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The Contempt of Public Property: the Datooga Salt Fracas and the Resistance against Colonial Definition of Property in Central Tanzania (1923-1927)

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the Datooga resistance to the British land law as announced by the Land Ordinance in 1923. The discussion centres itself in the provocation that the law implied and commanded on the local Datooga's ownership and control of the natural resources within the jurisdiction of the chief. The Datooga as shown in the paper were probably the first to openly resist the public ownership of resources as announced by the Ordinance, because for the Datooga the land resources, particularly the salt deposits from Balangida Lalu or any other that fell within the reach and borders of their chief's power were completely Datooga. The pinnacle of this contradiction is whether local chiefs in colonial Tanganyika understood the limits of what the British had claimed to offer to the local chiefs or they sometimes needed to resist what they considered undesirable situation. The salt fracas in Mbulu district that the paper discusses is an indicator of the irony of colonialism that offered local chiefs political power which the recipients could not use beyond the colonial framework.

KEY WORDS: colonial order, Datooga chiefs, ethnic identity, salt fracas

Introduction

The histories of public and private properties are still drawing many interests from across academic disciplines. Discussions on these two aspects range from rights of individuals to property, the evolution of property relations and its execution within the national parameters.

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While on the other end, public property is often presented by economists as inefficient due to rent dissipation, lack of direct ownership until they are captured and unproductive struggle to tame them (ÖSTROM 1999:334-335). In some instances, the common property is presented as a pre-capitalist dispensation and allocation of property which means that the more societies become complex and capitalistic the more they throw away the common practice.

In the context of Tanzania, the debate about the two aspects has more historical conglomerations. This is because of the historical circumstances regarding socialism and the fundamentals of *ujamaa* (Swahili word that means shared together) which cherished the traditional family through shared public property in what Nyerere called it basic goods of life (NYERERE 1968:106) was not completely unproductive. In the Tanzanian case, the difference between the two especially in the postcolonial era is possibly slim and controversial.

But taking this subject in the spectrum of colonial era, the conception put forward by Östrom possibly fits the British colonial context. The public and private properties are not without conflictual meanings. In the context of the British or any colonial order, tribalism as a vocabulary was introduced into the mind of the Africans and most importantly with communal identity (PARSONS 2012:496). In that regard, public property meant not individual but state owned. So while private property was somehow clearly delineated, the public nature of it was not. This paper tries to disentangle how such conflicting phenomena did also ingrain the social and political life of the Datooga in what was called by the British the salt fracas. I address this problem from a wider British establishment in Tanganyika in the early 1920s and the local/indigenous response to it. Lastly, I address also the subject of colonial resistance that picks it away from the always common understanding of African colonial resistance that sees the African chiefs/sultan as safeguarding their political interests in terms of rights to remain leaders of a local community, while economically, such interests would range from trading monopoly and worries against new competitors.

The Datooga and their neighbours: the creation of tribal Territories in Central Tanzania and its limits in the colonial contexts

The Datooga (Tatog, Taturu, Datoga) are communities which comprise more than 12 subgroups of the Datooga (*emoojiga* Datooga meaning the community of Datooga) who settle in northern, north western and central parts of Tanzania. They are specifically settled in

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modern days Manyara, Singida, Tabora and Mara regions (MHAJIDA 2019:48; BLYSTAD 2000:48; BIHARIOVÁ 2016:46). The community has such diverse sub groups which made some colonial sociologists to mistakenly list them as independent tribes (GULIVER 1959:74). The biggest subgroups of the Datooga are the Barbaig (Mang'ati) who are estimated to be 100,000 (BLYSTAD 2000:48). Others are the Brediga who settle along the Wembere River in western Tanzania (MHAJIDA 2019:42; BIHARIOVÁ 2016:48), the Rotigeng who are considered remnants of the Maasai raids of the 1830s and 1860s and live south Serengeti in Mara region. Many of the Rotigeng communities were uprooted in the Serengeti by Operation *Vijiji* (Swahili word for hamlets) in 1974 (MHAJIDA 2019:181). The Taturu are mostly in Singida, Tabora and Shinyanga. In Manyara there are still scattered Datooga groups who identify themselves as Gisamjeng, Dororajeg, Isemjang, Nyanyewda, Bisiyeda, Daragwajega and Gidang'odiga (BLYSTAD 2000:47; INFORMANT 2:07.01.15). Some other Datooga subgroups like the Barakushega and Sisiga in Dodoma, have completely vanished while only a few Gogo people in the villages around Kintinku and villages around in the north of Dodoma still trace their origin to the Datooga migrants of the 19th century; though most of them have not retained traces of Datooga culture (INFORMANT 2:07.01.15).

The Datooga mentioned above have had a long and tumultuous history. Their social and political landscapes in the last two centuries have been volatile and affected by the ruptures of the 19th century (SHETLER 2006). Part of the ruptures was the Datooga violent encounters with Arab and Swahili slave traders and later colonial activities (BURTON 1860; SHETTLER 2006; INFORMANT 1 2015). There is one specific reason why central Tanzania was also one of the affected regions. The effects are a mixture of constructive tendencies of the ruptures on one hand, and destruction on the other. As Mathias Mnyampala correctly says, by the late 19th century, the region was sparsely populated, so it was considered by many communities as a place of refuge from violence or any other displacement factors (MNYAMPALA – MADDOX 1995:43-44). So the savannas of central Tanzania ultimately became sanctuaries for communities especially those running from the Arab slave raiders in western Tanzania and Maasai raids. This is the reason why ultimately the region became a mosaic of diverse communities of the Bantu, the Cushitic, Nilotes and Bushnoids (LUSEKELO 2016:5; MHAJIDA 2019:59; MNYAMPALA – MADOX 1995:44). According to Mnyampala, Ugogo and the entire central Tanzania region, communities like Wagogo, Nyaturu and Nyiramba who occupy the region today are recent social and cultural units who resulted from the 19th century blending of cultures of the Wanyamwezi, Kimbu and Hehe (MNYAMPALA – MADOX 1995: 44; SHORTER 1968:240).

In addition to the Arab, Swahili and the general Trans Indian traders, the role of what Becker has called the politics of big men of the 19th century is also decisive in the making up of

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ethnic regions and territories in the region (BECKER 2004:6). Picking up from these drivers of change in the region, we should acknowledge the roles of Chief Mirambo and the resulting succession conflicts after the death of Mkasiwa in 1972 which resulted into the expulsion of Nyungu ya Mawe (the name means a pot of stone) to Ukimbu. This disrupted the Wakimbu and further pulled the war beyond the Unyamwezi to Singida and Ugogo (KIMAMBO 1969:72; SHORTER 1968: 239). In addition to the Nyamwezi factor, the Arab wars had similar consequences. One exemplary case was captured by Richard Burton while crossing the region in 1860, where he tells of the enterprising Wataturu around Tura, whom he saw with asses with "neat saddle-bags of zebra skin." Burton adds that this party "brought calabash or monkey-bread flour in this country, as in Ugogo, a favourite article of consumption and a little coarse salt" (BURTON 1860:220). For the Datooga, the trade in salt (processed either by drying mud from a *mbuga* (a blackish soil which is very common in the savanna plains in Tanzania) or by extracting it from Lake Balangida Lalu (Eyasi) in exchange for *holcus* grass and beads was not new (BURTON 1860:221). It is important to note that the participation of the Datooga in the trade, whether local or within the Trans-Indian Ocean trade, was primarily scant. Datooga groups remained on the periphery of trade, where the center was controlled by the Nyamwezi and their Arab allies, whose control of trade in Tabora had made the town a metropole of west and central Tanzania. Regarding the negative side of the trade, the trade brought break downs all weaved within the politics of big me. Burton further observed that:

"This wild pastoral people were formerly rich in flocks and herds… about five years ago, however, they were persuaded by Msimbira, a chief of Usukuma to aid him against his rival Mpagamo, who had called in the Arabs, as has been related, were worsened in the field, and the Wataturu suffered severe losses in cattle" (BURTON 1860:220).

The Datooga and Iraqw elders retold the same story differently, referring to those recruits of Msimbira as people who were involved in "the Datooga Rascal Domain" (MBULU DISTRICT BOOK 1930). According to the narrative, by 1852, the Arab traders had established formidable trading and political power in the region, particularly in Tabora. Nervous about Mirambo's growing power and the threat to Arab trading interests, the Arabs entered a coalition with a local Sukuma leader Mpagamo. Subsequently, Mirambo formed similar alliances with other ethnic groups in an attempt to bolster his competitive advantage against the Arabs. This alliance seeking behavior among leading enterprising communities forced immediate communities and those that were at the periphery like the Gisamjeng – Datooga to be drawn into the politics of self–made traders or power brokers (BECKER 2004:4-6). The recruitment of the Gisamjeng by Msimbira in the war against Mirambo led to a loss of cattle by the Gisamjeng. This event is also presented by the Gisamjeng as a lie that

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lured them into a complex war that impacted their population. According to the Gisamjeng, the "rascal domain that misled the tribe and lured them with lies to trek to Tabora, there most of them died" can be historically verified (MBULU DISTRICT BOOK VOL. 3 1930). While the "rascal domains" motivations and the trick remains unexplored in its details, what can be said is that the conflict was disastrous for the Datooga groups involved. Not only were they decimated, but "the remnants of this unhappy race drifted once more to Mbulu, hungry and poor" (MBULU DISTRICT BOOK VOL. 3 1930), they also became an increasingly marginalised group fighting to cement their own identity against other larger and more powerful ethnic establishments.

Identity, territory and colonial encounter

Three things were very important as a result of the 19th century circumstances. One was the fact that the century brought the formation of ethnic and language groups in central Tanzania. The Datooga as migrants from Serengeti transported their identities and group consciousness into Singida as complete and mature (KIDAMALA – DANIELSON 1961:67-68; LINDOSTROEM n.d. 21-22). Secondly, the Datooga and the Maasai apart from the above forces seemed to have produced a remarkable contribution in the formation of territorial consciousness among the people in central and northern Tanzania. The Maasai wars in the 19th century assisted in the formation of ethnicity, for instance among the Wagogo by the late 19th century "all young people in Ugogo spoke Maasai language and those who could not were laughed at" (MNYAMPALA – MADOX 1995:44). Similarly, Kidamala observed the same trends on the influence of the Datooga to the Nyiramba who taught them the art of war and the value of land and leadership (KIDAMALA 1961:68). Thirdly, by 1900, each society in central Tanzania was at least geographically settled (MNYAMPALA – MADDOX 1995:43). In this regard, the German colonial establishment recognized this ethnic alignment and produced boundaries between regions, districts and villages according to ethnic settlements. But these boundaries were defined by geographical features like rocks, mountains/hills, trees, rivers and any promontory features of any significance. Many German colonial arrangements had such reports on ethnic boundaries from 1911 (TNA: G36/4), most of them constructed arbitrarily, one of the German reports states the following:

Now the whole district is divided into jumbes, which are grouped according to the individual branches. In many cases, the individual tribes are divided into several jumbe companies.

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Among the jumbe are the Wanyampara, which include a small number of huts (TNA: G31/163).

The British conquered Mbulu from the retreating German soldiers in 1916 (MHAJIDA 2019:79). The British occupied Mbulu largely already organized within the Germany colonial administrative framework. So the first Datooga chief was Malomba. He accidentally acquired the position, when the rest of other Datooga were far from the reach of the colonizers. There was another important thing that gave Malomba advantage over the rest, he stayed close to the northern trade route to the Great Lakes, so had contacts with Swahili traders and so spoke some Swahili. So when the Germans came to the area, Malomba was quickly spotted and was given a status of a chief. Though Malomba was publicly denounced by the mainstream Datooga as illegitimate instead they considered his rival Gazeri the father of Gishingaded as lawfully jumbe. So throughout German colonial times, the Datooga had two chiefs, a pro – government chief (*chief ya serkali*) and the pro-Datooga, (*chief ya Datooga*) (TNA: Accession 69, file P.51). The two opposed each other on many issues especially pertaining to German colonial interests and those of the Datooga. Against all odds, Malomba persevered until he passed the banner of chiefship to his son Gidahoda.

Basically, there was a significant difference between the ethnic geographical consciousness that was acquired by the Datooga and other communities in the 19th century and the one that the colonial establishment brought in. Colonialism meant a total colonization of land and people and their political jurisdictions. The first tension that the British colonial system extensively wrestled with in the Datooga country was an attempt to resist the colonial exclusive rights on land matters. The early protest against the colonial definition of the public property was led by Chief Gidahoda Malomba of the Datooga – Barabaig in 1923. His protest started as irritations that came from the Rangi people from the neighbouring District of Kondoa. Chief Gidahoda claimed that the Rangi people, when entering his country for honey expeditions, also brought tsetse fly. The chief also accused the Rangi of burning grass, which was precious for the survival of their cattle. The following letter from Chief Gidahoda summarizes the alleged sources of conflict:

"I am informing you through this letter or letting you know. Now, I tell you this, the day 19.9.23, I have seen something bad in my country which was brought from the direction of your country. This thing is fire. Your people have burnt down grass in the direction of Akida Binde Changaha, and the fire went uncontrollably to Balagda Dalala (Sic.), and many

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bomas[1] *have been burnt out. So our cattle do not have anything to eat, all the grass is gone. You know our power we Mangati dwells in cattle, our food come from them, and our water is cattle. My people are in trouble; their bomas have been burnt down. Our cattle are also in trouble. I am in the process of migrating from here, but I know if I dare move to your country you will arrest me and all of my property will be confiscated. And if I migrate to Singida, they will imprison me as well and my property will be taken. Now, tell me if I must come to you or what? Because in my country there is no more fodder left for my cattle. Now look for the man who set these fires, because he has brought war of fire and is expelling me from my own country. Now my decision is this, tell your people that they are not allowed to come for salt nor come for honey expeditions in my forest. If I see your people in my country, I will arrest them and please don't be annoyed*[2]*"* (Emphasis is added by the author) (TNA, accession 69, file P.51: Jumbe Gidahoda's letter to Jumbe Salimu Kimolo of Sikole (Kondoa).

This letter contains serious warnings and definitely more lingering aspects which need to be discussed in detail. Firstly, the chief Gidahoda wrote through a secretary and unconventionally sent the letter directly to the "aggressor" community. In doing this, the chief Gidahoda affirmed the seriousness of the matter. And this had another implication on the Datooga, Gidahoda exerted his power as both *chifu ya* Datooga and chief *ya serkali,* but he did so without realising his had created bigger implications especially as far as the British colonial order was concerned. Secondly, the letter was the first indicator of the growing disturbance and anxiety of the Datooga concerning the infiltration of other communities into their country. The consistent usage of the word *nchi yangu* (my country*)* from the local chiefs' point of view completely opposed the order of the colonial authorities regarding common property. Therefore, Gidahoda's letter showed the predicament of the Datooga as a result of the colonial "tribal" border regulations. The border regulations created uneasy relations with neighbouring communities in the three Districts of Mbulu, Singida and Kondoa. As both the chief and spokesperson of his people, Gidahoda defined the economy of his people (their power) as basically pastoralist. Therefore, whoever attacked the survival of the cattle also attacked the entire Datooga community. The last observation from the letter

1 This is normally a household of a Datooga or any other pastoralist which has a collection of houses or just a single house where such house(s) are attached to a cattle kraal made of thorns or poles of different trees. In colonial Tanganyika, a boma was also a popular name for the district or government offices.

2 TNA, accession 69, file P.51: Jumbe Gidahoda's letter to Jumbe Salimu Kimolo of Sikole (Kondoa). (Translated from its original Swahili version).

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concerned the tribal space and limitations that each "tribal" chief was bound to protect or expand.

After the letter had been sent to Sultan Salimu Kimolo of Sikole in Kondoa without going through the District Administrative Officers of the two Districts, the immediate effect was evident. The first reaction of the Acting Chief Secretary of the colony recommended to the Provincial Commissioner that the Warangi should be ordered not to go into the Datooga country for honey (TNA 69, FILE P.51). The Warangi were therefore prohibited from honey expeditions in the Datooga country. Although the direct letter among local African chiefs such as the one by Gidahoda was rebuked and later was punished by the District Officer in Mbulu, this opened for more complex agitations from the Datooga community as they unfolded their resistance against the common property.

The salt dispute expanded the magnitude of the conflict between the Datooga and the neighbouring communities and at the same time increased tensions with the British colonial government.[3] While the honey expedition issue was quickly resolved, the salt lingered on. The difficulties that surfaced concerned how ethnic territories were superficially defined in British colonial eyes, which created tensions between the ethnic collective/common property as opposed to the public (government) sphere.

The problem was mainly on the lake Balangda Lalu (Lake Eyasi). The salt from Lake Balangda Lalu located in the Datooga country was a source of trade to Nyiramba, Nyaturu and other neighbouring communities. Juhani Koponen suggests that the salt in the Eyasi Lake was a huge source of a pre-colonial trade network that attracted not only the surrounding communities but also people from as far as eastern Nyanza. The argument that these communities paid a certain fee to the Datooga to access the salt and then used it as a trading commodity is not farfetched[4] (KOPONEN 1988:234). Apart from indicating the true scale of the demand for salt, a revealing article by H.S. Senior on the salt issue in Lake Balangda Lalu written in 1938 does not mention the involvement of the Datooga. Senior shows that the salt acquired from Eyasi was a huge asset to the communities involved:

"To give some idea of the numbers who make the journey: fourteen hundred people were seen, some going to, and some coming from the lake, in two days. It is estimated that at least

[3] TNA, accession 69, file P.51: Tatog Affray.

[4] The Nyaturu were apparently mentioned as key salt traders in pre-colonial central Tanzania, taking possibly their sources of salt from the Datooga country. See for instance KOPONEN 1988a:234.

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thirty thousand people make the journey to Nyaranja (Eyasi) annually from the various areas of the [sic.] Shinyanga, Kwimba, Mwanza and Maswa Districts" (SENIOR 1938:87).

Senior's observation summarises the Chief Gidahoda's argument of the true influence of salt in the economy of the Datooga and the rest of the communities. As the Sukuma popular adage says "he who has salt never starves" (SENIOR 1938:90). Since this resource was within Datooga country, the Datooga believed it to be their own gifts from God to enable them buy *matama* (cereals), axes, cooking pots and other needs. The number of people who converged around tha Balangda Lalu lake had established very elaborate exchange relations powered by the salt from Datooga land. This fact shows that since the pre-colonial period, salt was a key resource. The Datooga maintained "that no one ever obtained salt free until the establishment of European administration" (TNA 69, FILE P.51). It appears that the salt problem was also a contentious issue in the German colonial period, although the tensions are not brought to attention in many of the sources that I encountered.

Examining the protests expressed in a letter by Sultan Gidahoda, we can see that the underlying problem for the Datooga-Rangi conflict was not about who owned the salt deposits. Rather, why should one harvest the salt without payment and acknowledgement of the authority behind? The Datooga refused to agree that the salt from the lake that had been within their surroundings for centuries was now public property- as defined by the Datooga, "free for everybody" (TNA 69, FILE P.51) and that they had no control over this resource. But the public property domain was not a British invention in Tanganyika. The German colonial government established the Crown land-Ordinance in November 26th 1895.[5] On the British side, the Land Ordinance (Cap. 68 of the Laws) copied the above-mentioned German law in its form and contents. Its definition of the land tenure insisted that:

"under this ordinance the whole of the lands in the Territory are declared to be public lands under the control and subject to the disposition of the Governor to be held and administered for the use of the common benefit, direct or indirect, of the natives of the Territory, but the validity of any title to land or interest therein lawfully acquired before the date of the Ordinance is not affected thereby. On the enactment of this Ordinance the German law and

[5] *Schriftverkehr in Landangelegenheiten, provisorischer Militärbezirk* Kilimatinde. Part of the Ordinance reads: "In respect to property claims or otherwise material claims are private or juristically persons, chiefs or other native communities could legally claim…all land within German East Africa is to be ownerless Crown land." TNA, G 55/ 64

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practice as to the granting of public land cease to be in force in the Territory" (TNA 1934:26).

It is not a coincidence that the Ordinance appeared in 1923 and the Datooga were among the first to resist its definition of public sphere. This refusal was witnessed two months after Chief Gidahoda's angry letter: that the Datooga began to arrest several Rangi and Nyiramba going for salt as they had warned in the letter. Some of these salt harvesters were allegedly molested while others became victims of a Datooga culture of *kufaa Umardadi* (TNA 69, FILE P.51).[6] Nine days after the letter was issued, the Datooga found the Wanyiramba at the salt site and restrained them from taking the salt. In addition to this, they reportedly "t[ook] from one to three men or women where they were well fed and kept the night" (TNA 69, FILE P.51). This was the beginning of accomplishing the *kufaa Umardadi*. The kidnapped Wanyiramba were told to pass over a beam placed across the doorway of their host homes, and then water was sprinkled over their chests. The crossing of the beam symbolised that they were going backwards from adulthood into a childhood state (TNA 69, FILE P.51). The British administrators added that after this symbolic act, these motivated Datooga youths took about 23 Wanyiramba to their Chief, possibly thinking they would be cheered for what they had done. Instead, the Chief gave them lashes. It seems that chief Gidahoda was not impressed by the public spectacle that the Datooga youths were making of the whole issue. A few days later on November 6th 1923, a group of more than 100 Wanyiramba men and women going for salt in the Datooga country were caught by surprise by a similar number of Datooga men who inquired why were they there. Part of this story was told by the administrative officer for Mkalama, Kondoa-Irangi Perham, as follows:

"[They] approached them and asked them by whose order they were coming to dig salt. They replied that they were come (Sic.) at their own bidding and asked "have we not permission to dig salt?" The Tatoga replied 'it is our order that you may not dig salt'. The Tatoga were armed with spears and sticks and were seem (Sic.) to strike several women with the latter.

[6] *Kufaa umardadi* in the today standard Swahili is *kuvaa umaridadi*, and this means wearing smart. This culture was embedded in the capture of a supposedly enemy neighbour; its meaning in the context of 1923 is very obscure. According to the British officers, the tradition then was taking the latter to one's *boma*, and "on arrival to their houses they made the Wanyiramba pass over a beam placed across the door way and water was sprinkled over their chests, this I understand to be the old native custom when they kidnapped people." Then the captured were fed and after few days of traditional performances the victims were let free and accompanied back to their homes. The culture therefore gave those captors something to celebrate, wear ornaments such as bracelets, beads and others as a realization for having an adult 'child.'

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No one was, apparently seriously hurt. The Tatoga also threw salt in the eyes of the Aniramba. The aniramba had not yet obtained their salt and were prevented from getting any. They were split into separate small groups and led away captive by the Tatoga" (TNA 69, FILE P.51).

The assault made some Nyiramba and Rangi avoid the salt expeditions in the Datooga *nchi*. When they went on salt expeditions, they had to be covered by a government escort. At this juncture, the Datooga relations with their neighbours slowly became difficult. Oral accounts collected around this time did not reveal an outright state of violence but rather showed the beginning of fearful co-existence among the ethnic groups. What changed the situation was the reaction by the District colonial administration. The British colonial officers, who represented the public space as enshrined in the 1923 Land Ordinance, clashed with the Datooga who were ingrained within "tribal" institutions and authority. From the Datooga point of view, colonial maps, which were handed down from the German period, represented real borders that delineated the public and their own spaces. The Datooga understood public to mean territories that were outside ethnic spheres. It was therefore inconceivable for the Datooga that such maps, which defined what was theirs, were openly defied by the same people who introduced them as guides to the boundaries of economic space. It was a fallacy to them that salt within their borders was public but the land was Datooga. The multiple meanings of *nchi*, its borders and power over its resources were at the heart of the controversies. As a way of enforcing the British understanding of public space, they made sure that the salt matter was dealt with severity. Following the Datooga actions, it was estimated that between 70 and 80 Datooga pastoralists were arrested and later fined 3 heifers each (a total of 210 or 240 collected cattle). Some were confined in garrisons in Mbulu and a threat of a more severe punishment if such "offences" "were repeated was communicated to the Datooga" (TNA 69, FILE P.51).

Apart from the punishments described above, the British colonial officers wanted to find a lasting solution to the salt matter. Colonial administrators argued that "large parties of natives from Kondoa-Irangi and Mkalama come yearly to the lake; recently the Stock Inspector in Mbulu reported that on 2 days while he was at the lake some 500 Wanyaramba per day were taking salt" (TNA 69, FILE P.51). After issuing a verdict that punished the Datooga – Barbaig in the salt 'fracas,' the District Administrative Officers for Mbulu and Mkalama visited the conflict area. The first person to do so was the District Administration Officer for Mbulu from November 21st to 29th 1923. Another officer from Mkalama visited Datooga country from the 24th to 26th of the same month. The Mkalama officer was accompanied by 29 Nyiramba people as victims and witnesses of the previous Datooga salt assaults. These two visits, which were supposed to be a part of a fact finding mission, were nothing but a strategy

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of crushing the Datooga's confidence and particularly Chief Gidahoda's claims to salt. In addition, the two expeditions of British Administrative Officers which converged later at Ntimitiki, the eastern shore of the Lake Balangda Lalu used the occasion to reinforce the colonial government's position that the lake was part of the public sphere. Similar government impositions on the public property discourse appeared in other prior meetings between the 'native' *barazas* (meetings) and the British colonial administrators. As the following indicates:

"At the senior Commissioner's Baraza *[public meeting] at Dareda that day (12th October) all present were informed that the salt was public property and they were not to stop people taking it, also the quarantine regulations i.e crossing the Mkalama or Singida border without a veterinary pass were impressed on them, these regulations were also impressed on them at a Baraza at a Mumurang on 29th August"* (TNA 69, FILE P.51).

After the administrative Officers' visits and *barazas* there were several scattered episodes of resistance of the Datooga against the British public space discourse. After the Dareda *Baraza*, the Datooga youths' actions against the Nyiramba and Rangi salt diggers were secretive and spontaneous. The chief's letter that created the first spark of resistance was no longer important, though it was constantly referred to by the British administrators as the first symbol of defiance. The chief's fear of imprisonment made him resolve to adhere strictly the duties of *chifu ya serkal*. For instance, he started to collaborate to pass verdicts and punishments upon the Datooga youths who resisted. The sultan's aversion to government support would later haunt him in his position as a colonial chief. The Datooga interpreted the "conversion" of their chief to duties of *chifu ya Serkali* instead of those of *chifu ya Datooga* as an open betrayal. Therefore, Datooga youths were increasingly taking matters into their own hands and continued to arrest "alien" salt harvesters through the guise of *kufaa umardadi;* as the following extract attests:

"About 7th November a similar occurrence took place but the captors took their captives to their houses, and not to their sultan, making them go through the same ceremony as described above, feeding them well and in some cases giving them presents such as hides and beams, and food for the road and in nearly every case the captors claimed having accompanied their captives to the salt place the following morning and seeing that they get their salt and they were not arrested again. They were obviously not carrying out sultan Gidahoda's threat at stopping people getting salt" (TNA 69, FILE P.51).

The changing of the resistance from physical encounter to a cultural manifestation was a result of British arrests and punishment. To avoid confrontation with the British while also continuing the resistance, the Datooga initiated the *kufaa umaridadi,* so that people entering

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Datooga land for salt expeditions underwent and experienced "mockery arrests" to hide the true intention, which was still a resistance to what was regarded as their tribal sphere (INFORMANT 1 2015). With these changing tactics, the British also tightened their grip in dealing with these forms of resistance. It is difficult to understand the roots of *kufaa umardadi* as an invented cultural tool, because as far as the Datooga were concerned, the cultural practice seemed to have acquired prominence in the salt conflict. Years later, this invention translated into other forms of resistance including violence in the Singida-Mbulu border, popularly known as the Datooga "murders", and mass migration of Datooga youth from Mbulu onto other districts (MHAJIDA 2019).

The consequences of the salt fracas

The salt issue was not a simple and definitely and ease one especially for the Datooga. It brought many direct as well as indirect social and political costs for both individual and an entire Datooga community as noted earlier. The most significant impact that came over the Datooga was that for the first time, the community came to the spotlight of the British administrators in Northern and Central Provinces. The first major impact that affected the Datooga as a community was that their chief Gidahoda Malomba was sacked in 1927 because of charges of tax extortion (TNA 54, FILE 2/A). Thereafter, Gishingaded was given the mantle and mandate of a chief of the Datooga. However, Gishingaded never stayed long, he was also removed in less than a year. So the Datooga were placed under an Mrangi Chief as overseer until a formidable Datooga chief was erected (TNA 69, FILE P.51). At the same time, the British were growing weary of the Datooga leadership. In this account, the British summoned in 1927 a big meeting (*baraza*) in Dongobeshi of more than 150 local leaders from both Iraqw and Datooga. The agenda under this *baraza* was to push the Datooga into amalgamation into what the British called progressive individuals (the Iraqw). Further on this the British argued:

The Barabaig are an anachronism and cannot with the present outlook last very longer. Amalgamation and absorption is I think their only hope, and slow extinction, with their children neglected and left behind as a curiosity for the progeny of the progressive tribes the only alternative. The tribal boundary is only a line on the map and ignored by both sides; I know and record; without fear of contradiction that a very large number wish to amalgamate; join with a powerful tribe, under a just and satisfactory administration and receive their

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share of full prosperity and progress. If undue notice is taken of future the type of elder I have endeavored to portray this will be impossible" (TNA 69, FILE 8/5/A).

The Dongobesh Baraza took place on 2nd of August 1927. The District relied on two interpreters Kwaidamwish for the Datooga and Galkaeh for the Iraqw for him to transcribe the conversation. It is important to emphasize that the entire meeting was poised on destroying the Datooga concept of *nchi* as something contradictory. The Datooga's conception of land and its resources rested on the fact that such assets could be owned like cattle or farms. For the British, this was treasonous; the Datooga had to know clearly that local authority was there for the interests of the colonizers (PARSONS 2012: 497). This was the core of the whole matter. It is therefore an oversimplification of the whole matter if we suppose that the Datooga did not understand such a simple logic. What the Datooga were resisting was the allocation and definition of *nchi* and ethnic boundaries. So the Datooga understood also that the meeting called by the British officer sought to water down the conviction addressed by Gidahoda's letter. That is why all the Datooga whose opinions were jotted down by the British officer disagreed with the general opinion that an Iraqw chief should rule them. For instance, Gishema, after listening to the rest said "I am one of the Gismajeng wazee I only ask can a donkey mount an "*ngombe*" (cow) or vice-versa? Hence you cannot expect me to be placed under an alien chief" (TNA 69, FILE 54/MB/1). These same choruses were repeated by many Gisamjeng – Datooga. On the contrary, all the Iraqw present in the meeting agreed with the amalgamation policy.

Another vital consequence of the salt matter was more interference of the British on the Datooga livelihood. The most important is the beginning of the British policy of allowing more Iraqw people to come into the Datooga territories. The amalgamation policy was a delicate historical act which allowed more Iraqw agro-pastoralists into the Datooga land – what the Datooga continued to resist ever since. In his final letter to the British long time after he had been dismissed as a chief, Gidahoda believed he was at heart a chief of the Datooga even if the *serkali* power was over. In his self-made apostle of the Datooga land rights, Gidahoda wrote this final message:

"The serkali [Officer – Sic.] *has listened to the Wambulu.* Bwana *[master] we proved it was the Wambulu who did the murders in our country. They have got my country. Tell the Barotzl [British?] to give me back my country and I can and I shall rule my people. If there were no serkali there would not be an Mbulu in my country" (*TNA, Accession 69, FILE 51/1).

Gidahoda as a chief was very consistent on his usage of the word country. Since his first letter in 1923, his single message was 'leave alone the Datooga in their country." For Gidahoda, there was no contradiction at all in his message. In other words, though the

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colonial boundaries in villages were physical, the Datooga, like many other communities, drew their maps in their hearts and passed the conviction to all the successive generation through oral messages. When it was possible to use the written word as a tool for their defense, they used it as well. After 1923, there was probably many letters written by the Datooga either through hiring or the use of their educated sons.

Conclusion

The paper has addressed several issues of importance. First is the question of identity formation as purely a product of the 19th century history in central and northern Tanzania. In the discussion, I have underscored the fact that there was no single major force that played more roles in the shaping of the ways communities came to be. The experience of communities differed in the way they exposed themselves to agents of change. Therefore, the communities copied a variety of cultures and experience of which some were lethal and changed such communities in a negative way. In this case, the Datooga were a victim as well as an aggressor, depending on the contexts. Secondly, the issue of *nchi* as both enshrined in the British colonial policy or any colonial documents but also deeply fused in the geography of identity of individuals. The mentality and psychology of the Datooga chiefs as far as *nchi* was concerned was shared and strongly consistent. The third issue is the message of Chief Gidahoda's letter. He wrote it in 1923, but such a letter sparked a general Datooga resistance on one hand and provoked the British authorities to harass the Datooga on the other. Each reaction was equally widely expressed, but it was the British who were more reactionary. Even though the Datooga chief promised his neighbours a punishment, their response was rather lenient and soft. Lastly, there was a repercussion of actions of the two sides. Both were engaged in a non-agreement discourse that kept the two in unfitting ends throughout colonialism.

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