

Popular Resistance in Tanzania: Lessons from the Sungu Sungu

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RÉSUMÉ. En réponse à la grande crise des années 1980, une armée traditionnelle appelée les *Sungu Sungu* naquit dans les régions rurales de la Tanzanie. Revenant aux habitudes vestimentaires, aux armes et aux pratiques médicinales villageoises de la période pré-coloniale, les *Sungu Sungu* mirent au point leurs propres systèmes d'organisation et de mobilisation qui leur permettaient de contourner les tribunaux, la police et les structures du parti chargées de l'administration des villages. Après avoir échoué dans sa tentative de contrôler ce mouvement, le parti nomma les *Sungu Sungu* organe de sécurité des villages, représentant la milice populaire. Cette expérience des *Sungu Sungu* soulève nombre de questions importantes sur la forme, le contenu et l'orientation politique de la résistance populaire. En modelant des mouvements sociaux anti-coloniaux de façon à ce qu'ils cadrent avec une certaine conception du système de parti unique, l'historiographie nationaliste a dérobé aux masses leur histoire. Grâce à un examen critique des mouvements anti-coloniaux, il serait possible de réévaluer les forces et les faiblesses de ces mouvements de résistance et de voir comment de nouvelles formes de résistance pourraient rétablir le droit des peuples à une participation démocratique totale au processus de transformation. Il existe à l'heure actuelle en Tanzanie, tout comme ailleurs en Afrique, de nombreuses formes de résistance passive et moins passive dont, entre autres, les manifestations des travailleurs, l'abattage des caféiers, l'arrêt de production de cultures commerciales et leur utilisation à d'autres fins, le refus de payer l'impôt de Développement, la mise en échec du programme de travaux forcés. L'essor des *Sungu Sungu* correspondit à la fin évidente et tragique d'un mouvement de résistance en cours dans une société de crise et d'ajustement structurel. L'élément qui permet de faire une distinction entre cette phase de résistance et celle de la période anti-coloniale est la capacité des masses à identifier les agents locaux comme étant à l'origine de leur exploitation et de leur domination. Ces soulèvements spontanés ont leur propres contradictions internes à partir desquelles l'on peut mettre au point de nouvelles méthodes d'oppression.

Introduction

During the 1980s in rural Tanzania, there arose a "traditional" army called the *Sungu Sungu*. This army ascribed to itself the authority to maintain peace in the regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora. In this period of intense capitalist crisis where new forms of accumulation were developing in the rural areas, the activities of the plundering of the natural resources had reached such a stage that the established organs of law and order were integrated in a contradictory manner into the structures of the export of capital. Ivory, gold, diamonds, cattle and hides and skins were being taken from these regions when the return for labour was such that the poor were eking out a bare subsistence. In the face of the armed seizure of cattle, brigandry and death from the primitive form of gold mining in Kahama and Geita, the poor developed their own measures to fight the accumulators and cattle rustlers. The *Sungu Sungu* (or as they are called in some parts *ruga ruga*) in reverting to the mode of dress, weapons and medicinal practices of the pre-

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colonial village had developed a method of self-organisation and self-mobilisation which by-passed the courts, the police and the party structures of governance in the rural villages of the above three regions.

Through popular democratic village assemblies, the *Sungu Sungu* dispensed justice and mobilized the energies of the youth to conceptualize their ability to enter the decision making process where they lived and grazed their cattle. In essence, though based on democratic village assemblies, the core of the movement was male dominated. Thus after the original burst of energy to curb cattle thefts and racketeering had subsided, the *Sungu Sungu* turned their attention to other sources of insecurity and was linked to the problems of the resurgence of witchcraft and its opposite, witchcraft eradication. Older nationalist members of the party understood the political implications of this sort of movement. They remember how, during the anti-colonial struggle, "witchcraft could be used for political ends"¹.

After four years of efforts by the state security organs to infiltrate, find the leader and subvert the movement, the party decided in 1983 that the best way to control this peasant uprising was by embracing it. By 1983 the party designated the *Sungu Sungu* as the village security organ, the embodiment of the peoples militia. In the administrative style, the idea of resistance which issued from the *Sungu Sungu* was to be controlled by repressive tolerance. That is the party would laud the efforts of the peoples without dealing with the causes of the insecurity while developing the measures to bring the movements under party and state authority, including the extension of the administrative structure of Shinyanga. The measure of success could be seen by 1987 when the party could call out the traditional peasants army to form a guard of honour for the President on Peasants day in Shinyanga region of Tanzania.

The contours of peasant resistance in Tanzania in the 1980s in an independent African society twenty years after independence raise many important questions about the form, content and political direction of popular resistance. In the specific context of Tanzania, the idea of popular resistance is firmly linked to the anti-colonial struggle. From the armed uprisings of the *MAJI MAJI* in 1905-1906 to the strikes, marches, cash crop hold ups, boycotts and tax evasion of the 1940s and 1950s, the episodes of anti-colonial resistance are documented in the text books as part of the history of the nationalist phases in the history of Tanzania. Because nationalist historio-

1 This was the precise title of a study undertaken by the colonialists in the 1950s. See study made by Hans Cory, *How Witchcraft could be used for political ends*. Hans Cory papers No. 235 University of Dar es Salaam Library. This study was presented to the Witchcraft Committee of the Colonial Legislative Council in May 1958.

grapher seeks to rob the masses of their history, the social movements of the anti-colonial phase are moulded to fit a specific conception of one-partyism.

The books and papers on resistance do not in the main alert us as to how the spirit of rebellion could strengthen the people as they face new forms of exploitation by international capital and their local allies². Such a critical analysis of the form, content and nature of the resistance would allow for new appraisals of the strength and weaknesses of these resistances and how new forms of resistance could re-establish the right of the people to full democratic participation in the process of transformation.

That the nature of resistance in post-colonial Tanzania took many forms is still an area which requires research and documentation. Without doubt, similar to the period of the depression and World War II, at present, there are numerous forms of passive and not so passive resistance in the political life of Tanzania. The rise of the *Sungu Sungu* was the overt and dramatic end of resistance which is taking place in a society of crisis and structural adjustment. Whether in the form of worker protests, (eg the Kilombero Sugar factory protest and subsequent shootings), the cutting down of coffee trees, cash crop hold up and diversion, the refusal to pay the head tax called the Development Levy, or the failure of the forced labour programme (*nguvu kazi* - the Human Resources Deployment Ordinance of 1983), the resistance of the people asserts itself as a factor of Tanzanian politics of the 1980s.

These episodes of resistance can be distinguished from the anti-colonial, or anti-settler acts of rebellion in the continent of Africa. In this period the masses can identify local agents as the sources of their exploitation and domination. This new form of resistance is not unique to Tanzania in this period when there is an intensification of the exploitation of the continent of Africa. All over this continent of debt, hunger, armed struggles and militarization, there are social movements struggling to transform their material and social conditions.

Hence to be able to document and bring to light the popular aspirations of African masses is for the African intelligentsia a concrete expression of solidarity with the poor. However, this solidarity requires that the study is not simply a description of the social movements but the kind of analysis which

2 In particular the work of John Iliffe on Resistance in Tanganyika is linked to the ideas of modernization. See John Iliffe, *A History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge University Press, London 1979. Essentially the party history which is taught as *siasa* (the equivalent of civics) in the educational institutions reflect the same emphasis on the party or important personages in the anti-colonial period. For an alternative interpretation, see: Walter Rodney, *World War II and the Tanzania Economy*, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 1976. See especially the chapter on African Resistance.

can strengthen the organizational capacity of the producing masses as they meet their day to day hardships.

To be able to conceptualize the components of popular resistance and the potentialities has also been sharpened by the fact that a social movement calling itself a National Resistance Army has come to the summit of state power in at least one African territory. The success of the guerilla army in Uganda and the exercise of state power by the National Resistance Movement led by Yoweri Museveni also alerts the committed African scholar as to the fundamental differences between resistance and social transformation. For, in Uganda, a resistance movement seized political power but is confronted with the concrete problems of how to generate concrete economic initiatives to break the old cash crop economy and to inspire real political participation by the masses. Unfortunately the resolution of this question of the direction of the transformation of the Ugandan economy is now compounded by war and new forms of resistance which are linked to the history of regional differentiation and the politicization of ethnicity and regionalism in that battered and war weary society.

This resistance army in Uganda also brings to mind numerous rebellions which are going on all over the continent of Africa in independent states. Some of these rebellions are prolonged guerilla wars as in the Eritrean struggle. However, the nature of African universities and the present intellectual climate on the continent ensure that those in European and American centres of learning know more about the Eritrean struggle or that of the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army than the intelligentsia in Africa. Thus in East Africa security pacts by leaders prevent genuine intellectual discourse on resistance movements such as Mwakenya when other Human Rights organizations such as Amnesty International or think tanks in the West fully study the political implications of these movements.

That the centres for international capital study the potential of popular resistance is without doubt. For now in the period of anti-war sentiments in the capitalist metropolises when their own citizens cannot be motivated to fight oppressed peoples, the study and understanding of popular resistance movements in Africa take a new meaning. This is best illustrated in Mozambique where counter-revolution and South African destabilisation carry the label of resistance and exploit the ideology of pre-colonial practices in the rural areas. Cases such as the atrocities of the Mozambique Resistance movement (sometimes called RENAMO) dictate to the progressive scholar in the analysis of social movements and ideas there must be a conscious effort to ensure that the foundation of intellectual inquiry is linked to strengthening the masses against new and more covert forms of manipulation. Where imperialism seeks to use social science to undermine the sovereignty of the African peoples, the progressive scholar needs to build up an intellec-

tual culture which will be part of the culture of harmonizing the knowledge of the people with modern scientific techniques.

In the regions which gave rise to the *Sungu Sungu* in Tanzania are to be found a people which call themselves the *Sukuma*. Whether the *Sukuma* constitute a tribe, a nation or a dispersed ethnic group was for some time a matter of intellectual controversy. But the fact is that without a materialist history of pre-colonial Tanganyika, it is still difficult to say how and why the largest population group of the Tanzanian society speaks one language. The people who are called the *Sukuma* comprise more than 15 per cent of the population of Tanzania. Together with the people who are called the Nyamwezi and who share certain cultural traditions with the *Sukuma* they constitute 18-20 per cent of the population in three of the richest regions of the territory. One is however constrained by the unscientific nature of the studies on the peoples and regions from which the *Sungu Sungu* emerged. For the history of the region showed that the conception of the *Sukuma* tribe came after efforts by the colonial authorities to create 'tribes' for more effective indirect rule.

This fact comes through most clearly in the work of the sociologist - anthropologist Hans Cory³. The voluminous papers of Hans Cory form a veritable wall against a proper study of the regions of Mwanza and Shinyanga. Most studies on the *Sukuma* begin with Cory and even those who seek to differ challenge Cory on the same grounds; the preoccupation with chiefly structures and customary laws⁴. It is important to underscore that this methodological approach not only represents a particular world view but this kind of intellectual work is concerned with social control.

Inevitably this control is disguised under the banner of development and the rehabilitation of the land. One study of the *Sukuma* brought to light the real mandate of Hans Cory. It clarified that:

*The government hired Hans Cory, an Austrian immigrant turned anthropologist-sociologist, to investigate secret societies among the Nyamwezi and the Sukuma. In particular, he was directed to discover whether such societies might be potentially subversive organisations*⁵.

3 The Hans Cory papers in the University of Dar es Salaam library consists of more than 250 papers on the peoples of Tanganyika, especially the *Sukuma*. The most frequently quoted works are: (a) *The Ntami Traditional Rites of a Sukuma Chief in Tanganyika*, London: Macmillan 1951; (b) *The Indigenous Political System of the Sukuma and Proposals for Reform*, Kampala, Uganda. Eagle Press 1954; (c) *Sukuma Law and Custom*. London: Oxford University Press 1953.

4 B. Itandala, *History of the Babinza of Usukama, Tanzania*. Ph.D Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada 1983.

5 G. Andrew Maguire, *Towards Uhuru in Tanzania: The Politics of Participation*. Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp.10.

All over Tanzania at present there are studies which have the same purpose to see the ways in which the cultural aspirations of the people could be channelled to serve the purpose of the deepening of capitalism in the rural areas. Present scholarship on the cultural dimension of development from the *Bulletin of Third World Forum* alerted us to the importance of cultural resistance among the masses.

In the West as well as in Japan, material development was supported by internal changes in social and human relationships. The process, incidentally, was stretched out over a very long span of time. As a consequence, there was no radical break; instead, what took place was an extremely complex process in which selected elements of the old culture were re-absorbed within the context of technical and economic development. Modern capitalism is deeply rooted in native Western (or Japanese) traditions, helping reciprocally to strengthen it through a positive process of evolution that removed obstacles to technical creativity and economic initiative.

From this analysis of the relationship between the rise of capitalism and its integration with Western cultural values, we are reminded that:

Africa's situation is different. The historical conditions under which capitalism penetrated the continent, plus the circumstances of its later expansion, have meant right from the beginning, economic development has clashed with the local cultures. Concurrently, the impulse for changes in social and human relationships has come mainly from abroad, quite often with the help of brutal force⁶.

Because the role of force is so central to the reproduction of capitalism in Africa, the study of resistance in Tanzania as in other parts of Africa must involve the sharpening of the tools of analysis which will help to instill confidence in the people. For, in Tanzania as in other parts of Africa, there is the push to deepen the production of export crops despite the declining terms of trade for primary products from the Third World. This renewed effort by international capital must inevitably clash with local cultures and it is the argument of this paper that the expression of the *Sungu Sungu* was a reflex action by the poor to the looting of the countryside.

Hence the purpose of this paper is to give meaning to the clash which gave rise to the *Sungu Sungu* taking care to make a clear link between the cultural resistance of this movement and the changing political economy of the society as a whole. The concepts of regional differentiation and capital accu-

6 *Bulletin of the Third World Forum*. "A Working Group on the cultural dimension of Development in Africa". Dakar, Senegal, January 1987.

mulation are tools to enrich our understanding of young men bare-chested and crowned with feathers using spears to chase looters and cattle rustlers. The *Sungu Sungu* filled a spiritual void for the youth and used the recourse to pre-colonial ideas to combat the modernization schemes of the Rural Integrated Development Programmes (RIDEP). By resorting to 'traditional' cultural forms, the *Sungu Sungu* gave concrete expression to the clash where the commoditisation process and the processes of exploitation were masked by the language of rehabilitation, conservation and proper land use. But the kind of resistance of the *Sungu Sungu* could not turn into a sustained political struggle because of the contradictory nature of the pre-capitalist ideologies. The involvement of the *Sungu Sungu* in activities which persecuted older women as witches brought to the fore Amilcar Cabral's notion of the dialectical nature of cultural resistance.

Amilcar Cabral, the African freedom fighter provides a theoretical foundation for the study of cultural resistance of the type such as *Sungu Sungu*. Cabral had affirmed:

*The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies*⁷.

The positive and negative lessons of the *Sungu Sungu* can be penetrated with the help of Cabral's theoretical tools. For all over the continent the relationship between men and women in the natural environment engender social struggles which can either take the people forward or help to confirm new efforts to harmonize the economic and political domination of the people with their cultural personality. Imperialism is acquiring some expertise in the latter enterprise and the academic foundations have a renewed purpose in financing scholarly research in the African countryside. Hence the progressive scholar needs to clarify the positive and negative aspects of cultural resistance so that a scientific outlook is developed to understand the nature of the contradictions among the people. The questions of real transformation, of the social agents of this transformation, of the principal allies of any resistance movement, of the ideological basis of the resistance and

7 Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture" in *Return to the Source*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973, pp.41.

the objectives of the resistance are all sharpened by the present period in African history.

In 1967 Tanzania embarked on a policy of Ujamaa and Self-reliance. After twenty years of this process, the detractors of Tanzania have declared that even the limited initiative towards social welfare must be reversed. Social welfare and the egalitarian ideas of the society were to be replaced by a more explicit form of class selection and social stratification. Hence the ideas of liberalization, the giving of free rein to market forces and prosperity based on the private individual. Before the present thrust to make trade liberalization respectable the *Sungu Sungu* had been publicly involved in the war against economic sabotage. Now that the former economic saboteurs (called Walanguzi) have been given the stamp of approval by the turn to the IMF, the role and purpose of the *Sungu Sungu* has declined. The embrace of the party stole the thunder from this movement of resistance but the conditions of capital accumulation in the rural areas will continue to generate new forms of resistance among the rural peasantry. Our task is to attempt to grasp the context of the social struggles which brought forth the *Sungu Sungu*.

The Context or the antecedents of resistance in Sukumaland

The rise of the *Sungu Sungu* was a process of resistance in the period of the capitalist depression in Tanzania roughly from 1978 to the present. There is no precise date as to the foundation of the *Sungu Sungu*. There was no founding conference, there was no clear leader and the formation of this traditional army mushroomed all over the regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora. This much is evident from the present studies on the rise of the *Sungu Sungu*⁸. These studies have rightly recognized the significance of the spread of the *Sungu Sungu* and the fact that (a) there is no person or group of persons who could be called the leaders; (b) they are not confined to one village or any one administrative district; (c) that they are not confined to one ethnic group; and (d) that they took the law in their hands even to the point of arresting police persons and overthrowing village governments. Singing songs of resistance, dancing, rediscovering old forms of divination, running over long distances and effecting new forms of communication in

8 Among the Studies on the *Sungu Sungu* are: (a) Patrick Masanja, "Some notes on the *Sungu Sungu* movement" Department of Sociology Seminar, March 8, 1984; (b) Donna Kemer, "Witches, Cows, Thieves and Party Politics: An Examination of the *Sungu Sungu* movement". Department of Education Seminar 1983; (c) J.F. Mbwiliza and Donna Kemer, "The *Sungu Sungu* Movement" Department of History Seminar, February 16, 1984; (d) Mashiku J. Sabasaba and Ndibalama G. Rweyernamu, *Exercise of Punitive Powers Outside the Judicial Process in Tanzania: A Case Study of Neo-traditional Defence Groups (Sungu Sungu)* unpublished dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Law LL.B degree at the University of Dar es Salaam 1986; (e) Ray Abrahams, "Sungu Sungu: Village Vigilante Groups in Tanzania, *African Affairs*, April 1987.

the rural areas, the *Sungu Sungu* stamped a new sense of collective justice while establishing itself as the cultural reference point in the village community between 1981 and 1986. After one hundred years of intensive Christian proselytization, the pre-capitalist cultural patterns were unearthed to confront the oppressive accumulation through forced commoditisation of cattle.

The *Sungu Sungu* is usually referred to as coming from the *Sukuma* people. According to the ethnographic statistical framework of the population count of Tanzania, the *Sukuma* comprise the largest ethnic group in the society of close to 25 million in 1987. Out of this the *Sukuma* comprise about 15 per cent of the population. But because of the weakness of the ethnographic intellectual the *Sukuma* are sometimes grouped with the Nyamwezi without clear reasoning. In the specific case of the rise of the *Sungu Sungu* the analysis of the regions from which they arose include the region of Tabora which is supposed to be populated by the Nyamwezi⁹. This imprecision over who the *Sukuma* are arises directly from the ideation of tribalism which guided colonial scholarship.

Colonialism wanted to remove the African people from history. Colonized peoples were supposed to be passive objects providing an exotic base for colonial anthropologists who came to study primitive societies. Colonialism in the main, determined that Africans were not makers of history and were primarily objects to be looked at for unusual features such as structures of chieftainship, secret societies, witchcraft and other peculiar traits. The negative impact of colonialism was quite dramatic. African political entities lost their power, independence and meaning.

In the two regions of Mwanza and Shinyanga, the peoples were multi-ethnic and the social expansion of the peoples made anything like tribal loyalty a thing of the past. New ties based on specialization, new divisions of labour, increased production and social differentiation had substituted clan and tribal loyalties. However, as in all parts of the world, the substitution of class ties for purely ethnic ones is a lengthy historical process. In Tanzania, this process was arrested by colonial over rule. Colonialism blocked the evolution of national solidarity among a people who lived in a territory bigger than many European states. The degree of the homogeneity of the *Sukuma* language and culture requires an understanding beyond the intellectual heritage of the scholarship of tribalism and cultural change. The colonial state reified the myth of the *Sukuma* tribe.

It is not insignificant that since the work of Cory the principal studies of

9 For an analysis of the Nyamwezi in the mould of the work of Hans Cory see: R.G. Abrahams, *The Peoples of Greater Unyamwezi*. International African Institute, London 1967.

the *Sukuma* culture and traditions have been carried out by the church as an aspect of the civilizing role that it has assigned itself in *Sukumaland*. It is outside the scope of this short paper on the resistance of the *Sungu Sungu* to study the history of this region but part of the emancipatory political process of the Tanzanian people must be the development of a new epistemology with respect to the African past and present. Just as how colonialism went about the creation of tribes to implement colonial rule, the scholarship of the modernizing theorists went about weaving the ideas of social control hidden in the name of improved animal husbandry, proper land use, the individualization of land tenure and the solution to environmental problems. But the important fact for the purposes of our paper was the way in which a *Sukuma Identity* was linked to opposition to external colonial rule.

Future research from the point of view of social reconstruction in Africa will shed light on the ecology, production, class formation, ideology and labour processes among the peoples who are called the *Sukuma*. What were the relations with their neighbours, how did they avoid the rapacious slave trade and how did they emerge from colonialism without a destruction of their cultural personality? These questions are linked to the continuity and change which is evident and more significantly to the cultural clash between European capitalist culture and the indigenous cultural life of the people. This is clear from the numerous schemes to speed commodity production in *Sukumaland* from the period of the *Sukumaland Development Scheme* of the late 1940s to the present *Mwanza/Shinyanga Rural Development project*. In the introduction of the socio-cultural profile, the ideologues of this *RIDEP* insisted that studying *Sukuma* organization and culture for this may be a 'source of resistance to proposed innovations'.

Resistance to Innovation

The so called resistance to innovation which is perceived by the donors is a long process of resistance to the deepening of capitalism in this region of Tanzania. Before the major capitalist depression of the 1930s, the regions of *Mwanza*, *Shinyanga* and *Tabora* were part of the labour reservoir of the colonial trade economy. The 'war-like' history of the *Sukuma* plus the ecology of the region had prevented large scale white settlement. During the depression, when Britain wanted to intensify exploitation of the colonies, these regions became the principal cotton growing areas of the *Tanganyika* territory. Like any other colonial crop the growth of cotton in this region reflected the needs of capital accumulation of colonial capital and not the social needs of the people for a better life. The growth of cash crops speeded the process of social and regional differentiation in the territory. In comparison to the areas of *Kilimanjaro*, *Mbeya*, *Tanga* and *Bukoba*, the intensity of colonial capital did not bring about the same level of social stratification. *Kilimanjaro*, *Tanga* and *Mbeya* were the areas of plantations, of more roads, more schools, more houses with corrugated iron sheets and

more of the infrastructure of colonialism. So though Mwanza and Shinyanga were not as undeveloped as Kigoma, Lindi, Mtwara or Songea, the formation of classes in this region was well underway before independence.

By 1940, however, gold and diamonds were discovered in Sukumaland so that added to the wealth in livestock and agricultural produce. Sukumaland was the largest and richest area in the country, both in actual and potential terms. The whole agenda of the British after 1940 with the *Sukuma* Development Scheme (SDS) was how to weaken the people of the region so that they could be more vulnerable to capitalist exploitation. This could be seen from the thrust of the SDS, the directions suggested by the East African Royal Commission Report of the 1950s up to the present Mwanza Shinyanga Rural Development Project. Weakening the peoples was at the heart of the destocking campaigns of the region.

Destocking was only one of the maze of ordinances and regulations which controlled the peoples. There were rules and regulations affecting all aspects of life. G. Maguire who studied the regions after the euphoria of the unrest in Sukumaland said that the *Sukuma* peasant was

*being pushed around..... He had to ridge and manure acreages of cassava and cotton, plant at certain times and pull out cotton stalks by certain dates for burning after harvest, refrain from cultivating near gullies, cutting trees or transporting cattle without a permit, have his cattle dipped or inoculated against disease, slaughter or sell a certain percentage of his cattle and produce on request certificates indicating sale or attesting that the hides from slaughtered beasts had been seen by the appropriate government officer*¹⁰.

All these measures were predicated on teaching the *Sukuma* how to properly use the soil and not to overgraze the land. It was never reasoned that the regressive nature of cotton production was the real cause of soil erosion.

To the extent that there was a crisis in land use methods in Tanganyika by the 1950s, the colonialists were responding not merely to the backwardness of existing African technology but also to the consequences of intense cultivating of cotton without offering any possibility of improved technology to replace an African technology which was adequate when there was shifting cultivation and a smaller population¹¹. The force of colonialism all over Tanganyika territory was linked to the establishment and spread of the narrow range of export crops: sisal, coffee, cotton, cashewnuts, tea and tobacco.

10 G. Andrew Maguire, *op.cit*, pp.30.

11 The ideas that the *Sukuma* were responsible for soil erosion because of poor farming methods formed the basis of the study by D.W. Malcolm, *Sukumaland, An African People and Their Country*, Oxford University Press 1953.

But in the specific case of the *Sukuma*, force served a direct economic function by incorporating into the capitalist system value which initially laid outside the said capitalist system. This was most explicit in the destocking legislation which forced the people to sell their cattle at giveaway prices.

Destocking and Resistance in Sukumaland

The force of colonialism during the post war period of Tanganyika could be seen in every aspect of social reproduction. The coercive legislation and the web of regulations which were implemented as war time requirements became permanent features of the colonial economy. This continuity was most explicit in the destocking campaign which in the parlance of the neo-colonial period is called the need for proper livestock farming. The destocking campaign actually began in the 1930s when the colonialists began insisting that the pasture was over stocked and that Africans would do themselves a good turn by selling cattle and destocking¹².

This is in spite of the fact that the establishment of the colonial enterprise had unleashed a major rinderpest epidemic between 1880 and 1920 and more than 90 per cent of the cattle herd of East Africa was decimated. Lord Lugard had boasted of the impact of the rinderpest epidemic on the pastoralists of the region where vast herds of cattle were wiped out¹³. Studies on the ecology and cattle complex of the region since then have shown that the decline in cattle herds led to a falling human population and the subsequent spread of the tsetse wild game eco-system¹⁴. Up to the present, the peoples of East Africa have not regained their independent initiative in relationship to the natural environment.

Despite the clear evidence of the decline in cattle herds, the colonial state embarked on a massive destocking campaign in the regions of Mwanza and Shinyanga. World War II had brought a dramatic increase in the demand for beef to feed British troops. Thus the British meat processing firm of Leibigs had established a buying station and factory at Athi River in Kenya. The colonial propaganda machinery induced the pastoralists of Tanganyika to part with some livestock as their contribution to the war fund¹⁵. But as the war intensified, the colonial state turned from exhortation to forced destocking. Walter Rodney in his study of this period showed how the Defence Regulations were invoked to ensure the compulsory sale of cattle in 1942. Under the provisions of the Defence (Compulsory sale of cattle) Regulations it was decided that Kwimba, Maswa and Shinyanga districts should supply

12 Walter Rodney, *World War II and the Tanzanian Economy*, pp.22-24.

13 Lord Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire*, Vol.11. Edinburgh, 1893, pp.525-526.

14 Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History*, Heinemann, 1977.

15 Rodney, *op.cit.*, pp.22.

60,000 of the 70,000 heads of cattle required from the Lake Province. Quotas for each district were allocated to the chiefs and to the villages. Rodney showed how "the resistance to the compulsory sale of cattle formed a special part of African resistance in the rural sector during the war". After the war the colonial state helped British capital by establishing Tanganyika Packers Ltd. (TPL).

Even during the war, it was clear that there was no problem of over-stocking so that after the war, it was necessary to devise new measures to take value out of Sukumaland. Serious problems had arisen for though the beef for Britain campaign was linked to an enterprise located at Athi River in Kenya, the factory drew 90 per cent of its supplies from Sukumaland by way of long and poorly watered stock routes. So to be able to continue the destocking campaign and the concomitant compulsory sale of cattle at low prices, the colonial state sheltered British capital by the establishment of a company formed jointly with the colonial government and Leibigs under the name of Tanganyika Packers Ltd. This company was incorporated in November 1947. In the twenty year period between 1947 and 1967, this company survived and prospered through state subsidies. Not only was this company subsidised by compulsory destocking thus assured of supplies but the company was given tax concessions, profitable prices and the necessary infrastructure of feeder roads, reduced freight rates and priority access to transport from the Railway Authorities.

This explicit support for colonial capital with the political impact of compulsory sale of cattle disguised as destocking meant that Sukumaland became the pivot of the anti-colonial resistance during the 1950s. The resistance to cattle sales took many forms and even the colonial sociologist in giving evidence before the East African Royal Commission testified to the unpopularity of the destocking measures to support TPL. Cory, presenting his case in the liberal tradition that men should have the right to dispose freely of his property, warned that, "without the Tanganyika Packers Ltd., a compulsory destocking campaign could not be executed, because the surplus cattle could not be sold"¹⁶.

It was therefore not insignificant that in the anti-colonial struggles of the period of mass resistance in the 1950s, forced destocking was at the top of the list of the measures that the African nationalists wanted to be removed. So when in 1954 the political expression of anti-colonialism emerged in this region, the *Sukuma* Union drew up an agenda for discussion with the colonial state the first three items of which were:

- (1) Necessity for destocking

16 Hans Cory Papers No.77. "Destocking in Sukumaland".

- (2) Destocking (procedures) and
- (3) Prices paid by Tanganyika Packers Ltd¹⁷.

The area called Sukumaland was one of the most militant centres of opposition to colonial rule and the ferocity of the resistance in this period was such that the colonial authorities banned the operations of the nationalist party - The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) - in Sukumaland for three years. Hans Cory who had been studying the subversive 'potential of *Sukuma* secret societies' wrote a warning for the colonial state on the conditions which gave rise to the *Maji Maji* and the *Mau Mau*. He was using his knowledge to prevent an uprising in the regions of the *Sukuma*. In August 1954, the colonialists did not yet know the full measure of the nationalists so, by banning TANU, they drove resistance underground though some of the energies were channelled into the building of the cooperative society to market the growing cotton crop¹⁸. When legitimate forms of political expressions were driven underground in the regions of Mwanza and Shinyanga, the fledgling nationalist politicians lost control over the peasant resistance and this was manifest in the Geita uprising of 1958.

Geita, in Mwanza region, is a rich area where today there is a gold rush in that part of Tanzania. The colonial authorities at that time undoubtedly knew of the existence of the vast deposits of gold and had wanted to establish a multi-racial council as a new form of governance. The mass opposition to colonialism in this region climaxed in a protest march which opposed the specific establishment of the multi-racial council but the Geita uprising was part of the general unrest throughout Sukumaland as "dissidents flouted agricultural rules, sought to release prisoners and threatened courts"¹⁹.

This uprising speeded the decolonization process as the colonial state gave more authority to the nationalists so that they could help to stabilise the situation. With the liberation war of the Land and Freedom army engaging British troops in neighbouring Kenya, the British did not want the Geita uprising to escalate and spread throughout the Tanganyika territory. The equivocal attitudes of the nationalists to the self organisation and self activity of the people is now stifled in the nationalist presentation of the heroes of the colonial struggle. This is especially important for in the era of the *Sungu Sungu*, the resistance was aimed against the same state machinery, only this time commanded by the former nationalists. What is also of special

17 G. Maguire, *op.cit*, pp.147.

18 Maguire *ibid*. pp.181-195. Maguire suggested that this was the result of an explicit agreement between Bomani and Nyerere.

19 John Iliffe, *op.cit*, pp.558-560. Iliffe actually saw this uprising as the breakthrough which strengthened TANU vis a vis the colonial state. For a fuller discussion of the issues of the "geita crisis" see Maguire, *op.cit*, pp;199-215.

significance was the way in which the anti-colonial uprising was linked to the notion of *Sukuma* identity. For a while the colonial state toyed with the idea of mobilising the ethnic identity by setting up the *Sukuma* Federal Council but Julius Nyerere, the then leader of TANU, opposed the colonial support for this council for he had perceived the divisive potential of this form of organisation in the context of the nationalist struggle all over the continent of Africa. He opposed the Sukumaland Federal Council on the grounds that "we can't have another Katanga here"²⁰.

The period after political independence in 1961 brought a respite in the spate and intensity of the peasant resistance. The forms of *Sukuma* identity which had been part of the Geita uprisings and other forms of passive protest had been submerged under the euphoria of 'Uhuru'. Nationalist forms of governance replaced the indirect rule of the colonialists. Chieftainships were abolished and the party institutionalised in the rural areas as the political leaders sought to effect greater cohesion of the society through the party and the laying of the foundations for a territorial language - Kiswahili. It was the strength of the party which enabled the nationalists to abolish the chiefly structures throughout the territory. Together with the promise of Ujamaa in 1967 and the efforts towards self-reliance, the Tanzanian society became distinguished from its neighbours by its relative stability. It is our view that the declaration of Ujamaa acted as a safety valve for the nationalists but without the conceptualisation of how to harness the knowledge of the village community for transforming the poverty of the rural poor, the forms of the colonial trade economy were bound to lead to new patterns of resistance.

The regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora were rich areas but there were no plans to use the gold, diamonds or cattle for the strengthening of the local capacity for sustained economic development. Instead the effort was to intensify the old insistence on a narrow range of cash crops. In the specific case of TPL, without the overt support of the state, this company could not prosper by competing in the 'marketplace'. After the Arusha declaration, the company was nationalised under terms which would be questionable in a society where a larger per cent of the population understood basic accounting or where the state was in any way responsive to democratic appeals. And to be able to get closer to the cattle of the *Sukuma*, the TPL laid the foundations for a meat processing plant in Shinyanga. But like so many other projects in the neo-colonial period, after fourteen years the fa-

20 Maguire, *ibid.* pp.282.

ctory was not opened²¹. The history of TPL is still riddled with anti-people activities to the point where even the party had called for a ten per cent destocking in certain regions; viz Arusha, Mwanza and Shinyanga. But the party's own efforts to probe the maladministration of the TPL has led to class solidarity in that the findings have never reached the public.

Forced destocking of the colonial type could never be implemented in the neo-colonial era (except by a military regime) even though 'aid agencies' had to find new ways to reduce the cattle herd so that the people could become more dependent on the sale of cash crops for their livelihood. So, by the end of the 1970s the region of Sukumaland became once more the area of intense cattle rustling. Where the TPL could not take the surplus cattle because of the incompletion of the Shinyanga meat processing factory, the old Athi River factory in Kenya was the next closest factory and was one of the destination of the cattle of the people. Similar to the era of colonialism the value from the peoples labour was entering the circuit of capital accumulation through the Kenya Meat Marketing Board. It was not insignificant that Shinyanga region with over 32 per cent of the total cattle population of the country was the area of the most intense violence and cattle theft.

The spate of cattle thefts and violence in Shinyanga was one clear manifestation of the alienation of the poor peasantry from the state. During the 1970s, all the regions of Mwanza and Shinyanga seethed with discontent and the surface appearance of the problem was the increased witchcraft homicides in this area. The insecurity and uncertainty generated by the forced villagisation of the 1970s was being compounded by the lack of clarity on how the concept of collective villages should affect the pastoral peoples. The idea of settled villages did not seriously consider the long term effects of villagisation on the pastoral peoples as the state accepted the colonial view that the livestock producing peasants were not yet settled. Kemal Mustafa in his study of the 'Pastoral Question in Tanzania' said that

Administrators continue to assert, usually without any empirical evidence, that without further destocking, there could be no development for the livestock producing masses. He went on to say:

Given the reluctance by the livestock producing peasants to reduce their cattle numbers under increasingly difficult economic conditions, there

21 The links between the needs of the state and the economics department of the University were most explicit in the M.A. thesis written to develop policy guidelines for a guaranteed supply of meat to the proposed meat canning factory. See, E.S. Bukuku, *Marketed Cattle Supply in Shinyanga Region: A Study of Producer's Response to Price and Rainfall*. M.A. Economics, University of Dar es Salaam 1977.

has been a growing tendency to use both legal and illegal force to bring this destocking in the interests of accumulation.

Linking this process of forced commoditisation to the increased plunder of the rural areas, especially after the 1979 Kagera War, this writer like many others noted the use of heavy sub-machine guns to rob the pastoralists of their cattle.

The oppressive nature of this accumulation on the basis of the livestock producing masses has been leading to an increasingly antagonistic relationship between the livestock producing peasants and the petty bourgeois class in control of state power in Tanzania. The rise of the militant Sungu Sungu movement in Mwanza, Tabora and Shinyanga regions, the heart of the so-called livestock zone of Tanzania in the 1980s is a direct response by the livestock producing peasants against this oppressive accumulation through 'forced commoditisation'²².

In our view the rise of the *Sungu Sungu* was related to the increased insecurity in the regions; insecurity generated the results of forced villagisation, the lack of clarity on the future of pastoralism and far more important, the increased use of machine guns to steal cattle from the peasants after the 1979 war in Uganda. The *Sungu Sungu* was a response to the deepening class struggle in the rural area. This class struggle was no longer silent as the masses could not count on the Stock Theft Prevention Unit to protect them. According to the figures of the government there were over 11,453 cattle thefts and 15 murders in Shinyanga, Maswa, Kahama and Bariadi districts in 1981. In 1982 there were 21,922 cattle thefts and 8 murders related to cattle thefts in the same districts. A total of 52,876 cattle were reported stolen from the country in 1982²³. This meant that at 1982 prices the state was losing over US \$66 million from cattle thefts. In essence this was a rough estimate for the state did not know the full extent of the livestock population of the country for up to the present, many of the rural livestock producers associate the livestock census²⁴ with taxation or other measures linked to coercion such as forced destocking.

By the 1980s, insecurity was compounded by increased activity linked to gold mining, smuggling and those forms of economic activities associated with primitive accumulation. Mwanza on Lake Victoria was like a frontier

22 Kemal Mustafa, "The Pastoral Question in Tanzania" paper presented at the seminar on Economic Recovery in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Feb. 1986.

23 *Daily News*, 10 August 1983.

24 According to the Minister of Agriculture there were 12.5 million heads of cattle, 7 million goats, and 3.4 million sheep in Tanzania - by the figures of the 1984 census. *Sunday News*, August 16, 1987, pp.7.

region where the possibility existed to receive all kinds of contraband goods and where leaders made a mockery of the party's code of conduct. From time to time, the press reported alarming figures of deaths of up to 11 persons per week in Geita until the state was so embarrassed that the news of the insecurity only reached the capital city Dar es Salaam in a trickle.

The vein of gold in Geita which runs all the way through to Kahama is only partially mined by the State Mining Corporation at the Buck Reef Gold Mines. The bulk of the mining is carried out by small scale operators who have very little legal protection from competing claimants. The diggers had even less security even more so because the mining methods were primitive without the minimum of safety conditions for those who were digging for the gold. But, however, much of the mining methods were primitive without proper drilling equipment or other mining equipment, the amount of gold taken out was in such large quantities that one estimate in the newspaper suggested that over half a billion shillings worth of gold was being taken illegally every week²⁵. Mining villages such as Bulyankulu in Kahama district became the magnet for all kinds of dealers and by 1987 over 30,000 persons were to be found in this small village, which had to be divided in stages Bulyankulu 1, 2, 3, etc. stretching the limits of all forms of administration and normal social interaction.

Kahama district is a rich fertile district in Shinyanga region and it is not accidental that the *Sungu Sungu* first appeared in Kahama district. This district epitomized the cultural clash between the impossible modernisation, Europeanisation of the village community and the cosmology of the peasantry. This clash is compounded by the fact that the region of Shinyanga is one of the richest in Tanzania both in human resources and in terms of the resources in gold, diamonds and other wealth being taken out of the country. State mining ventures such as the Madui Diamond Mines took a fraction of the actual amount of diamonds mined. This was common knowledge in Tanzania and from time to time the popular outcry by parliamentarians and other sections of the party national executive led the state to set up Commissions of inquiry into the rate of smuggling of gold and diamonds²⁶. But where class solidarity ensured that the findings of these commissions are never revealed to the public, the violence and insecurity required urgent at-

25 The figures of the newspapers would suggest that more gold was being smuggled out of Tanzania than the total of the revenue of the state budget for the past four years. Calculated at 70 shillings to the dollar this figure would amount to over US \$342 million per year being smuggled out in gold. See *Sunday News*, September 13, 1987 and *Daily News*, December 12, 1987.

26 The most recent Commission was the formation of a Parliamentary Select Committee to study the Mining Operations in Mara, Mwanza, Shinyanga and Singida regions. *Daily News*, August 28, 1987.

attention and in order to halt the spread of violence, insecurity and cattle rustling, the people resorted to a traditional form of military organisation to form the *Sungu Sungu*.

The *Sungu Sungu*²⁷

That the *Sungu Sungu* arose as the social force to resist the violence, insecurity and forced commoditisation of cotton was a profound statement on the form of class struggles in rural Tanzania. The very name of the *Sungu Sungu* itself in its meaning reflects the search for solidarity and collective action by the people. Research into the nomenclature of the *Sungu Sungu* showed that it is very difficult to transpose a concept which is linked to tradition to the English language. For in this process the concept of *Sungu Sungu* is going through three layers of language. The closest that this research could come to this in its attempt to carry forward this concept to English was the fact that the concept related to "cooperation in doing jobs" which is similar to the cooperation of insects which in *Kisukuma* are known as *Sungwa or Sungu*²⁸.

The *Sungu Sungu* are also called *Wasalama* which means those soldiers who have brought peace and security in the society. This name is a Kiswahili name and is linked up to the general acceptance of the work of the *Sungu Sungu* in the three regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora where the people do not all claim to be *Sukuma*. One important point however, was the way in which the *Sungu Sungu* brought to life a form of *Sukuma* identity in the above-mentioned regions. So much so that in a region such as Tabora where the people are predominantly Wanyamwezi, in the military operations associated with peace keeping in the villages, the *Sungu Sungu* in this region were also called *Basukuma*. It suggested that the *Sukuma* identity was taken on for cohesion and discipline, especially so in the area of Kahama which had attracted thousands of immigrants in the past ten years.

P. Masanja in his study of the *Sungu Sungu* said that through legend the founder of the movement was one Kishosha, the grandson of Ng'wanamalundi. The legends surrounding this Ng'wanamalundi are all linked to his knowledge of traditional plants and his opposition to colonial rule to the point where he was exiled from Shinyanga by the British. Through oral literature tales are told of how he defied the British authorities to escape detention and it is clear from these stories that they are meant to motivate the youth. Deeper investigation showed that the *Sungu Sungu* in its structure

27 Research on the *Sungu Sungu* was carried out over a period of four years by this author with assistance from Monica Morris who did field work and completed the questionnaire in Mwanza and in Sengerema. M. Kamata carried out research in Bariadi district of Shinyanga region and Vincent Joshua did the bulk of the research in Kahama district.

28 Notes of researchers in Shinyanga in 1987.

and organisation does not depend on an individual but on the collective self organisation of the village community. The spread of the movement in the short period between 1980-1983 showed that there was a certain autonomy to each village assembly so that for years the state security organs were studying the leadership structure of the *Sungu Sungu* in order to curb the growth but could not do it. Here was an army of the people which later called itself "Jeshi la Ukombozi" which traversed an area over 50,000 square kilometres establishing law and order according to the conception of popular village assemblies.

One researcher in describing the *Sungu Sungu* said:

*the Sungu Sungu specialize in the apprehension and punishment of live-stock thieves..... When a thief is caught he is taken to the location where the theft occurred and punishment takes place..... Sungu Sungu members appear quite exotic as they are barefoot and bare-chested, wear feathered head-dresses, shorts, quivers of bows, bells around their ankles and carry arrows and spears in their hands. They dance and sing in a circle around the thief who sits impassively in the centre, appearing dazed and disinterested*²⁹.

Beyond the exotic appearance of this army this researcher captured the place of dance and songs in this collective village security process. For the songs and dances were a reflection of a deeper manifestation of a people trying to preserve their cultural heritage. These dances demonstrated the popular culture of the village and were not the subversive societies that Hans Cory had been mandated to study. Dance and song occupy a very important place in the village community. They are not only outlets for artistic and aesthetic expressions among the people but they also fill material, spiritual and emotional needs.

Even though one of the more important of the *Sukuma* dances, the snake dance (buyeye) is now used to entertain tourists, the dance societies were related to entertainment, physical exercise and the skills of medicine, hunting and the herding of cattle. Undoubtedly the content of the dances and songs have been affected by the transformations unleashed by colonialism and neo-colonialism. Thus while the *Sungu Sungu* seem traditional in the form of the songs sung or the dances performed, the traditional structures which were linked to homesteads (*kaya*) or established fields (*matongo*) were affected by the new production and social relations that had arisen in the society. What was traditional was that the *Sungu Sungu* dug deep into the knowledge of organisation and collective security to develop an army

29 Donna Kerner, *Witches, Cows, Thieves and Party Politics: An Examination of the Sungu Sungu Movement*, Department of Education Seminar, 1983.

which could confront and neutralise the superior weaponry of the cattle rustlers. Far more important than the exotic characteristics of the *Sungu Sungu* was the class content.

Fifty years earlier, Hans Cory warned the colonial bureaucracy that it was powerless to interfere with the dance societies so that the state should be careful lest the societies provide the focus for popular self-organisation, (in the words of colonialism - discontent). After describing seventeen societies including 3-5 dance societies he had warned that:

Although the societies described above do not meddle in the administrative or political affairs there is the possibility that if changing economic conditions give rise to class divisions based on wealth, one or more of these societies may provide the focus for discontent, because there is the tendency for the sophisticated and better off native not to join this kind of society.

After one generation of independence, the better off "native" of the *Sukuma* had indeed become part of the state class in the party, the regional administration or in the ideological apparatus of the state machinery. For this reason, though cattle rustling affected pastoralists more than it affected cultivators, it was in the interest of the whole community to break the cycle of insecurity and violence generated by the forced commoditisation of cattle. The content of the *Sungu Sungu* was to defend the weak and the poor; pastoralists and non-pastoralists. P. Masanja in his notes, while explaining the traditional *Sukuma* forms drawing extensively from his facility in the language was penetrating enough to perceive the class content. He said:

The Sungu Sungu initially emerged as a response by the middle and poor peasants who had been harassed by increasing armed cattle rustling, highway brigandry (known as Kodi ya Milembe or Masanja) and house breaking. In Kahama they considered themselves as Jeshi La Ukombozi against the much richer peasants who had created their own organisation known as Chama cha kumi in which cattle keepers paid a membership fee of 200/- which allegedly was used to grease the palm of those in authority to arrest thieves as an insurance against theft³⁰.

The social processes which gave rise to this movement were very specific to the nature of the regions with large numbers of cattle. Far more research is needed on the links between cultivators and pastoralists if collective forms of association are to be engendered in the future. This research work could also help to show how the social wealth of these communities is linked to

30 P. Masanja, *op.cit.*, pp.3.

the ownership of cattle and not to the newer symbols of capitalism. Yet, from the present evidence, it is clear that the poor whether cultivators or pastoralists came together to defend their communities. This is seen from the social basis of the social organisation of this army of resistance.

The Sungu Sungu basis of social organisation is the village community (kijiji or Nzengo). All inhabitants of the kijiji are Basungusungu. While initially the Sungu Sungu were a few able-bodied men who secretly met to plan out strategies for defence, now every inhabitant is deemed to be Sungu Sungu. There are no membership fees as such, though on the day that the kijiji constitutes itself into the Sungu Sungu, word is passed around that from the neighbouring village, Sungu Sungu will come to install the leadership and contributions of 20/- are collected from each (kaya) household. The enthusiasm with which people readily pay is an indication of the positive response from the peasantry and the way they wish to be identified with this movement..... The village community was its assembly to which all belong and participate in deliberations.... The assembly elects in a public gathering their (ntemi) leader, (katibu) secretary, five elders and a makanda to head each group of 10 able bodied young men³¹.

This description and other works on this army emphasised the democratic and popular nature of the movement where free elections, open accountability and collective resistance superseded the social domination of the party and the state with the layers of functionaries who were to be seen cooperating with thieves, smugglers and other corrupt elements of the bureaucracy and donor agencies. In more than one instance, the *Sungu Sungu* even apprehended police persons and replaced village governments. The *Sungu Sungu* gave themselves the mandate to return the security to the villages by removing and guarding against cattle rustling, thieves, racketeers (walanguzi) and alleged witches.

Before the era of trade liberalisation in 1984, the prosecution of hoarders and racketeers in the villages was carried out with such vigour that the village community had reasoned that magendo brought insecurity. This was a tremendous development in the popular consciousness but the *Sungu Sungu* lacked the ideological tools required to deepen this profound transformation in the consciousness of the poor peasants. The *Sungu Sungu* had no links with the working class in the towns nor with the progressive intelligentsia so that when they are acclaimed by the state and the party as having restored

31 Ibid. pp.14.

peace and security, it could be legitimately asked who benefitted from that security.

Despite the ideological limits of the *Sungu Sungu*, the nature of this organisation was such that the military structure of the movement did not take the form of a standing army. The *Sungu Sungu* were integrated into the village community and were answerable to and carried out their conception of justice with the power of the community behind them. This power of the community to sanction justice outside the legal framework of the colonial judiciary had been noted by colonial officials who studied the *Sukuma*³². This form of law enforcement by community action meant that the army was totally integrated into the community. In this sense the *Sungu Sungu* was a real peoples army totally reliant on the community. This is clear from the weapons, system-bows and arrows, the knowledge of the environment, the motivation techniques, the knowledge of medicine (the proper chingira), the command, control and communications system of the army called the *Sungu Sungu*. The command structure is linked to the *Ntemi* and the commander who must be a person with medicinal practices and the sort of training necessary for fighting and endurance. While tracking cattle rustlers, the *Sungu Sungu* moved in small groups of 8-10 or the size of the section of the platoon of the Western army. The *Sungu Sungu* used guerilla tactics for survival and drew heavily from the *ruga ruga* tradition: that is the military skills which were used by Chief Mirambo in the battles of the 19th century.

The *Sungu Sungu* had their own unique methods of communication over a region of 50,000 sq. kilometres with over 5 million persons. The process of establishing this sort of communication was linked to the cultural bonds between the people and the fact that the power of the poor peasants held sway over the rustlers and racketeers. *Sungu Sungu* went from village to village and carried out a ceremony called *kutemya* (some researchers including my own research assistants call this an enthronement ceremony but this ideation seem to contradict the popular basis of the movement. It seems that there is no adequate English translation for this process). In this ceremony the *Sungu Sungu* dance and sing the following song:

Gininiga ng'watwizilike ng'wali ng'wakumuka wibi
na basambo abo ng'watogwa kubulaga
banhu sagala
Mmane giki Sungu Sungu itabembelejaga
Lelo ng'wacha.

(roughly translated)

32 R.E.S. Tanner, "Law Enforcement in Sukumaland". *Journal African Administration*, Vol.VII, No.4 October 1955.

*Gininiga you have come to call us
thieves were dominantly threatening everywhere,
Witchcraft rejoiced to kill people,
Let you all know the facts
Sungusungu has no mercy on you,
death is upon you,
be prepared.*

The military organisation of the *Sungu Sungu* described above proved adequate as long as resistance remained within the politics of the districts from which the army arose. It could not confront a real army bent on mowing down peasants armed with bows and arrows. So while there was a high rate of success in trapping cattle rustlers this limited military capacity, especially with respect to weapons could not succeed in battles elsewhere. This was clear in a major battle in May 1984 where scores of *Sungu Sungu* were ambushed in a battle with the Wataturu. The party Secretary General was rushed to Shinyanga region and the party prevailed upon the *Sungu Sungu* not to take revenge. Instead the party promised that it would "equip the traditional defence groups with modern defence techniques to enable them to be more effective"³³. This was only more pushed by the political leadership to pacify and demobilise the *Sungu Sungu*. Since that time the official line has been that the *Sungu Sungu* represented the true embodiment of the people's militia and as such should be recognised under the law governing the peoples militia. (At the same time another party commission urged caution in the issuing of firearms to the peoples militia in the areas where the *Sungu Sungu* were strong). The older party leaders who has matured out of the popular struggles of the nationalist era knew of the potential of this kind of village grassroots organisation and thus to control the uprising in order to curb it the party gave the *Sungu Sungu* its public blessing while seeking ways to restrain its autonomy and independence from the party structures in the villages.

From that period when the party leaders took to tours to address the *Sungu Sungu* this movement was gradually turned from its original objectives to become cheap unpaid labour to keep peace in the villages especially in the frontier gold mining villages of Kahama and Geita. During 1983, when the state was in a battle against racketeers, the *Sungu Sungu* were deployed in

33 The newspapers reported that 48 were killed in this battle but local party officials said that the figure was much higher. For the figures of the government see *Daily News*, June 19, 1984. Some villagers believed that the police assisted in setting up the ambush.

the towns of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora and became part of the peace-keeping apparatus of the state³⁴.

This was a major achievement for the party commissioners who studied the *Sungu Sungu* were old enough to know the consequences of driving resistance underground as the colonialists did in the same regions in the 1950s. But in their embrace of the *Sungu Sungu* the party did not bring any clear leadership to deal with cattle rustling and insecurity and thus embraced all the aspects of the *Sungu Sungu* including the contradictory aspects of the male dominated community organisation. This contradiction was most explicit in the speeches of the party leaders on witchcraft and witchcraft eradication. Hence the party exhorted the *Sungu Sungu* to refrain from the persecution of witches without developing the kind of programme which would seek to help the peasantry to cope with their pre-occupation with witchcraft. The tactic of the party recognition of the *Sungu Sungu* was a short term measure of repressive tolerance but was inadequate for the long term resolution of the social conditions which gave rise to the *Sungu Sungu*.

For this reason, confusion exists over the lines of authority between the state organs such as the police, the courts, the Stock Theft Prevention Unit and the *Sungu Sungu*.

The Sungu Sungu and the State

The spread in the size and operations of the *Sungu Sungu* in rural Tanzania was a profound response of the peasantry to the way in which state control over the lives of the people had been strengthened by villagisation and the administrative changes developed in its wake. *Sungu Sungu* was to be a source of confidence for rural villagers that they could develop autonomous forms of popular assembly which was in resistance to the 'plethora of appointed officials at the local level'. The take over of village governments and the take over of police stations by the *Sungu Sungu* was a dramatic response to the forms of governance in the rural villages. This form was authoritarian, and its content anti-democratic and was the political expression of the socio-economic policies pursued in the society and disguised as *Ujamaa*. The fundamental problem however, was in the objective basis for accumulation in Tanzania.

Though the ideology of the state since 1967 had been predicated to self reliance and socialism, there was a marked continuity in the direction of the colonial economic policies. Where the nature of village organisation changed to resemble the collective aspirations of the people called *Ujamaa*, the essence of the structures of production and marketing was to perpetuate the old dependence on a narrow range of export crops. The gold from Kaha-

34 *Daily News*, August 10, 1983.

ma and Geita, the cotton, the cattle and the diamonds did not go to build the foundations of a socialist economy, or even the foundations for a local capitalist class. These commodities entered the circuit of international capital in ways which led to the leakage of capital and reinforcing the history of super-exploitation and marginalisation. More than one study in the recent past has documented the ways in which villagisation was the culmination of efforts that started way back in the colonial days to restructure rural economic life so as to facilitate further exploitation of the rural masses by international capitalism³⁵.

To be able to test this assertion, one needs not remain at the level of the operations of the Tanzanian state in the sense of the examination of the relevant organs. For in the day to day operations of the state, it can be seen how all the organs of the state whether ideological or coercive are integrated with foreign capital. Its links with the socialist community strengthen the claim to legitimacy of being socialist but this in no way diminishes the way in which the whole economy is integrated with western capitalism. This was even more explicit in the 1980s when in the face of the balance of payments crisis the "donor" agencies took a more direct role in administering regional integrated projects. The church and the donor agencies intensified their campaign to modernise the rural peasantry.

While in other parts of the underdeveloped world such as in Latin America the church has been transformed in the process of popular resistance to link the ideas of theology to liberation, the church in rural Tanzania is still rolling ahead with its civilising mission ensuring that it is part of the cultural confrontation in the society. This is because in its civilising mission the church does not seek to build up on the spiritual and religious experiences of the poor. So that in the campaign rhetoric to rid the society of ignorance, poverty and disease, there is no sense in seeking to tap the vast knowledge dammed up by colonialism. The health projects reinforce the domination of multinational drug firms through the aid called the Essential Drug Programme. Education for self reliance also turns its back on the informal process of knowledge production in the village community so that even the advances made in Universal Primary Education is threatened in turning into its opposite as shortages of desks, chairs and books affect the youth³⁶.

35 This is not to say that Ujamaa started out with the explicit objective of strengthening capitalism in the rural areas but once international capital saw that this strategy was based on a narrow range of cash crops they supported the idea to defeat the genuine aspirations of the people. See (a) Cheryl Payer, "The World Bank and Tanzania". *Third World Quarterly* October 1983 and (b) H. Mapolu, "The State and the Peasantry", in *The State and the Working People in Tanzania* ed. Issa Shivji. Codesria Books 1985.

36 The President acknowledged in a speech at the university of Dar es Salaam in June 1987 that there were over 48,000 pupils in the primary schools in Dar es Salaam alone without desks and chairs.

Hence the fact that the bulk of the army of the *Sungu Sungu* were standard seven leavers was one indication of the reality that the villagers were saying that the school system did not prepare their children for the realities of peasant life. This was a major statement on the whole rationale for state legitimisation in Tanzania since the policy of education for self reliance was one of the cornerstone of the Ujamaa strategy.

Defiance and resistance, however, while mobilising the energies of vast communities proved unable to generate the kind of outlook which could carry the people forward out of the insecurity generated by their relationship to the natural environment and to the state. And the party leadership could only think of development in terms of intensifying what had gone on before. Most of the development projects were rewrites of the post war programme, rewritten as the World Bank Programme 1961, with the latest version being the Structural Adjustment Programme of 1982. All these plans called for the extension of the acreages under tobacco and cotton. These two crops were the cash crops of the region of the *Sungu Sungu*. Tobacco production with its dependence on firewood led to deforestation and the regressive nature of cotton production. Its linkages in the economy meant that the people who produced the cotton could not afford the clothes from the same cotton. The kind of scientific outlook necessary to lay the basis for transformation was not forthcoming as the leading economic thinkers in the University became consultants for donor agencies on how to deepen the production of the same regressive crops in the face of resistance from the peasantry.

Because the present foundations of the Tanzanian state did not simply lay in the heritage of the colonial state the party which itself arose out of the resistance of the people took a different line on the *Sungu Sungu* from the other organs of the state, especially the coercive organs. Whereas the police, the courts and the Stock Theft Prevention Unit called for greater powers over the *Sungu Sungu* the party as the ideological arm of the state and the source of the legitimisation of the system first studied the *Sungu Sungu* and held regular consultative meetings with district and regional officials from the *Sungu Sungu* areas. At the same time party functionaries in the University studied the *Sungu Sungu* and warned that "it should not be driven underground".... "It is important to avoid coercive measures and instead adopt political measures that can transform and modernise the movement into an effective and highly disciplined grassroots organisation rooted in the history and culture of the peoples it intended to serve"³⁷. The Party commission took this modernising theme to heart and this was reflected in the speeches of party and government leaders promising the *Sungu Sungu* modern wea-

37 J.F. Mbwiliza and Donna Kemer, "The *Sungu Sungu*" History Department Seminar, Feb. 1984.

pons and uniforms. This was an empty promise for there was a shortage of equipment for the more established layers of the coercive forces, like the peoples militia. This ensured that up to the time of writing the *Sungu Sungu* still wore their exotic uniforms even when called out to be guards of honour at state functions such as peasants day in 1987.

Because the party was a thermometer to test the attitudes of the people, the party recommended that in order to bring the movement under stricter state control, the *Sungu Sungu* would become the village security committee. At the same time to be able to better administer the movement another district was created in Shinyanga region. Thus Maswa district was divided into two to create the districts of Maswa and Meatu. (This was the border area over which a lot of the rustled cattle passed on its way to Kenya). From time to time there were reports in the press that the party was preparing training programmes for villages and to decide which offences were to be handled by the peoples army and those which were to be handled by the police. These distinctions were never codified into law.

But there was a certain logic in the approach of the party for at times the state found it convenient to mobilise the *Sungu Sungu* when there were internal squabbles between different sections. This was glaring after the planned military intervention by certain elements in January 1983. The shaken political leadership identified a new class of accumulators as its principal opponents and called them economic saboteurs. The party then mobilised the *Sungu Sungu* in the rural areas to flush out corrupt elements, racketeers and saboteurs (called *Walanguzi*). In the heat of this campaign, the then Prime Minister commended the *Sungu Sungu* for "carrying out a cultural revolution in the country" in their efforts to fight crime and to build socialism³⁸. The then Prime Minister who later met his death in an automobile accident, was at that time the Secretary of the National Defence and Security Commission of the party. He asserted that the society had forgotten the role of their tradition and culture in defence and security. Statements such as this endeared the Prime Minister to the *Sungu Sungu* to the point where one of their most favourite songs was on the untimely death of the Prime Minister in April 1984.

*Sokoine uli Nsalama ugongwa gali
guseka amasambo
Mungu bebe leka na bile baba u-Sokoine
Nuchoba abasambo*

38 Speech by the Prime Minister Edward Sokoine in Mwanza in October 1983. Reported in *Daily News* October 21, 1983.

(roughly translated)

*Sokoine was the upright man
The enemies of the people planned an accident
He died and they rejoiced
Sorrow spread everywhere
Ok God, I cry for Sokoine
I will hunt for the conspirators.*

During this period, the policy of confinement of goods was a measure against the wholesale importation of luxury goods. In the villages, those who hoarded goods were identified as enemies of the people. It was for this reason that the *Sungu Sungu* took up the campaign against saboteurs in earnest for as poor peasants they suffered from the shortages of essential commodities and the high prices when these goods appeared. As long as there was a collusion of interest between the national leadership and the role of the *Sungu Sungu*, the President, the Prime Minister and the Secretary General of the party called for the recognition of the *Sungu Sungu* under the law. So successful were the *Sungu Sungu* in curbing cattle rustling that by 1985 the cattle rustlers had to take their activities to Mara region. Then the national party leaders called on the people to form traditional defence groups of the *Sungu Sungu* genre to combat the insecurity and murders in Mara region. This was problematic not in the least for the fact that the *Sungu Sungu* developed not simply as a self defence group but in a specific cultural and historical context. Up to 1987 the party Chairman and former President was calling on the government to recognise the traditional defence groups the "baraza" in Mara and the *Sungu Sungu* in Sukumaland³⁹.

This position of the top party leadership was always at odds with the local party officials in the regional administration and with the legal authorities in the society. Firstly, during the Anti-Economic Sabotage Campaign, there were many instances in the regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora when regional leaders were harassed and called Walanguzi by the *Sungu Sungu*. Secondly, after the 1984 budget, when the trade liberalisation policy allowed the so called former racketeers to freely import and sell goods, those who raised their voices against the *Sungu Sungu* called for more efforts to curb the traditional defence structure⁴⁰.

In the initial period of the new trade liberalisation policy, the party, to cushion the apparent shift in policy direction called on the *Sungu Sungu* to plant trees and to increase agricultural production.

39 *Daily News*, August 5, 1987.

40 This was reflected in the parliamentary debates. Every year, since 1984, there have been heated exchanges in Tanzanian Parliament on the existence of the *Sungu Sungu*.

This was the beginning of the new explicit campaign to demobilise the *Sungu Sungu* and this was to be carried forward by the 'donors' who introduced a special scheme of "incentive goods for rural Tanzania" especially among the *Sukuma*. Incentive goods were to be thousands of bicycles which would be used as a carrot to induce the peasant to produce cotton despite the fact that the world price of cotton was below the cost of production. In other words the incentive goods were to dissuade the *Sungu Sungu* from turning their energies to demand a fair price for their produce. By 1987, the legal experts of the state felt confident enough to proclaim that the party (CCM) recognition of the *Sungu Sungu* did not have the force of law⁴¹. This problem of the relationship between the *Sungu Sungu* and the law highlighted the contradictions of the state and its inheritance both in relation to the people and to the colonial legal statutes. The decision of the party to allow the *Sungu Sungu* to organise was a major political retreat. But this retreat meant that there were clear contradictions with other branches of the state. This was explicit in relationship to the laws of Tanzania for the *Sungu Sungu* gave themselves the authority to try and pass judgement on cattle rustlers.

A clear contradiction existed between the agencies of the law, the law itself and the *Sungu Sungu*.

Though the party exhorted the *Sungu Sungu* to follow the laws of Tanzania, the party leadership from time to time called for the court to respect the rulings of the assemblies and called on the *Sungu Sungu* to hand over their charges to the courts. But the law was never changed to give a legal base for the activities of the *Sungu Sungu*. So when local state functionaries recovered their nerve after the political turn around in 1984, they started to arrest some members of the movement. This even led to more confusion as this strengthened the resolve of the *Sungu Sungu* in some areas and to the weakening in others.

Whereas under English common law a person is innocent until proved guilty, the *Sungu Sungu* had their code of investigation and those arrested are presumed guilty. At independence, Tanzania inherited the British legal system with the change of name of some courts but essentially with the same functions. What the party had wanted was for the activities of the village assemblies to have the force of the primary courts. These courts have a limited mandate and can only pass certain sentences. The *Sungu Sungu* gave themselves a higher authority and would not shirk from carrying out the death sentence if necessary.

It was this conflict which led to the repeated calls by state officials for the movement to hand over suspects to the police. This was the line of the

41 Speech of the Attorney General to Parliament. *Daily News* July 18, 1987.

Ministry of Home Affairs and this call became more urgent when the *Sungu Sungu* seized at least one police station in Mwanza region and when the weapons they seized from racketeers were found on the streets again. Behind the Ministry of Home Affairs, lawyers in the University have argued that the *Sungu Sungu* was illegal and should be disbanded⁴². As this settlement found wider acceptance, there were those who wrote letters to the press claiming that the *Sungu Sungu* was a terrorist organisation, terrorising innocent persons in the rural areas⁴³. This potential for the movement to turn into its opposite emerged from the efforts of the party to enforce unpopular laws such as the Human Resources Deployment Act - (called *Nguvu kazi* by the masses). By 1985 the *Sungu Sungu* were being called upon by the government to ensure that villagers paid the new head tax which was called 'the development levy'.

The dialectics of the positive and the negative in this movement was always present and was to emerge most clearly in the problems of witchcraft. For the party in embracing the movement had embraced it with all its contradictions and one of the manifest contradictions of rural Sukumaland was the persecution of old women as witches. During the 1970s, the problem of witchcraft homicides in Shinyanga had rocked the society and the scandalous actions of the state security organs in dealing with the problem had led to the resignation of the then Minister of Home Affairs, who is now the President of Tanzania⁴⁴.

The *Sungu Sungu*, Witchcraft and Socialism

The ideation of witchcraft remains one of the most baffling questions for socialists in their conceptualisation of the requirements of the transition to a higher form of social organisation beyond the poverty, destruction and *cul-de-sac* of neo-colonial capitalism. For inevitably as in the case of the *Sungu Sungu*, all conflicts in the rural areas hinge on the belief in the supernatural. Witchcraft has been defined by anthropologists in many books but as of the present, these understandings begin from the colonial standpoint that the native was superstitious and backward. The authors in a much quoted book on *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* defined witchcraft as 'a mystical and innate power, which can be used by its possessor to harm other people'⁴⁵.

Such a definition is static and begins from the starting point which ignores the cosmology of peasants in African societies. In the present struggle in

42 See *The Exercise of Punitive Powers outside the Judicial Process in Tanzania: A Case Study of Neo-Traditional Defence Groups (Sungu Sungu)*.

43 This was reflected in a very strong letter to the *Daily News*, March 6, 1984.

44 P. Masanja and S. Mesaki, "Witchcraft Homicides in Sukumaland". Department of Sociology, University of Dar es Salaam, November 1983.

45 John Middleton and E.H. Winter, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1983.

South Africa where real questions of social transformation are posed, there is no attempt to define witchcraft but to understand its place in social reproduction. When popular defence committees fighting the South African state were confronted with the problem of youths trying to unleash violence on so called witches, some elements called for a sober analysis and asked the relevant question, whether witches are just a superstitious remnant of the dark pre-colonial past or is there a more rational explanation for their existence? Other questions were: Is the belief in witches necessarily reactionary or can such beliefs be transformed into a progressive ideology? Is the political and cultural isolation of the countryside just a passing problem that will disappear with the march towards liberation? Or does it reflect profound difficulties in the ability of urban people to understand and interact with rural culture?⁴⁶

From these profound questions the same commentary maintained; "To Christians, Christ exists. To Muslims, Allah exists. To Marxists, class exists. To many living in the countryside, witches exist".

Such a starting point allows for a more thought provoking approach beyond the colonial witchcraft ordinances which sought to outlaw a popular custom and influenced the work of scholars in East Africa. It requires a scientific and philosophical outlook to grapple with the transformation in the society which generates the kind of insecurity which leads to the practices associated with witches and witchcraft. There are many problems raised by this question in Africa not the least is the way in which the idea of witchcraft is firmly embedded in the consciousness of the people. A graphic example of this fact is that there is hardly a soccer team in Africa which does not travel with its own witch doctor.

The colonial state even while passing legislation against witchcraft did not ignore the depth of this belief among the people. The colonial state paid close attention to those who were supposed to have the supernatural powers and the potentialities of witchcraft eradication movements. Their experience all over the colonial world taught them that witchcraft eradication movements could also develop into mass anti-colonial movements. In the specific case of colonial Tanganyika the British took care to ensure that there was no overt alliance between the nationalists and the witchcraft eradication movements⁴⁷.

46 "Burning the Herbs.... Youth, Politics and Witches in Lebowa" *Work in Progress*, No.40 South Africa, 1987.

47 There is evidence that at least one such person Nguvumali was mobilised to work on the side of the colonial state. *Tanganyika Standard*, August 29, 1957. See also L.E. Larson "Problems in the study of Witchcraft Eradication Movements in Southern Tanzania". *UFAHAMU* Vol.VI, No.3, 1976.

The aspect of the nationalist struggle is not yet properly documented but there is work which links the *Maji Maji* revolt of 1905-1906 to witchcraft eradication movements. Hans Cory in his extensive study of witchcraft had warned the colonial authorities that witchcraft and traditional beliefs could be used to mobilise anti-colonial feelings⁴⁸.

Where the intellectual starting point of anthropology was concerned with control and repression, an emancipatory intellectual framework must be developed to be able to transcend the sociology of control. The potentialities of this direction was demonstrated during the struggle, for political independence in Zimbabwe. In the process of waging armed struggle the guerillas did not turn their backs on the ideological outlook of the peasants. The guerillas made a conscious effort to mobilise the diviners and spirit mediums on the side of the liberation war⁴⁹.

To be able to tackle the insecurity in Sukumaland Tanzania which stems from the large numbers of witchcraft homicides requires a transcendence beyond the kind of exhortation to be found in the speeches of the political leaders in Tanzania. As the economic crisis deepened in rural Sukumaland so did the increase in the incidence of murders of old single women. In this the region of the *Sungu Sungu* witchcraft homicides provided for the general climate of insecurity in the community. *Sungu Sungu* arose as an antidote to this insecurity and it was therefore not surprising that members of this peasant movement have been arrested on charges of murdering witches. The party and government has called on the *Sungu Sungu* to refrain from persecuting witches but without laying the basis for changing the conditions which strengthens the outlook and beliefs in witchcraft.

This problem pointed to the urgency of the need for a scientific view of the links between witchcraft and the labour process. Progressive intellectuals need to try to understand how the consciousness of witches is determined by the relationships between men and women in the natural environment. To be able to separate real techniques of labour and the imaginary techniques of magic requires a philosophical outlook which grasps the social relations of production and the links to nature⁵⁰. A non-materialist starting point begins

48 Hans Cory, "A Few Comments on Witchcraft" No.84. In Kenya, during the struggle of the Land and Freedom army, the British called a conference of witch doctors to attempt to mobilise them against the freedom fighters. See, John Nottingham, "Sorcery among the Akamba in Kenya" *Journal of African Administration*, Vol.XI, No.2, 1955.

49 David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1986. In Mozambique the MNR seeks to mobilise the spirit mediums on the other side of the border in the cause of South African destabilisation.

50 This attempt is made in a preliminary fashion in the study of "Traditional forms of Insurance and Social Security", in J.L. Kanywanyi, *The Effect of Ujamaa Socialism and Nationalisation on Insurance Law and Practice in Tanzania*. PhD Faculty of Law University of Dar es Salaam, 1987.

from the view that the existence of the idea of witches relates to paganism. This is because the philosophical view of Western capitalism separates matters of the spirit and the soul from sciences and technology. The philosophy of the West which was consistent with the rise of capitalism postulated that science and technology determined every sphere of life, transforming social relations in the process. The *Sungu Sungu* and the ideological infrastructure from which it sprung was one of the manifestations of resistance to the ideological formulation of capitalist development which claimed universal validity. This resistance in trying to preserve precapitalist forms could not thrive at a time when the society was confronted with the real issues of the political and economic legacies of Africa's domination and exploitation. In so far as the pre-capitalist ideas failed to challenge this domination, then even the component of resistance would hold the people back instead of carrying them forward as in the case of the rise of the *Sungu Sungu*.

Having said this, however, it should be noted that there has always been a big difference between those who profess to be witches and those who have specialised knowledge of the herbs and plants of the African countryside. As early as the 1930s the British were studying the "Native Poisons and Native Medicines of Tanganyika"⁵¹. Today, when modern medicine is caught with the contradictions of the high level of chemicals in the products of the transnational drug firms, there is a major search for natural remedies in plants and herbs. Transnational drug companies are carrying out research in the rural areas while the state imports the complex of health care of Western medicine and high cost drugs. If the state in Tanzania spent one tenth of the resources of the Essential Drug Programme on the Traditional Medicine Research Unit, then the society would be making a major step in harnessing the knowledge of traditional doctors to improve the health of the people.

Present research work in other African states such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe seeks to link the resources of the research institutes of the academic community to the medical laboratories and to the patients using the knowledge of the local healers. In Tanzania, the effort of the state to marshal this knowledge is limited and just as how at present the peasant plants cotton and cannot afford to buy the clothes, one day the herbs and plants will be packaged by transnational drug companies and the rural peasants will not be able to afford it.

The Chinese Communists in the process of transforming the inheritance of

51 W.D. Raymond, "Native Poisons and Native Medicines of Tanganyika" *Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* October 2, 1939.

backwardness did not turn their backs on the knowledge of the traditional herbalists. In China one could find herbalists practicing alongside modern doctors and the treatment by acupuncture is now world famous⁵². The Chinese started from the point of view that socialism and socialist transformation involved the knowledge, skills and scientific techniques of the people accumulated over centuries. In Africa the modernising elites who took over as leaders after the end of formal colonialism even when proclaiming socialism turn their backs on the examples of self reliance among the people and seek to harmonise the economic exploitation of the people with the impossible task of Europeanisation. But the rise of the *Sungu Sungu* should encourage research on the relationship between social transformation and 'tambiko'⁵³.

Resistance and Transformation

The experience of the *Sungu Sungu* in Tanzania in the 1980s was a major testament to the failure of the modernisation strategy, whether this strategy was carried forward in the name of socialism or in the name of capitalism. It was an experience of the poor resisting in the main against the forced commoditisation of their labour power.

From the period of World War II to the present, all the major initiatives for economic development have been predicated on the weakening of the people to make them more vulnerable to external domination. Scholars who have been impatient with the failure to break the resistance from the villages speak of 'the uncaptured peasantry' while social democrats who dominate the donor agencies in Dar es Salaam call for capitalist development but with the learning of the experiences from the poor⁵⁴.

The *Sungu Sungu* challenged the progressive scholar to discern the real spirit of this recent manifestation of resistance in the Tanzanian countryside. They sharpened the notion of the clash between Europe and Africa, between the deepening of capitalist relations and the possibilities for new forms of democratic association and organisation. In this respect the *Sungu Sungu* cemented the place of the self organisation and the self emancipation of the masses. And at the same time the lessons of the ability of the party to take the movement under its wings reinforce the need for ideology and the clarity as to who are the allies of the rebelling masses.

52 Ralph C. Crozier, *China's Cultural Legacy and Communism*, Pall Mall Press London 1970. See especially the chapter on the attitudes toward traditional medicine. This was written before the turn to 'modernisation' in China in 1978.

53 Tambiko; loosely translated refers to the traditional values and belief systems among the popular masses.

54 Per Brandstrom, "Do we really learn from experience? Reflections on Development efforts in Sukumaland", in Anders Hjort, *Land Management and Survival*, Scandinavia Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, Sweden, 1985.

Popular discontent and resistance of the *Sungu Sungu* went beyond simple protests and took the form of armed organisation, albeit arms and weapons of a pre-colonial nature. As part of the historical process of the Tanzanian people, this movement joined the long chain of passive and active rebellions which are associated with capitalist penetration of the village community. Just as in the past capitalism retreated from other rebellions to find new forms of domination, the rise and growth of the *Sungu Sungu* did not in any way check the expansion of the ferocity of exploitation in a period of world capitalist crisis. However, if the movement did not succeed in breaking the new thrust to increase cash crops, it exposed the hollow basis of the party line on Ujamaa and self-reliance.

Significantly the *Sungu Sungu* clarified to other peasants that it was one thing to take over village governments but quite another to run them. In Mwanza, the movement removed corrupt leaders only to find out that if they were to manage the development projects of the village, then there would have to be a break in the way in which the whole operations of the village had been integrated into the parallel market. In Uganda, the Resistance movement in seizing state power is finding out that there is a big difference between resistance and laying the foundations for the real empowerment of the producing masses. In Tanzania, this question is not yet seriously tabled as the state seeks to concretise its links with the IMF without explaining the political and economic costs of this overt capitulation to pressures from the West.

Despite the claims that the 1986 agreement and the so called Economic Recovery Programme has brought essential commodities to the rural areas, the essential requirements for agricultural production could only be procured by participating in the illegal but thriving parallel market. Hence successful village projects require that even the village administration sell hides and skins and other valuable commodities to neighbouring countries. And because the *Sungu Sungu* does not understand the workings of international capital, they do not see anything wrong with keeping the peace at Geita and Kahama when 95 per cent of the gold mined is taken from their communities, while the level of the material culture of their community remain impoverished. A social movement with a wider vision would place a tax on the gold mines to ensure that there are more schools, roads, clinics, the supply of clean water and other essential services in their communities. The *Sungu Sungu* by concentrating on theft and cattle rustling at the village level did not make links with workers in towns such as Mwanza and Shinyanga. Nor did they try to deal with the real thieves who organise the nature of the society thus creating the problems to which thieving is only a response. Moreover by 1985, when the *Sungu Sungu* were being called upon to keep peace in the towns, some elements were playing with the idea of using the *Sungu Sungu* as an anti-worker force.

This was a major weakness, one which was compounded by the campaign of some members of the *Sungu Sungu* against witchcraft. Thus though the movement eliminated one form of insecurity by combatting cattle rustlers armed with sub-machine guns, it created insecurity for older women who saw the movement as a traditional aggressive male form of authority which is repressive. Witchcraft eradication has been a feature of the peoples called the *Sukuma* and was one of the control mechanisms exercised by society. In this period of crisis women tend to lose out because they do not have the power to determine where resources go and ultimately older single women are vulnerable to perceptions of ill omen in a community⁵⁵. Rural peasants are experiencing real hardships in Tanzania and it was not always easy to identify the state and foreign capital as the source of the crisis in the economy. For this, the party has been eminently successful in deflecting the energies of the poor to guarantee the legitimisation of the system⁵⁶.

The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other agencies of international capitalism have not been unaware of the demobilising role of the party. Together with the incentive goods and the promise of health, sanitation and welfare, the exploiters of African labour survey the lessons of the *Sungu Sungu* movement. The thinkers of these 'donor agencies' reflect on how to use grassroots organisations as a management unit, thus permitting the diffusion of a management and control system down to the last family and *kaya* in the village... The potential usefulness of these grassroots leaders mobilisation capability in the *Sukuma* context should not be underestimated by any development endeavour⁵⁷. The promise here is to be able to mobilise the party and the remnants of the *Sungu Sungu* to entrench the production of cash crops when the resistance to the regressive form of agricultural production was growing. But as the problems of the bumper crop of cotton of 1986-87 showed, the people of Tanzania have no control over the world market price for primary commodities. And inside Tanzania, the state may exhort the peasants to produce; the peasants will respond but the state does not have the infrastructure for storage, transport, ginning, marketing or to pay the peasants for their crops.

Out of this chaos, there will be new frustrations and other forms of resistance will rise up in the countryside. Progressive scholars must be able to

55 Monica Morris, *"The Effect of Socio-Economic Changes on the Position of Women in Sukumaland"*. A report submitted in the fulfillment of the requirement for the Diploma in Food Resources Related to Community Development. University of London 1986/1987.

56 Horace Campbell, "The IMF debate and the Politics of Demobilisation in Tanzania" In *Eastern Africa Social Science Review*, Vol.II, No.2, 1986, Addis Ababa.

57 World Bank Preparation Report for the Mwanza/Shinyanga RIDEF. "The *Sukuma*: A Socio-Cultural Profile" Policy Evaluation Unit, The Prime Minister's Office, pp.22.

develop a scientific orientation so that there is theoretical guidance for the spontaneous outbursts of the masses so that these rebellions do not provide new techniques of oppression. This was the concrete lesson from the results of the *Mau Mau* struggle⁵⁸.

As the process of class selection expands under the IMF, sections of the petty bourgeoisie will attempt to use the legacies of the *Sungu Sungu* for the purposes of the politicisation of ethnicity. The absence of the overt forms of this aspect of politics was not because of the absence of ethnic differences, but due to the weak development of the petty bourgeoisie. Now these strata are using the welfare guise (of burials and weddings) to rear its head.

By Way of Moving Forward

The *Sungu Sungu* has re-established the right of the pastoralists to be part of the future of Africa. For too long the idea of development was based on the destruction of the way of life of the pastoralists. The Ujamaa strategy for livestock development did not differ in content from the East African Royal Commission Report of 1953 nor the subsequent investigations of the specialised agencies of finance capital. Speech after speech by national leaders call for the pastoral people to be linked to the cattle complex which deepen their dependence on Western grain, the banking system and Western drugs.

The experience of the Soviet Union where the dependence on imported grain is tied up to the acceptance of the Western model of animal husbandry should be studied by those who seek to develop genuine socialism and self reliance. Moreover the present system of livestock production has definite limits in improving the yield of the livestock population.

A socialist strategy for Tanzania must draw from the storehouse of the experience of humanity, including the positive and negative lessons of capitalism and socialism. A prerequisite for social change must be the ability to build on the historical experiences of the people including the mobilisation of the positive skills and knowledge transmitted over centuries.

Already the thrust of specialised investigations on the peoples such as the Masai and the *Sukuma* tend to study these people under the rubric of environmental protection and wildlife. The ecological flag is raised to justify the physical elimination of these peoples from the continent in the long run.

The *Sungu Sungu*, in defending the right of their communities, have entered the legend of herdsmen who defended their cattle. This fact is now part of the history of Tanzania.

Tanzania is a vast underpopulated land and the health and nutrition and change in the standards of living is linked to a healthy population of goats,

58 Al-Amin Mazrui, "Ideology, Theory and Revolution. Lessons from the Mau Mau" *Race and Class*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, 1987.

sheep and cattle. And if the pre-colonial forms of livestock control are to be transformed, then progressive social scientists are confronted with fundamental problems, e.g. What should be the attitude of the progressive scholar to the hunters and gatherers? What is the adequate form for the improvement of the livestock yield of the pastoralists? How can new scientific skills be introduced in the village communities of Africa without destroying the skills and knowledge of the rural producers.

The rise of the *Sungu Sungu* sharpened these questions as the society grapples with its past and confronts the future. The *Sungu Sungu* was a reassertion of the cultural strength of the African people. The party in its embrace of the movement embraced all its contradictions in order to demobilise and diminish the growth of the uprising. There was no real effort to study the lessons for history. It would require another form of democratic politics to link up the positive aspects of this movement with modern scientific techniques.

This is what the Chinese meant by 'Science walking on two legs'. This paper hopes to be part of the starting point for a more precise understanding of the content of popular resistances from the village communities as Africa struggles to be independent.