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A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE KEREBE OF TANZANIA

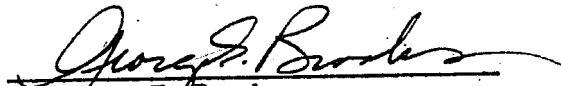
TO 1895

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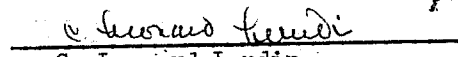
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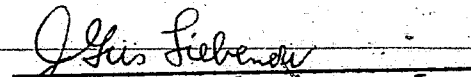
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PREFACE

This study attempts to reconstruct the history of the people and the royal Silanga clan who live in Bukerebe, a small, centralized Tanzanian chiefdom located in the southeastern part of the Victoria Nyanza. The Kerebe, that is, the people inhabiting Bukerebe, are unique in their district because they represent an isolated extension of the interlacustrine culture zone centered on the opposite side of the lake and they inhabit an area that receives adequate and reliable rainfall. These factors encouraged the Kerebe to assume a leadership role before 1900 that was regionally manifested in their trading relationship and in their ritual authority.

The oral traditions on which this history is based begin with the emigration of Bantu-speaking agricultural hunters from the Buha and Bunyoro dispersal centers into the interlacustrine zone, presumably during the early centuries of the first millennium A.D. Some centuries later Bantu-speakers reached the southeastern portion of the Victoria Nyanza where they had been preceded by hunters, identified as ancestors of the Sandawe, and pastoralists, identified as ancestors of the Tatoga. Kerebe traditions reveal the migratory routes of Bantu-speakers and also suggest a sequence of two distinctly different pastoral groups.

moving into the interlacustrine region, first the Tatoga with short-horned cattle followed later by the Hima with long-horned cattle. The Bantu-speakers' major concerns, such as hunting, fishing, agriculture, and smithing, are partially revealed but it is only with the establishment of a royal dynasty by the Silanga clan in the seventeenth century that traditions focus on the historical development of a centralized chiefdom with its political, social and economic ramifications.

Increasing contacts with nearby communities around 1800 indicate the development of intertribal trade that was associated with the "opening up" of the interior, that is, the western portion of East Africa, to traders from the Indian Ocean coast. The Kerebe welcomed the opportunity to exchange ivory for trade goods in the international market, yet the social cost for this participation was staggering. People travelling from the Indian Ocean introduced new diseases into the hitherto isolated interior which caused incalculable loss of life and simultaneously encouraged and influenced the evolution of sorcery in Bukerebe. Nonetheless the Kerebe persevered in their trading activities. Only the omukama (chief) participated directly in the long distance ivory trade. Participation in the local trade required the Kerebe to increase agricultural production since grain was their preferred exchange commodity and this in turn encouraged the use of individuals held in varying degrees of bondage as laborers. Together the local and long distance trade placed increased emphasis on the acquisition of material wealth that required new

economic values within the community. The desire for material wealth along with the deaths from new diseases and the related accusations of sorcery combined to heighten tensions and increase social insecurity during the last decades of the nineteenth century, both within the chiefdom and the entire region. The Kerebe attempted to resolve the increasingly complex problems but their efforts led to growing social instability and violence before German colonial authorities "pacified" the Kerebe in late 1895, an event that concludes this historical survey.

The use of Kerebe terms and names in the text requires an explanation. A standardized orthography for most Ekikerebe (the prefix eki- is translated as "the language of," in this case, the Kerebe) does not exist. Given the interchange of the "r" and "l" sounds in the language and the possible inclusion of some Jita words that tend to use the "z" sound in place of the "j" sound of the Kerebe, the spelling is necessarily arbitrary. The name of the chiefdom and island is Bukerebe in Ekikerebe and the people are referred to as Abakerebe (singular, Omukerebe). However, it is customary in scholarly writings in English to use the root "kerebe" as a descriptive term, hence the people are called Kerebe and their possessions, such as a particular type of canoe, are referred to as "Kerebe." Outside the chiefdom, Ukerewe and Kerewe are used as names for the chiefdom, island and people. This usage probably became common during the nineteenth century when traders from the East African coast replaced the "b" sound of the Kerebe with the "w" sound and then used the Swahili

place prefix "U" for the Kerebe "Bu".

Research for this study in London, Stuttgart, Berlin, Rome, Dar es Salaam and Bukerebe was generously financed by a grant from the Foreign Area Fellowship Program which also supplied funds to meet living expenses while writing the dissertation. I am deeply indebted to the Program for its assistance for myself and family. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Department of History, University College, Dar es Salaam and to the Tanzanian Government for their cooperation and permission to conduct research among the Kerebe.

Numerous institutions kindly made material available to me for study and assessment. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of individuals and the use of materials in the Tanzanian National Archives, the National Museum of Tanzania, the Church Missionary Society in London, and the Mother House of the White Fathers in Rome as well as the library and archival facilities of the White Fathers at Nyegezi, Professor Kurt Krieger of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, Dr. Jurgen Zwernemann of the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, and Mr. William Fagg of the British Museum in London.

The active support of the following professors at Indiana University has been greatly appreciated: C. Leonard Lundin, Michael J. Wolff, Leo F. Solt, B. G. Martin, and Roy Sieber.

A particularly fruitful and stimulating East African seminar conducted by Dr. Roy C. Bridges, visiting Professor at Indiana University during 1967 from King's College, Aberdeen,

Scotland, also attended by Dr. Stanlake Samkage, Mrs. Carole Buchanan and Mr. E. Hollis Merritt, was instrumental in focusing my attention on a number of significant developments during the nineteenth century that were subsequently investigated among the Kerebe. To both my instructor and colleagues I wish to acknowledge my gratitude.

Encouragement and advice at various stages of the research project by Dr. John A. Rowe of Northwestern University, Dr. Norman R. Bennett of Boston University, Dr. J. A. G. Sutton of University College, Dar es Salaam, Mr. A. T. Matson of Seaford Sussex, England, Father Francois Renault of the White Fathers in Rome, and Dr. C. F. Holmes of Union College have given additional perspective to the study.

Mr. Alan R. Taylor, African Studies bibliographer, Professor J. Gus Liebenow, Director of the African Studies Program, and Dr. George E. Brooks, Jr., my adviser and infatigable source of stimulation, have been particularly instrumental in guiding me through my graduate program as well as the research project.

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On Ukerewe I benefitted immeasurably from stimulating discussions with Father Henryk Zimon who was undertaking an ethnographic study of Kerebe rainmakers in addition to a history of the royal Silanga clan. Numerous research assistants aided me

during my eight months on the island including Josephat K. Mdono who introduced me to the island and people of Bukerebe, Edward L. Alphonse whose patience and ability in transcribing taped interviews has never ceased to amaze me, Joachimus M. Abel who assisted me ably for five months in acquiring traditions, and Philibert T. Magere whose interest in Kerebe music and history added significantly to his contribution. Our neighbors, the White Fathers of Murutunguru parish and the personnel of the Tanganyika Cotton Company's ginnery, were most generous of their time and consideration during our stay at Murutunguru. I would also like to note my appreciation for his encouragement of the project to Michael Lukumbuzya, the last Kerebe omukama who now serves Tanzania in its diplomatic corps.

A stumbling block to research in the Tanzanian National Archives was the beautiful but illegible--to me--Gothic script of the early German letters. Thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Christel Roe these documents became meaningful.

Throughout the period of research and writing I have been encouraged, assisted and listened to faithfully by my wife whose presence has made the project feasible, enjoyable and worthwhile. Her contribution to the project has been significant. I would also like to express my appreciation to my children for their forbearance and patience while their father trekked about East Africa and Europe. To my parents for their understanding, encouragement and support, I express a heartfelt thank you.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AHS</u>	<u>African Historical Studies</u>
<u>CMI</u>	<u>Church Missionary Intelligencer</u>
CMS	Church Missionary Society, London
<u>DKB</u>	<u>Deutsches Kolonialblatt</u>
<u>JAH</u>	<u>Journal of African History</u>
<u>JRAI</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</u>
TNA	Tanzanian National Archives
<u>TNR</u>	<u>Tanzania (Tanganyika) Notes and Records</u>
UCD	University College, Dar es Salaam
<u>UJ</u>	<u>Uganda Journal</u>

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE KEREBE OF TANZANIA
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Attempts to reconstruct East African history through the systematic collection and interpretation of oral traditions are a recent development. The dearth of written records for the period before 1900, however, has made it imperative to use oral traditions or no "history" will appear. Historians have shown caution in using these traditions. Initially they were used to supplement archival sources, then archival sources were used to supplement oral traditions, and, finally, oral traditions were used to supplement other oral traditions. This history is primarily of the latter type. Regretably most collected traditions have concentrated on political developments within a given chiefdom; while political history is important in its own right and in the chronological structure it provides, concentration on this feature tends to segment African society within a given region more than was actually the case. This study attempts to broaden the base of historical inquiry by focusing on economic and social as well as political dimensions to portray a more complex view of Kerebe society and to present material that can be more readily compared and related to similar data from neighboring societies; it is

desirable if not imperative to verify, correct or modify the interpretation of Kerebe traditions presented within this study.

The type of traditions remembered in any given society vary greatly. It is not unusual to find societies that are unable to provide meaningful oral evidence about significant developments before 1800 or even 1850. On the other hand, some large kingdoms, such as the interlacustrine culture societies of eastern Africa, have retained impressive oral traditions. These societies developed centralized institutions through the centuries providing the historian with a wealth of historic traditions which record events from the past four or five hundred years. However, political traditions from the numerous kingdoms within the interlacustrine region are frequently contradictory, unrelated and seemingly irrelevant. Traditions of the Kerebe, who are on the periphery of the interlacustrine zone and share a common though not identical past, add a new dimension in reconstructing the history of these people. The strengths of one set of oral traditions can be used to balance weaknesses in similar accounts from nearby communities. As collections of traditions from a number of societies are collected our understanding of early East African history could be greatly enhanced.

The significant difference between existing traditions from the interlacustrine societies and those of the Kerebe is that the traditions of the latter are not solely concerned with the political and social accomplishments of the pastoral stratum of society. Those of the Kerebe, by contrast, are primarily

concerned with the agricultural-hunters¹ because they have dominated Kerebe society. Kerebe traditions therefore contribute to our knowledge of social, economic, and political developments among the agriculturalists, who composed the majority of the population in the interlacustrine region.

Kerebe Oral Traditions

The Kerebe offered an unusual set of conditions for field work in that a relatively small geographical area is involved and--unfortunately--only a limited number of informants possessed the type of historical evidence required for reconstructing a general history. Therefore it was possible to learn about and then seek out the informants who had reputations for possessing valuable traditions. There was insufficient time to pursue an intensive study of individual clan traditions. Since, however, these traditions are no longer available in abundance an alternative presented itself in the person of Bahitwa s/o Lugamage whose clan data have been collected and assembled in Appendix 1 providing an indication of early migration patterns.

1. The earliest Bantu-speaking people in eastern Africa practiced agriculture, but hunting was commonly practiced as well. Since men assumed the hunting role and women the agricultural responsibilities, it is desirable to convey the idea that both agricultural and hunting pursuits were significant functions for Bantu-speakers, particularly in regions of sparse population.

This study is the product of a modified approach to oral tradition.¹ It was assumed from the outset that a detailed reconstruction of Kerebe political developments would not contribute as much to our knowledge of East African history as a reconstruction of economic and social developments. This research direction in turn created certain methodological problems. There is, for example, little relevant published information concerning social issues treated within an historical context; thus the information on sorcery and its ramifications introduces a topic heretofore not discussed by historians. Because sorcery is a fundamental social issue the reliability and interpretation of the Kerebe evidence must be tested by researchers working in societies that experienced similar isolation until recent centuries. Kerebe information dealing with the various migrations of different pastoralists into and through the interlacustrine region suggests a new perspective that likewise requires critical examination by historians with other traditions and knowledge at their disposal. In addition, historical traditions collected on cultural features such as wood sculpturing, musical practices, blacksmithing, and hunting associations disclosed valuable insights into the history of the Kerebe.

The arrival of the royal Silanga clan on what was to

1. Relevant comments about the collection of oral traditions in East Africa are found in the following: Andrew Roberts, "Introduction," Tanzania Before 1900, ed., A. Roberts (Nairobi, 1968), ix-x; B. A. Ogot, History of the Southern Luo (Nairobi, 1967), 11-20; and Gideon S. Were, A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya (Nairobi, 1967), 13-27.

become Bukerebe occurred during the seventeenth century and has had a marked effect upon Kerebe traditions.¹ Thereafter they are generally associated with the omukama (chief) who ruled at a particular time. The establishment of a small but centralized chieftainship provided a focal point around which other events could be linked. Since the omukama was the single most important person in the chiefdom, with powers presumed to be far superior to those of others, he was frequently credited with innovations, or blamed for misfortunes, that occurred during his tenure. Consequently traditions after the coming of the Silanga contain a degree of chronological order, although a comparatively rich set of traditions are not available until dealing with developments during the nineteenth century. In contrast, the era before the arrival of the Silanga has very little discernible chronology. The principal remembered events are the movements of small clusters of people from site to site, from village to village. In this process the names of "clans" are recalled and occasionally the name of a man, but whether the individuals so remembered were important leaders, clan founders; or important hunters is no longer recalled.

Nonetheless significant information about the way of life

1. Bukerebe was a name gradually adopted during the eighteenth century. Earlier the name of Bukerebe had been associated with the Yango clan when living on the west side of the lake and they brought the name with them to the southeastern part of the lake. According to Bahitwa, Bugibwa had been the general name for the region before Bukerebe replaced it. Throughout this study Bukerebe will be used to identify the island and, later, the chiefdom of the Silanga royal clan.

that existed in the pre-Silanga era is available in traditions and in this sense some reconstruction is possible. Kerebe traditions are focused on a Bantu-speaking people who have historically been a hunting as well as an agricultural people. The Kerebe have been significantly influenced by pastoralists through the centuries and have adopted many of their practices. Their separate identity, however, remains intact. Historically they describe themselves as hunters who practiced agriculture and who are distinct from pastoralists such as the Tatoga, Hima and Masai with whom the Kerebe have had contact. Simultaneously their traditions have little to reveal directly about non-Bantu-speaking hunters, fishermen or pastoralists who may have been absorbed by the Bantu-speakers. The disparate nature of cultural practices followed by Bantu-speaking "clans" suggests a movement of people in small groups. While the hunters and pastoralists preceding the agricultural-hunters are readily identified in traditions, it is only the later Bantu-speaking people who are described in detail.

This monograph is based primarily upon oral traditions collected over an eight month period extending from mid-July 1968 to mid-March 1969, traditions elicited by means of intensive questioning--a method which poses numerous difficulties for the investigator. The enquirer conducting research of this type is ever concerned that significant questions may not be asked and therefore potentially valuable evidence missed. The uneasiness that this causes is heightened by the realization that knowledgeable informants of today may no longer be available tomorrow,

placing their traditions in jeopardy. The enquirer's ignorance of a particular society is partially overcome by an awareness of traditions and methods of acquiring them from other societies. Yet each society presents its own idiosyncrasies that have partially determined what has been passed from one generation to the next as well as how it was accomplished. The investigator then must establish working relationships with individuals conversant with historically orientated traditions.

What has been preserved within Kerebe traditions varies from individual to individual. Generally the most detailed traditions concern the informant's clan or a particular member of it. If an informant's father or grandfather was involved in some memorable event, it may often be recalled in detail. Few lads growing up at the beginning of this century missed hearing evening accounts concerning their forefathers that should compose the bulk of Kerebe traditions. But the effort the informant has made to retain the traditions of his family is a variable that influences what is remembered. Informant after informant expressed an inability to recall this heritage. Conditions within the chiefdom have fostered this situation.

In Kerebe history as in any centralized political unit the ruler and his exploits are stressed. What he has done at any given time has been accorded signal importance. In contrast to the omukama (chief) and the chiefdom, the clan is a parochial and mundane entity and its importance in "official" histories is measured by its relationship and ability to serve the omukama. Modern experiences have discouraged the preservation of traditions

by introducing new sets of values emphasizing a way of life that has minimal relationship to stories of the family and chiefdom. Whether or not they attended school, young people throughout the present century have seldom been enthusiastic in learning about their past; there has been an aura of irrelevancy about it all. Altered social developments have hindered the process of transmitting traditions as well. The time following the evening meal once devoted to family education and entertainment has been attenuated so that children attending school could obtain sufficient rest. During recent decades, clan homesteads have been dispersed with many family units now containing only a small number of individuals with the result that services of the clan specialist in traditions or story telling or proverbs is lost to the majority of the clan.

The social role of those who remember traditions has also significantly influenced the type of tradition passed from one specialist to another. Prior to the present century a clan elder held this responsibility within a specific clan. In addition, the omukama required individuals who possessed general information about all clans and he attracted men to his court whose knowledge and advice was needed. Some of these men were called enfura (friends of the omukama) and although they held no official position they were esteemed men in society because of their influential relationship with the omukama. One means by which these men could gain recognition was to acquire an extensive body of historical traditions that could be used by the omukama to resolve legal cases brought before him. Traditions

of this nature were mainly those concerned with clan rights in relation to land: villages where clans had resided, shifts from one village to another within the chiefdom, the historical relationships between clans, and different names of the same clan who lived in surrounding districts. The enfura who was an historian was called an omwanzuzi (pl. abawanzuzi) by the Kerebe and the information itself was omwanzuro. There were usually no more than six men who held this vaunted position at any particular time. It required considerable time and effort to become an official (that is, one recognized by the omukama) traditional historian. An aspiring historian sought to elicit information from men who were already renowned as historians which meant in practice that the novice would visit his informants periodically until he had absorbed the desired factual information. Perseverance is a characteristic of an historian and those in Kerebe society were no exception.

The sole surviving official Kerebe historian in 1969 was Bahitwa s/o Lugambage. The adjective "official" is used in the sense that Bahitwa claimed to be an omwanzuzi and he was in turn recognized as such by the community. The Kerebe, in the person of Bahitwa, are thus far the only society studied by historians in Tanzania possessing an institutionalized role for an historian.¹ Bahitwa's knowledge has specific limitations even

1. In Uganda the Ganda had guardians of the royal tombs who possessed historical information about deceased rulers. In Rwanda and Burundi royal traditions were also consciously preserved. Other centralized societies in the interlacustrine region may also have had specialists devoted to preserving historical traditions although there may no longer be surviving representatives.

though he has attempted to encompass all historical traditions. His most extensive information is on clans, their migratory routes, their important leaders, their villages of settlement and the development of sub-clans. These traditions are not focused solely on the Kerebe insofar as most clans have representatives living in many different ethnic or tribal communities. Bahitwa has also made himself the repository for events that feature the Silanga, the major royal clan.

Bahitwa's rendition of the royal Silanga history is valuable because he belongs to the Kula clan, a royal clan that has rivalled the Silanga on the peninsula and island from the late seventeenth century until the 1920s when its ruler was deposed by the British administration. As a Kerebe historian, Bahitwa has attempted to bridge the difficulties imposed by his descent and his desire to gain recognition as a specialist on all Kerebe traditions including those of the Silanga. But his view of royal history is parochial in comparison to his recounting of clan traditions. Diplomatic alliances arranged during the nineteenth century by Omukama Machunda, for example, are unknown to him and the relationship between the Kerebe and the Ganda is vague and unimportant for him. These shortcomings in his recounting of traditions exist because of the role performed by a Kerebe omwanzuzi that was determined by an omukama's need for clan information to resolve litigation. The function of the Kerebe traditions was only incidentally related to praise of the omukama or the chiefdom; it was pragmatic because it assisted the

ruler to carry out his functions.¹

The system of maintaining traditions through specialists such as Bahitwa possessed a series of checks to insure accuracy. Bahitwa readily acknowledged that differing versions of men's deeds and their significance existed, and maintained that one task of the omwanzuzi was to determine the authenticity of his conflicting material. If a set of conflicting traditions could not be satisfactorily resolved by intensive questioning of numerous informants, Bahitwa resolved the dilemma by accepting the version held by his most trusted and respected teachers who were themselves abawanzuzi. But in giving a tradition Bahitwa provides only the version he has accepted as valid rather than indicating that others held varying interpretations. Once confronted by a different interpretation, however, he would acknowledge its existence and, on occasion, could explain the background for the opposing views. In the pre-colonial era, the omukama's method of checking clan traditions was to refer to several abawanzuzi who would discuss conflicting evidence or confirm the evidence supplied by litigants in a dispute.

Specific information relating to a particular event was never told the same way by two different informants. But for a general history it is possible to reconstruct the basic historical framework without the specifics related to each event, however desirable the specifics may be. Recent historical studies

1. A memorized tradition was never passed from one omwanzuzi to another as it was by griots of West Africa.

have shown that oral traditions are reasonably reliable for general information, and Bahitwa's are no exception. Major discrepancies on basic trends or developments were not encountered, with the possible exception of the disputed role assumed by the Silanga clan in Ihangiro which is discussed in Chapter III.

Bahitwa's material provides the basis for a significant portion of the pre-1700 era since his traditions are unusually full for that period. His evidence refers to the migration of Bantu-speaking people into eastern Africa that extends back to the first millennium A.D. Nonetheless, his traditions for the remote period are fragmentary and general; they are therefore compared with collected traditions from other interlacustrine societies. These provide some check upon Bahitwa's material from other oral sources. His traditions complement those from other areas remarkably well and often go beyond them by providing more specific information. As the collection of oral traditions proceeds in other communities, Bahitwa's traditions may become more meaningful. The information and the interpretation given below, consequently, should be regarded as an historical reconstruction based upon the present state of available oral and written evidence.

One other Kerebe informant, Buyanza s/o Nansagate, deserves special acknowledgement. In 1968 he was approximately 86 years of age, about four years Bahitwa's senior. Buyanza is a Silanga, a grandson of Machunda, a nineteenth century omukama. In contrast to Bahitwa, Buyanza was among the first Kerebe to receive formal mission education in the late 1890s while Bahitwa

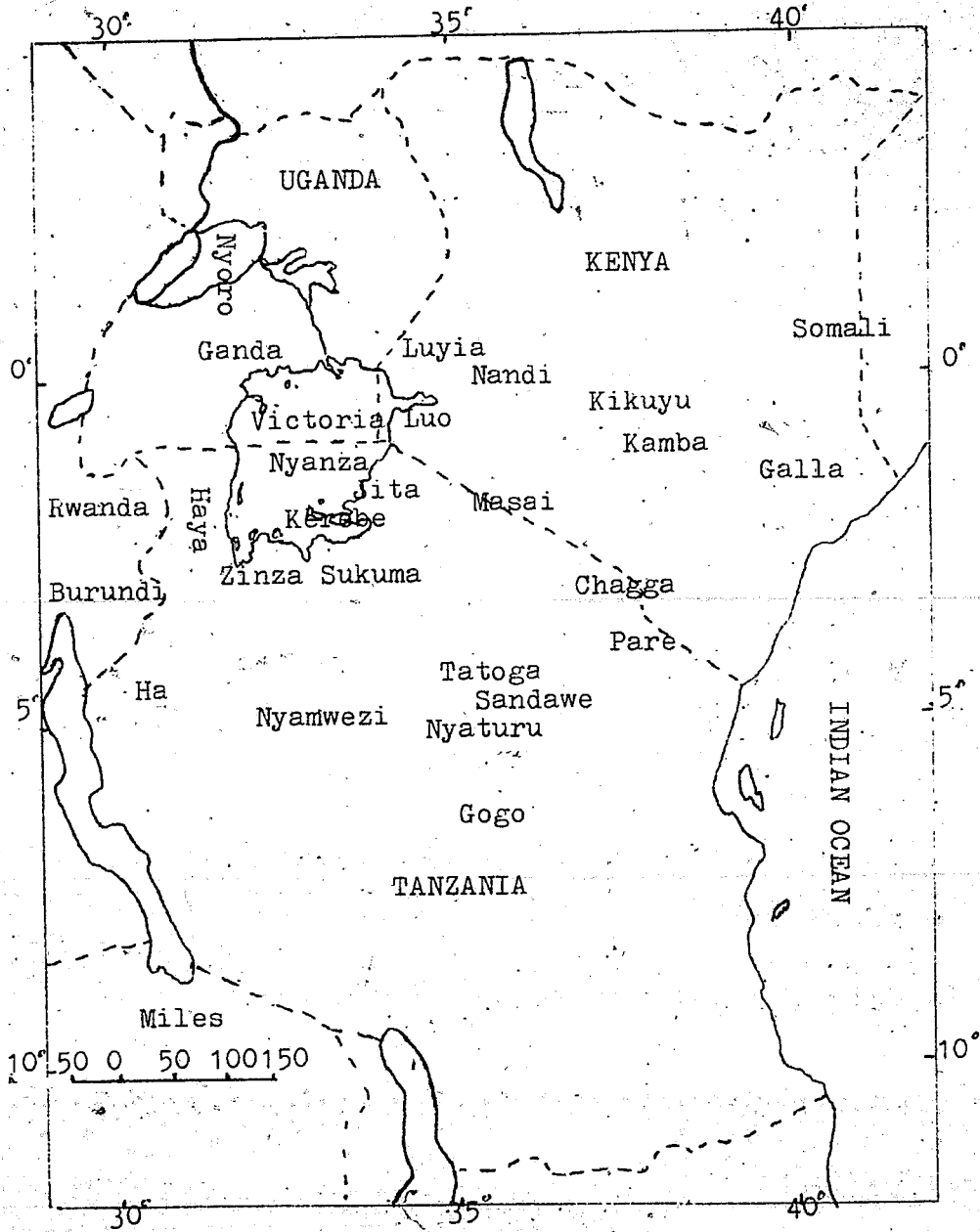
did not receive any formal education and is not proficient in Kiswahili. Buyanza acquired literacy by the time he was twenty years old and has retained it throughout his life. He was recruited to serve in the German forces in 1904 and participated in the suppression of the Maji Maji uprising. He remained in the German military forces until 1918 when he was among General Paul von Lettow Vorbeck's force that finally surrendered in Zambia. His experience outside Bukerebe undoubtedly sharpened his interest and awareness of Kerebe traditions. He assiduously sought information from elders concerning the Silanga and the relationship of the Kerebe to neighboring people. His traditions are rich in references to the Ganda, Haya, Zinza, Sukuma, Jita (Kwaya), Ruri, and Luo and are thus characterized as being chiefdom oriented in contrast to Bahitwa's traditions which are clan oriented. Buyanza cannot be classified as an official historian nor is he regarded as such by the community but he merits the description of an outstanding unofficial historian. His knowledge, character, and intelligence qualified him as an ideal informant and his contribution to our knowledge of nineteenth century history in the lake region is unusually great.

The historian consults the most reliable and most productive sources in collecting data; hence Buyanza and Bahitwa were interviewed more frequently than other informants. Their information that pertained to major developments could usually be confirmed by checking with other informants.

Climatic and Ethnographic Background

It is misleading to refer to Bukerebe as an island in historical terms. In the twentieth century the German and British administrations deepened and broadened the narrow, swampy Rugezi canal that separated the mainland and the island to permit the passage of loaded sailing vessels. Previously people waded across with their livestock, particularly when the water level was low; furthermore, Bahitwa insisted that the peninsula and island formed a single geographical unit prior to the nineteenth century. During the present century the depth of the lake has fluctuated between 30 and 40 inches in any given decade.¹ Since the completion of the Owen Falls Dam at Jinja, Uganda, the average lake level has risen substantially and Bukerebe has become an island in every sense of the word. It now takes twenty minutes by ferry to reach the mainland peninsula from the island. Nonetheless the chiefdom itself was never greatly influenced by whether or not water separated one district from another; historically the chiefdom included a major portion of the peninsula in addition to the "island."

1. Heinz Dieter Ludwig, Ukara - Ein Sonderfall tropischer Bodennutzung im Raum des Victoria-Sees (IfO-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung München: Afrika-Studienstelle, Nr. 22, München, 1967), 57. Ludwig has assembled an extremely valuable set of geographical statistics for the southeastern lake region that includes population statistics on an ethnic basis, soil and vegetation information and rainfall information. He has attempted to compile all available statistics for the twentieth century. Therefore any variations that may occur in the lake level from decade to decade are taken into consideration.

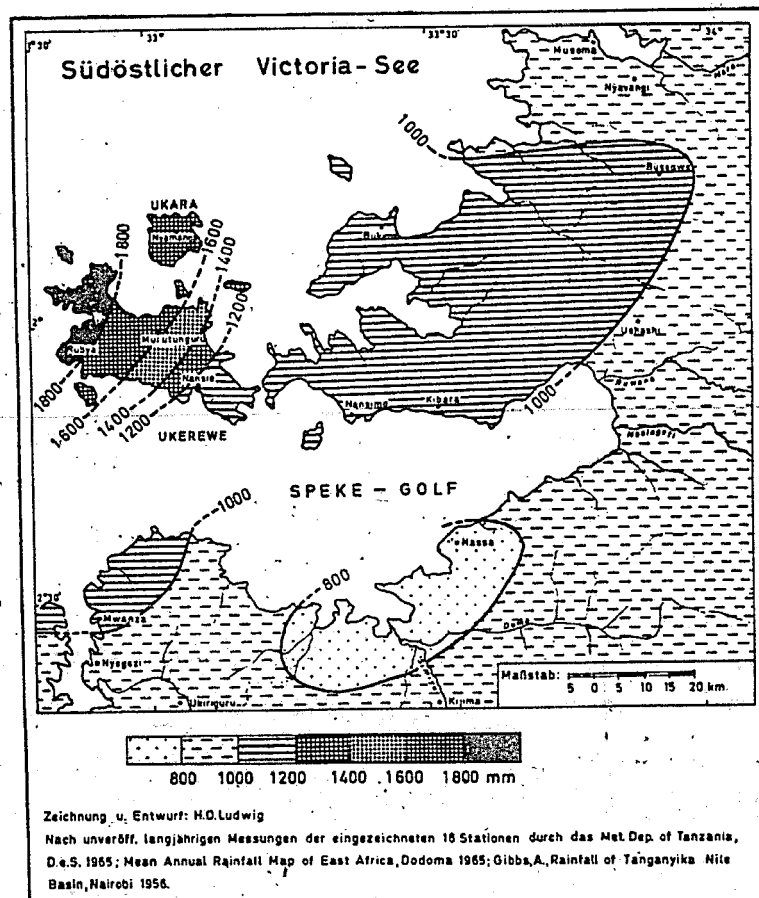


Peoples of Eastern Africa

The Kerebe are predominately an agricultural society that has also vigorously pursued hunting, fishing and herding. Until the present century species of sorghums and eleusines, sweet potatoes, bananas, various types of groundnuts, and different types of legumes composed the basic vegetable diet. During the nineteenth century new varieties of millet and sorghum, cassava, maize and rice were introduced to supplement the basic diet. For centuries cattle and goats have been especially important for those Kerebe who could acquire them. Hunting and fishing were historically important activities although fishing was a greater concern for those living near the lake shore.

A fundamental determinant for an agricultural society is the average rainfall and its reliability. Although local variations occur, the entire island receives adequate and reliable rain for the traditional crops. The rains usually begin in October when the first crops are planted with the second planting occurring during another wet period from December to February. The heaviest rains fall in April and May; July and August mark the dry season and harvest time. The average rainfall for the island is over fifty inches annually; in contrast the mainland or peninsula portion of the chiefdom receives only 30 to 40 inches.¹ The western portion of the island receives consistently more moisture than the eastern portion, the difference being approximately 30 inches, that is, some 70 inches

1. E. C. Baker, "Report on Administrative and Social Conditions in the Ukerewe Chiefdom," Cory Papers No. 9, UCD.



Rainfall Distribution in the Southeast Victoria Nyanza*

* Reproduced from H. D. Ludwig, Ukara, 39.

falls on the western end and some 40 inches on the eastern end, which has influenced the pattern of settlement.¹ The drier eastern portion of the island provided the most desirable conditions for cattle and the dominant grains: sorghum and eleusine. People living on the wetter end of the island concentrated to a greater extent on bananas. In the late nineteenth century the population was concentrated on the eastern and northern areas of the island. Elsewhere people tended to dwell along the lake shore leaving a large forested area vacant in the central and western interior. Prior to 1800 people inhabited the central region but as population declined in the nineteenth century it became a preserve for wild animals such as monkeys, wart hogs, buffalo, rhinoceros, leopards and elephants.

The earliest population estimate was based on a hut count in 1907 for tax purposes. The population was then given as 30,000 for the island, some 13,000 for the peninsula, and 2,000 for the numerous small islands that are included within the chiefdom. The large island of Bukara (Ukara) to the north of Bukerebe, however, was never included within the chiefdom. In 1932 the population was reckoned to be 65,000 with 47,000 living on the island, giving a population density of 218 per square mile in contrast to the drier peninsula with a population density of about 48 per square mile.² In recent years the island's

1. Ludwig, Ukara, 39.

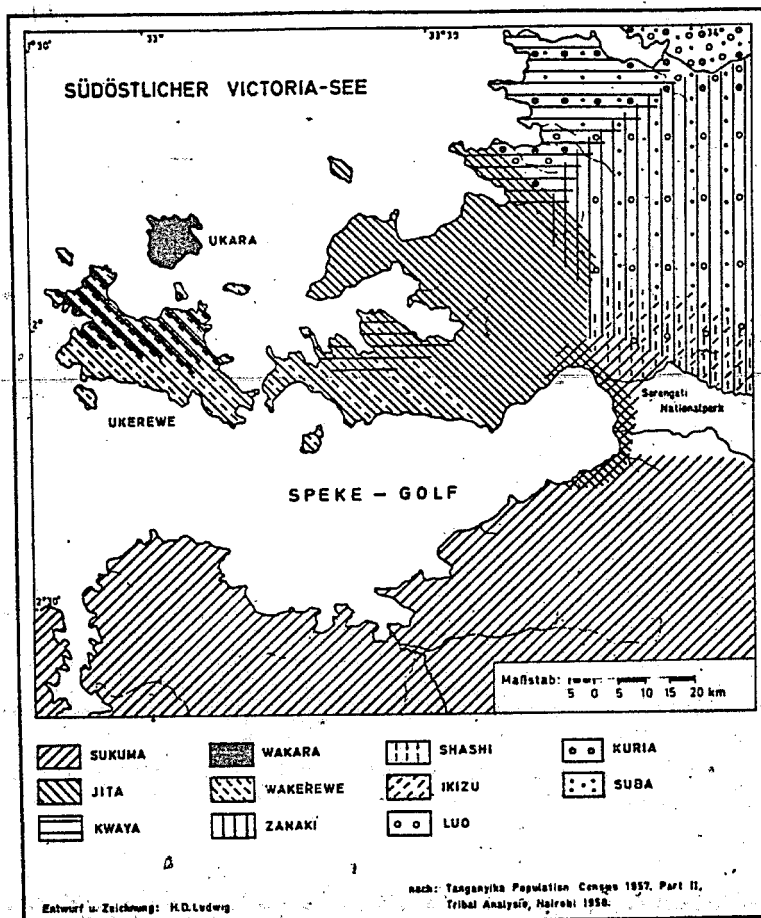
2. Baker, "Report on Administrative and Social Conditions in the Ukerewe Chiefdom."

population is estimated to be 70,000.

The people currently refer to themselves as Kerebe but this is a recent development and one based on the island's name. Previously the dominant social element of the island's population called themselves Sese (Abasese). But among the Sukuma living across Speke Gulf the word -sese meant slave and Omukama Gabriel Ruhumbika (1907-1938), sensitive about his people's image, advised them to use the name Kerebe which had the added attribute of including all inhabitants of the chiefdom. Earlier, Sese had designated only a minority of the population albeit the "important people" descended from clans claiming relatively recent ties with clans in an interlacustrine society.¹ The royal Silanga clan was the leading representative of the Sese clans who introduced the language and customs from the interlacustrine zone into Bukerebe. Sese clans apparently permitted other groups to join their ranks because in 1968 informants gave a broad definition to the term. Distinctions, furthermore, cannot be readily made on a clan basis; representatives of a clan living on Bukerebe may have been Sese while members of the same clan living on the mainland were not regarded as Sese.

By 1900 there were three ethnic terms used to differentiate non-Sese portions of the population who, together, composed the majority of the people. The largest group was and remains the Jita (Kwaya) who began their sporadic emigration in small

1. Although the term Sese may have a common origin with the word Sese used to identify people inhabiting the Sese Islands in the northwestern part of the lake, tradition does not provide a link.



Tribal Distribution in the Southeast
Victoria Nyanza*

* Reproduced from H. D. Ludwig, Ukana, 75.

groups from the east coast of the lake by at least 1800. Another important group had come during the nineteenth century from the island of Bukara and is referred to simply as Kara. The third group was the Ruri who composed the vast majority of domestic slaves. They originated from the region north of the Jita and came from a number of different ethnic stocks.¹ In the 1800s both the Kara and Ruri occupied low social positions though the former group can best be described as agricultural laborers. The Jita and Kara migrated into the chiefdom when conditions in their own country forced them to seek a more favorable place in which to live. The Jita experienced occasional famine due to drought and also attacks from pastoralists in the nineteenth century. The attackers are invariably designated as Masai but additional candidates for the role are the Kuria and the Tatoga (Taturu). The Kara, on the other hand, experienced a shortage of food caused by a high population density so their problem existed on a recurrent and virtually annual basis. The Ruri slaves were usually children brought to Bukerebe and sold by men needing food during times of famine. In the present century Sukuma and others began to migrate into Bukerebe in significant numbers.

Generally when migrants entered Bukerebe their ethnic and language difference was not stressed, rather, they emphasized their clan affiliation. With approximately seventy-five

1. Eugene Hurel, "Religion et vie domestique des Bakerewe," Anthropos, VI (1911), 63-65.

different clans and sub-clans found in this region of the lake, any one clan may have had representatives living among half a dozen different ethnic groups. Although the different ethnic representatives of a clan may identify themselves with a distinctive name, they nonetheless are well aware of what their relatives call themselves in other districts. Thus, in this century, when the Sukuma immigrated into Bukerebe they would reduce Kerebe suspicion of themselves as outsiders by announcing their clan ties and identifying their brothers (cousins) and fathers (uncles) within the chiefdom. All immigrants could claim their own land within the chiefdom providing they went through the proper administrative channels; uncultivated land was available to them; although an exception to this policy occurred in the post-World War II period, this barrier was soon removed. Today the Sese, Jita, Kara, Ruri, and Sukuma compose the Kerebe, that is, the inhabitants of Bukerebe. Throughout this century there has been an increasing tendency for differences separating the ethnic groups to decrease in importance. Intermarriages are becoming more frequent though total integration remains to be achieved.

Linguistically and ethnographically the Kerebe form an integral part of the interlacustrine societies.¹ The politically

1. Malcolm Guthrie, The Classification of the Bantu Languages (London, 1948), 42-43. A chart illustrating the linguistic classification of all East African languages together with a new set of suggested terminology can be found in J. E. G. Sutton, "The Settlement of East Africa," Zamani: A Survey of East African History, ed. B. A. Ogot and J. A. Kieran (Nairobi, 1968), 80-81. Also see Brian K. Taylor, The Western Lacustrine

and socially influential section of the Kerebe population, the Sese, modeled their political system on the states founded by Ruhinda the Great on the southern and western shores of the lake.¹ As will be described below the Kerebe ruling clan arrived in the southeastern lake region sometime in the seventeenth century along with representatives from seven other clans. This nucleus of eight clans imposed their language and customs on the inhabitants of what became Bukerebe. Before the arrival of this contingent from the west lake district, the language spoken was presumably one closely related to that now spoken by the inhabitants of the island of Bukara and the Jita/Kwaya on the southeastern shore of the lake. All of the languages around the lake are mutually intelligible with the exception of that spoken by the Sukuma, just to the south of Bukerebe, and the Luo of Kenya on the northeastern corner of the lake. As in any society, the

Bantu, Part XVII of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa, ed. Daryll Forde (London, 1952). Though the Kerebe are not included within this volume, the information provided gives an idea of the type of society to which the Kerebe owe much of their cultural heritage. Father Hurel's "Religion et vie domestique" is not a complete ethnographic survey, as the title itself indicates. It is, however, the only published ethnographical material available. At the present time Father Henryk Zimon of Fribourg University, Switzerland, is completing a Ph.D. dissertation on the Kerebe rainmakers in which additional ethnographic information will appear.

1. Ruhinda the Great is used to distinguish the various rulers with the name Ruhinda from the important founder of the Hinda dynasty in the west lake district. The descriptive word 'Great' has been used by Israel K. Katoke in "A History of Karagwe: Northwestern Tanzania, ca. 1400-1915" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1969), 35, and it effectively and accurately describes the leader concerned. Katoke estimates that he lived between 1450 and 1520.

language or dialect spoken by an inhabitant partially determined the social stratum in which he found himself. Those persons appearing frequently at the royal court found it necessary to adopt its usages and a court language developed that was based on proverbs, nuances, and indirect speech and only frequent attendance at court could keep a man abreast of current idiomatic expressions. Since vast powers were centered within the person of the omukama, the various clan representatives aspiring to become a part of the Sese community and share their prestige adopted the language of the influential minority. In the present century the Sese language has virtually become obsolete because of a steady influx of immigrants (Jita, Kara, and Sukuma), a tendency to use Kijita in singing, and the impact of Swahili that is taught in the primary schools.¹

The technical specialists of Bukerebe included smiths, woodcarvers, basketweavers and potters with only the woodcarvers and basketweavers not socially affected. Men produced the various pieces of wooden objects such as stools, eating utensils and canoes. Women were responsible for weaving various types of basketry for use in food preparation and serving while larger types of baskets used for fishing and others for storing food and carrying produce were made by men; these skills were common within the community. On the other hand, both the smiths and

1. The impact of singing and dancing upon Kerebe society in the present century is discussed in G. W. Hartwig "The Historical and Social Role of Kerebe Music," Tanzania Notes and Records, No. 70 (1969), 41-56.

pottery--who were women--came from clans who occupied a low social position, though it would be misleading to label them as despised peoples. Numerous Sese clans have a history of working with iron as smiths although this information is not readily revealed. In the 1960s only Jita or Sukuma clans do this type of work, but even among these ethnic groups it is only certain clans that perform the work. Intermarriage, until recent years, did not take place between these clans and others, except the royal clan which did not fear the skin disease attributed to close contact with the clans of smiths and potters.

The chiefdom possessed most raw materials necessary for the various specialists. Wood, a scarce commodity in the relatively dry southeastern lake region, was plentiful for all types of uses, especially for canoe production. Clay and various grasses and reeds were bountiful. Salt could be obtained from some reeds which were also useful in constructing living quarters. The major raw material not readily available was iron ore. In the nineteenth century expeditions had to be made to Mwanza Gulf to obtain hoes from the Longo smiths of Buzinza. The smiths on the island then reworked the worn out hoes and other damaged implements to produce the various weapons and tools desired.

* * * * *

Kerebe traditions that provide the evidence for this historical interpretation of Kerebe history also add insights into the social and economic development of the region. The methodology used broadens the basis for understanding the Kerebe

and suggests leads that other investigators may pursue. When non-political aspects of culture are known, understood and emphasized, we will approach a general history of eastern Africa that concentrates on the development of the majority of people, their mode of life in addition to their social and political institutions thereby placing in perspective political development of individual societies.

Chapter II

EARLY OCCUPANTS OF BUKEREBE

The earliest identifiable inhabitants of Bukerebe were a hunting people referred to as Sandasya (Abasandasya) in Kerebe traditions.¹ According to the Kerebe historian Bahitwa, the Sandasya were "tall people"² who had previously migrated into the region from the northeast. Apparently they continued their

1. The majority of information on the pre-Silanga period is the contribution of Bahitwa s/o Lugamage, the sole surviving Kerebe historian. Beginning in August 1968, Bahitwa was interviewed occasionally until January and February 1969 when he was interviewed weekly. Makene s/o Ikongolero contributed important supplementary information that clarified and modified Bahitwa's traditions for the pre-Silanga era. Makene's clan, the Hira, was important in the region before the arrival of the Silanga. Although certainly not as knowledgeable as Bahitwa, he was extremely helpful in independently validating some of the latter's assertions. Makene was initially visited in August 1968 and then again on several occasions in February 1969. Hans Cory, a sociologist under the British colonial government, collected historical information about the Kerebe during the 1950s. His notes substantiate the traditions collected although it is possible that the same informant, Bahitwa, was also used extensively by Cory. The latter's material was collected in the presence of Omukama Michael Lukumbuzya; presumably other informants were also present; see "Ukerewe Local Government and Land Tenure," Cory Papers No. 420, UCD.

2. Bahitwa was definite in stating that the Sandasya hunters were tall in stature even though hunters are commonly described as short.

general southward movement when the next group of migrants appeared. The descendants of the Sandasya are identified by the Kerebe¹ as the Sandawe, a Khoisan-speaking people now living some 250 miles SSE of Bukerebe.² Recent archaeological excavations of rock shelters by Creighton Gabel on the northeastern shores of the Victoria Nyanza possibly reveal the type of settlement pattern and mode of existence that can be attributed to the Sandasya. The radiocarbon dates for sites excavated by Gabel range from 450 B.C. to 640 A.D.³

The Kangara (Abakangara), a pastoral people, followed the Sandasya hunters into the region, possibly during the latter centuries of the first millennium A.D.⁴ Confusion arises over the present identity of these people. The Kerebe claim that the Kangara called themselves Nyaturu; yet the Nyaturu are a Bantu-speaking, predominantly agricultural society, although they have adopted numerous customs of pastoral people. Traditions collected from Zinza and Sukuma informants also designate early pastoralists in their respective districts as Nyaturu.⁵ The

1. When 'Kerebe' or 'informants' is used in the text to identify the source of information, it means that the tradition is commonly held by numerous persons, regardless of clan affiliation.

2. Sutton, "The Settlement of East Africa," 85-86.

3. Creighton Gabel, "Six Rock Shelters on the Northern Kavirondo Shore of Lake Victoria," AHS, II, 2 (1969), 219.

4. Christopher Ehret, "Cushites and the Highland and Plains Nilotes," Zamani, 166-168.

5. A. M. D. Turnbull, "Notes on the History of Uzinza, Its Rulers and People," and O. Guise Williams, "Tribal History and Legends--Sukuma," Mwanza Province Book, NAT.

German explorer Oscar Baumann who passed through Bukerebe in the 1890s identified the Kangara pastoralists in the vicinity as "Taturu or, as they refer to themselves, Tatoga."¹ Assuming that the Kerebe designation for people they now call Kangara has not been transferred from one pastoral group to another, the original Kangara can be identified as Tatoga, a Nilotic-speaking people who are culturally and linguistically related to the Kalenjin people of western Kenya such as the Nandi and Kipsigis.

The Tatoga (Kangara) brought their cattle and other livestock with them to their new region of settlement around the southeastern corner of the lake. Traditions state emphatically that the Tatoga did not find any people practicing agriculture upon their arrival and, although it is uncertain whether the Tatoga found hunters in the vicinity, it is a distinct possibility. The Tatoga remained in the area for an undefined period of time and according to traditions moved on when their herds became too large. It is apparent, however, that some of them remained in the general vicinity and exercised a considerable influence over Bantu-speaking agricultural-hunters who followed in their wake. When the royal clan arrived in the 1600s, for example, they found Bantu-speaking people in the area practicing circumcision, a custom learned from pastoralists. Since it is reasonably well established that the Masai did not appear in the region until approximately the eighteenth century,² it is

1. Oscar Baumann, Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle (Berlin, 1894), 168.

2. Sutton, "The Settlement of East Africa," 94.

necessary to seek an earlier group, most probably the Tatoga.¹ The Tatoga contribution of cattle to the agricultural-hunters is discussed below.

Either the Sandawe or the Tatoga left an isolated example of "rock art" on Bukerebe. Similar designs and pictorial representations have been found in numerous East African localities and Merrick Posnansky, an archaeologist, has made a preliminary study of them suggesting that they are the product of both hunters and pastoralists.² Those found on Bukerebe are located on the underside of a rock outcrop some twelve feet above the surface of the ground near the lake shore on the south central part of the island. It may originally have been a shelter; the surface of a rock ledge extending directly beneath the design has been worn smooth, seemingly by human activity. A series of short vertical red lines, some placed at right angles to others, reveals no meaningful pattern. There are no traditions concerning the lines among the Kerebe which supports the likelihood that either the Sandawe or the Tatoga were responsible for them.

Bantu-Speaking Agricultural-Hunters

The migrants who followed the hunters and pastoralists were Bantu-speaking descendents of peoples who entered eastern

1. Ehret, "Cushites and Nilotes," 163-168.

2. Merrick Posnansky, "The Prehistory of East Africa," Zamani, 65-68.

Africa in the first half of the first millennium A. D.¹ The Bantu-speakers moved from west to east, settling on the western shores of the Victoria Nyanza before some moved to the eastern region of the lake; Kerebe traditions conform to the postulated pattern of migration.² Information provided by Bahitwa, the "official" Kerebe historian, is sufficiently detailed to reconstruct the migratory movement of numerous clans that have dwelt on Bukerebe at one time or another.³ His traditions also shed considerable light upon the early Iron Age in the lakes region and complement the collected traditions from other interlacustrine societies. According to Bahitwa, there were two major dispersal regions from which people migrated to Bukerebe: Buha and Bunyoro. The majority of clans came originally from Buha, the closer of the two dispersal centers. Bahitwa's concept of the dispersal centers is general rather than specific and therefore probably cannot be too closely identified with the present locations of the Ha and Nyoro. Unfortunately for historians, Bahitwa's information did not include specific details concerning

1. Archaeologists associate dimple-based and channelled pots with the spread of iron working; simultaneously Bantu-speakers are assumed to have produced the aforementioned pots hence they are credited with the spread of iron working. It is a tentative hypothesis.

2. Jean Hiernaux, "Bantu Expansion: The Evidence from Physical Anthropology Confronted with Linguistic and Archaeological Evidence," JAH, IX, 4 (1968), 507; and J. E. G. Sutton, "The Iron Age in East Africa," The Iron Age in Africa, ed. P. L. Shinnie (Oxford, forthcoming).

3. Appendix 1 contains a list of the various clans and their designated routes to Bukerebe.

the presumed movement of agricultural-hunters prior to their entrance into Buha and Bunyoro; actually, he preferred to regard Bunyoro as the area of "creation." He could not provide substantial information about possible migrations before the Bantu-speakers entered eastern Africa with the exception of the Gara mentioned below. Bahitwa's historical orientation for Bantu-speakers is Bunyoro, to the northwest of Bukerebe; there is no way to interpret his traditions to make them conform to the suggested migration of Bantu-speakers from the southwest.¹ Rather, his traditions complement the historical reconstruction advanced by Jean Hiernaux and Aidan Southall.² They assume that the fore-runners of the present Bantu-speaking population gradually moved from West Africa to the east along the northern edge of the equatorial forest zone, thereby reaching the interlacustrine area.³

According to Bahitwa these Bantu-speaking migrants were family units practicing hunting and agriculture and when

1. Roland Oliver, "The Problem of the Bantu Expansion," JAH, VII, 3 (1966), 375. In the case of a significant portion of the Nyamwezi-Sukuma population, a migration from the southern Congo dispersal center appears reasonable.

2. Hiernaux, "Bantu Expansion," 505-515; Aidan Southall, "The Peopling of Africa--The Linguistic and Sociological Evidence," Prelude to East African History, ed. Merrick Posnansky (London, 1966), 74; also relevant are G. W. B. Huntingford, "The Peopling of the Interior of East Africa By Its Modern Inhabitants," History of East Africa, vol. I, ed. Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew (London, 1963), 80-81, 85; A. M. D. Turnbull, "Wahima," Cory Papers No. 231, UCD; Hans Cory, "(Banyamwezi) The Country and Its Inhabitants," Cory Papers No. 43, UCD.

3. Southall, "The Peopling of Africa," 74.

discussing migrations Bahitwa refers to a specific clan (oluganda) not to Bantu-speakers in general. From Bahitwa's usage of "clans" it is impossible to determine if clusters of kinsmen now designated as clans possessed a similar composition in the first millennium A.D. He also fails to distinguish between a clan and a number of clans who may have formed a "tribal" unit. Whether the clans he enumerated and identified as Bantu-speakers were so originally creates an additional difficulty in discerning the movement of various people. When asked to name the early groups of people who migrated to Bukerebe he began with the Sandasya, then proceeded to the Kangara, Gara, Koni, Sohera, Nange, Si, Hira, Twa, etc. He identified the Sandasya as the Sandawe and the Kangara as "Nyaturu" (Tatoga), both of whom speak a non-Bantu language. Once groups of agricultural-hunters within the dispersal centers are discussed Bahitwa ceased to distinguish one cluster or clan from another; they are all indiscriminately included within the basic "clan" list.

The Twa (Abatwa) provide an example of the difficulty in attempting to reconstruct the early era from Bahitwa's traditions. In Rwanda the Twa compose a pygmy population that is made up of numerous clans whereas in Karagwe there is a Hima (pastoral) clan by the name of Twa. Bahitwa's "Twa" lived on Bukerebe for a time before returning to Rwanda. Although he had no information on the physical characteristics of the Twa to suggest whether they were either pygmies or tall pastoralists, he did know that they were renowned potters, an attribute strongly suggesting that his Twa were related to the Rwandan pygmies who are

skilled potters. However the basic problem remains; it is impossible to determine whether they were a single clan or composed of a number of family units. A related issue is Bahitwa's identification of pastoral migrants. He identified them as a tribe but without smaller social units. His four pastoral "brothers" are the Somali, the Kwabi (Masai), the Kangara (Tatoga), and the Huma (Hima, Tusi). He draws a distinction between non-Bantu-speaking pastoralists and Bantu-speaking people such as the Sukuma who maintain large herds of cattle. Significantly, he designated the Hima, who now speak a Bantu language, as being different, a circumstance reflecting that their origins differ from other Bantu-speaking people. The imprecise nature of Bahitwa's traditions means that it is exceedingly difficult to determine without additional evidence from other sources, as yet uncollected, whether or not some "clans" were originally non-Bantu-speaking but then gradually became assimilated by the agricultural-hunters.

Bahitwa attributed a unique migratory route to the Gara, one of the earliest "clans" to appear on Bukerebe. The tradition is unique in that it does not begin with Buha or Bunyoro; rather, he claimed that they came from the west, from Gana, in fact "Nkrumah's Ghana." According to Bahitwa the Gara migrated eastward to Bunyoro where they divided into two major segments. One group continued traveling eastward while tracking a wounded elephant until they reached "Mombasa" (the Indian Ocean). The other segment traveled south from Bunyoro into present day Buhaya. The hiving-off process of individuals and small clusters

from a core group or groups continued and eventually some representatives arrived in Bukerebe; it is from these people that the island of Bukara receives its name according to Bahitwa (at some time the "g" sound being altered to a "k" sound to produce Bukara rather than Bugara). The alleged migration from "Ghana" is staggering in its scope, concomitantly the portion dealing with the movement from somewhere in western Africa to Bunyoro complements existing linguistic evidence.

The Longo (Rongo) are another cluster of people whose designation has caused confusion among historians. They inhabit a portion of Buzinza and have assumed a vital role in the region as smelters of iron ore and as forgers of hoes which became the basic medium of exchange for much of this area in eastern Africa during the nineteenth century. An early account of the inhabitants of Buzinza identified the Longo as a group of clans who were descendants of the original Bantu-speaking people.¹ The given identity of the Longo has varied from a distinct ethnic group, on the one hand, to a single clan on the other hand. Bahitwa's traditions, in this particular case, provide significant information because many of the Kerebe clans have ancestors who were Longo prior to their departure from the area. He identified the Longo as a cluster of clans cooperating in iron ore smelting and hoe production. Non-smiths, according to the Kerebe historian, used the name Longo to identify the smiths, deriving the name from the verb kulongo, meaning to cooperate in

1. Turnbull, "Notes on the History of Uzinza."

the smelting and smithing process. Bahitwa's own ancestors of the Kula clan at one time worked as smiths in Buzinza and formed a portion of the Longo population; thus his description of these people is particularly valuable since his traditions account for the distinct qualities of the group and its numerous segments in contrast to other people in the vicinity who refer to them indiscriminately as a single entity.

Migratory Routes from Buha and Bunyoro

In all, Bahitwa enumerated at various times the names of 107 clans and sub-clans that allegedly settled in the district of Bukerebe at unspecified times; the list provided by him cannot be considered as complete nor beyond correction.¹ Only a minority of these clans still reside in the area while others either migrated to other districts or died out. Bahitwa relates the dispersal center from which the ancestors of each clan emigrated--either Buha or Bunyoro--in addition to the general migratory route taken. While some details concerning routes and clan totems, particularly of those who are no longer represented in the chiefdom, may be erroneous, the general pattern of migration that emerges is complex and seemingly reliable.

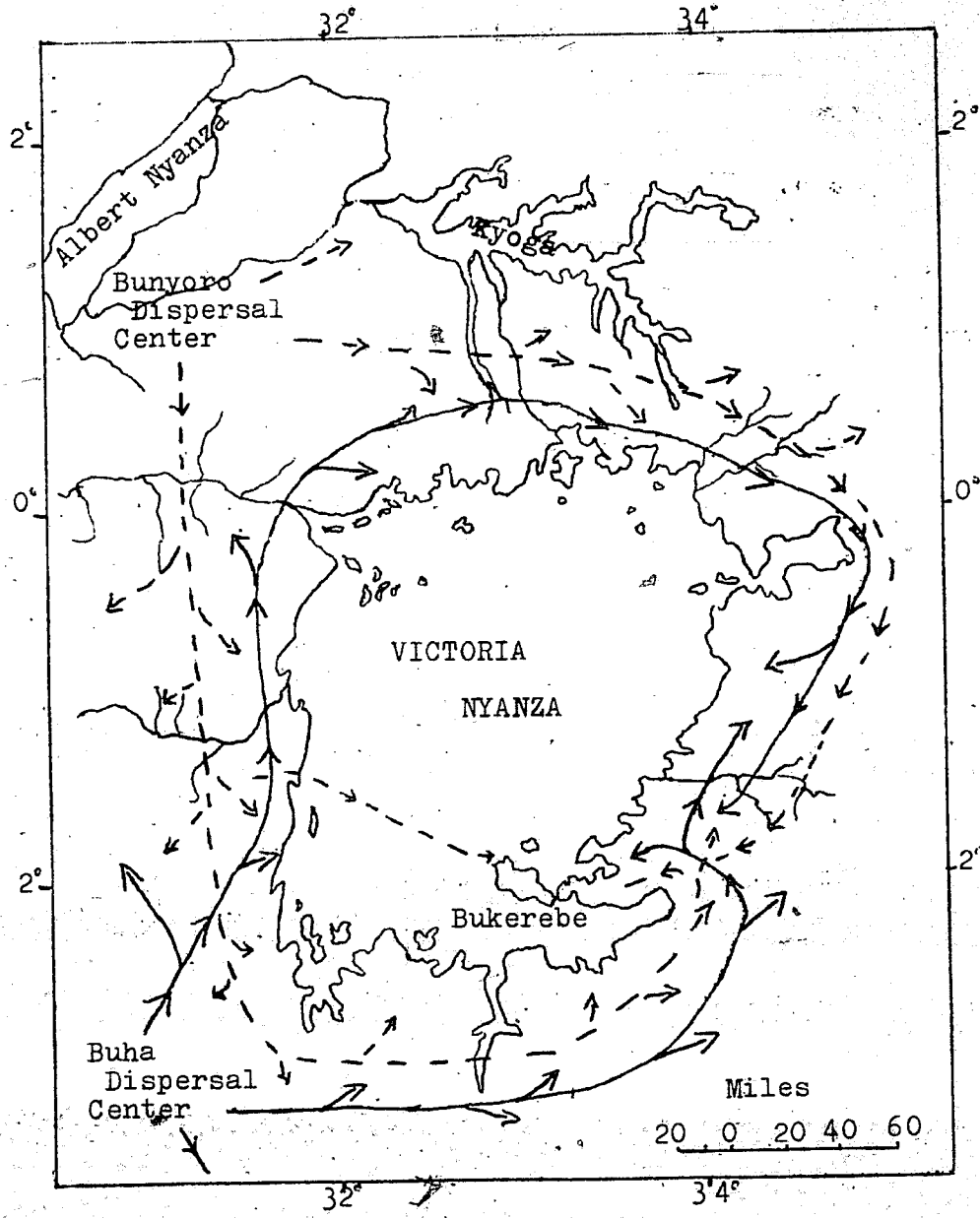
A recent historical reconstruction of Karagwe by Israel K. Katoke correlates well with Bahitwa's traditions. Katoke's

1. In Appendix 1, 109 groups are listed but two of them, the Sandasya and the Kangara, are non-Bantu-speaking and are not included within the discussion of agricultural-hunter migrations.

evidence suggests that the original Bantu-speakers arrived from the Buha region where they "were later found by their 'cousins' from Bunyoro."¹ Bahitwa's information, however, makes no clear distinction regarding which dispersal center provided the original immigrants for either the interlacustrine or the Bukerebe areas, although the Gara were among the first groups on Bukerebe and they came via Bunyoro.

In all likelihood the clans Bahitwa enumerated were representatives of a general movement of people that entered eastern Africa shortly after the time of Christ. Bahitwa's traditions suggest that the movement from the dispersal centers was gradual with small groups of migrants moving in virtually all directions with a considerable intermingling of people from Buha and Bunyoro. Bahitwa is relatively specific about the route taken by seventy-eight clans included in Appendix 1. The majority that have resided on Bukerebe trace their origins to Buha, the closer of the two centers. As far as can be determined from Bahitwa's account, only a few representatives of a given clan migrated from the dispersal area at any one time with a nucleus remaining in the center; a few people moved on some distance before settling down again farther east. "Clans" were fragmented during this process and it appears that a new name was frequently given to the "fragment" of the clan after its hiving-off although an identity with the parent group often continued through the centuries. Important variations to the basic

1. Katoke, "A History of Karagwe," 32.



General Routes Taken by Various Clans From the Buha and Bunyoro Dispersal Centers to Bukerebe

eastward migration from Buha occur, particularly for those migrants moving northward who eventually had representatives living on Bukerebe. Some clans moved into the Karagwe area, then representatives backtracked, and gradually moved along the southern shores of the lake until reaching the Bukerebe district. Simultaneously other migrants continued their northerly trek into present day Uganda, then moved east along the northern lake shore, and finally a few moved back south along the eastern lake shore to Bukerebe.

The Bunyoro dispersal center illustrates the same general complex migratory pattern with hundreds of miles traveled, but most likely over hundreds of years in time. According to Bahitwa a substantial number of Kerebe clans--twenty-seven-- trace their origins to Bunyoro in comparison to fifty-one from Buha. Three different routes are discernible for those migrants with origins in Bunyoro who eventually arrived in Bukerebe. A general movement to the south from the dispersal center implies that many of the migrants intermingled with people from the Buha center in the Karagwe area. Some of these migrants rounded the lake and joined the movement of clusters from Buha that were moving eastward toward Bukerebe. As will be described below, a group of exiles representing approximately eight clans came across the lake in the seventeenth century from Ihangiro to Bukerebe; this method of migration was most unusual and this group is the sole example of immigrants who extensively used water transportation. The third cluster of clans from Bunyoro moved eastward from the center before traveling southward along

the eastern lake shore.

One purported impetus for migration was strife between clan members. The consequences of this friction are revealed in the development of sub-clans of the Silanga and Timba clans which then adopted distinctive names and, in one case, altered the clan totem. The royal Silanga clan traces its origins to the Bunyoro dispersal center from where they traveled eastwards and then south along the east side of the lake. Tradition places them at Isene, a district to the east of Bukerebe, when a quarrel in the clan--called Segena--caused one man to seek his future elsewhere. The individual eventually arrived in Ihangiro chiefdom where he and his family were given the clan name Silanga which was derived from skill in constructing canoes. When his descendants had established their chiefdom in Bukerebe surviving members of the parent Segena clan from Isene joined them on Bukerebe. They retained their separate identity although both the Segena and the Silanga sub-clan claimed the same bird and fish totems. Later, two sub-clans hived-off from the Silanga. The Gembe sub-clan was formed when one "brother" of the chiefdom's founder allegedly selected a hoe when they arrived in Bukerebe, symbolizing his preference for cultivation, while a second "brother" selected a drum, symbolizing his preference for ruling. The Yambi, the second sub-clan to splinter from the Silanga, came into existence during the reign of the fourth Kerebe omukama when a son of the ruler killed a brother and was ejected from the clan. All sub-clans that evolved retained the totems of the parent Segena clan from Isene, although a new

social unit was created each time another name appeared. The experience of the Timba clan stands in contrast with that of the Silanga. Another clan dispute, possibly in the eighteenth century, caused the ejection of one member who originated the sub-clan name of Chamba and subsequently acquired two different totems from those of the parent clan.

The bewildering changes in "clan" names and the less frequent adoption of new totems make it difficult, if not virtually impossible, to trace the interrelated clusters of people who share common ancestors merely by names or totems. Bahitwa's clan information, for example, includes as far as he can remember, the clan name of those who dwelt on Bukerebe during at least the past millennium and the name of the parent or sub-clan that lived in Buzinza, Buha, Bukara, etc., a formidable maze of varying names which reveal the hiving-off process and the tendency to alter the clan name when settling in a new location. Although alterations in clan totems also occurred, an interesting pattern emerges from a survey of those totems provided in Appendix 1. Two basic phenomena appear: the majority of clans that trace their origins to Bunyoro have a wild animal, a bird, or a fish as a totem; in contrast, most clans with origins in Buha have cattle totem, and in some cases a wild animal is the second totem. It is generally explained by informants that totems originally came into existence either because the particular "thing," whether it be an animal, a bird, a fish or an object, had either harmed an ancestor and was therefore cursed by him, or the "thing" aided an ancestor in some way and

was henceforth protected by his descendants.

This available information about clans, totems, and clan origins, suggests that the Bantu-speaking clusters at the time of their entry into East Africa possessed totems of which the vast majority were wild animals.¹ Gradually new totems were added reflecting an important event or development for the clan or sub-clan. Not least of the important events in this area of East Africa was the introduction of cattle, probably during the first millennium A.D., and the clans emanating from Buha were more influenced by pastoralists, as indicated by the cattle totems, than those emanating from Bunyoro and now living in the southern lake region.² It appears that totems of clans in the Buha center were either replaced after cattle were introduced or there was a substantial amount of intermarriage between the Bantu-speaking population and the Nilotic-speaking possessors of cattle with the result that some pastoralists became sedentary and more dependent upon agricultural produce in addition to acquiring a Bantu language. A discussion of Bahitwa's traditions

1. I wish to acknowledge the many profitable discussions on the problems of clans and their totems that I have had with Carole A. Buchanan who has carried out historical research in Bunyoro.

2. Hans Cory and M. M. Hartnoll provide information on Haya clans and their totems. Generally their data provide a mixed picture and do little to clarify Kerebe traditions. It is significant to note, however, that the majority of Hima clans have one type of cow or another as a totem. Unfortunately data are incomplete on the Hima but a sizable minority did not possess cattle totems. An impressive number of non-Hima clans also had cattle totems: Customary Law of the Haya Tribe (London, 1945), Tables 1-45, 287-289.

concerning the introduction of cattle is given below.

The Bantu-speaking population of the southeastern lake region was eventually composed of migrants with similar cultural backgrounds from Buha and Bunyoro although people from the former center had received a more intensive exposure to pastoral values. The language of the Bantu-speakers in the interlacustrine area is markedly different from that spoken by the Nyamwezi and Sukuma which is a related Bantu language. Around the shores of the Victoria Nyanza the Sukuma and the Nilotic-speaking Luo possess languages that are significantly different from that of others in the vicinity, but the majority speak mutually intelligible languages and these people are the descendants of the early Bantu-speakers from Buha and Bunyoro.¹ This population in turn has been influenced by intrusive people speaking other languages, the major event being the appearance of the Hima (Tusi) pastoralists into the interlacustrine region. Although they adopted the language of the agricultural majority, they also altered it significantly. The Kerebe spoke the language of the interlacustrine cultures once the royal clan and its entourage of followers imposed it upon the inhabitants of Bukerebe after they arrived. Their language was probably still intelligible to the earlier occupants whose language is currently spoken by their Kara and

1. Guthrie, Classification of the Bantu Languages, 42-43.

Jita descendants.¹

Hunting, Fishing and Agricultural Pursuits of the Agricultural-Hunters

Hunting, both as a food source and for protecting cultivated crops, was important for the early agricultural-hunters in Bukerebe and the neighboring region. The significance of hunting among the ancestral predecessors of most Kerebe clans is provided in the ethnographic notes recorded by Turnbull in the 1920s when he described the ironworking Longo of Buzinza as hunters and recorded nothing about their agricultural interests.² As descendants of early agricultural-hunters from the Buha dispersal center, their described preoccupation with hunting reflects a condition that presumably existed centuries ago; Kerebe traditions refer to the importance of hunting, particularly in sparsely populated areas where wild life was abundant and not greatly threatened by man. Traditions frequently explain the movement of people by stating that they were hunting an animal that led them to a desirable location and hence they settled in the area.

Hunting is a prestigious activity in traditions. Men

1. A map illustrating the location of people speaking various languages in East Africa and also distinguishing between those people around the Victoria Nyanza influenced by the Hima and those who missed their influence can be found in the supplement provided by Franz Stuhlmann, "Ethnographische Uebersicht der Völker des äquatorialen Ost-Afrika," Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika (Berlin, 1894).

2. Turnbull, "Notes on the History of Uzinza."

hunted animals for their flesh to supplement the vegetable diet provided by the agricultural activities of the women. Cultivated crops in turn had to be protected from wild animals and men had the responsibility of preventing burrowing and grazing animals from destroying crops by using trenches and pit-traps. As the population increased in agriculturally favorable districts wild animals were forced to give way to a sedentary population with hunting decreasing in importance for the people who remained in the area. Where various species of antelope existed hunters used bow and arrow, frequently assisted by their dogs who located, chased and confused the intended victim.¹ Traditions suggest that large animals such as buffalo, elephant and hippopotamus received very little attention from the early hunters. Not until formal hunting associations were introduced do traditions refer specifically to hunting of these larger animals. It is explained that only with an organized group of hunters possessing specific skills in addition to magical knowledge necessary to hunt successfully a particular animal, could the task be undertaken without exposing the participants to unreasonable risks. On Bukerebe men have not always imposed their will on wild animals. Bahitwa maintains that many centuries ago, long before the royal clan arrived in the 1600s, Bukerebe was literally invaded by large numbers of wild life, presumably animals such as buffalo and elephants. The agricultural-hunters of the region

1. See Aniceti Kitereza, "How Men and Women Came to Live Together," Natural History, LXXXIX, 1 (1970), 9-19.

were unable to cope with them and were forced to withdraw from the district. Only after the animals had departed could the people once again occupy the area.

In contrast to the early importance assigned by tradition to hunting, fishing activities are not accorded much significance although in recent centuries fishing appears to have increased in importance.¹ Tradition assigns specific methods, implements, and fishing techniques to particular clans; unfortunately it is impossible to determine the sequence of clan arrivals or even the approximate time of their arrival that a hypothetical reconstruction of early fishing activities necessitates. There is a dearth of published historical evidence from other fishing communities around the lake; traditions from fishing populations on the west side of the Victoria Nyanza, for example, would be valuable in understanding their historical role.

Bahitwa's traditions reveal little about any fishing clans that lived in the southeastern area of the lake before the arrival of the Silanga clan in the seventeenth century; however they do indicate that the cultures on the western side of the lake were strikingly different from those on the eastern side, a situation that is revealed when innovations introduced by the royal clan are enumerated. The royal clan, or someone within their entourage, introduced an unbarbed metal fish hook (emigonzo).

1. Comparative information on Kerebe and Haya fishing practices in the present century is described by H. A. Fosbrooke, "Some Aspects of the Kimwani Fishing Culture," JRAI, LXIV (1934), 1-22.

and a three pronged metal fish spear (amasaku).¹ The fact that the Silanga are also credited with introducing the sewn canoe enhances Bahitwa's contention that early clans had little to do with fishing.² Yet other informants contend that their ancestors preceded the Silanga into the district and had "always" concentrated on fishing.³ These clans utilized basket traps (emigono) and possibly fence traps (emibigo) and consequently did not depend upon canoes for fishing since both devices are used along the lake shore. Kerebe traditions thus reveal some complexities that will be involved in eventually reconstructing the history of fishing populations.⁴

While Kerebe traditions suggest that hunting clans originally had a separate identity from fishing clans, they associate agricultural innovations with the hunters, but early fishermen may have practiced agriculture as well. Bahitwa confidently contends that the agricultural-hunters who were in the Buha and Bunyoro dispersal centers cultivated a number of food

1. Fishing implements and techniques are discussed and illustrated by S. and E. B. Worthington, Inland Waters of Africa (London, 1933), 142-151.

2. J. Hornell, "Indonesian Influence on East African Culture," JRAI, LXIV (1934), 324-325. Illustrations of canoe types found around the Victorian Nyanza are in Worthington, Inland Waters of Africa, 157-162.

3. Neki Kageri, Makene s/o Ikongolero, and Mpehi stated that fishing clans preceded the Silanga in contrast to Bahitwa who claimed that the fishing clans arrived with or later than the Silanga.

4. Information on early fishermen near Lake Tanganyika is found in Andrew Roberts, "The Nyamwezi," Tanzania Before 1900, ed. A. Roberts (Nairobi, 1968), 118.

crops but the extent to which hunting and gathering supplemented other food acquiring activities remains unclear although soil and climatic conditions would limit the role of cultivation. All informants agree that the earliest types of cultivated grain were sorghum (omugusa) and eleusine (endwero). Bahitwa also stated that the earliest clans cultivated two species of legumes (enkole and enzutwa) in addition to two species of groundnuts (empande and enkuku).¹ The Kerebe acquired at least one type of banana in the 1600s, later, about 1800, they experienced a veritable revolution in agriculture that accompanied the era of long distance trade and travel which will be discussed in Chapter VII.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that the banana (or plantain) was not known to the early clans in Buha and Bunyoro and was not introduced to the southeastern area of the lake until the royal clan brought suckers of the plant with them from Ithangiro on the western lake shore.² Bahitwa's understanding of the dispersal of bananas within the interlacustrine zone indicates that the early migrants did not yet have them when the pastoral Tatoga passed through the country west of the lake. Bahitwa assumes that this plant was brought into the lake region

1. Refer to David N. McMaster, A Subsistence Crop Geography of Uganda (Bude, England, 1962), 48-59, 72-87; also P. J. Greenway, "Origins of Some East African Food Plants," East African Agricultural Journal, vol. 10 (1944), 34-39, 115-119, 177-180, 251-256, and vol. 11 (1945), 56-63.

2. G. W. Hatchell, "The History of the Ruling Family of Ukerewe," TNR, 47/48 (1957), 198; "History of Ukerewe Chiefdom," Cory Papers No. 290, UCD.

from the north, although this is inconsistent with a current historical hypothesis that it was introduced into the inter-lacustrine area from the Zambezi basin far to the south.¹

The Introduction of Iron Technology

Bahitwa's traditions indicate that the early agricultural-hunters in Buha and Bunyoro possessed the knowledge of iron working, both smelting and forging. He stated in addition that "all" early clans had smiths (abawesi) within their midst, however his traditions did not differentiate between smelters of iron ore, a highly specialized skill requiring sophisticated technical knowledge, and forgers, who only reworked iron.

Smithing has not been a prestigious occupation among the Kerebe for a number of centuries, an attitude possibly acquired from the Tatoga pastoralists. Members of Kerebe smithing clans have been restricted in their marriage arrangements to the extent that they could only marry into other smithing clans or with the royal Silanga clan. Silanga women, unlike others, had no fear of marriage with smiths because they possessed "medicine" sufficiently powerful to protect themselves from a skin disease associated with people who worked with iron. Bahitwa and other informants did not satisfactorily explain the origin of social restraints imposed upon smiths, a development dating at least

1. Sutton, "Settlement of East Africa," 92; see also D. N. McMaster, "Speculation of the Coming of the Banana to Uganda," UJ, XVI (1952), 145-147.

from the 1600s, but informants agree that a significant proportion of the early clans had smiths (forgers) within their midst.¹ But by the nineteenth century only one Sese clan, the Bago, continued to forge iron while a second clan, the Gabo, provided a few iron ritual objects for the abakama. Otherwise all smiths were immigrants either of Jita or Zinza extraction, and in the present century only the descendants of Jita migrants have remained active in this work. The trend has consistently been for smiths to abandon this occupation because of the social impositions.

The Victoria Nyanza region is particularly well endowed with iron ore deposits. In the southern lake district the richest deposits were located in Buzinza while minor deposits were found to the east and south of Bukerebe Island. Although traditions are contradictory as to the iron ore deposit that was exploited by Kerebe smiths before the eighteenth century, it is apparent that ore from Kulwirwi, a highland massif on the peninsula just to the east of the island, was smelted before 1700.² The smelters belonged to the Gabe clan who resided on Kulwirwi

1. Although this is Bahitwa's contention, Makene s/o Ikongolera of the Hira clan, a clan that lived in the region for an extended period before the Silanga arrived, confirmed that at one time his ancestors had smithed. The Hira eventually dominated other clans around them and became dependent upon the subordinate population for smithing services. As evidence that another particular early clan had smithed, Bahitwa claimed that he had found waste materials associated with smithing while cultivating a garden in a village formerly occupied by the clan (Gara) who left the island years ago.

2. Magoma s/o Kitina in addition to Bahitwa maintained this point of view.

until the 1700s when they were driven from it by the Silanga.

With the Gabe smelting iron ore on Kulwirwi, the mountain served as the center for hoes which were also made by the smelters and then bartered for livestock or grain. When hoes had been worn down by use, and the attrition rate of the untempered metal used in hoes was relatively high, the remaining blade and shaft--the section inserted into the handle--was reheated and reworked by local smiths (forgers) to make such objects as arrow heads, spears, and knives. In the 1600s, according to Buyanza, the hoe made by the Gabe smiths was called ebyebwe and was smaller in size than the Zinza type later used. Some form of the word gembe was also used at approximately the same time in relation to the hoe since the Gembe, the sub-clan of the Silanga mentioned above, acquired their name from their choice of a hoe in preference to a drum. The word gembe shares a common root, -embe, with the Kiswahili word for hoe, jembe. The hoe used by the Kerebe since the eighteenth century was called enfuka and was acquired from the Longo in Buzinza.

Centuries ago, according to Bahitwa, local forgers were numerous and common, particularly in clans settled in sparsely populated districts. Given higher concentrations of population, specialization apparently emerged within specific clans, a development primarily dependent upon the extent of political and religious authority with which each clan was imbued, the greater the authority the more likely that a clan's members ceased smithing. Specialization in iron working by particular clans commenced before 1600 among the Kerebe which implies significant

interdependence among clans in the area. Consequently the Gabe clan who controlled the iron ore sources on Kulwirwi assume an important role in Kerebe traditions at the time the Silanga arrived; they were in a position to command respect and cooperation although they were confined territorially to Kulwirwi. This arrangement was dramatically altered in the eighteenth century when a military encounter between the Gabe and Silanga dispersed the former who subsequently occupied a subordinate ritual role in relation to the Silanga, leaving the Kerebe without a local source for hoes and it then became necessary to acquire them by barter in Buzinza.

Cattle and the Agricultural-Hunters

Bahitwa relates that the migrants who emigrated from Buha and Bunyoro had sheep, goats, dogs, and chickens, but not cattle. His tradition emphatically asserts that the Tatoga, speakers of a highland Nilotic language,¹ introduced cattle to the Bantu-speakers, presumably the short-horned type. The Tatoga, according to Bahitwa's tradition, moved westward with their cattle through present-day Uganda from Mount Elgon and then moved southward through the interlacustrine region into central Tanzania. During this migratory period, the pastoralists encountered Bantu-speaking people who acquired cattle when the pastoralists exchanged them for grain during times of food

1. Ehret, "Cushites and Nilotes," 163-167.

shortages. From Karagwe, a kingdom west of the lake, there are traditions claiming that the agricultural population there possessed short-horned cattle before the Hima pastoralists arrived with the long-horned breed by the fourteenth century, thus supporting Bahitwa's tradition that the Hima-Tusi did not introduce the former cattle into the interlacustrine zone.¹

Kerebe traditions unfortunately provide few insights into the probable integration process that occurred between the agricultural-hunters and the pastoralists. It is likely that this occurred to a greater degree with the first wave of pastoralists, particularly in and around the Buha dispersal center, since the later Hima wave has retained its identity in the interlacustrine zone over at least a five hundred year period. No clan that settled in Bukerebe has a pastoral identity or background recalled in traditions, although in the mid-1800s an omukama had some twelve Tatoga (Kangara) wives. Yet a recognition of contributions from the pastoral Tatoga abound in traditions. Cattle, their care and treatment, for example, is accepted as particularly significant. Within the spiritual realm, Rugaba was respected by the Kerebe as the protecting guardian spirit for cattle. This same spirit assumed an important role in the spiritual realm of the various states west of the lake where the spirit was generally, though not always, associated

1. J. Ford and R. de Z. Hall, "The History of Karagwe (Bukoba District)," TNR, 24 (1947), 4. Also see Gideon S. Were, "The Western Bantu Peoples from A.D. 1300 to 1800," Zamani, 179.

with cattle.¹ Bahitwa also made the revealing comment that the Tatoga taught the Kerebe to work and socialize together, reinforcing the impression that agricultural-hunting clans were virtually self-sufficient, autonomous units that reluctantly merged with their neighbors into larger corporate entities.

* * * * *

Traditions state that the Sandawe, a hunting people, originally settled in the southeastern lake district. They were succeeded by the pastoral Tatoga who had migrated through the interlacustrine district, encountered Bantu-speaking agricultural-hunters there, but arrived in the Bukerebe area prior to the latter group. The agricultural-hunters had entered eastern Africa from the west and then dispersed from two major centers: Buha and Bunyoro. These early migrants are described in Bahitwa's traditions as clans but they may have been clusters or bands of people composed of numerous clans. From Buha and Bunyoro migrating clans that eventually had representatives residing in Bukerebe took varying routes to reach the area, revealing a complex pattern of movement with people from the two dispersal centers intermingling freely. Unfortunately the continual process of small groups hiving-off from parent clans and subsequently changing their clan names and less frequently their totems impedes

1. Hans Cory, "The Earliest History of Bukoba," Cory Papers No. 79; Cory, "Bantu Religion of Tanganyika," Cory Papers No. 41; Cory, "The Bahinda in Bumbwiga (a Bukoba Chiefdom)," Cory Papers No. 40, UCD.

attempts to trace clan interrelationships. These early migrants practiced agriculture and hunting; fishing may have been the concern of a smaller number of clans. As the population became more sedentary the dependence upon agriculture increased. Iron technology was known to the agricultural-hunters who used metal implements and weapons. Their close contact with pastoralists not only gave them access to cattle but also introduced social changes such as avoidance of smiths which created new problems for a population that heretofore had been essentially egalitarian.

Chapter III
THE CONQUERING ROYAL CLAN

The arrival of the Silanga clan in the seventeenth century had a momentous impact upon a hitherto segmented population in the southeastern lake region. The Silanga and their contingent of followers from other clans were political refugees who imposed their will on the inhabitants of the northern and western portion of Bukerebe ushering in a new era characterized by a centralized system of government. The Silanga and their followers had fled from the chiefdom of Ihangiro on the western side of the lake, a chiefdom ruled by a member of the prestigious Hinda clan. Traditions clearly reveal the significant political, social and cultural innovations that the refugees introduced into Bukerebe; these contributions are accepted unquestioningly and include a centralized political system, the language of the interlacustrine zone, a musical instrument, a type of canoe, and at least one specie of banana. Disparate traditions of the Silanga are related concerning their political role while living in Ihangiro and their relationship to Ruhinda, founder of the Hinda dynasty whose members ruled numerous interlacustrine chiefdoms. Traditions then converge, however, presenting a description

of how the Silanga defeated those clans who resisted the establishment of a ruling dynasty.

The time of the Silanga clan's appearance in Bukerebe can best be approximated by calculating an average tenure for each of the fourteen abakama (chiefs) who reigned prior to 1895.¹ Three men ruled between 1895 and 1963 and their average tenure in office was twenty-one years. There is oral evidence to suggest a length of reign for the abakama of the nineteenth century, but for the earlier rulers there are no clues. It is desirable, however, to estimate an average for each ruler before the present century to provide an approximate time of arrival in Bukerebe for the founder of the Silanga dynasty. There were at least seven abakama who held office during the nineteenth century although the omukama who ruled in 1800 complicates the issue because he had very likely been in office a number of years before that date; in fact, his total reign could well have approximated a half century. Even by excluding this exceptional individual, the average reign during the nineteenth century is about sixteen years. If he is included as representing a half reign, the average falls to about fourteen years. Yet during the nineteenth century two rulers were deposed and two other abakama died in office after apparently serving for brief periods of time. Prior to this time only one of the preceding nine abakama had been deposed for failing to perform his duties satisfactorily.

1. Appendix 2 contains a list of the Kerebe abakama that the evidence most strongly supports. Bahitwa's variation is noted and the list provided by the explorer H. M. Stanley is included.

The four abbreviated reigns during the 1800s appear unusual and therefore it is preferable to use the average based upon the reigns of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries giving an average reign of sixteen-plus years. If an average of sixteen years is applied to the first eight abakama, assuming that the eighth omukama began his reign in 1780, the first ruler appeared in 1668, or the mid-seventeenth century. The margin of error probably lies within the range of twenty-five years.¹

Discerning the Royal Clan's Role in Ihangiro

Early traditions concerning the royal clan are divided into distinct categories. One elaborate segment portrays the life of at least two generations while they dwelt in Ihangiro. Although several versions exist describing their role in this district, there is no doubt that the clan resided there for some time. Oral traditions recorded by government officials of Tanganyika invariably begin their accounts of the royal clan in

1. The most probable date would fall in the latter half of the century. Hurel estimates the arrival date as 1610 but he provides no explanation for his selection of this particular date: "Religion et vie domestique," 65. There are eleven generations involved from Katobaha to Lukumbuzya who was the last Kerebe omukama. If an average length of 27 years is calculated for each generation (figuring from 1962), the arrival date of Katobaha is 1665; see D. W. Cohen, "A Survey of Interlacustrine Chronology," *JAH*, XI, 2 (1970), 177-201. If the average length of reigns is based upon 13 years as suggested by D. H. Jones, the arrival date is 1741; see Jones, "Problems of African Chronology," *JAH*, XI, 2 (1970), 164-165. Calculations based upon generations when compared to those based upon an estimated average reign of Kerebe rulers are almost identical.

Ihangiro, thus implying that the Silanga originally emanated from this region.¹ The second, less controversial but also less publicized segment of the Silanga tradition provides a description of the clan founder's travels before reaching Ihangiro. When the two portions of the tradition are treated as a single entity, the results are apparently straight forward; however this rendition contradicts the assertion that the Silanga were direct descendants of Ruhinda the Great.² Chroniclers of the White Fathers, a Roman Catholic mission society that has been established on Bukerebe since the 1890s, have consistently incorporated both segments of the Silanga tradition in their historical accounts thereby providing the soundest description of events.³

The majority of elders have some knowledge of the royal clan's activities before arriving in Bukerebe and are able to comment on the various versions of their role in Ihangiro. These

1. A. M. D. Turnbull, "Tribal History and Legends on Ukerewe Chiefdom," Mwanza Province Book, TNA; "History of Ukerewe Chiefdom," Cory Papers No. 290; Hans Cory, "The Coming of the Wasilanga Chiefs," Cory Papers No. 30; Hatchell, "History of the Ruling Family of Ukerewe." A local chronicler, Aniceti Kitereza, provides a similar version in his historical account: "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs," (unpublished Kikerebe manuscript, Kagungulu parish, Ukerewe).

2. Ruhinda the Great--the praise name is used to distinguish the founder of the Hinda dynasty in the west lake district from others rulers with same name. The Karagwe historian, Israel Katoke, estimates that Ruhinda the Great ruled between 1450 and 1520.

3. Hurel, "Religion et vie domestique des Bakerewe," 65-57; White Fathers, "The Ukerewe Tradition (concerning the foundation of Ruhinda's kingdom)," within Turnbull, "Notes on the History of Uzinza."

are all informal traditions in that no memorized, formal version exists. Each individual relates his own version and interpretation of events. The differing accounts of the Silanga role in Ihangiro, which in essence are efforts to explain the relationship of the Silanga to Ruhinda the Great, may be characterized as two fundamentally distinct and incompatible renditions. The "official" version, that is, the version that the Silanga clan want others to accept, identifies Ruhinda the Great as their ancestor.¹ This version gained acceptance during the 1920s when British authorities attempted to identify legitimate rulers throughout the country of Tanganyika. The District Officer, A. M. D. Turnbull, requested Omukama Gabriel Ruhumbika to provide background information on the Kerebe royal clan. Ruhumbika asserted that his royal ancestors were descendants of Nkombya (Kankombya) who had succeeded Ruhinda the Great as ruler in Ihangiro, and Turnbull's report consequently stated that "the ruling family of Ukerewe Chiefdom is descended from the Bahinda," the dominant ruling clan in the west lake district.² This "official" version was later incorporated into the Oxford History of East Africa, into what has become the standard reconstruction of interlacustrine history.³

1. Turnbull, "Tribal History and Legends on Ukerewe Chiefdom;" Hatchell, "History of the Ruling Family of Ukerewe," 198; Roland Oliver, "Discernible Developments in the Interior, c. 1500-1840," History of East Africa, I, 186.

2. Turnbull, "History and Legends on Ukerewe Chiefdom."

3. Oliver, "Discernible Developments in the Interior," 186.

The search by British administrators for legitimate rulers--that is, rulers or their descendants who ruled before the imposition of German colonial rule--placed tremendous pressure upon incumbent chiefs in the 1920s. Omukama Ruhumbika's position was by no means secure because his father had been installed as a consequence of a German punitive expedition in 1895, and the search for legitimate rulers focused on just this type of situation. Ruhumbika's pedigree was sufficiently impressive, having both a father and a grandfather who had occupied the royal stool, however, there was another branch of the royal clan vying for power in the 1920s. Although Ruhumbika was the grandson of Ibanda, a deposed ruler of the early 1800s, the other branch descended from Machunda, Ibanda's brother and successor. Machunda's son and successor, Rukonge, had been deposed by the German authorities in 1895 after the Kerebe attacked a mission establishment within the chiefdom. Mukaka, the son of Ibanda and father of Ruhumbika was appointed the new omukama. The descendants of Machunda challenged Ruhumbika's position in the 1920s--to no avail. Turnbull accepted Ruhumbika's case as the stronger. However, according to a former secretary of Ruhumbika, the Omukama lied to Turnbull in asserting that the Silanga were direct descendants of Ruhinda the Great.¹ The validity of this assertion becomes apparent from an analysis of non-Silanga traditions from informants such as Bahitwa.

1. Interview with Alipyo Mnyaga.

The Silanga relationship to Ruhinda, however, cannot be casually dismissed. Ruhumbika's version of direct descendancy varies only slightly from the majority of existing traditions recounted by members of the Silanga clan in the late 1960s. That this identification is not merely a product of the twentieth century is suggested by an abakama list compiled by the explorer H. M. Stanley after his visit to the island in 1875. Stanley's list is somewhat garbled for the earlier rulers, but significantly he begins the list with Ruhinda.¹ Stanley undoubtedly received a misleading or an incorrect translation from his interpreter. His Kerebe informants probably emphasized the link between the Silanga and Ruhinda and this was incorrectly interpreted by Stanley to mean that Ruhinda was the founder of the Silanga dynasty. But the significant fact is that Ruhinda was mentioned and that an effort was apparently made to establish a relationship between the ruling Silanga clan of Bukerebe and the royal Hinda clan in Buzinza, Nkole, and the Haya states.

The Silanga Claim to Royalty in Ihangiro

The "official" or Silanga version of its relationship to Ruhinda is initially described followed by the "unofficial" version which is the basic account given by men who are not members of the royal clan. An independent reconstruction is then advanced that is based upon Kerebe traditions in addition to the

1. H. M. Stanley, Through the Dark Continent (London, 1899), I, 196.

evidence available from the Haya and Zinza traditions concerning Ruhinda the Great.

The "official" account, in common with other interpretations, initially introduces Kankombya (Nkombya), the father of Katobaha who was the first omukama of Bukerebe.¹ According to this account Kankombya was the eldest of Ruhinda the Great's five sons and upon the death of Ruhinda, Kankombya became the omukama of Ihangiro.² He soon experienced problems when one of his brothers attempted to usurp the royal stool; Kankombya met the challenge by forcing his jealous brother into exile. The latter migrated northward and eventually married and settled in Buganda. After he had secured a respected position in Buganda, he persuaded the kabaka of Buganda to assist him in attacking Kankombya so that he could become omukama. Eventually the pretender returned to Ihangiro accompanied by a large Ganda force and, following a bitterly fought struggle, defeated Kankombya who was severely wounded by an arrow during the final stages of the conflict. Realizing that it was a mortal wound Kankombya summoned Katobaha before him and informed his eldest son:

My son, I am soon to die. When my spirit has departed bury my body carefully--but do not bury me together with my head. You must cut off my head and take it

1. In addition to Buyanza, versions of the "official" account are found in sources cited in footnote 1, p. 60, above.

2. Traditions from the west lake district claim that on Ruhinda's death his kingdom was divided into numerous divisions; each was ruled by one of Ruhinda's sons.

with you wherever you may go, for you will never rule this country; we are defeated. Now let me die.¹

Katobaha followed his father's instructions after his death; he severed the head and henceforth carried it with him in his travels. Since Katobaha's position in Ihangiro was insecure he assembled his relatives and friends and together they prepared for an extended journey by canoe. Soon Katobaha, accompanied by his mother, Nzunaki, departed from Ihangiro together with his entourage for an unknown destination; they paddled directly across the lake in an easterly direction and eventually settled on Bukerebe.²

The above account of the Silanga relationship to Ruhinda is straightforward: Kankombya was a son of Ruhinda, the founder of the Hinda dynasty. Providing that the earlier portion of the royal clan's history is ignored, this version appears acceptable. But the tradition offered by Silanga and non-Silanga informants tracing the founder of the Silanga clan's trek of some 200 to 300 miles from Isene, a settlement located about 80 miles east of Bukerebe, to Ihangiro calls into question the Silanga role in the latter chiefdom. The Silanga have no apparent wish to deny this migration; it is simply not readily volunteered. Their immediate

1. Cory, "The Coming of the Wasilanga Chiefs."

2. This account is based upon the sources cited above in footnote 1, p. 60. See also A. M. D. Turnbull, "Usambiro Sultanate, . . . ; History of the Bahinda Rule in Usinza," Cory Papers No. 416. Turnbull's speculation that the Katobaha who lost his throne in Usambiro was the Katobaha of Kerebe history does not have verification from Kerebe sources although some features of the two accounts are similar.

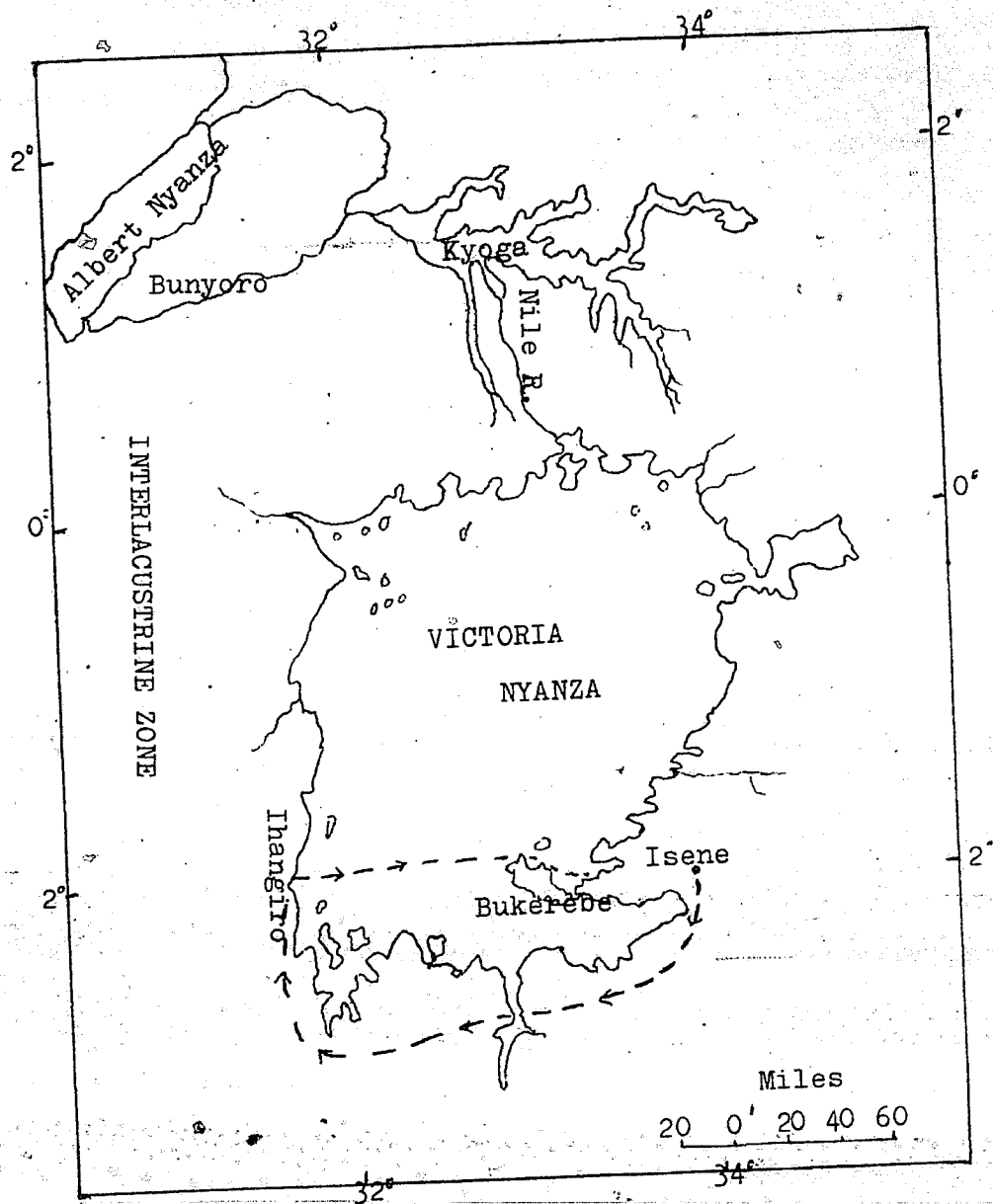
response to an inquiry about their background refers back to the years in Ihangiro. The events that occurred earlier at Isene are relatively unimportant in their estimation and consequently are not forthcoming without encouragement. An abbreviated account of Silanga traditions has thus found its way into governmental and historical records. An examination of the journey from Isene to Ihangiro, a tradition that is common among informants of different clans, yields additional evidence concerning the origins of the Silanga clan.

From Isene to Ihangiro

All informants agree that the ancestor who arrived in Ihangiro had originally commenced his journey from Isene, a dry, sparsely populated location east of Bukerebe.¹ The Segena clan, from which the Silanga hived-off, had originally emigrated from the Bunyoro dispersal center via the eastern side of the Victoria Nyanza.² Beyond this fact nothing is remembered about Bunyoro itself, such as conditions there or why the clan left, or the regions through which their ancestors passed enroute to Isene. No chronology exists that might suggest the number of

1. Informants with valuable information on the Silanga migration and their role in Ihangiro include Buyanza (Silanga), Magoma s/o Kitina (Silanga), Aniceti Kitereza (Silanga), Palapala s/o Kazwegulu (Silanga), Alipyo Mnyaga (Miro), Kaliga s/o Lwambali (Sita), Sameo Rubuzi (Siba) and Bahitwa (Kula).

2. Interviews with Magoma s/o Kitina, Buyanza s/o Nansagate, and Bahitwa.



Migration of Silanga Ancestors from Isene to Ihangiro to Bukerebe

generations involved in the migration or for how long the clan had resided at Isene. The identity of the man who left his family to become the founder of the Silanga sub-clan is not clear; even Silanga informants do not agree on this issue. Most informants, however, identify him as Kankombya although it may be preferable to think of him as Kankombya's forefather. Traditions tend to reduce the number of generations involved in a process that occurred some centuries earlier into a few, or even a single, generation of time.

The most detailed Silanga tradition relates that Kankombya departed from his family at Isene after his favorite hunting dog was found dead, a deed Kankombya suspected was perpetrated by a member of his family. A heated argument ensued but the issue was not resolved to Kankombya's satisfaction. He consequently left Isene with a hunting companion of the Sita clan, a man tentatively identified as Buniri.¹ The two men roamed about the country, living as hunters while generally moving in a westward direction along the southern shore of the Victoria Nyanza and eventually settling in the district of Ihangiro. This may have occurred in the sixteenth century, either at the time of Ruhinda the Great's reign or shortly after his death.

Kankombya and Buniri lived in the bush as hunters for a time; they were particularly adept at killing buffalo with their bows and poisoned arrows. One day a young girl, usually

1. Interview with Kaliga s/o Lwambali.

described as a servant or slave of the ruler of Ihangiro, found the two hunters hidden in a wooded sanctuary. Although very suspicious of the men, she permitted herself to be won over by their forthrightness and charm. The hunters gave her a gift of meat in return for her promise not to reveal their whereabouts to her master and chief. But soon the chief learned that the girl had returned home on one occasion with fresh meat and he asked her to explain how she had acquired it. Under intensive questioning she eventually disclosed her secret: two strangers were living in the woods nearby. Immediately a search party was organized to locate and capture or kill the intruders. The girl naturally pleaded for the lives of the hunters since they had shown her considerable kindness. The chief did not commit himself in advance to any particular course of action and the girl was forced to lead a party of warriors to the hiding place of the hunters. The girl tactfully persuaded the two strangers to emerge from the woods and allow themselves to be taken before the chief.

Once in the chief's court, the two men gave a full account of their wanderings and explained their activities while in Ihangiro. Their bearing so impressed the ruler that he granted them permission to remain and settle in his district. They continued to hunt buffalo, frequently leading others on their forays. People were impressed with the hunters' prowess because buffalo were seldom hunted in Ihangiro; too often in the past hunters had been killed or maimed by these animals. Kankombya and Buniri, however, hunted with poisoned arrows and were sufficiently

skillful to avoid the animals.

When the hunters' supply of poisoned arrows was depleted, they ceased hunting by which time Kankombya's conduct and leadership had won the ruler's respect. Eventually both Kankombya and Buniri were given wives by the chief; Kankombya's wife was Nzunaki, the maiden who had initially discovered the two hunters. The hunters' pattern of life soon changed to the normal existence of people who lived near the lake shore including at least two new activities for Kankombya: the construction of sewn canoes from which the name Silanga is derived and the hunting of hippopotami. During this interlude time may again be distorted in tradition. The migration from Isene, the episode at Ihangiro, and the settlement at the lake shore are all attributed to one man, although it is possible that more than one generation was involved in this period and that the tradition describes the sequence of events in poetic form.

The "Unofficial" Versions of the Silanga in Ihangiro

According to "unofficial" traditions that deny the Silanga's claims of descent from the Hinda clan in Ihangiro, Kankombya prospered and his wife bore five sons. Unfortunately his relationship with the ruler caused increasing problems. The favors granted to Kankombya nurtured the resentment of others in the chiefdom who felt that their own positions were being jeopardized by the growing respect of the omukama for Kankombya.

Schemes began to emerge either to harm Kankombya or to tarnish his reputation. Friends intervened on Kankombya's behalf on numerous occasions to frustrate his enemies' unscrupulous actions, but the pressure continued to mount and Kankombya advised his friends and relatives to make plans to leave Ihangiro. Before long they implemented their plans and a sizable party stealthily departed from Ihangiro by canoe to an unknown eastern destination.¹

It is readily apparent that this account of the Silanga's background retains a very plebian quality. It does not attribute royalty or chiefdomship to the Silanga sojourn in Ihangiro. What is significant about the conflicting traditions is the basic agreement that the Silanga lived for a period of time in Ihangiro; their role there is disputed, not the fact that they were there. Details have become distorted, wittingly and/or unwittingly, to the extent that the Silanga position in Ihangiro is either claimed to have been a chiefly one or a low, almost slave status. One of the few common facts in Silanga and non-Silanga accounts is the number of sons (five) attributed to Ruhinda in the official and to Kankombya in the unofficial account.

The Silanga ancestor who migrated from Isene is integrated effortlessly into the non-Silanga version which states that the hunters became captives of the ruler of Ihangiro. Over a period of time, it contends, the faithful qualities of the

1. Hurèl, "Religion et vie domestique," 65-68; White Fathers, "The Ukerewe Tradition"; interviews with Magoma, Bahitwa, and Kaliga.

Silanga ancestor won the ruler's respect, thereby alienating others around the court who became jealous of his rise in the chief's esteem which in turn precipitated the flight across the lake. In contrast, the most plausible Silanga account incorporating both the trek from Isene and the rise to royalty in Ihangiro asserts that the ancestor who came to Ihangiro as a hunter--or his descendant--rose peacefully to political preeminence in the chiefdom. The ruler, usually identified as Ruhinda the Great, was so impressed with the stranger's loyalty and ability that he selected him as his heir rather than any of his sons. This inference to adoption dispels the confusion about direct ancestry between the Silanga and Ruhinda and also serves to explain the conflict that emerged between the "brothers" over the chiefdomship. The unofficial account referring to jealousy within the court to discredit the Silanga ancestor can even be compared favorably with this interpretation, except the unofficial version does not admit any royalty contention.

Yet another version recorded by the White Fathers and also held by Buyanza claims that it was actually Ruhinda the Great who migrated from Isene to Ihangiro.¹ The chronicler of this tradition did not attempt to simplify or gloss over the internal inconsistencies presented because he was more concerned about the ethnic implications. This version states that Ruhinda arrived in Ihangiro while a non-Hima ruler was in power, and, by

1. "The Ukerewe Tradition"; Palapala s/o Kazwegulu, Silanga, gave the same relationship.

unexplained means, became the ruler: "Tradition is by no means clear, but it is said that the Msilanga who became sultan was in fact Ruhinda and that it was after Ruhinda's death that his successor Nkombya was attacked by his own brother who previously had been driven away to Uganda. . . ." ¹ This particular rendition explicitly denies that Ruhinda had any ties with the pastoral Hima until the dynasty was founded after which time he became associated with the Hima through marriage. The Kerebe are well aware that traditions from the Hayá states and Buzinza do not admit this assertion. Haya traditions state unequivocally that Ruhinda arrived directly from Bunyoro leading a strong contingent of Hima pastoralists. An historical reconstruction of Ruhinda's efforts to establish his empire in the west lake district completed recently by Israel Katoke ² does not allow a serious consideration of the assertion that Ruhinda came from Isene. ³ The numerous conflicting accounts of the Silanga antecedents and their political role in Ihangiro provide some basis for discerning the cultural identity of the Silanga that narrows the possible limits for the clan's role in the society of, Ihangiro.

1. "The Ukerewe Tradition."

2. Katoke, "A History of Karagwe," 35-75.

3. Simeo Rubuzi, a Kerebe with Kara ancestry, offered an explanation for the confusion regarding Ruhinda. He suggested that the man's name who left Isene was Nyahinda which has subsequently been distorted to Ruhinda in traditions in an effort to identify the clan with Ruhinda the Great.

Cultural Attributes of the Royal Clan

A critical examination of the conflicting accounts suggests that the identity of the Silanga's role in Ihangiro is dependent upon the resolution of three basic issues: the identity of the man who migrated from Isene, the ethnic identity of this individual--whether a pastoral Hima or a Bantu-speaking hunter--and whether any of the Silanga ancestors who lived in Ihangiro ever served as rulers.

The first issue, the hunter's identity, remains shrouded in some uncertainty although traditions from the Haya states make it reasonably clear that the Silanga ancestor could not have been Ruhinda the Great. Rather, a more likely identity is either Kankombya, or his ancestor.

The second issue, the ethnic identity of Kankombya, may contain a significant clue to the entire identity problem. Ruhinda has always been closely associated with the Hima pastoralists although he was not necessarily of Hima stock himself; he is identified as a son of Wamara, the last of the Chwezi rulers in Bunyoro. According to traditions from Karagwe, the royal Hinda clan, along with Hima clans, have never included fish in their diet. Like most pastoralists they lived mainly on meat, milk and other cattle products.¹ The "official" Silanga traditions makes no attempt to portray their ancestors as Hima or Tatoga, but by claiming that Ruhinda was their ancestor, they

1. Israel Katoke, personal communication to the author, September 11, 1968.

remove him from a pastoral heritage because the Silanga proudly proclaim their own prowess in fishing, construction of canoes, and even hunting hippopotami, skills of fishermen learned while in Ihangiro. When this evidence is introduced the "official" account of the Silanga sojourn in Ihangiro loses its credibility.

The final issue, whether Kankombya or any of the Silanga ruled, like the first issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved. A possible check is to determine whether Kankombya fled with his son Katobaha to Bukerebe or whether he died in Ihangiro, but as many informants asserted that he did make the voyage as those who claimed that he did not, and no particular account gives sufficient evidence to determine which is more likely. Traditions do not appear to be primarily concerned about Kankombya's specific deeds, partially explaining the confusion over the location of his burial site. Instead they stress Kankombya's severed head which represents the spiritual repository of his wisdom and power. By retaining possession of this physical symbol, Katobaha could continue to benefit from the spiritual and worldly powers of his father. The significance of this particular symbol in traditions and the related burial custom of severing the head of an omukama and then burying the body with the head of the deceased's predecessor, however, indicates that Kankombya was closely associated with chiefdomship.

The Kerebe use of the proper noun Omuhinda (pl. Abahinda) also requires an explanation. In the west lake district Hinda or Bahinda is the name of the royal clan founded by Ruhinda the Great. The Silanga do not utilize this name to identify their

clan but rather to identify the descendants of the abakama. The name Abalenzi, however, is reserved specifically for the sons of an omukama and although the nonruling sons retain this designation their sons and grandsons are referred to as Abahinda.¹ Female descendants of an omukama are called Abahindakazi (the root -kazi means girl or woman). Silanga informants cannot explain the derivation of the name Omuhinda and they make no attempt to refer to Ruhinda, though this appears to be an obvious option. A major factor for not seeking a close identity with the Hinda clan is the totem discrepancy. The totems of the Silanga are a small wren-like bird (enfunzi) and a specie of fish (omusilionjo) whereas the Hinda totem is a monkey (enkende).

In summary it is credible that a Silanga ancestor lived in Ihangiro at the time of Ruhinda or shortly after his death and the chiefdom of Ihangiro was a portion of Ruhinda's substantial empire ruled by his descendants.² Kankombya rose to a position of prominence within the political system of the chiefdom but by doing so he aroused the animosity of those he had surpassed in rank and power. His position was almost certainly not as the omukama of Ihangiro but more likely as a trusted subchief of the ruler.³ During this interlude Kankombya and his son were

1. Great-grandsons are no longer Abahinda according to Buyanza.

2. Oliver, "Discernible Developments in the Interior," 186.

3. J. La Fontaine and Audrey Richards state that in the Haya chiefdoms the omukama selected district governors (balagilwa) who were drawn from non-royal clans; "The Haya," East African Chiefs, ed., A. I. Richards (New York, 1959), 180.

certainly exposed to royal ritual and state-craft since the Kerebe political system is definitely modeled on the Hinda system. Then, at a time of political upheaval, Kankombya's opponents successfully removed him from office and thereupon Katobaha and his coterie fled. The Silanga claim that they are direct descendants of Ruhinda the Great cannot be accepted, but a close identification with him existed. In this sense Ruhinda looms large as the spiritual progenitor of the Silanga.¹

The Silanga: From Exile to Authority

Katobaha's flight from Ihangiro with his band of followers can only be described as a momentous but desperate undertaking.² According to traditions, they made considerable preparation for their journey, suggesting that they fully intended to strike out across the open waters of the lake, an unusual decision given the threat of sudden storms and the impossibility of foraging for food; they undoubtedly feared pursuit.³ The inclusion of banana suckers within their provisions presumes that they hoped to settle in an area that was climatically suited for growing bananas.

1. Buyanza, a Silanga, expressed it thusly: "The Abahinda (Ruhinda's clan) came from Bunyoro to Karagwe; they did not reach Bukerebe but their grandsons [the Silanga] did."

2. The identity of the various clan representatives accompanying Katobaha varies among informants. There is agreement about the Hembe, Singo, Zubwa, Sita, Yango, and Gembe clans, but disagreement about the Rubizi, Tundu, and Songe clans.

3. Inclement weather on the lake is related to the seasonal rainfall pattern, thus some months are safer for travel than others.

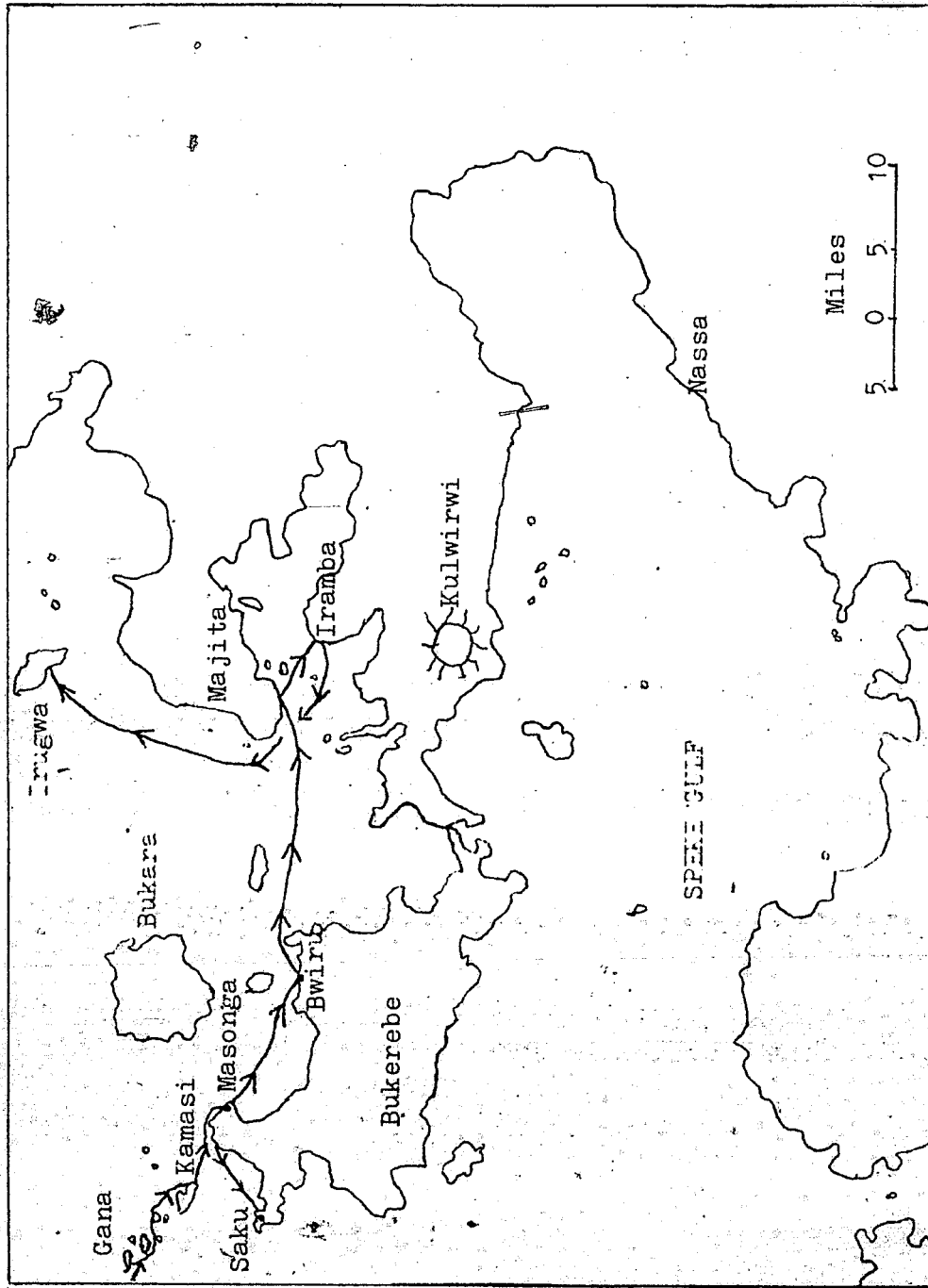
Their residence in an Ihangiro fishing community would have given them an opportunity to travel considerable distances along the southern shores of the lake thus providing some knowledge about the region's differing ecology.

Traditions contain detailed descriptions of the party's eastward course across the lake. Their course can be partially reconstructed since traditions enumerate a series of islands that were visited. Nzunaki, the mother of Katobaha, emerges as the heroic figure during this lake journey. It was she who assumed authority when others despaired of ever reaching land again: she prophesied that an island of great importance for them in the future lay ahead. When she saw a low flying water bird, an ensozu, she directed her son to follow it and they were soon led by the bird to the uninhabited island of Goziba. After resting they continued their voyage, again following a bird until reaching the uninhabited isle of Gana. The voyagers at this stage had reached an area that abounded with numerous small islands, just to the northwest of Bukerebe. Finally, on the island of Kamasi, the band encountered members of the Zigu and Hunga clans, probably the first significant indication that their journey would not end in disaster. Traditions infer that the exiles remained on Kamasi for some time, planting their banana suckers and sowing millet to replenish their food supply. During their stay a cordial relationship was established with the inhabitants who were impressed with the banana, a new food source

for them.¹ Katobaha then determined to continue his journey to the northwestern tip of Bukerebe, charging the Zigu leaders to care for the newly established banana groves.

Traditions invariably relate Katobaha's encounters with three different settlements in this region: at Masonga the people were led by Igungula, a Hinga; at Saku the leader (omugerezi) was Tandwe, a Zigu; and at Bwiru, Makobe, a Hira, was the leader. Masonga and Saku were situated on the northwestern end of the island while Bwiru was located some twenty miles to the east. In each case Katobaha arrived as a congenial traveler with his companions and in each case the inhabitants welcomed him. Silanga informants deny that Katobaha arrived as an omukama looking for a chiefdom. Katobaha's relationship with the inhabitants and what he expected from them, however, is revealed at Masonga. It would not be surprising if Katobaha and his followers assumed a superior air because the knowledge and skills they possessed were totally unknown to the inhabitants. While the population of Kamasi had been duly impressed with the travelers, the abagerezi (leaders) of the three settlements did not shower Katobaha with the same affection and obeisance. Katobaha and his contingent consequently devised a scheme to attack Igungula, the Masonga leader. Igungula stoutly defended

1. The evidence for Katobaha's flight and establishment of authority is based upon a number of sources including: Hatchell, "History of the Ruling Family of Ukerewe," 198-199; Hurel, "Religion et vie domestique," 65-68; Turnbull, "History and Legends on Ukerewe Chiefdom"; Cory, "The Coming of the Wasilanga Chiefs"; Kitereza, "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs"; interviews with Magoma, Bahitwa, Buyanza, and Kaliga.



Katobaha's Passage in the Southeastern Lake Region

himself during the ensuing skirmish but fell mortally wounded. Thereupon he called Katobaha to his deathbed and requested the Silanga conqueror to treat his people justly and kindly; Katobaha pledged to do so before the dying leader. Shortly thereafter Katobaha sent men to carry out a similar plan to defeat Tandwe, the local omugerezi at Saku. Tandwe resisted unsuccessfully but escaped death. Masonga and Saku were then placed under the authority of an official appointed by Katobaha who gave the appointee a ritual spear as a symbol of authority. Henceforth these communities remained loyal to Katobaha.

The encounter with Makobe (Kikobe) was characterized by guile and treachery rather than military power. Makobe, of the Hira clan, dominated a substantial community of several clans who accepted him as their omugerezi. As the Kerebe chronicler Kitereza describes it, "Katobaha continued his practice of winning people. He gave them ripe bananas to taste. The Abahira found them very good; they had never tasted them before. Because of the bananas, Katobaha attracted their interest and acquired a number of adherents."¹ The people were also intrigued by the many catfish that the newcomers caught by using a hook and line, a new fishing technique to them. One day Makobe expressed an interest in learning how to fish in this manner so Katobaha invited him to accompany the canoes out onto the lake to set the lines; Makobe was delighted and eagerly accepted the invitation. Katobaha took advantage of Makobe's vulnerability

1. Kitereza, "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs."

in the canoe without any of his followers and the man was tossed overboard once they were far from shore. After removing their daily catch Katobaha and his men then reset their lines and returned to Bwiru. When they arrived the Hira asked: "'where is our leader, Makobe?' Katobaha answered, 'when we reached deep water Makobe was so frightened that he jumped and fell into the water.'" The Hira were completely demoralized without their omugerezi and subsequently requested Katobaha to rule them. But he procrastinated; he still wanted to travel before settling down although a representative may have remained behind.¹

From Bwiru, traditions relate how the conquering band continued to travel eastward by water until they reached Majita. Although the region was inhabited, there is no indication that an attempt was made to conquer the local leaders at that time nor in later centuries.² A possible reason for this seemingly unusual reticence after the display of ambition may be in the customs and values of the Bantu-speaking population who practiced male circumcision revealing an intense exposure to pastoralists, presumably Tatoga. Narubamba, a brother of Katobaha, married and settled in Majita, but prior to his marriage he had to be circumcized, a custom henceforth adopted by his descendants. After his circumcision, the Silanga regarded Narubamba as an outcaste and his clan name was altered to Zandwe. Narubamba was

1. Kitereza, "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs."

2. It is possible that an attempt to establish control was repulsed and hence "forgotten."

not regarded as a representative of Katobaha in Majita although his descendants were assigned a responsibility by later Kerebe abakama: when ordered they supplied wood from the emizule (mivule in Swahili) grove of hard wood trees in Majita for the omukama's stool, wooden utensils, and canoe.¹

Iramba, located across the bay to the south of Majita, became the eventual settlement of Katobaha. His village site was along the lake shore in an area significantly drier than the district of the defeated clans to the west. Katobaha's travels were not complete, however. His last voyage took him north of Majita, to the island of Irugwa where one of his brothers, Ruhinda, remained to represent him. Numerous smaller islands were also visited and, finally, on the small island of Chehumbe, Katobaha had his head shaved signifying that this was the northern limit of his chiefdom.²

Kahana, another brother of Katobaha, displayed further wanderlust and ambition. According to tradition he saw a distant highland area and decided that he would like to visit it. Accordingly he embarked on a journey that took him to the present Sukuma chiefdom of Nassa. He liked the land and so sent word back to his brother informing him of his decision to settle

1. According to Buyanza the stand of trees was inadvertently started when the exiles repaired their canoes and pieces of wood from the canoes were left about and some of them took root thus beginning an isolated stand of mivule trees in this part of the lake. Timber from these trees remained the exclusive property of the Kerebe omukama even though Majita never became a part of the Kerebe chiefdom.

2. Kitereza, "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs."

there; he also requested from Katobaha the symbols of authority (for example, a drum, stool and spear) to enable him to establish his own chiefdom. Katobaha granted the request thereby extending the dominion of the Silanga clan. Nassa, however, never became an integral part of Bukerebe although the Nassa chiefs maintained a ritual link to the Kerebe omukama; whenever a new chief of Nassa was enstooled the ritual objects of chiefdomship were always requested from the parent clan.¹

The Silanga are Threatened from Ihangiro

Katobaha faced a final challenge before his dynasty could be solidly established. The challenge came from Ihangiro in the form of warriors sent to crush Katobaha and his band. This event provides an additional indication that Katobaha had held a prominent position in Ihangiro from which he fled in that his flight apparently aroused serious concern. Had he merely been a peasant or fisherman the flotilla of canoes that followed and attempted to capture or kill Katobaha probably would never have been sent.²

Traditions contradict one another concerning Kankombya's residence at the time of his death. But within the conflicting accounts there is consistency to the degree that if a version

1. Kitereza, "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs;" interview with Masalu Kapongo of Nassa chiefdom, Usukuma.

2. Bahitwa consistently stated that the canoes numbered thirty. Other informants providing information on this particular series of events are Kaliga, Buyanza, Magoma, and Alipyo Mnyaga; also Kitereza, "The Background History of the Wasilanga Chiefs."

indicated that Kankombya was killed in Ihangiro, then it was Katobaha who later committed suicide or, conversely, if it indicated that Kankombya also fled from Ihangiro, then it was he who committed suicide when the enemy flotilla arrived. Whatever the case may have been, it is clear that the man in question did not wish to be captured by his pursuers. Apparently only by committing suicide could the enemy's enterprise be foiled because it would enable the son to preserve his father's head as a symbol of inherited authority. If the enemy had acquired the head, the various traditions imply that Silanga authority would have been substantially reduced. There is no indication that a large scale encounter occurred and if any fighting took place it was probably limited.

The timing of the pursuit is difficult to reconstruct. When relating the incident, informants invariably relate it after Katobaha had successfully overcome the three leaders he encountered at Masonga, Saku and Bwiru. None of these confrontations are characterized as swift maneuvers but rather as gradual, time consuming actions designed to subdue an authority that refused to give Katobaha the recognition he expected. The flotilla from Ihangiro that pursued the exiles may not have appeared for some time after the Silanga settled at Iramba. Motivation for Katobaha's continued movement to the east even after subduing groups of people along the way may have been fear of just such a force. The pursuing flotilla apparently followed Katobaha's example and came across open water from the west in their sewn canoes, again displaying a remarkable lack of concern

for the inherent dangers. Simultaneously the flotilla's presence reflects that the chiefdom of Ihangiro, from which they came, was well organized and that the chief had sufficient authority and resources at his disposal to embark on such a venture.

Katobaha (Kankombya?) apparently learned of the pursuit after he settled at Iramba and shortly thereafter took his own life. When the pursuers embarked on their return voyage they encountered a severe storm off the northwestern tip of Bukerebe which capsized their canoes, drowning all the occupants. One canoe survived and the occupants returned safely to Ihangiro to give their report. According to informants, Tandwe, the man defeated by Katobaha at Saku but who then accepted Silanga authority, was responsible for causing the storm. He knew of the flotilla's mission and its consequence and therefore meted out revenge in this awesome manner. The Silanga, in recognition of Tandwe's services, henceforth regarded his clan, the Zigu, as their own. Today, when referring to a descendant of Tandwe, his clan is given as Zigu-Silanga.

* * * * *

The hunter from Isene, or his descendants rising from a menial position in Ihangiro society to a respected position of substantial authority, aroused the animosity of court rivals in Ihangiro. Consequently Katobaha, the son of Kankombya, led a contingent of followers across the lake to Bukerebe. The band of exiles impressed the inhabitants in the southeastern lake

region with their knowledge of fishing with hook and line, with the art of constructing sewn canoes, with their new food source --the banana--and with their skill in hunting the hippopotomi. But skills and knowledge alone were insufficient to convince the inhabitants that the Silanga should be acknowledged as their undisputed rulers, consequently the Silanga and their followers employed guile and military might to crush the existing leadership and thereby place Katobaha, the Silanga leader, in the role of conqueror. The later suicide of Katobaha thwarted the immediate threat from Ihangiro to stifle the Silanga dynasty before it had an opportunity to take root and flourish.

The Silanga obviously regarded themselves as a branch of the Hinda dynasty and although the evidence does not support a direct relationship between the Hinda and Silanga clans it does support the Silanga contention that they had close ties with the Hinda ruling clan. The way of life characteristic of Katobaha's people; their values and their powers were recognized to be superior to those of the people they found living in the district; their immediate success reinforced this contention. The next task was to impose a system of government that would effectively control the newly founded chiefdom.

Chapter IV

AN ERA OF POLITICAL MATURING

The establishment of the Silanga chiefdom presumably occurred during the latter half of the seventeenth century. From then until the latter part of the following century, the royal clan evolved a political system to govern its expanding territory. Traditions do not provide an abundance of information about this era, yet numerous significant developments are discernible. It is apparent that the powers and administrative framework of the system of government were firmly fixed during this period. Relations between the Silanga and two other clans, the Kula and Gabe, were marred by friction: but the Kula maintained a political system though it was subject to periodic harrassment while the Gabe were dispersed and, those who remained with the Silanga, ritually subjugated. The Silanga themselves experienced a military defeat at the hands of the pastoral Tatoga and consequently fled westward from their settlement at Iramba. An important adjustment required of the Kerebe during the eighteenth century was their need to obtain hoes from Buzinza as a consequence of losing control over local iron ore sources on Kuḍwirwi as well as losing the services of smelters.

The Pre-Silanga Political System

The Silanga's experience in Ihangiro enabled them to introduce a similar complex political and administrative system in the southeastern lake region when they established their own dynasty. They did not, however, move into a political vacuum nor were they confronted only by a clan-level political system. In the seventeenth century a form of government existed in the southeastern lake district that clearly transcended clan lines. Traditions tend to obliterate the existence of numerous clans and consequently only four clans readily emerged from discussions concerning this period: the Zigu, Hira, Gabe and Kula. Numerous other clans lived in the region but their presence is not readily discernible because they were either subordinate to one of the major clans or did not challenge the authority of the Silanga.¹

The few dominant clan leaders (abagerezi) are not attributed with the authority of a chief in the sense that the Silanga royal clan provided an omukama.² Furthermore, each clan, whether a dominant unit or not, has "always" had an omugabiro, a respected elder whose duties focused primarily upon appeals to esteemed ancestors, thus the omugabiro acted as a liaison between the living and the dead. When a number of clans lived in the

1. Information on the Kerebe political system contained in this chapter is primarily the contribution of Buyanza and Bahitwa while Makene s/o Ikongolero contributed complementary information on the Hira clan.

2. Relevant comments on other rulers in western Tanzania at this time are found in Roberts, "The Nyamwezi," 118-120; and Isaria N. Kimambo, "The Interior Before 1800," A History of Tanzania, ed., I. N. Kimambo and A. J. Temu (Nairobi, 1969), 22-24.

same vicinity, however, an omugerezi (pl. abagerezi), emerged as a district leader with ritual powers encompassing more than one clan and he was assisted by a council, apparently composed of representatives from each clan residing in the district. As described in the preceding chapter, the Silanga encountered three abagerezi, Igungula, Tandwe, and Makobe, and it was their authority and position that had to be subordinated.

The functions of the abagerezi were primarily judicial in nature: attempting to resolve disputes over inter-clan thefts, debts, boundary disagreements, and adultery. Additional responsibilities included the parceling out of land to immigrants as well as responsibility for formal relations with other districts outside his jurisdiction.¹ The basic responsibility of the abagerezi appears, then, to have been essentially one of maintaining social order. Military functions are significantly absent from the attributed role of the abagerezi although this does not preclude martial encounters. But as Andrew Roberts suggests in his historical study of the Nyamwezi, discontented individuals were just as likely to emigrate as they were to foment dissension.² The Kerebe, for that matter, do not regard themselves or their ancestors as outstanding warriors; historically their geographical location has been their most effective

1. See Hans Cory, "Report on the Pre-European Tribal Organizations in Musoma District. . .," Cory Papers No. 173. This report contains information on the people east of Bukerebe whose system of government was chiefless and presumably similar in structure to the early Kerebe organization.

2. "The Nyamwezi," 120.

defense.

The omugerezi who led the abagerezi b'amagambo (council) was seemingly a representative from a particular clan and not an elected official;¹ he represented a clan that had demonstrated unusual powers earlier and thereafter one of its members was accepted as the omugerezi. Frequently recognized competence in the ritual sphere, such as rainmaking, healing, or controlling the environment in some other manner, equipped a clan for a role of authority.² The Hira clan, for example, were noted abafumu (medicine men) and became abafumu for the royal clan; according to Bahitwa, the Hira were the first abafumu in the district. Unusual powers of this nature furnished the rationale for other clans to subordinate themselves. Tandwe's strength, as noted above, was recognized as being sufficient to cause the storm that swamped the flotilla from Ihangiro; he had been an omugerezi before his defeat by Katobaha. While the council that existed before the Silanga's arrival retained a modified role in the Silanga governing hierarchy, the role of the abagerezi was abolished.

1. This organization was similar to the council that existed among the Kwaya (Jita), who live just to the northeast of the Kerebe, and was composed of all clan leaders and heads of important subclans. The Kwaya council could increase its own size if necessary and this group elected the leader of the community: Cory, "Tribal Organizations in Musoma District."

2. Unlike the Pare in eastern Tanzania, the knowledge of iron smelting or smithing did not confer authority upon the practitioner in Kerebe society: Isaria N. Kimambo, "The Pare," Tanzania Before 1900, 18. Walter Cline comments on the varied role of smiths in East Africa among the Masai, Chagga, Nyoro, and Nkole in Mining and Metallurgy in Negro Africa, General Series in Anthropology, No. 5 (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1937), 114-119.

The Powers of the Omukama

The omukama stood as the ultimate source of power within the new order. The functions of the ruler were necessarily broad, incorporating judicial, administrative and legislative duties, and were discharged in close collaboration with his council of elders. Unlike the majority of East African leaders who had to contend with an increasingly complex network of relationships during the nineteenth century, the Kerebe abakama did not find it necessary to become continually embroiled in military forays with neighbors.¹ Occasional fights certainly occurred, particularly with the rival Kula clan who occupied the southern portion of the peninsula and island, but they were small scale encounters that did not continually concern the population, although both land and cattle were at stake. The Ganda also posed a very real threat to Kerebe society after 1877, but cooperation with these potentially destructive people prevented serious disruption.² Therefore the Kerebe and their omukama did not find it necessary to devote their energies towards the creation of a militarily orientated chiefdom.

The omukama was assumed to be the intercessor between his people and the spiritual realm and was in a position to assist the Kerebe during their time of need. In comparison to

1. Roberts, "Political Change in the Nineteenth Century," A History of Tanzania.

2. Gerald W. Hartwig, "Bukerebe, The Church Missionary Society, and East African Politics, 1877-1878," African Historical Studies, I, 2 (1968), 223-225.

neighboring people to the north, the Kara, and to the east, the Jita/Kwaya and Shashsi, the Kerebe omukama possessed more concentrated power than any individual in these chiefless societies. Even the Sukuma chiefdoms to the south, across Speke Gulf, regarded the Kerebe omukama with considerable respect for his reputed powers, particularly his rainmaking abilities. Throughout the southeastern lake region there was no more consistently successful rainmaker than the omukama, a factor that added significantly to his prestige among other communities. Rainmakers (abagimba) had always held a significant position of power in Kerebe society and although Katobaha claimed to be proficient in this realm as well, there were successful abagimba prior to his appearance. Hence by merely professing rainmaking powers, the Silanga could scarcely convince the inhabitants that they should replace their existing practitioners with a newcomer, and, in fact, the Silanga omukama did not displace the existing abagimba even though theoretically his powers were supreme in this realm. Each clan retained its own omugimba and the omukama was approached only when seriously threatened or during a drought. Similarly the appeal by each clan to its ancestors remained a family affair, that is, a particular form of spiritual worship existed and no alterations were made in the basic institution just because an omukama was present. But the royal clan's presence added yet another dimension to the prevailing means of invoking the assistance of the spiritual realm. Because the Silanga displayed a more varied and complex relationship within the secular realm, it was assumed that their access to the

spiritual domain was superior. Consequently nonroyal clans respected the omukama's superior powers although they would only request his assistance when their own efforts proved unsuccessful. Clan responsibilities such as rainmaking and appealing to the spirits of their ancestors continued after the chiefdom came into being and henceforth the Kerebe possessed two mutually compatible avenues to approach the awesome spiritual world.

Theory and practice operated in an intriguing manner among the Kerebe. While theoretically supreme the omukama proved his excellence as a leader in practice by attracting to his court those specialists from nonroyal clans who were acknowledged as the best within the chiefdom. If people were experiencing drought, for example, they would inform the omukama of their dilemma and the ineffectiveness of their own efforts to provide rain. He, in turn, would call the most highly regarded omugimba (rainmaker) in the chiefdom to the court and direct him to use the omukama's rainpot, stones and medicine to provide rain. In the case of an invasion by locusts, again there was a particular clan who claimed power to drive the holocaust away and its representative was summoned by the omukama to perform this service for the chiefdom. The specialists were well rewarded for their assistance and acquired considerable social recognition for their association with the omukama; failure had the contrary result.

Rainmaking can be placed in a category of intangible powers, along with other attributed powers, that helped to strengthen the position of the omukama. Appeals directed by him

to his ancestors, to Namuhanga the creator, and to lesser intermediary deities in time of affliction tested the ultimate authority of the ruler and failure to conform to these expectations was the major reason for deposing an omukama. Thus one of the concerted efforts by rulers such as the Kerebe abakama in the nineteenth century, and presumably this would have been equally true earlier, was to seek knowledge--knowledge or power to bolster the position of men confronted and threatened by increasing pressure from new and, frequently, alien forces.¹ Much of the knowledge came in the form of "medicine," some that was attributed with supernatural power to enable the leader to overcome an unprecedented situation, some that was harmful to be used against enemies, and some that was useful in curing new diseases. Because of the continual growth of these intangible powers the functions and role of the omukama were dynamic and increasing in complexity with each new development. When viewed from this perspective it is misleading to refer to "traditional" society. It was never a static situation and an increasingly complex role is a marked characteristic of the omukama's office as well as the conditions under which society evolved.

Selection of the Omukama

The Kerebe system for selecting an omukama minimized the

1. See Terence O. Ranger, "The Movement of Ideas, 1850-1939," A History of Tanzania, 162-163.

opportunities for strife that could lead to dynastic wars.¹ Sons of a ruler were theoretically eligible for the position of omukama. Flaws in their pedigree or physique, however, precluded numerous sons from candidacy. A son whose mother was a member of the Kula clan, for example, or whose mother was a Jita, or a representative of any other outside community, was not considered. The rationale for these exclusions was that if an omukama encountered serious difficulties within the chiefdom he would be unable to call upon his uncles (his mother's brothers) for assistance since they were outside the realm. A second restriction was an age factor; before the twentieth century, an immature boy was not accepted as a candidate because if a lad were chosen, a regent would be necessary and the Kerebe feared placing their trust in a man to act on behalf of the rightful ruler. Reluctance to select a youngster as omukama was evident when Ibanda was deposed in favor of Machunda in the early nineteenth century. The latter, in his teens, was living in exile to the east of Bukerebe when an elder visited him with the specific intention of measuring his height. Apparently the plotters were not satisfied with the lad's size and a second trip was taken later by which time Machunda had achieved sufficient stature, and undoubted maturity, to allow the deposition to take place.

1. For comparison see D. J. Stenning, "The Nyankole," East African Chiefs, ed., Audrey I. Richards (New York, 1959), 148; J. La Fontaine and A. I. Richards, "The Haya," Ibid., 178-179; and Fontaine, "The Zinza," Ibid., 197.

A third limitation for any candidate dealt with the individual's physical attributes. He could be in no way deformed or physically marred; in practice this meant that he could not be circumcized, have pierced ear lobes or front teeth extracted --all practices of various people living to the east of the Kerebe. Conversely, if a newly appointed ruler wanted to disqualify any of his ambitious brothers from office, he merely had to pierce their ears or extract some of their teeth to achieve his objective.¹ The procedure tended to reduce to a minimum fratricide by the ruler.

Beyond the restrictions imposed by the mother's clan, age and physical attributes, the eldest son generally received initial appraisal and under normal circumstances he could expect to be selected. Candidates, however, were not at liberty to act irresponsibly even though their privileges as Abalanzi (sons of the omukama) were numerous. It was necessary for them to convey a sense of responsibility and respect to the elders who would ultimately determine the next omukama. Acceptable behavior, then, comprised the fourth qualification which is discussed at greater length below.

The selection of an omukama was ideally limited to the elders of a single nonroyal clan, the Sita, though in practice a

1. The introduction of colonial rule upset the prevailing system. In 1895 the Germans enthroned Mukaka who had the distinction of possessing two restrictions that normally barred a candidate from consideration as omukama: his mother was a Jita, she had very likely been a slave, and his ear lobes had been pierced. Again, in 1939, Lukumbuzya was a lad of nine years of age at the time of his election.

few valued advisors of the Sita may also have participated.¹ The role and power of this particular clan in the selection of a ruler was unprecedented in other interlacustrine societies where the usual selection procedure was restricted to the royal clan itself.² The Sita are representatives of an old and powerful clan that had possessed political power in various communities within the interlacustrine zone prior to 1500, that is, before the appearance of the Hinda and Bito ruling clans. Kerebe traditions, however, do not impute any unusual authority to the Sita during the seventeenth century or before. Kerebe informants from various clans explain that the special powers and privileges of the clan are a result of the unique relationship that formed between "Kankombya" and Buniri when they departed as hunters from Isene centuries ago. Buniri, the first member of the Sita to be remembered by name, appears in a subservient role in traditions to the forebearer of the Silanga, not as an equal. Whatever the early relationship, evidence from the Silanga's treatment of some subdued clans suggests that the Silanga and Sita combination was based on cooperation. An exception occurred in the nineteenth

1. In addition to selecting the omukama, the Sita clan were specifically responsible for burial of the abakama, storing the omukama's official rain-pot and rain-stones, guarding the royal accoutrements of a ritual nature along with the head of the previous ruler in a special structure called enzu ya menzi, and guarding the abakama's burial ground. The Sita had divided themselves so that a particular elder was responsible for a particular task; the elder's son would then follow his father in the performance of a specific duty.

2. A markedly different situation existed in Buganda where the absence of a royal clan accounted for the variation; see A. I. Richards, "The Ganda," East African Chiefs, 47.

century when an Omusita attempted to overthrow the Silanga ruler and dynasty and place himself as the omukama. The abortive effort, however, did not permanently impair the relationship of the Sita, one that remained substantially unaltered from the time they had arrived with the Silanga in the 1600s until 1895 when colonial representatives limited the prerogatives of the Sita in the selection of an omukama.

The Sita had a number of days at their disposal during which they agreed upon a replacement for a deceased ruler. The time involved for selection occurred between the death of the incumbent and his burial some two to four weeks later. Major variables determining when burial occurred included the time of the omukama's death in relation to the next appearance of the new moon, and the prolonged process of severing the head from the deceased's body.¹ When the body was prepared for burial and the new moon appeared, the death of the ruler was formally announced by striking the symbolic drum of the chiefdom, the matwigacharo. Only a few individuals, such as the Sita, councilors, and some persons working within the court, would previously, officially at least, know of the omukama's death because this was confidential information.

During the brief, unannounced interregnum, the elders of

1. A strand, or several strands, of hair from an elephant or giraffe's tail was looped about the neck and tightened periodically until decomposition permitted the device to sever the partially decomposed flesh. During the process, performed by members of the Gabe clan, the body was treated with "perfuming" agents.

the Sita clan would decide on a successor. It is impossible to determine the amount of consultation that occurred in the selection procedure before the present century, but the intention was to isolate the Sita from pressure. Secrecy discouraged potential candidates and their uncles from influencing the selectors' decision and decreased the possibility of internecine struggles. Although the Sita married only into the Silanga clan, the creation of vested interests was avoided because intermarriage could only be with Silanga who were ineligible for the position of omukama; Sita women could not be married to eligible sons or grandsons of an omukama.

Tradition does not indicate whether any of the abakama before 1895 were younger sons although a tumultuous period in the early nineteenth century produced a number of abakama with the same father, thus some were necessarily younger sons,¹ but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether younger sons were selected in preference to their elder brothers by the Sita. The actual discretionary power of the Sita in selecting an omukama remains theoretically broad since the Kerebe emphasize "behavior" as the significant determining factor, certainly more basic than age. Another unknown condition is the extent of pressure exerted by some candidates upon the Sita even before the death of an incumbent became an immediate concern of which the most acceptable form would be overt respect or periodic visits

1. Mihigo II, the eighth ruler, is the omukama in question; he died in approximately 1820.

to the Sita elders. These elders, since they were fundamentally concerned about the "behavior" of a candidate, desired an individual who would provide a stable, auspicious set of conditions in which they and society in general could flourish. They could be expected to distrust any individual who flaunted his privileges in a callous manner since this would ultimately infringe on the privileges or rights of themselves and others.

Deposition of an Omukama

An equally important function of the Sita clan was the responsibility of deposing an incumbent who did not fulfill the demanding expectations of his office. Drought over an extended period of time, apparently of more than a year's duration, was a serious condition for an agricultural community and the omukama was held directly accountable for it. The twelfth omukama, Ibanda, was deposed for this reason; Ruhinda, Ibanda's predecessor, on the other hand, was allegedly deposed for failure to control an excessive amount of rainfall.¹ In a different situation the "behavior" expected of an omukama is illustrated in the case of the sixth ruler, Lutana Mumanza. His reign commenced auspiciously when he generously shared a large number of his cattle with his subjects but then, sometime later, unwisely

1. This is Bahitwa's version; he also maintained that the lake level increased significantly and numerous islands came into being at this time, including Bukerebe itself and Kome, off the Buzinza coast.

demanded the cattle back, a decision that prompted his removal. Nago, in remembered contrast to Lutana Mumanza, followed his predecessor's lead in generosity but avoided the wrath of his people and simultaneously earned their gratitude by his continuing generous policy.

Discontentment with the abakama ruling between approximately 1820 and 1840 is reflected in the number of deposed abakama. This political instability was only brought under control by Omukama Machunda who successfully checked the apparent abuse of power by the Sita elders. Though this period is remembered as having unusual climatic conditions, the Sita were undoubtedly distressed by other factors, primarily the introduction of diseases that placed a new stress on the social fabric, one that the abakama did not resolve satisfactorily for some time. Because the omukama was ultimately responsible for the welfare of his subjects, the Sita could exercise their prerogative to depose the ruler who allegedly failed in his task. Considerable preparation characterized an attempted deposition of an incumbent if the details reported of Ibanda's removal in the early 1800s is any indication. As previously mentioned, a representative of the Sita visited Machunda to determine whether he was sufficiently mature to replace Ibanda who was confounded by an extended drought. It was not until after the second visit to Machunda, living approximately seventy-five miles to the east, that the Sita made their decision to depose Ibanda. Hence the amount of time consumed while plotting the deposition may have extended over three years, particularly since the physical

maturity of Machunda assumed an important place in the final decision.

The omukama continually weighed the political climate of his chiefdom by means of the council of elders, the visiting enfura (friends of the omukama), the abakungu (headmen), and the abazuma (messengers). The Sita held numerous offices at court and consequently were in a position to hear the reports coming in from the villages. If serious issues remained unresolved for a prolonged length of time the omukama--as well as the Sita--was well aware of it. The resultant stress between the Sita, representing the concerned populace, and the omukama together with his uncles and other supporters during periods of tension would surface in daily affairs. As a general rule the Sita could attempt a deposition only when an omukama's apparent support dwindled to a low ebb. Until such time the Sita had to limit themselves to a period of watchful waiting. In this sense the Sita did not possess unusually significant political prerogatives but rather were an institutionalized means of ridding the chiefdom of a ruler who had lost the support of his people. Certainly in the late nineteenth century, the Sita openly resented Rukonge who is generally regarded in tradition as a cruel and tyrannical omukama during a very disturbed era. Yet the Sita could not depose him because too many Kerebe supported him. Rukonge also fortified his position by an alliance with the Ganda in addition to attaching numerous dependable men to his court; oftentimes these were Ganda migrants who had settled on Bukerebe and owed personal allegiance to Rukonge. Given the restrictions on the

Sita's role, the chiefdom benefited from a relatively stable political system in which the omukama either satisfactorily fulfilled his responsibilities or faced expulsion.

Advisors to the Omukama

The concept of the Silanga political system arrived with Katobaha from Ihangiro; the territorial boundaries of the chiefdom originally comprised the northern portion of the island/peninsula and numerous islands in the vicinity, excluding the island of Bukara. But the various officials and representatives of the omukama in the 1800s were not immediately appointed in the 1600s. While the nascent chiefdom commenced with Katobaha, tradition does not assign the appearance of some royal representatives until the eighteenth century thereby implying that the royal clan evolved a system of government over a period of time.

The omukama and his councilors formed the powerful and prestigious center of the political system. As previously mentioned the Silanga found councils composed of clan elders led by abagerezi already in existence. This system was modified by the royal clan to the extent that an omukama, who exercised substantially more power than had an omugerezi, ruled in conjunction with the council composed of elders from nonroyal clans. The council retained the prerogative of controlling its own number as well as electing its own membership, thereby maintaining a degree of independence. All clans, however, were not

necessarily represented on the council, the only official body that influenced the decision making process. Since the omukama and the council represented the court of final appeal in difficult cases of litigation there was a tendency for ambitious individuals, particularly from unrepresented clans on the council, to gravitate toward the court where they would be noticed by the omukama and the council, assuming that persons nearest the center of authority would receive sympathetic consideration. Others chose to remain aloof from the political center pursuing their daily affairs without undue concern over their lack of social and political prominence.

Men who wished to become known by the omukama had to visit the court on a periodic basis, usually with a gift to the omukama as a token of respect, a social requirement that immediately disqualified men of limited means. The elusive goal sought by ambitious visitors, particularly in the 1800s, was to be regarded as enfura of the omukama, literally interpreted as friends of the ruler. It was not a rank nor an official position but rather a social relationship that guaranteed social prestige and political power. Mere visits to the royal court by no means assured a man of recognition as enfura; his intelligence, wit and general demeanor were important factors. A foolish, irritable or quarrelsome man would be excluded. Recognition of enfura, depending in part upon the omukama's personality, was based upon the value of the man to the court, that is, upon his wisdom, advice and knowledge. Enfura were men occasionally

sought by the omukama and his official advisors for information or advice. Under these circumstances historians in Kerebe society could be recognized as enfura because their traditions were useful in court cases; being an historian (omwanzuzu) was a means of drawing attention to one's self in the effort to become recognized as a friend of the omukama.

The status of enfura permitted men from outside the royal clan to become a part of court life without being an official councillor.¹ The omukama benefited from the enfura by having intelligent, enterprising and trustworthy men about him, men who were in touch with village affairs, thus insuring a secondary unofficial channel of intelligence from the chiefdom; primary responsibility for reporting on affairs of the villages rested with the headmen, official representatives of the omukama. Enfura were divided into two categories: the most prestigious, the endyabusyo, were those who were permitted to eat the food left by the omukama after his meal; the second category of enfura then ate the food remaining after the endyabusyo finished their food. Court protocol was well established and the eating arrangements of the enfura reflected one aspect of it.

1. Nfura or enfura were also found in Haya society, on the western side of the Victoria Nyanza, and are described as high-status clans whereas in Kerebe society high-status individuals more accurately describes the situation. Refer to J. La Fontaine and A. I. Richards, "The Haya," East African Chiefs, 176.

The Bureaucracy of the Omukama

Introduction of chiefdomship brought with it greater territoriality and the need for representatives of the omukama to control the various villages. Essentially the administration of village matters was delegated to abakungu (singular, omukungu) or headmen who resided in the villages. Unlike the councilors and enfura, the abakungu were either members of the royal clan, or a sub-clan of the Silanga, or had married into the royal clan. The majority of headmen were in fact brothers or uncles of the omukama although it was possible for the ruler to designate a sister or daughter as an omukungu in which case the woman's husband could perform the daily tasks of the office.

Abakungu were a common feature within interlacustrine political systems and, from the tradition of Katobaha's travels and his brother settling on the island of Irugwa, it is apparent that abakungu were present from the inception of the chiefdom.¹ By means of these officials the Silanga royal clan subjected the population to the rule and administration of a single family. Although most abakungu were descendants of an omukama and consequently had a vested interest in the chiefdom, they were concomitantly the most potentially disruptive group in society; from their ranks came men who could encourage the deposition of

1. J. La Fontaine and A. I. Richards, "The Haya," East African Chiefs, 181; Stenning, "The Nyankole," Ibid., 150-151; J. La Fontaine, "The Zinza," Ibid., 200. These references provide comparative information on bakungu in other interlacustrine societies.

of an omukama, but they themselves could in turn be disqualified for the royal position.

Abahinda comprised the privileged portion of Kerebe society. Being members of the royal clan they were given considerable license to benefit their position. No one, for example, could physically attack them, including the omukama himself, although accusations are numerous about Rukonge, a late nineteenth century omukama, who violated this principle. The Abahinda were not entirely above the law and prominent men, such as enfura, could tactfully report to the omukama that an Omuhinda was abusing his privileges and harrassing people in a particular village. Abahinda who became a social burden were usually men who did not hold official positions, men who were not useful to the omukama nor trustworthy. One successful means of getting rid of abusive Abahinda was to insinuate to the omukama that a man was plotting to depose him. The Omuhinda could then be expelled or forced into exile, the most common means of removing potentially troublesome relatives from the chiefdom.

An omukungu had numerous duties within his village or villages. Minor civil and criminal cases came under his jurisdiction as did the disposal of unoccupied land within the village. Immigrants to the chiefdom who desired land could approach the abakungu directly for it, or, in some cases, the omukama himself would direct an omukungu to provide land for newcomers. The assessment and collection of taxes was a major annual task. The Kerebe royal clan levied two substantial taxes: the omuseku was based upon the total possessions of a man, such

things as goats, cattle and hoes, while the omusoro was a millet tax. In each case the omukungu determined the amount payable by each householder because it was based primarily upon the quantity of a man's livestock or millet which would vary from year to year. The omukungu as tax assessor retained a portion of the tax as a fee of office. If a man in the village needed temporary aid, however, the omukungu was expected to provide it from his stores, while the remainder was forwarded to the omukama. One check on the omukungu's discretionary powers was a prominent man, usually an enfura, who could report oppressive taxing to the omukama. Where abuses from abakungu occurred villages with enfura among the inhabitants realized a distinct advantage over those with none.

The omukama possessed land within each village and the omukungu had rights of cultivation on a portion of it while he held his position in the village. When he was replaced, his successor used the same plots. This was an efficient and practical system for the omukama and it placed the abakungu in a dependent, landless category which could be offset by independently acquiring an obusi (once land was cleared it became an obusi of the family, a possession that was retained as long as it was occupied and used) to which abakungu could move if they lost their appointed position.

There were a few abakungu whose responsibilities included two or more villages. An omukungu could name assistants to help with his duties providing the villages contained a substantial population. He often selected an entwalilizya (sub-headman)

from among relatives or friends but not necessarily Silanga. The entwalilizya, as in the case of his superior, assessed taxes and retained a modest share of those collected.

In addition to abakungu, the Silanga created a separate administrative echelon composed of abasiba who outranked the abakungu; they were concerned about potential threats to the chiefdom from external sources. The omukama delegated considerable authority to the abasiba who presumably represent an eighteenth century administrative development that accompanied the expanding territorial limits of the chiefdom. There were only four remembered posts for abasiba in the late nineteenth century and their primary duties consisted of warning the omukama of approaching strangers, and determining the nature of their presence or business. They lived at strategic locations around the chiefdom, frequently on capes. The most influential omusiba lived at Ngoma where he was in a position to observe any hostile force from the mainland. His role in welcoming trading caravans in the nineteenth century also enhanced the importance of the position. Traders approaching from the east by land passed his residence as well as those who arrived by water from Kageyi or Mwanza.¹

Abasiba did not normally perform functions of abakungu; however they were occasionally summoned to court to assist the omukama in judging difficult cases, particularly the Ngoma

1. See, for example, Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, I, 194.

omusiba. The abasiba, as royal appointees, were also members of the Silanga clan but one specific qualification was that he could not be a candidate for the office of omukama. Since only the sons of an omukama were serious contenders for the royal position many of the Silanga clan, grandsons of former rulers for example, were outside the select circle of prime candidates. An even more basic condition disqualified those Silanga eligible for the position of omusiba, at least according to one tradition.¹ During the rule of Kahana, the fifth omukama, a serious problem arose between Kahana and his sons and subsequently the former cursed a number of his sons indicating that none could ever become an omukama, only an omusiba. While this explanation is not entirely credible, it does reveal the sharp division within the royal clan between those who were sons of an omukama and those whose royal ancestry went back two or three generations. Another distinction between abakungu and abasiba was that the former did not normally possess their own obusi within the village as did the abasiba, which added a more permanent basis for their appointment.

The abasiba possessed large drums, symbolic representation of their important position in relation to the omukama as well as a communicating device. The omukama's set of drums, collectively referred to as emilango, was a symbolic aspect of royal power and only his representatives--abasiba and a few of the important abakungu--had any reason to use a drum. An

1. Interview with Magoma s/o Kitina.

exception to this general rule was a small replica of the royal drum used by some clan elders and medicine men for ritual purposes and it was only after a different style of drum appeared around the beginning of the nineteenth century that drums of any sort were used for entertainment outside the royal court.

Near the royal residence, the abazuma, the messengers of the omukama, lived in close proximity to the elders of the council. The abazuma were a collection of men who gravitated to the court and acquired positions of responsibility there. While relaying messages and performing errands were the daily tasks of the abazuma, they also assisted in tax collection by assuring that the abakungu sent their quota to the omukama on time. Occasionally some of these men, who came from nonroyal clans, could rise to prestigious positions by becoming enfura. Some of the abazuma were, in fact, boys who were sent by their families to the court to serve the omukama but not all clans chose to send their sons; it was not a mandatory service. Compensation for an omuzuma was proximity to the source of political and social power, in itself an awesome opportunity for the average subject. He might eat somewhat better than others, but, according to informants, his position was not highly respected and therefore it was actively sought only by individuals from the lower social ranks who would gain from the post. If the omukama had developed a standing army in the nineteenth century as the Ganda and Nyamwezi, the abazuma would have most likely

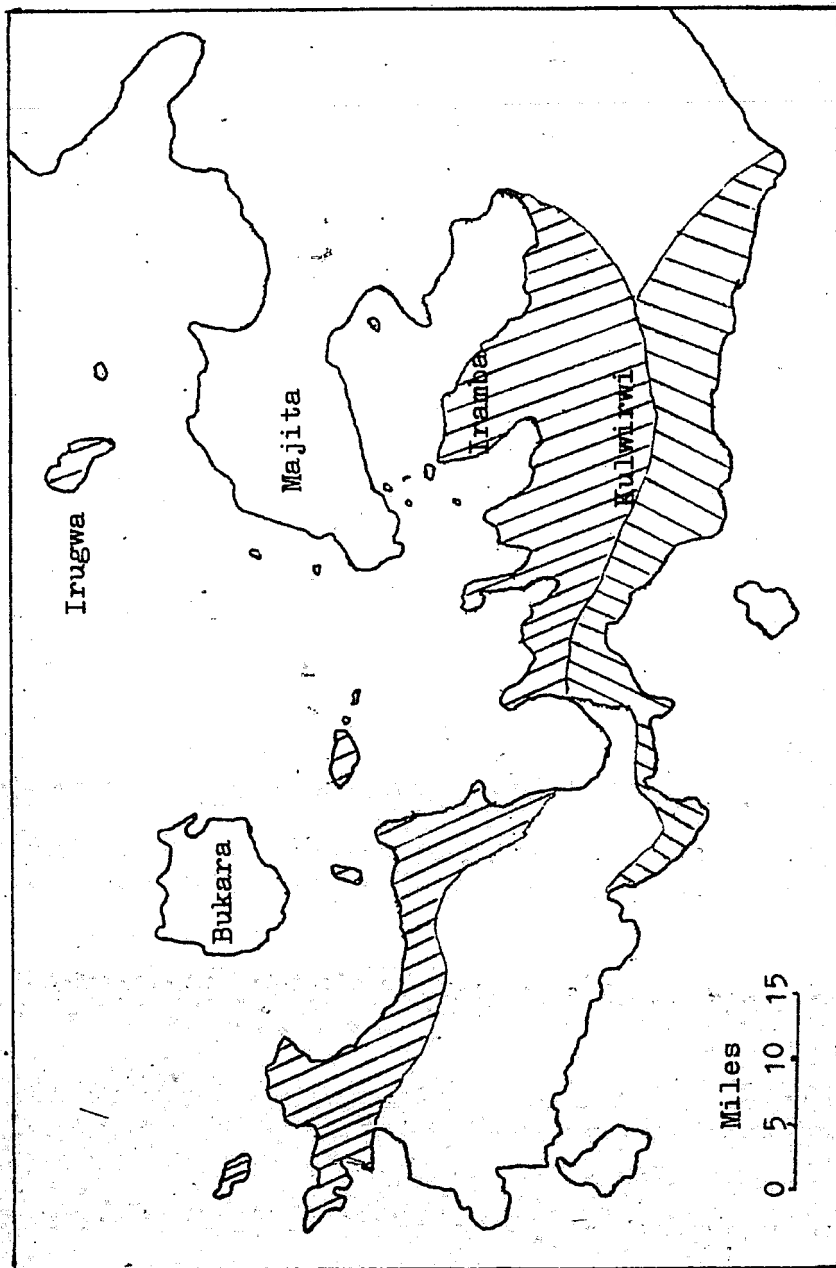
formed the core of it.¹

The Kula and Gabe, Neighbors and Rivals of the Silanga

The Kula clan established a second chiefdom on the southern section of the peninsula and island of Bukerebe. This clan had originally migrated in an eastward direction from the Buha dispersal center. Ancestors of the Kula belonged to the Longo (Rongo) of Buzinza, the renowned smelters and blacksmiths. The Kula themselves continued smithing until they evolved their own chiefdom when they acquired the smithing services of another clan. It appears that they settled on the peninsula before the arrival of the Silanga concentrating on hunting and herding. The Kula, according to Bahitwa who is a member of this clan, did not claim to possess chiefly powers before the Silanga's appearance. Competition between the Kula and Silanga, therefore, may have been an important factor in developing royal aspirations among Kula elders.

Cattle raiding characterized the periodic conflicts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries between the Silanga and Kula with the former emerging as the inevitable victor in both Silanga and Kula traditions, possibly because they controlled more subjects. Although efforts to stabilize relations and avoid friction is suggested by numerous marriage

1. Andrew Roberts, "Political Change in the Nineteenth Century," 72-84.

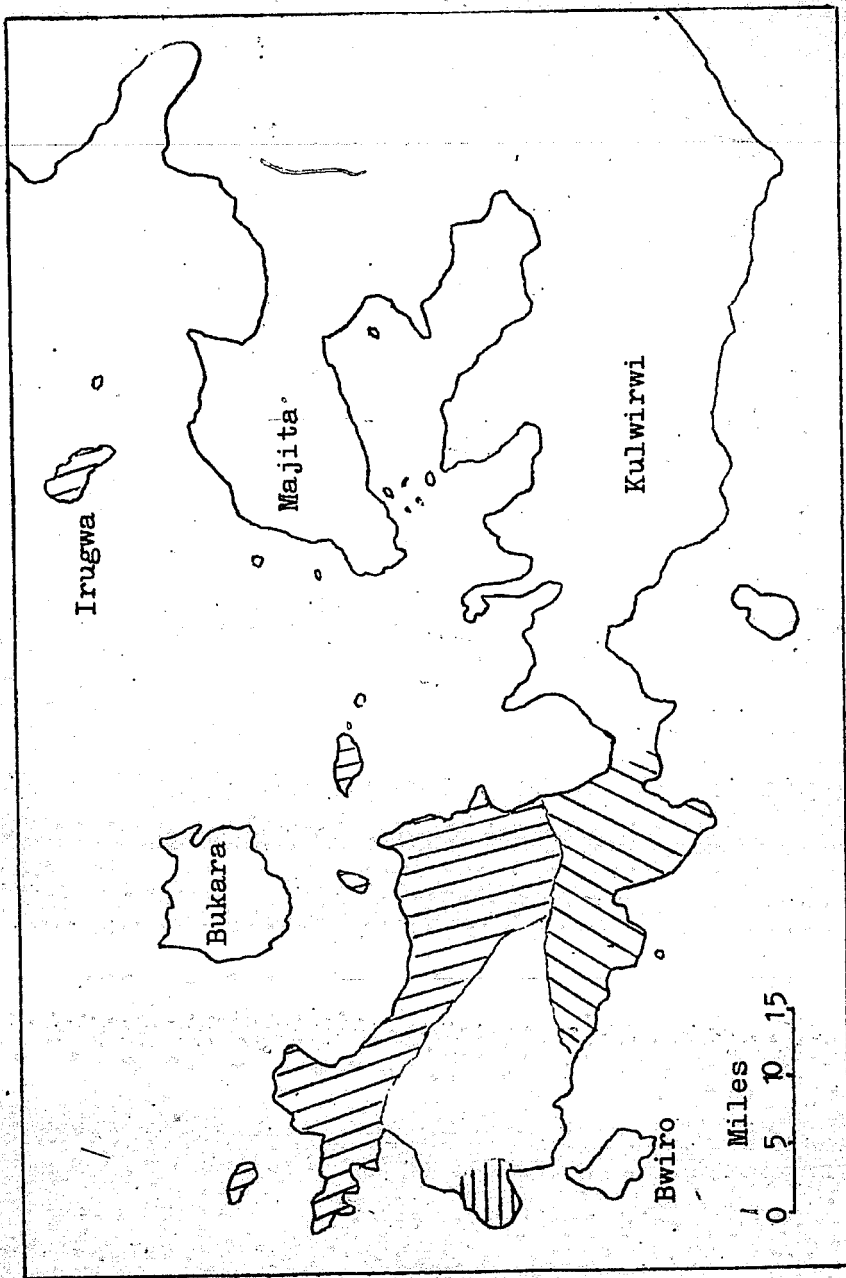


Approximate Extent of Chiefdoms in 1700

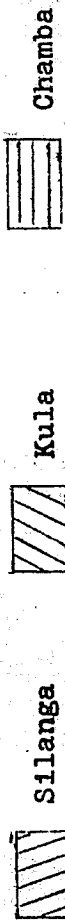
-  Kula
-  Silanga

alliances between the rivals, the major consequence of the conflict was the Kula's continual shift westward, seemingly to decrease pressure from their opponents. But the Silanga themselves experienced a major setback from the pastoral Tatoga in the eighteenth century when a defeat at their hands forced Omukama Kahana to flee from the Silanga court at Iramba on the peninsula to Bukindo and join the Kula on the island. Consequently the Silanga and Kula lived side by side, at even closer quarters than earlier. The eastern end of the island was then divided in half by mutual agreement with the northern portion occupied by the Silanga and the southern portion by the Kula. This arrangement remained in existence until approximately 1840 when the powerful Silanga omukama, Machunda, drove the hapless Kula to a smaller area on the southwestern end of the island, including the island of Bwiro. There is every reason to suspect, even though tradition is silent about it, that this conflict was a direct consequence of the long distance ivory trade since the Kula had occupied a district that effectively blocked direct access to the major Sukuma trading bases at Kageyi and Mwanza and caravans coming by land from the east. Henceforth the Silanga virtually excluded the Kula from any substantial participation in the long distance ivory trade.

While the Kula developed a small scale chiefdom, the Gabe did not attain a similar status. This clan lived on the peninsula highland called Kulwirwi in the 1600s and reportedly controlled the iron ore deposits found on the slopes of this massif.



Approximate Extent of Chiefdoms After
Kahana's Defeat in 1700s



Agricultural clans in this arid part of the peninsula made their homes along the lake shore but not the Gabe and Babo (the latter was a sub-clan of the former). The Gabe appear to have been a substantial clan in numbers, power, and influence although tradition does not indicate whether they controlled any clan other than the Gabo. Available evidence suggests that the Gabe operated a smelting center on Kulwirwi that supplied the essential raw material for agricultural implements in addition to weapons assuring the region's inhabitants a supply of iron wares.¹ Gabe control of Kulwirwi came to an abrupt end in the early 1700s when Mihigo, the fourth Silanga ruler, allegedly drove the Gabe from their stronghold and dispersed them.² Certainly from this time onward the population of the region could no longer rely upon a local supply of hoes (after smelting, the pig iron was made into hoes), a condition that forced them to utilize another source of hoes, marking the beginning of trade with the Longo smiths and smelters of Buzinza. Thus from the early 1700s the Kerebe traveled a considerable distance by canoe and then by land to obtain hoes. While this development reveals a growing

1. Whether iron ore was in fact smelted on Kulwirwi before the present century could not be determined with certainty. Living representatives of the Gabe clan in 1968-69 were unable to provide definite information. Traditions from Bahitwa, Buyanza, and Mugoma, however, supported the contention that ore was smelted there and this interpretation has been tentatively accepted. This issue becomes a fundamental factor in determining when long distant trade with Buzinza began.

2. Buyanza provided this particular account. Other informants suggested that it was the Tatoga who had attacked the Gabe or, a third version, that disease caused the dispersal.

interdependence between two distant communities it also implies that the Kerebe were henceforth dependent on an outside source for an essential raw material.

Following the defeat and dispersal of the Gabe and Gabo from Kulwirwi, individuals who remained within the Silanga chiefdom were accorded ritual responsibilities. The Gabe, who may have delegated smelting and smithing tasks to the Gabo (a sub-clan of the Gabe) prior to leaving Kulwirwi, henceforth performed the secretive function of removing a deceased omukama's head, presumably under the supervision of the Sita clan. The Gabe's ritual subjugation is illustrated by the death of Omukama Machunda's donkey (an animal in his small menagerie); the Gabe were assigned the task of burying the animal. Like the Sita clan, the Gabe married only into the Silanga clan, but this may well have emanated from the practice that clans associated with smithing married endogamously (that is, with other smithing clans) or with the royal clan. The Gabo apparently smelted and forged on Kulwirwi at the time of their dispersal and continued to do so although on a limited scale after their defeat. They became fulltime agriculturalists for all practical purposes, the exception being when metal ritual objects such as a royal spear were required by the omukama. Another ritualistic function that continued long after the Gabo ceased smithing was to scratch a mark on hippo harpoons before their use, harpoons made by smiths of other clans. The hunters sought the ritual mark on their weapons from the Gabo because it would enhance the weapon's

effectiveness. Their historical and ritual significance in addition to their close relationship with the abakama assured the Gabe and Gabo of a controversial but impressive rank in Kerebe society.¹

Social Aspects of Kerebe Culture

The Silanga made a considerable impact upon the social hierarchy of their subjects. The conquering contingent from Ihangiro came from a society that was demarcated along social and economic lines: a Hima pastoral population maintained an aloof social and political dominance over an agricultural majority. The ruling Hinda clan forged close ties with the Hima who controlled the cattle, which were regarded as the real wealth within the region.² Katobaha and his followers did not assume the role of pastoralists either in Ihangiro or Bukerebe. They were members of an agricultural-fishing community, however, they introduced and promoted a social order in the southeastern lake region based upon principles in common with those of the socially

1. Since low status is a characteristic of smiths information on it is difficult to acquire from informants who are no longer smiths. Traditions concerning the Gabe and Gabo were doubly difficult to acquire because living elders of the clans were few and reluctant to discuss their traditions. Rather than consciously preserving their clan traditions, the contrary seemed to be occurring, a deliberate effort to forget traditions by not passing them on to the younger generations. Informants contributing significant information on the Gabe and Gabo included Johana Mazige (Gabe), Mpehi s/o Mageza (Himba), Kaliga s/o Lwambali (Sita), Magoma s/o Kitina (Silanga), Buyanza (Silanga), and Bahitwa (Kula).

2. "The Nyankole," 153; "The Haya," 176; "The Zinza," 199-200.

stratified interlacustrine communities.

Social stratification on Bukerebe cannot be compared with other interlacustrine societies since a permanent pastoral class did not exist in Kerebe society.¹ Some pastoralists (Tatoga) lived among the Kerebe in the 1800s--the men were herdsmen for Kerebe with large herds of cattle and the women were wives of the omukama and possibly other Abahinda--but they did not represent a permanent part of society, the herdsmen were temporary and the women adapted themselves to a new culture.² Nonetheless stratification of society developed with the Sese (representatives of interlacustrine culture) dominating people of Kara or Jita extraction, that is, the descendants of the indigenous Bantu-speaking population. A tendency existed to absorb migrants from the interlacustrine societies into Sese ranks much more readily than from communities east of the lake even though only agriculturalists or fishermen were involved. Language and customs provided barriers that were not easily overcome. Language itself created and maintained a social barrier. This does not refer to the Sese language spoken by the Silanga but rather to indirect speech, proverbs and simple nuances in language usage that can convey meaning among individuals who are in frequent contact with one another. The presence and constant development of communication at this level thwarted the efforts of all but the

1. Slavery is discussed below in Chapter VII.

2. Journal of Lieutenant G. Shergold Smith, November 17, 1877, C. A6/0 22, CMS.

most ambitious and steadfast men in the chiefdom. Even within the Sese stratum a number of sub-strata appeared that were based on proximity to the omukama in the socio-political realm. A man's social relationship to the omukama determined his social stratum. The wealth (the size of his cattle herd for example) of the individual would be the most apparent manifestation of this fundamental social condition to an observer since wealth was necessary to gain attention of the omukama, and proximity to the omukama in turn determined the social class to which a man belonged.

* * * * *

From the foundation of the Silanga chiefdom in the 1600s until the late 1700s, the political and social components of the interlacustrine cultural region were implanted among the earlier inhabitants of the southeastern lake region. The development was undoubtedly gradual but the extension of control and power is evidenced in the successful encounters against the Kula and Gabe clans. The setback received after the Tatoga pastoralists forced the Silanga to move westward into a district with more agricultural than pastoral potential.

The Silanga introduced a dynasty and centralized political system that enabled them to control as well as tax the subject population; the headmen (abakungu) and watchmen (abasiba) were all members of the royal clan. Integration of the political system found by the Silanga in the 1600s provided for a council of elders who represented some of the nonroyal clans. Moreover

the omukama encouraged individuals from nonroyal clans to join court society, men who were then recognized as enfura, or friends of the omukama, who unofficially advised and reported on conditions within their villages.¹ The omukama's claim to superior supernatural powers was tested on occasion and he was held accountable if he was found wanting; the Sita clan took the initiative in deposing an incumbent who had lost support from the population. The Sita also possessed the unusual authority to select the abakama, thus depriving the royal clan of this prerogative.

A hierarchical society apparently flourished under the Silanga, displaying noteworthy resilience when it adjusted to the loss of control over local iron ore deposits and thereafter participated in the Buzinza hoe trade.

1. The increasing importance of enfura in the late 1800s, forming a parallel service to the councilors in advising and a parallel service to the headmen in reporting from the villages, suggests that they may have ultimately replaced the council and the headmen if the colonial period had not intervened.

Chapter V

WIDENING HORIZONS

Historians have only begun to reconstruct the history of events that dominated eastern Africa in the nineteenth century. For the period after 1850, when European explorers and missionaries made observations of the interior that are available for assessment, an understanding of the numerous political, economic and social forces at work among the people in the interior is emerging.¹ Unfortunately oral traditions are limited for the period before the European intrusion into the interior and as a consequence the period before 1850 tends to remain disappointingly vague. Swahili, Arabs and tribal Africans participating in the ivory trade introduced into the interior from the cosmopolitan community along the East African coast new food crops such as maize and cassava (mandoc, an American crop), trade goods such as beads, cloth and guns, and promoted Swahili as a lingua franca.² Recently historians have recognized the

1. Roberts, "The Nyamwezi," 117, 130-131; Edward A. Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," A History of Tanzania, 56; Roberts, "Political Change in the Nineteenth Century," 82-84.

2. Norman Bennett, "The Arab Impact," Zamani, 235-236.

"enlargement of the political scale" together with the introduction of new ideas and the rapid dissemination of information as consequences of the long distance ivory trade.¹ The slaving activities that accompanied the search for ivory also had a disturbing influence on some interior districts.

Traditions of the Kerebe provide evidence that increases our understanding of events occurring between approximately 1800 and 1850.² As traditions from neighboring societies become available, it will be possible to estimate with greater assurance the approximate time that significant changes began to occur, what the response was in each case, and whether it complements the Kerebe experience. While the Kerebe traditions provide a vague chronology by associating events with a particular omukama, this device is not precise and is merely suggestive of a general time period. Finally, a speculative though necessary function in reconstructing events for this era as well as interpreting their significance is to discuss probable cause and effect relationships for various events.

The Momentous Reign of Mihigo II

The reign of Mihigo II, ca. 1780 - ca. 1820, bridges a transitional period in Kerebe history. It was during Mihigo II's

1. Roberts, "Political Change in the Nineteenth Century," 57-84; Ranger, "The Movement of Ideas," 161-171; Bennett, "The Arab Impact," 235-236.

2. Buyanza is primarily responsible for traditions in the early 1800s.

tenure as omukama that Bukerebe experienced the positive as well as the negative effects of the long distance ivory trade and thereby moved into a new and difficult age. Prior to the exposure of Bukerebe and its immediate hinterland to the ramifications of the Arab and Swahili trading community's appearance, the Kerebe had been insulated from direct influences emanating from the Indian Ocean coast. Earlier history, as related above, was characterized by significant though parochial developments, but as far as can be determined there were no major regional developments since the arrival of the pastoral Hima that affected the interlacustrine region or the Nyamwezi-Sukuma district. Mihigo's rule, however, spanned an era when radically altered conditions and values developed.

Unfortunately for chronological purposes, the time of Mihigo's reign is uncertain and the dates of 1780-1820 are the best estimate.¹ Kerebe informants often estimate the length of an omukama's reign by the number of children born to his wives. And as Bahitwa pointed out, toward the end of Mihigo's life, he had had so many sons that he could no longer remember all of their names; consequently he attributes Mihigo II with a very long life and reign. Moving back in time from Rukonge's deposition in 1895 and approximating the length of each omukama's reign, based on oral information, it is calculated that Mihigo II

1. Bahitwa and Magoma both emphatically contend that Mihigo II ruled for a very long period, longer than both Machunda (estimated to have ruled 34 years) and Rukonge (estimated to have ruled 26 years) or any other Silanga omukama.

died around 1820; the margin of error is probably less than ten years. It is hypothesized that he reigned for about forty years since tradition accords him with a longer reign than either Machunda or Rukonge. Hence the year 1780 is suggested as the approximate time of Mihigo's installation as omukama.

The significant developments that introduced such drastic changes into Kerebe culture during his tenure can be symbolized by a drum, a spear, and a man/beast. The first object, a long, cylindrical drum called the embegete, represents the least disruptive change for the Kerebe; it was introduced by an immigrant people during Mihigo's reign. The second object, the endirima, was a spear introduced by Sukuma hunters to kill the formidable elephant, an animal heretofore not hunted on a systematic or organized basis. Butamile was the man/beast, a "creature" who terrorized the Kerebe for a number of years during Mihigo's time and who persists as a personalized beast in the imaginations of the younger Kerebe in the present century. Each of these symbols represents an amorphous set of conditions that rapidly transformed Kerebe society. Butamile personifies the increased, insecurity and irrational death that stalked the Kerebe in an inexplicable manner in the nineteenth century. The spear represents the search for ivory and for the Kerebe this implied the presence of men, ideas and technology from the East African coast whether introduced by Africans, Arabs or Europeans. Lastly, the drum is associated with the migration of the Nilotic-speaking Luo, a movement that presaged both opportunities and difficulties for the people with whom they came in contact.

Diffusion of a Drum

Although the Kerebe did not experience first hand the southward thrust of the Nilotic-speaking Luo (called Abagaya by the Kerebe) in the mid-eighteenth century, numerous Bantu-speaking people living along the eastern side of the lake were either assimilated or forced to migrate to other districts. Sometime after 1760 when the Luo entered the area south of Kavirondo Gulf from the north and west, the Gusii, Kuria and others were forced to migrate east and south.¹ This movement of people reverberated throughout the region and unrest continued to characterize the region throughout the nineteenth century; Masai raids in the late 1800s added yet another disruptive dimension giving further impetus to the people living east of the lake to migrate.² Numerous families and bands of people sought a haven on Bukerebe during this period although Kerebe traditions are uninformative about their migrations.

The immigrants to Bukerebe during Mihigo's time were Jita (Kwaya) who began a sporadic flow of migration to the relative safety of the geographically isolated peninsula/island that continued during the 1800s. Traditions do not relate background information about the early Jita migration but the embegete drum

1. B. A. Ogot, History of the Southern Luo, I (Nairobi, 1967), 206-210.

2. D. A. Low, "The Northern Interior, 1840-84," History of East Africa, I, 301-303. Traditions also place the responsibility upon the Masai; however other pastoralists may have been responsible, for example the Kuria or Tatoga. See "Einem Berichte des Lieutenants R. Meyer über seine Expedition nach Kavirondo," DKB, IV (November 15, 1893), 519.

in their possession reveals contact with Nilotic-speakers.¹ It is difficult to determine the probable diffusion of this particular drum since a reliable historical survey of musical instruments in East Africa does not exist.² The drum was not present in the southeast lake region when the Silanga-led contingent arrived in the 1600s and it is certain that they did not bring this drum with them, although they did introduce a drum of a different shape that was used by the royal clan. The embegete was the first drum to appear in Bukerebe associated with hunting and used to accompany dancing and singing following a successful hunt; singing had previously accompanied the festivities that followed the killing of a large animal, but drums were absent. The shape of the embegete is commonly found in Uganda, indicating its northern origins, and it becomes less common the farther one travels southward into Tanzania.³ It is probable that Nilotic-speakers either possessed the drum when they moved into eastern Africa before 1500 or they acquired it at a very early date from some other source.

It is unknown how the drum was acquired by the Jita but

1. Gerald W. Hartwig, "The Historical and Social Role of Kerebe Music," TNR, 70 (1969), 44.

2. The only survey thus far attempted is from museum collections, and is concerned only with the distribution of musical instruments; Bernard Ankermann, "Die afrikanischen Musikinstrumente," Ethnologisches Notizblatt, III, 1 (1901), 1-134.

3. A. Sherman and L. Anderson, "Drums of Padhola," UJ, XXI (1967). Additional information can be found in Margaret Trowell and K. P. Wachsmann, Tribal Crafts of Uganda (London, 1953), 376, pl. 84, fig. F.

the most likely course would have been for individual Luo who used the drum to have become a part of the Jita population either through marriage or slavery. An examination of the diffusion of other musical instruments into Bukerebe around 1900 reveals that to be adopted an instrument requires a thorough exposure to the population by a master musician who immigrates and settles in the community. By charisma and musicianship the player attracts others in the surrounding villages to participate in his musical activity. Although a musician may have performed as a resident for a decade or more, the only means to insure that the instrument would be assimilated by the inhabitants was for the master to instruct a few permanent residents of the community in the art of his music. Providing the novices displayed the necessary qualifications of a successful musician, assimilation took place; otherwise the musical innovation would simply pass away, leaving no trace of its existence.¹

Although the Jita brought the drum with them into Bukerebe, it remained solely in their possession for at least a half century; the Sese portion of the population had nothing to do with it since it was exclusively used by Jita hunters following a successful hunt for leopards or lions. But by the late 1800s the drum also came to be used within a game context, that is, a musical organization formed for the expressed purpose of entertainment.² Some Sese participated in this particular game (dance

1. Hartwig, "The Historical and Social Role of Kerebe Music," 51, 53.

2. Ibid., 44, footnote 8.

organization) but it would be misleading to state that the drum had been absorbed into the Sese musical life because all singing was in Kijita rather than Kisese. Language and social barriers apparently mitigated against the dominant element of society accepting an object brought into their midst by a people considered beneath them in social rank.

The embegete's appearance on Bukerebe reveals the movement of people who had found it expedient to relocate in an alien community. Unrest, reflected by migration, did not abate; instead, the restless movement of people within the eastern lake district bounded by the lake on one side and the Masai steppe on the other continued to increase as the pressure on these small, chiefless societies intensified. A serious consequence was that this region attracted the attention of slavers during the nineteenth century.

The Abagunda: The Elephant Hunters

The endirima (spear) does not represent warfare but rather the instrument introduced to kill elephants in Bukerebe that enabled the Kerebe to acquire ivory destined for the international ivory markets. The spear is approximately four feet in length and being well weighted it could penetrate the hide of the largest creature. The weapon and the necessary procedures for using it to kill an elephant, were reportedly introduced to the Kerebe by a group of hunters who entered the chiefdom while tracking a wounded animal; they comprised the advanced

wave of men whose goal was to extract wealth from a region that could be exchanged for trade goods from the East African coast.

The Kerebe considered specific weapons, hunting techniques, and accompanying ritual necessary to hunt certain large animals. Organized groups of hunters previously existed to hunt the hippopotamus and buffalo. The Kerebe did not hunt elephants on an organized basis until a hunting organization had been introduced, and it is likely that a similar situation existed in other societies in the interior of East Africa. It is possible that by tracing the growth of elephant hunting organizations considerable light may be cast upon the current problem of whether people from the coast initially opened up the western region, or conversely, whether people such as the Nyamwezi ventured eastward to the coast to open up the interior.¹ The Nyamwezi interest in trade and ivory, for example, may have been related to the westward movement of people into Unyamwezi from the major dispersal area of Usagara, a process that predated 1800 by decades.²

The ancestors of the Hesere clan introduced the techniques for killing elephants into Bukerebe during Mihigo's reign, presumably around 1800.³ The origin of the hunters was Kanadi, a

1. See Aylward Shorter, "The Kimbu," Tanzania Before 1900, 106-107; Roberts; "The Nyamwezi," 125-126; and Terence O. Ranger, "The Movement of Ideas, 1850-1939," 167-168.

2. Shorter, "The Kimbu," 100; Roberts, "Introduction," Tanzania Before 1900, xi-xii.

3. Informants for the Abagunda and their activities include Buyanza, Alipyo Mnyaga, Makeremu s/o Manyanga and Bahitwa; only the latter claims that the Hesere arrived during Nago's reign.

large, sparsely populated eastern Sukuma district, located approximately 135 miles southeast of Bukerebe. According to tradition the hunters inadvertently found themselves within Mihigo's chiefdom while on a hunting expedition. They described the existence of men to the east who desired ivory and who exchanged commodities such as beads for elephant tusks. Mihigo was sufficiently impressed with the possibilities of exchanging ivory for trade goods to request the hunters to remain in Bukerebe where they would form the nucleus of a hunting organization that his men could join. The hunters agreed to stay although they asked permission to return to their home in Kanadi before settling in Bukerebe, allegedly to bring their families. Mihigo granted them permission and eventually the founder of the Hesere clan in Bukerebe returned to Mihigo and thereupon established residence in the chiefdom.

The identity of the Hesere clan is not difficult to trace in Kerebe traditions. While designated as Sukuma, the district of Kanadi is situated far enough east to raise questions about whether the Hesere may not have actually been representatives of a coastal hunting expedition. Yet there is no evidence to support this possibility; rather, according to Bahitwa, the Hesere had originally migrated from the Buha dispersal center to the west. When and where the hunting society of which they were members had come into being remains a fundamental problem. It was definitely a Sukuma hunting association by the time it reached the Kerebe and even on Bukerebe it remained essentially a Sukuma organization until its demise late in the 1800s.

The men on Bukerebe who joined the elephant hunting group were called Abagunda; giving a name to the adherents of a social organization was the standard procedure for any group of men who joined together for a common purpose. Membership was open to any man who was interested in hunting elephants and many of the men from all clans, including the royal Silanga clan, participated in the organization. Leadership of the Abagunda was retained by the Hesere clan because they apparently kept sole possession of the magical knowledge believed to be essential in successfully killing an elephant. According to informants most elephant hunting was done within the chiefdom, on the western portion of the island where the topography, vegetation, and absence of population provided an ideal home for elephants. Various caves in the region are still remembered as camping sites for the hunters.

The procedure for killing elephants remained the same throughout the nineteenth century for the Kerebe. Once a potential victim was chosen the hunter with his spear would ascend a tree under which the elephant was likely to pass. Other hunters then moved into position and attempted to move the elephant or elephants under the tree in which the hunter with the endirima was posed to thrust the heavy spear down into the shoulders of the animal. Even after wounding an animal the hunt was usually far from over, next came the tracking, stalking and, if fortunate, the eventual killing of the animal.

The prize of the hunt--the ivory tusks--was presented to the omukama, a policy instituted by Mihigo II. In some districts

of East Africa the chief claimed only a single tusk from a kill, but the Kerebe omukama received both tusks. The successful hunter, however, was well rewarded for his prowess, usually receiving two head of cattle, and, following the presentation of tusks to the omukama, an extended period of feasting ensued, courtesy of the ruler.¹ The district in which the Kerebe hunters searched for their game was restricted and the number of kills in any given year was certainly limited. A productive group of hunters would have had to travel at least fifty miles to the east before approaching satisfactory hunting ground on the mainland and the Kerebe simply did not undertake such ambitious hunting expeditions.

In the early 1800s caravans of Swahili and Arab traders from the coast did not travel from one district to the next in search of ivory nor did the traders have their agents posted at strategic locations to collect ivory from hunters and chiefs as they did later in the century. Mihigo found it necessary at the outset to organize his own caravans of Kerebe porters to take his ivory to "Takama" where it was usually exchanged for beads among other things. Takama, unfortunately, is probably not a place name but rather a Kisukuma word meaning south; the destination of the ivory seems to have been somewhere south of Mwanza Gulf and may have been exchanged with either Sukuma or Nyamwezi middlemen.

1. The Sukuma influence remained strong in the ritual of the hunters as evidenced in the singing of the group following a successful hunt--the song texts remained in Kisukuma.

The movement of ivory from Bukerebe to Takama was by both water and land. Kerebe canoes took ivory to Sukuma chiefdoms where the Kerebe porters disembarked and proceeded to Takama. Mihigo's marriage alliances with two Sukuma chiefdoms, Busukuma on the shore of Speke Gulf and Burima on the eastern side of Mwanza Gulf, indicate the probable route.¹ As far as can be determined, Mihigo was the first Kerebe omukama to establish marriage alliances with any Sukuma chiefdom, and it can be assumed that it was done to expedite his interests in moving ivory southward. The Sukuma chiefdoms in question were in a familiar area to the Kerebe since annual journeys were made to Buzinza to acquire hoes and handles for hoes; Buzinza was located on the western side of Mwanza Gulf with numerous Sukuma chiefdoms on the eastern side. Had Mihigo moved his ivory any other direction, he would probably have needed political alliances with people to his east and southeast. None are remembered. Kerebe usually travelled or hunted during the dry season, June through August, and this was also the time when ivory caravans made their trips to the south.

1. Busukuma is used to describe the important trading chiefdom in which the village of Kageyi was located; Usukuma is used to describe the country in which all of the Sukuma people live. I am indebted to C. H. Holmes for this terminology.

The Impact of Long Distance Trade Upon
the Kerebe

The Kerebe most frequently obtained luxury items in exchange for their ivory. Dark blue beads were the most prized item. Beads together with cloth and copper used in bracelets obtained later in the century were greatly desired by the upper strata of society, particularly the royal clan. The primary function of the trade goods superficially appears no more important than providing prestige items for the wealthy individuals. The advantage of participating in the long distance trading network seems meager within this context. The intangible importance of prestige goods is no doubt the primary issue and it had unexpected consequences. Since the omukama monopolized and distributed trade goods, princes were more likely to revolt in an effort to attain the royal office. As the princes and councilors came to expect a share of the trade goods as a right, it appears that the abakama undermined their positions by encouraging enfura (friends of the omukama) to act as unofficial advisers. They, unlike the official advisers, were solely dependent on the omukama for their position and consequently were more likely to be loyal. The trade goods thus increased tensions within the royal clan and among others vying for royal consideration.¹

The introduction of new food crops was an important

1. Political fragmentation also occurred among the Pare when trading increased; see Kimambo, "The Pare," 28.

immediate consequence for the Kerebe.¹ According to traditions it was under Mihigo II that cassava, maize (corn) and new varieties of sorghum and millet were first planted in Bukerebe.² None of these food plants were brought by Arab or Swahili traders. In each instance Kerebe porters who had taken ivory southward returned with samples of different food to the omukama who had each new crop planted near his residence to determine for himself its value when later harvested. Whether Mihigo instructed his men to seek unfamiliar food crops (or ideas) or whether the porters were merely pleased with these new foods and returned with samples in hopes of pleasing Mihigo is a moot point. The significant fact is that the Kerebe exhibited a receptiveness to unfamiliar food crops and they demonstrated considerable initiative in acquiring them. Whether a particular plant was eventually accepted and incorporated into the agricultural cycle depended upon other factors, not least of which was the response of the omukama to the novelty. Though neither cassava nor maize, particularly the latter, replaced the earlier varieties of sorghum and eluesine as the basic food, they did provide viable options but some of the new varieties of millet and sorghum were welcomed to the degree that the basic grain of 1750 was virtually replaced by 1875 with different varieties of sorghum and millet.

1. See Andrew Roberts, "The Nineteenth Century in Zambia," Aspects of Central African History, ed., T. O. Ranger (London, 1968), 83.

2. See William O. Jones, Manioc in Africa (Stanford, 1959), 232.

Once the Kerebe became involved in ~~hunting~~ elephants for their tusks, they also became involved in portage, an extension of their earlier travel to Buzinza for hoes. The acquisition of new food crops can be regarded as a basic long term advantage that evolved from the trade and it illustrates Kerebe initiative when opportunities appeared; their response was undoubtedly characteristic within the region.

The political consequences of seemingly trivial luxury goods upon the loyalties of the omukama's clansmen may have been of the utmost importance during the 1800s but in immediate economic terms participation in the ivory trade had few positive results. Diplomatically, however, the Kerebe now had added incentive for fostering formal relations with Sukuma chiefdoms to the south with whom the Kerebe, in all likelihood, had bartered agricultural goods on a limited scale prior to Mihigo II's time. Mihigo's response to the opportunities of participating in the ivory trade suggests an enterprising leader.

Death Stalks the Kerebe

The third symbol of Mihigo's reign is Butamile, the man/beast representing the negative aspects of Mihigo's reign. The unrest and evil that Butamile connotes in Kerebe tradition has become firmly entrenched in Kerebe society and "he" appears as a mythical symbol of death. While children on Bukerebe today may never have heard of embegete or endirima, they are virtually certain to have a vague conception of Butamile.

Butamile is usually described as a humanized lion that stalked the Kerebe, terrorizing people by pouncing on the top of their huts and either forcing his way into the structures to attack the occupants or springing on them as they fled from their homes. He roamed about for years, maiming and killing, before he was eventually killed. The central portion of the island was inhabited at the beginning of Mihigo's reign but by the end of it the region was uninhabited and it reverted to bush. Reoccupation did not begin until after 1920, during which time evidence of earlier occupation was found, namely grinding stones that had been used by women in the preparation of millet. Informants such as Bahitwa and Buyanza attribute the exodus from the central portion of the chiefdom to the harrassing tactics of Butamile. They claim that some of the people moved to the lake shore while others left the chiefdom completely.

According to Buyanza, the most knowledgeable Kerebe on nineteenth century history, Butamile was the creation of Mihigo himself. He was, in fact, a member of the Silanga clan who had been cursed by Mihigo and had "become" a lion, "become" in the sense that he was obligated to live an isolated life in the bush like an animal. In addition, he draped a lion skin over his shoulders and attached lion's claws to his hands. As Butamile, the man/beast, he was instructed by Mihigo to strike families or individuals alleged to be troublesome within the chiefdom. Once Butamile had successfully cleansed the chiefdom, Mihigo had him hunted down and killed.

Who or what Butamile actually was cannot be determined; he is all but a mythical creature today. Mihigo's involvement is also problematical. According to tradition, nothing could occur in Bukerebe during Mihigo's reign that did not have the ultimate sanction of the omukama, whether it was rain or drought, life or death, it was always the affair of the omukama. He emerges as a "larger-than-life" leader, an omukama to whom important developments and awesome powers are attributed. Consequently Mihigo's alleged responsibility for creating Butamile in the first instance must be treated cautiously. It is a different matter entirely to question the existence of Butamile; his existence was real enough. Whether, however, he was a demented individual assuming a lion's character to kill on his own accord, or whether he was acting at the behest of Mihigo, or it was in fact a man-eating lion, we may never know.

A possible reason for Butamile's continued existence in Kerebe traditions is that he represents a personalized rationale for a very significant development within Kerebe society. This development was the increasing number of deaths due to unfamiliar diseases that occurred during Mihigo's tenure. The violence represented by Butamile's actions is therefore only a single facet of a much more complex situation. But as in the case of the man/beast, Mihigo is assigned credit in traditions for introducing the silent killers, such as cholera and small pox. The explanation given by informants is that the omukama sought to destroy his enemies within the chiefdom; consequently he appealed to the Tatoga for the necessary "medicine" to destroy these

people. This request was supposedly granted by the Tatoga and in this manner new diseases were introduced into Bukerebe.¹

The devastation caused by new diseases could have been staggering for Bukerebe and the entire region. Assuming that societies in the interior of East Africa were relatively self-contained before trading in ivory began, the disease environment of the population would have been limited since an isolated human community very likely has a specialized and distinctive disease environment.² This condition in turn leaves the population extremely susceptible when alien diseases appeared for which the existing disease environment provided no source of immunity--high death rates are the natural consequences. Even later in the 1800s the interior of East Africa suffered immeasurably from the ravages of cholera that were periodically introduced by trading caravans from the coast.³ Although disease as an historical factor in eastern Africa has not yet received more than passing attention by historians, primarily because evidence is difficult to obtain, it is reasonable to assume that

1. Informants were not as consistent in their responses as to when diseases were introduced as they were on the introduction of food crops; however, a part of this can be explained by the lack of importance attached to diseases as killers. A new disease like cholera did not simply appear one day, rather it was present because the omukama introduced it. The disease was not the serious threat to life; the actual threat was the omukama.

2. Philip D. Curtin, "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," Political Science Quarterly, LXXXIII, 2 (June 1968), 195.

3. See James Christie, Cholera Epidemics in East Africa (London, 1876); also the comments by Robert W. Felkin, "Notes on the Waganda Tribe of Central Africa," Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 13 (1886), 704.

the interior population was severely affected by the introduction of diseases from the East African coast.

The Kerebe, when exposed to a new disease, undoubtedly experienced a high mortality rate given the density of population in favorable agricultural areas. The emigration of people from Bukerebe under Mihigo may have been related more closely to diseases than to the creature known as Butamile. It is conceivable that the Kerebe actually experienced considerable depopulation at this time primarily as a consequence of the "opening-up" of the interior although Butamile is assigned this responsibility in traditions. There is little evidence that deaths from diseases placed an unbearable stress upon the Kerebe, rather it is incorporated unobtrusively into the lore accompanying the name of Mihigo II. He had allegedly introduced diseases for reasons best known to him, and therefore the matter is questioned no further. Disease was generally regarded as a form of magical knowledge or medicine that could be manipulated by powerful individuals.¹ Just as a ruler might seek power to destroy life by introducing disease he might also expend considerably more energy in seeking power to control harmful conditions since he was ultimately responsible for his community's welfare. Traditions accord Mihigo with both powers though he was the last Kerebe omukama to be attributed with such diverse abilities.

1. Tradition specifically associates only one infectious disease to non-Africans: syphilis is credited to Arabs.

The introduction of diseases into Bukerebe poses a complicating question. Tradition relates that Mihigo sent his porters and ivory by canoe to Busukuma and Burima and the ivory was transported southward from there. Food crops were also returned from the south--Takama. On the other hand, Mihigo reportedly "acquired" cholera from the Tatoga who lived to the east. Under normal circumstances it would be logical to assume that diseases would be associated with the ivory trade to Takama since Kerebe porters very likely returned with infectious diseases on occasion. Yet the eastern direction from which the diseases were acquired by Mihigo may in fact indicate that carriers of new diseases from the Indian Ocean coast had approached the Victoria Nyanza from the east. It has been assumed that the Arabs and Swahili arrived in the Unyanyembe (Tabora) region in Unyamwezi before they arrived at the lake. Diseases associated with the east rather than the south suggests the possibility that traders first approached the lake by crossing the Masai-steppe. Traditions themselves do not mention traders coming from the east yet there is abundant evidence to indicate that this was the case by mid-century.¹ Indeed, Kerebe traditions are generally distorted to the extent that non-Kerebe receive little attention and are consequently soon deleted from oral historical accounts. Therefore the traditions themselves cannot be relied upon to

1. Christie, Cholera Epidemics, see the accompanying map; J. A. Grant, "Summary of Observations on the Geography. . .," JRGS, XLII (1872), 257-258; Hartwig, "Bukerebe and the Church Missionary Society," 212-213; Eunice A. Chacker, "Early Arab and European Contacts with Ukerewe," TNR, 68 (1968), 75-77.

provide evidence about traders approaching from the east and the disease factor may be the more reliable indicator that there was trading activity in the vicinity of Bukerebe early in the 1800s.

* * * * *

Mihigo II's reign, estimated to have occurred between ca. 1780 and ca. 1820, effectively bridged the apparently stable era of the eighteenth century to the uncertain era of the nineteenth century. During his reign the southward migration of Nilotic-speaking Luo was evidenced by the migration of Bantu-speaking Jita from the east lake coast into Bukerebe. This migratory pressure had no apparent impact on Kerebe culture and Mihigo no doubt welcomed the migrants. The range of Kerebe trading extended beyond the former limits determined by the need for hoes when tusks were exchanged for trade goods. The extent of Mihigo's involvement in ivory acquisition outside of Bukerebe is not discernible in traditions though it may have existed. His son Machunda certainly developed or inherited a system that acquired tusks from inhabitants along the eastern shore of the lake.

The embegete drum, the endirima spear and Butamile symbolize the long, eventful reign of Mihigo II who, in traditions, was the most powerful and therefore most successful Kerebe omukama since Katobaha. The position of omukama never again achieved the same exalted level, hereafter the men who ruled lost some of their "control" over events in the eyes of their subjects. As a "traditional" ruler Mihigo II ranks supreme in the eyes of

the Kerebe. Some say it was he who "created" and manipulated Butamile against troublesome people, it was he who "brought" in diseases to perform a similar function, it was he who initiated the ivory trade and "introduced" new food crops for his people, it was he who welcomed new migrants into the chiefdom and who sired many sons thereby earning the deepest respect from his family and people.

The Kerebe entered the nineteenth century under the pervasive authority of Mihigo, struggling to comprehend the indiscriminant terror that was unleashed in their midst by the arrival of diseases alien to them. While attributing the deaths to Butamile and Mihigo, life was made more complex but nonetheless comprehensible. So long as a strong omukama held office the old order and rationale associated with it remained in tact.

Chapter VI
AN INTERLUDE OF UNREST

Against a background of excess rainfall and severe drought, tempered by a cessation in the need to import hoe handles, the Kerebe witnessed a procession of abakama who ruled for short periods of time between approximately 1820 and 1840. Two of the rulers died while in office; two others were deposed; the fifth man survived a deposition attempt and thereafter proceeded to rebuild a strong political base for his office. The Silanga dynasty during this period of upheaval apparently lost its ability to provide the demanding leadership requisite to maintain control of events. The political crisis of Bukerebe is attributed in tradition to natural phenomenon such as drought, and to the unusual ambition of a man from the nonroyal Sita clan who, very likely, sought to replace the Silanga dynasty with a member of his own clan. These years of political uncertainty cannot be fully understood without examining the social developments which, it is argued, altered the foundations of Kerebe attitudes toward death. It was during these politically turbulent years that sorcery as it is presently known became prevalent in the chiefdom. During Mihigo II's reign the omukama himself

was assumed to be magically responsible for diseases and the resulting deaths. But during this period of political instability following Mihigo's death the omukama was no longer attributed with these powers; the Kerebe then attributed death to other agents, frequently someone within a village--which often as not meant someone within a person's extended family.¹

The period of political and social unrest must also be placed within the broader perspective of Kerebe participation in the long distance ivory trade and the diseases introduced by traders and caravans, as only within this context can the events in Bukerebe be understood. Tradition atypically credits an outside agent with introducing change in society, but in the cases of disease and sorcery the Kerebe inevitably associate them with specific neighboring peoples, although the Kerebe themselves "brought" each in after first requesting someone for it. Innovations could not enter the chiefdom on their own accord; the introduction of new or altered things, whether tangible or intangible, is associated with a particular time, event and persons. Although immediate neighbors, especially the Tatoga, Jita, and Zinza, are associated with the marked changes of the two

1. Tradition is limited concerning the evolution of sorcery in Bukerebe, but it is sufficiently pervasive to warrant serious consideration since the social ramifications of sorcery are notoriously broad. Buyanza provided the most extensive information about sorcery and initially drew my attention to it. Bahitwa provided complementary information although his information differed as to the time of introduction; nonetheless the times of the two men fall within the general period of 1820-1840 under consideration. Kaliga s/o Lwambali collaborated the data on sorcery of Buyanza and Bahitwa; he reported that it was introduced during Machunda's reign, the last of the five abakama considered in this chapter.

decades under examination, available evidence suggests that some of the conditions promoting unrest emanated from the coast of the Indian Ocean rather than the immediate vicinity of the Kerebe, in particular the diseases that accounted for deaths in a manner little understood by the Kerebe. Internal and external influences during this period of unrest on Bukerebe contributed to profound changes in society and it is these influences that must be considered to fully understand developments that ensue.

Ecological Changes

Traditions assert that profound ecological alterations in the vicinity of Bukerebe occurred in the first two or three decades of the nineteenth century. The forestation of the island is one such change. Traditions emphatically contend that hoe handles were a scarce commodity during Mihigo II's reign, so scarce that they were confiscated from a debtor when he became delinquent in his obligations. Sometime before mid-century hoe handles ceased to be a scarce commodity and the Kerebe no longer imported them. Informants' interpretation of this development is that an absence or scarcity of particular species of trees made the handles valuable whereas the presence of trees made them less valuable. Bahitwa's explanation is most ingenious:

During Mihigo's time there were no trees; people went to cut their hoe handles at Nassa, Rwondo, Kome and Mesome [Usukuma and Buzinza]. If someone had a debt and he did not pay it back, the lender took the debtor's hoe handle to settle the debt. This means that there were no trees anywhere in Bukerebe, even at Ilangala [this is now a densely wooded portion of the island]. Trees

started growing after locusts invaded the chiefdom because seeds of trees were in the excrement of the locusts and the seeds grew. The locusts came from the north. After their appearance in Mihigo's time, there was no longer trouble with hoe handles.

Bahitwa alone attributed the solution of the hoe handle shortage to locusts. It is also noteworthy that no one attributed this development directly to Mihigo II. While the eastern end of the island is well stocked with trees today, many of these are fruit trees, such as mango trees, and were planted within the past eighty years. On the other hand, the western end of the island was well wooded at the turn of the present century,¹ and it may be that a particular specie of vegetation was absent around 1800, or, as Buyanza explained it, there may have been too many people about during Mihigo's time, hence the shortage. Regardless of the actual cause-effect circumstances, hoe handles were in short supply and therefore highly desired around 1800 but within a generation a balance between supply and demand developed. This was a positive change during the years of political instability although depopulation may have been a relevant factor in accounting for the balance.

The political atmosphere may have been as adversely influenced by an over abundance of rain as by drought, both of which occurred during the period under consideration, according to Bahitwa, and would have had more immediate impact than forestation. Bahitwa contended that between approximately 1825 and 1830, during the brief reign of Ruhinda, the level of the

1. Hurel, "Religion et vie domestique," 62.

lake rose significantly thus creating numerous islands. Bukerebe as well as Kome, off the Buzinza coast, became islands at this time. The increase in the water level did not have to be great to create the island of Bukerebe. It was no easy task for Stanley to manipulate his small boat through Rugezi channel in 1875 illustrating that Bukerebe was an island, but only in technical terms.¹ A drop in the lake level would have rendered Bukerebe a peninsula during the 1870s; the lake level has varied up to one and a half meters over a ten year period in the twentieth century.² Bahitwa contended, however, that a major rise in the lake level occurred, one that prevented people from "walking," or wading, to Bukara. His information complements a Sukuma tradition that refers to a time when Mwanza Gulf did not exist (or a major portion of it).³ When the Sukuma and Bahitwa's traditions are compared it becomes reasonably well established that a significant increase in the water level occurred at some time in the 1800s. Whether Bahitwa's association of the event with Ruhinda in the 1820s is correct is another matter. An occurrence of this nature would have forced people living along the shore to move inland and may have had ramifications in the political sphere suggesting to the Kerebe that the omukama could

1. Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, I, 194; "Ostafrika und Kamerun," Bd. I, Das Deutsche Kolonialreich, ed. Hans Meyer (Leipzig, 1909), 285.

2. Ludwig; Ukara, 57.

3. Vicariats de Mwanza et de Maswa, "Table d'enquêtes sur les moeurs et coutumes indigènes--Tribu des Basukuma," n.d., Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.

not control events.

The Era of Short Tenures

Four abakama were selected in the 1820s and 30s and each ruled for a relatively short time because of his inability to control their environment: two may have been killed by diseases and two others could not satisfactorily control the rainfall. Following Mihigo II's death in ca. 1820, his son Katobaha III reigned briefly as his successor. Katobaha died in office in the 1820s and his son Golita was in turn selected omukama by the Sita. Golita died in office after a short time without eligible issue so his brother Ruhinda succeeded him. Ruhinda was deposed a short time later by the Sita for failure to stop the heavy rainfall, according to Bahitwa, and he fled to Bukara and then on to Bururi. The Sita ignored Katobaha III's descendants, assuming that any remained, and made their selection from among the sons of Mihigo II. They chose Ibanda only to depose him also after a few years because of an exceedingly severe drought. The next omukama, the fifth in less than twenty years, was Machunda, another son of Mihigo II. The Sita had checked twice on Machunda's "height" or maturity while he lived in exile, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, hence it is assumed that he was in his teens when installed and must also have been one of the last born of Mihigo II's sons.

The four abakama who reigned prior to Machunda may have had an average reign of about four years; of the four men, Ibanda

and possibly Katobaha III ruled for longer periods than Golita and Ruhinda, based on the fact that so little is recorded in traditions about the latter two men. Only Bahitwa associated any significant events with Katobaha III and Ruhinda. He related the advent of sorcery to Katobaha III's reign and the formation of islands to Ruhinda's time. Buyanza, by contrast, associated very little with the three abakama who succeeded Mihigo II; he did not know the tradition about the formation of islands, however, and associated the commencement of sorcery with Ibanda who ruled about ten years after Katobaha III. Numerous informants, on the other hand, referred to Ibanda's attempt to return the exiled Ruhinda from Bururi. Whatever Ibanda's reason was for this maneuver Ruhinda feared to face his uncle and therefore jumped out of the canoe that was bringing him back to Bukerebe and drowned.¹

Ibanda's tenure as omukama was by no means a pleasant one. The powerful Sita were extremely disturbed about a very severe drought that Ibanda was unable to end. Ibanda is remembered by the Kerebe as Omukama Chomya because of widespread starvation. Stalks of banana plants as well as roots of other shrubs and plants were utilized as food. Children born during the extended drought, which lasted for more than one year, were named after the various "hunger" foods. The intensity of the suffering made a deep impression upon the survivors who spoke of

1. Buyanza regards Ruhinda's action as suicide. The incident is also referred to as suicide in "Historia ya Ukerewe," Cory Papers No. 290.

their ordeal with such fervor that their descendants, three to four generations removed, recall Ibanda's drought as the most severe of that century.

Machunda, accompanied by his uncle as well as a brother and a sister, went into exile shortly after the beginning of the drought reflecting Ibanda's insecurity. There was talk that Machunda was "causing" the absence of rain and his uncle therefore apparently decided that exile was the only solution to protect his nephew's chances of ever becoming omukama. The Sita were also in an awkward predicament. They had selected four leaders within a decade and, although their power undoubtedly increased by this development, they were unsuccessful in selecting a ruler capable of resolving the increasing difficulties experienced by the Kerebe. Chief among these problems was the continued presence of diseases such as small pox and cholera.¹ Ibanda, according to Buyanza, did his best to alleviate the suffering by seeking "medicine" from both the Jita and Zinza to counteract the killers.

Machunda's Ascendency to Power

Ibanda no less than any other Kerebe ruler was aware that his days were limited as omukama as long as the drought

1. "Historia ya Ukerewe," Teacher Training College, Murutunguru, Ukerewe. This is a sixteen page cyclostyled manuscript that was prepared for the use of primary school teachers by the staff of the Teacher Training College. It is based on Aniceti Kitereza's unpublished account of Kerebe history.

continued. The duration of the drought before Ibanda's deposition indicates that he employed every means at his disposal to retain his position as omukama. Although traditions preserve only the exile of Machunda, Ibanda had probably taken the precaution of ridding the chiefdom of potential rivals to his position. The Sita patiently endured before commencing intrigues to locate and eventually return the exiled Machunda to Bukerebe. Given the inability of Ibanda to produce rain, they had little choice. Time and suffering gave them the upper hand in relation to Ibanda who continually lost support in spite of his efforts.

Machunda's place of refuge among the pastoral Tatoga was most unusual. Exiled Kerebe princes even at this time were certainly no novelty in this region of the lake although in the latter part of the 1800s it seemed to be common for brothers of the omukama to leave the chiefdom. Princes usually cast their lot with one of the Sukuma chiefdoms along the lake shore, chiefdoms such as Nassa, Busukuma, and Mwanza while a few went northward to find solace among the Jita or others farther north. A prince's country of exile probably depended upon his mother's family, for example if members of her clan were found in a particular area, such as Bururi, Majita or Nassa, then he could conceivably seek a home there. Machunda instead went to live with the pastoral Tatoga and yet his mother's clan was Yango, a group with no apparent relationship on the male side with the Tatoga.

According to Buyanza, Machunda established a lasting friendship with these people even though he encountered some

difficulties while living with them. Although the duration of Machunda's exile probably did not exceed two or three years, during this time a brother who had accompanied him was allegedly killed by the Tatoga and his sister died shortly thereafter. The Tatoga assumed that Machunda, since he was a lad in his teens, would be circumcized and thus become one of them. But Mugangi, Machunda's uncle, refused to grant permission as this would disqualify his nephew from becoming an omukama, an option that he wanted to keep open. Consequently Mugangi offered to submit himself to the rite in place of his nephew. This was accepted by the Tatoga.

The Sita could not overthrow Ibanda without thoroughly preparing for his successor's assumption of authority. Simply killing an undesirable ruler was not possible. To kill a member of the royal family was to invite disaster to the participants. The mastermind behind the Sita conspiracy was Chehaga, guardian of enzu ya menzi, the store-house of the ruler's most powerful magical and ritual possessions including his predecessor's head. It was Chehaga who had dispatched messengers on two occasions to visit Machunda among the Tatoga. Machunda was secretly returned on the second journey so that he could step into the position when it was declared vacant at an auspicious time. Once Machunda was available Chehaga then had to remove Ibanda from the palace area so that he would be vulnerable. This was accomplished by arranging for an elaborate hunt in which Ibanda was enthusiastically encouraged to participate. Ibanda agreed to accompany the hunters and on the second day of the hunt the coup d' etat.

took place. The hunters heard the sound of the chiefdom's symbolic drum, matwigacharo, at Bukindo, the royal residence, and they informed Ibanda that a new omukama had taken possession of the vacated royal residence.¹ Ibanda made a futile attempt to arouse support for his cause but his inability to end the drought had convinced the vast majority of Kerebe that he was an inadequate ruler. He and a few followers were quite easily sent on their way to seek a life outside Bukerebe. Ibanda, temporarily powerless, sought refuge first in Mwanza chiefdom and later in Buzinza. He returned to the island by the 1850s and subsequently established a rival chiefdom on the west end of Bukerebe where he caused Machunda considerable trouble. It is estimated that his deposition occurred in the mid-1830s.

Machunda's ascendancy to authority was marked by an end of the drought; nonetheless his right to remain in office was quickly challenged by Chehaga, the powerful Sita leader who became disenchanted with his clan's most recent choice of omukama. Chehaga charged that Machunda "had lived among the Kangara (Tatoga) too long and when eating he licked his fingers," which was considered poor etiquette by the Kerebe.² Chehaga and other elders were sufficiently dissatisfied for some reason to attempt their third deposition of an incumbent within two decades. Oral

1. According to Buyanza, some Tatoga returned to Bukerebe with Machunda and assisted, at least by their presence, in placing him in power.

2. Buyanza, who provided this tradition concerning Chehaga and Machunda, was unable to provide any more basic cause for Chehaga's desire to depose Machunda.

traditions are obscure in regard to Chehaga's motives in this attempt to depose Machunda, but one cannot discount the possibility that Chehaga himself was ambitious to assume the position of omukama.¹ Whatever his motives, Chehaga seriously miscalculated his strength in relation to that of Machunda. Any deposition required substantial support or at least neutrality from the populace to achieve success. In this case the incumbent had powerful uncles who in turn had Kwaya (Jita) allies. The tables were turned on Chehaga who was forced to flee to Buzinza, a beaten man. Having survived this threat to his position, Machunda went on to reign for approximately thirty-five years, until the late 1860s.

The relationship of the Sita clan vis-à-vis the royal Silanga clan appears to have been impaired by the series of events between Mihigo II's death and Chehaga's unsuccessful attempt to depose Machunda. The two abakama's deaths while in office and the overthrow of two rulers had made the Kerebe extremely aware of the Sita's political prerogatives even if unsettled climatic and health conditions were fundamental causes for their actions. Once Machunda had triumphed over Chehaga, the Silanga were no longer seriously concerned by any further threat from this quarter, primarily because both Machunda and his son and successor, Rukonge, had long reigns. In 1895 the colonial

1. Kaliga s/o Lwambali, a Sita informant, unabashedly claimed that Chehaga wanted the position for himself. Buyanza, in interviews six weeks apart, initially stated that Chehaga wanted the position himself and then later asserted that he wanted to replace Machunda with the exiled Ibanda.

authorities undermined completely the prerogatives of the Sita clan in selecting a successor to Rukonge.

Sorcery as a Social Phenomenon

"Before Ibanda became omukama the Kerebe died natural deaths; during and after Ibanda's time people died because they were killed by someone."¹ This statement by Buyanza discloses a profound change within Kerebe society. In essence it purports that during Ibanda's reign, sorcery, as it is practiced and recognized in the twentieth century, suddenly emerged. Bahitwa verified Buyanza's tradition by two different means. During an interview in 1968 he stated that sorcery, obulogi, commenced while Katobaha III reigned, the successor to the powerful Mihigo II, consequently placing the beginning of sorcery about a decade earlier than Buyanza. Years before the author's interview Bahitwa had dictated historical traditions to a pupil that were transcribed, and among those recorded traditions he made the following observation:

After some time whole clans went away; they disappeared from this country. People started moving away when Katobaha mbaliro [Katobaha III] was ruling and no one was around when Golita started ruling. Gabriel Ruhumbika

1. Buyanza first drew my attention to the evolution of sorcery on Bukerebe with this statement. Kaliga associated the commencement of sorcery with Machunda.

[1907-1938] started to rule the country properly again.¹

The implication of this statement is that people suffered severe harrassment from an undisclosed source and depopulation subsequently occurred. There is a striking coincidence between the traditions of "misrule" attributed by Bahitwa to the abakama of this period and the spread of new diseases together with political instability after Mihigo's death.

Sorcery as a social phenomenon within contemporary African societies has received considerable attention from social scientists. John Middleton and E. H. Winter define a sorcerer as someone who is thought to practice evil magic against others,² although the intentional use of poison by the Kerebe cannot be simply classified as evil magic. It is generally agreed, according to R. Willis, that sorcery accusations are a function of misfortune and of personal relations. Interpersonal accusations are initiated by such events as sickness or death, or loss of crops or livestock, and occur between peers in situations of sexual or status rivalry.³ M. G. Marwick also

1. Bahitwa s/o Lugambage, "Kerebe Manuscripts from Nansio, Ukerewe," Book A2, 18-19 (microfilm, University College Library, Dar es Salaam). Bahitwa dictated a considerable amount of historical information and as far as is known none of the material was published. Bahitwa retains his traditions in numerous notebooks but he permitted a copy of them to be made which were subsequently microfilmed by the University Library.

2. John Middleton and E. H. Winter (eds.), Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa (London, 1963), 3.

3. R. Willis, "Kamcape: an Anti-Sorcery Movement," Africa, 38, 1 (1968), 9.

states that sorcerers do not attack strangers.¹

Historians have not as yet attempted to establish an historical perspective for the role of sorcery within a given social setting. Rather, as T. O. Ranger asserts, they are concerned about the use, or abuse, of sorcery by African leaders: "The nineteenth century in Tanzania was a period in which insecurity and fear produced a widespread increase of witchcraft belief which was often exploited by chiefs and other leaders to obtain slaves, or servants."² He notes that efforts to reintegrate society and dispel the fear causing witchcraft frequently took the form of religious movements. Ranger's statement superficially describes the situation on Bukerebe around 1850. But the important issue is surely what encouraged the insecurity and fear that led to sorcery in the first place. The exploitation of sorcery by chiefs referred to by Ranger is a controversial assertion. How many leaders were able to remain aloof from the same fears and thereby take advantage of their people must be determined before the extent of exploitation can be assessed.

Sorcery in History

John Beattie, a social anthropologist, collected data on sorcery in Bunyoro which are particularly valuable since the

1. M. G. Marwick, Sorcery in Its Social Setting (Manchester, England, 1965), 3.

2. Ranger, "The Movement of Ideas," 169.

Nyoro and Kerebe share numerous cultural features within the interlacustrine culture complex. The Nyoro mbandwa cult of spirit possession has existed for an extensive period of time, but in its earlier phase the cult was not associated with sorcery, revealing an historical occurrence similar to that which occurred in Bukerebe when Buyanza asserted that natural deaths were the expected thing before but not after Ibanda.¹ In both the Nyoro and Kerebe cases, disruptive internal social conditions apparently altered to give rise to a new set of expectancies and behavior in which a complex system of magical and quasi-magical practices and beliefs evolved to permit comprehension of the phenomena.²

A fundamental characteristic of sorcery is its situational nature; it only comes into play when things go wrong.³ But this should not be interpreted to mean that victims of sorcery in the twentieth century experience similar stresses to their predecessors of the 1800s and therefore manifest similar patterns of response. Kerebe traditions on the development of sorcery refute this type of assumption; they remind one that conditions alter through the centuries and man's responses alter as well. Europe's experience with witchcraft during periods of stress and uncertainty is illustrative. The records reveal that during the thirteenth century, when appeals for Church reform developed, the

1. John Beattie, "Sorcery in Bunyoro," Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa, 40.

2. Ibid., 50.

3. Ibid., 52.

beginning of the Inquisition "with its tribunals, police, spies, informers and torture" encouraged accusations of witchcraft. Again the bubonic plague or Black Death scourged Europe in the fourteenth century. Mortality was extremely high, killing perhaps as much as one third of Europe's population in its first three years while periodically appearing to kill again and again and records of witchcraft charges are abundant during this era. Belief in witchcraft by Europeans gradually declined during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; conditions that had fostered its rise--wars, epidemics, high infant mortality, general social and religious unrest--gave way to improved conditions and additional knowledge that in turn provided increased understanding for sickness and death.¹

Europe's experience and reaction to the devastation of bubonic plague in the fourteenth century no doubt approximates what occurred in the interior of eastern Africa when alien diseases were introduced in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Neither peoples understood the cause or transmission of disease although a certain level of knowledge existed to insure a satisfactory adaptation to existing diseases. Neither community accepted a spiritual explanation for the ravaging intruder; rather, both communities assigned the responsibility for causing the "unreasonable" deaths to people within their midst although the scapegoat varied considerably for the two communities.

1. Geoffrey Parrinder, Witchcraft: European and African (London, 1958), 20-21, 104-105.

Witchcraft in both cases evolved out of backgrounds that led to their own peculiar forms and development.

The periodical appearance and evolutionary aspect of witchcraft and sorcery implies that what is practiced on Bukerebe or in Africa in the twentieth century is not necessarily the same as it was a century before and even less similar to what existed two centuries before when conditions were considerably different. Just as political institutions evolve through time, so also do social institutions.¹ Just as significant is the realization that sorcery and witchcraft in East Africa varies from society to society.²

Kerebe Traditions Concerning the Origins of Sorcery

A contemporary examination of sorcery³ among the Kerebe has yet to be undertaken. The information discussed below examines Kerebe sorcery only to the extent that it sheds light upon its development in the nineteenth century. Byanza's

1. Martin Southwold argues as a social scientist that custom and history are basically incompatible because the former alters with conditions thus to describe a custom as a static phenomenon tends to distort its historical development: "The History of a History: Royal Succession in Buganda," History and Social Anthropology, ed., I. M. Lewis (London, 1968), 136-137.

2. Refer to the nine different studies in Middleton and Winter, Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa.

3. In common with Beattie's findings among the Nyoro, the Kerebe do not concern themselves to any great extent about witchcraft, that is, a situation in which x causes the death of y unintentionally in contrast to sorcery in which x causes the death of y intentionally. See "Sorcery in Bunyoro," 29-30.

assertion that "natural deaths" occurred before Ibanda's rule will be analyzed as thoroughly as the evidence permits. Oral traditions have a tendency to distort the past to the extent of focusing on a single aspect of a complex situation which in the case of sorcery goes to the point of claiming that now it exists, earlier it did not. The issue at hand is to determine the historical conditions that prompted Buyanza's statement concerning the commencement of sorcery and then to suggest the development of sorcery on Bukerebe.

Bahitwa and Buyanza hold two strikingly different traditions concerning the commencement of sorcery among the Kerebe. Bahitwa associated sorcery with the immigration of three clans into the chiefdom during the reign of Katobaha III, possibly in the early 1820s. These clans were composed of abalogi (wizards) and it was to their secretive activities that the deaths of so many people are attributed by Bahitwa. Knowledge of sorcery spread from these three sources through inter-marriage. Rukonge (ca. 1869-1895) finally attempted to eradicate sorcery by systematically killing members of these three clans. This drastic action did not prevent the reoccurrence of sorcery because, Bahitwa explained, female members of the clan who were married were not killed and they passed the knowledge on to their children and in some cases to their husbands, thus spreading it into other clans.

Buyanza, however, regarded the three clans destroyed by Rukonge merely as being riddled with abalogi and they received their due reward, but they did not introduce sorcery. Buyanza

believed that poisoning, that is, the insertion of poisonous substances into food or drink, was introduced by a Jita woman in Ibanda's time who inadvertantly used a deadly herb or root in a man's food. The purpose of the "medicine" was to rekindle the husband's love for his wife, but it unfortunately killed him.

Buyanza maintained that people learned about substances that could be used secretly to kill an individual from this accident. Prior to this case of poisoning, Buyanza's traditions disclose that if hatred between men reached a crisis a fight would ensue with spears or bows and arrows; deaths resulting from these incidences would then be revenged or resolved by legal proceedings before the omukama. It is noteworthy that Buyanza did not portray an idyllic picture for the "pre-sorcery" era; however he did not suggest how women may have resolved their conflicts.

The omufumu (medicine man) continues to assume a vital role in contemporary sorcery cases; he or she determines, among other things, who was responsible for causing a particular disease or mishap to a victim and then designates the omulogi who has practiced sorcery, that is, caused the misfortune.¹ This function, according to Buyanza, was first added to the omufumu's responsibilities during Ibanda's time. The event that precipitated this development, actually a legal crisis for Ibanda, was the death of a member of the Sita clan who had been bathing in the lake when a crocodile grasped and drowned him. A dispute

1. For comparative data see J. H. Scherer, "The Ha of Tanganyika," Anthropos, 54 (1959), 897-898.

arose within the Sita clan because one of the victim's brothers was suspected of having "sent" the crocodile to kill his kinsman. The case eventually appeared before Ibanda for resolution. Rather than make a decision himself to determine who was responsible for "magically" sending the crocodile to kill the victim, the omukama abdicated this duty and resolved the dispute by sending to Buzinza for a renowned omufumu having the ability to determine a guilty party by reading the intestines of a chicken. The specialist performed his task by designating the guilty party who was subsequently executed by the omukama. This was apparently the first occasion in which the omukama resorted to this procedure for resolving a legal case. Buyanza claimed that the Kerebe henceforth utilized the abafumu (pl.) to assist in determining who was responsible for misfortunes; the omukama, Buyanza claimed, believed this to be a sound procedure.

Buyanza assumed that the function of the abafumu to determine who causes misfortune and the introduction of poisoning is sufficient evidence to prove that sorcery "began" under Ibanda. His assumption is significant and, although neither Bahitwa nor Kaliga s/o Lwambali used the same incidences to support their contentions, they were all in basic agreement on the vital issue that sorcery as it is now understood began sometime between 1820 and 1840. Further evidence to substantiate these traditions is also discernible.

The Participants in Sorcery Cases

An examination of the alleged deeds, powers, and roles of three categories of specialists involved in sorcery reveals a probable hierarchical evolution of functions that lends significant support to oral traditions.

Two characters most commonly associated with sorcery in Bukerebe are the omulogi (wizard) and the omufumu (medicine man). The latter is a healer and/or diviner while the former is characterized as either a trickster or a murderer. The omufumu is respected in contrast to the omulogi who is despised and feared. The existence of these specialists presented a perplexing problem for informants who claimed that sorcery commenced at a particular time in the nineteenth century but no one would acknowledge that these positions also initially appeared in the same century. On the contrary, they insisted that the specialists had "always" existed. This is a realistic assertion because an examination of other languages in the interlacustrine region reveals that the roots -fumu and -logi (-rogi, -roki) are universally present suggesting that the two social positions are of considerable antiquity and were undoubtedly common to the Bantu-speaking people who migrated from the Bunyoro and Buha dispersal centers. A third individual associated with sorcery is the omuhike. He is seldom referred to in traditions; his reputed power enabled him to see the invisible omulogi.

An analysis of the functions of an omulogi adds a significant dimension to our understanding of the probable development of sorcery that Buyanza and Bahitwa claim occurred. Abalogi,

according to the Kerebe, are alleged to possess the following characteristics: they are active at night, they work either in collusion with others or alone, they dance naked when together at night, they can make themselves invisible, they can change themselves into animals or birds, they have animal or bird familiars, they kill others, and they use portions of the victims to make additional deadly medicine.¹ Buyanza and Bahitwa were independently requested to describe the characteristics of the abalogi before sorcery became prevalent in the nineteenth century. They arrived at similar attributes--identically the same as above except the harmful, killing quality was absent. A pattern emerges when the functions of the abalogi and the abafumu (medicine men) are compared. They fall into distinct categories, as if one tier of functions had been incorporated at some unspecified time. The abalogi are described as either tricksters or killers, never as both simultaneously. The trickster image is still strong for the Kerebe and such individuals are described in irksome tones. A favorite activity was to ride someone's cattle at night and even though no harm came to the livestock the omulogi's action was condemned. E. H. Winter has pointed out that the -logi in Amba society allegedly inverted normal activities. Whatever it happened to be, whether it was going naked, being active at night, or drinking salt water to quench

1. See E. H. Winter, "The Enemy Within: Amba Witchcraft," Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa, 292-293. The characteristics of "witches" as conceptualized by the Amba is very similar to that attributed to them by the Kerebe.

thirst, each attribute was the opposite of socially expected behavior.¹ Killing one's neighbor openly was a crime but society had established procedures for handling this situation. But the omulogi resorted to subterfuge by attacking his victim secretly so as not to reveal his identity thus creating a legal problem for society. The dual roles of trickster and murderer for the omulogi as described by the Kerebe are fundamentally incompatible; one did not simultaneously assume both roles.

The omuhike must be introduced to clarify the relationship between the omufumu and the omulogi. His power is described as superior to that of the omulogi and his sole purpose was to discover those who were practicing abalogi. The omuhike's power permitted him to see the invisible abalogi. The abahike (pl.) are invariably described as men who held positions of authority; the omukama, the abasiba (watchman), the abakungu (headmen), the advisers, and the enfura (friends of the omukama) were all abahike, men who could see the invisible abalogi. Socially and politically this dominant strata held an amazing amount of power, sufficient it would be logically assumed, to control the unruly abalogi within society. Informants reported that an omuhike occasionally took advantage of his position and insinuated to a man that he was an omulogi, that he, the omuhike, had "seen" him one night, but he would accept a goat, cow or whatever from the accused in exchange for not announcing publicly his identity. But hints of blackmail actually suggest that the omuhike was a

1. Winter, "The Enemy Within: Amba Witchcraft," 292-293.

remnant of the past because he is dealing with the trickster not the murderer. When the trickster was a public nuisance--not a public nemesis--the omuhike could fulfill a socially relevant role by exposing the annoying individual. Possibly the most significant evidence to illustrate the development of sorcery along the lines suggested by Buyanza and Bahitwa is the inability of the abahike to "see" the abalogi who killed. It is submitted that they were "equipped" only to deal with the trickster, not the murderer. For all of their alleged power to discern abalogi, these men could not serve society during the post-Ibanda era by identifying sorcerers who killed or harmed others. Society--and the abahike comprised the power structure within it--called upon the abafumu to detect the omulogi rather than abahike. The abahike's functions and powers apparently remained constant when sorcery initially emerged in contrast to the functions and powers of the abafumu that increased in response to a new social need.¹

The functions and role of the abafumu are extremely diverse giving the impression of a highly flexible and absorbative position. Because of these qualities it is difficult to distinguish earlier characteristics from those acquired in more recent times. Traditions concerning the original abafumu do exist. The Hira clan is reputed to have been the first in the region to have practicing abafumu in its ranks. One of their abilities at

1. E. Adamson Hoebel, The Law of Primitive Man (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961), 241-242, 272-274. Hoebel does not deal directly with the problem at hand but he does allow for change or development within a legal system to adjust to new circumstances.

that time was to "read" the intestines of a chicken to assist in diagnosing and curing a patient's illness. The Hira migrated from the Buha dispersal center, according to Bahitwa, and went into Buzinza. Although they were a very early agricultural-hunting clan in the southeastern lake region they were by no means the first there indicating that the earliest Bantu-speakers may not have had abafumu in their midst, or they may have possessed a different term for a similar specialist. The approximate time for the arrival of the Hira in Bukerebe would be at least two centuries before the Silanga appearance in the 1600s and possibly three to six centuries earlier.

Traditions contend that the original functions of the abafumu consisted only of diagnosing and treating illnesses. Informants minimize the ailments of the pre-1800 period, suggesting that death for reasons other than old age was unusual. Fever is depicted as the only serious physical problem and the basic treatment for it was cupping, that is, drawing off blood by means of a cow's horn. Buyanza distinguished sharply between the treatment of the post-Ibanda era that included internal medicines to those of an earlier time when external prescriptions were the rule. It is suggested that the appearance of alien diseases with the penetration of the long distance trade network promoted a chaotic situation for the abafumu who then sought effective means to understand and to counteract these deadly intruders. Lack of success with existing treatments, due to ignorance of new diseases could only encourage the medical practitioners to assume that someone rather than something was

accountable for the condition. Since abakama no longer assumed or were assigned responsibility for disease after Mihigo II, it was then a logical step to place the source of magical power elsewhere. Thus abafumu used their prevailing diagnostic means, such as interpreting the intestines of a chicken, to perform the additional task of determining who had covertly caused a particular misfortune.

The distinctly separate trickster or killer characteristics of an omulogi, the inability of an omuhike to discern the killer omulogi, and the added function of an omufumu to discover who caused a misfortune are fundamental alterations in the activities of three categories of participants associated with sorcery. These changes focus attention on the evolutionary nature of sorcery and provide valuable internal evidence to support the traditions of Buyanza and Bahitwa.

Discernible Social and Legal Effects of Sorcery

It has been suggested within the context of nineteenth century East African history that the mechanism of sorcery was in reality a means of achieving social control within a given society.¹ According to this thesis, the troublesome individual, the malcontent could be purged through the device of sorcery, or, more significantly, the threat of social retribution through

1. Edward A. Alpers, The East African Slave Trade, Historical Association of Tanzania, Paper No. 3 (1967), 19.

sorcery accusations was instrumental in cautioning individuals about their behavior. The validity of this thesis for the nineteenth century is questionable given the present dearth of information on this phenomenon. Various societies need to be examined to determine the prevalence of sorcery and witchcraft accusations in each, whether a society before 1850 with a strong centralized government such as Buganda experienced approximately the same amount of sorcery as societies with less centralized systems such as the numerous Sukuma chiefdoms. Implied in the thesis that sorcery was an effective means of social control is the basic correlative hypothesis that the earlier legal system was unable to function satisfactorily within an altering social environment. When Omukama Ibanda, for example, requested aid from a Zinza omufumu to resolve a case that he could or would not decide, he abdicated his responsibility to a specialist. He accepted that the omufumu's power to resolve certain types of legal cases was superior or preferable to his.

Sorcery is primarily used to explain loss of life, human or animal, and destruction of property. Disputes between persons over boundaries or nonpayment of debts continued to be resolved through the preexisting legal structure. Punishment for a convicted sorcerer varied from fines (loss of property), replacement of the destroyed thing, enslavement, to death. Depending on individual circumstances, some accused persons chose exile rather than punishment. Consequently there was a movement of people in the 1800s who were outcasts, socially undesirable persons in a given society who were accused murderers or destroyers of

property. Because sorcery accusations are usually directed towards kinsmen or immediate neighbors, the accused could flee from their homes and seek refuge in a nearby community. If Machunda's response to outcasts was at all typical, these migrants were readily welcomed into other communities. Seldom was a stranger ever feared since close acquaintances were usually accused of sorcery.

Edward Alpers asserts that chiefs frequently abused their power by accusing subjects of sorcery, not as a means to augment social control, but rather to exploit the accused and rob them of their possessions.¹ This type of exploitation may have existed. Recognizing that the eastern portion of East Africa would have a markedly different development than the western region because the two areas were exposed to the same diseases at different times, it should be emphasized that sorcery's evolution in the nineteenth century appears to have developed because the existing legal structure, whether clan or tribal, could not satisfactorily control the emerging social malaise. The growth of sorcery appears as an extra-legal means of working out social tensions exacerbated by high mortality rates, assumed to have been caused by agents using magical or poisonous means. The medicine men/diviners became indispensable advisers of the chiefs or councils since they were specialists whose knowledge and skill were in great demand. Under normal

1. Alpers, The East African Slave Trade, 17, 19; Ranger has accepted the same thesis, see "The Movement of Ideas," 169.

circumstances initiative for an accusation did not come from the ruler himself but rather within a village context. If the village legal structure could not resolve the situation it was then directed to higher authorities. It is unrealistic to allocate the primary responsibility for sorcery accusations to the chiefs. They, of course, possessed the authority to enforce the decision of the diviners who determined the guilty parties. The desire manifested in the 1800s to accumulate possessions also contributed to avarice among men in authority. Yet the chief was undoubtedly more interested in eradicating the causes of sorcery and witchcraft than he was in anticipating case after case that was to come before him thus increasing his wealth. The position of chief within society did not assure immunity from the harmful practices of sorcerers; the continual search by men of this rank for magical powers to enhance their positions reflects their insecurity. Chiefs were in no position to remain aloof from the affairs of the community, in fact, they were as deeply concerned about conditions over which they had little control that encouraged social unrest as other members of their society. To regard sorcery and witchcraft simply as a means of social control and the chiefs as unscrupulous men taking advantage of their subjects is to misconstrue the nature of sorcery and witchcraft as well as to deny the anarchical nature of it. No one was fully protected from sorcery nor from the diseases whose mortality rates encouraged the search for a human agent on whom blame could be placed.

* * * * *

The period between Mihigo II's death and Machunda's successful defense of his position as omukama was characterized by unusual climatic conditions and by numerous rulers with brief, ineffectual reigns. Kerebe traditions asserting that sorcery first appeared during this era emanate from a time when an alarming death rate, caused by the introduction of new diseases that accompanied the caravans from the Indian Ocean coast, was comprehended within a magical context. Initially the increased mortality rates were attributed to the magical power of Mihigo II but following his death the absence of a powerful omukama encouraged the Kerebe to transfer responsibility for these deaths from the abakama, who allegedly lost magical control over diseases, to an omulogi, a person within the community who sought to harm others, often by magical means. An examination of the various activities and functions of the major participants in sorcery, the omulogi, the omuhiké and the omufumu, indicates that a significant alteration in their roles occurred thus lending support to Kerebe oral traditions. A parallel legal development that transpired was the abakama's abdication of their responsibility to resolve court cases involving sorcery thereby increasing the already important role of the abafumu who then claimed the power to identify sorcerers. The omukama, his headmen and advisers lost considerable legal control over events when the abafumu assumed the power to identify sorcerers. Therefore the omukama was in no position to exploit his subjects with sorcery,

a phenomenon rooted in events that neither he nor anyone else could control. The internal adjustments to the unrest established the basis for living under ever increasing stress during the remainder of the century, a price the Kerebe paid for participation in long distance trade.

Chapter VII

THE KEREBE AT MID-CENTURY UNDER MACHUNDA

Machunda, the thirteenth omukama of Bukerebe, developed a stable political regime with a substantial economic base while in power from approximately the mid-1830s to the late 1860s. By contrast, this same period is characterized by social instability due to depopulation because of diseases and emigration due to sorcery accusations. The omukama actively sought immigration into his chiefdom from neighboring communities but his efforts were nullified to a degree by friction with a rival chiefdom established by Ibanda at Ilangala. Machunda was seemingly preoccupied with economic affairs. He concerned himself with the neutralization of the Kula as serious competitors in ivory trading and simultaneously maintained or created political alliances with neighboring communities to support his interest in the long distance ivory trade. His subjects, on the other hand, were restricted to regional trade. A consuming Kerebe interest in trading activities produced fundamental changes in economic values by the mid-1800s. The accumulation of possessions by the ambitious members of society became an important undertaking which in turn stimulated local trade and altered agricultural

priorities by increasing the desirability for agricultural labor to cultivate enlarged fields devoted to producing a grain surplus. Machunda's involvement in the long distance trade brought the Kerebe into a cooperative relationship with the Ganda who were drawn into the lake's southern region to promote their trading interests, not at the behest of Arab and Swahili traders but most probably on their own initiative. In this region they sought the assistance of people like the Kerebe who acquiesced to their request in deference to Ganda power.

The Movement of People

The sparseness of Bukerebe's population remained a disturbing characteristic throughout Machunda's lifetime. Deaths resulting from new diseases--understood within the context of sorcery--and the migration of persons accused of sorcery who sought refuge outside their former communities contributed to this phenomenon of depopulation. Although traditions do not refer to persons fleeing from Bukerebe because of sorcery accusations they do mention those who sought refuge in Bukerebe. The majority came from societies such as the Jita and Kara who immigrated in the greatest numbers and who had the closest clan connections with the Kerebe. According to Buyanza, Machunda actively encouraged immigration by sending his personal canoe to countries like Buzinza and Majita to transport those persons willing to immigrate into his chiefdom. They arrived as freemen but whether they were fleeing from problems within their own

communities cannot be determined. Some of the Zinza arrivals were Longo smiths, men explicitly sought by Machunda who had channeled his request through the Zinza ruler.

This particular request indicates that these specialists were in short supply at the time. It is the first evidence that the Kerebe tendency to avoid smithing, allegedly because it was difficult to marry, had a disruptive effect upon the community due to a consequent shortage of implements and weapons. Even the omukama's willingness to provide Silanga wives for the smiths, who were otherwise endogamous in their marriage arrangements, could not overcome the fundamental disdain the population had for those who practiced this vital occupation. Once the Zinza smiths settled on Bukerebe they too acquired a desire to cease smithing or else they returned to their homes in Buzinza. It was not until a Jita smith and his sons immigrated into Bukerebe late in Machunda's reign that this particular shortage of skilled craftsmen was overcome.

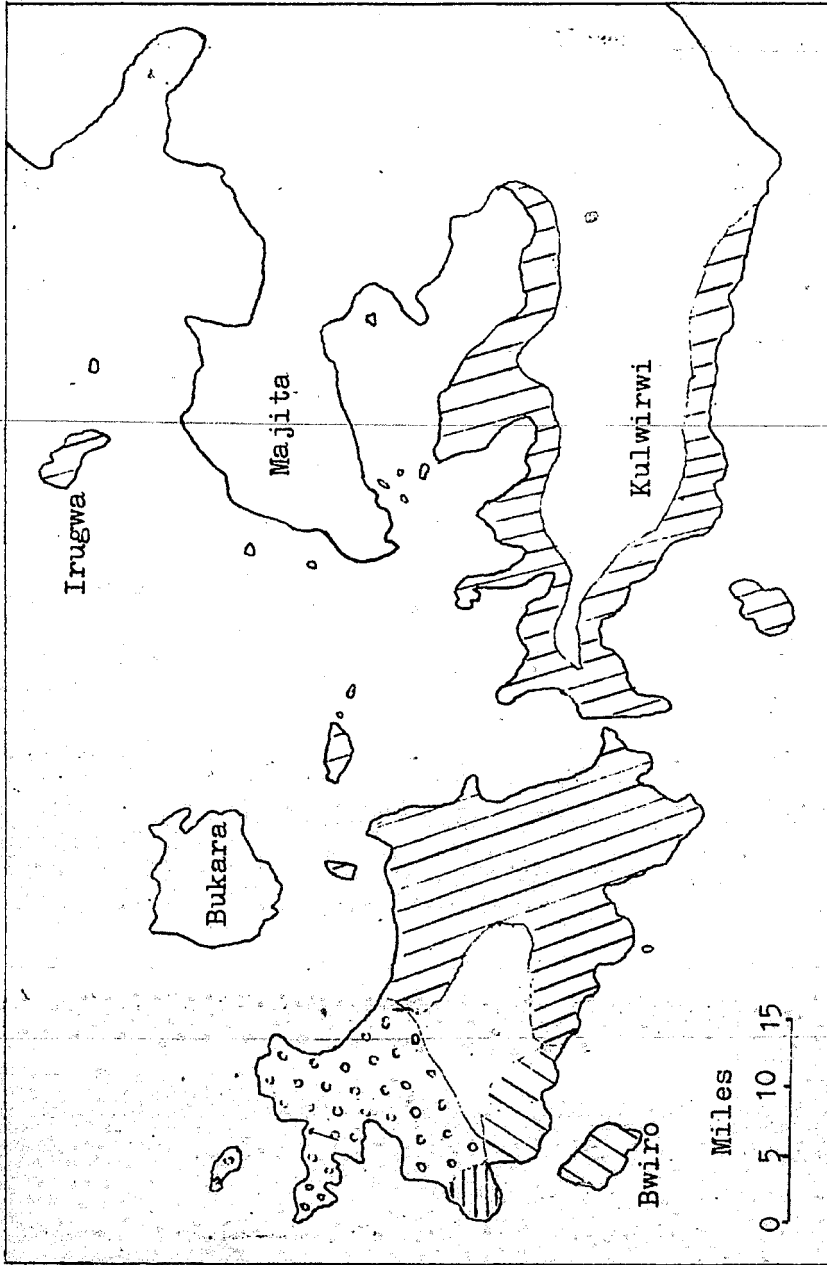
Machunda was plagued throughout much of his reign by the emergence of a rival chiefdom in Ilangala, a district in the northwestern part of the island. The chief of this newly created chiefdom was Ibanda, Machunda's deposed predecessor and brother. When Ibanda fled he first went to Mwanza, a Sukuma chiefdom with which Machunda did not have an alliance.¹ Ibanda shifted later

1. John H. Speke, What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile (New York, 1868), 312-313, 316-317. The rival Kula chiefdom on the island had good relations with Mwanza. Buyanza's traditions provide the basis for much of this chapter, supplemented by those of Bahitwa and others on specific aspects.





from Mwanza to Buzinza before he returned to Bwiro Island, off the Kerebe coast, under control of the Kula royal clan. Ibanda then moved to Ilangala which was sparsely inhabited and nominally under Machunda's control, where he was successful in convincing the population to accept his leadership as well as encouraging migrants, particularly from the island of Bukara, to become his subjects. In traditions Ilangala is referred to as a haven for social outcasts from Bukara and Majita with a liberal sprinkling from Machunda's chiefdom. Ibanda welcomed these persons since his greatest desire was to populate his chiefdom. He reaped a measure of revenge from those who had deposed him by creating internal confusion and dissension within Machunda's realm. This was accomplished either by attacking a compound in Machunda's chiefdom at night to expose Machunda's weakness, or by secretly inciting accusations of sorcery against one of Machunda's subjects who, fearing dispossession of his property, was encouraged to shift with his wealth intact to Ibanda's proffered sanctuary. Machunda no doubt countered in kind thus adding to the general unrest and insecurity of the period. Significantly, Machunda apparently did not make a concerted effort to dislodge Ibanda from his entrenched position until it was too late.¹

This was somewhat ironical because Machunda had previously driven the Kula clan from the southeastern portion of the island, an area to which they had fled after an earlier defeat at the hands of Mihigo I in the 1700s. Following their

1. G. Shergold Smith to Wright, November 27, 1877, C. A6/0 22, CMS.



Approximate Boundaries of Chiefdoms in 1850

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|------------------|
|  | Silanga (Machunda) |  | Kula |
|  | Chamba |  | Silanga (Ibanda) |

loss to Machunda, presumably before 1850, the Kula fled towards the southwestern corner of the island. Although tradition suggests that a dispute over cattle sparked Machunda's attack on the Kula there is circumstantial evidence implying that he wished to remove them from a competitive commercial position. Prior to the conflict the Kula were in a preferable strategic location to trade in ivory with caravans coming from the east and the canoes coming from Sukuma chiefdoms. It is not surprising that the most powerful omusiba (watchman) of Machunda and Rukonge was situated at Ngoma, a village formerly under the Kula chiefs, and his importance emanated from his responsibilities to meet approaching strangers who were predominately traders.

The most unusual group of migrants that Machunda welcomed to his chiefdom were Tatoga pastoralists. When he had returned from his period of exile in their country, a number of Tatoga had accompanied him and thereafter he maintained cordial relations with them until his death. On the island they performed the same function as pastoralists to the south of the lake: they were permitted to act as herdsmen for the omukama and other wealthy Kerebe possessing large herds of cattle. Machunda married between ten and twenty Tatoga women indicating that his links to the pastoralists were well forged. Little is remembered about their way of life and they finally departed around the turn of the present century.¹

1. Journal of G. S. Smith, November 17, 1877, C. A6/0 22, CMS. Tradition claims that individual Tatoga herdsmen were killed occasionally, but the major encounter suggested by Oscar Baumann was not forthcoming in traditions: Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle, 46.

Alterations in Economic Values

A profound alteration in economic values took place during the early part of the 1800s. The basic measurement of wealth before 1800 and for many persons until the present century was in terms of cattle; a wealthy individual in Bukerebe was a man with a sizable herd of cattle. The Kerebe also participated in intertribal trading before 1800 to a limited extent; both hoes and hoe handles had to be acquired from Buzinza. Beyond these necessities the Kerebe were virtually self-sufficient. Salt, for example, could be extracted from local reeds or soils. Yet it is probable that the bartering of other goods occurred when a specific need or opportunity arose. Then in the early nineteenth century conditions dramatically altered. Although Bahitwa and Buyanza disagreed on the specifics, they both stated that a fundamental measurement of value increased in the 1800s: bridewealth. Bahitwa contended that the number of items necessary for bridewealth increased to twelve while Buyanza insisted that the number remained constant but the value of the items increased.¹ In either case the result was an emphasis on more material wealth revealing both the availability and the desire for such items as hoes and livestock. It is apparent that the Kerebe expanded the amount of their participation in inter-tribal

1. See Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, I, 200. The explorer's assertion was that twelve goats, equal to one cow, in addition to three hoes were required for bridewealth. The items themselves could vary from livestock to hoes but the latter seemed to be significant, virtually a constant item, although the quantity was not constant.

trading as opportunities presented themselves.

The major Kerebe export was grain and those persons who wanted to acquire goods found it necessary to produce a grain surplus. The amount of land cultivated by the Kerebe aspiring to accumulate more wealth must have increased noticeably by Machunda's reign. But not all Kerebe demonstrated the same desire. Buyanza estimated that approximately a third to a fourth of the population was actively seeking to increase their wealth and, significantly, some immigrants were among this group. The previous system of subsistence agriculture had encouraged the cultivators--the women--to sow only the approximate amount of grain necessary to feed those for whom she was responsible.¹ When the Kerebe adopted grain as their major export it meant that cultivators had to take into account the desirability of producing a surplus for trading. An ever increasing availability and desire for commodities of value meant that an ever increasing amount of land had to be cultivated to produce the surplus grain.

The practice of bartering may have become more common during this era. Traditions relate that when men went to Buzinza there were two means of acquiring hoes. Late in the 1800s, expeditions in groups of twenty to thirty men would travel together taking goods with them such as dried fish, grain or goats as an exchange for hoes. Or they would go to Buzinza with the expressed intention of working two to three months for the

1. See McMaster, A Subsistence Crop Geography of Uganda, 88.

smelters collecting iron ore in exchange for a portion of the hoes made from the ore. The traditions of Buyanza and other informants implicitly suggest that the latter type of exchange --labor for hoes--was common earlier but decreased in the late nineteenth century even though violence became a characteristic feature of the trade relationship since the Kerebe, laden with foodstuffs to exchange for hoes, virtually invited attacks upon themselves by nonsmithing Zinza. These parties, consequently, approached Buzinza well armed and prepared for a hasty withdrawal if necessary. Foodstuffs undoubtedly facilitated the procedure for obtaining hoes, probably becoming the preferred method by the mid-1800s.

Increasing Use of Agricultural Labor

The increase in agricultural production and the use of newly introduced species of millet and sorghum from Takama (the south) in the early nineteenth century paralleled an increase in the domestic slave trade.¹ Slaves (bonded servants may be a more accurate term) were a component of Kerebe society long before the 1800s, certainly from the time of the Silanga's arrival on Bukerebe in the 1600s; the majority of these persons, however, originated from within the chiefdom itself. The aberu (male slaves) and abazana (female slaves) were either individuals who had lost their families and had no place to go for sustenance

1. See Alpers, The East African Slave Trade, 13-26.

except to the omukama, or those who for one reason or another could no longer claim membership in their clans. Aberu w'engoyelo, on the other hand, composed a distinct and separate category of domestic slaves. These persons could either have been from within or from outside the chiefdom; their common problem was a lack of food. Hunger had driven them to the situation in which bondage or dependency was a preferred status to independence. They could place themselves in servitude, a master-servant relationship, with the omukama or with any man possessing adequate food supplies. A slave remained with his/her master for the remainder of his life or until redemption occurred.

Slaves were accorded reasonable treatment by their master and any slave suffering abuse or ill-treatment could leave his master and take refuge with another provider. When this occurred the original master was not compensated for the slave's loss whereas the second master received the redemption wealth if this transaction took place. Consequently the aberu and abazana were not under the absolute control of their master although the legal system did not reflect much concern over their plight. An accusation of sorcery, for example, was usually followed by a summary execution whereas the majority of Kerebe had numerous avenues open to them for refuting the accusation. A slave therefore needed to be cognizant of the limitations placed on his rights.

Redemption came either from the slave's family or from his own resources. The standard value of an individual was assessed in terms of cattle: a female slave, regardless of age,

was valued as one cow and a male slave was valued as one bull. A hoe provided a second standard of measurement: twelve hoes equalled one cow and six hoes equalled one bull. In addition, a goat and a large basket of grain each equalled a hoe. A person could be redeemed by any combination of hoes, goats or baskets of grain if a cow or bull was unavailable. Regardless of the time involved while a person was in a state of dependency the redemption price remained constant. If an enslaved person was on good terms with his clan, providing they were nearby or within the chiefdom and providing the slave wanted to alter his status, it was not difficult to redeem an individual.

When an individual migrated from another country because of famine and became enslaved the situation was more difficult for the enslaved because only the poorer clans were unable to exchange livestock or hoes for food in the first place to avoid enslavement. These men were frequently victims of drought and, occasionally accompanied by their nuclear families, had fled from the eastern lake shore, a region notorious for its unreliable rainfall. Tradition reveals that accumulating the redemption fee was difficult and time consuming but it attributes the aberu w'engoyelo with resilience and determination, characteristics that enabled them to work out their own redemption over a period of years. Unlike many of the slaves from Bukerebe who were often disowned by their clan for laziness or personal animosities, the slaves who were famine victims very often attempted to regain an independent status. The aberu w'engoyelo as bonded servants were expected to cultivate their own food supply in addition to

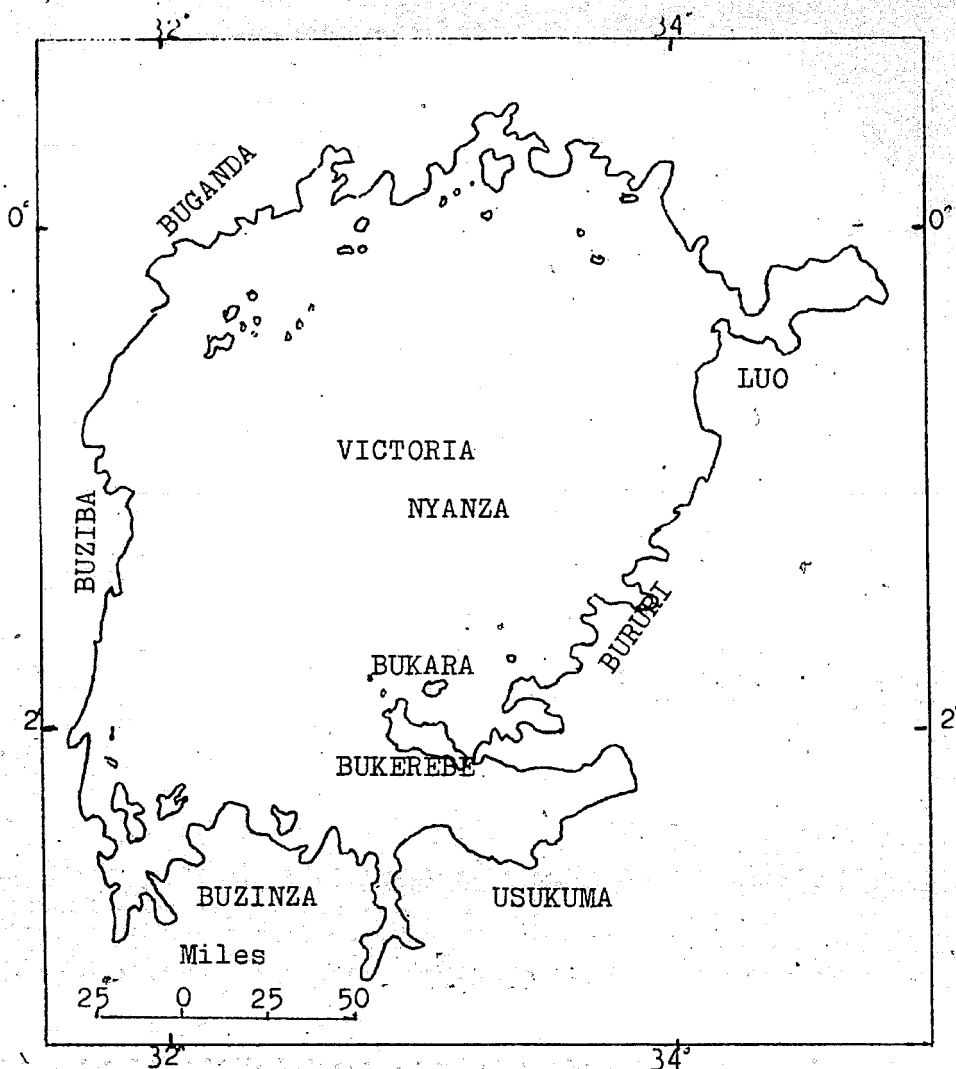
cultivating and performing other menial tasks for their masters. But this category of servant apparently had sufficient latitude and sufficient opportunity to accumulate a surplus of grain and thereby acquiring the necessary redemption price. Redemption was not always an achievable goal for slaves nor a desirable one, a situation partially determined by the attitude of the individual and partially the background of the slave.

From the time of Machunda's rise to power in approximately 1835 until 1895, the Kerebe purchased a number of slaves from other societies for the purpose of obtaining agricultural labor, a development concurrent with the policy to encourage freemen to immigrate to the island. The majority of purchased slaves emanated from two major districts: Bururi and Bugaya. Ruri was a Kerebe name given indiscriminately to people from a number of ethnic backgrounds residing in the Musoma region in the eastern lake district. These people practiced male circumcision and the Kerebe, when exchanging foodstuffs for slaves during a famine, wanted to acquire children, particularly boys before they had been circumcized. The desire for slave labor, actually seeking slaves rather than waiting for refugees to arrive and place themselves in a state of dependency, also made it less likely that the slave would be encouraged to redeem himself. Boys in particular tended to remain aberu for life in the late 1800s, and, although marriage was arranged for them by their master with abazana, their off-spring were recognized as slaves. Yet, by the third generation, there was a definite tendency for the slave status to recede and they came to regard

themselves as members of the clan to which they had become an integral part. The slaves from Bugaya, on the other hand, were Nilotic-speaking Luo. They were victims of famine or conflicts resulting from famine because during periods of hunger kidnapping of children was common and they were then exchanged for food; the Luo also suffered from the presence of Swahili and Arab slavers. Since they were Luo with a distinctly different cultural background than the Kerebe, this was an added barrier if they wished to improve their position within Kerebe society.

Intertribal Trade

Bukerebe's reputation as the granary of the southeastern lake region was based upon its reliable and abundant rainfall and its vital role in the local trade was possible because of the climatic factor. Drought was not unknown but it was not a frequent problem, particularly when compared to the neighboring districts. It is not surprising that informants refer to Kerebe abagimba (rainmakers) being dispatched by Mächunda and Rukonge to other countries in response to pleas by chiefs for assistance in rainmaking. The Kerebe abakama had apparently found a highly successful formula for ensuring adequate rain and this knowledge was greatly prized. Once the Kerebe began to exploit the agricultural potential of their island beyond subsistence, they were in a position to take advantage of any disadvantages experienced by their neighbors.



Local Trade: Kerebe Imports

People

Ganda
Ziba
Zinza
Sukuma
Kara
Ruri
Luo

Commodities

Bark Cloth
Coffee Beans, Bark Cloth
Hoes
Salt, Cattle, Hides
Cattle, Hides
Slaves, Tobacco
Salt, Slaves

Just as the Kerebe depended upon favorable climatic conditions for their surplus in grain, so they also depended upon unfavorable climatic conditions in other regions to gain desired items. Famine in Bururi meant that it was an auspicious time to acquire slaves. Both Bukara and many of the Sukuma chiefdoms possessed sizable herds of cattle and during drought this was the item the Kerebe most actively sought. Traditions from a Kwimba chiefdom in Usukuma recount a serious famine between 1860 and 1870 that is referred to as "the famine of the profiteers, in which residents of Ukerewe came to sell food supplies at an exorbitant price."¹ Hoes from Buzinza, of course, remained a constant need but even these valued items could be acquired on better terms when adverse conditions existed.

Exports from Bukerebe included dried fish, canoes, oars, worn out hoes, sheep and goats in addition to grain.² A used hoe, one whose blade had been entirely worn away by use (a fairly rapid process since the metal was not tempered) retained some value because the shaft that was wedged into the handle possessed valuable iron. It was from a number of these shafts that Kerebe smiths could reheat and rework the iron into implements such as knives, arrow heads, spears, adzes, etc. Iron, in the form of these shafts, could be readily exchanged with most people along

1. Charles F. Holmes, "A History of the Bakwimba of Usukuma, Tanzania, From Earliest Times to 1945," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1969), 146.

2. See A. Schynse, A travers l'Afrique avec Stanley et Emin Pasha (Paris, 1890), 77; C. Waldemar Werther, Zum Victoria Nyanza (Berlin, n.d.), 183.

the eastern lake shore for small items. Luo canoemen, for instance, came to Bukerebe in the nineteenth century with salt and eagerly exchanged a packet of salt for a hoe shaft. Within Bukerebe these shafts had considerable value because they represented the raw material from which any necessary tool was made. The smiths had no other access to iron except for these shafts and other discarded implements. When the importation of Zinza hoes is viewed from this perspective, the essential nature of those implements can be better appreciated.

Fishermen made lengthy journeys to the Buzinza and Bururi coasts during the months of June through August for the purpose of catching fish which were dried and then exchanged for goods the fishermen needed.¹ This particular form of trade may have decreased in the latter half of the 1800s given the increased political unrest in Buzinza and the presence of the aggressive Ganda. On the other hand, the hunters of the hippopotamus (abanyaga) apparently did not curtail their expeditions to Buzinza and Bururi, journeys that provided the Kerebe with yet another commodity for trading purposes--hippopotamus meat.² The Kerebe generally regard the inhabitants of Bururi as the most proficient hippo hunters in the region and the Kerebe would join forces with them. This cooperation permitted the Kerebe

1. H. A. Fosbrooke, "Some Aspects of the Kimwani Fishing Culture, with Comparative Notes on Alien Methods," JRAI, 64 (1934), 1-2, 19-22. This article describes Kerebe fishing voyages in the present century.

2. Mpehi s/o Magesa provided excellent information about the activities of hippo hunters in the nineteenth century.

hunters to range beyond the territorial limits of the chiefdom in company with another community, the only example of a "formal" Kerebe hunting association that cooperated with non-Kerebe. The hunters traveled along the southern and eastern coasts in search of their prey. When a supply of meat was available it was then exchanged for other goods. A favorite region for the hunters was the Luo coast, south of Kavirondo Gulf, where the flesh could be exchanged for the excellent salt found in the area, a commodity that also attracted the Ganda to the same source.¹ This salt trade may have had its origins before the nineteenth century that would have supplemented the low quality local sources available to the Kerebe.

Hoes, slaves, cattle, and salt formed the bulk of Kerebe imports by 1850. Hides imported from Usukuma and Bukara were made into articles of clothing and represented an additional minor item of exchange that continued from earlier times into the 1800s. By the latter half of the nineteenth century both Ruri and Sukuma tradesmen provided tobacco for the Kerebe; prior to this time local varieties of "tobacco" had been used for both smoking and chewing. The Sukuma also supplemented the Kerebe salt supply from Kenya (Bugaya) by offering another variety obtained from Lake Eyasi.²

1. Speke, Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile, 401; John Roscoe, The Baganda (London, 1911), 438.

2. See H. S. Senior, "Sukuma Salt Caravans to Lake Eyasi," TNR, 6 (1938), 87-90.

Regional, intertribal trade, while actively participated in by the Kerebe, was by no means an unregulated activity. In essence all major imports were assessed a tax on the omukama's behalf by headmen. Whether hoes or salt, a percentage of the commodity was designated as the omukama's share. The details of the system are not altogether clear, but as an illustration, Buyanza reported that after a war in which captives were taken, the omukama received the first prisoner from his subjects and fifty percent of those remaining. This policy was seemingly flexible; the ruler could return a single captive to the captor but the gesture of recognizing the omukama's right to the first captive was important. As with all goods received through taxation, the omukama used his discretion in redistributing them and members of the royal clan received the largest single portion while others who were socially near the seat of authority could expect consideration. Nonetheless, it was also a matter of policy to retain a reserve supply of non-perishable goods to meet unexpected emergencies.

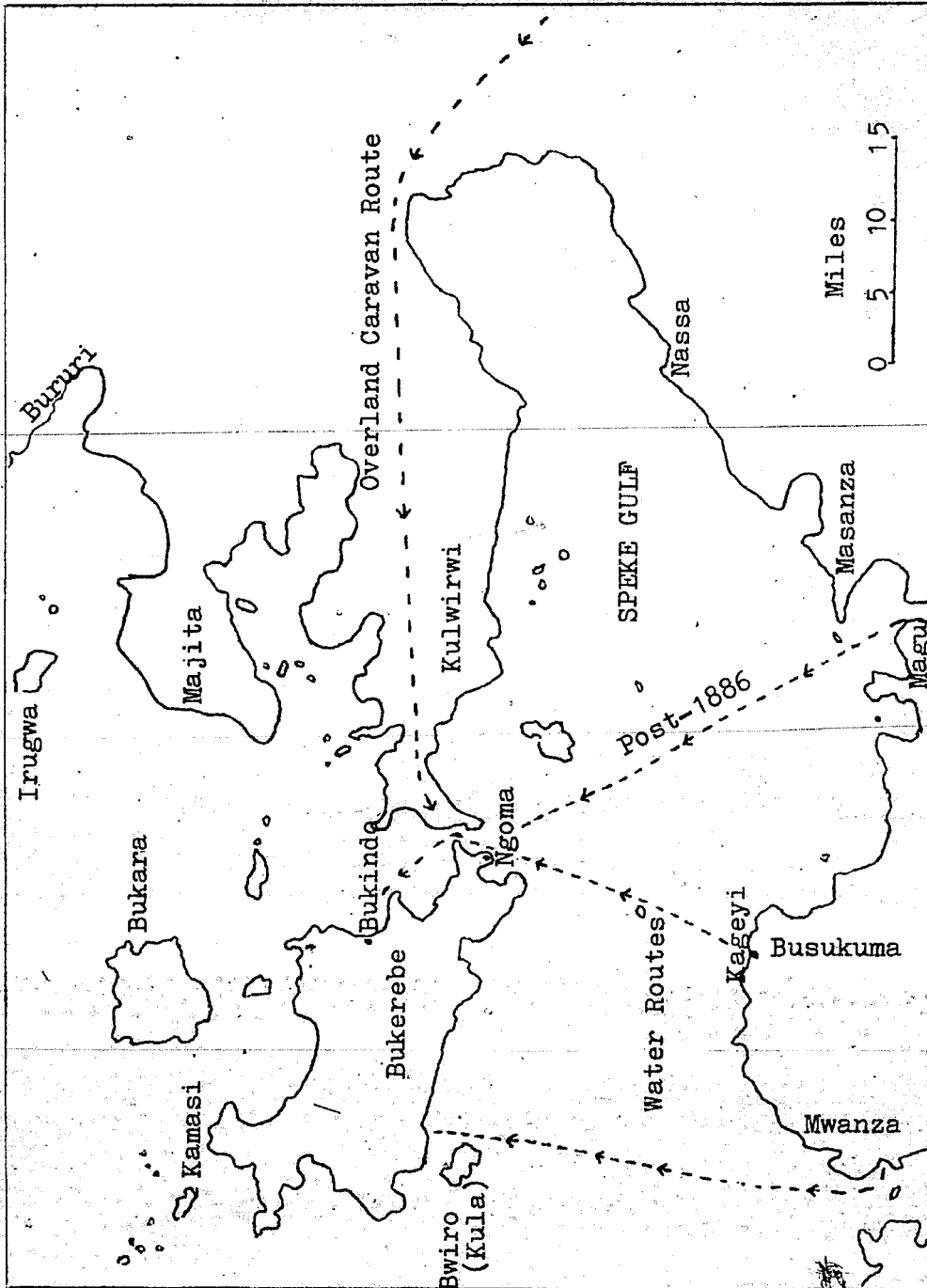
Two other imports, coffee beans and bark cloth, also appeared within the chiefdom during Machunda's reign. These products are in a transitional category between intertribal trade and long distance trade. The products were African produced and traded but they formed a part of the omukama's trade that bore all the characteristics of a royal monopoly similar to the ivory trade. The Ziba, who live north of Bukoba on the west side of the lake, were primarily responsible for dispersing coffee beans

grown in their vicinity throughout the lake region.¹ Although their major interest was ivory the Ziba were always welcomed when they visited Bukerebe because they brought coffee beans which the elders enjoyed chewing. On Bukerebe the omukama exchanged ivory for coffee beans in addition to other commodities, then freely dispensed the beans to advisers and enfura who appeared at his court. Bark cloth represented another highly prized luxury commodity that was brought occasionally by the Ziba and Ganda and it too was a by-product of the ivory trade, hence a virtual monopoly of the omukama.

Long Distance Trade

Unlike local trade, long distance trade centered around ivory and necessitated diplomatic arrangements among the various chiefs. According to Buyanza the Kerebe abakama, beginning with Mihigo II, had marriage ties with at least two Sukuma chiefdoms, Busukuma and Burima (Bulima), and with some important elders from Bururi since centralized political systems were absent in the region. Machunda retained these arrangements and added two other alliances, at least one was with a Ziba chief and the other with an unidentified Haya chief on the west coast of the lake. The Kula chiefdom, on the other hand, had a marriage alliance

1. Brief but pertinent comments on the Ziba and other people around the lake are found in "Rapport du P. Brard sur les tribus insulaires du Nyanza Meridional," Chronique trimestrielle de la Société des missionnaires d'Afrique, 73 (1897), 152-157. Hereafter referred to as Chronique.



Long Distance Trading Routes to Bukerebe

with Mwanza, a rival chiefdom to Busukuma. Therefore the rival chiefdoms of Bukerebe did not maintain relations with the same authorities in other countries. What Ibanda's ties might have been while at Ilangala are unknown but it is relatively certain that he also participated in the ivory trade since the Arabs at Unyanyembe knew of his existence and hostile relationship with Machunda.¹ There are two notable omissions from those chiefdoms mentioned by informants: Buganda and Buzinza. The Kerebe rulers certainly had diplomatic relations with the leaders of both states, gifts being exchanged by Kabakas Suna (died 1856) and Mutesa, 1856-1884, of Buganda and Abakama Machunda and Rukonge of Bukerebe. The reason for diplomatic relations with Buzinza undoubtedly emanated from the trade in hoes since Buzinza neither supplied the Kerebe with ivory nor did the country provide a route by which ivory could be transported southward. Consequently a formal diplomatic arrangement never became necessary between the Kerebe and Zinza. In the case of Buganda, the kabaka needed Kerebe assistance to transport ivory hence the initiative for establishing a diplomatic alliance rested with him and the exchange of gifts apparently served this purpose for him.

The precise time and sequence of major developments that ushered the Kerebe and their neighbors into participation within the long distance ivory trade are difficult to discern. Kerebe traditions are explicit about the elephant hunting society,

1. Richard F. Burton, The Lake Regions of Central Africa, II (New York, 1961), 214.

Mihigo II's participation in the ivory trade, and his marriage alliance to facilitate caravans of tusks to move southward. The sequence of events seems clear up to this point. But the developments following the initial phase for some reason are not present in Kerebe traditions and specific information pertaining to the arrival of Arab and Swahili traders in the chiefdom or when the Ganda commenced their canoe journeys to the district of Bukerebe is lacking. Similarly European sources reveal only that coastal traders had reached the lake and begun trading with the Kerebe by the 1850s,¹ and that the Ganda had established cordial relations with the Kerebe by 1862.² Buyanza suggested that the Arabs or Swahili may have initially visited Bukerebe sometime during Ibanda's reign, presumably in the early 1830s. Interesting evidence for his assertion is that one of Ibanda's sons was named Mzungu who was most likely named for an Arab, although mzungu is a generic Swahili term now used to designate Europeans because of light skin color. This is merely suggestive but it should be remembered that traditions indicate the appearance of diseases before 1820 emanating from the east. The route from Tanga and Pangani via Kilimanjaro to the lake region may have had traders penetrating earlier and farther westward on it than merchants using the Unyamwezi route.³

1. "Excerpt from Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society concerning Erhardt's Map," CMI, VII (1856), 190, 192; J.A. Grant, "Summary of Observations. . .," JRGS, XLII (1872), 257-268.

2. Speke, What Led to the Discovery, 318.

3. Kathleen M. Stahl, History of the Chagga People of Kilimanjaro (London, 1964), 49; Richard F. Burton, "The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa," JRGS, XXIX (1859), 262.

Tradition concerning Ganda visitors to Bukerebe is not precise but initial contacts occurred before the time suggested by European sources. One gift sent by Machunda to Buganda was a unique piece of sculpture measuring over one meter in height.¹ This statue of a young girl was so appreciated by the Ganda that it was carefully preserved for approximately a half century before the Reverend John Roscoe, a Church Missionary Society missionary in Buganda, acquired possession of the figure and placed it in the British Museum in London in 1909. According to Roscoe's information the statue belonged to Kabaka Suna who died in 1856. Buyanza provided specific descriptive information about the statue sent to Buganda by Machunda. Although he did not know the sex of the piece he knew that it had been damaged, apparently before it left Bukerebe. When the exquisitely finished statue is seen in the British Museum an immediate feature noted is a missing left arm.² There can be little doubt that the statue described by Buyanza is the same statue collected by Roscoe. But the importance of this piece of sculpture is that it is associated with Kabaka Suna thereby indicating the presence of Ganda canoes in the southern lake region by the 1850s.

Two perplexing problems of the long distance trade emerge: when the lake assumed a role as a transportation medium

1. For details, Hartwig, "The Victoria Nyanza as a Trade Route in the Nineteenth Century," JAH, XI, 4 (1970), and Hartwig, "A Historical Perspective of Kerebe Sculpturing--Tanzania," Tribus, 18⁴ (1969), 85-90.

2. An illustration of this piece can be seen in "A Historical Perspective of Kerebe Sculpturing," 88.

linking the northern kingdom of Buganda to the Sukuma chiefdoms and at whose instigation: Arab or African. There is little doubt that the early ivory trade in the vicinity of Bukerebe was under the control of local chiefs. Kerebe caravans to Takama and the diplomatic schemes to facilitate these ventures provide convincing evidence to support the contention that local initiative dominated the early trade. Yet the evidence supplied by the explorers Burton and Speke in 1858 about Kerebe involvement in the ivory trade portrays the Arab and Swahili contingent as the dominant group.¹ What had apparently developed from the beginning to the middle of the century was that Machunda had relinquished the earlier task of moving his own ivory, and by 1858, was encouraging the merchants to come to him. If the omukama did not have sufficient tusks available the caravans would remain on the island while agents were sent to Bururi to obtain the desired tusks. The chiefdom became both an entrepôt base for ivory from the east lake coast and a base from which agents ventured forth to acquire the desired commodity. Machunda's hospitality to merchants stood in distinct contrast to the hostility accorded to them by the Ruri, Shashi and Tatoga. This situation, however, could only continue as long as the supply of ivory remained relatively plentiful and there is every reason to believe that shortly after 1858 the traders shifted their attention to more productive regions. The zenith of Kerebe

1. Burton, The Lake Regions of Central Africa, II, 214-215; Speke, What Led to the Discovery, 308-318.

participation in the international ivory trade was probably reached in the 1850s.

Buganda's Control over Lake Traffic

By mid-century the Kerebe no longer organized their own caravans; they were then being served by coastal traders. Regardless of the procedure for moving ivory, water transportation was utilized by both Kerebe and Arab and Swahili traders over comparatively short distances. But this does not shed light upon the use of the lake by the Ganda. Kerebe informants provided only one specific example of Ganda-Kerebe cooperation under Machunda in addition to the exchange of gifts.¹ On at least two separate occasions a flotilla of Ganda canoes arrived in Machunda's chiefdom laden with ivory bound for Takama with the leader of the expedition described as an Arab. According to the tradition of Chavery Wanzura, he stopped at Bukerebe to request Machunda to provide Kerebe porters for carrying tusks from the Sukuma mainland to a southern destination. Machunda consented and ordered a Sukuma refugee living in Bukerebe to lead the expedition. Porterage was performed successfully on both occasions by Kerebe freemen.

The "Arab" mentioned in the Kerebe tradition appears to support later statements made by European observers after 1875

1. In addition to the excellent information from Buyanza valuable accounts were also contributed by Bahitwa, Adolf Malimu, Chavery Wanzura, Daudi Musombwa, and Simeo Rubuzi.

that Arabs had initiated long distance transportation across the lake by encouraging the Ganda to use their canoes to move ivory.¹ Yet these observers commented on a development that occurred at least three to five decades before their arrival on the scene and only one observer attempted an historical survey to confirm his assertion but the statue sent by Machunda to Suna refutes his findings. Furthermore coastal traders do not appear to have been innovators in seeking or acquiring ivory or even slaves. The impression tends to be the reverse, that the merchants cautiously entered a region in which ivory was already a viable commodity, astutely surveyed the existing patterns of trade, and then gradually began to compete with local traders. Some chiefs resented and resisted the merchants' intrusion, others, like the Kerébé abakama, attempted to accommodate them and gain thereby.² But striking off into unknown areas to establish trading bases where routes were nonexistent does not appear to be

1. Près des grand Lacs par les missionnaires de S. Em. le Cardinal Lavigerie (Paris, 1886), 35; Franz Stuhlmann, Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika (Berlin, 1894), 733; Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, I, 330; Robert W. Felkin, "Uganda," The Scottish Geographical Magazine, II (1886), 217; see also J. M. Gray, "Trading Expeditions from the Coast to Lakes Tanganyika and Victoria before 1857," TNR, 49 (1957), 236-237; J. M. Gray, "Arabs on Lake Victoria. Some Revisions," UJ, XXII (1958), 76; J. M. Gray, Letter to the Editor, TNR, 25 (1948), 79-81; V. C. R. Ford, The Lake Trade of Lake Victoria (Kampala, 1955), 18.

2. Speke, Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile, 131; Oscar Baumann to the Executive Committee of the Deutsch Anti-Sklaverei Lotterie, Coblenz, November 2, 1892, Korrespondenz mit der Anti-sklaverei-Lotterie, G 1/30, NAT; R. C. Bridges, "Introduction to the Second Edition," Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours, J. Lewis Krapf (London, 1968), 23.

characteristic of these traders.

Lacking evidence to illustrate that coastal traders initiated lake traffic, it is just as reasonable to hypothesize that traders found Ganda or other canoes operating in the southern part of the lake. Although the basis for Machunda's relationship with Suna is unknown, and since no marriage alliance existed, it appears that the initiative for the cooperation came from the Ganda who could profit from the Kerebe relationship. The Ganda may have actually been one of the suppliers of ivory to Bukerebe at mid-century. Neither Speke nor Burton make reference to this possibility yet not only Kerebe sources but also Speke refer to Kabaka Suna's interest along the eastern coast of the lake.¹ Some ivory may have been acquired in this region and then moved southward to Bukerebe where traders could easily exchange goods for it. Individuals from the coast may then have attached themselves to the Kabaka's court and served as valuable agents for the Ganda as men understanding the mechanisms of the ivory trade from the merchants' as well as from the ruler's vantage point. Even more conclusive that traders did not initiate long distance trade on the lake is that they abandoned the southeastern lake region but did not abandon their interest in Buganda. They merely used an overland route, via Karagwe, to reach their destination. If they had developed or encouraged lake traffic in any way they certainly would have welcomed the opportunity to reduce their trek to Buganda.

1. Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile, 401.

When the few facts available are examined they still do not inform us as to when the Ganda commenced long distance trade on the lake; that it existed to a small degree by 1850 is reasonably certain. Who initiated the trade remains unclear but the tendency of merchants to follow existing trading patterns and the absence of traders operating independently of the Kabaka on the lake before 1875, together favor the interpretation that the Ganda initiated ivory traffic on the lake. It appears that traders, except for those Swahili or African individuals who willingly served the Ganda Kabaka in a trading capacity,¹ felt no great compulsion to depend upon Ganda canoes for transportation even though the option was available, until circumstances forced them to do so in the late 1870s. Another alternative open to traders was to construct sailing vessels (dhows) for their own use on the Victoria Nyanza, as they had before 1858 on Lake Tanganyika.² While a number of factors undoubtedly contributed to their apparent reluctance to build dhows on the Victoria Nyanza, certainly one was that traders could not be assured of reasonable freedom of movement on the lake.

The Victoria Nyanza, for all practical purposes, came under the control of Buganda once long distance ivory trade commenced across its surface. Prior to this time the Ganda may

1. John A. Rowe, "Revolution in Buganda, 1856-1900, Part One: The Reign of Kabaka Mukabya Mutesa, 1856-1884" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1966), 73-74.

2. Burton, "The Lake Regions," JRGS, 238.

have exercised hegemony over contiguous countries but there would be little reason for them to have gone completely across the lake. By the 1880s, with traders and missionaries and Africans using lake transportation, all groups recognized Ganda control over the lake.¹ Virtually no significant development occurred on or along the shores of the lake from 1877 to 1890 without Ganda involvement; it was a fact of life as evident to the vulnerable trader as it was to the various people who lived about the lake.² Much of the ivory emanating from Buganda, particularly under Mutesa, 1856-1884, remained the Kabaka's until it reached either Unyanyembe or Zanzibar. Mutesa attempted to deal with the Sultan of Zanzibar as an equal and seems to have regarded traders more as personal agents of the Sultan than as independent agents.³ The kabaka's monopoly or at least his control of the transportation on the lake enabled him to establish and maintain control over the ivory trade. He permitted vessels constructed by traders and missionaries to navigate on the lake but only at his discretion.

1. Carl Peters, New Light on Dark Africa (London, 1891), 468.

2. Buganda's trading ventures on the lake are discussed at greater length in Hartwig, "The Victoria Nyanza as a Trade Route."

3. See J. M. Gray, "Sir John Kirk and Mutesa," UJ, XV (1951), 1-16; Felkin, "Uganda," 217; Chronique, 6 (1880), 118; Ibid., 7 (1880), 195.

* * * * *

Machunda's efforts to encourage immigration into his chiefdom was an effort to offset depopulation on Bukerebe due to diseases and accusations of sorcery. His difficulties with Ibanda's establishment of a rival chiefdom at Ilangala were partially balanced by his defeat of the Kula and their subsequent move to the western part of the island where neither they nor Ibanda could effectively compete with Machunda in the long distance ivory trade. A greater Kerebe involvement in the inter-tribal trading encouraged the production of a grain surplus by 1850 with livestock, hoes, salt and slaves acquired with the surplus. The growth of slave trading for internal purposes implies that for the first time there was a determined effort to seek and acquire slaves who in turn cultivated enlarged fields to produce the grain surplus. A minority of the chiefdom's population profited and acquired wealth from increased agricultural production and trade. The omukama regulated his subjects' local trade through taxes while he monopolized the ivory trade with long distance traders. To facilitate this trade he created diplomatic marriage alliances with other chiefdoms. When Arab and Swahili traders appeared Machunda welcomed them, thereby undermining the previous trading network. Simultaneously the appearance of the Ganda in the southern part of the lake during Machunda's reign meant that the Kerebe cooperated with them in the movement of ivory albeit in a subordinate capacity, the burden of which was not felt until after Machunda's death.

Chapter VIII

AN ERA OF IMPENDING DISASTER: RUKONGE'S ENCOUNTER WITH ALIEN POWERS

Rukonge's tenure as omukama, ca. 1869-1895, can be divided into three periods. The initial phase lasting until late 1877 was essentially an ordered period in which the Kerebe continued to pursue diverse economic interests that had gained such prominence under Machunda. The later periods can only be characterized as "disturbed"; violence or the threat of it created a climate of insecurity among the Kerebe and other peoples in the region. Rukonge acquiesced to Ganda domination during the second period, between 1878 and 1889 when he was no longer able to make decisions that might affect his Ganda overlords without taking into account their primary interests. But this curtailment of the omukama's independence did not impose a serious hardship on the Kerebe in contrast to the third period, from 1890 to 1895, which was characterized by interference in Bukerebe's internal affairs imposed by members of the German Anti-slavery Society. Neither Rukonge nor his subjects adjusted satisfactorily to the Europeans' expectations and consequently Rukonge was deposed by the Germans in 1895 and the Kerebe began the colonial era under

new leadership. Rukonge's deposition by the Germans did not come as a surprise to the Kerebe elders. Forebodings of disaster and prophecies of doom were heard with increasing frequency in the last years of Rukonge's reign, yet there was no realistic means to avert it.

Rukonge's Ascendency to Power

Rukonge's position as omukama was seriously challenged shortly after he gained the title by dubious means. According to Buyanza, Rukonge disposed of his father (Machunda) by magically sending a common fly into Machunda's mouth which he swallowed leading to his death some days later; the fly was the carrier of a powerful medicine that "killed" the victim. During Machunda's fatal illness, Lutami, the son expecting to succeed his father as omukama, was advised by supporters of Rukonge to travel to Sukumaland where he was to consult medicine men to determine the nature of Machunda's illness. Lutami learned to his regret after his arrival in Sukumaland that he had been deceived by Rukonge because Machunda died even before Lutami reached his destination and Rukonge was installed as omukama before he could return. Lutami went into exile, living first in Bururi, then in Majita where he plotted with Jita allies to overthrow Rukonge. He moved from Majita to Iramba, the original site of the Silanga's residence in the 1600s and a district theoretically under Rukonge's control, where he was able to gain a foothold by gaining the support of the Jita population who composed a vast

majority of the people in the area. Rukonge responded energetically to the threat posed by Lutami.¹ The omukama sent a party of men to Iramba and Lutami and his Jita allies were soundly defeated by Rukonge's men. Lutami and other captives were then returned to Rukonge where his victorious brother ordered his eyes gouged out. Rukonge then sent him to a nearby village where he was permitted to live unmolested because he no longer posed a threat.

Lutami's challenge to Rukonge was serious but not an unexpected phenomenon since Rukonge seemingly influenced the Sita's selection. Under normal circumstances the death of an omukama was not announced until burial by which time the successor had been determined. In the Lutami-Rukonge incident, Lutami was directed to Usukuma to inquire into the nature of his father's illness while Machunda was already on his death bed. The removal of Lutami from the chiefdom was apparently based on the concern that only by his absence would Rukonge be in a position to succeed Machunda. The candidates for the position of omukama should not have been actively involved with the elders during the omukama's illness but it is apparent that Rukonge had negotiated

1. The quarrel between Rukonge and Lutami has been preserved in a song text of the major Kerebe musical instrument, the enanga. The singing associated with the instrument in the 1800s tended to concentrate on affairs of the chiefdom but, unfortunately for the historian, this practice altered in colonial era. Texts from the earlier era are seldom a part of anyone's repertoire today. Kazimili s/o Mazige formerly performed before the omukama and his interest in affairs of the chiefdom insured that his repertoire included a few texts from the pre-colonial era. In addition, Buyanza contributed a substantial amount of detail about the incident.

with a segment of the Sita indicating a change in the latter's role. It is likely that the Sita's political role in selecting and deposing abakama in the 1820s and 1830s had had an adverse effect upon their authority by the late 1860s, preparing the way for an aggressive aspirant for the royal stool like Rukonge to influence those with ritual authority. Furthermore Machunda had established a practice of relying more on enfura for advice than his official advisers and Rukonge continued the process cultivating the good will of enfura at the expense of those with official capacities. This development permitted Rukonge to draw a number of influential elders about him who then became identified with him, a particular candidate, which is precisely the type of situation traditions claim would not have happened under ideal conditions. The role of the Sita was significantly reduced by this development.

Rukonge's problems at the time of his installation were not totally unrelated to events leading up to the death of his father, nor were the steps taken by him to neutralize his most obvious rivals to the position of omukama since he was burdened with nearly one hundred brothers. Many of Rukonge's brothers chose exile while others were mutilated (teeth pulled or ears pierced) before they could escape. They were then allowed to enjoy lives of privileged aristocrats, perhaps even as headmen, for the rest of their lives.¹

1. Lazaro s/o Machunda, living in Dar es Salaam in 1968, is probably the last surviving son of Machunda. He fled from Bukerebe with a brother during Rukonge's rule, lived in Usukuma

In the eyes of Europeans Rukonge's reputation as a ruler altered dramatically during his quarter century reign. H. M. Stanley first offered an assessment of Rukonge's character in 1875 and it was highly favorable.¹ Two years later members of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) met Rukonge and again his behavior elicited highly laudatory language: "Rukonge is a wise and popular ruler and his people seem happy and contented His communication with neighboring states [is] frequent."² While the latter comment, suggesting Rukonge's influence in the south-eastern lake region, essentially agrees with oral tradition, the praiseworthy character assessments, on the other hand, contradict traditions. The Kerebe recall Rukonge as an extremely despotic and cruel omukama whose extraordinary jealousy and constant fear of a coup d'etat place him in a unique category among the various abakama. The resolution of the discrepancy between the early written references to Rukonge and the traditions referring to him is explained in chronological terms; traditions reflect the latter part of his reign when extreme external and internal pressures provoked a most unusual response pattern from the fourteenth Kerebe omukama.

a number of years, and finally accompanied an Arab caravan to the coast where he became a permanent resident. He estimated his age as 110 years old in 1968. See Hadji Konde, "110 Years Young!" Drum (June, 1968).

1. Through the Dark Continent, I, 195.
2. Lt. G. S. Smith to Wright, June 16, 1877, C. A6/O 22, CMS.

Rukonge's Initial Encounter with Europeans

Just as the arrival of traders interested in ivory had inadvertantly introduced new diseases that produced unexpected manifestations, so Stanley's appearance set in motion events that produced profound alterations within Kerebe society. The explorer's account of his relations with the Kerebe make no mention of trouble with Rukonge although Stanley most likely harmed some of Rukonge's subjects during his sojourn in the region.¹

Stanley's aggressiveness probably had less lasting impact than his implantation in Rukonge's mind that he "might expect white men to visit Ukerewe who would teach the King and his people to be clever, how to build houses, fine large boats, and many other useful things."² This statement, assuming something of this nature was relayed to Rukonge, could only raise the expectations of chiefs and commoners for acquiring material goods. Cloth, beads, metal and ivory ornaments were all symbols of wealth and while Stanley emphasized practical skills there was no guarantee that Rukonge or anyone else would use them as Stanley had intended. The most fundamental consequence of the explorer's presence in the lake district, however, was his appeal

1. Through the Dark Continent, I, 12, 16, 121-128, 175-177, 187, 194-201, 297, 329; Wilson to Wright, March 2, 1877, C, A6/0 25, CMS; Hartwig, "Bukerebe, the Church Missionary Society, and East African Politics, 1877-1878," AHS, I, 2 (1968), 213-214,

2. "Central Africa," The Times (London), April 27, 1878, 13; apparently Stanley's promises in Buganda aroused the same emotions in Mutesa, see Wilson to Wright, January 15, 1878, C. A6/0 25, CMS.

for Christian missionaries to bring the gospel to central Africa. In less than two years after Stanley's visit to Bukerebe the first respondents to his call to Buganda appeared before Rukonge. The relationship of the Kerebe to the Anglican CMS representatives began amicably in early 1877, but by the end of the year Rukonge's subjects had killed two of these missionaries and his chiefdom's very existence was a matter of grave concern.¹

Acting upon the recommendations of the explorer J. A. Grant as well as Stanley, the CMS planned to establish mission centers in Buganda and Karagwe.² Their caravan route followed the major route from Bagamoyo west to Unyanyembe and then north to the lake on which boats were to be launched and used for transportation, emulating Stanley's efforts. Because timber was required for construction purposes, a commodity not available in the vicinity of Kageyi, the main terminus on the route approaching the lake, the missionaries determined to go to Bukerebe where timber was readily available. Once the missionaries completed their own boats they planned to depart from Bukerebe for Buganda.

In this endeavor they followed in the footsteps of the Swahili trader Songoro who had begun construction of a dhow in Bukerebe in 1874. Songoro had developed a substantial settlement on Bukerebe extending over some ten years and he had secured his

1. The incident is described and discussed in Hartwig, "Bukerebe and the Church Missionary Society," 211-232.

2. Edward Hutchinson, The Victoria Nyanza, A Field for Missionary Enterprise (London, 1876), 105-108.

property by a marriage to Rukonge's sister establishing a bond of brotherhood between the two men.¹ By 1877 Songoro's establishment of freemen and slaves included an estimated eighty persons who were responsible for a sizable herd of cattle plus stores of trading goods. In the summer of 1877 the missionaries purchased Songoro's unfinished dhow, expressing themselves extremely fortunate for this unexpected windfall.² Even though the missionaries assumed the responsibility for completing the vessel by mid-June, Rukonge did not understand the transfer of ownership. Not until November when the missionaries attempted to launch the completed vessel did they find that Rukonge would not permit them to leave. After a lengthy interrogation of Songoro by both the omukama and two missionaries, it became evident that Songoro had misled Rukonge about the payment for the vessel. The trader maintained that he had not been paid for the dhow hence he could not compensate Rukonge for the timber used. The missionaries had in fact purchased the dhow on credit payable in Zanzibar. Songoro had indicated his comprehension of this arrangement when he told Lieutenant Smith that he had sold beads on credit to the explorer Speke in Buganda in 1862 and upon his surrender of the IOU at Zanzibar "it was immediately cashed."³ Songoro's reluctance to pay Rukonge increased in significance when it was learned that a substantial gift from the Europeans

1. Through the Dark Continent, I, 200.

2. Smith to Wright, June 16, 1877, C. A6/0 22, CMS.

3. Journal of Lt. Smith, November 19, 1877, Ibid.

to Rukonge had never been delivered by the trader.

Songoro's deceitfulness boded ill for his enterprise. He mistakenly assumed that a quick profit at Rukonge's expense would not jeopardize his commercial activities. It was a shortsighted decision although he had no way of predicting what the missionaries' or Rukonge's response would be. Once his attempted deception of Rukonge became apparent the omukama vented his anger by demanding an exorbitant price for the timber Songoro had used.¹ At this stage the trader may have decided to forfeit his establishment on Bukerebe. His decision was no doubt related to rumors that Rukonge had intimated a desire to take Songoro's possessions on the island.

The missionaries were inextricably involved in the affair by purchasing the dhow, a factor recognized by Lt. Smith who attempted to mediate between Rukonge and Songoro. Negotiations made halting progress and settlement was marred by Rukonge's unabashed effort to relieve Songoro of his property while Songoro displayed adeptness at cheating. Smith could not exercise control over either party and eventually a fight broke out in which the two missionaries, Songoro and approximately fifty others lost their lives.²

1. Smith to Wright, December 10, 1878 [sic, 1877], C. A6/O 22, CMS.

2. The events leading to the incident are reconstructed from the following sources: Wilson to Wright, February 18, 1878 and May 28, 1878, C. A6/O 25; Mackay to Wright, July 28, 1878, C. A6/O 16; Stokes to Wright, April 16, 1879, C. A6/O 24, CMS.

Rukonge's action set in motion a complex series of diplomatic exchanges between such diverse individuals as Kabaka Mutesa of Buganda, the Nyamwezi leader Mirambo, Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar, and John Kirk, the British Consul of Zanzibar.¹ Each party had specific interests at stake. Songoro's mercantile associates in Unyanyembe, for example, demanded that the merchandise of Bukerebe be restored to them. Sultan Barghash on Zanzibar was concerned in maintaining secure trade routes in the interior to facilitate the trade of his subjects. Also concerned was the British Consul on Zanzibar who wished to encourage cooperation along the caravan routes and to secure the physical safety of his countrymen who had begun penetrating the interior in significant numbers after 1876. While the incident on Bukerebe was not the first of its kind in the interior, it did serve to remind Sultan Barghash and the trading community that their commerce rested on the good will of Africans in the interior. Any action that the Sultan or the British consul may have decided upon in response to Rukonge's deed could only be implemented by moral suasion or by a strong leader such as Mirambo to act on their behalf. The latter alternative became feasible when Sultan Barghash used the Kerebe incident to heal temporarily a breach between himself, as the representative of the Arab trading community, and Mirambo, the Nyamwezi leader who

1. The involvement of these persons is discussed in greater detail in "Bukerebe and the Church Missionary Society," 221-231.

had been harrassing the Arabs since at least the early 1870s.¹

Mirambo also welcomed the diplomatic opening to offer his services to the Sultan. When Mirambo subsequently received encouragement from Sultan Barghash to secure a more stable and peaceful route it pleased the Nyamwezi leader because it gave him approval (and gun powder) from Zanzibar to increase his influence in the region.² The rapprochement was a brief respite in the normally tense relations with the trading community. Mirambo made a military foray in the direction of Bukerebe in 1878, but nothing of a serious threat ever developed though it revealed the extent of Mirambo's desire for empire as well as the limits of his power. Rukonge's island was too distant and therefore a refuge from Mirambo who was more interested in diplomatic recognition from Zanzibar than he was in Rukonge's future.

Talk of revenging the deaths on Bukerebe could even be heard in London where the Church Missionary Society attempted to dissuade Kabake Mutesa of Buganda from attacking Rukonge stressing that the "revenge we want is the privilege of preaching the gospel there."³ The mission society, no more than the British consul, the Sultan of Zanzibar, the merchants at Unyanyembe, or the powerful Nyamwezi leader had any realistic means of dealing with the Kerebe omukama. The sole individual

1. For background material see Norman R. Bennett, "Mirambo of the Nyamwezi," Studies in East African History (Boston, 1963), 8-11.

2. "Bukerebe and the Church Missionary Society," 227-228.

3. CMS to King Mtesa, May 8, 1878, C. A6/L 1, CMS.

capable of dealing with Rukonge was Kabaka Mutesa who eventually sent a flotilla of canoes filled with warriors to Bukerebe. Mutesa's motives for the expedition appear more related to a desire for obtaining plunder than revenging the deaths, but this appearance is misleading. Kabaka Mutesa had a vested interest in the people killed by Rukonge since Songoro had been assisting Mutesa by moving Ganda ivory from Kageyi to Unyanyembe and the two missionaries were bound for Buganda where Mutesa awaited their arrival.¹ He regarded the missionaries no less than the traders as representatives of an alien group whose presence in the region could only be justified as long as it served the Kabaka's interests. Rukonge's deed had therefore deprived him of additional clients.

The issues that developed over the sale of Songoro's dhow to the CMS were not the only factors involved in the crisis that developed on Bukerebe in late 1877. A related and significant series of events transpired on the western end of the island which drew the rival chiefdoms there into the conflict. The Kula chiefdom at Bwiro became embroiled when residents attacked a small group of Ganda, who were probably foraging for food, ostensibly to take their bark cloth wraps. The inhabitants of Bwiro, according to Buyanza, fearing the inevitable Ganda reprisal hurriedly departed. Some sought refuge with Rukonge, a few remained in Bwiro, while others fled to Ilangala and sought refuge with Mbulumagulu (Maka), ruler of Ilangala and son and

1. "Bukerebe and the Church Missionary Society," 222-223.

successor of Ibanda. In November, as the crisis over the dhow gained momentum, Rukonge attacked the weakened Kula chiefdom. He requested aid from the missionaries in the form of poison and from the Ganda in the form of 200 canoes with warriors. Since neither request was granted at the time the omukama limited his fighting to the Kula thus giving the people of Ilangala a reprieve. Namtikima, the chief of Bwiro, was driven into Ilangala and Bwiro was temporarily incorporated into Rukonge's realm.¹

Rukonge's basic concern while the problem with Songoro grew centered on Ilangala and Mbulumagulu. Since the deposed Ibanda had established a rival government at Ilangala, the region had remained outside the influence of the Silanga ruler at Bukindo. Rukonge sought revenge, according to Lieutenant Smith, for the deaths of 600 Kerebe and the theft of 300 cattle, while according to oral traditions, it was because one of Rukonge's wives had fled to the court of Mbulumagulu and the latter refused to return her.² Rukonge had the support of his cousin, Mukaka, a brother of Mbulumagulu who had originally succeeded as ruler in Ilangala after Ibanda died in the late 1860s, but the people deposed Mukaka after a short time and he was appointed as headman by Rukonge. Mukaka was anxious to return

1. Journal of Lt. G. S. Smith, November 5-22, 1877; Smith to Wright, November 27, 1877, C. A6/O 22, CMS. Namtikima is referred to as Mposi Msoni in the CMS records.

2. Namisi was the woman involved, a former slave given to Machunda by a Nyamwezi chief whom Machunda married. Rukonge inherited her along with his father's other wives when Machunda died.

to Ilangala, even if it was under Rukonge's hegemony.

Rukonge and Mutesa of Buganda

The deaths of Songoro and the missionaries in December 1877 prevented Rukonge from pursuing his military designs against Ilangala. He feared revenge from two sources: the Ganda and the Europeans. The former had not lost any people in the skirmish--the Kerebe protected two Ganda who had accompanied the missionaries--but Songoro's removal disrupted the small flow of Ganda ivory through Kageyi in Busukuma while the loss of the white men was "disappointing." Nonetheless Rukonge was hardly in a position to "disappoint" the Kabaka who claimed "a sort of feudatory power over" Rukonge.¹ The omukama understood the implications of his actions as they related to the Ganda, fully realizing that Mutesa would have to be compensated somehow for the loss. Rukonge had no way of knowing what to expect from Europeans. His only previous experience had been with Stanley, a man who practiced the rule of "an eye for an eye."² The explorer's belief in a show of strength led the missionary A. M. Mackay, an apologist for Stanley at the time, to state: "where ever I find myself on his [Stanley's] track I find his treatment of the Natives had invariably been such as to win from them the

1. Wilson to Wright, February 18, 1878, C. A6/O 25, CMS.

2. Refer to "Bukerebe and the Church Missionary Society," 228-232.

highest respect for the face of a white man."¹ Consequently Rukonge could only have assumed that his own philosophy--blood that has been shed must be revenged--used against Songoro, would be used against him by the Europeans. Kaduma, Rukonge's former friend and ally at the caravan terminus of Kageyi, ostracized the Kerebe omukama after the incident because revenge was expected and Rukonge was expected to confront it alone.

Approximately seven months after the incident Alexander Mackay, a lay member of the original CMS party, hurried to the lake from near Bagamoyo to join his lone colleague in Buganda. He assumed responsibility for determining the cause of the deaths by visiting Bukerebe and hearing Rukonge's version of the causes. The Omukama distrusted Mackay presuming, logically, that he might be the revenger. Mackay did his best to demonstrate his peaceful intentions by approaching the Kerebe unarmed and with no military escort. Rather than reducing tension, however, this procedure may have increased it. Mackay's apparent harmlessness could then be interpreted as a display of awesome magical powers. Regardless of the fears of both the missionary and the omukama, according to Mackay, his visit to Bukerebe proved to be satisfactory. Rukonge undoubtedly failed to understand the motives of the Christian missionaries for not seeking revenge let alone why they had come to the lake in the first instance. Mackay clarified matters to a degree when he warned Rukonge that white men would not endure ill-treatment indefinitely:

1. Mackay to Wright, 17, 1878, C. A6/O 16, CMS:

I warned him not to mix up white men a second time with Arabs, lest they might get killed, and news of that would reach England again, and perhaps our Queen would send her soldiers and big canon, of which she had very many, and one was enough to destroy all his town at once, and kill all his people.¹

The negotiators each pressed their cases, based upon their own understanding of diplomacy. Mackay, for his part, wanted Rukonge's assurance that missionaries would be welcome to teach in Bukerebe, to which Rukonge readily agreed. Then the omukama countered by proposing that he and Mackay become blood-brothers, a diplomatic maneuver that Rukonge assumed would effectively prevent Mackay from harming him. Mackay would only agree to this on condition that Rukonge return the firearms of the deceased and the diary of Lt. Smith. Eventually most of the weapons reappeared but Smith's written materials, including his account of the events leading up to the fight which he penned while the fighting was in progress, apparently never came to light. Rukonge's most significant achievement during Mackay's visit was to convey his view that Songoro had been the culprit and, for a reason not clear to the omukama, the missionaries had chosen to defend the trader rather than accept the safety offered to them. Rukonge was obviously at a loss to explain the missionaries' behavior since he had no quarrel with them. His attitude of confusion was no doubt instrumental in convincing Mackay that no plot had existed and he therefore recommended that

1. Mackay to Wright, July 28, 1878, C. A6/G 16, CMS.

the CMS treat the Kerebe with leniency.¹

Rukonge had no idea of Mackay's possible influence at the court of Kabaka Mutesa in Buganda, but he assumed that Mackay would be a respected spokesman for Kerebe interests. His assumption was shared by two other men as well, Namtikima of Bwiro and Mbulumagulu of Ilangala who both visited Mackay at Kageyi and pressed him for assistance in their quarrel with Rukonge.² By the time Mackay reached Buganda and consulted with Mutesa, word reached Buganda from Zanzibar that Mirambo had been encouraged to chastize Rukonge for the deaths. The course of events had long since passed this stage but Mackay and Mutesa had no way of knowing this. In a series of discussions, Mackay urged Mutesa to establish direct political control over Bukerebe, with Rukonge's approval, if possible, otherwise he would be replaced. Mackay believed that if the Ganda effectively controlled the people about the lake the tendency of small scale disputes such as the one on Bukerebe to disrupt the mission's work would be substantially reduced. Mutesa dispatched an expedition to Bukerebe, ostensibly to implement a nonviolent scheme suggested by Mackay. The result of the foray shocked the missionary. Apparently the expedition's commander and Rukonge met at which time a joint decision was made to attack Ilangala. Rukonge's recognition of Buganda's suzerainty was acknowledged by this venture--he who possessed the power controlled and Mutesa certainly dictated terms to Rukonge; the omukama's numerous

1. Mackay to Wright, July 28, 1878, C. A6/O 16, CMS.

2. Ibid.

requests for Ganda assistance had in fact acknowledged the dependent relationship of the Kerebe to the Ganda. Together the Ganda and Kerebe forces devastated Ilangala, killing Mbulumagulu in the process. But the use of Ganda military aid cost Rukonge a considerable amount in goods. In addition it affirmed Rukonge's subordinate relationship and implies his willingness to respond to Ganda demands, for example if Ganda canoemen needed provisions the Kerebe obliged them. The immediate cost to Rukonge, according to Buyanza, was to laden the Buganda-bound canoes with "gifts" for Mutesa in appreciation for the aid: foodstuffs, slaves and ivory. Only when the canoes were filled to capacity did they embark on their two hundred mile voyage to report their success to Mutesa.¹

The chiefdom of Bukerebe at last comprised the entire island. Rukonge placed one of his sisters at Ilangala as the responsible omukungu. Significantly Mukaka, Rukonge's cousin who had urged the attack on Mbulumagulu, was not granted the position. According to Buyanza, Rukonge learned that it was Mukaka who had killed his brother Mbulumagulu, not the Ganda as had been initially reported, consequently he used this reason as the rationalization for chasing Mukaka from the chiefdom-- even an omukama was not permitted to take the life of a kinsman.²

1. Mackay to Wright, November 17, December 5, December 26, 1879, C. A6/O 16, CMS.

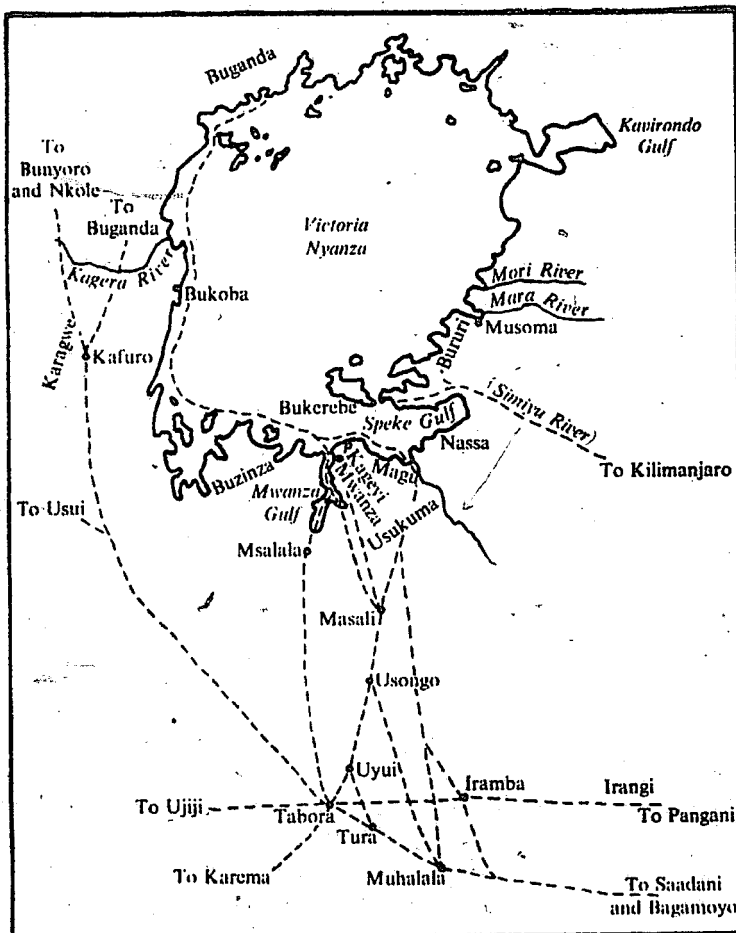
2. According to Buyanza, Mukaka had also personally killed Thomas O'Neill, Lt. Smith's CMS companion. It is unusual that one man should be attributed with so many "dark" deeds and also ironical that he should be the Europeans' choice to succeed the deposed Rukonge in 1895.

Rukonge actually had little concern for Mukaka as a rival since the latter's ears had been pierced during his youth. The former Kula chiefdom of Bwiro had also come under Rukonge's authority a year earlier when the omukama had defeated them. The former ruler, Namtikima, became a resident of Bukerebe where he eventually persuaded Rukonge to allow him to return as ruler of Bwiro. The omukama's magnanimity was made possible by marriage arrangements between the two royal clans.

The Ganda in the Southern Lake District

The deaths on Bukerebe in 1877 and the death of Rumanyika, omukama of Karagwe, in mid-1878 appear to have been fundamental causes for the traders' general abandonment of the Unyanyembe to Karagwe route. The Ganda moved into Karagwe after Rumanyika's death, principally to control the traffic flowing northward from Karagwe into Bunyoro. The Ganda did not wish their enemies to acquire trade goods, particularly guns and gunpowder, from the Zanzibari traders.¹ By redirecting the Arab and Swahili traders over the Unyanyembe-Kageyi-Buganda route the Ganda maintained control over their trade goods because the traders were obliged to rely upon Ganda canoes for their transportation. The Kabaka's policy was partially subverted by the continued presence of Nyamwezi and Ziba traders along the

1. See R. W. Beachey, "The Arms Trade in East Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century," JAH, III, 3 (1962), 451-467.



Ivory Trading Routes to the Victoria Nyanza
in the 1880s*

* Reproduced from Hartwig, "The Victoria
Nyanza as a Trade Route," JAH, XI
4 (1970).

Karagwe route.

By 1879 the village of Kageyi had become an important caravan terminus, a position it maintained until the mid-1880s when the hongo (tax) rate rose to such heights that the Arabs moved their route and their camp eastward. The Catholic and Protestant missionaries used similar routes to the lake and consequently also constructed quarters near Kageyi, on Mwanza Gulf. The Roman Catholic White Fathers appeared on the lake's shore in 1879 and assumed an important role in the development of Bukerebe after 1893. The CMS representatives shifted their supply depots to avoid harrassment on three separate occasions in the 1880s which typifies the turmoil of the decade. The routes and settlements themselves were vulnerable to ever increasing demands from innumerable Sukuma chiefs and headmen. The settlements on the lake, essential supply depots for the mission and mercantile representatives in Buganda, were also vulnerable to Ganda political machinations and rumor constantly encouraged fear of imminent attack. A White Father recorded a sentiment in 1884 that must have been shared by Africans, traders and Protestants alike--"My God, these Ganda cause us uneasiness."¹

The Ganda periodically appeared in the southern end of the lake from 1879 until 1890, primarily to ferry goods from one end of the lake to the other. Kabaka Mutesa until 1884 and then Kabaka Mwanga until the end of the decade controlled the movement of aliens about the lake. The CMS, for example, made a

1. Bukumbi Diary, March 8, 1884.

decision to relocate a supply depot from Kageyi to Bukerebe in 1883 because Rukonge had remained on good terms with the CMS after Mackay's visit in 1878 and he continually expressed a desire to have his people taught by Europeans. Final arrangements for the shift had been made when suddenly Mutesa learned of the proposal and warned the missionaries that anyone locating with Rukonge would be killed. Not wishing to harm their already precarious position in Buganda, the CMS immediately gave up its intended move. The men sent by the omukama to transport the missionaries were simply informed that "Mutesa wanted us in his own country and did not want us to go to Ukerewe. These words were enough. They were content."¹ Rukonge would understand.

The Kerebe-Ganda Relationship

Bukerebe's relationship to Buganda² was based on the recognition that the Ganda had greater access to power in sacred as well as in secular realms; the military power of Buganda was merely a manifestation of this. It was therefore a matter of expediency for Rukonge to cooperate with the Ganda since the association could benefit the Kerebe, a case of the weak attaching itself to the strong for sustenance. Kerebe informants acknowledge Rukonge's "friendship" with the Ganda, particularly

1. Gordon to Lang, November 5, 1883; also see Ashe to Lang, March 13, 1883, and O'Flaherty to Wigram, June 19 and July 1, 1883, G3. A6/O 1, CMS.

2. This relationship is called "tributary" in the literature.

with Kabaka Mutesa (1856-1884). The "friendship" in practice meant that Ganda canoemen would be welcomed in Bukerebe (fortunately for the Kerebe, the chiefdom was not immediately adjacent to the major water route), that the two rulers would occasionally exchange gifts, and the Kerebe did not compete with the Ganda in affairs of the latter's own choosing. In practice this relegated the Kerebe to involvement only in the domestic trade; they were generally excluded from the long distance ivory trade and were not expected to have missionaries resident with them. These two conditions appear to have been major restrictions placed upon the Kerebe once Rukonge established "friendship" with Mutesa.

Bukerebe became the home of a considerable number of Ganda during Rukonge's reign although their precise status is difficult to determine. Some were slaves given to Rukonge by Mutesa; an earless craftsman is particularly well remembered for his drum making abilities. Other Ganda came with their wives to settle in the chiefdom while others came singly and married Kerebe women. Whatever their social status, oral traditions regard them as agents of Rukonge. A few Ganda were actually accorded the position of omuzuma (messenger) but their real asset for the omukama was their allegiance to him, not to the Kerebe at large. Buyanza has no doubts that Rukonge used the Ganda to solidify his position in office.

The extent of the Ganda impact upon Kerebe culture is

best revealed in the musical life of the island.¹ Before Rukonge's time, dancing and singing solely for purposes of entertainment was not common, at least no knowledge of it has been preserved in traditions. Singing and dancing certainly existed prior to Rukonge's reign but it had always accompanied something else, such as hunting, fishing or ceremonial events so that entertainment emerged from the circumstances of another experience, an addition to the purpose for assembling in the first place. At least by the mid-nineteenth century games were introduced. These games or dances required formal association by the male membership--women could participate but were not members. Furthermore they existed primarily for entertainment. During Rukonge's reign three important games existed, two had origins in Buzinza and one in Majita. Typical of the inter-lacustrine societies, dancing was not accompanied by a musical instrument or drums; percussive effects were accomplished by clapping or other means.² The embegete drum, introduced around 1800 by Jita immigrants and associated with hunting rites and entertainment, retained its identity with hunting until the twentieth century. The first drum to be used for purely entertainment purposes was the embugutu, introduced by Ganda immigrants after 1870. As in the case of the earlier Jita introduction, the

1. A discussion of the various Kerebe musical traditions is found in Gerald W. Hartwig, "The Historical and Social Role of Kerebe Music," TNR, 70 (1969), 41-56.

2. Près des Grand Lacs par les Missionnaires de S. Em. le Cardinal Lavigerie (Paris, 1886), 27; J. H. Scherer, "The Ha of Tanganyika," Anthropos, 54 (1959), 851.

shape of the drum differed from that of the royal drum, hence no problem arose over its use. The drum and accompanying game gradually became assimilated into the Kerebe musical culture. Although Nyamwezi and coastal musicians visited Bukerebe during the nineteenth century, their traditions were not absorbed by the people. The Ganda drum tradition, however, became a vital part of Kerebe musical culture indicating a significant cultural impact by the Ganda.

A Disturbed Era: Disease

The Kerebe fulfilled a distinct role in the southern lake district during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They provided foodstuffs and lumber for both the Arab and Swahili traders and the European missionaries, an expansion of the flourishing domestic trade.¹ But new developments occurred in the 1880s that caused considerable distress among the Kerebe: disease and invasions by the Masai.

Kerebe tradition refers to two incursions by Masai during Rukonge's time and in both instances the Kerebe inflicted serious losses on the invaders seeking cattle. Possibly tradition has not incorporated the appearance of other incursions during which the Kerebe were victimized. Mission sources are by no means

1. Bukumbi Diary, July 19, 1889, February 12, 1884, July 17, 1887, April 12, 1884, November 19, 1888; August Schynse, Mit Stanley und Emin Pascha durch Deutsch Ost-afrika (Köln, 1890), 8; Through the Dark Continent, I, 118.

explicit on the frequency of the raids but they suggest that they occurred periodically: "Rukonge is insatiable and continually wants guns and powder in order to defend his country from invasions of the Masai who each year profit from the low lake level, entering the island on foot."¹ Serious cattle losses due to disease also occurred in 1884 and 1891.² The latter date marked a rinderpest epidemic that swept through the eastern portion of the African continent.³ Cattle died by the hundreds on Bukerebe, even buffalo and elephant fell victim to the disease. Scavengers such as hyenas were unable to consume all the carcasses.⁴

The Kerebe replenished their depleted herds in one instance by taking advantage of a drought on Bukara. According to Buyanza, Rukonge informed his people after their losses that one day they would acquire more cattle "from the lake." When the rains were late that year, possibly 1891 or 1892, Rukonge counseled patience. Then some two to three months after the normal planting time, and before any significant rain had fallen, the omukama instructed the Kerebe to commence planting. The

1. Bukumbi Diary, January 20, 1890; Mackay to Lang, October 23, 1888, G3. A5/0 1889, CMS.

2. Bukumbi Diary, July 4, 10, 1891, July 15, 1884; Gordon to Lang, May 22, 1886, G3. A5/0 1886.

3. Lionel Declé, Three Years in Savage Africa (London, 1898), 566; R. W. M. Mettam, "A Short History of Rinderpest with Special Reference to Africa," UJ, V (1937), 22-26; Katoke, "A History of Karagwe," 241; D. A. Low, "The Northern Interior, 1840-84," History of East Africa, I, 308.

4. Bukumbi Diary, July 4, 10, 1891.

rains began very shortly thereafter and the Kerebe reaped an excellent harvest. The Kara were not so fortunate; they too had experienced drought but were not able to procure any harvest at all. Their island had been spared the cattle disease, consequently they were able to obtain sorghum from the Kerebe by exchanging their livestock. The Kerebe returned to their homes with cattle in their canoes, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Rukonge that cattle would come from the water.

Problems of human health continued to pose serious problems, the serious consequences for Kerebe society may never be fully appreciated. In the 1890s the Irish trader Charles Stokes reportedly "spent days dressing people's feet and tearing up yards of cloth to make bandages" for Kerebe who suffered "from ulcerated feet as a result of a 'jigger' infection."¹ The traveller Lionel Decle gave an even more poignant description of the incapacitation of people from villages south of the Victoria Nyanza resulting from a recently introduced infestation of these insects which burrowed into the toes, deposited eggs and, if they hatched, produced open sores on the extremities: "I found the people starving, as they were so rotten with ulcers from jiggers that they had been unable to work at their fields, and could not even go to cut the few bananas that had been growing."²

1. Anne Luck, Charles Stokes in Africa, 1878-1895 (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, forthcoming).

2. Decle, Three Years in Savage Africa, 568.

Buyanza provided information stating that the royal Silanga clan and other elements of the population on Bukerebe may have been dying out, failing to reproduce itself in the struggle to balance births and deaths. Buyanza's tradition records that Rukonge's sister, prior to her drowning at Rukonge's command, cursed Rukonge and the entire Silanga clan declaring that the family would have few children in the future. This particular "curse" may have been less of a prophetic utterance, as implied by tradition, than a reflection of current conditions destined, in the wish of the curser, to continue into the future. Although satisfactory comparative evidence is not available to determine whether mortality rates among all clans were similar or whether the Silanga clan experienced greater mortality, Buyanza supplied a certain amount of valuable information. The case of Nansagate, the father of Buyanza, is given as an illustration. Nansagate was the brother of Rukonge, a wealthy headman who had married at least twelve wives. When Buyanza was in his early twenties in 1904, his father had been dead some ten years by this time, Nansagate's living children numbered nine. Six wives had borne children that lived at least until the age of ten. Two women each had one child live; two women had two live, and Buyanza's mother had three alive in 1904. Buyanza reported that his mother alone bore a total of nine children. He placed the responsibility for this alarming mortality rate on syphilis, indicating that princes were particularly vulnerable to the disease because they had sexual intercourse with women other than their wives, women exposed to the disease from aliens. While syphilis is

acknowledged to be introduced by the Arab and Swahili traders, Buyanza asserted that the Kerebe received the infection via the Ganda. The stress placed upon the social fabric because of these deaths and other illnesses must have been enormous. Most deaths, it must be emphasized, were assumed to have been caused by a human agent (a sorcerer), a fact of life that caused an immeasurable amount of suspicion and fear.

High mortality during the late nineteenth century, and its social consequences, should remain in sharp focus when attempting to understand the motives as well as the responses of Rukonge and his people to circumstances in the last years before the colonial era. The interior of East Africa was in a disturbed state, for travelers violence was frequent and always a threat, especially in the 1880s. Within the political and social context of each clan and tribe similar stresses were experienced from disease, accusations of sorcery and altering economic values. It is indicative of these stresses that Rukonge sent envoys on two occasions to Buhaya on the lake's west shore and to an unidentified place in the Congo, beyond Burundi, to exchange ivory for "medicine." Medicine in this context means the power or knowledge to control a specific situation.¹ Men in Rukonge's position earnestly and desperately sought ways to maintain their authority in a disturbed era.

1. Adolf Malimu s/o Kalimanzila provided the information concerning his father's role as Rukonge's envoy.

Slavery and the German Antislavery Society

Once Europeans had committed themselves to a colonial empire in East Africa after 1885, tension between the Arab community and Europeans increased until accommodation on the slavery issue was no longer possible and colonial authorities used force to subdue the Arabs.¹ Swahili, Arab and African slavers had been active in the Victoria Nyanza region shortly after long distance trading commenced, emanating from earlier forms of servitude associated with military defeats or physical hardship. But by the late 1880s the majority of slaves transported across the lake was accomplished with Ganda participation, or at least their approval. The Ganda raided their immediate neighbors, some of whom were supplied to the traders, while slavers frequented the Kavirondo Gulf on their own initiative to acquire slaves.² In 1889 cooperation between the Ganda and the slave traders yielded an estimated 600 slaves who arrived in Tabora from Buganda.³ It

1. Numerous authors have referred to this development within an East African context, see Roland Oliver, "Some Factors in the British Occupation of East Africa, 1884-1894," UJ, XV (1951), 49-64; Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London, 1952), 97-108; B. G. Martin, "Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Uways B. Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa," JAH, X, 3 (1969), 474-476; Norman R. Bennett, "The Arab Impact," Zamani, 233-235; Marie de Kiewiet Hemphill, "The British Sphere, 1884-94," History of East Africa, I, 399-403; G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, "The German Sphere, 1884-98," Ibid., 438-446; Ralph A. Austen, Northwest Tanzania Under German and British Rule (New Haven, 1968), 22-30.

2. Stuhlmann, Mit Emin Pascha, 224; Bukumbi Diary, January 7, 1883.

3. Mit Emin Pascha, 107. Significantly, in Europe the estimate of slaves reaching Tabora from the lake was 60-80,000, see Richard F. Clarke (ed.), Cardinal Lavigerie and the African Slave Trade (London, 1889), 334-335.

was not an overwhelming number but the movement of these people in the presence of European missionaries committed to the abolition of slavery inferred the superiority of the slave traders. By 1890 the slavers lost their dominant position on the lake because internal strife in Buganda forced them to retire temporarily to the southern lake shore where they established a new base at the Sukuma chiefdom of Masanza. Late in 1890 a German force commanded by Emin Pasha and led by Franz Stuhlmann destroyed the Masanza slaving base and permanently crippled slave trading on the lake.¹

The removal of the slavers from the region affected the Kerebe to a limited degree. They could no longer exchange sheep, goats, dried fish and other foodstuffs for beads, cloth and copper wire. Although the Kerebe possessed substantial numbers of slaves, traditions of informants like Buyanza and Bahitwa contain no reference to the exchange of slaves to coastal traders for trade goods. While there may have been reticence on informants' part to reveal this type of information, they did not hesitate to relate that Machunda and Rukonge frequently sent to and received slaves from other African rulers. Rukonge's supply of slaves was dependent upon the intensity and frequency of droughts among his neighbors to the east, a reliance that prevented him from becoming a reliable supplier to slavers who depended upon rulers like those of Buganda who were willing to attack and raid their neighbors. Undoubtedly some Kerebe slaves

1. Mit Emin Pascha, 110-112.

were turned over to slave traders but the chiefdom could not have been a significant slave source. The removal of the slavers, however, had no discernible affect upon continued Kerebe endeavors to acquire slaves for domestic purposes whenever the opportunity arose.

According to European accounts, slave raiding and trading in the 1880s and early 1890s assumed a terrifying character and dimension in eastern and central Africa.¹ Missionaries residing about the Victoria Nyanza contributed to the tales of horror that circulated in Europe and which stimulated the formation of numerous antislavery societies designed to promote abolition of the trade. At about the time the slavers on the Victoria Nyanza were destroyed as an effective force, the German Antislavery Society (Deutsch Anti-sklaverei Gesellschaft) was organized with its primary goal of abolishing slave trading in the great lakes region of eastern and central Africa. It was a privately financed organization, actively supported by the Roman Catholic Church, that marshalled impressive financial resources and which sought and gained the German government's cooperation. During 1891 and 1892 large caravans, some with over 1,000 porters, arrived on the Victoria Nyanza with equipment, supplies and trade goods that were designed to enable the antislavery forces to stop and prevent slaving activities. The fact that slave trading had previously been dealt a mortal blow in the region presented an embarrassing

1. Francois Renault, Le cardinal Lavigerie, l'esclavage africain et l'Europe (Paris, forthcoming).

dilemma.¹

Bukerebe attracted the attention of the representatives of the German Antislavery Society for the same reason it had attracted the trader Songoro and the CMS missionaries: the island offered timber resources for the construction of vessels that were otherwise unavailable or inaccessible in the southern lake region. The Germans approached Rukonge requesting and receiving permission to build an establishment on the southeastern end of the island. Buyanza indicated that when the society's representatives arrived before Rukonge in 1892 they already possessed a reputation for treating uncooperative chiefs harshly, consequently the omukama readily agreed to "welcome" the newcomers. The Society's purpose on the lake was altered from the original intent of stopping slave trading to maintaining a "presence" to prevent its return and simultaneously to further legitimate lake trade and traffic in addition to the nebulous task of "spreading civilization."²

1. Rochus Schmidt, "Wissmanns kulturelle und Pionierarbeit in zentral-afrikanischen Seengebiet," Hermann von Wissman, Deutschlands grösster Afrikaner, ed. C. V. Perbandt, G. Richelmann and R. Schmidt (Berlin, 1906), 338; "Die Organisation der Ukerewe-Vorexpedition," DKB, 2, 18 (September 15, 1891), 394; "Ueber den Victoria-Nyansa und die Schifffahrtsverhältnisse desselben," DKB, 3, 17 (September 1, 1892), 446; "Die Unternehmungen des Deutschen Antisklaverei-Komitees," DKB, 3, 24 (December 1, 1892), 611; "Ueber den Sklavenhandel am Victoria-Nyansa," DKB, 4, 2 (January 15, 1893), 44; Mit Emin Pascha, 684.

2. Report by Dr. Busse, March 1893, G 1/30, NAT. One tangible contribution the Society claimed was that they had destroyed Sewa Hadji's monopoly in supplying caravan porters. Numerous accounts by expedition leaders are available; Werther's account contains valuable ethnographic information: C. Waldemar Werther, Zum Victoria Nyanza (Berlin, n.d.); Kapitän Spring,

Rukonge attempted to remain in control of internal affairs by cooperating or "collaborating" with the first agents, semi-official though they were, of German colonial administration that had commenced the process of establishing effective control in 1885 at the East African coast. The Kerebe omukama had insufficient power to resist their presence in his chiefdom although he disliked and feared them. His dilemma was heightened because Mukaka, the man held responsible for killing Mbulumagulu in the Ganda-Kerebe attack on Ilangala in 1878 and subsequently driven into exile, approached the German authorities at Mwanza with his case as a legitimate ruler who had been unjustly deposed by Rukonge. By presenting substantial gifts to the Germans, Mukaka received a sympathetic hearing. Rukonge apparently feared the possible consequences of Mukaka's diplomatic efforts and subsequently re-installed him as a subordinate ruler in Ilangala.¹ According to Buyanza, a brother and advisor of Rukonge warned the omukama with the proverb: "If the big lizard goes into the ant hill, it doesn't come out again," insinuating that Rukonge would lose control over Mukaka as well as the district. Rukonge may have reasoned that it was preferable to lose the district rather than his entire chiefdom.

The establishment of facilities by the German Antislavery

Selbsterlebtes in Ostafrika (Dresden-Leipzig, n.d.); Otto Schloifer, Bana Uleia, Ein Lebenswerk in Afrika (Berlin, 1943); Wilhelm Langheld, Zwanzig Jahre in deutschen Kolonien (Berlin, 1909); Hans Hermann Graf von Schweinitz, Deutsch-Ost-Afrika in Krieg und Frieden (Berlin, 1894).

1. Bukumbi Diary, January 17 and March 25, 1892.

Society on Bukerebe meant that Rukonge's subjects had to perform the unskilled labor necessary for numerous projects, including the cutting and transporting of timber for the construction of three vessels and the construction of a mud-brick station.

Mukaka's position in Ilangala, an authority who maintained a cooperative relationship with the Germans, insured the Antislavery Society representatives of a continual flow of labor from both Mukaka and Rukonge who certainly realized that his lack of cooperation in supplying labor would lead to his removal by the Germans. Even though Rukonge and Mukaka consented to provide laborers for the Germans, the Kerebe themselves did not appreciate their role in constructing the most "magnificent" German station in the East African interior.¹ At the height of construction work in 1893 the Kerebe labor force of an estimated 500 men ran away from the Society's station site. Some 200 soldiers were based at the station overseeing the labor, as well as pacifying people in nearby disturbed areas, and they proceeded to terrorize the district while attempting to find the runaways. Rukonge subsequently paid a fine of "a lot of goats and cattle" for failing to control his people.²

The representatives of the Society left an unfortunate legacy because harsh methods were used to accomplish their goals. Lionel Declé, a French traveler who commented on the remarkable

1. Langheld, Zwanzig Jahre in deutschen Kolonien, 172.

2. Nickisson, August 8, 1893, G3. A5/0 1893; Walker Papers, Vol. XV, No. 301, December 30, 1895, CMS.

station on Bukerebe noted that "it is not difficult to build magnificent stations if you have four or five hundred men always at forced labour. If a man tries to escape he is fired upon."¹ Criticism also came from a German government official who had no control over Society members in their quasi-official capacity although they assumed the role of government officials and acted in the government's name. He charged that their sole interest was the extraction of tusks, or other forms of wealth such as live-stock, by threats if necessary. Accusing them of extravagance he declared that they collected ethnographic material, staged war with the African populace and "following their murders and destruction they go home," leaving the task of rectifying the resultant chaos to the permanent government officials.² A contrary view is expressed by another official, Wilhelm Langheld, an administrator in the region respected by both Germans and Africans who contended that the relationship of the Society with the Kerebe was "very good," that the people "came from all sides to work," and that the chiefs (Rukonge and Mukaka) were "disturbed when their people were not busy."³ It is reasonably certain that compensation in the form of beads or cloth was given to the laborers; nonetheless it was forced labor in every other respect. The most telling evidence of Kerebe relations with Society representatives occurred in 1893 when a CMS party visited Rukonge and

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1. DeCle, Three Years in Savage Africa, 382-383.
 2. Hermann, Mwanza to Bagamoyo, February 2, 1893, G 1/30, NAT.
 3. Zwanzig Jahre in deutschen Kolonien, 172.

any Kerebe meeting them enroute fled into the bush in "abject terror" at the sight of Europeans.¹

Rukonge and the Missionaries

Rukonge had expressed a willingness in 1875 when the explorer Stanley visited the chiefdom to have European missionaries live on the island "to teach" his people.² The Church Missionary Society and the Roman Catholic White Fathers were both at the lake by 1879 but Buganda remained their priority throughout the 1880s while communities in the southern part of the lake were important to the missionaries only as they contributed to their work among the Ganda. When Mutesa forbade CMS representatives from establishing a mission on Bukerebe in 1883, Rukonge accepted the restriction and contented himself with occasional commercial transactions with the missionaries in the Mwanza Gulf where the Protestants and Catholics maintained supply depots for their respective missions in Buganda.³ As Ganda authority in the southern lake area atrophied it was replaced by German authority, a development that permitted the missionaries and the Kerebe to evolve a relationship denied earlier. In 1891, prior to the arrival of the Germans on Bukerebe, Rukonge requested teachers

1. Nickisson, August 8, 1893, G3. A5/0 1893, CMS

2. H. M. Stanley, "To the Editor of The Times," The Times, April 27, 1878, 13.

3. See Hartwig, "The Victoria Nyanza as a Trade Route."

from the White Fathers who responded by sending Ganda catechists in early 1892. The omukama, however, expelled the catechists from the chiefdom within two weeks, apparently because the White Fathers were also thought to be negotiating with Mukaka who was still in exile at the time.¹

Within a year Rukonge was living under the yolk of the Germans, Mukaka was in Ilangala, and the omukama once again requested teachers. The White Fathers again despatched their Ganda catechists led by a Christian from Buzinza; a second contingent was simultaneously sent to Mukaka at Ilangala. Rukonge accepted these teachers but they did not assist him in the way he desperately needed them--as a liaison between the Kerebe and the German Antislavery Society representatives. It is apparent that Rukonge wanted European rather than Ganda teachers to represent his interests before the Germans. Consequently he approached Protestant CMS missionaries then stationed at the Sukuma chiefdom of Nassa and invited them to teach his people along side the Roman Catholic catechists. Two missionaries journeyed to Rukonge's residence but the strained relations existing between the Germans and Kerebe was apparent as was the role Rukonge wanted them to perform vis-à-vis the Germans. The possible negative political ramifications of an establishment on Bukerebe, in overt competition with the Catholics already established there with German approval, weighed too heavily against the CMS desire.

1. Bukumbi Diary, January 3, 17 and February 12, 1892.

to undermine the White Father effort.¹ Rukonge had to endure his undesirable visitors without the potentially ameliorating efforts of missionaries.

As abruptly as representatives of the Antislavery Society appeared on Bukerebe in 1892 they withdrew in early 1894 leaving the Kerebe considerably relieved. The former German station changed hands twice during the next eighteen months; the trader and former lay-missionary of the CMS Charles Stokes purchased it from the Germans and in 1895 the White Fathers acquired it following the death of Stokes. Rukonge no longer supplied laborers during this period but he was now pressured to bring about social changes within his chiefdom by stopping his own and his subjects' slave acquisitions. German officials and the White Fathers were in agreement on this issue leaving Rukonge no source for solace. The Kerebe began losing slaves by at least 1894 when German authorities took some sixty individuals from them. Kerebe anger arising from this development focused on the catechists who implemented the abolition policy. The situation grew considerably worse by mid-1894 when a serious famine developed in Bururi.² The Kerebe responded as they had throughout the century by acquiring numerous slaves and the catechists in turn continued to free a portion of them without compensation to the owners. Not surprisingly Kerebe resentment continually increased against

1. Nickisson, August 20, 1893, G3. A6/O 1893, CMS; Bukumbi Diary, March 28, 1893; October 23, 1893; November 21 and 28, 1893; November 30, 1893; January 22, 1894.

2. Bukumbi Diary, June 28, 1894.

catechists, missionaries and government officials.

The White Fathers and their catechists made progress among non-slave owning Kerebe until August 1895, when rumors of violence and harrassment of the catechists indicated a serious resistance to mission activities.¹ According to Buyanza, Rukonge was deluged with advice from elders holding conflicting viewpoints. One group informed him that an attack on the representatives of well-armed Europeans could not possibly succeed while others had been provoked sufficiently long and counseled an attack, having little concern about probable consequences. A third element, Mukaka was apparently in this group, taunted Rukonge because he had been forced to perform so many unsavory deeds for the Germans, intimating that a good leader would purge the chiefdom of catechists. Buyanza stated that Rukonge exerted virtually no leadership at this tense time, neither preventing nor inciting the attack that materialized in November 1895.

The End of an Era

The Kerebe razed the station they had helped to construct two years before and killed between thirty and fifty catechists and catechumens.² Rukonge realized that the Germans would hold

1. Bukumbi Diary, August 16, 1894; May 20, 1895; June 10, 1895; August 1, 1895; October 28, 1895.

2. Numerous commentaries about the attack are found in the following references: Bukumbi Diary, November 14, 1895, November 20, 1895, August 10, 1896; Ukerewe Diary, Initial entry, July 1897; Correspondence concerning Ukerewe, White Fathers Archives,

him responsible, consequently he fled to Bururi. The Kerebe attack generally coincided with other incidents requiring German military action in the district and a conspiracy against colonial rule was feared.¹ An assessment by a White Father assumed that the basic cause for the Kerebe attack was their hatred of all whites, but the departure of the top German administrator (Langheld) for the coast, the apparent weakness of the Europeans, and the chance for loot, all allegedly contributed to the attack.²

According to Buyanza, when Rukonge fled from Bukerebe he took the royal drum and other royal insignia in an effort to retain his position. The German authorities did not encounter serious resistance on their arrival and they, together with mission representatives, decided to replace Rukonge with Mukaka who had cooperated with them during the preceding three years, a man who could never have been selected omukama by the Kerebe because of physical defects. Rukonge lived in exile for about one year, moving from Bururi to the mainland portion of Bukerebe where he garnered some Kerebe support for his threatened return, before colonial officials captured and imprisoned him. He died in

Rome: P. Leonard, January 22, 1906; P. Brard, 1899; P. Roussez, July 14, 1897; Chronique, 77 (January, 1898), 84-88; "Ueber die Vorkommnisse im Bezirke Muanza im November," DKB, 7, (April 1, 1896), 186; "Ueber die Expedition des Oberstlieutenants v. Trotha," DKB, 7, 20 (October 15, 1896), 641; Hubbard to Baylis, November 26, 1895, December 25, 1895, G3. A7/O 1896; and Walker Papers, Vol. XV, No. 301, December 30, 1895, CMS; Ernst Nigmann, Geschichte der Kaiserlichen Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika (Berlin, 1911), 50.

1. Austen, Northwest Tanzania, 42-44.
2. Bukumbi Diary, November 14, 1895.

prison in 1897.

Rukonge was the last omukama to rule under "independent" conditions, yet his authority had already been restricted by the Ganda in 1878, and thereafter the Kerebe experienced an ever increasing loss of security and self assurance. Disease and death stalked people as well as livestock. Raids by Masai intensified the Kerebe sense of insecurity. The oppressive extractions by the German Antislavery Society representatives could only have heightened the sense of impotence and doom. Kerebe traditions record numerous cruel acts that Rukonge perpetuated against his wives and brothers who threatened his position in some way, the first Kerebe ruler to attack openly his kin, suggesting that Rukonge felt sorely pressed in an era characterized by violence and turmoil. Prophets of despair voiced their sense of impending social disaster. One of the most farsighted Kerebe prophets was Mandaka s/o Magorogosi who reportedly made the following observation to Rukonge:

Your chiefdom will not last for many years. Strangers will come and rule like the abakama and the slaves will be the owners of the country. Sons and daughters of the omukama will not receive their due respect and our magic will no longer be respected. Skin garments will no longer be worn. The children of tomorrow will be thin and weak; respect and dignity will vanish. A son will not be afraid of his father, and the hen will be eaten by important people.¹

Rukonge's deposition and the subsequent elevation of Mukaka by colonial representatives signalled the demise of the old political order in Bukerebe. But as the prophet Mandaka

1. Buyanza.

foretold, the social changes that were to follow in the next decades would be even more startling and significant for the Kerebe.

Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

Kerebe traditions state that hunting people, ancestors of the Sandawe, first occupied the southeastern region of the Victoria Nyanza. They in turn were followed by pastoralists, ancestors of the Tatoga, who had migrated southward through the interlacustrine district where they encountered Bantu-speaking agricultural-hunters and at this time the latter people acquired short-horned cattle from the pastoralists. Some of the pastoral Tatoga continued to migrate around the southern part of the lake arriving in the vicinity of Bukerebe before the Bantu-speakers. The sequence of inhabitants in the district, hunters, pastoralists and the agriculturalists, clarifies a perplexing problem within the interlacustrine area. The Nilotic-speaking pastoralists (Tatoga) represent a previously undescribed migratory wave that preceded the Hima pastoralists who followed with their long-horned cattle and a distinctly unique culture. The partial assimilation by Bantu-speakers of values associated with a cattle culture thus preceded the advent of the Hima in the early centuries of the second millennium A.D. and requires analysis from this perspective.

The migration of early Bantu-speakers is a development that has received scant attention from historians because little evidence has been available. Kerebe traditions claim that these people entered the interlacustrine region from the north and west in the vicinity of Buha (Rwanda and Burundi) and Bunyoro and dispersed north, east and south from those centers. The Bantu-speakers migrated in small clusters with most "clans" possessing common agricultural food crops, knowledge of forging (smelting was apparently practiced by a smaller nucleus of clans), and a predilection for hunting small game. Those "clans" that concentrated on fishing are less emphasized in Kerebe traditions and while included as Bantu-speakers they may have formed a distinct element within the population. There were also different groups of fishermen, each utilizing varying types of fishing techniques.

The establishment of a royal dynasty in the seventeenth century by the Silanga clan provides a watershed and a chronological base for Kerebe traditions. The royal clan has claimed a relationship to Ruhinda the Great of Karagwe but an analysis of varying traditions reveals that the Silanga claim to direct descent from the famous ruler cannot be accepted although their identification with Ruhinda does make him their spiritual progenitor. When the Silanga and their followers arrived in Bukerebe from Ihangiro on the west side of the lake they imposed a new language, a centralized political system, and customs from the interlacustrine zone.

A description of clashes between the Silanga clan and the major clans on the island/peninsula during the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries reveals the means by which political control was extended and the institutions that evolved to maintain control are also discernible. The Kerebe lost the services of their smelters when they were attacked and dispersed by the royal clan in the seventeenth century, an event that forced the Kerebe to rely upon the Longo smelters of Buzinza, thus beginning an important trading relationship with a relatively distant community.

Kerebe traditions expose and shed light on a number of significant historical issues appearing during the nineteenth century. Related to the growth of local and long distance trade in eastern Africa are the following developments: the impact of new diseases, the evolution of sorcery, the increased production of grain for trading, the increased need for labor to cultivate, and modified economic values. The Kerebe participated to a significant degree during the 1800s in both the long distance trading network, which was monopolized by the omukama, and local trade in which most Kerebe participated. Together the two trading networks prompted altering sets of political, social and economic principles that strained the social order.

The establishment of a formal hunting association for hunting elephants occurred around 1800 when Sukuma hunters arrived in the chiefdom. The Kerebe omukama initially sent his own caravans to Takama (south) where his ivory was exchanged for trade goods such as beads and, in addition, they returned with various new species of grain and other food crops. New diseases also appeared within Bukerebe causing considerable unrest. The

omukama from ca. 1780--ca. 1820 was a powerful, respected ruler and traditions attribute the responsibility for introducing these new diseases to him; consequently the omukama "caused" the deaths resulting from diseases. After Mihigo II's death in approximately 1820, a series of four abakama with short reigns lost the attributed power to control disease-related deaths and the responsibility was then placed on others for allegedly killing by either magical or other secretive means. The growth of sorcery was combatted by abafumu (medicine men) who determined who or what caused misfortune, in assuming this role it appears that the abafumu assumed a legal function formerly held by the omukama and his advisers.

Sorcery was aggravated by a modification in the economic and social system during the nineteenth century. Material possessions, whether beads, ivory or metal bracelets, hoes, cattle or goats, were actively sought by ambitious persons desiring to improve their social relationship with the omukama who alone possessed sufficient power to provide security as well as privileges in an increasingly disturbed environment. Those wanting to improve their standing with the ruler needed gifts to present to him, hence they increased their efforts to obtain greater quantities of the Kerebe's most valuable trading commodity-- grain. This in turn required more labor for cultivation. The laborers were persons in varying degrees of servitude, some acquired outright by the exchange of grain for children during famines to migrating families seeking food who became dependents of Kerebe clans with sufficient stores of food until the migrants

could redeem themselves. As rivalry between competing rulers on the island of Bukerebe intensified during the 1800s, and as sorcery accusations increased due to social tensions emanating from high mortality rates from diseases, greater numbers of people sought security by moving from one community to another. Nonetheless the Kerebe persisted in their trading activities through out the century.

The Kerebe role in the ivory trade is associated with the establishment of water transportation, particularly by the Ganda, across the Victoria Nyanza to facilitate the movement of goods. Arab and Swahili traders initially concentrated their activities on Bukerebe, but after the mid-nineteenth century they moved farther west leaving the Kerebe in a trading backwater. The killing of two missionaries by the Kerebe in 1877 in addition to the virtual closing of the Karagwe caravan route combined to force traders and missionaries to use water transportation which was under the control of the Ganda kabaka. Large numbers of Ganda in the southern lake district meant that the Kerebe and others in the region fell under Buganda's hegemony.

The subordination of the Kerebe to the Ganda lasted until approximately 1890 after which time the Kerebe were subjected to an even harsher period of repression by representatives of the German Antislavery Society who established themselves on Bukerebe to construct vessels for which the Kerebe supplied timber and labor. Quasi-colonial control ceased when the Kerebe omukama was deposed in 1895 by a German force following a Kerebe attack upon a mission station because of its association with antislavery

measures.

Kerebe oral traditions and their interpretations raise numerous issues that require comparison with traditions from other communities to validate, correct or modify the Kerebe evidence and its interpretation. The non-political nature of substantial amounts of the evidence will permit other investigators to pursue these same social and economic developments across chiefdom and ethnic lines thus giving the data a unity that cannot otherwise be achieved. Just as this study has benefited from the pioneering works by historians who have collected oral traditions extensively among the Luo and Abaluyia in Kenya and the Pare, Shambaa and Nyamwezi in Tanzania, it is hoped that this cultural history of the Kerebe will further the process of reconstructing the elusive past of East Africans.

APPENDIXES

Appendix I

The clan information below is primarily the contribution of Bahitwa and represents clans who have lived at some time in the past in the district of Bukerebe. The data are tentative.

Clan	Time of Arrival	Route to Bukerebe	Totem
Bago	Omukama Nago	A	bushbuck
Bilizi	pre-Silanga	A	?
Bo (Mbeba)	pre-Silanga	A	?
Bogo	pre-Silanga	A	bushbuck and tri-colored cow (a mottled animal with black, brown and white coloration)
Bwarumi	pre-Silanga	A	mud fish
Bya	post-Silanga	C	?
Chamba (sub-clan of Timba)	post-Silanga	D	tri-colored cow and warthog
Chambi (sub-clan of Yango)	post-Silanga	D	tri-colored cow
Chuma	post-Silanga	D	hippopotamus
Chwela	pre-Silanga	E	?
Gabe	pre-Silanga	D	bushbuck

Gana (sub-clan of Gara)	pre-Silanga	D	tri-colored cow
Gabō (sub-clan of Gabe)	Omukama Mihigō I		tri-colored cow and wren-like bird
Ganga (sub-clan of Lanzi)	post-Silanga	D	hippopotamus
Ganza (sub-clan of Yanza on Bukara)	pre-Silanga	A	tri-colored cow
Gara	pre-Silanga	D	bushbuck
Gembe (sub-clan of Silanga)	with Silanga	E	wren-like bird and an eel
Gere (Fwe'ngere)	pre-Silanga	A	?
Geru	pre-Silanga	A	?
Gobera	pre-Silanga	C	?
Goma (sub-clan of Zigaba)	pre-Silanga	A	bushbuck and a guinea fowl
Gulye	pre-Silanga	A	?
Guza (sub-clan of Gembe)	post-Silanga		wren-like bird and mud fish
Haza (sub-clan of Tundu)	with Silanga	F	?
Hembe	with Silanga	F	a type of grass
Hesere	Omukama Mihigō II	A	wren-like bird
Hima	pre-Silanga	A	?
Himba	Omukama Kaseza	?	buffalo
Hindi	Omukama Mihigo	A	mud fish
Hinga	pre-Silanga	A	hartebeest
Hira	pre-Silanga	A	wren-like bird and tri-colored cow
Horo (Horu)	pre-Silanga	A	?
Hunga	post-Silanga	A	bushbuck

Kamba	pre-Silanga	A	tri-colored cow
Kana (sub-clan of Miro)	?	D	tri-colored cow
Kanda	pre-Silanga	A	?
Kangara (Tatoga)	pre-Silanga		
Kayebe	Omukama Katobaha	A	mixture of millet and sand ready for sowing
Kerekeke	pre-Silanga	A	monkey
Kokwa	pre-Silanga	C	?
Koni	pre-Silanga	A	?
Kula	pre-Silanga	A	tri-colored cow
Kulitira	pre-Silanga	A	wren-like bird and mud fish
Kumi (sub-clan of Kula)	?	A	tri-colored cow
Lanzi	pre-Silanga	A	hippopotamus
Lera (sub-clan of Kula)	Omukama Mihigo	A	tri-colored cow
Lima (sub-clan of Lanzi)	?	A	hippopotamus
Linda (sub-clan of Sekabwiname)	pre-Silanga	C	tri-colored cow
Liro	pre-Silanga	A	?
Lubizi	with Silanga	F	buffalo
Lwa	pre-Silanga	A	bushbuck and tri-colored cow
Mara	pre-Silanga	B	?
Manda	pre-Silanga	A	?
Maro	pre-Silanga	A	?
Milwa	pre-Silanga	B	?

Miro	Omukama Katobaha II	E	baboon and tri-colored cow
Mpeke	pre-Silanga	C	?
Nange	pre-Silanga	A	?
Ndu	pre-Silanga	E	?
Nene	pre-Silanga	E	?
Ngu	pre-Silanga	A	?
Nonza	pre-Silanga	A	?
Noro	pre-Silanga	E	?
Nuge	pre-Silanga	E	tri-colored cow
Nzozwa	pre-Silanga	A	tri-colored cow
Ombezi	pre-Silanga	A	?
Onzi	pre-Silanga	B	?
Ruhu (sub-clan of Hembe)	Omukama Kahana	A	a type of grass
Sa (Siba)	pre-Silanga	A	?
Sandasya (Sandawe)	pre-Silanga		
Segena	Omukama Katobaha II	E	wren-like bird and mud fish
Segi	Omukama Kahana	A	?
Segu (sub-clan of Miro)	Omukama Katobaha II	E	baboon and tri-colored cow
Sekabwiname	pre-Silanga	A	tri-colored cow
Senzi (sub-clan of Gara)	?	D	tri-colored cow and two types of brush not used for firewood
Shosho	pre-Silanga	A	monkey
Si	pre-Silanga	B	wren-like bird
Silanga (sub-clan of Segena)		E	wren-like bird and mud fish

Sindi	Omukama Kahana	A	tri-colored cow
Singo	with Silanga	F	bushbuck and tri-colored cow
Sita	with Silanga	E,F	hippopotamus
Sohera	pre-Silanga	D	?
Songe	post-Silanga	D	black-headed weaver
Sosi	pre-Silanga	D	tri-colored cow
Sumba (sub-clan of Gara)	?	D	tri-colored cow
Swiza	pre-Silanga	B	?
Syora (sub-clan of Bwarumi)	?	A	lungfish
Tamba	pre-Silanga	B	?
Tiama (sub-clan of Kamba)	?	A	crow
Timba	Omukama Katobaha II	B	bushbuck
Tongera	Omukama Kahana	D	tri-colored cow
Toto	?	?	helmet guinea fowl
Tundu	with Silanga	D,F	leopard
Twa	pre-Silanga	D	?
Twiga	pre-Silanga	D,E	?
Yambi (sub-clan of Silanga)	Omukama Mihigo	E	wren-like bird and mud fish
Yange	pre-Silanga	A	?
Yango	with Silanga	D,F	?
Yozu	pre-Silanga	D	?
Zaga	pre-Silanga	E	?

Zeru (sub-clan of Senzi)	?	D	bushbuck
Zigaba	Omukama Mihigo	D	tri-colored cow and intestines of any eatable animal
Zigu (sub-clan of Timba)	?	A	bushbuck
Zila	pre-Silanga	E	?
Zime	pre-Silanga	E	tri-colored cow
Zimuzimu (Nwi)	pre-Silanga	E	?
Zubwa	with Silanga	D,F	tri-colored cow and hartebeest
Zugumi (became part of Kula)	?	A	tri-colored cow
Zuke	pre-Silanga	B	tri-colored cow

Legend to Routes Taken to Bukerebe:

- A - Buha to Buzinza to Usukuma to Bukerebe
- B - Buha to Buhaya to Buzinza to Usukuma to Bukerebe
- C - Buha to Buhaya to Buganda to east side of lake to Bukerebe
- D - Bunyoro to Buhaya to Buzinza (or Buha) to Usukuma to Bukerebe
- E - Bunyoro to east side of lake to Bukerebe
- F - Buhaya across the lake to Bukerebe

Kikerebe names for totems:

Engabe - bushbuck	Enemela - hartebeest
Enkanga - helmet guinea fowl	Enzubu - hippopotamus
Enfunzi - wren-like bird	Endara - leopard
Enkobe - baboon	Ensole - black-headed weaver

Enkende - monkey

Embogo - buffalo

Empunu - wart-hog

Emamba - lungfish

Omusilionjo - mud fish

Namulimi - anteater

Runa - tri-colored mottled
cow or bull: black,
white, brown

Appendix II

The following list of Kerebe abakama is based upon the evidence of numerous informants. The only serious deviation from it comes from Bahitwa who claims that Golita was the third and Ruhinda the fourth omukama in place of Katobaha II, giving his list a total of eighteen abakama. An asterisk before a name indicates that the ruler was deposed.

- 1 Katobaha - 17th C
- 2 Kaseza - 17th C
- 3 Katobaha II - 18th C
- 4 Mihigo - 18th C
- 5 Kahana - 18th C
- *6 Lutana Mumanza - 18th C
- 7 Nago - 18th C
- 8 Mihigo II - ca. 1780--ca. 1820
- 9 Katobaha III - 19th C
- 10 Golita - 19th C
- *11 Ruhinda - 19th C
- *12 Ibanda - 19th C
- 13 Machunda - ca. 1835--ca. 1869
- *14 Rukonge - ca. 1869-1895
- 15 Mukaka - 1895-1907
- 16 Ruhumbika - 1907-1938
- 17 Lukumbuzya - 1939-1962

Stanley's "King" list collected in 1875 differs markedly from similar lists given by informants at the present time.¹

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Ruhinda I | 9 | Kahana II |
| 2 | Kasessa | 10 | Gurta II |
| 3 | Kytawa | 11 | Ruhinda II |
| 4 | Kahana I | 12 | Kahana III |
| 5 | Gurta I | 13 | Iwanda |
| 6 | Nagu | 14 | Machunda |
| 7 | Mehigo I | 15 | Lukongeh, the present
king |
| 8 | Mehigo II | | |

1. Through the Dark Continent, I, 196.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Oral Sources

Oral traditions provide the bulk of the evidence used in reconstructing Kerebe history. Each informant is identified with those contributing exceptionally valuable traditions noted. After each informant's name the following information is given; an asterisk indicates that the individual is literate, then his clan, village and approximate age in 1968.

Adolf Malimu s/o Kalimanzila, (Jita), Namagamba, 60s.

Malimu provided information about his father's journeys as an envoy for Omukama Rukonge. Interview on January 24, 1969.

Alipyo Mnyaga,* Miro, Bukonyo, 60s.

As a former secretary of Omukama Ruhumbika, and in 1968 a district court magistrate, Mr. Mnyaga was in a position to learn significant information about the royal clan and has made an effort to remember it. Interviewed on September 7, 1968.

Alphonse Golita Mukamabili s/o Mukaka,* Silanga, Lugongo, 70s.

During the regency of Omukama Lukumbuzya, this man, a son of Omukama Mukaka, acted as regent for over a decade. His knowledge of the pre-colonial period was meager in contrast to the information he possessed on political activities since the 1930s. Interviewed on November 7, 1968.

Aniceti Kitereza,* Silanga, Nakisilila, 73.

Mr. Kitereza has written a number of lengthy monographs on Kerebe customs. His recorded version of the royal clan's history provides the basis for a history used within the primary schools of the community. He is not regarded as an historian nor is his collected historical information outstanding but within the ethnographic sphere he is one of the most sensitive and lucid informants. Periodic interviews between July 15, 1968 and March 15, 1969.

Bahitwa s/o Lugabage, Kula, Harwego, 82.

Bahitwa is the remaining official Kerebe historian of the previous order. His information has significant potential for assisting in shedding light on the pre-1700 era. He is not renowned for his accuracy on specific details but his breadth of history permits a cautious interpretation of the major trends. Periodic interviews between July 15, 1968 and March 15, 1969, with increasing frequency after January, 1969.

Bundala Kakenki, Kula, - - -, 60s.

He provided information concerning his clan. Interviewed September 13, 1968.

Buyanza Bernardino 'Musa' s/o Nansagate,* Silanga, Kiyozu, 86.

His information on nineteenth century political, social and economic developments provide the basis for much of the material of that century discussed above. He was an extremely valuable informant for all subjects that fell within his period of expertise. His service within the German military forces from 1904 to 1918 exposed him to cosmopolitan perspectives denied to men of more insular experiences. Frequent interviews between September 1, 1968 and March 15, 1969, with increasing frequency.

Celestine Mahoro, Miro, Musozi, 90s.

He provided limited information on life at the end of the 1800s. Interviewed July 25, 1968.

Chavery Wanzura s/o Magoyelo, (Kara), Bulamba, 70s.

Information about his father's two journeys to Takama during the reign of Machunda was extremely valuable in reconstructing the early contacts between the Kerebe and Ganda. Interviewed November 7, 1968.

Darmas Biseko, Lanzi, Nakabungo, 30s.

He provided information concerning his father who was reported to be one of the first Kerebe to speak Swahili and consequently was one of the first non-Silanga appointed to the position of headman during the reign of Rukonge. Interviewed August 8, 1968.

Daudi Musombwa,* Gembe, Kibara, 70s.

He related numerous traditions and was able to portray a view of the nineteenth century that was in essential agreement with Buyanza's traditions. Interviewed August 9, 1968.

Donald Mganga s/o Rulago, Nampanga, Bwiro, 40s.

He had uncovered a number of metal implements, including two hoes in his field. The hoes were not of the Zinza shape and he consequently enquired about their origin. I visited him, acquired one of the hoes, and proceeded to determine its possible origin. One of the old smiths on the island

identified the hoe as a product of Ngurimi. The hoe was subsequently placed in the National Museum in Dar es Salaam. Interviewed September 13, 1968.

Gregory Nkomangi s/o Babili, (Ruri), Musozi, 40s.
He provided excellent information on musicians and musical games in the present century. Interviewed December 16, 1968.

Jeremi Mukama Baruza,* Singo (Jita), Bulamba, 70s.
He gave information about his father's migration to Bukerebe from Majita. Interviewed September 12, 1968.

Johana Mazige,* Gabe, Kagunguli, 60s.
His information on the important Gabe clan was the most detailed available. Either his personal disdain for those working with iron or the disdain of those from whom he received traditions prevented him from contributing additional information. Interviewed October 4, 1968.

Johana Constantine, Zubwa, - - -, 60s.
He provided information concerning his clan. Interviewed September 7, 1968.

Josephat Mdoho s/o Katundali,* Hira, Musozi, 30s.
He acted as my research assistant for three months and was instrumental in introducing me to the Kerebe and their way of life from July 10, 1968 through October 1968.

Joseph Samula,* Gembe, Hamkoko, 70s.
Information on his clan was contributed in addition to his own educational experience. Interviewed July 26, 1968.

Kabunazya, Tundu, - - -, 60s.
He provided information on his clan's history. Interviewed August 23, 1968.

Kaliga s/o Lwambali, Sita, Kitale, 70s.
Obtaining traditions from men residing around the residence of the former omukama proved to be difficult; uncooperativeness and suspicion were common traits of potentially valuable informants. Kaliga was one of the few men representing the former power structure who readily provided traditions about his clan and their relation to the royal clan. His father had been guardian of the omukama's rainpot. Interviewed August 30 and December 17 and 19, 1968.

Kammando Mzinza,* Kula, Buye, 60s.
His information on the Kula clan was incomplete but it did corroborate Bahitwa's traditions to a degree. Interviewed September 17, 1968.

Kazimili s/o Mazige, Zubwa, Hekerege, 60s.

An accomplished enanga player, he gave valuable information on the role of this instrument in Kerebe society as well as providing a number of song texts from the 1800s. Interviewed November 4, 1968.

Kilemezi Mwizarubi, (Jita), Bukonyo, 70s.

An accomplished musician from the pre-1940 era, he gave an account of musical developments in the present century. Interviewed December 13, 1968.

Lazali Katundali, Hira, Musozi, 50s.

He provided information on his clan's history. Interviewed July 25, 1968.

Lazaro s/o Machunda, Silanga, Dar es Salaam, 110.

The sole surviving son of Omukama Machunda, died ca. 1869, who went into exile during Rukonge's reign and eventually became a part of an Arab caravan to the coast where he remained. He unfortunately could recall few events from the 1800s, with the interesting exception of a few key lines from songs he had sung over seventy-five years ago. Interviewed July 10, 1968.

Luguga s/o Tuuna, Songe, Buzunze, 70s.

He provided information on his clan's history. Interviewed August 23, 1968.

Lwakanyaga, Songe, Nakatunguru, 70s.

He provided traditions on his clan's role during the 1800s. The Songe clan made wooden utensils for the omukama and it was therefore assumed that they were responsible for producing the piece of sculpture which the Germans took from Rukonge in 1895. In fact a Nyamwezi had produced the wooden figure. Interviewed August 23, 1968.

Magoma s/o Kitina, Silanga, Nebuye, 60s.

Magoma prided himself on being knowledgeable about his clan's traditions and in fact he gave an extensive narrative of the royal clan's trek from Isene to Ihangiro to Bukerebe. He was not as proficient on other topics. Interviewed January 22, 1969.

Makene s/o Ikongolero, Hira, Kihungula, 70s.

Makene was the most knowledgeable member of the Hira clan on its traditions, especially for the pre-Silanga era. His traditions paled along side those of Bahitwa but they provided a valuable check on Bahitwa's traditions. This was particularly important for obtaining evidence concerning blacksmithing before 1700. Makene confirmed that his clan had at one time "beat" iron, an admission that gave credence to Bahitwa's traditions on this sensitive topic. Interviewed occasionally between July 20, 1968 and March 1, 1969.

Makeremu s/o Manyanga, Hesera, Harwego, 30s.

All senior members of this clan are deceased but Makeremu shed light on his ancestors introduction of the elephant hunting association into Bukerebe from Usukuma. Interviewed January 16, 1969.

Makomba, Kula, Nakatunguru, 50s.

A musician and craftsman, Makomba shed considerable light upon the Kerebe musical games of the present century. Some of his pieces of sculpture were used as amaleba in games; one piece is now within the Fine Arts Museum, Indiana University. Interviewed occasionally between September 1968 and February 1969.

Malobo Bangala s/o Makene, Hira, Kihungula, 40s.

He provided information on musical games of the present century. Interviewed October 3, 1968.

Manumbi, Zandwa (Jita), Kilimabuye, 60s.

He provided information about his father's migration to Bukerebe. Interviewed September 6, 1968.

Manyanya s/o Nyawawa, Lega, Butimba, 90s.

Manyanya is not a Kerebe but he was queried about sculpturing in Butimba in the late nineteenth century. His information was useful in revealing the nature of trading activities in the region before 1900. Interviewed September 27, 1968.

Masalu Kapongo, royal clan, Chumve, Nassa chiefdom, Usukuma, 90s.

His information was helpful in disclosing the relationship between the related royal clans of Bukerebe and Nassa. Interviewed September 21, 1968.

Matabi s/o Kumaya, Songe, Musozi, 90s.

Matabi related traditions about his clan and musical practices at the turn of the present century. Interviewed August 22, and September 10, 1968.

Matuli, Yango, Nakatunguru, 60s.

He provided information concerning his clan's traditions and considerable information on musical games in the present century. His personal experiences revealed a great deal about Kerebe attitudes during my stay on the island. Interviewed occasionally between August 1968 and January 1969.

Mbaruku Nyamlazi, Kana, - - -, 70s.

His ancestors came to Bukerebe from the island of Irugwa, an island that came under Silanga control in the 1600's. Interviewed September 17, 1968.

Mfaume s/o Gatalya,* Silanga, Nampanga, 60s.

Mfaume had been an interpreter for the British colonial government and had remained away from Bukerebe for a number of years before retiring on the island. While he did not possess many traditions he was extremely helpful in explaining the purpose of my activities to Buyanza who was initially skeptical of my intentions. Consequently Mfaume's intervention on my behalf persuaded the man who eventually contributed most to my collection of traditions to cooperate with me. Occasional meetings between September 1968 through March 1969.

Mpehi s/o Magesa, Himba, Musozi, 70s.

Mpehi contributed substantially to my understanding of the role played by hippo hunters in Kerebe life. Interviewed August 8, 22, and November 6, 1968 and January 30, 1969.

Mongelele Bulolima s/o Manoko, Gamba (Jita), Kilimabuye, 50s.

He is an outstanding musician on the island. He contributed information about the introduction and role of the endongo, a single stringed bowed instrument. A number of his songs were recorded and are on tapes preserved by the Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University and the Music Conservatoire of Tanzania situated in Dar es Salaam. Interviewed and performed occasionally between August 1968 and February 1969.

Muganga Golita, Silanga, Mahande, 60s.

A renowned musician, he gave historical information on the development of Kerebe musical traditions during the past century. Interviewed December 12, 1968.

Muganzansoni, Yango, Kagunguli, 60s.

Provided information on the history of his clan. Interviewed September 10, 1968.

Musumali, Gamba (Jita), Kilimabuye, 70s.

He provided information about the migration of his father to Bukerebe. Interviewed September 6, 1968.

Mzugulu Ndozero, Bwarumi, Lutali, 80s.

Mzugulu provided information about his clan and about the relationship of the people on Irugwa Island to Bukerebe. Interviewed September 17, 1968.

Namtamwa,* Songe, Gallu settlement scheme, 60s.

He gave information concerning his education experience. Although he knew limited amounts of history about his clan, he was most knowledgeable about administrative structure and developments since the 1930's. Interviewed August 26, 1968.

Neki Kageri, Bwarumi, - - -, 60s.

He provided information about his clan. Interviewed August 23, 1968.

Ngilimba, Songe, Buzunze, 60s.

He provided information about his clan. Interviewed August 31, 1968.

Ngoloma s/o Lamusyeta, Sindi, Musozi, 50s.

He gave information concerning his clan's origins. Interviewed January 7, 1969.

Nfuma, Miro, Bukindo, 70s.

He provided information about his clan. Interviewed August 31, 1968.

Ntobesya Halanga, Hindi, Nakabungo, 70s.

He provided information about his clan. Interviewed August 8, 1968.

Palapala s/o Kazwegulu, Silanga, Kitale, 60s.

His father was a former Siba. His information about the royal clan was reasonably broad and his information shed light on the administrative role of the Siba within the Silanga administrative hierarchy. Interviewed September 30, 1968.

Padre Petro s/o Chavery,* (Kara), Itira Parish, 50s.

Padre Petro informed me about his grandfather's exploits under Machunda and directed me to his father. He shared and discussed ideas concerning Kerebe history. Interviewed August 26, 1968.

Petro Mahugo, Chuma, - - -, 60s.

He provided information about his clan. Interviewed September 12, 1968.

Rukonge Biseko, Kula, Butiriti, 60s.

He provided information about his clan. Interviewed July 26, 1968.

Simeo Rubuzi,* Siba (Kara), Murutunguru, 60s.

He is an aspiring historian, emulating both Aniceti Kitereza and Bahitwa. Since his is of Kara origin, his view of Kerebe history is valuable. He has attempted to write history and lives for the day when he can get his material published. I was unable to use much of his information because it had been greatly influenced by Kitereza and Bahitwa and he had extracted portions from the material used by primary school teachers. He was not in the tradition of a Kerebe historian nor were his ancestors important within the chiefdom. His information was collected for a utilitarian purpose, to publish a history book that would be used by the local schools and provide an income for himself. Interviewed occasionally between August 1968 and February 1969.

Walji Rahani, - - -, Nansio, 80s.

As one of the first Asian shop keepers to establish a duka (shop) on the island, Walji provided valuable comments concerning his half century as an alien business man on the island. Interviewed January 29, 1969.

Wanzala s/o Buzuzya, Miro, Rubya, 50s.

He provided information about his father's exploits as a sculpturer in the twentieth century and thereby helped to resolve a vexing problem focusing on the sculpturing tradition of the Kerebe. Interviewed September 30, 1968.

Zumbula s/o Gilolo, Yango, Guguyu, 80s.

A retired blacksmith, Zumbula provided significant information about his own family who immigrated into Bukerebe during Machunda's reign and who continue as blacksmiths on the island. Although referred to as Jita, the clan's origins go back to Buha and Bunyoro. Zumbula was able to identify two non-Zinza hoes that were found on the island. Interviewed occasionally between October 1968 and February 1969.

II. Documentary Sources

Tanzania: Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam

The National Archives contains copies of correspondence from members of the German Antislavery Society to the parent organization in Coblenz in addition to German colonial officials' correspondence pertaining to the Society (G. 1/30).

The Mwanza District (Province) Book in the Archives also contains valuable historical notes on the Kerebe and neighboring societies:

Anon. "The Ukerewe Tradition (concerning the foundation of Ruhinda's kingdom)." Enclosed in A. M. D. Turnbull. "Notes on the History of Uzinza."

Turnbull, A. M. D. "Tribal History and Legends on Ukerewe Chiefdom."

_____. "Notes on the History of Uzinza, Its Rulers and People."

Williams, O. Guise. "Tribal History and Legends--Sukuma."

Tanzania: University College Library, Dar es Salaam

Relevant papers within the Hans Cory collection include the following:

Anon. "History of Ukerewe Chiefdom." No. 290.

Baker, E. C. "Report on Administrative and Social Conditions in the Ukerewe Chiefdom." No. 9.

Cory, Hans. "The Bahinda in Bumbwiga (a Bukoba Chiefdom)." No. 40.

_____. "(Banyamwezi) The Country and Its Inhabitants." No. 43.

_____. "The Coming of the Wasilanga Chiefs." No. 30.

_____. "The Earliest History of Bukoba." No. 41.

_____. "Report on the Pre-European Tribal Organizations in Musoma District." No. 173.

_____. "Ukerewe Local Government and Land Tenure." No. 420.

Turnbull, A. M. D. "Usamiro Sultanate, . . .; History of the Bahinda Rule in Uzinza." No. 416.

_____. "Wahima." No. 231.

"Kerebe Manuscripts from Nansio, Ukerewe." Microfilm.

Recorded historical traditions of Bahitwa s/o Lugambage and Simeo Rubuzi are available in English translation for examination in the University College Library.

Tanzania: Ukerewe (Bukerebe)

Valuable written but unpublished sources of information in French and Kikerebe are available in the Roman Catholic parishes at Kagunguli and Murutunguru:

Anon. "Historia ya Ukerewe." Mimeographed manuscript, Teacher Training College, Murutunguru.

Kitereza, Aniceti. "Omwanzuro gw' Abakama ba Bukerebe." Typed Kikerebe manuscript.

Simard, J. A. "Religion d'Ukerewe ou resume des connaissances religieuses des Bakerewe." Typed manuscript.

_____. "Vocabulaire Français-Kikerewe." Typed manuscript.

_____. "Vocabulaire Kikerewe-Français." Typed manuscript.

Tanzania: Nyegezi (near Mwanza), Regional House, White Fathers

Extant diaries of the Roman Catholic White Fathers are available from numerous missions in the district for perusal. Those consulted included the following:

Diary: Notre Dame de Kamoga (Bukumbi), 1883-1888, 1893-1899.

Rome: Mother House of the White Fathers (Padri Bianchi)

Much of the information extracted from diaries that was sent by missionaries to the Mother House and subsequently published in the order's periodical, the Chronique de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique, is preserved in Rome. The complete diaries themselves, however, remain at Nyegezi in Tanzania if extant. Reports and survey information is also available for perusal in Rome. The consulted diaries and reports of the White Fathers, written in French, include the following:

Diary: La Mission du Bukumbi (alors Kamoga), 1889-1893.

Diary: Ukerewe, 1897-1904.

Correspondence from Ukerewe, 1896-1922.

R. P. Bourget. "Notes sur les Bagwe."

R. P. Joseph Gass. "Les Bagwe: Croyances, Superstitions, Sorcelleries," 1927.

Vicariats de Mwanza et de Maswa. "Table d'enquêtes sur les moeurs et coutumes indigènes--Tribu des Basukuma."

Chronique de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique, 1878-1898.

London: Church Missionary Society

Correspondence to and from missionaries in eastern Africa is available for research. The earliest letters from any given area frequently contain valuable information on the community in which the missionary was residing at the time. The consulted information included the following:

The Nyanza Mission, 1876-1898.

Walker Papers, the personal correspondence of R. H. Walker to members of his family and friends--a keen observer.

III. Published Primary and Secondary Works

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Deutsche Kolonialzeitung. Berlin, 1890-1896.

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The Times. London, 1878, 1884-1885.

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