

Indigenous Beliefs, Rituals and Environmental Consciousness in the Heru Kingdom of Buha, Western Tanzania, 1800s-1980

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Abstract

This paper discusses the place of indigenous beliefs, rituals, and environmental consciousness in the Heru kingdom of Buha in Western Tanzania. I argue that indigenous beliefs and ritual practices played an important role in conserving the land, rivers, and groves in the kingdom. To make effective the human-nature relationship, taboos were set up for social control. This explains why human activities such as hunting, honey collection, and cultivation were prohibited in groves and rivers because they were believed to house nature and ancestral spirits. However, the introduction of Christianity, the British indirect rule system, and the villagization program led to a relative decline in beliefs and ritual practices, and generally affected the human-nature relationship. I rely on primary and secondary sources to first, show the link between beliefs, rituals, and environmental consciousness in pre-colonial and colonial Heru. Secondly, I survey the impact of Christianity, indirect rule, and the villagization program to the changing beliefs and ritual practices in the kingdom.

Keywords: Indigenous beliefs, Rituals, Environmental consciousness

1. Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between indigenous beliefs, ritual practices and environmental consciousness in the kingdom of Heru in Buha, Western Tanzania. It also demonstrates how the introduction of Christianity, the imposition of the British indirect rule system, and the villagization program affected the course of human-nature relationship. Heru kingdom was found approximately between Latitude 3° and 5° S Longitude 29° and 31° E. In comparison to other kingdoms of Buha--Heru-Bushingo, Nkalinzi, Nkanda-Luguru, Buyungu and Muhambwe,--Heru was the largest and most populous kingdom.¹The term “belief” as used in this paper means feelings of certainty that something or someone exists or something is true.²I analyze rituals of Heru relying on Catherine Bell, Victor Turner, Ronald Grimes, Roy Rappaport, and Jonathan Smith’s conceptualizations of rituals as expressions of logical ideas and forms of religious behaviors that are associated with social transitions.³Building on this definition, I argue that beliefs and ritual practices are interdependent and therefore they should be treated simultaneously. Studies on rituals have attracted a voluminous scholarly attention in social anthropology and religious studies. On the whole, scholarship on ritual has tended to emphasize issues of rites of passage, religious expressions of ritual, symbolism and ritual efficacy to mention just a few.⁴

¹ Captain H. B. Grant, “Uha in Tanganyika Territory” The Geographical Journal, Vol.66, No.5 (1925), p.411, Joseph F. Mbwiliza, “The Origins and Development of the Heru Kingdom From About 1750 -1930” (University of Dar es Salaam, Unpublished Undergraduate Dissertation, 1974), p.5.

²<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/belief> retrieved on February 20, 2015.

³Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 19, “Constructing Ritual” in Ronald L. Grimes, ed., *Readings in Ritual Studies* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1996), p.22, Victor W. Turner, *The Forest Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p.95, Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp.192-193, Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.24, Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. p.63.

⁴See for instance, Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffé, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960, Frederick M. Smith, “Possession, Embodiment, and Ritual in Mental Health Care in India”, *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 24 (2) (2010), Victor W. Turner, *The Forest Symbols, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New Brunswick and London: Aldine Transaction, 1995), Ronald Grimes, *Readings in Ritual Studies*, 156

While this is the case, the production of historical knowledge at Dar es Salaam has for decades paid a relatively little attention to studies of indigenous beliefs and practices. A few studies of religion were written to reflect the nationalist and materialist paradigms.⁵ Alyward Shorter's work remained--in Tanzanian religious scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s intellectual climate--the only work that historicized life-crisis and redressive rituals among the Kimbu of Western Tanzania.⁶ Until recently, a few studies by Africanist historians have delved into issues of Christianization, and incorporation of Christianity into indigenous beliefs and cultures.⁷ As far as Buha is concerned, Michelle Wagner's study remains the only work that addresses issues of indigenous beliefs and environment.⁸ While acknowledging her contribution to the field of environmental history, my work builds on Victor Turner's analysis of liminality, structures and anti-structures (*communitas*) to present a tripartite interplay of beliefs, rituals and environmental consciousness in the kingdom of Heru in Western Buha (Kasulu district). Other works on Heru have shed light on tribal insignia, ritual, symbolism, and social production. However, they have confined their analyses on power relations and social production nudging aside beliefs, ritual and environmental consciousness as issues that need to be studied.⁹

(New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), William K. Powers, *Yuwipi: Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984), William S. Sax, Johannes Quack and Jan Weinholt, eds., *The Problem of Ritual Efficacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵See for instance, Isaria N. Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania c. 1500-1900* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), Isaria Kimambo and Cuthbert Omari, "The Development of Religious Thought and Centres among the Pare" in T.O. Ranger and I.N. Kimambo, eds., *The Historical Study of African Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 111-121, Israel Katoke, *The Making of the Karagwe Kingdom: Tanzanian History from Oral Traditions* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1970), Steven Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom: A History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), Joseph Mbwiliza, "An Economic History of Rungwe District, 1890-1962: Some Aspects of Economic and Social Changes among the Nyakyusa" (University of Dar es Salaam: Unpublished MA Dissertation, 1975), Karim Hirji, "Colonial Ideological Apparatuses in Tanganyika under the Germans" in *Tanzania under Colonial Rule* ed. Martin H.Y. Kaniki (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1980), Gershom T. Mishambi, "Colonialism and underdevelopment in Tanzania", *Tanzania Zamani*, Vol.1, No.1 (1992), B. A. Majoya, "The Missionary Factor in Socio-Economic and Cultural Transformation: A Case Study of Rungwe District 1890-1950" (University of Dar es Salaam: Unpublished MA Dissertation, 1995).

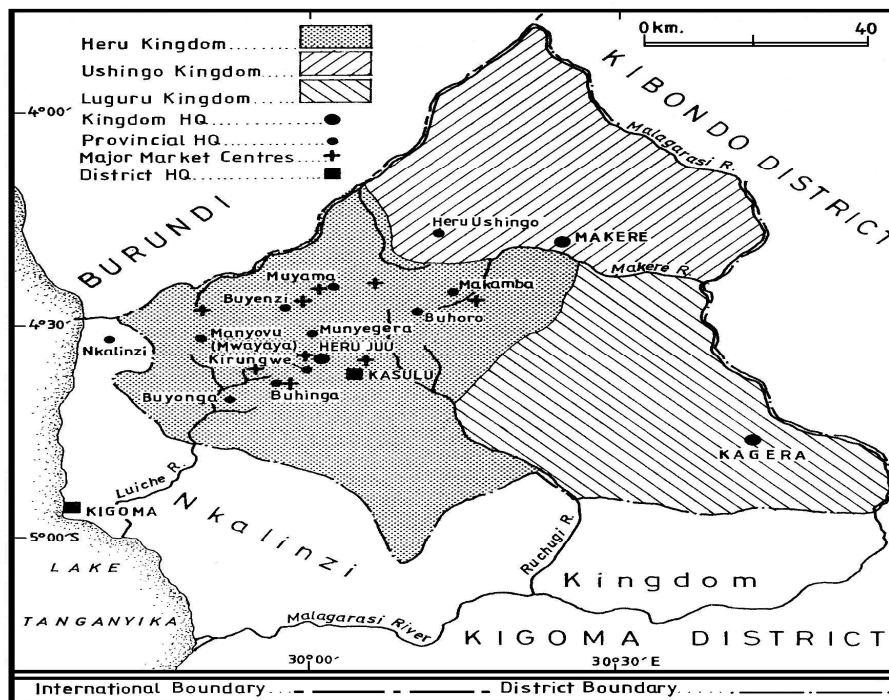
⁶Alyward Shorter, "Symbolism, Ritual and History: An Examination of the work of Victor Turner" in T.O. Ranger and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds., *Historical Study*, pp. 139-148.

⁷Terence O. Ranger, "Missionary Adaptation of African Religious Institutions: The Masasi Case" in T. O. Ranger and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds., *Historical Study*, pp.221-247, Gregory H. Maddox "The Church and Cigogo: Father Stephen Mulundi and Christianity in Central Tanzania" in *East African Expressions of Christianity* eds. Thomas Spear and Isaria Kimambo (Oxford: James Currey; Dar es Salaam: MkukinaNyota Publishers, Nairobi: EAEP and Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), pp.150-163, James L. Giblin, "Family Life, Indigenous Culture and Christianity in Colonial Njombe" in *East African*, pp.309-322 and Kathleen R. Smythe, *Fipa Families: Reproduction and Catholic Evangelization in Nkasi, Ufipa, 1880-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006).

⁸Michelle Wagner, "Environment, Community and History, 'Nature in the Mind' in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Buha, Tanzania" in Gergory Maddox and James Giblin, eds., *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: MkukinaNyota Publishers, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), pp.175-197.

⁹William B. Tripe, "Tribal Insignia of Heru, Tanganyika Notes and Records (here in after referred to as TNR), 16 (1943), J. J. Tawney, "Tribal Insignia of Heru Chiefdom of Buha in Kasulu District", TNR, 18 (1944), G.C.K.Gwassa, "Social Production and Ritual in Buha, 1750-1900", TNR, Nos.79 &80 (1976).

Map 1: Kingdoms of Western Buha



Modified from Joseph F. Mbwiliza, "The Origins and Development of the Heru Kingdom from about 1750-1900", 1974:4

2. *Liminality and Communitas in the Ritual Practices of Heru Kingdom*

Rituals in the kingdom of Heru ranged from the family, clan and the state with specialists who acted as intermediaries between the people and the deities. In the family, the head of the family was responsible for all matters of religion, the clan head was also responsible for all issues pertaining to the religious needs of the clan while the king assisted by specialists (bateko) were responsible for rituals of the whole territory.¹⁰ Families and clans built shrines (ndaro), planted trees (imivumu) or could go to the mulinzi trees that offered physical and psychological liminal spaces for families and clan members to perform rituals on behalf of all members.¹¹ Like families and clans, kings/chiefs set aside areas that provided liminal spaces for territorial rituals. In the Heru kingdom, the mwami had his grove (iholezo) that provided a sacred space for territorial rituals. Likewise, in Nkalinzi kingdom, mwami Rusimbi and Mugasa had by the nineteenth century already set Bigabiro at present Mwandiga for territorial rituals and worship.¹²

Before the formation of large centralized kingdoms by the Tutsi dynasties in Buha, bateko (sing. muteko) extracted surplus from communities living on the land they had controlled. Below them were abajenana. These were heads of families who acted as advisors of muteko. Bateko performed several functions in Buha. First, they were duty bound to allocate land for settlement and cultivation. Abandoned lands (amatongo) remained under the control of muteko who collected fees for their reallocation. Secondly, muteko blessed farmer's seeds at the beginning of the planting season and provided advice (umuhanuzi) and medicine to the villagers. Thirdly, he was a medium of land spirits (ibisigo) in rivers and in sacred groves (amaholezo).¹³ Finally, he was responsible for settling disputes over land especially when two villages scrambled for a fertile piece of land.

¹⁰ Pamphil Chubwa, *Waha: Historia na Maendeleo* (Tabora, Tanganyika Mission Press, 2005), pp.1-9.

¹¹ See for instance Michelle Wagner, *Environment, Community and History*, p.176.

¹² Interview, Prof. J. F. Mbwiliza, Dar es Salaam, 15/12/2011, Mzee Kamego Yagaza, Herujuu village, 04/02/2012. iholezo was a sacred grove in the kingdom of Heru that was reserved for territorial rituals. It was a place where the anger of the spirits of the ancestors would be cooled and pacified through ritual.

¹³ Joseph Mbwiliza, *The Hoe*, p.11.

Joseph Mbwiliza's study about the political economy of Heru shows how the two bateko performed ritual in settling conflict over the disputed land. Both would come dressed up in complete official regalia. A mat would be spread out and a mulinga (bracelet) placed on top. Then they would be summoned to lie on top to take oath: As a muteko of this village since the times of my great ancestor whose official kiteko is [name of muteko's ancestor], I do hereby take oath before these same ancestors that this disputed land I am lying on is under my lawful control and should I be lying may God take away my life as I lie here.¹⁴

Following the establishment of kingdoms from the second half of the nineteenth century, the role of the bateko changed--when Tutsi kings (abakimbiri) assumed territorial authority.¹⁵ The change was exacerbated by struggles over arable land that heightened conflicts between clans and lineages. While bateko retained their religious functions as land priests there emerged, in response to state formation, a body of rainmakers (abavurati) who were responsible for all matters of land productivity thereby leaving diviners (banyamuragura) dealing with all other issues relating to health and the wellbeing of family members. Such a change reduced the influence of territorial spirits while royal ancestral spirits gained prominence. The change also meant that bateko were pushed to be owners of unproductive lands thus lacking legitimacy over the entire population.¹⁶

Though bateko lost control of arable land--following the institutionalization of kingdoms in Buha--kings still needed support from the natives to exert their political authority in Buha. It is within this context that the roles of the bateko in performing territorial rituals became imperative. The demand of bateko--by Tutsi kings--made the roles of bateko transcend that of families and clans and became more and more territorial.¹⁷ The roles of the bateko in Buha became complex from the 1850s onwards when the long distance trade reached Ujiji along the shores of Lake Tanganyika. By 1880 Ujiji became a prosperous trading town in the interior.¹⁸ The bateko of Ujiji acted as mediators between the Arab traders and nature spirits on one hand and between the Arabs and the local communities on the other. Apart from acting as mediators, bateko played an important role in providing permission to traders for trading in Ujiji and those who wanted to expand their trade to the interior of Buha.¹⁹ In the course of forging territorial unity, chiefs in Buha developed annual ceremonies that brought together the people and the chiefs once a year. In the kingdom of Heru, mwami Ntare concentrated on his westward expansion and paid little attention on the eastern provinces of Bushingo and Luguru. This was due to the fact that the communication between Heru, Bushingo and Luguru was difficult as impenetrable forests made regular communications between the center and the peripheries difficult. This, in effect, diminished mwami's influence from the center at Heru to the eastern provinces of Bushingo and Luguru to the extent that they could secede to form independent kingdoms.²⁰ To avoid secession, the mwami developed annual thanksgiving ceremonies indorerwa/ indolegwazimpeshi to maintain territorial unity and peace in the kingdom.

In this ceremony, the bateko offered blessings, made offerings and poured libation on behalf of the people. People came from different corners of the kingdom; they ate, drank and danced at Buseko hill near the kingdom's headquarters. The ceremony lasted for eight days with the last day being reserved for the ritual of the king tambiko la mwami (ritual for the king) performed in the forests of vugizo (mukibilachi'vugizo).²¹

¹⁴ibid, p. 10.

¹⁵Laurenti Sago, "The Role of the Bateko in the History of Buha" in Ruzoka et.al, eds., *The Baha and Related Peoples of Kigoma Region, History, Culture and Development* (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Printing Services, 2001), p.58.

¹⁶Joseph F. Mbwiliza, "The Kimbiri Dynasty in the Heru Kingdom" in Paul Ruzoka, et.al., *The Baha and Related Peoples of Kigoma Region: History, Tradition, Culture and Development* (Kigoma: Kigoma Development Association, 2001), p.57.

¹⁷Laurenti Sago, *The Role*, p.59.

¹⁸ibid, p.61, C. H. Beker, "Materials for the understanding of Islam in German East Africa" translated by Bradford G. Martin, *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 68 (February, 1968), p.38, David C. Sperling and Jose H. Kagabo, "The Coast Hinterland and Interior of East Africa" in Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels (eds). *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), p. 289.

¹⁹D. C. Sperling, "The Coastal Hinterland and the Interior of East Africa" in Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Pouwels eds., *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2000), p.289.

²⁰Joseph F. Mbwiliza, *Development*, p.24.

²¹Salvatory S. Nyanto, "Coping with the Challenges of Evangelisation in a Plural Setting: Experiences of the White Fathers in Buha and Unyamwezi 1878-1978" (University of Dar es Salaam, Unpublished MA Dissertation, 2012), p.31, William B. Tripe, *Tribal Insignia*, pp.5-6, "The Installation (Kusamwa) of the Chief of Uha" *Man*, 35 (1935), p.54, J.J. Tawney, *Insignia of Heru*, pp.86-87, G. C. K. Gwassa and Joseph F. Mbwiliza, *Social Production*, pp.18-21.

The ceremonies in Buha were held in June and July after harvest as a symbol of paying allegiance to the deities and their king/chief for the obtained harvests. It was an important event that reminded the people about the end of the season and ended before the early rains began (before October-ilemba). The end of the ceremony marked the beginning of the new season. With such a change of season, people stopped the ceremony and cleared their fields ready for production.²²

The annual thanksgiving ceremony indorerwa/indolegwazimpeshi in Heru sheds light on Victor Turner's conceptualization of separation, liminality, communitas and re-incorporation in ritual performances. First, the after harvest ceremony meant separation from people's daily activities and thoughts. Individuals from different parts of the kingdom had to go to the kingdom's headquarters at Heru. Secondly, by attending the ceremony, the kingdom's subjects entered into both physical and psychological liminal spaces as they interacted, drank, and danced at Buseko hill for seven days. It was not ostensibly the initial intention of the people to drink and dance at Heru. Such liminal entities, as Turner asserts, were "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom and ceremonial"²³Dances, drinking, and socialization at Buseko hills signified temporal erosion of social hierarchies (communitas/anti-structure) among the banyaheru and those who came from distant lands of the kingdom. To borrow Neil Kodesh's words, Buseko hill invariably functioned as a "ritual arena where members [subjects] assembled to seek life, peace, and collective good fortune".²⁴The ritual for the king (tambiko la mwami) at vugizo that was performed on the eighth day of the ceremony acted as a liminal space for the king to perform territorial rituals for the needs of his subjects. As the ceremony ended, people returned to their homes having been ritually motivated on royalty to their king and a working spirit for the new planting season.

What accounts for the annual attendance at the indorerwa/indolegwazimpeshi stems from the belief that the king (mwami) and his body of rainmakers (abavurati) had the power over rain.²⁵They also believed that kings acted as mediators with royal ancestral spirits and that invisible forces could intervene over problems including droughts, locusts, diseases and famine. The forces that dominated the invisible world included nature spirits ibisigo of rivers and groves and ancestral spirits(imizimu, ibiyaga). These spirits were believed to cause sufferings and misfortunes to households members who were still living. Other forces in the invisible world of the Baha included zombies, spirits of the dead and strange forces that caused troubles to the people unless heads of families, clans and kings performed rituals to appease them.²⁶Upon grappling with the problems emanating from nature such as life and death, there developed a local form of theology dominated by diviners (banyamuragura, and bapfumu), rainmakers (abavurati) and withches(abarozzi). Under such circumstances, indigenous beliefs and ritual practices played an important role in creating a sense of belongingness. Territorial rituals in particular, addressed issues that transcended clan boundaries.²⁷

²²Joseph F. Mbwiliza, Development, p.24.

²³ Victor Turner, The Ritual Process, p.95, Liminality and Communitas, p. 512.

²⁴ Neil Kodesh, Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), p.75.

²⁵Steven Feierman's work among the Shambaa remains classical in African studies that addresses issues of "power of healing the land", "power of harming the land" and "power against power" (nguvukwanguvu). For detailed account see Steven Feierman, Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

²⁶Salvatory S. Nyanto, Coping, pp.35-36.

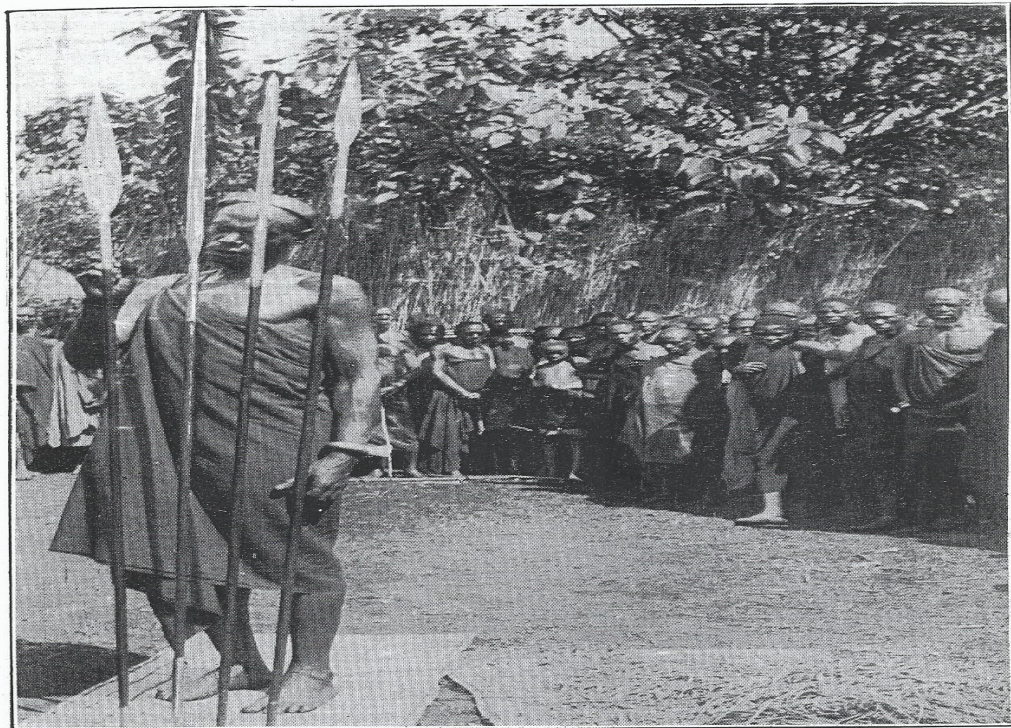
²⁷Joseph F. Mbwiliza, The Origins, p.9, The Hoe and the Stick, p.13.

Figure 1: Ancestral Drums of Heru during the indorerwa/ Indolegwazimpeshibeating an enthusiastic welcome to the Mwami in 1943



Source: W.B. Tripe, "The Tribal Insignia of Heru", Tanganyika Notes and Records, No.16, 1943.

Figure 2: The Great Spears of Heru exposed during the Annual Thanksgiving Ceremony Indorerwa/ Indolegwa zi Mpeshi in 1943



Source: W.B. Tripe, "The Tribal Insignia of Heru", Tanganyika Notes and Records, No.16, 1943.

4. Beliefs, Ritual Practices and Environmental Consciousness in the Heru Kingdom

As I have elaborated in the previous section, bateko who acted as traditional priests, performed several functions in Buha. As guardians of the land the muteko made sure that the land was not infringed by any means. To effect control of the land, the muteko kept the python (insato) as a symbol of his office to frighten anyone who would settle or cultivate without muteko's approval. The python was kept in the sacred grove (iholezo), and should such a snake be killed, the muteko or his assistant (umuhodya) had to cool (uguhoza) the land spirits.

The muteko used drums to cool and pacify land and nature spirits. Misuse of the drums was believed to cause "ecological and social disequilibrium." It was therefore the duty of the bateko in Buha to maintain ecological equilibrium and to restore order following the breaching of taboo (umuziro).²⁸ Both men and women, except for muteko's family, were allowed to either collect or cut fire woods in sacred groves.²⁹ The presence of the python in the groves helped to keep the groves for ritual purposes. No muteko was henceforth allowed to vacate his land as it would mean total abandonment of the land spirits. This made it difficult for all bateko to practice shifting cultivation that would claim more areas in Buha.³⁰ Experiences of bateko in Buha demonstrate the fact that the relationship between bateko, nature and land spirits served to maintain the relationship between living human beings and the physical environment which was by and large reciprocal. The reciprocity became effective in conserving the land. The muteko on one hand cooled the spirits uguhozaamashinga/ ibiyaga through rituals and he could also direct other members of communities where to live and where to cultivate so that they could not trouble the spirits. The spirits in return maintained security to the environment and the people who were living in it.³¹ Such a human-nature spirit relationship was a continuous process that dominated the day to day undertakings of the Baha. Order had to be restored by the entire community and it was the muteko who had to restore the broken relationship between the Baha and the land spirits. The relationship between the Banyaheru and nature spirits increased the need for conserving the environment since individuals were not allowed to till or live in an area without a prior permission of the muteko. Muteko also solved boundary disputes and disputes over resources to avoid unwarranted tensions.

Notwithstanding bateko's role in conserving land resources, their practice of allocating land for cultivation and living was characterized by politics of land distribution and conflicts in the entire kingdom. In most cases, the best lands remained in the hands of bateko's families and relatives. Bateko's politics over land distribution continued during the reign of the Tutsi dynasty (abakimbiri) in the kingdom.³² Although the ascendancy of Tutsi dynasty into power had far reaching impact on the institution of bateko, they continued to be distributors of the land and performers of rituals. The python that acted as a symbol of their offices was kept at vugizo (mukibhirach'ivugizo) where territorial rituals were performed. Bateko remained guardians of pythons too. As it was before the arrival of the Tutsi dynasty, groves remained sacred and no one was allowed to enter into the groves without prior permission of the muteko. The importance of the sacred places forbade the banyaheru from carrying out hunting, farming and other activities apart from their primary function. Again, since rituals ranged from the family, clan and the state, places for ritual and prayer making tended to follow a similar pattern. The presence of the python helped to conserve the sacred groves and its surroundings as it would threaten the people who illegally entered the grove and in this way the forests in the holezo were reserved for rituals and invariably remained untouched.³³ In order to maintain the harmonious relationship between individuals, communities, nature and ancestral spirits, taboos (imiziro) were set up to effect social control. Any deviation from social control was considered as an abuse and inevitably could cause problems (diseases, drought, famine etc). At Heru, the trees in the sacred grove iholezo could be cut down. Human activities such as hunting, farming and honey collection were strictly forbidden. Women were only allowed to collect dried and naturally fallen fire woods for cooking while men were not allowed to cut down trees for building purposes as they believed that spirits would make the house collapse. People were not allowed to temper with the sources of rivers by either crossing the rivers or cutting down trees--around the rivers—for the fear that they would be cursed by spirits ibisigo.

²⁸Laurenti Sago, *The Role of Bateko*, p.60.112

²⁹Joseph Mbwiliza, *The Hoe*, p.12, Johan Scherer, *The Ha*, p. 894.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹Wagner, *Nature in the Mind*, p.182.

³² Joseph Mbwiliza, *The Hoe and the Stick*, p.12.

³³Joseph F. Mbwiliza, *The Hoe*, p.12.

Those who had breached the order would have their hair been removed and in realization of such a side effect, the people would say to the cursed person, ulinakimweshi [you have been cursed by the evil spirits].³⁴ Such a belief had a significant role in conserving riversources and rivers in Buha as they feared to be cursed by the nature spirits of rivers. The fear of being cursed by spiritsibisigo of the rivers made Banyaheru to preservesources of rivers including forests from unnecessary destructions. Such a fear did not confine to the ordinary people, the mwami also feared ibisigo/amashinga.

Michelle Wagner shows how the mwami of Heru Juu feared ibisigo of Bogweriver to the extent that he could neither cross nor look at the river.³⁵ The impression that one gets here is that in their attempt to maintain their religious roles in their kingdoms, abami of Heru offered a model in preserving river resources and from them it was easy for the common Baha to follow the similar practice. This explains why highlands of Buhahad numerous streams that were left undisturbed. The fear of being cursed by ibisigo/amashinga dominated the life of Banyaheru and their kings and was an important step in the conservation of river resources before they were integrated into the world economy. This, in a way, builds on Michelle Wagner's idea of "nature in the mind", David Anderson's "local knowledge" and Christopher Conte's "highland sanctuary" to show how the Banyaheru understood and related to nature on one hand, and the role they played in shaping their relationship with land, groves, rivers and forests.³⁶

5. Indirect Rule, Christianity, and Villagization Program: the fate of Beliefs and Ritualsat Heru

The Germans—the first colonizers of German East Africa/Tanganyika--employed indirect rulein Usukuma, Unyamwezi and Buhaya because of strong resistances. But they employed a direct rule system in Buha because internal wars against Mirambo and Ngoni invasionsweakened Buhamaking it succumb easily to the German colonial rule. In all areas of Buha, the Germans provided chiefs with account books for keeping records of fines and collected taxes from their subjects.³⁷ Their power and survival, therefore, depended on effective handling of the books and not the possession of traditional regalia.³⁸ Unlike the Germans, the British—the second colonizers of Tanganyika--employed an indirect rule system that heavily relied on native authorities. They also introduced a native treasury, a poll tax system, regulations, fines and court fees that eroded the power of the ruler to privately collect revenue from his subjects for his private ends. The payment of salaries to native chiefs affected their position as they could no longer receive donations from their subjects.³⁹ In Buha, hereditary succession was no more observed. A chief was chosen by the colonial state subject to meeting the stated qualifications (education and administrative experience). It was also the colonial state and not the subjects that had authority to depose the chief. He could be deposed for breaking the law and his failure to efficiently rule his subjects.⁴⁰

With the British indirect rule, some individuals who held positions in the kingdom's political structure were not recognized. For instanceheadmen (umularike/abalarike) who acted as intermediaries between inhabitants and the chief were neither recognized nor did they appear on the payroll. Only a few headmen who were in charge of populated areas were paid by the Native treasury. Likewise the umuteko/bateko, who initially distributed land to the people and cooled the country uguhoza with medicine in times of epidemics and disasters, were no longer valued by British authorities and neither were they included on the payroll.⁴¹ The sacred pythons (insato), as symbols of reincarnated ancestors, became almost useless in the minds of the Baha. The people were no longer afraid of killing snakes as was the case in the pre-colonial period.⁴² By the 1950s, traditional ritual practices had tremendously declined in Buha as Johan Scherer made the following observation: The sacred connections of chieftainship, which were probably never particularly developed in Buha, are—where they are not yet extinct—rapidly disappearing.

³⁴ KamegoYagaza and NsegimanaNsago, Interview at HeruJuu village, February 04, 2012.

³⁵ Michelle Wagner, Environment, Community and History, p.181.

³⁶ See Michelle Wagner, Environment, Community and History, p.175, Anderson, Eroding the Commons, p.5, and Christopher A. Conte, Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.16.

³⁷ See for instance,Raphael G.Abrahams, The Political Organisation, p.45.

³⁸ Ibid, p.46.

³⁹ Johan H. Scherer, The Ha, p.884, Raphael Abrahams, The Peoples, pp.56-57.

⁴⁰ Rapahel Abrahams, The Peoples, p.57.

⁴¹ Johan H.Scherer, The Ha, p.884.

⁴² Ibid, p.894.

Most hereditary chiefs no longer adhere to the faith of their ancestors, whereas in the case of appointed chiefs, sacred associations are in the nature of things out of the question. The desiccation of the corpses of Tutsi rulers is by now a thing of the past.⁴³ [Emphasis is mine] Indirect rule system affected ritual practices in Buha. At Heru, the annual ceremonies indorerwazimpeshi or kumpeshi and territorial rituals at vugizo (mukibhirach'ivugizo, and mumaholezo) lost their values. Consequently, Heru, which initially attracted people from far and wide lost its importance as the ceremonies were not being held annually as usual.

Gradually, the efficacy of the king (mwami) and the body of rainmakers (abavurati) started to be challenged as the source of rain, peace, and harvests for all Banyaheru. Furthermore, the installation of the new king/chief (ugusamwa) by mwami's associates in Buha, had to be attended by a representative of the British colonial state.⁴⁴ Kings forced their subjects to pay tax to the British colonial state, work for public labour works and conscripted them for a migrant labour system (manamba). As a result, kings (abami) and not the British authorities were mostly hated by the Banyaheru throughout the British colonial period.⁴⁵ Mwami Joseph Gwassa was one of the kings who represented the interests of the British colonial state in the Heru Kingdom. Although Gwassa earned a commendable reputation from missionaries [as I will discuss in due course] and the British colonial administration in Kasulu, he was not made king by virtue of hereditary succession. The British drove out of power Kanyoni and his position was taken by Gwassa. What made Kanyoni lose his title as a king was the fact that he maintained the traditional roles of the king and most elaborately he was the defender and spokesman of his people.⁴⁶ Thus, Gwassa, with all due support from the British, lacked mass support in ruling the kingdom and throughout his reign he was never accepted by king-makers at Heru. As a colonial chief, Gwassa turned the kingdom into an important labor reservoir for the sisal plantations and mining companies. His relations with the British, recruiting agents, and mining companies enabled him to keep his office as king without possessing the royal insignia that he could not receive from the people.⁴⁷

On the whole, the policy of indirect rule caused frustrations and problems to the British "subjects" in the colonies. Thomas Beidelman's study among the Kaguru in Kilosa district (eastern Tanzania) presents a critique of the system in colonial Tanganyika. Among the critics he raises include, first, under the divide and rule policy, ethnic communities could not be integrated into a nation-state where citizens could hold common values and rights.⁴⁸ Secondly, although the system was said to operate on the basis of traditional forms of authorities, customs and values that were held in many societies, officials who supervised native affairs had a poor understanding of what Africans thought and even wanted to do. In most cases, chiefs enforced rules that were new to their subjects that were, though not often, interpreted in favor of their friends.⁴⁹ Finally, because of widespread poverty among the communities, abuses, bribes, and favoritism of chiefs and Native authorities in general, many Africans lost hope.⁵⁰

⁴³ *ibid*, p.887

⁴⁴ KamegoYagaza, Interview at HeruJuu village, February 04, 2012, Raphael Abrahams, *The Peoples*, pp.56-57, Raphael Abrahams, Political organisation, p.36.

⁴⁵ See Laurenti Sago, "A History of Labour Migration in Kasulu District 1928 -1960" (University of Dar es Salaam: Unpublished MA Dissertation, 1974), "Labour Reservoir: The Kigoma Case" in Walter Rodney, KapepwaTambila and Laurenti Sago, *Migrant Labour in Tanzania during the Colonial Period: Case Studies of Recruitment and Conditions of Labour in the Sisal Industry* (Hamburg: Institut fur Afrika Kunde, 1983)

⁴⁶ Joseph Mbwiliza, *The Origins*, p.38.

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ Thomas O. Beidelman, *The Culture of Colonialism: The Cultural Subjection of Ukaguru* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), p.17.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, pp.20-21.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.22.

Figure 3: Royal Court [Inama] at Heru Juubuilt by the British for Mwamito Exercise his Powers over his People



Taken by the author on July 18, 2015

Besides Indirect rule, the introduction of Christianity into the kingdom of Heru affected indigenous beliefs and ritual practices. The earliest missionaries to set up their mission stations in Heru were the German Lutheran Neukirchen Society. They opened their mission stations at Shunga (1922), and Kihwahuro-Kilungwe (near the chief's headquarters of Heru) in 1935.⁵¹ The second missionaries were Pentecostal Swedish Missionaries who opened one of the earliest mission stations at Msambara (1933) in the eastern parts of the kingdom, and Kasulu town (1970). The third missionaries were the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) who opened their mission stations at Kabanga (1935), Kasumo (1939), Marumba (1945), and Kasulu (1959).⁵² And the last missionaries were the British Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) who, after the end of the Second World War in 1945, took over the mission stations of the German Lutheran Neukirchen at Shunga and Kihwahuro-Kirungwe.⁵³ Following the dominance of Christianity in the kingdom, some converted chiefs (mwami Joseph Gwassa and mwami Theresia Joseph Ndalichako) were buried under Christian burial procedures in 1946 and 1963 respectively. Their corpses were taken into the local church at Heru, attended by Catholic priests and district officials and finally were buried. They were neither wrapped in a skin followed by desiccation, nor were they accompanied by rituals and personal belongings--clothes, drinking vessels, honey, bows and arrows etc., as was the practice for many generations.⁵⁴ Increasingly, with the dominance of Christianity in the kingdom, certain taboos were also challenged as being unrealistic and mystical. Groves that were initially feared to house both nature and ancestral spirits could not be sustained. Missionaries expected converted chiefs to abandon traditional practices in favor of the Christian faith. For instance, Monsignor Birraux expressed his hope in 1933 that mwami Joseph Gwassa would abandon the practices of his ancestors in favor of Catholicism in his kingdom.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Salvatory S. Nyanto, *Coping with the Challenges*, pp.51-52, Paul Ntiruka and Rev. Meshack Shinze, Interview at Kasulu Town, February 06, 2012.

⁵² Salvatory S. Nyanto, *Coping with the Challenges*, pp. 62-63, Hugo Hinfelaar, *Footsteps on the Sands of Time: A Life of Bishop Jan van Sambeek* (Rome: Society of Missionaries of Africa, 2007), p.49.

⁵³ Salvatory S. Nyanto, *Coping with the Challenges*, p.53.

⁵⁴ See for instance Johan H.Scherer, *The Ha*, p. 883

⁵⁵ Francis P.Nolan, *Mission to the Great Lakes: The White Fathers in Western Tanzania, 1878-1978* (Kipalapala: Tanganyika Mission Press, 1978), p.54.

In fact, Gwassa's conversion to Catholicism earned him esteemed respect from the colonial administrators to the extent that J.J.Tawney, the then District Commissioner of Kasulu, described his death as "immensurable loss to his country"⁵⁶

Figure 4: the Roman Catholic Church built by the White Fathers at the Headquarters of Heru Kingdom



Taken by the author on July 18, 2015

Besides indirect rule, the villagization program (1973-1976) affected the course of indigenous beliefs and rituals in the Heru Kingdom. The program was a result of Tanzania's ideology of Ujamaa (Socialism), an element of the Arusha declaration of 1967 that advocated apart from socialism and self-reliance, principles of social and spatial equalities, and communal life and production in settled villages [ujamaa].⁵⁷ Although the government intended to keep its citizens in proper villages, the program nevertheless had far reaching impact on indigenous beliefs and ritual practices. Among the regions that were affected by the program (opereshenivijiji) was Kigoma. The kingdom of Heru in particular was affected by the program in several ways. First, those who lived in the lowlands (mahameni) in Heru were forced to move, the army (TANU Youth League-military wing) set houses on fire, and people were forced to relocate themselves to the highlands at Heru Juu. In so doing, compulsory villagization disturbed the human-nature relationship that had been observed for years at Heru. The sacred groves at vugizo, and kalubhu forests that had a variety of animal species disappeared due to intensive cultivation, and the quest for fire woods and building materials.⁵⁸ The displacement of the people into different Ujamaa villages eroded what used to be an "annual pilgrimage" at Heru Juu for the after harvest annual ceremonies indolegwazimpeshi. Buseko hill that used to be an important site for the after harvest ceremonies became a site for cultivation and settlements. In due course, the importance of ceremonies and royal rituals (tambiko la mwami) remained practices of the past among the people in Heru.⁵⁹ Apart from the disappearance of plant and animal species at Heru, women felt a pinch of compulsory villagization as they walked long distances in search of fire woods. In Kasulu district, few miles from the headquarters of the kingdom, one of the district forest officials, argued that the formation of Zeze Ujamaa Village in the interior of Mkuti [sic] forest reserve affected women who had to walk longer distances to obtain firewood for daily cooking since the area surrounding the village had been left bare, with no forests.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ J.J.Tawney, J.J.Tawney, "Tribal Insignia of Heru Chiefdom of Buha in Kasulu District" Tanganyika Notes and Records (Hereinafter referred to as TNR), 18 (1944), Joseph Mbwiliza, The Origins, p.38.

⁵⁷ See Julius K. Nyerere, "Socialism and Rural Development" in Freedom and Socialism, Selection from Writings and Speeches (Dar es Salaam, Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 359, Phil L. Raikes, "Ujamaa and Rural socialism", Review of African Political Economy, No. 3, (1975), p. 38.

⁵⁸ Kamego Yagaza and Nsegimana Nsago, Interview at Heru Juu village, February 04, 2012.

⁵⁹ Kamego Yagaza, Heru Juu, February 04, 2012.

⁶⁰ Thaddeus Sunseri, *Wielding the Ax: State, Forestry and Conflicts in Tanzania, 1820-2000* (Athens: Athens University Press, 2008), p. 159, See also, M. McCall, "Environmental and Agricultural Impacts of Tanzania's Villagisation Programme"

6. Resilience in Indigenous Beliefs and Ritual Practices at Heru

The impact of Christianity, indirect rule, and the villagization program did of course alter the human-nature relationship in the kingdom and other resultant impacts as elaborated in the previous section. However, it would be unfair to assert the claim that the three led to absolute decline of indigenous beliefs and ritual practices. While acknowledging the fact that there was a relative decline, the Banyaheru, like other communities, did not abandon indigenous beliefs and ritual practices wholeheartedly in the face of Christianization, indirect rule, and the villagization program. One of the illustrative cases in response to Christianization was the conversion of mwami Joseph Gwassa. Monsignor Joseph Birraux was convinced by Gwassa who, from the beginning of his conversion, was determined to become a committed Christian in future.⁶¹ However, contrary to the Bishop's expectation after his baptism, Gwassa did not end ritual practices in the kingdom. Although he was never given the ceremonial spear as a sign of people's allegiance to him, the keeper of the royal spear—presumably of Nkatula's lineage—kept them active in his kingdom and ritual practices still bound the people together.⁶² Mkalinga, the great copper spear of Heru, remained an important royal symbol. It was difficult to see the spear as it was always preserved in a keeper's hut. No European visitor was henceforth allowed to see it unless he/she had qualified before the eyes of the keeper.⁶³

More importantly, the annual thanksgiving ceremonies *indolegwazimpeshi* were retained upon which *tambiko la mwami* (ritual for the king) was invariably held at Vugizo in the remaining three days of the great ceremony. Notwithstanding mwami's conversion and the establishment of the Catholic Mission station at the heart of the kingdom, the ceremonies still attracted the majority of the Baha in June and July after the harvest season. While missionaries viewed the two [sacred groves and the ceremony] as stumbling blocks towards the Christianization of the Banyaheru, the majority Christians including the mwami found it difficult to disentangle from the practices of their ancestors.⁶⁴ This partly explains why convergent-divergent tendencies of converts and the king dominated the day to day undertakings of Banyaheru. On Sundays, the mwami together with Banyaheru converts attended church services at Heru but on regular days they kept the old practice that in turn frustrated the White Fathers' efforts.⁶⁵ One of the recorded examples of missionaries' frustrations in converting the natives into Christianity comes from Ufipa in South-west Tanzania. Kathleen Smythe and Francis Nolan present Fr. Dromaux whose several attempts of converting the native Fipa ended into personal frustrations: I go there accompanied by some native children and carrying a little salt or tobacco. On my arrival, I invite the people to come together to hear the words of God and I sit down on the shade of a tree or hut Sometimes I speak, sometimes I ask questions. One of the children I have brought distributes salt, another tobacco.

The rest of the salt is distributed at the end of the lesson.⁶⁶ The results, as Fr. Dromaux concluded, were frustrating, "I find more disappointments than conversion." Fr. Dromaux's conclusion demonstrates that indigenous beliefs and practices presented a more formidable challenge despite countless efforts to attract the natives into the new faith. Likewise, at Heru, elders, kings (*abami*) and *batekodid* did not abandon wholeheartedly the old practices in favor of Christianity.

in J.I. Clarke et. al. eds., *Population and Development Projects in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, H. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History, The Case of Tanganyika 1850*, (Dar es Salaam, MkukinaNyota Publishers, 1996), p. xxxvii.

⁶¹ Francis P. Nolan, *Mission*, p.54.

⁶² See for instance, Joseph Mbwiliza, *The Origins*, p.38 and J.J. Tawney, *Tribal Insignia of Heru*, 1944. Mwami Gwassa was made king by the British to meet their demands. He was not crowned by virtue of hereditary succession. According to J.J. Tawney, the royal insignia of Heru were kept by Nkatula's lineage. They were exposed only during the annual ceremonies *indolegwazimpeshi* and during the installation of the new chief [*ugusamwa*] that, however, did not appear during Gwassa's installation.

⁶³ J.J. Tawney, *Tribal Insignia*, p.83, W.B. Tripe, "Tribal Insignia of Heru", *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 16 (1943), p.2, Gilbert C. K. Gwassa and Joseph F. Mbwiliza, "Social Production, Symbolism and Ritual in Buha, 1750-1900" *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 79 & 80 (1976), p.12.

⁶⁴ Kamego Yagaza, Mzee Selemani Kichuzi, and Nsengimana Nsago, Interview at Heru Juu Village, February 04, 2012.

⁶⁵ Kamego Yagaza, *Heru Juu*

⁶⁶ Kathleen R. Smythe, "The Creation of a Fipa Society: Conversion in Nkasi District, Ufipa" in Thomas Spear and Isaria Kimambo, eds., *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford: James Currey; Athens: Ohio University Press; Dar es Salaam: MkukinaNyota, 1999), pp.138-139. Francis P. Nolan, *Mission*, p.18.

They still believed that missionaries could ruin the society's culture, beliefs and practices.⁶⁷ Hence it was easier said than done for the majority to abandon the old practices and turn their attention to the Christian God. Consequently, when missionaries prohibited converts from dual practices, the reply was always undemanding. One of the informants, Kamego Yagaza, recalled people's response to missionaries saying "None tusengeikim anachom wikanisaimizimu yabasokuruntiyiz akutugora? njanyetusengevyose." [If we worship God in church, shall we not be troubled by the spirits of the forefathers? We would rather worship the two].⁶⁸ Another aspect that emerged in response to Christianity was the development of secret societies especially *ibhishegu* and *ukubandwa/ imbandwacults* at Heru. Men and women who were possessed by nature spirits *sibhiyaga* not only held ritual ceremonies of healing but also regarded ceremonies as rites of passage. To maintain the secrecy of their ritual practices, *imbandwa* men and women spoke the language that they could understand themselves. They were also not allowed to disclose participants' names *amazina ayibhishegu/ibhishegu* to exclude foreigners and intruders from ritual.⁶⁹ This explains why lack of knowledge of secret societies prompted missionaries to claim that men and women *ibhishegu* were predominantly promiscuous in their major ceremonies.⁷⁰ However, such a claim has no evidence in the existing literature. What accounts for missionaries' negative perceptions was the fact that members of secret societies employed unfamiliar languages and never disclosed their names in the public in order to disguise their message.

As it was in Christianity, secret societies responded to the formation of royal court--under the umbrella of indirect rule's Native Authorities--that heightened pre-existing social inequalities between men and women at Heru. Initially, the institution of *bateko* and councils of elders [*inama/intahe*] consisted of men of all lineages and made decision on behalf of all members of the village. Women, notwithstanding being wise were disqualified from village councils. Though village councils symbolized kinship organization yet they acted as organs of men who were, in principle, property owners of the society. Women's ambitions to voice their concerns in the councils were challenged by the so called "wise men" of the village.⁷¹ Such male dominated councils were maintained in the Native Authorities during the indirect rule that incidentally were male-dominated too. To demonstrate their dissatisfactions over men and women in the Kingdom of Heru, there emerged the cult of *dyangombe* that, apart from healing and other ritual practices, distinguished itself as a protest movement against social inequalities and injustices to women.⁷² The above exposé of *dyangombe* as a protest movement against social inequalities and injustices to women in the Heru kingdom supports Iris Berger's contention that *dyangombe* cult, like other *Cwezi/Chwezi* cults of the interlacustrine region, "provided women with both a sphere from male-focused ancestor veneration and a 'counter-hegemonic voice control' over their own reproduction"⁷³ Berger's depiction of counter-hegemonic voice has, however, raised critiques in the recent scholarship of *Chwezi/Kubandwa* cults as to whether they were entirely dominated by female initiates and idioms.⁷⁴

While acknowledging the critics, pieces of oral and written evidence from Heru find Berger's argument plausible in demonstrating the emergence of *dyangombecult* as a form of counter-hegemonic movement that women expressed their discontents against male-dominated systems of power. Male-dominance at Heru should be understood as a historical phenomenon as it was rooted from pre-existing village councils and remained unchanged during the British Native authorities.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Mzee Kamego Yagaza, Interview at Heru Juu village, February 04, 2012.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Scherer, *The Ha*, p. 891

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 892. In the northern kingdoms of Buha, *ibhishegu* were commonly known as *abachwezi/ibichwezi*. Despite the different names, their nature and character were the same throughout Buha.

⁷¹ Joseph Mbwiliza, *The Hoe and the Stick*, p. 11, Paul Bahinda, Interview at Kigoma, February 01, 2012.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Iris Berger, *Religion and Resistance: East African Kingdoms in the pre-colonial period* Tervuren, Belgique: Musée Royale d'Afrique Centrale, *Annales Série In-8^o-Sciences Humaines-N^o 105*, 1983), "Fertility as power: spirit mediums, priestesses and the pre-colonial state in the interlacustrine East Africa, in David Anderson and D. Johnson, eds., *Revealing Prophets: prophecy in eastern African History* (Oxford: James Currey, 1995), pp. 65-81. See also Ivan. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: a study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 26.

⁷⁴ Shane Doyle, "The *Cwezi-Kubandwa* Debate: Gender, Hegemony and Pre-Colonial Religion in Bunyoro, Western Uganda", *Africa* 77 (4) (2007), p. 567.

⁷⁵ Mbwiliza, *The Origins*, p. 38, Kamego Yagaza and Nsengimana Nsago, Interview at Heru Juu village, February 02, 2012, Paul Bahinda, Interview at Kigoma Town, February 01, 2012.

To borrow James Scott's words, I argue that dyangombe cult of Heru invariably functioned as a "weapon of the weak" upon which women could express their dissatisfaction against social inequalities in the society. It also served as an arena to negotiate their reproductive and matters related to health and healing.⁷⁶ Apart from Native Authorities, the villagization program prompted several responses to human-nature disturbances in Buha. One of the responses that the Banyaheru undertook was the building of shrines indaro for ancestral veneration. The rationale for building shrines in new Ujamaa villages was twofold. First, they bound together members of households and spirits of ancestors in their abandoned settlements [mahameni/mumatongo] that could not physically be transported. Secondly, shrines meant that ancestral spirits [imizimuyabhasegekuru] would still interfere in the day to day undertakings of household members in the new Ujamaa villages.⁷⁷ Such a practice was not confined to the kingdom of Heru. Rather, it was a widespread phenomenon in Muhambwe and Buyungu kingdoms—in northern Buha—where the Baha were also forcefully moved into Ujamaa villages. This is demonstrated by Julie Weiskopf's study about resettling Kibondo that shows how the program deprived the Baha of Muhambwe kingdom from their ancestors by living into Ujamaa villages. In course of maintaining their relationships with their departed ancestors, they started "planting mirumba trees that would make it like the first place....where [they] built ndaroo of the ancestors"⁷⁸

Elsewhere in Tanzania, where people were forced to live in Ujamaa villages, shrines were also constructed to maintain communities' relations with their ancestors in the abandoned settlement. In his work among the Iraqw of northern Tanzania, Yusufu Lawi shows two developments. First he shows how villagization changed the established practices of controlling ecology to ensure their survival.⁷⁹ Secondly, he shows how environmental ideas and beliefs on important forces especially the land based spirits (theneetlang'w) determined the selection for new places to live. Such a balance was disturbed after the operation vijiji; neither were the people given an opportunity to determine their neighbors, nor did they consult the neetlang'w to select where to live.⁸⁰ Likewise, James Giblin's study of Handeni shows how the villagization program changed Zigua's relationship with their ancestors following the disappearance of matambiko (rituals). They opposed the program arguing that the government would fail to provide security and prosperity as did their ancestors.⁸¹ These few examples provide a clear demonstration of continuities in beliefs and ritual practices in the post-villagization notwithstanding the nature and character of the program.

Conclusion

The relationship between beliefs and ritual practices is important to the understanding of environmental consciousness in the kingdom of Heru in western Buha (Kasulu district). The relationship between the two also serves as a mirror to reflect the extent to which the Banyaheru responded to the challenges of the environment and secondly, it tells how the people in the kingdom interacted with forces of nature (nature and ancestral spirits, and deities). Although the Banyaheru consciously or unconsciously devised taboos and norms to maintain the harmonious relationship with nature, eventually beliefs and ritual practices became tools of environmental consciousness and conservation.

With "nature in the mind" as Michelle Wagner has argued, the Baha of Heru strove in as much as possible to maintain the human-nature relationship. However, such a human-nature relationship relatively declined following the introduction of Christianity, the imposition of the policy of indirect rule, and the villagization program. While there was a relative decline of beliefs and ritual practices, communities in the Heru kingdom responded in various ways against the introduction of Christianity, the imposition of the British indirect rule system, and the villagization program.

⁷⁶James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁷⁷Kamego Yagaza and Selemani Kichuzi, Interview at Heru Juu, February 02, 2012.

⁷⁸ Julie Weiskopf, "Resettling Buha: A Social History of Resettled Communities in Kigoma Region, Tanzania, 1933-1975" (University of Minnesota: Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011), p. 288. Mirumba (imivumu) are common in Buha. They were considered to be abode of spirits. This explains why shrines (indaro) were always built under imivumu tree.

⁷⁹Yusufu Q. Lawi, Tanzania's Operation Vijiji and Local Ecological Consciousness: The Case of Eastern Iraqwland, 1974-1976 in *Journal of African History*, 48 (2007), p. 82.

⁸⁰ibid.

⁸¹James Giblin, *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp.182-183.

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