

## LAND-RELATED CONFLICTS IN UCHAGGA, 1960-2000

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### Abstract

*Land scarcity and its related conflicts are a serious problem facing the Chagga people of Moshi Rural District in the Kilimanjaro region. The problem started during the colonial period when a massive amount of land was grabbed by the colonial governments and some was acquired by colonial missionaries. As a result, the Chagga were dispossessed of the land they had reserved for future use. Although much of the land alienated by the colonial authorities was nationalised after independence, the problem of land scarcity lingered, due to population pressure. The net result of this situation was an increased incidence of land grabbing, encroachment, eviction, misdistribution of land, and perpetuation of family conflicts including gender-related injustices. Post-colonial agrarian reform policies such as villagization and liberalisation created the tendency to privatize land and intensify the market for it, which exacerbated conflicts over land at the local level. I argue that land scarcity, as a cause of land-related conflicts, resulted not only from population pressure, but also from competitive land use as well as political and cultural factors. My argument is premised on the assumption that the forces behind land-related conflicts in Africa, as observed by Ward Anseeuw and Chris Alden (2010), do not behave logically. The paper sheds light on the complexity of land conflicts by analysing their political, economic, cultural and historical dimensions. The political economy approach, normative quest theory and scarcity school of thought is used to analyse the complexity of the land crisis in Uchagga.*

**Key words:** *Chagga, land dispossession, villagization, privatization, land disputes*

### Introduction

Unlike their neighbours down in the plain, the Chagga have a tremendous sense of place. In fact it might be said that a sense of place was the first thing they had in their genesis as a people, and it will be the last that can be taken away from them.<sup>2</sup>

The Chagga people of Moshi Rural District are parochial, yet outward-looking people.<sup>3</sup> Their lives are attached to their inherited ancestral lands, *vihamba*, to which

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<sup>2</sup> Kathleen M. Stahl (1969) p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp.210-211. Stahl describes the Chagga as outward-looking people who like to go out to look for greener pastures.

they have “a strong sense of connection” or emotional attachment.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, their inherited *vihamba* are both ritual and sacred sites for ancestor worship, although that does not mean they do not use them for agriculture, which historically was widely practised in Uchagga before the onset of colonial rule. The cultivation of bananas, which came much earlier than the cultivation of coffee, played an initial role in increasing the value of land. It is argued that the banana culture, which was practised in Taveta and Moshi way back in the 1880s,<sup>5</sup> created an “artificial scarcity of land and hence a struggle for its control.”<sup>6</sup> With the expansion of the commercial production of coffee, beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, land acquired greater economic value as it became scarcer. By 1930, the commercialisation of agriculture in Uchagga had transformed communal-and clan-based land tenure into private customary land tenure, whereupon a period of land crisis and conflicts started.<sup>7</sup>

### **Theoretical Discussion**

A lot of studies on land conflicts have been done in different parts of the world. Most of them are based on the conventional resource scarcity and resource abundance schools of thought. However, the resource governance school of thought has challenged those two schools. The resource scarcity school of thought is grounded on the idea that if a resource, in this case land, becomes scarce, competition over its control emerges. Cynthia S. Simmons (2004), Chango Machyo (1969), P.H.Gulliver (1961), and Adolf Mascarenhas (2003) argue that land scarcity, which is the source of land conflicts, results from population pressure, unequal access to land, misdistribution of land, environmental changes, increasing demand for land, environmental conservation and large-scale commercial farming.<sup>8</sup> Daniel Buckles and Gerrett Rusneth (1999) add to the list changing consumption patterns, trade liberalization, the development of rural enterprises as well as changing land use and technology.<sup>9</sup> Studies have shown that in a situation of landlessness “scarcity competition” becomes inevitable.<sup>10</sup> The competitive claims of individuals, social groups or states become a source of conflict because these disputes make it impossible to effectively manage the natural resources involved.<sup>11</sup> However, according to Ward Anseeuw and Chris Alden (2010) “it is not the increased competition as such that leads to conflict but the increased confrontation . . . of

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<sup>4</sup> Beverley Brock (1969) p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> H.H.Johnston (1986) pp. 64-68.

<sup>6</sup> John Ngeleshi (1977) p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> Reginald Elias Kirey (2012) pp. 1-19.

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia S. Simmons (2004) pp.183-19; B. Chango-Machyo (1969) p. 101; P.H. Gulliver (1961) pp. 16-25; Adolf Mascarenhas (2003) p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Buckles and Gerrett Rusneth (1999) p.4.

<sup>10</sup> Lillian D. Estorninos and Gerry B. de Cadiz (2010) p. 3; Catherine Boone (2014) pp. 52-56.

<sup>11</sup> Economic Commission for Africa (2004) p.26.

different sets of norms, linked to diverse political and policy frameworks, cultures and values.”<sup>12</sup> Throughout Africa, most competition for land manifests in the form of organised groups of landless people struggling to get back the land they lost to other people.<sup>13</sup> Studies have shown that most of land-related conflicts in Africa result from what Robert Ojambo (2017: 16) calls “contradictions rooted in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial land policies.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, the problem of land-related conflicts in Africa is explained by the fact that African communal land tenures are not in harmony with private ownership of land which started with colonialism. As a consequence, the inherited colonial land tenures disrupted African customary land tenure system resulting in conflicts over land ownership.<sup>15</sup>

Avery Kolers (2009) employs the concept of normative quest which is equally important in analysing the causes of land conflicts.<sup>16</sup> He studied the ‘Palestine-Israel conflict’ and postulates that the issue of attachment or affiliation pushes people to fight for land.<sup>17</sup> This argument is corroborated by Margaret Moore (2015), who uses the concepts of individual moral rights of residency and collective moral rights of occupancy to illustrate the political theory of territory.<sup>18</sup> The former denotes an individual’s right to live in a particular area as his/her home to which he/she is emotionally attached.<sup>19</sup> The latter refers to “a collective right which a group may have, over and above the individual residency rights of its members.”<sup>20</sup> These theoretical concepts form the basis for analysing different forms of land-related conflicts. Border or boundary conflicts, for example, are motivated by issues of identity, as the conflicting groups feel they have an affiliation and attachment to the areas or land they are struggling to control.<sup>21</sup> This brings to the fore the idea of the “atavistic value of attachment” and the “symbolic dimension”, as mentioned by Sam Moyo (2008) and David Newman (2005), respectively.<sup>22</sup> But this is not to downplay the “concrete and tangible dimension,” which is the feature of many studies. Many scholars have explained the causes of resource conflicts using the deterministic approach (which considers only the material value of the resources), putting less emphasis on symbolic factors. However, studies have shown that under certain circumstances resources are fought for not only because they are scarce but also

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<sup>12</sup> Ward Anseeuw and Chris Alden (2010) pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Sam Moyo (2008) p.3.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Robert Ojambo (2017) p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Avery Kolers, (2009) pp. 1-7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Moore (2015) p.35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Moore (2015).

<sup>21</sup> David Newman (2005) p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Moyo (2008) p. 3; Guma Kunda Komey (2010) p.7.

because of symbolic imperatives. Evidence shows that issues of attachment or affiliation are at the heart of the Israel-Palestine land dispute.<sup>23</sup>

The political economy approach is also useful for analysing land conflicts. According to Simmons (2004), land conflicts taking place at the local level are caused by “hierarchical forces interacting across spatial scales.”<sup>24</sup> The political economy approach, as explained by Simmons, “situate[s] land conflict within the complex social, economic and political circumstances” and analyses power struggles which evolve from them.<sup>25</sup> Methodologically, therefore, this paper takes a pluralistic approach, which considers the fact that “the causes and development of land disputes do not necessarily conform to the convention of logic.”<sup>26</sup> A comprehensive account of conflicts over resources requires that it be situated within the historic, social, political and economic circumstances of specific places.<sup>27</sup> Hence, different dimensions of land conflicts are identified, namely class, political, cultural (social), ethnic and gender.<sup>28</sup>

### **Land crisis in Uchagga**

As mentioned earlier, population pressure and colonial land alienation were the major reasons for land scarcity in Uchagga. Paulo S. Maro (1974) observes that population density increased by 30.5 per cent between 1948 and 1967.<sup>29</sup> It maintained a steady growth in the following years as the table below indicates.

### **Population growth in Uchagga**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>POPULATION SIZE</b>	<b>POPULATION DENSITY (PER SQUARE KILOMETRE)</b>
1913	99,000	7
1921	128,443	25
1928	143,013	28
1930	143,000	28
1931	155,337	31
1942	172,000	34
1946	200,000	39

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<sup>23</sup> Kolers (2009) pp. 202-219.

<sup>24</sup> Simmons (2004) p.183.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187; see also elaboration by Komey (2010) pp.6-12.

<sup>26</sup> Anseeuw and Alden (2010) p.2.

<sup>27</sup> Simmons (2004) pp.183-190.

<sup>28</sup> Buckles and Rusneth (1999) p. 2; Moyo (2008) pp. 3-5.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Maro (1974) p. 7.

YEAR	POPULATION SIZE	POPULATION DENSITY (PER SQUARE KILOMETRE)
1947	207,000	41
1957	351,255	69
1967	361,914	94
1978	312,041	203
1988	342,896	224
1995	391,281	256
1998	414,232	271
2000	430,276	281

**Sources:** United Republic of Tanzania (1998: 7), Maro (1974: 7), Griffith (1947: 23)

The rapid growth in the population led to a critical shortage of land which called for immediate government intervention. Addressing the people of Rombo District on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966, the late ‘Father of the Nation’, Julius K. Nyerere urged the Chagga to migrate to other parts of Tanzania where land was abundant.<sup>30</sup> He told them that “the mountain [that is, Mt. Kilimanjaro] is not increasing in size, but the population is.”<sup>31</sup> Following this call for the Chagga to migrate, the Regional Officer of Kilimanjaro started to organise meetings with the Chagga people, trying to convince them to migrate to other parts of Tanzania to look for land. As a result, a committee of nineteen people travelled to Mpanda, Turiani, Mvomero and Handeni between 17<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October 1968 to find out if these areas were suitable for Chagga settlements. Immediately after the committee had finished their work, plans were made to register and transport Chagga people who wanted to migrate to these areas.<sup>32</sup> Approximately 593 people from Mamba, Mwika, Marangu and Kilema agreed to go to Mwese in Mpanda at the end of 1968.<sup>33</sup> By April 1969 the number of people who had migrated to Mpanda was 1815.<sup>34</sup>

Despite government efforts to persuade people to look for land elsewhere in Tanzania, the problem of land shortage persisted. The considerable amount of land still under the control of white settlers and missions in the early 1960s increased the

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<sup>30</sup> Tanganyika Notes and Records [hereafter TNA], No.C.50/80,1968-1970, Accession No. 548.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> TNA (1968-1970) op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> TNA (1968-1970) op.cit.

<sup>34</sup> TNA No. C.50/80, From the Administrative Secretary of Kilimanjaro to District Traffic Superintendent of Tanga, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1969.

pressure on land. Christian missions still owned a lot of unutilised land despite the fact that the government, through the 1947 Moshi–Arusha Land Commission, had urged them to give it back to the Chagga. Likewise, a large number of white settlers did not abandon their farms until the early 1970s, when the government nationalised them. Even so, the shortage of arable land available for Chagga farmers did not end with the nationalisation of settler farms, as a great number of people still lacked *shamba* [farm] land. As a consequence, the struggle for land following its scarcity resulted in the outbreak of land conflicts related to encroachments, land use and misdistribution.<sup>35</sup>

### **Conflicts over *Shamba* land**

Between 1964 and 1969, Mwika Lutheran Diocese and the farmers from Mamba area had a serious row over the use of the *shamba* land which belonged to the former.<sup>36</sup> This was 50 acres of *shamba* land, which was in the place called Riata, and had been given to the diocese in 1959 by the Area Land Board of Mwika. It was surrounded by small *shambas*, approximately 0.5 acres each, given to 101 people from Mamba by the paramount chief in 1947.<sup>37</sup> These *shamba* holders were not present when the Area Land Board allocated the land to the mission. The owners of these *shambas* protested against the decision of the Area Land Board to allocate the land to the diocese in their absence, which they alleged had enabled the mission to encroach on the surrounding *shamba* land. In 1969, the amount of mission land had increased from 50 to 56 acres,<sup>38</sup> by extending the boundaries of the mission land onto the surrounding *shamba* land. The people whose *shamba* land had been reduced in size as a result of the extension of the boundaries of the mission land rose up in protest. They also opposed the decision of the mission to use the land for activities for which the land was not intended. The diocese had promised the Area Land Board that it would use the land for building a church, school and dispensary, but by the late 1960s no structures along those lines had been built. The land was, instead, used for cultivation and renting. This caused the people to protest, for the mission was using the land for commercial gain and not for the public's benefit. They felt also that the mission was exploiting them by charging them rent for the use of its land. Fearful of a possible conflict that might occur if such grievances were not addressed, in October 1969, the Provincial Commissioner of Kilimanjaro resolved that the mission should leave the land for use by the Chagga.

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<sup>35</sup> Of 3920 acres of land owned by the missions, only 327 acres were in use. See TNA No. 950, 1947-1951; Tanganyika Territory (1947) p. 405.

<sup>36</sup> TNA No. L. 20/16, Accession. No. 548.

<sup>37</sup> TNA No.L.20/16W. D.P, Kiritu to all sub-chiefs, April, 1947, p.140A.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

Of all the factors underlying the above conflict, the extension of the mission boundaries contributed to fueling the anger of the Chagga. The fact that the mission cultivated its farm using tractors meant that, wittingly or unwittingly, it disturbed the farm boundaries.<sup>39</sup> The use of tractors made the disruption of farm boundaries possible because the ploughs, strong as they were, could easily destroy the markings of the boundaries. Cultivation by tractors had become widespread by the 1950s. In 1955 the number of Chagga farmers owning tractors was 29 compared with 18 farmers in Arusha.<sup>40</sup> Countrywide, the number of tractors in use rose by 19 percent in 1960.<sup>41</sup> By 1960, the number of tractors in use in the north-eastern zone, both wheel and crawler types, was 768 compared with 25 and 235 tractors used in the central and southern highlands, respectively.<sup>42</sup> This shows that there was an increase in the use of tractors in the north-eastern zone, which, according to oral information, contributed to quarrels over farm boundaries. Unlike in the uplands where *dracaenas* (locally called *masale*) were planted along *vihamba* boundaries, in the lowlands certain plants, locally called *Matolo*, were planted between *shamba* lands to mark the boundaries. These plants were very tender, with much shallower roots than those of the *dracaenas*. For this reason, they could easily be removed by the sheer force of ploughs. When the boundaries were destroyed beyond recognition, conflicts ensued when the parties concerned were trying to reset the boundaries. It became extremely difficult to mark boundaries that would satisfy all the parties involved, which was why some people resolved to plant sisal along the boundaries of their farms,<sup>43</sup> because they were strong enough to withstand any disturbance. In the Bakiga society of Uganda, weak boundary markings caused similar conflicts to those experienced by the Chagga. The Bakiga of Kigezi used to dig small trenches between their plots as boundaries, which caused conflicts, because whenever they cultivated their farms these boundary markings kept on shifting.<sup>44</sup>

Conflicts over *shamba* land also involved those that pitted pastoralists against cultivators. A good example of this was the conflict over Lotima farm. From 1947 to 1965 Lotima land had been used for farming and grazing.<sup>45</sup> During all this time no conflict had occurred between pastoralists and farmers. Between 1965 and 1966 the government gave the Mwika Farmers Partners (MFP) and the TANU Youth League (TYL, Northern Mwika Branch) 750 and 1020 acres, respectively, at Lotima for sisal

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<sup>39</sup> TNA No.L.20/16, S.M.J. Makundi to R.C, April, 1947, p.140.

<sup>40</sup> Tanganyika Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioners, 1955, p. 86.

<sup>41</sup> Tanganyika. Census of Large Scale Commercial Farming in Tanganyika: October, 1962. The Treasury, Central Statistics Bureau, November, 1963, p.11.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Robert Meray, Kilema, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>44</sup> E.R. Kagambirwe (1972) p.158.

<sup>45</sup> TNA No. 2016, Land Matters-East Vunjo, 1969.

cultivation.<sup>46</sup> The pastoralists, who had previously been using that land for grazing, were unhappy with the decision made by the government, although, in 1968, it registered Lotima as an *Ujamaa* village for pastoral activities. By the end of 1969 the village had 156 pastoralists owning about 1,345 cows.<sup>47</sup> However, the members of the MFP and TYL did not accept the idea of letting this land be transformed into an *Ujamaa* village for pastoralists only. They wanted to continue using the land for cultivation. The matter was worsened by the fact that the members of the TYL, numbering 77 at the end of 1969, were denied the 53,100 shillings they demanded as compensation for being evicted from the Lotima land.<sup>48</sup>

The development of Lotima farm by state action further complicated the conflict. For example, the government, under section 14 of the 1982 Ordinance, re-registered the Lotima land as a co-operative society, the so-called The Locolova Co-operative Society. With a total of 900 members by the early 1990s, this co-operative focused on developing modern livestock keeping.<sup>49</sup> To avoid further conflicts, the government set aside 1,350 acres for livestock keeping and another 1,200 acres for cultivation.<sup>50</sup> This arrangement, however, did not prove successful. In the early 1990s, for instance, farmers were encroaching on the land set aside for pastoralists, which led to physical confrontation between the two groups.

In comparison with other regions, few *Ujamaa* villages were established in Kilimanjaro. Due to the lack of land the Chagga were living in densely populated settlements, which in addition to their strong feelings of attachment to their *vihamba*, hindered full implementation of the *villagization* policy in the region.<sup>51</sup> For these reasons, the government failed to establish as many *Ujamaa* villages in Kilimanjaro as it did in other regions in Tanzania. According to Goran Hyden (1980), the total number of *Ujamaa* villages in Kilimanjaro in 1974 was 9, compared with 465 villages in Mtwara region.<sup>52</sup> Due to this, Nyerere once suggested that the people of Kilimanjaro could implement *Ujamaa*'s policy by creating communally owned non-agricultural projects. He said: "...in Kilimanjaro a group of farmers may get together and jointly organize and run a modern poultry unit, or a communal tannery, or a communal woodworking, or, again, they may come together to share the use of a

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> TNA (1969) op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> TNA No. 20/16, D.O to T.Y.L, 10/7/1969; TANU to P.C, 27/11/1969.

<sup>49</sup> Frank Ngowi, "Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Land Matters" [hereafter PCILM], 1992, Vol. VIII, pp.175-176.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Goran Hyden (1980) p. 103.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



truck which they jointly own, or organize some new irrigation-perhaps with a water-wheel they jointly own-which will benefit them all.”<sup>53</sup>

It was thought that nationalisation of settler farms would create some land for Ujamaa activities. To achieve this goal, the government had to revoke the rights of occupancy and freehold titles granted to white settlers during the colonial period. In 1963, for example, the Free Titles (Conversion) and Government Leases Act, Cap 523 was passed so that all freehold titles granted during colonial rule could be revoked.<sup>54</sup> In the same year, the Right of Occupancy (Development Conditions) Act was passed in order to specify the land use types which were in tune with *Ujamaa*'s policy.<sup>55</sup> Two years later, the Land Acquisition Ordinance (Amendment) Act was passed, which enabled the president to alienate land for public use.<sup>56</sup> The implementation of this ordinance, together with the cited 1963 land legislation, led to the nationalisation of a large amount of undeveloped land, which was still under the control of white settlers. The 1965 Land Acquisition Ordinance (Amendment) Act enabled the government to acquire undeveloped settler farms not only in Moshi but also in Dar es Salaam, Tabora, Mwanza and Tanga.<sup>57</sup> By 1973, for example, 50 settler farms in Moshi Rural District had been nationalised.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, in 1974 only 15 farms of these had been reallocated to Chagga farmers for them to introduce *Ujamaa* villages.

In 1971, the government in Uchagga reallocated 180 acres of the Kiyungi Sisal Estate at Kibosho to 110 families as *shamba* land.<sup>59</sup> This estate had hitherto been in conflict with the people living in the neighbourhood, as everyone was struggling to obtain *shamba* land from it.<sup>60</sup> However, the farmers were given land at Kiyungi Sisal Estate on condition that they would introduce a *Ujamaa* village, hence the Shiri Matunda *Ujamaa* village.<sup>61</sup> It goes without saying that those who were against the policy of *villagization* did not get land from this estate. It is obvious as far as this situation was concerned that many of those who did not like the idea of living in an *Ujamaa* village were denied the right to use the land.

Although the Chagga were relieved that their land lost to white settlers had at last been nationalised by the government to be given back to them, the redistribution of

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<sup>53</sup> J. K. Nyerere (1968) p. 360.

<sup>54</sup> Anonymous, in D.W.K. Mwapwele (1975) p. 167.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Anonymous (1975).

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous (1975).

<sup>58</sup> *Ujamaa Leo*, No. 1, May, 1974.

<sup>59</sup> *Ngurumo*, No. 4160, 31<sup>st</sup> December 1971.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *Ngurumo* (1971) op. cit.

some of these farms was, by any standard, unfair. Conflicts emerged because the exercise was not properly handled. Two examples illustrate this point. The first example was the redistribution of 381 acres of the Himo Sisal Estate, which had formerly been leased to Arbuthnot Latham & Co.<sup>62</sup> Oral accounts indicate that the government had ordered the land to be given to the people who were living near the sources of water, particularly along the steep banks of the rivers.<sup>63</sup> The government declared that people from all divisions of Moshi Rural District, falling within that category, should be given land from the estate. However, the reallocation of land to these people was neither fair nor transparent. In fact, only a few rich people managed to get land from the estate, which suggests that corruption was at work. In addition, many people complained about incidences of multiple allocations, pointing the finger at those given the task of allocating the land. The second example was the problem of multiple allocations of the Kahe Sisal Estate land. In the early 1990s, paddy cultivators from Kahe ward opposed the government's decision to redistribute their *shamba* land.<sup>64</sup> They claimed that the government had distributed two acres to each of them between 1980 and 1981. It appears that the government treated these farmers as squatters who had no right to Kahe Sisal Estate land. One might argue that the government was acting contrary to the Rural Farms Land (Acquisition and Re-grant) Act of 1965, which enabled the government to acquire "the land in the occupation of a person other than the owner" and then grant that land to such occupier as if he had developed it.<sup>65</sup>

Encroachment on nationalised farms registered as co-operative societies was not uncommon during the era of *Ujamaa*. At Uru Mawela, for example, people used to encroach on the Machare Estate (365.9 acres) that was nationalised in 1973 and registered as the property of the Uru North Co-operative Society in 1984.<sup>66</sup> By the early 1990s, encroachment on this land took place on a massive scale as rumours spread that the government would redistribute it. Commenting on why the people were encroaching on this land, Mr. Linus Kisima, the manager of the co-operative, remarked: "I think it is because of the announcement people heard on the radio that this land would be redistributed to them as *vihamba* land."<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, conflicts over *shamba* land resulted from the extension of boundaries, misdistribution of land and competitive user rights. The overriding reason for these conflicts was land scarcity, together with population expansion and the over-

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<sup>62</sup> TNA, No.950/11, Land Settlement, 1949-1951.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Thomas Mwakiponya, Samanga, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily News*, No.3142, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1990.

<sup>65</sup> D.W. Mwapwele (ed.) (1975) p.168.

<sup>66</sup> Linus Kisima, PCILM, Vol. VIII, p.149.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p.50.

cultivation of coffee for sale. The cultivation of coffee, the major export crop in Uchagga, increased in relation to the increase in coffee prices. In the 1960s, coffee exports recorded a tremendous increase.<sup>68</sup> From 1975 to 1976 coffee exports increased by forty-one per cent as its price had tripled.<sup>69</sup>

### **Land grabbing by individuals**

Most of the land conflicts experienced between 1960 and 2000 were those involving individual farmers quarrelling with each other over the use and control of land. They appeared as individual complaints about chiefs' violation of customary procedures of allocating land, the forceful eviction of occupiers by rich peasants, legal claims over land, and disputes relating to inheritance and gender.

Prior to the abolition of chieftainships in 1962, some headmen and chiefs were abusing their power by grabbing land from people who enjoyed customary rights to it.<sup>70</sup> They would then reallocate this land to other people in return for money or beer [*Mbege*] or they would decide to keep the grabbed land as their personal property. However, in 1968 the government passed The Customary Leaseholds (Enfranchisement) Act to be applied in Moshi, Pare Tukuyu and the West Lake Region in order to achieve equality in land ownership.<sup>71</sup> As far as *Ujamaa's* policy was concerned, this Act was expected to "free the mass of people who lived under the feudalistic system of customary land tenure, by which a landlord owned the land but did not develop it."<sup>72</sup> In Moshi Rural District in particular where the implementation of this Act caused a lot of land cases, a special customary land tribunal assisted by a Resident Secretary or a Legal Advisor was established in 1970 in order to hear and adjudicate them.<sup>73</sup>

The grabbing of land by chiefs and headmen increased in the early 1960s due to two important factors. First, the chiefs could hardly get unoccupied land for allocation, and so the only alternative was to use their power and grab other people's land for reallocation. Secondly, the payment of money as opposed to the traditional *upata lo Mangi* [cow or he-goat] was more tempting as it provided an opportunity for chiefs and headmen to accumulate wealth in the form of money. In 1954, for example, a person acquired *kihamba* land after paying three hundred and fifty shillings to the chief and headmen, respectively, but, surprisingly, the chief reallocated this same

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<sup>68</sup> C.G. Kahama et al. (1986) p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> Knud Svendsen (1986) p. 67.

<sup>70</sup> Mwika Ward Office, hereafter MWO, No. 6/4/1/, "Vihamba"

<sup>71</sup> Anonymous, in Mwapwele (ed.) (1975) p. 168.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Anonymous (1975); Maro (1974) p. 175.

piece of land to another person in the early 1960s.<sup>74</sup> Although these multiple allocations were motivated by a desire to accumulate, it reflects the fact that the chiefs had no more unoccupied land to allocate. The poor were greatly affected by such injustice, due to the fact that a rich person, for instance, could bribe a chief or headman to obtain the piece of land he desired. Because a poor person could not afford to pay a bribe it meant that he would not manage to get land from the chief. This implies also that a great many of those who lacked money to bribe chiefs or headmen had their land grabbed.<sup>75</sup> The people most affected, as far as the problem of land grabbing was concerned, were those living in towns but owning *vihamba* in the villages. By the time they came back to the village, most of them found that their *vihamba* had been reallocated to other persons, or their boundaries altered by their neighbours. This was the major complaint of the people coming back from Mombasa in the early 1960s.<sup>76</sup> However, Milline S. Mbonile (2003) reports that absentee landowners have now resolved to hire “security guards” from Singida, Dodoma, Babati and Mbulu to protect their plots of land from encroachment and changes in the boundaries by their neighbours.<sup>77</sup>

To resolve the problem of land grabbing, the government introduced the Area Land Boards in 1961,<sup>78</sup> which were charged with all matters pertaining to the allocation of land and settling land disputes. Any person in need of a *kihamba* had to fill in the form kept in the chiefs’ offices, which was thereafter forwarded to the Area Land Board for consideration.<sup>79</sup> The boards, which existed in all chiefdoms, were also involved in settling land disputes. Unlike the traditional way of allocating land in which a person could only be given land within the chiefdom in which he was living, the boards allowed people to apply for a *kihamba* anywhere in the District. However, before approving an application for *kihamba* land, the board and the local chiefs had to satisfy themselves that such a person had no *kihamba* in the area he was coming from.<sup>80</sup> Implicit in all these conditions is the idea that the boards had realised the existing problem of the unequal distribution of land amongst the Chagga people and therefore aimed to resolve the problem of landlessness in the entire District. Notwithstanding the introduction of these boards, new forms of land conflicts emerged, due to the fact that the allocation of land was not done fairly or equitably.

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<sup>74</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, Ananiel Kipongoro to Area Land Board [hereafter ALB], 5<sup>th</sup> April 1962.

<sup>75</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, David Gideon to ALB, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1962.

<sup>76</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, Zakaria Temu, Kimaroroni, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Milline S. Mbonile (2003) p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, Chagga Native Authority (hereafter CNA) to the chiefs of Moshi District, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1963.

<sup>79</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, Mangi Office of Mwika to the Area Commissioner of Kilimanjaro, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1962.

<sup>80</sup> See correspondence in MWO: No. 6/4/1.

It was common for favouritism and lack of transparency to dominate the registration of people in need of *vihamba* land.<sup>81</sup> Although under circular No. 13 of 1962 the boards were obliged to submit the minutes of their meetings as well as the list of people who had applied for land, very few of them had done so by 1963.<sup>82</sup> Similar to what happened in Iraqwland,<sup>83</sup> the replacement of the traditional system of allocating land by the use of land committees led to increasing number of conflicts relating to multiple allocations.

Because of all these land problems, Moshi District Council came up with General Circular Number 113 of 1962, which directed local chiefs to make sure that the allocation of *vihamba* favoured those without any, and do a thorough investigation to establish whether a person applying for land did not own a *kihamba* or whether he had sold any land.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to the mismanagement of land matters by local leaders, land grabbing by rich individuals was reported in Uchagga. In 1968, for example, about 38 people at Kileseu-Mwika complained that a rich peasant had grabbed their *shamba* land.<sup>85</sup> The conflict that ensued was so serious that efforts to resolve it by the Regional Land Advisory Committee were unsuccessful until it was sent to the high court. This suggests that the security of land tenure for poor peasants was at great risk in the face of the acquisitive behaviour of rich peasants, and government interventions in land matters seemed to favour rich peasants. In the early 1960s also, the government granted formal rights of occupancy to large-scale cultivators, which meant that small-scale cultivators were evicted. A case in point is in Chekereni where in the early 1960s the government evicted poor peasants from their pieces of land in the name of introducing large-scale farming.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, as early as the 1960s, a class of rich peasants had emerged and was posing a great threat to poor peasants being evicted, because the legal framework and the existing local organs for settling land disputes were not yet strong enough to protect their rights. Not surprisingly, many land grabbers refused to abandon the land they had acquired illegally, even when ordered by the court.<sup>87</sup> It was in this environment that rich farmers managed to amass large amounts of land amidst a critical situation of landlessness. By 1987, it was apparent that, despite the existence of the 1983 Land

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, CNA to the chiefs of Moshi District, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1963.

<sup>83</sup> Yusufu Lawi (2000) pp. 353-354.

<sup>84</sup> MWO, No.6/4/1, Moshi District Council to all the local chiefs, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1962.

<sup>85</sup> TNA, No. L. 20/16, Accession No. 548.

<sup>86</sup> Fred Simon Lerise (2005) pp. 15-21.

<sup>87</sup> Barnabas Nyenja of Longuo, Ndekango Mborori of Mamba Kimbowo and Evelyn Okachu Njau of Kimanganu Village, PCILM, Vol.XXI, pp.1-2, and Vol. VIII, pp.70, 145-146.

Restriction Policy, there was an urgent need to introduce a “by-law specifying the size of land an individual [could] own.”<sup>88</sup> Such urgency stemmed from the fact that rich people were taking advantage of their financial muscle to accumulate land, because the 1983 New Agriculture Policy had allowed private ownership of land,<sup>89</sup> which is thought to have intensified land-related conflicts in rural areas as it made the land owned by poor peasants insecure.<sup>90</sup>

It must be said that women were the most affected by acts of land grabbing, because, according to Chagga tradition, women had no right to own land. A woman had the right to own and use a plot of land as long as her husband was alive. An unmarried woman, for instance, was allowed to live on her father’s land only if he or the clan had given her permission.<sup>91</sup> By the beginning of the 1990s however, some families had started discarding such gender discrimination against women, as some fathers had started allocating *vihamba* to their daughters.<sup>92</sup> In the families where women were able to get land from their fathers, or allowed to inherit the land of their deceased husbands, a lot of land conflicts beset them. Many of these conflicts resulted when a brother wanted to grab the land given to his sister(s), or when a rich neighbour or a deceased husband’s relative wanted to grab the land inherited by a widow.<sup>93</sup> In fact, studies elsewhere in Africa have shown that women’s “user rights to land acquired from their fathers or husbands . . . are precarious in the event of divorce/widowhood.”<sup>94</sup> In March, 1992, for example a father wrote a will that stipulated that part of his land be given to his married daughter.<sup>95</sup> When his son, who was in Mombasa, came back home and learnt that his father had written such a will, he was furious and decided to report the matter to Mwika Primary Court, accusing his father of giving a *kihamba* to a married daughter. But the father stood by his decision and told his son: “It is not you, my clan or the court to decide how I should allocate my land. Whether you like it or not what I have written is final.”<sup>96</sup> Added to this problem was the question of polygamy. In May, 2000, for example, a father wrote a will in favour of the children of his second wife, which caused the children of his first wife to oppose it in the court.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Daily News*, No.4565, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1987.

<sup>89</sup> Boesen (1986) p.24; Peter Gibbon, et al. (1993) pp. 65-67.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> See PCILM, Vol.VIII, op.cit. p.25

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> MWO, “Miradhi Wosia”, No.47, Letters by Martha F. Mosha and Mariamu Amani, 1992, Interview with Andrea Makundi, Samanga, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>94</sup> L. Mathoni Wanyaki (ed.) (2003) p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> MWO, No.47, Japheth Msando to Rochen Msando, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1992.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> MWO, No.47, Elisante’s family to Mwika Primary Court [hereafter MPC] March, 1992.

To summarise, land grabbing amongst the Chagga emerged because of social differentiation, which assumed class, gender, political and cultural dimensions. Rich people, including local rulers, took full advantage of their political and economic position to grab land from poor people. No wonder that as late as 1949 members of ruling clans were people who “wish[ed] to have large grain farms as their own property.”<sup>98</sup> The introduction of the Area Land Boards did not bring about any noticeable change in resolving unequal land distribution.

### **Conflicts caused by the sale of *Vihamba* land**

Selling *vihamba* land had some negative socio-economic impacts, which led to further land conflicts. As a matter of fact, selling family land contradicted the Chagga customary land tenure norms, according to which it was taboo for someone to sell a *kihamba* on which his ancestors were buried. Indeed, clan land was not for sale; it could only be inherited. As ancestral land, “it contained the remains of the departed ancestors”.<sup>99</sup> In fact, the Chagga believed in the ‘living dead’ [*warumu*] and would conduct ritual practices to appease them.<sup>100</sup> When a person died it did not mean that he or she had forever severed links with the material world<sup>101</sup>. The dead interacted with their living relatives. The living had to respect the *warumu*, and so their burial sites or graves had to be protected. In fact, “if an individual wanted to live a long and happy life, he or she had to be careful to keep in harmony with the living dead.”<sup>102</sup> The common practice was to pour out libations of beer [*mbege*] and milk or offer sacrificed animals to the *warumu*. Because the spiritual value of land was so entrenched, it was, and still is, an abomination for someone to sell the land on which his dead relatives were buried. However, the economic value of the land is another reason why it was given such importance.

Because of the foregoing, family conflicts were widely experienced in Uchagga due to the land market. For example, when a father wanted to sell clan land, he was faced with stiff opposition not only from his wife and children but also from his relatives.<sup>103</sup> The Chagga custom forbade a person to sell or buy land in the absence of his relatives and neighbours. Violation of this rule gave rise to litigation, misunderstandings, confusion and hatred among family members. In the early 1990s, for instance, a person at Kilema Chini was sent to court by his wife for selling the land without the knowledge of the members of the family.<sup>104</sup> In addition, on several occasions the land

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<sup>98</sup> John Illife (1979) p. 458.

<sup>99</sup> Neville Zebedayo Reuben (1986) p. 113.

<sup>100</sup> Anza A. Lema (1999) p.45.

<sup>101</sup> John S. Mbiti (1969) pp. 8-9.

<sup>102</sup> Lema (1999) p. 46.

<sup>103</sup> MPC, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1997, 15/8/1997; MWO: No. J.10/14/Vol.IV/WD.XXX.

<sup>104</sup> See correspondence in PCILM, Vol VIII, op. cit.

sold by a father would, upon his death, be reclaimed by his children, who would press for the buyer to be refunded so that they could get the land back. In doing so a land conflict would ensue because under no circumstances would the buyer agree to a refund. A piece of land which was bought in 1951 at Uru Mawela for example was, in the early 1990s, demanded by a child after his father had died, saying that the buyer had not actually bought the land, but rather that his father had given it to him as collateral.<sup>105</sup> In similar cases, when the father (the seller) died before the buyer of the land paid the money in full, his children would immediately prevent him from completing the payment, but would compel the buyer to accept a refund. To elaborate on this point, let us consider a civil case sent to Mwiki Primary Court.<sup>106</sup> It happened in 1998 that the father of Moses Meela had fallen sick and decided to sell his piece of land to Daniel Rafael so that he would be able to raise money to pay for his medical expenses. Rafael agreed to buy the piece of land for Tshs. 800,000 and paid Tshs. 100,000 as the first instalment. Unfortunately, the father died and at the funeral ceremony Rafael paid some Tshs. 50, 000 as the second instalment. All these transactions were put in writing. Later on when Rafael wanted to pay up the balance so that he could acquire full ownership of the land, Meela refused to take the money and hand over the piece of land. The latter wanted to refund the down payment of Tshs. 150,000 to the buyer. Rafael sent the case to Mwiki Primary Court which ruled in his favour. But when Meela appealed to the District Court the earlier Mwiki Primary Court ruling was reversed and the land was given to him. However, in 2001 Rafael appealed to the High Court which ruled in his favour. The High Court gave three reasons for its decision: (1) the deceased had agreed that the Appellant buy his land, (2) the transactions were made in writing, and (3) “there was no evidence of delay in repaying the Tshs.650, 000.”<sup>107</sup>

In a nutshell, commodification of land led to a number of land conflicts because it clashed with the customary norms of handling land issues. We have seen, for example, that selling a *kihamba* on which ancestors were buried was not acceptable traditionally. Although Neville Z. Reuben argues that this tradition had been somewhat discarded due to Christian evangelisation,<sup>108</sup> the majority of Chagga people still believed in the power of the ancestors. In fact, commodification of land contradicted the symbolic value of land rooted in the Chagga tradition of associating *vihamba* land with the spirits of the ancestors. Thus, at the family level, selling land

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<sup>105</sup> Testimony by Elene Siriwa, PCILM, Vol. VIII, op.cit., p.143.

<sup>106</sup> MPC, Civil cases No.14 of 1998, (civil appeals Nos. 58 and 10 of 2001) and No.7 of 1991.

For privacy, the names used are not real.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Reuben (1986) p. 113.



acted as a source of conflicts as family members would have conflicting interests over it.

## Conclusion

This paper has shown that the problem of land scarcity and its related conflicts in Uchagga was not only a result of population pressure, but also of the unequal distribution of land as, for example, between the poor and rich, men and women, and large-scale cultivators and small-scale cultivators. This not only put pressure on the land, but it also led to land grabbing, conflicting land uses, encroachment, evictions and family conflicts. The paper has also indicated that government intervention in land matters, such as the introduction of modern land tenures and policies, aggravated land-related conflicts at the local level. In addition, the market for land became the most contested terrain, because it transformed land into a commodity, and so the Chagga's cultural attachment to their pieces of land was challenged. This was contrary to the local concept of the value of land which was broader. The value of land, according to Chagga customs, was not only in the material things (rent, crops, settlements, etc.) that the land could provide, but also its cultural significance: first, as a resting place for ancestral spirits, and second as a sacrificial site.

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