336 (quotation).

57. Richard Kandt, *Caput Nili*. Berlin, 1904, p. 240.

58. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, p. 108 (quotation); Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 140; Malcom, *Sukumaland*, p. 12.

59. Speke, *Journal*, p. 107; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 210.

60. Kollmann, *Victoria Nyanza*, p. 177.

61. Weiss, *Völkerstämme im Norden*, pp. 205, 243, 306.



needed partly against the Maasai who, for their part, lived in kraals of varying size. Some had even more than 1 000 inhabitants. The Maasai huts were “looking like brown cardboard honeycombs,” long-shaped and very low, never more than 1,5 m high. This was because they were composed of boughs bent over, interwoven, and liberally plastered with cow’s dung.<sup>62</sup>

On the western and southwestern plateaus the dominating settlement patterns were relatively widely spaced nucleated villages of modest size or denser but non-nucleated settlement. In Buha both larger and smaller villages were found. Larger ones, with more than 100 huts, were situated in northern Buha. In the southern lowlands the Ha were dispersed in tiny hamlets each of a few huts only.<sup>63</sup> Along the shores of Tanganyika Hore found “two distinct kinds of scene.” In the more unsettled regions villages were perched upon peninsulas and other easily-defended positions, whereas in more peaceful places “mile after mile of scattered houses, peeping out from amongst the groves of bananas, [indicated] peace and plenty ... wide-stretching fields of corn and cassava [were] spread over the country.”<sup>64</sup> At the places in which caravans preferred to cross the lake larger, multi-ethnic settlements had sprung up.<sup>65</sup> The Fipa were living in concentrated villages situated usually a few hours walk from each other. Most of them appear to have had around 100 inhabitants or less; village with a population of 300—400 were considered large.<sup>66</sup> Travellers

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62. Höhnelt, *Lakes Rudolf and Stephanie*, I, p. 247 (quotation); Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, pp. 243—244.

63. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 225; *A l’assaut*, p. 293; Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 318. See also the sources mentioned in Chrétien, *Le Buha*, pp. 28—29.

64. Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 152.

65. Tambila, *Rukwa Region*, p. 75.

66. Lechaptois, *Tanganika*, p. 9; Franz Solan Schäppi, *Die katolische Missionsschule im ehemaligen Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Paderborn, 1939, p. 71; Fromm, *Ufipa*, p. 81; Nolan, *Great Lakes*, p. 35. Willis, *State*, p. 119 argues that the mean village size must in ca 1880 have been larger, possibly 250 inhabitants. The argument is logical because primary sources originate mainly from the time a disintegration of villages was under way. However, it is difficult to locate the actual time reference of missionary sources used by Lechaptois, Schäppi and Nolan, and Willis’s concrete evidence is not entirely convincing.

on the plateau between Lakes Tanganyika and Nyasa were usually struck by the contrast between the open, well-tended villages of the Nyakusa and the stockaded, untidy settlements of the plateau peoples. All villages on the plateau were stockaded and people were living within the enclosures with their cattle, sheep, goats and fowls. This made them "dirty beyond words." The villages were almost invariably among trees, usually near a river. Yet they were surrounded by a palisade and sometimes a ditch outside it.<sup>67</sup> One of the most indigenous forms of settlement arrangements was found in the region of Mbamba Bay on Lake Nyasa: "huge granite blocks were heaped in a mighty rampart, and between clung a host of small houses like birds' nests."<sup>68</sup>

The impression early travellers received was that the East African village was a mobile and short-lived species: villages were built in a few weeks, inhabited for a few years and abandoned again. "Of all the fine villages, I saw in my march ... there is probably not one now standing. Such is the evanescent nature of governments, peoples and villages in Africa," Thomson wrote.<sup>69</sup> And certainly an African village was not as stable as an European one. Climate made it possible to use building materials which were easily available and easily erodible; production systems and the abundance of land favoured a more mobile way of life. It was indeed possible to build an African village in a few weeks or months and abandon it after a few years only.<sup>70</sup> But clearly the African village was not as peripatetic as imagined by Thomson and most of his contemporaries. It was only in hunting, gathering and nomadic cattle pastoralism that continuous movement from one place to another had to be sustained. Some agricultural societies were extremely stable, especially those whose economy was based on the banana, a perennial, and who used manure. But not all villages

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67. Kerr-Cross, *Geographical Notes*, p. 287, Decle, *Savage Africa*, pp. 296—297 (quotation p. 297).

68. Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 418.

69. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 234. See also e.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, pp. 27—28.

70. For scattered references, see e.g. Giraud, *Lacs*, p. 186; Häfliger, *Ungoni*, p. 47; Martin van de Kimmenade, 'Les Sandawe (Territoire du Tanganyika, Afrique)', *Anthropos*, 31 (1936), p. 397; R.F. Gray, *Mbugwe Tribe*, pp. 49—50.

were hypermobile even in the grain-growing regions. From both Unyamwezi and Sukumaland it was reported that villages might have changed their location fairly often but there were also old villages, which had remained for 70—80 years or even more than 100 years at the same location.<sup>71</sup>

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71. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 372; J.M.M. van der Burgt, 'Von Mwansa nach Uschirombo, 29. September bis 7. Oktober 1903', *PM*, 52 (1906), p. 128.

## 10. Conclusion: beyond merry and primitive

The material presented in this study defies a neat summing up, and we must refrain from very positive statements. Much remains to be researched and discussed in the history of precolonial Tanzania, even regarding the themes on which this study has focused. After all necessary allowances for inadequate sources and inadequate methods and concepts have been made, there cannot remain much dispute that 'Primitive Africa' and 'Merry Africa' are indeed both myths as far as precolonial Tanzania is concerned. The realities were much too complex and subtle to be forced into such grossly caricatured categories. But merely to acknowledge the complexity is not very enlightening. Nor will it do away with historical interpretations which gravitate toward the 'Primitive' or the 'Merry'. Perhaps nothing will. An infinitely complex historical reality which is bound to remain imperfectly known will always be looked at from different angles and interpreted in different ways; interpretations will also be judged differently. As argued in the introductory chapter, historical knowledge is always provisional. Historical interpretations are conceptual and inevitably partial reconstructions of some aspects of the past. They cannot, and should not be expected to, convey 'whole truths', not to speak of 'ultimate truths'. Historians might perhaps try to learn to speak more in terms of probabilities than in terms of 'facts'. Yet to say that reality was complex and interpretations are partial and provisional is not to say that reality cannot be known and understood at all, or that all interpretations are groundless or equally arbitrary. Hence, what I wish to do in this concluding chapter is to return to some of the major themes of the study from a new perspective and discuss their current interpretations, seeking grounds for regarding some interpretations as preferable to others.



## Population, cattle and environmental control: local dynamics

It has lately become customary among serious Africanists to mock 'merry' Africanists for depicting "all African peasants as miraculously 'adapted' to their physical environment."<sup>1</sup> This is, in terms of caricature, what Kjekshus does, and, as this study should have shown, I do not subscribe to such a picture of precolonial Tanzania myself. I see several flaws in Kjekshus' argument. As many critics have noted, Kjekshus tends to take the African societies as static until the 1890s and overlooks the rapid changes they underwent earlier in the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> I, in this work, have greatly emphasized precolonial change. I have argued that many if not most societies in the Tanzanian area were toward the end of the 19th century in the grip of a powerful process of change stemming from the 'opening up' of the country through long-distance trade organized by Zanzibari-based merchant capital. The keynote of my study has been that Tanzanian precolonial societies must be considered the result of continuity of structure *combined with* the effects of recent trade-induced change, and that discussion of any aspect of them must keep the impact of change well in view.

There is another flaw in Kjekshus' argument, less frequently noted but not less fundamental. It is that he posits his ecology control system to be country-wide or 'national'. This is based on hypotheses of growing, or at least stable, human population, a dispersed settlement pattern and a widespread distribution of cattle in pre-1890 Tanzania. The evidence I have reviewed for these hypotheses cannot convince me to accept them. Admittedly they are tricky questions to explore. We have no overall quantitative information and it is very difficult to compile a general picture from what are essentially very narrow local sources. But, and this is the major point, I do not think it is fruitful to pose such questions in quantitative terms within a 'national' framework if there are no figures available and no contemporary 'national'

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1. Michael Watts in *ASR*, 26 (1983), p. 78 commending Paul Richards for not being a 'merry' Africanist.

2. E.g. Iliffe in *JAH*, 19 (1978), p. 140 and Hartwig, *Demographic Considerations*, p. 657.

social basis for discussion. I believe such questions can be meaningfully discussed, in the absence of exact figures, only if they are first approached in local contexts, that is if we focus on precolonial societies, and if generalizations are made not in terms of statistical trends but by comparing local situations and developments.

Let us take the case of population first. In the national perspective we are badly lost. We do not know how many people inhabited the Tanzanian area in precolonial times. It is reasonably safe to assume that the total population of the area was roughly four million at the end of the German colonial period before the First World War.<sup>3</sup> But to estimate the total population before colonialism by projecting backward trends based on this figure is too hazardous an undertaking. It is now generally acknowledged that the 1890s were a disastrous decade not only politically but also demographically in present-day Tanzania, and more generally in East Africa, and that they ushered in a population decline which may not have halted before the 1920s. Historians of differing persuasions by and large agree that the great dissident colonial demographer R.R. Kuczynski was right in believing that the "impact of European civilization tended rather to increase than to reduce 'normal' mortality."<sup>4</sup> But we have a very inadequate idea of population development during the early colonial period. And population trends of the 19th century are even more contested.

Combining the discussions presented above on high rates of mortality (chapter 4) and more moderate rates of fertility (chapter 8) one might well be tempted to make a case for an overall decline of population in late 19th-century Tanzania. But we must not forget the fundamental insecurity of our data base. The discussion on mortality was focussed on only one aspect, the 'crisis' mortality

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3. The first systematic German count in 1913 produced the number of 4 063 000 for what is now mainland Tanzania. Although not a proper census, its broad reliability is suggested by subsequent British counts. See *Die deutschen Schutzgebiete in Afrika und der Südsee 1912/1913. Amtliche Jahresberichte* (hereafter *Jahresberichte*). Berlin, 1914, Stat. Teil, p. 36 and United Nations, *Population of Tanganyika*. New York, 1949, p. 18. The population of Zanzibar was counted in 1910 at slightly below 200 000, see above, ch. 3, fn. 12.

4. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, p. 118.

due to war, famine and, above all, pestilence. It was concluded that the mortality levels must have been exceptionally high in the late precolonial period because of the spread of new epidemics and the increase in war and famine. But we have next to no idea of 'normal' mortality levels in precolonial Tanzanian societies. Similarly, discussion on fertility was geared to show that precolonial fertility was not uninhibited and its general levels must have been lower than the present average of seven births per woman; the question of how high or low it actually was could not be answered for lack of reliable data. It can be argued that in principle, country-wide, all the options are open: a period of depopulation, population holding its own, or even showing a moderate rise. Which option is chosen depends on how we weigh the variables of the growth model, which include not only mortality and fertility but also migration, and, with our data base, we can weigh them almost as we please. Consequently, I see no possibility of giving meaningful quantitative 'national' estimates (except as statistical simulations, for which this is not the place).

But if we shift the discussion to the local plane, the contours of the picture will become more clearly discernible. Now we can in fact find firmer evidence for depopulation than for population growth. Regional evidence for population growth is scanty and comes almost exclusively from cases involving heavy immigration. Moreover, we know that the regions which imported population most heavily, i.e. Zanzibar and the mainland coast, where most of the slaves finally arrived, were also most heavily affected by epidemics of both cholera and smallpox. The population of Zanzibar probably grew till the 1870s, but the growth might not have been quite as rapid as the highest estimates indicate. On the other hand, it is well attested that the Zanzibar population went into a steep decline in the early 1870s, and on the basis of what we saw above it can be assumed that the abatement and virtual end of the slave trade was only one factor in the decline, cholera and smallpox being the other. Similarly, the argument by Unomah and Webster that among African peoples along the central route, such as the Nyamwezi and Gogo who imported slaves, the slave trade was a factor in population growth,<sup>5</sup> overlooks the disease factor.

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5. Unomah and Webster, *Expansion of Commerce*, p. 300.

One could rather speculate that perhaps it was the loss of population through disease which gave these peoples at least one incentive to buy slaves.

Naturally, the structural bias in the sources must not be lost here either. The sources deal only with regions where outsiders went, and a major implication of the argument of this study is that it was these very regions which were most affected by the 19th-century disasters. Thus, there must have been many regions in which population trends looked very different, and it is not unreasonable to assume that there must have been many regions with population growth as well. But when all the regions of obvious depopulation and the fact that many if not most slaves came from beyond the present-day borders of Tanzania are balanced against the few assured and several insecure and speculative growth cases, the odds will tilt towards a widespread disruption of population patterns and a measure of depopulation at least in some societies on the coast and along the southern caravan routes. In this perspective, the population disasters of the 1890s were no new departure, as claimed by Kjekshus, but a continuation and a climax of earlier 19th-century population trends.

As we saw in chapter 6 there were cases in which cultivation systems had developed from a more extensive to a more intensive type and this had obviously taken place under population pressure much in the way foreseen by Ester Boserup's famous model of population growth leading to agricultural innovation.<sup>6</sup> But these cannot be taken as proof of a territory-wide trend of population growth (or the universal applicability of Boserup's model). Rather, as I argued above, they fit better with Gourou's 'siege' idea which envisages the development of intensive cultivation systems under duress. Grain-based intensive systems had been developed in areas of local population pressure where extensive agriculture and the addition of new cultivated land which it always entailed were out of the question for ecological or historical reasons: small islands (Ukara), inaccessible mountain retreats (Matengo, Iraqw), pockets of irrigable land in drylands unsuitable for cultivation (Sonjo, Engaruka).

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6. See Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*. Chicago; 1965 and idem, *Population and Technology*. Oxford, 1981.



Turning to the dispersed settlement pattern, the second major Kjekshusian prop of the ecology control system in pre-1890 Tanzania, one cannot find much firm evidence for it. The term settlement pattern can refer either to the physical form of the settled community or to the distribution of communities over a wider area, a distinction which is not quite clear in Kjekshus' work. Concerning the forms of communities a dense pattern of settlement seems fairly well attested. I endeavoured to show in chapter 9 that in the late 19th century a major part of the settlements were nucleated and a part of those which were not were otherwise densely organized (the latter in particular in banana areas). Moreover, it can be argued that while there was a trend towards increasing nucleation this did not mean the absence of earlier village settlement. Dispersed settlement took place mainly in what the sources call 'tiny hamlets' in the eastern, south-eastern and southern parts of the country. Concerning the distribution of settlements the evidence is more ambiguous. Sources leave the impression, which, however, cannot be properly documented, that settlements may have been more evenly distributed in some regions like the south-eastern plateau or parts of the central plateau. But it is evident that the land under cultivation was only a fraction of the total area of the territory, and settled regions were situated like islands among uninhabited wildernesses.<sup>7</sup> Stanley's description of Unyamwezi in 1872 was not atypical of grain-growing regions: "One great forest, broken here and there by little clearings around the villages."<sup>8</sup>

As far as cattle are concerned, their numbers are still more contested than those of humans and their distribution is not quite clear. The first German cattle estimates, indicating a cattle population of some half a million head at the turn of the century, are entirely useless for backward projections.<sup>9</sup> Not only is there no

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7. For a general discussion, probably overemphasising the size of the area exploited by man, see Fritz Jaeger, 'Der Gegensatz von Kulturland und Wildnis und die allgemeinen Züge ihrer Verteilung in Ost-Afrika', *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 16 (1910), pp. 121—133.

8. Stanley, *Dispatches*, p. 38.

9. 'Ergebnis einer schätzungsweisen Viehzählung auf Ende Dezember 1901 in Deutsch-Ostafrika', *Berichte über Land- und Forstwirtschaft*, 1 (1903), 3, p. 314 estimated the cattle population of mainland Tanzania,

reason to assume their accuracy, but they were also heavily affected by the ravages of the Great Rinderpest of the 1890s and the earlier cattle epidemics briefly touched upon above in chapter 4. All numerical estimates are naturally speculative and there was variation in the regional impact, but there cannot be any doubt that the cattle epidemics of the latter part of the 19th century wiped out the great majority of cattle in the area. However, it appears probable, as discussed in chapter 6, that although in the pre-colonial period there may have been cattle in areas where there are none now, notably in the northern coastal hinterland and parts of the north-west, by and large the distribution of livestock was not dissimilar to what it is now. Well-stocked districts were much the same as they are now even if the contrast between them and other areas was probably smaller. Where Kjekshus seems to be correct is that the distribution of tsetse fly was not as wide as it later came to be, but I argued above that there must have been further factors which inhibited cattle-raising over large areas.

Even if the evidence is not quite conclusive and there may be some room for discussion in each particular case I cannot see how Kjekshus' case of a territory-wide system of ecology control functioning till the 1890s could be maintained; too much speaks against it. But I believe Kjekshus did make a major contribution to the historiography of Tanzania by insisting on the ability of African farmers and cattle herders to adapt to their environment and to control it. I fail to see how the Tanzanian precolonial people, or any other, could have survived otherwise. And survive they did, in spite of the heavy onslaught of outside-induced calamities. As always, historians are concerned with survivors. If there was a threat to the collective survival of some societies, as there obviously was in those places which were suffering from depopulation, it was due to exogenous factors and interventions. I do not deny the reality of famine and inter-African warfare but, for reasons which were discussed in chapter 4, I cannot believe that they could have led to a sustained depopulation (even if single hunger catastrophes cannot be ruled out). But here too we should

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without Moshi and Lindi regions, at 671 000 head; a more accurate count in 1903 gave a result of 460 000 heads (*Jahresberichte* 1902/1903, app. A VIII, p. 69).

descend from the 'national' to the local level. Environmental and social control and, ultimately, survival in precolonial Tanzania was not a 'national' achievement but an essentially local affair.

What the Tanzanian productive and reproductive systems were adapted to was their local micro-environments. It was argued in chapter 6 that there were a wide variety of productive systems in late precolonial Tanzania based on a few common principles which were skilfully adapted to local micro-environments and that productivity of labour in the major fields of African livelihood — hoe cultivation, pastoralism as well as hunting and gathering — may have been considerably higher than is commonly realized. In chapter 8 I suggested that precolonial societies had also evolved several means of controlling their own reproduction. On the basis of these arguments I now wish to propose that Tanzanian precolonial societies had as a rule reached a functioning *modus vivendi* with their local environments. As there was no 'Tanzania' as a political or social unit, there was also no single country-wide system of ecology control, but instead many local systems, or *modi vivendi* between man, society and environment. With a long process of trial and error and careful oral transmission from generation to generation the people in precolonial societies had gathered and stored extensive amounts of ecologically sound knowledge of their own functioning and their immediate environment which was brought to bear in their systems of production and reproduction. This, I think, is also the gist of the argument made by John Ford in his justly acclaimed work *The Role of the Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology*; its country-wide (mis)application must be ascribed to its popularizers such as Kjekshus.

Not all scholars are equally sanguine on the capacity of the precolonial people to control their environment. On the contrary, the environmental effects of precolonial production systems have often been questioned. Some early colonial observers accused African cultivators of forest destruction leading to land degradation and soil erosion.<sup>10</sup> I do not feel competent to take a strong

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10. E.g. Franz Stuhlmann, 'Über die Uluguruberge in Deutsch-Ostafrika', *MDS*, 8 (1895), pp. 220—222; Adams, *Lindi*, pp. 19—21. Pastoralists were accused of the same only much later during the colonial era, see e.g. Allan, *African Husbandman*, pp. 320 ff.

stand on this. That great areas of forest were constantly cleared for cultivation is beyond doubt, as is the presence of erosion; early travellers noticed numerous indications of both deforestation and erosion. A shortage of fuelwood was reported at least in parts of Usambara, western Ugogo, in Unyanyembe around Tabora, Uhehe and Sukumaland,<sup>11</sup> while signs of severe erosion, hills denuded of soil, deep ravines and gullies etc., were observed in particular in the semi-arid central and south-eastern parts of the country.<sup>12</sup> With the advantage of hindsight we can also see that at least some of the intensive grain systems, skilful as they were, were detrimental to the environment. In particular the indigenous cultivation system on Ukara island was becoming over-intensified. Intensification meant not only technological advance but also decline in labour productivity and increased stress on land fertility. When more labour was put on the land and the soil was not given enough time to recuperate, it began to be impoverished.<sup>13</sup>

But the relative extent of 'natural' and 'man-made' factors as causes of precolonial erosion is not easy to determine. In the geologically older parts of Tanzania there had certainly been several cycles of natural erosion, "nature's ... making and regrading of soils," during thousands of years.<sup>14</sup> It is commonly assumed that much of the Tanzanian area had once been covered by a much denser forest and that the main part of the vegetation, most grassland, the *miombo* forest and Makonde thicket were all what is called fire climax, at least partly a result of human activities. But the felling of the original forest did not automatically leave the soil exposed to erosion; much depended on the nature of the soil and

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11. Krapf, *Missionary Labours*, p. 388 (Usambara); Herrmann, Ugogo, p. 193 (Ugogo); Becker, *La vie*, II, p. 24 (Tabora); Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, p. 215 (Uhehe); Schynse, *Letzte Reisen*, p. 19 (Sukumaland); Willis, *State*, p. 9 (Ufipa).

12. Burton, *Lake Regions*, I, p. 299; Southon, *Notes of a Journey*, p. 548; Adams, *Lindi*, p. 19; idem, *Im Dienste*, p. 22 (picture). For further references, see Carl Christiansson, *Soil Erosion and Sedimentation in Semi-arid Tanzania*. Uppsala, 1981, pp. 147–148.

13. Allan, *African Husbandman*, pp. 204–205.

14. Obst, *Das abflusslose Rumpfschollenland*, pp. 14 ff.; Allan, *African Husbandman*, p. 209 (quotation); E.M. Lind and M.E.S. Morrison, *East African Vegetation*. London, 1974, pp. 167, 177.



the slope forms developed under natural conditions.<sup>15</sup> In addition, it should be remembered that African cultivation systems had developed their own built-in devices against erosion: different types of fallow, inter-cropping, and contour ridging on easily erodible slopes.<sup>16</sup>

## Barbarous plenty — continuity, change and differentiation

Whatever was the case with more long-term adaptation of precolonial systems of production and reproduction, one can, on the basis of other sources used in this study, go further and suggest that as far as the levels of material welfare are concerned precolonial Tanzanian societies were not only surviving but in some respects relatively well off. Even a writer like Burton, who “could seldom bring himself into any constructive sympathy with Africans who were so clearly different from English gentlemen,”<sup>17</sup> wrote in a well-known and much-quoted passage that in the areas he had travelled through, “the African lives more comfortably, is better dressed, fed and lodged and does less work than the unfortunate *ryot* of British India. In regions where the slave trade is slack his position actually compares favourably with that of the peasantry in some of the richest European countries.”<sup>18</sup> And Burton visited mainly the less favourable parts of the country, the coast and the central plateau up to Lake Tanganyika.

To be sure, Burton visited the Tanzanian area in 1857—58 and what was true then was not necessarily true after thirty or forty years’ exposure of interior societies to the ravages of forces unleashed by long-distance trade. The argument underlying this study is not only that a commercial change was in progress in the 19th century but also that the impact of that change was largely

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15. For a general discussion, see P.H. Nye and D.J. Greenland. *The Soil under Shifting Cultivation*. London, 1960, esp. pp. 85—91.

16. Lind and Morrison, *Vegetation*, p. 208; Allan, *African Husbandman*, p. 386.

17. Basil Davidson, *The African Past*. Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 272.

18. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 278.

destructive. I do not wish to overlook the fact that the new commercial economy restructured old economic and social relations in a variety of ways. One of the most obvious consequences of the restructuring was a considerable increase in contact and interaction between peoples and societies in the Tanzanian area. No doubt the area, and East Africa in general, became a more internally integrated and geographically specific region of the world than it had been before.<sup>19</sup> Trade grew and *utani* relationships of reciprocal assistance, long customary within many societies, widened to inter-ethnic cooperation along the trade routes.<sup>20</sup> This can, in the African historical context, be taken as an intrinsically positive development. But integration may have been more superficial than it appeared. As Baumann noted in the early colonial period, the effect of caravan routes was "levelling to an unbelievable extent. People of one and the same type extend along the routes into the heart of the continent, while only a few miles away, often too in the neighbourhood of the coast, the pure essence of African life flourishes. He who has seen only the highway can hardly say that he has been in Africa."<sup>21</sup>

However, I do not want to pursue these questions further here in spite of their crucial importance to Tanzanian history. Rather I should like to raise another question which I feel is even more important for our present purposes. It is the question of the nature of 19th-century development and the new economy. Few deny the predatory nature of the slave trade and ivory hunting, but scholars like Iliffe have suggested that there was also a more positive and developmental side to the 19th-century trade economy. With long-distance trade and portage 'capitalist relations' penetrated the interior. These are seen by Iliffe as developmental assets, bringing with them opportunities for wage labour (portage) and commercial agriculture (provisioning of caravans) as well as new crops, "the most important economic gain of the century."<sup>22</sup>

There are two issues conflated into one in the argument: the

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19. The point made by Wright, *East Africa*, p. 540.

20. See e.g. R.E. Moreau, 'Joking Relationships in Tanganyika', *Africa*, 14 (1943—44), pp. 386—400 and Dora C. Abdy, 'Notes on Utani and other Bondei Customs', *Man*, 24 (1924), no. 114.

21. Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 102.

22. Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 77, 45, 2—3 and *passim*.

capitalist nature and the beneficiality of 19th-century commercial development. Let us take the question of capitalism first. It was argued in chapter 2 that long-distance caravans were funded by Zanzibar-based financiers and the whole process of the 'opening up' of East Africa can be seen as the penetration of merchant capital into the interior of Africa. But it is important to stress that this does not necessarily mean incipient 'capitalist' development or the emergence of capitalist relations, certainly not if we accept the Marxian definition of the capitalist mode of production as a large-scale commodity production for the purpose of capital accumulation with a combination of free, i.e. proletarianized, labour force and privately owned means of production.<sup>23</sup> In that perspective capitalism must not be equated with market relations and a capitalist relation involves much more than hiring of labour or, as suggested by Iliffe, "appropriation of labour by economic means."<sup>24</sup> That elements of market economy appeared in the Tanzanian area through the 19th-century trade system should be evident from what has been said in this study. In particular, the old principles of exchange of reciprocity and redistribution gave way to a market principle and the borderlines between the old spheres of exchange were considerably lowered if not altogether demolished. But such elements can be present in economies of many kinds and it is a long way from their presence to the expropriation from the immediate producers of their means of production, which, according to the Marxian view, is a necessary precondition for the emergence of a proletarianized labour force and hence a capitalist economy.<sup>25</sup> It was argued above that porters represented a minority of the labouring people and most of them cannot be regarded as 'free' labourers. They remained as a rule cultivators and among them there was a great number of slaves. Those who

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23. See Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, I. Berlin (GDR), 1984 (1st ed. 1867), pp. 167, 183—184; *ibid.*, II, p. 42. Cf. also Cohen, *Marx's Theory of History*, pp. 78, 181.

24. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 45. He has since sharpened his definition, *idem*, *The Emergence of African Capitalism*. London 1983, p. 4.

25. Cf. Marx's scornful comments on historians and economists "who smudge over all historical differences and see bourgeois relations in all forms of society." *Das Kapital*, I, p. 182, fn. 39 (for Theodor Mommsen) and *Grundrisse*. Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 105 (quotation; 1st ed. 1939).

were not slaves were often subject to other relationships of personal dependency. As for the provisioning of caravans, it was suggested that a part of it may have been undertaken by plantations worked by slaves.

Quite apart from the question of capitalism, I think the material presented in chapters 3 and 6 suggests that the assumed gains from long-distance trade may have been quantitatively less significant and qualitatively more mixed blessings than Iliffe and many others believe. New crops may indeed have been the most important economic gain of the 19th-century commercial system in many places but it is hard to view their effect as epoch-making in the area as a whole when we know that major new crops had penetrated not only from east to west but also from west to east and that this process had begun certainly before the latter half of the century, perhaps much earlier. On the other hand, as argued in chapter 4, there cannot be much doubt of the increasing militancy and the spread of new diseases, and these factors, separately or together, had dramatic results in many societies. The slave trade, increase in firearms and heightened political turmoil resulted not only in an increasing number of petty and not-so-petty wars but also in their increased destructiveness. At the same time, new or newly re-spreading diseases such as cholera and smallpox played terrible havoc. Famines were probably made more frequent and worse in their effects by the increased turbulence of political and social conditions and by the increased demands for food outside the traditional societies. Even the most critical historian must reach the conclusion — unless he or she wishes to declare the whole source material entirely misleading — that in the late 19th century life in many African societies was tough indeed.

However, we have a great deal of indirect evidence that a not inconsiderable part of the comparative well-being and “barbarous comfort and plenty” observed in passing by Burton<sup>26</sup> was preserved to the end of the century. In chapter 6, I reviewed the positively delighted descriptions of the first travellers to the banana districts. Nor did changes break up the economic foundation of the grain areas visited by Burton. Southon, whose pessimistic assessment of the short lifetime of Nyamwezi men was quoted previously, noted that old men were not lacking and that

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26. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 7.



women (who did not travel or go to war) were much more long-lived.<sup>27</sup> Reichard, for his part, transmitted an almost idyllic picture of life in a Nyamwezi village at the end of the 1880s.<sup>28</sup> Above I presented evidence about the large grain stores of African leaders and high levels of consumption of *pombe*. Some contemporary writers even claimed that in many societies poverty, in the European sense, was an unknown phenomenon. "A real pauperism is unknown," related Becker from Ubende at Lake Tanganyika. Everyone had a grain field which produced enough to satisfy the most essential needs.<sup>29</sup> Thomson, who travelled through the south-central and south-western parts of the area in 1878–80 claimed that in every settlement he visited he saw "only contented, well-fed people, leading an idle, lazy life."<sup>30</sup>

But it is important to take a closer look at what is meant by 'relative well-being' in this context. Structural levels of material welfare may have been higher than is often realized, but this does not entitle us to idealize the life of common people in those societies. Even if Burton's comparison with the peasantry of the richest European countries is justified, it should be remembered that conditions among the latter were nothing to boast about. The life expectation of a European peasant, for instance, was not much over 30 years.<sup>31</sup>

While we have no figures and no statistics to rely on, an answer must be sketched from fragmentary pieces of ethnographic description and from indirect inferences concerning such basic things as dress, dwelling and diet. Surely it would be futile to claim that people even in the most well-to-do precolonial Tanzanian societies enjoyed a 'high living standard' by present-day yardsticks. Dress and accommodation were extremely modest. People lived in huts the form and building materials of which

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27. Southon, *History of Unyamwezi*, p. 10, LMSA, Central Africa 1880 3/4/C, quoted above, p. 126.

28. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, pp. 359 ff.

29. Becker, *La vie*, II, p. 344. For similar arguments, see e.g. Brard, Victoria-Nyansa, p. 89 (Buzinza) and Sutherland, *Elephant Hunter*, pp. 202–203 (south).

30. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, II, p. 18.

31. For an Austrian peasant, for instance, 32 years. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, p. 119, fn. 2.

varied greatly but which usually had an earthen floor and a roof of grass or banana bast.<sup>32</sup> Grass roofs evidently leaked often.<sup>33</sup> In more congested places the huts were shared during the night with animals.<sup>34</sup> As for dress, it was, "in a temperate and uniform climate, simple, light, and airy."<sup>35</sup> Garments varied from aprons and loin-cloths to robes of a sort, but they seldom covered much of the body. Goat skins were traditionally used as clothing material throughout the country and cattle skins in cattle-keeping areas. In addition, barkcloth was popular in the far west and also used in the south-east and south-west, while native cotton dominated the south and south-west. Among peoples like the Nyakusa, Nyaturu, Irangi and eastern Sukuma, men went almost without clothing.<sup>36</sup> Dress was among those things which changed much during the 19th century. Although domestic fabrics were favoured among Africans they were, as seen above, laborious to produce, and imported cloths from abroad made a massive entry during the Zanzibari-based trading system. Already Burton was struck by the quantity of imported cloth in East Africa. At the end of the 19th century, it was related, foreign fabrics were rapidly displacing domestic cotton cloths in many parts of the country and the skills of spinning and weaving were beginning to sink into oblivion.<sup>37</sup> Yet even in such commercially frequented places like Sukumaland

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32. The best general ethnographic descriptions of both dwellings and cloths are to be found in the relevant parts of Burton, *Lake Regions*; Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*; Baumann, *Durch Massailand* and Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*. For a short systematic and comparative treatment, see Weule in Meyer, *Kolonialreich*, map facing p. 74. For a more detailed discussion on huts, see Alfred Schachtzabel, *Die Besiedlungsverhältnisse der Bantu-Neger*. Leiden, 1911, pp. 32 ff. and on clothing Stuhlmann, *Handwerk*, pp. 38—41.

33. E.g. Böhm, *Von Sansibar*, p. 61 (Unyamwezi).

34. E.g. Herrmann, Wasiba, p. 52 and Richter, *Ethnographische Notizen*, p. 67 (Buhaya); Schlobach, *Völkstämme der Ostküste*, p. 187 (Ukara).

35. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 323.

36. E.g. Elton, *Lakes and Mountains*, pp. 332, 331 and Fülleborn, *Njassa- und Ruwumagebiet*, p. 383 (Nyakusa); *A l'assaut*, p. 262 and Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin*, pp. 188, 746 (Sukuma), 761 (Irangi), 765 (Nyaturu).

37. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 324; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, p. 234; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 232.



Plate 16. African fashions. A group of Zaramo in the late 1850s (above); a wife of the Nyamwezi chief Mnywa Sele in 1874; and a Nyakusa couple in 1883.



people living some distance away from the main trade routes were found wearing animals skins or almost naked as late as 1890.<sup>38</sup>

The most fundamental factor in any definition of welfare is, however, food production and diet. I have already made a case for the overall quantitative adequacy of food in normal times and rejected Iliffe's contention that famine was an overhanging threat even in the most favoured societies. Here we must briefly review qualitative aspects of diets. Evidence is, of course, again very superficial and no estimates can be made of calorie or protein intake. But it appears that, even if there was no *haute cuisine*, the diet was sufficiently varied and nutritious. In grain areas the basic dish was *ugali*, a porridge of millet or other cereal. Served with it were mostly legumes, sometimes meat or fish. "Fish is found in the lakes and in the many rivers of this well-watered land. It is despised by those who can afford meat, but is a 'godsend' to travellers, to slaves, and to the poor. Meat is the diet most prized; it is ... a luxury beyond the reach of peasantry except when they can pick up the orts of the chiefs."<sup>39</sup> In banana regions the basic food was of course the banana, either as a porridge of unripe fruit or fried, combined with relish. Legumes such as peas and beans seem to have been an important part of relish in both grain-based and banana-based diets. As a rule there were two or sometimes three meals. There was much variation here, too, but a fairly common pattern appears to have been a little gruel in the morning, something during the day and a full meal in the evening. Poorer people in particular had to content themselves with two meals a day.<sup>40</sup> Pombe was never taken with meals. Livestock raisers were glad to drink milk, often sour, with meals, while those without stock drank water, acquired from rivers, springs, water holes or sometimes, as in Ugogo, proper wells. The quality of water varied

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38. Holmes, *Zanzibari Influence*, p. 502.

39. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 280—281.

40. For diets, see e.g. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, pp. 280—281 and idem, *Lake Regions*, p. 54 (coast); Giraud, *Lacs*, pp. 82—83, 133; Stanley, *Livingstone*, pp. 526, 550; Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 246 (Zigua and Doe); Velten, ed., *Reiseschilderungen*, p. 187 (Doe); Widenmann, *Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung*, p. 65 (Chagga); Hurel, *Religion et Vie domestique*, pp. 279 ff. (Kerebe); Baumstark, *Warangi*, p. 47 (Irangi); Richter, *Ethnographische Notizen*, p. 116 (Haya).



greatly; travellers had to learn to drink many sorts: "Dirty water and water tasting of saltpetre ... smelling of hydrogen sulphide ... water with a heavy iron content ..." <sup>41</sup>

Of course, this is an overgeneralized and static ideal type which needs appropriate qualification according to local and historical variations. There were differences both within and between societies. Throughout the study we have seen that traditional African societies at bottom were hardly as egalitarian as Nyerere and other exponents of *ujamaa* ideology have implied.<sup>42</sup> Most societies were marked by clear social distinctions. The 19th-century trade system catapulted a few groups of 'entrepreneurs' such as the Nyamwezi *vbandevba* caravan leaders or Jiji fishermen on Lake Tanganyika to prominence and prosperity,<sup>43</sup> but traditionally differentiation took place between descent groups. It was the latter which regulated inheritance and thus functioned as accumulation groups. All societies were divided at least into leaders and led, i.e. chiefly lineages, or 'aristocracy', and free peasant lineages. But there were also differences within these two categories; sources often refer to 'poorer' or 'more well-to-do' people. In addition, slavery and pawnship were widespread not only in the 'new' plantation form but within the African societies themselves. Whether slaves can be considered as a third stratum, as suggested by some authors,<sup>44</sup> is doubtful, however, because, being kinless, they were usually incorporated in royal or commoner lineages. Although it was always well-known who was a slave, or of slave origin, slaves appear to have been considered as a separate social group only where they were particularly numerous and had a specific economic function, as on the coast. Even there it was hard for outsiders to tell who was a slave and who was not, because it

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41. Emin, *Tagebücher*, IV, p. 345.

42. J.K. Nyerere, 'Ujamaa — The Basis of African Socialism', in idem, *Freedom and Unity*. Dar es Salaam, 1966, esp. pp. 164—165. He does not deny the existence of 'rich' and 'poor' individuals but maintains that everybody had to work and if natural calamities struck they struck everybody — 'poor' or 'rich'.

43. Unomah, *Vbandevba*, passim; B. Brown, *Muslim Influence*, pp. 623—624, 626.

44. E.g. Avon, *Vie sociale*, pp. 104—105 from Ubende.

was "very common for slaves to pay their masters two dollars a month, and then shift for themselves as they best may."<sup>45</sup>

The degree of social differentiation varied of course from one society to another. Social distinctions seem to have been smallest in matrilineal societies of the south-east, where even political leaders were considered hardly more than the first among equals.<sup>46</sup> In the eastern matrilineal belt differences grew more pronounced with the build-up of the 19th-century trade system.<sup>47</sup> The sharpest distinctions were found in coastal towns and plantations on the one hand, and in the interlake kingdoms on the other. In the coastal towns a few wealthy *waungwana* families had managed to gain control of the land and worked it with slaves. While the landowners lived in large, multi-storey *majumba*, most free people had a single-storey thatched *nyumba*. Slaves often had only a room in their patron's house.<sup>48</sup> In the interlacustrine kingdoms the patterns of inequality were varied. In Karagwe travellers were struck by the contrast between the abundance in the king's court, where women were fattened with milk into "wonders of obesity," and the appearance of misery among the common Nyambo cultivators.<sup>49</sup> Elsewhere such institutions of formal inequality had been developed as the *nyarubanja* land tenancy of Buhaya,<sup>50</sup> or the *ubagire* of the Ha kingdoms, a master-client arrangement based on the loan of livestock.<sup>51</sup> In general, the introduction of cattle as movable wealth seems to have been a powerful differentiating factor. In addition to Buha this was reported from elsewhere in the interlake area and Sukumaland.<sup>52</sup> Sharp distinctions in cattle wealth were

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45. Edward Steere, 'Some Account of the Town of Zanzibar', *UMCA Occasional Papers 1867—1882*, 4, p. 10.

46. E.g. Liebenow, *Colonial Rule*, pp. 63 ff. (Makonde).

47. Beidelman, *Matrilineal Peoples*, p. xiii.

48. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, p. 77; August H. Nimtz Jr., *Islam and Politics in East Africa*. Minneapolis, 1980, pp. 107 ff.

49. Speke, *Journal*, pp. 189—190 (quotation); Grant, *Walk*, p. 177.

50. Above, p. 271; Cory and Hartknoll, *Customary Law*, pp. 123—126.

51. Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, pp. 18—20; J.F. Tawney, 'Ubagire: a Feudal Custom among the Waha', *TNR*, 17 (1944), pp. 6—9.

52. Gwassa and Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, pp. 18—20 (Ha); Berger, *Religion and Resistance*, pp. 8—9, (interlake in general); Itandala, *History of the Babinza*, pp. 196 ff. (Sukuma).

observed both in pastoral societies<sup>53</sup> and in societies where cattle were combined with permanent farming. In Unyaturu, for instance, there was a clear distinction between the few rich and the "disproportionately large number of poor ... who possess very few cattle or none at all."<sup>54</sup>

Differentiation and inequality were firmly entrenched within the descent groups, too. 'The rich' referred almost invariably to senior, and usually polygamous, men who were in a position to appropriate a part of the labour of their wives, children and (sometimes) in-laws. As we saw in chapter 6 the social division of labour allocated most of the daily drudgery to younger and middle-aged women, and slaves where these were available, while senior men were given the opportunity to concentrate on the management of public affairs. "(T)he women are always at work," observed Anne Hore, the first white woman to go to Lake Tanganyika. "The food stuff they dish up to their households they must first sow, reap, pound, and grind, and the water they must carry on their heads from its source. Their lives are a continual round of drudgery, but many of the well-to-do women have slaves who do most of this."<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, it appears that the central position of women in production gave them the right to control a considerable part of the produce<sup>56</sup> and to demand their share of the incoming trade goods.<sup>57</sup>

Differences in social standing were often displayed in clothing and ornaments,<sup>58</sup> but what they entailed for patterns of food consumption is not clear from the sources. Almost all we are able to document is that the consumption of *pombe* was often the preroga-

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53. Fischer, *Massai-Land*, pp. 64—65 (Maasai).

54. Sick, *Waniaturu*, p. 33.

55. Anne Hore, in Hore, *Missionary*, p. 162. It should be noted that Kavala Island in Lake Tanganyika where Mrs Hore made her observations is beyond the present-day borders of Tanzania.

56. See the discussion on the control of food stores above, pp. 299—300.

57. However, we have evidence only from matrilineal societies: Giblin, *Famine, Authority*, pp. 49—50 (Zigua); Marja-Liisa Swantz, 'Old and New Ujamaa', in idem, 'Cultural and Social Change in the Restructuring of Tanzanian Rural Areas, Bagamoyo Research Project, Final Report: Selected Parts', mimeo, Helsinki, 1979, pp. 24—26 (Kwere).

58. E.g. Adams, *Im Dienste*, p. 35 (Hehe); Shorter, *Chieftship*, p. 137 (Kimbu) and references in the footnote immediately above.

tive of the chiefs and the elders; many African leaders were reputed to almost subsist on it.<sup>59</sup> When we know in addition that chiefs had always the largest grain stores and cattle herds we may be permitted to assume that their consumption levels must have been, on the average, higher than those of their subjects. But we have very few hints of differences in consumption according to gender and age. Men often took their meals separately from women and children but there are no sources telling whether they also ate better. There are suggestions from Kilimanjaro and Unyamwezi that children might have suffered from inappropriate diet after weaning but whether it was also inadequate is unclear.<sup>60</sup> Neither do we know whether our descriptions faithfully reflect an all-the-year-round situation or whether they are biased towards certain junctures of the yearly cycle of production and consumption. Most of the major modes of livelihood in precolonial societies were highly seasonal, and it is understandable that immediately after the harvest or catch there may have been more food available than immediately before. Feierman, however, has suggested that seasonal hunger or the 'hungry months' preceding the harvest may be a relatively recent phenomenon which was unknown in the precolonial period.<sup>61</sup> This is an attractive argument in the light of what was said in chapter 6 of the way the crops were rotated in many agricultural systems, producing several minor crops to be consumed during the time when major crops were ripening. However, there are scattered indications in the sources that hungry months actually were known among sections of population in some societies. Burton once mentions that in Unyamwezi provisions began to be scarce at the time of preparing the fields. The Spiritan missionary Picarda noted from Uzigua that those who had neglected their fields or brewed too much pombe had to "tighten their belts during several months" without however "actually

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59. E.g. Speke, *Journal*, p. 61; Grant, *Walk*, pp. 85, 128; A l'assaut, p. 262; Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, II, p. 403.

60. Gutmann, *Recht*, p. 69; Southon, *History of Unyamwezi*, p. 10, LSMA, Central Africa 1880 3/4/C.

61. Steven Feierman, 'Struggles for Control: The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Modern Africa', *ASR*, 28 (1985), p. 101.



having to starve" as long as the granaries of the neighbours were not empty.<sup>62</sup>

We must also not forget that the inhabitants of precolonial Tanzania lived no more than any other people by food alone. I have been concerned with the material side of precolonial life in this study partly because I think it is the side which in any case has to be tackled first and partly because of the lack of coherent sources for such things as popular cosmologies — not because I think the latter do not matter. The reason I have refrained from discussing the existing fragments of information on religious and cosmological systems is that I think that their decoding requires a much deeper knowledge of the cultural codes of the societies concerned than I possess. Obviously these were small-scale pre-literate societies with intense personal interaction and close social control effected through the ubiquitous ritual. Order was created by symbolic patterns; high god was conceived as a shadowy, withdrawn figure; the forces which were seen intervening actively in people's lives were the spirits of ancestors and of nature; and much of the causation of events was taken to be personal.<sup>63</sup> Neither were cosmologies unaffected by the 19th-century change. Witchcraft accusations may have increased,<sup>64</sup> while at least the northern coastal hinterland and Buzinza experienced a spread of new 'peripheral' spirit possession cults.<sup>65</sup> It is clear that beliefs and developments like these, while not unconnected with the productive and reproductive basis, must have added a profound dimension to the popular experience of life and should be given due weight in an overall assessment of precolonial societies. However, I am not striving at such an assessment here but sticking to the material side.

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62. Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, p. 290; Picarda, *Autour Mandéra*, p. 246.

63. I draw here mainly on M. Wilson, *Religion and Transformation*, passim and Iliffe, *Modern History*, pp. 26—32.

64. T.O. Ranger, *The African Churches of Tanzania*. Dar es Salaam, 1972, p. 6 (general); Hartwig, *Art of Survival*, pp. 184—186 (Kerebe, sorcery "began"). Cf. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 81 who does not believe in the increase of witchcraft accusations.

65. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 200—202 (Shambaa and Zigua); Harries, ed., *Swahili Prose*, pp. 201—205 ('Swahili'); Svein Bjerke, *The Bacwezi Complex and the Other 'Spirit Cults of the Zinza of Northwestern Tanzania*. Oslo, 1975, pp. 51—53 (Zinza).

## Adaptation, accumulation and human needs

Broad conclusions concerning developmental levels of Tanzanian precolonial societies in the latter part of the 19th century which can be drawn from this study are perhaps not very surprising or exciting. Relative material well-being appears to have existed side by side with want and distress and the relative proportion of the two obviously changed to the detriment of the former as the century advanced. Tanzanian societies on the eve of colonialism were scarcely "a land of milk and honey" as implied by Kjekshus,<sup>66</sup> but neither were all their inhabitants "measuring out their lives in famines," as Iliffe would have it.<sup>67</sup> The productivity of labour and structural levels of material well-being in precolonial societies most probably were higher than has often been believed, although the fruits of production were obviously not divided equally.

Such conclusions are open to critical comments and questions. It can be argued that they fit quite well within the 'Merry Africa' parameters and downplay social differences: precolonial Tanzanians were effectively adapted to their environments and were, as a whole, relatively well-off till the outside calamities intervened. It can also be suggested that the idea of a drastic outside-induced change for the worse may be an optical illusion created by the non-availability of earlier source material, i.e. that we cannot be sure whether the 19th-century disruption by war, famine and pestilence was a new, historically unique phenomenon caused by the specific conditions of its own time, or whether these Apocalyptic Horsemen were a cyclic endogenous factor, recurrent visitors who had intervened, in varying combinations, in the development of the Tanzanian area untold times before, without historians being present to record it.

These questions may be ultimately unanswerable. It must be admitted that there is much we do not know, and cannot know on

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66. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, p. 127. His direct reference is to Ugogo which, of course, was among the most famine-prone parts of the territory.

67. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 13. The reference is to "Tanganyika in 1800."

the basis of the sources used in this study, about the concrete working mechanisms and processes of African systems of production and reproduction. On the basis of this study alone there is no denying that pre-documentary and endogenous war, famine and pestilence took place. But peaceful co-existence and contacts, storage systems as well as biological and social defences against disease were also functioning. On the other hand, we do not know how, and at what cost, the *modus vivendi* between man, society and nature had been achieved, even if we can guess from the observed correlation between immunity to malaria and high child mortality<sup>68</sup> that the cost must have often been considerable. Nor can we be sure that the 19th-century epidemics of cholera and smallpox were the first visitations of these diseases in the interior of East Africa. The East African coast had been in contact with the outside world for millennia. Even the interior, for a long time among the last white spaces on the white man's maps, was not as hermetically closed from the outside world as is often assumed. But it is plain that direct communications between the outside world and East Africa increased dramatically during the 19th century and the spread of epidemics must be seen in that context. Remembering the conquest of Central America and the South Pacific, where the opening up led to invasion by new diseases and heavy losses of local population, it is tempting to view 19th-century East Africa as an analogous process: an economic integration accompanied by 'microbial unification', to use Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's phrase.<sup>69</sup> At least it seems safe to say that if it was not the first such disruption then it was a part of so vast a cycle that its predecessors had completely faded not only from the social but also from the biological memory.

Yet we must beware of exaggerating the impact of the trade economy and outside forces in general and forgetting the internal forces that were at work. We know that some indigenous systems had ended in a complete cul-de-sac without any contribution from outside trade, as in Engaruka, where a seemingly flourishing cultivation system had been completely abandoned. A serious

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68. Above, ch. 8. p. 331.

69. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian*. Brighton, 1981, p. 83 (*Le territoire de l'historien*, II. Paris 1978).

obstacle for a discussion on this issue is, however, that we have no firm idea of the time scale involved. We do not know how long the systems, as observed in the late precolonial period and discussed in this study, had been operating — whether they were, historically speaking, fairly recent phenomena, as suggested by Iliffe's idea of mainland Tanzania as a "frontier territory which was being penetrated by colonists from all different directions" in about 1800,<sup>70</sup> or whether many societies had been settled for a longer time, which is my suspicion. What speaks for the long settlement of many societies is not only the archaeological evidence,<sup>71</sup> but also the degree of accommodation and control they had reached over their environments. In particular it is inconceivable that dozens of local varieties of banana could have evolved without a settlement of several hundred years. On the other hand, we have evidence of a remarkable adaptive capacity in some grain-growing societies. In the 19th and 20th centuries cases are known in which a society changed its whole mode of livelihood in a matter of a few decades. The more dramatic examples include the Bena of the rivers who, beginning in the late 1870s, in two generations turned from a grain-growing and cattle-herding mountain people to lowlanders subsisting on rice and fish.<sup>72</sup>

Regardless of whether most societies in late precolonial Tanzania were "colonising societies"<sup>73</sup> as Iliffe believes, or whether they were more settled, none of them can be taken as static. *Modus vivendi* must not be confused with equilibrium nor adaptation with the absence of contradictions and change. The argument put forward by Maurice Godelier that a successful adaptation tends in the long run to turn into a maladaptation if it is not continuously adjusted deserves to be taken seriously also in the Tanzanian context. In this perspective human societies are regarded as sub-systems of more extensive ecosystems wherein human, animal and vegetable populations co-exist in a constant and complex inter-relationship. There is an in-built source of contradiction between the success of adaptation of a society to its environment which

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70. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 8.

71. Ambrose, *Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions*, passim.

72. Culwick and Culwick, *Ubena*, pp. 23—26.

73. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 17.



allows population to grow and the environmental and social constraints which set more or less narrow limits for the use of resources. This contradiction can actually be seen among the major factors which set social development in motion: the stability of a society is always provisional. It lasts only as long as its internal contradictions are regulated. In Godelier's own words:<sup>74</sup>

(T)he condition for a system's reproduction is not ... the absence of contradictions in the interior of that system, but rather the existence of a regulation of these contradictions which provisionally maintains its unity. A social system or a natural ecosystem are ... never, as functionalists old and new would claim, wholly 'integrated' totalities. They are totalities whose unity is the 'provisionally stable' effect of the properties of structural compatibility between (its) elements ...

While there is no reason to posit Tanzanian precolonial societies as unchanging, we have seen in this study how difficult it is, because of the scarcity and unreliability of sources, to discover the ways in which they were changing. In this respect, the paucity of sources is naturally a serious obstacle to the historian. But seen from another angle the same paucity can be taken as an advantage. It can give us a clue to some of the basic features of these societies. Underlying this suggestion is the idea that a lack or dearth of sources (or, more often, of certain types of sources) about a society, far from being a chance, a result of unfortunate accidents, most probably stems from the essential characteristics of the society concerned. Here I think we can benefit from the suggestion that what is important in a text is not only or necessarily mainly its surface contents but also, and above all, its gaps and silences.<sup>75</sup> I wish to extend this argument from 'texts' to all kinds of historical evidence. At least as far as Tanzanian precolonial societies are concerned one can suggest that if we on the whole have so few endogenous sources, meaning surviving remnants and traces of them, it may be a necessary concomitant of their fundamentally non-accumulative nature. These societies simply did not leave

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74. Godelier, *Mental and Material*, pp. 65—66 (emphases deleted). This paragraph draws heavily on *ibid.*, ch. 1.)

75. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, pp. 14 ff. The idea is derived ultimately, of course, from Freud.

many remnants and traces behind. A very small part from each cycle of production was saved for the future and accumulated to be built upon. The changes that took place easily erased the earlier forms not only from existence but also from the collective memory. If this was so, this non-accumulative nature must be recognized as one the most fundamental structural characteristics of these societies and we cannot conclude this study without touching upon the issue.

In order to accumulate a society needs, as is widely acknowledged, to produce a surplus over and above the immediate subsistence needs of its members. But if the main theses of this study are correct, this cannot have been the factor the absence of which obstructed accumulation in Tanzanian precolonial societies. I argued above that the precolonial systems of production were capable of continuously producing surpluses and in fact produced some. Moreover, with the relatively high productivity of labour and the general availability of land there appears to have been nothing to prevent the societies producing more if they had needed to. I make these claims with full awareness of the fact that 'surplus' is no simple category.<sup>76</sup> The definition I employ here is not the only possible one. And whatever definition of surplus is accepted, it always involves the thorny issue of human needs. It is very hard to determine what are the 'immediate subsistence needs' of members of a society and consequently what part of the total produce of the society should be regarded as meeting those needs and what part is left in the category of surplus. This is because the level of human needs cannot be considered a phenomenon to be defined in purely biological terms. It includes a socially and culturally determined component as well. As Marx noted, "the extent of so-called vital needs, like the nature of their satisfaction, is itself a historical product"; it is determined on the one hand by the climate and other natural endowments, and on the other by the cultural level and historical development of the country in question.<sup>77</sup> Nutritional needs are no exception — a diet merely ensuring physical

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76. Those who wish to pursue this question further may turn to Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*. New York, 1957, ch. 2 and Harry W. Pearson, 'The Economy has no Surplus: Critique of a Theory of Development', in Polanyi et al., eds, *Trade and Market*, pp. 320—341.

77. Marx, *Das Kapital*, I, p. 168.

survival can scarcely be regarded as socially or culturally acceptable. The immediate needs are even more difficult to determine in precolonial Africa, where most major modes of livelihood were not round-the-year activities but highly seasonal. A considerable part of the product had to be stored. Part was consumed before the next harvest or catch, while another part was kept longer as a famine reserve.<sup>78</sup> Because of these considerations a surplus cannot be an empirically determinable quantity. Yet I maintain that surplus is a fruitful heuristic concept. A part of the total produce of a society can be conceived as a surplus from which necessary investments are made and non-productive activities, whether considered socially necessary or not, provided for. In this work I have tried to show that surpluses, in this sense, were not lacking in late precolonial Tanzania.

To accumulate, a society needs also accumulators. They were not missing in Tanzanian precolonial societies. We have seen that chiefs and elders appropriated some of the labour of others and accumulated stores of grain and livestock or other prestige items. This has led some scholars to argue that, in Tanzania and elsewhere, the key position of the elders made them a social 'class' or stratum of their own who 'exploited' both women and the younger men.<sup>79</sup> I have reservations about the use of the notions of 'class' and 'exploitation' in precolonial Tanzania though I admit that they *can* be given definitions which make their use possible in this context. It was not only that a part of the labour by women and junior men was appropriated by the chiefs and elders, but also that rights to children were always transferred to the men's kinship groups regardless of whether the society was patrilineal or matrilineal.<sup>80</sup> But if we try to define exploitation 'objectively', as appropriation of labour without an equivalent given in re-

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78. Cf. Meillassoux, *Maidens*, pp. 51—55.

79. That they were a class is the original argument by Rey in his *Lineage Mode of Production*. However, it is not shared by Meillassoux who fully endorses the dominance of the elders, see Seddon in *Relations of Production*, p. 159. In the Tanzanian context Iliffe speaks of the "exploitation" by the older men without calling them a 'class', *Modern History*, p. 17.

80. Cf. Meillassoux, *Maidens*, pp. 75 ff.

turn,<sup>81</sup> the issue becomes intractable: we have neither standards to measure labour equivalences nor empirical information on the flow of goods and services involved. Few sources contradict Nyerere's suggestion that the wealth the elder "appeared to possess was not his, personally; it was only 'his' as the Elder of the group which had produced it. He was its guardian."<sup>82</sup> But while it appears that these stores were shared in times of shortage, we have no detailed information on how the members of the groups in normal times benefited from 'their' collective wealth guarded by the chief or elder and to what uses the latter could put it. Although a fairly widespread sharing of produce may have been a rule in societies of more 'traditional' type, we know of the late 19th-century conqueror-chiefs that some leaders had grown autonomous in the use of the resources they had collected. But how the process had occurred and at whose cost the latter have achieved their position is not clear from the sources used in this work. Here we reach, once again, the limits of our study and cannot proceed much further.

If there were surpluses to be accumulated and people who were in a position to carry it out but no longer-term material accumulation in fact occurred, we obviously have to conclude that the latter were either unwilling or unable to undertake the task. In order to probe these possibilities I suggest we shift our attention from the size of the surplus to the form of it. A clue can be gained from Max Gluckman who argues that the "spirit of generosity" in what he calls tribal societies has to be viewed in the context of the general economic situation. In such societies it was "impossible to use goods — even productive tools — to raise one's own standard of living, and there was no point to hoarding." That is, as long as there was no way to convert surpluses which were produced in the form of food or drink into something more durable, there were obvious limits to the use of them, and no possibility for private accumulation. However, we have seen in this study that Gluck-

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81. Cf. Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*. Cambridge, 1985, ch. 4. According to his definition (p. 167), "(b)eing exploited means, fundamentally, working more hours than are needed to produce the goods one consumes."

82. Nyerere, Ujamaa, in *Freedom and Unity*, p. 165.



man's idea that there were no 'luxuries' in these societies<sup>83</sup> is inaccurate. The introduction of cattle had brought to many Tanzanian societies a prestige asset into which food could be converted and which could be accumulated. Later the intrusion of trade goods introduced a functionally similar asset to cattleless societies and increased in cattle-keeping societies the range of goods that were accumulable. But the point is that neither cattle nor trade goods were 'economic' wealth amenable to productive accumulation. Rather, it can be argued that they were a 'social' wealth amenable to reproductive accumulation. They could be used to create new social relations like marriages and client relations. What was said about the Nyakusa applied equally to numerous other cattle-keepers: "Cattle bred and wealth begot wealth. A rich man married many wives and begot many sons and daughters. He received cattle for his daughters' marriages and gave cattle for the marriages of his sons."<sup>84</sup> Client relationships were created by loaning cattle to those who were without them and could reciprocate only through services. In cattleless societies human relations were built up and cemented by means of other prestige goods.

This brings us, I believe, to the heart of the social dynamics of Tanzanian precolonial societies. It was not that accumulation was missing but rather that what was accumulated was not used to lay a material basis for future economic and social activity. Instead it was used to create new social relations and new human beings and in this way to lay a social basis for that activity. This, I suggest, can be regarded as the 'innermost secret' of these societies. Whether it represents some sort of ultimate preoccupation with "reproduction of life as a precondition of production," as argued by Meillassoux<sup>85</sup> or whether it should be interpreted as "the creation and the control of labour-power" as suggested by Jeff Guy in a Southern African context<sup>86</sup> need not be discussed here. Suffice it to note that given the conditions of Tanzanian precolonial societies such logic was

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83. Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual*, pp. 51, 13.

84. M. Wilson, *Men and Elders*, p. 64.

85. Claude Meillassoux, 'From Reproduction to Production', *Economy and Society*, 1 (1972), p. 101.

86. Jeff Guy, 'Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14 (1987), p. 20.

by no means irrational. There is no reason to quarrel with Gluckman over the point that most of what was produced was not accumulable in the physical sense. Foodstuffs could be stored but not for ever; buildings were made of mud and grass or other perishable materials which had to be replaced in a few years; iron tools were smelted and resmelted several times till the metal literally disappeared. Moreover, accumulation of knowledge was slow in the absence of literacy.<sup>87</sup> In such an environment people can rely only on each other to make their societies survive.

What it was like to live in such a society is quite another issue — our social science possesses no euphorimeters.<sup>88</sup> People used to living with modern amenities would hardly have been happy in such societies. However, precolonial people were used to a different life. If the satisfaction of human needs is taken as the ultimate value, it can be speculated that precolonial life may not have been altogether unbearable, at least not before and outside the 19th-century calamities. After all, subjective perception of welfare is determined by the relation between the level of needs and their satisfaction. As long as the needs remain modest, they can be satisfied by simple means. But this is to speak more in terms of structural potentialities than of immediate realities. As this study should have shown, there hardly could have been a single, undivided experience of 'precolonial life'. 'Tanzania' was composed of societies which were internally differentiated already before the onslaught of the externally-induced forces of change, and the 19th-century restructuring was bound to differentiate them further. But how the people themselves experienced their life and changes in it we simply do not know. Surely they did not give the impression of a subjugated or submissive people. On the contrary, travellers often complained about the egalitarian attitude of Africans towards outsiders. Burton wrote indignantly that "the African ... treats all men, except his chief, as his equals."<sup>89</sup> What little other documentation exists comes mainly from ex-slaves and

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87. Cf. Jack Goody and Ian Watt, 'The Consequences of Literacy', in Jack Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge, 1968, pp. 27—68.

88. Jack Goody according to Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*. London, 1983, p. 109.

89. Burton, *Lake Regions*, p. 336.

gives a starkly varying picture. "The often horrifying autobiographies of women caught up in nineteenth-century disorder" contrast with nostalgic reminiscences of a lost land of abundance.<sup>90</sup> I doubt whether such experiences can be evaluated 'objectively'; I am convinced that we cannot do it with our present-day yardsticks.

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90. Iliffe, *Modern History*, p. 83; 'History of a Sagara Boy', in Madan, ed., *Kiungani*, pp. 64 ff.

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### 3. Documentary sources

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*Public Record Office*, Kew, U.K. (cited as PRO)

For this study, I consulted some files containing correspondence between the Foreign Office in London and the Zanzibar consulate.

*Tanzania National Archives*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (cited as TNA)

In this book I have cited some German records containing correspondence between district officers and the governor in Dar es Salaam.

*Zentrales Staatsarchiv*, Potsdam, German Democratic Republic (cited as ZStA)

I have cited a few files containing correspondence between the colonial department at the Foreign Office (*Kolonialabteilung, Auswärtiges Amt*), later reorganized as the Colonial Office (*Reichskolonialamt*), and the local authorities in East Africa.

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