

The Effects of Colonial Environmental Conservation Policies on Culture among the Sukuma of Shinyanga and Simiyu-Tanzania, 1920s-1950s

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.907000250>

Received: 09 July 2025; Accepted: 16 July 2025; Published: 12 August 2025

ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the intricate relationship between environment and culture among the Sukuma people of Shinyanga and Simiyu regions in Tanzania during the colonial period from 1922 to the 1950s. It illustrates the detrimental impact of colonial policies on the established symbiosis between the environment and Sukuma culture. The study aims to shed light on the impact of colonial environmental policies on the Sukuma community and how these policies influenced the dynamics of their cultural practices and socio-economic structures. Employing a qualitative methodology, the paper conducted data analysis guided by predefined objectives and questions, with the research conducted in the Shinyanga and Simiyu regions. The predominant approach was qualitative, characterized by an interpretive and naturalistic orientation towards the subject matter. Archival materials were also incorporated into the study. The author presented findings by utilizing both primary and secondary information. The study has explicitly demonstrated how the pre-colonial social structure utilized its cultural practices for environmental conservation, highlighting the interconnectedness between the environment and Sukuma culture. However, with the arrival of colonialists, these experiences were disregarded, and policies were implemented that severed the indigenous people from their natural surroundings. The paper concludes that the pre-colonial social structure adeptly employed its cultural practices for environmental conservation, but the colonialists, upon their arrival, dismissed these practices and introduced policies that alienated the natives from their inherent connection to nature and culture. It was recommended that scholars and researchers studying environmental conservation must look at the organizational structures and narratives that promote greater local participation in environmental management to improve the culture of the community.

Keywords: Sukuma, Shinyanga, Simiyu, Colonialism, Environmental Policies, Culture, Tanzania.

INTRODUCTION:

The Sukuma people are one of the Tanzania's largest ethnic groups. They have a rich cultural heritage deeply intertwined with their environment. This paper examines the effects of colonial environmental policies on the Sukuma of Shinyanga and Simiyu regions during the period from 1922 to the 1950s. The colonial administration's policies significantly influenced the Sukuma way of life, affecting their traditional practices, resource management strategies, and socio-economic structures.

Before the advent of colonialism, traditional socio-economic activities and practices existed in harmony with the surrounding environment. This coexistence was a result of societies developing customs and regulations that ensured the sustainable utilization of natural resources. Pre-colonial communities recognized the ecological transformation of natural forms as a significant component in the religious systems of societies with subsistence economies, as noted by Matowanyika (1991). Numerous discussions have centered around the concept of 'sacredness' and its role in conservation. Sacred groves, for instance, are considered representative of crucial pre-colonial forest conservation practices, while sacred pools are linked to the conservation of wetlands, and so forth.

Although it is acknowledged that religion was indeed utilized to conserve vital resources, especially during times of crisis, it is apparent that sacred places served broader religious goals and functions beyond conservation. These sacred sites encompassed various scales of conservation, ranging from individual hunters' shrines to extensive sacred territories managed by multiple religious and political authorities.

In South Africa, measures were implemented by the pre-colonial state to control the utilization of resources by external entities, as documented by Schoffeleers (1979). King Shaka, in particular, established a royal hunting reserve, now known as the Hluhluwe Game Reserve, specifically allocated for the ruling political and military class, as highlighted by Matowanyika (1993). Certain African rulers devised rudimentary management systems to limit the activities of early European hunters and prevent the depletion of wildlife (MacKenzie, 2017). For instance, Mzilikazi instituted a permit system for all European hunters entering his kingdom. This system required the presentation of gifts and other offerings to the king in exchange for permission to hunt within his territory. Additionally, the king imposed a percentage of the hunting spoils as compensation for granting permission, as noted by Masona (1987).

In Northern Tanzania, the Iraqw people possessed extensive traditional knowledge regarding the holistic utilization of the landscape and its resources, as indicated by Lawi (2002). They organized their landscape into distinct usage zones, demonstrating their understanding of various soil types, their characteristics, and the influence of topography on different land options. Despite the Iraqw's well-established traditional environmental knowledge and cultural practices, these practices came to be perceived as detrimental to the environment.

Colonialists held the assumption that the African experience in environmental conservation and cultural practices was flawed. Perhaps, in an effort to rationalize their perspectives and further their interests, they asserted that the natural environment in Africa was more fragile than it initially appeared. This dismissal of the indigenous environmental knowledge and cultural practices of the Iraqw people by colonial authorities underscored a broader trend of undervaluing and misinterpreting local wisdom in environmental management.

Hence, colonialists held the belief that the African environment required vigilant care and protection against human encroachment, as noted by Lawi (2002). The Colonial Government, however, diminished the significance of local communities, along with their cultural knowledge, in the management of their environment. This perspective was rooted in the perception that local populations misused environmental resources such as forests, land, and wildlife. There was a prevailing notion that Africans were considered unreliable in their utilization of environmental resources (Zahabu et al., 2009). The conceptual framework for conservation and sectorial policies was derived from this colonial viewpoint on environmental conservation (Kjekshus, 2022).

Given this articulated perspective, the primary objective of this paper was to investigate the repercussions of colonial environmental conservation policies on Sukuma culture. It highlights how these policies disrupted the pre-existing relationship between the environment and Sukuma culture.

Historical Context:

The historical context of colonial environmental policies among the Sukuma of Shinyanga and Simiyu in Tanzania from the 1920s to the 1950s is characterized by the presence of both British and German colonial influences (Alawi, 2014). During this period, the colonial powers implemented a range of policies that significantly impacted the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the Sukuma community. One of the key elements of historical context is colonial administration presence. Both British and German colonial administrations had a significant presence in the Shinyanga and Simiyu regions during the specified period. The colonial powers established administrative structures that aimed to assert control over the territories, including the implementation of policies related to land use, resource management, and economic activities.

Concerning land tenure and resource management regulations, colonial authorities implemented policies related to land tenure that frequently contradicted traditional Sukuma land-use practices as noted by Nhantumbo, Monela & Kowero (2003). The imposition of external policies on resource management clashed

with the Sukuma's sustainable methods, bringing about alterations in how the environment was utilized and resources were accessed. In terms of the impact on the environment and culture, the intersection of colonial policies with Sukuma traditional practices instigated profound changes in both the environment and culture. The Sukuma, who had cultivated sustainable land-use and resource management techniques rooted in their cultural practices, encountered disruptions as external policies were enforced.

Regarding the connection between culture and environment, the historical context highlights the intricate interdependence of culture and the environment within the Sukuma community. According to Rutabanzibwa (2021), the Sukuma's traditional practices were deeply embedded in their surroundings, and the disturbances brought about by colonial policies had extensive repercussions.

Grasping this historical context is essential for scrutinizing the enduring effects of colonial environmental policies on the Sukuma community and comprehending the intricacies of their encounters throughout this era as noted by Maddox (2004).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The author conducted interviews in the Simiyu and Shinyanga regions, with a focus on the districts of Shinyanga, Bariadi, and Meatu. The interviews encompassed specific villages situated within the Shinyanga region, namely Kilulu, Shishani, Mwanyahina, and Miti Mirefu.

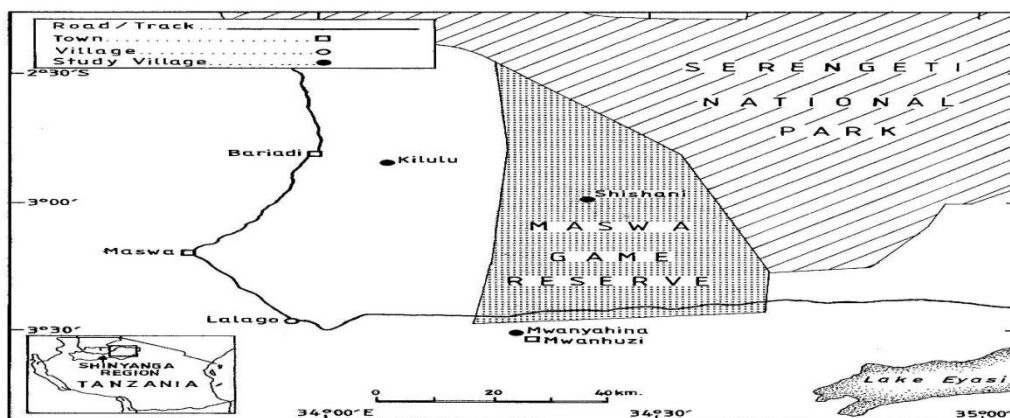


Figure 1: The Map Showing some Parts of Shinyanga and Simiyu Villages

Source: Dar es Saam University, Geography Department, Map Laboratory Unit

This portion explores the distinct environmental measures enacted by the colonial authorities in Shinyanga and Simiyu. The analysis encompasses policies associated with land tenure, extraction of natural resources, and agricultural practices to evaluate their repercussions on the Sukuma community. The paper also investigates the ways in which these policies disturbed traditional ecological equilibrium and modified the Sukuma's connection with their environment.

This study is grounded in a qualitative approach, employing an interpretive and naturalistic method in its investigation. Qualitative researchers, following this approach, observe and analyze phenomena within their natural contexts, aiming to understand and interpret them based on the meanings ascribed by individuals. Qualitative research encompasses the examination of various empirical materials, including case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observations, histories, interactions, and visual texts, which describe both routine and challenging aspects of individuals' lives. Additionally, archival materials have been incorporated into this research. These materials, serving as evidence of past events, offer recorded information about historical activities. They act as memory aids, enabling users to recall and revisit past events or communicate information about those events across different points in time and space (TNA, Archival Material, 2007).

In this study, the researcher relies on a combination of written archival documents and oral recollections as the foundational sources of evidence to comprehend traditional healing practices in both pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. Despite the diverse origins of these evidential materials, the researcher considers them as complementary, recognizing that none of them can stand alone. Since each piece of evidence reflects the subjective perspectives of its respective authors and producers, interpreting them as complementary evidence enables the opportunity to analyze and assess them in relation to one another. This approach also acknowledges that the social actors responsible for producing these materials, including government officials generating archival documents and peasants whose recollections have been unveiled through their descendants, did not exist in isolation. Instead, they influenced, interacted, and shaped one another within the constraints imposed by colonialism. These social interactions provide insights into the negotiations and relationships among the various actors who contributed to the creation of the aforementioned materials.

Various written documents, including archival records authored by colonial government officials, served as a crucial evidential foundation for this paper. The author obtained access to these documents from the Tanzania National Archives in Dar es Salaam, the largest repository of historical documents in Tanzania. In addition, oral recollections played a vital role in providing evidence for this study, with the use of biographical and unstructured interviews. The biographical interview involves the collection and analysis of a comprehensive account of an entire life or a specific period, typically through an in-depth and unstructured interview. This account may be supplemented by semi-structured interviews or personal documents. Instead of focusing solely on a 'snapshot' of an individual's current situation, the biographical approach underscores situating the individual within a network of social connections, historical events, and life experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 1995).

This paper utilized biographical and unstructured interviews due to their advantages over questionnaires and documentary reviews, providing flexibility for both the researcher and respondents. These interview types allowed the researcher to have control over the research process by adjusting questions as needed and creating new questions in response to the informants' answers. In this context, open-ended questions, designed to elicit comprehensive and meaningful responses using the subject's own knowledge and feelings, were employed. These questions contrast with closed-ended questions, which typically prompt brief or single-word responses. Open-ended questions also tend to be more objective and less suggestive than their closed-ended counterparts. Throughout this study, open-ended questions were predominantly employed in oral interviews to allow ample opportunity for participants to provide extensive information on the study theme.

The Sukuma local language was employed in the interviews. Since the researcher lacked proficiency in Sukuma, assistance was sought from additional researchers familiar with the language. The cooperation of the interviewees was facilitated through these assistants. The recollections provided by the interviewees yielded crucial information on how their predecessors, including parents and grandparents, comprehended and addressed healing practices. The researcher construed these oral recollections as a collective knowledge base passed down through generations, acquired from their parents and grandparents, and subsequently adapted in their contemporary context to comprehend the past. The central concepts encompassing how earlier generations navigated the challenges posed by colonial conservation policies in relation to their culture were transmitted from one generation to the next. Furthermore, each subsequent generation imbued these concepts with contextual meanings, rendering them pertinent and meaningful in their respective times.

Thus, oral recollections contain traces of the past, the contemporary experiences, and the dialectical interplay between them (Denzin, and Lincoln, 1995). Through the oral recollections, the paper has given prominence to understanding the views and arguments of the people in their environment and culture, and how they practiced against the colonial environmental conservation policies. This cumulative dimension enabled the researcher to interrogate contemporary oral recollections as a window into the world in which the Sukuma culture connected to their nature, and how they felt when the new policies came upon their environment.

As an accumulated form of knowledge shaping individuals and social communities, each generation transmits this knowledge to the succeeding one. The process of transferring memories from one generation to the next involves alterations and consistencies in the nature and character of these memories. According to Shetler (2003), this interplay of change and continuity occurs because new generations tend to reinterpret and

contextualize these memories in alignment with their contemporary social contexts and historical experiences. In the course of this reinterpretation, they may no longer uphold received facts that lack relevance to their current contexts, causing such facts to potentially fade away from contemporary recollections of the past (Shetler, 2007).

Ultimately, oral recollections encapsulate the self-interests and individual agendas of the interviewees. By recalling and narrating their past, and organizing the contributions of their parents in reshaping both their culture and environmental conservation strategies, those providing oral interviews assume the role of memory keepers for the social processes that have molded the evolution of their communities over time. Notably, the elders convey stories about past cultural practices with confidence, leveraging their local authority in cultural preservation. At times, these narratives are presented as objective reality or truth. The researcher interprets these oral recollections as subjective and interpretive constructions employed by the interviewees to comprehend their past culture. Such recollections are subjective in the same manner as any other form of evidence that historians, both Africanists and non-Africanists, use to construct historical knowledge.

Theoretical Underpinnings:

According to Wolf (Ibid), political ecology is the study of how social, political, and economic variables relate to environmental problems and changes. Political ecology examines the ways in which social, political, and economic factors interact to impact the environment. Its ideas aid in comprehending how governments and multinational companies contribute to the disruption of the human-ecological equilibrium under capitalism (Charney, 1994). The social and political aspects of environmental changes are allegedly understated in "scientific" articulations of environmental deterioration that focus on the link between humans and nature (Ibid). This approach made it easier to comprehend how power dynamics impact the way people use the environments in the Simiyu and Shinyanga study areas. The theory was used to examine various colonial and postcolonial Tanzanian policies and practices.

The significance of the meanings ascribed to ecological systems and the impact of human-environment interaction on culture are also examined, along with the nature and causes of environmental changes at various levels of study (Leon, 2002). In this approach (Political Ecology Theory) is where the study's results demonstrate how resources were managed throughout the colonial era and to a lesser extent during the post-colonial era. More importantly, the theoretical approach has been instrumental in exploring the repercussions of colonial environmental conservation policies on the Sukuma environment and culture. Utilizing the theory, the study has scrutinized perceptions and ideas related to African traditional farming, social taboos, hunting practices, and livestock keeping. Furthermore, the theory facilitates an understanding of how these activities interconnect with colonial environmental conservation policies that were perceived as conflicting with Sukuma culture. In its conclusion the results have also demonstrated how communities and NGOs are involved in environmental conservation and the Sukuma culture. The findings continue by discussing the management/government policies' responses to the conflicts between land users and managers over land resources.

The Impact of Environmental Conservation Policies on the Sukuma Culture:

In pursuing this objective, the author has investigated the consequences of environmental conservation policies on the Sukuma culture. The focus is primarily on elucidating how these policies impacted the various facets of Sukuma culture, encompassing traditional farming practices, traditional hunting and gathering methods, and the observance of cultural taboos. These cultural elements are intricately linked to the Sukuma environment. Within this objective, the author has specifically delved into the examination of key environmental conservation policies, namely the Tsetse Fly Act, Soil Conservation Act, Overstocking Policy, and Wildlife Policy.

Tsetse fly Act

The Tsetse Fly Act had a significant impact on the culture of the Sukuma in Shinyanga and Simiyu. According to interviews conducted in Shinyanga, it was revealed that the Tsetse Fly Act had direct implications for

Sukuma culture. The primary objective of the Act was to eliminate tsetse flies in the forests, and this was achieved through the clearance of these forests to prevent the accommodation of tsetse flies. This policy directly influenced Sukuma cultural practices (TNA, Published in Tanzania Government Gazette, 1943).

The "Yenge" practices, for example, employed a forest among the Sukuma for "Ibimbe," or ancestral spirit rites (Makoye, 2003). According to the belief that this forest facilitated connection with ancestral spirits, the Sukuma were able to call out elephants and other animals to foresee crop yields and rainfall. However, many forests were removed when the colonialists implemented the Tsetse Fly Act. As a result, the aforementioned traditions and customs vanished. Furthermore, it was observed that the Act played a role in the decrease of animals in the vicinity of Sukuma homesteads (Interview Ntimba, 2020).

These animals, such as "Mbushi" and leopards, held significance in ritual activities. The considerable impact on their presence was largely attributed to the deforestation initiated by the colonial policy for tsetse fly control starting from the 1920s (ibid). This perspective aligns with Lundgren's (1982) observations regarding the introduction of exotic trees by the colonial government in forest policies. Lundgren (1982) notes that preservation efforts were also directed towards large expanses of miombo woodland to ensure a steady supply of the valuable *pterocarpus angensis* (Lundgren, cited in the same work). A notable forestry development during the British colonial period involved the systematic introduction and testing of exotic trees suitable for plantation production, with key species including pines, cypresses, and eucalyptus (Ibid).

Drawing from the mentioned account, a similar scenario unfolded in Simiyu. Before colonial dominance, there existed a significant well near the Bariadi forest called "habia." It was noted that the water in this well never dried up because cultural taboos prohibited the cutting of trees surrounding it. This well served predominantly as a place of worship, where individuals prayed to their ancestral spirits.

Upon the arrival of the colonialists in Simiyu and Shinyanga, a multitude of environmental conservation policies was introduced, as outlined in an interview with Ntimba (cited in the same work). Among these policies was the Tsetse Fly Act, which mandated the clearing of forests to prevent the accommodation of tsetse flies. The implementation of this act resulted in the widespread clearing of forests, leading to the drying up of the "habia" well. Consequently, the area lost its significance for rituals and worship (Ntimba, 2011, cited in the same work). In a related vein, the clearance of forests, as mandated by the Tsetse Fly Act, was attributed to the disappearance of animals such as elephants. Elephant dung, an essential element used for treating children's ailments among the Sukuma, was affected by this environmental alteration.

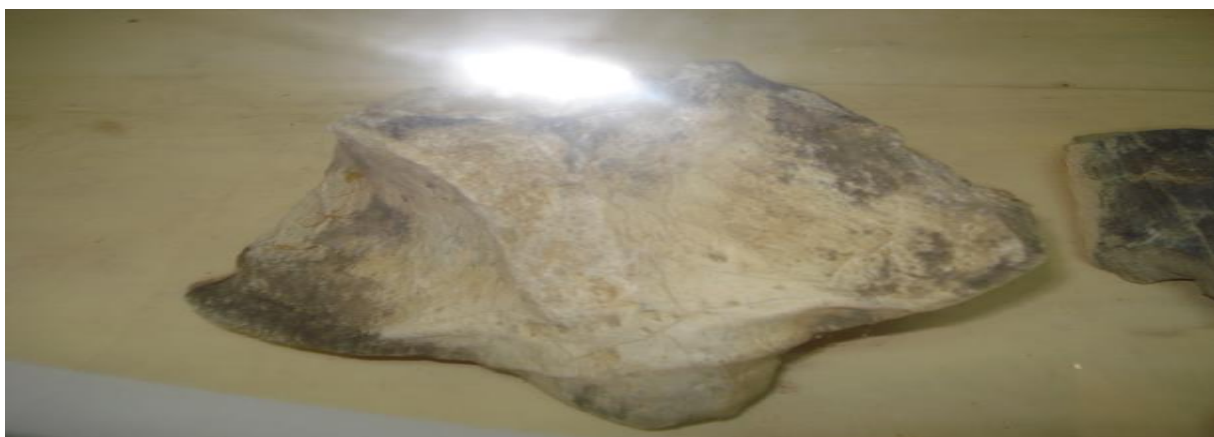


Plate 1: Elephant Bones

Source: Environmental Museum (Maarifa Centre) in Shinyanga

These are remnants of elephant bones left behind after their demise, a consequence of the clearing of forests in Shinyanga and Simiyu, as mandated by the Tsetse Fly Act starting from the 1920s. Numerous elephants perished due to the lack of sustenance resulting from the extensive clearing of the forests.

Within the communities of the Lake Victoria Basin, sustainable harvesting of aquatic plants, including papyrus reeds and water reeds utilized for crafting items such as baskets, sleeping mats, fish cages, and thatching roofs, was a common practice (Lwoga, 2018). However, with the introduction of colonial environmental conservation policies in the region, these practices were abandoned. Some policies directed the local inhabitants to clear forests with the aim of eradicating tsetse flies and eliminating tsetse fly-borne diseases, rendering traditional taboos obsolete (interview with Perter, 2020).

It was asserted that prior to colonial dominance in Simiyu, there existed a forest area known as Maswale in Bariadi. This forest housed 179 medicinal trees and fruits like "mkuyu" and "mkwaju." Traditionally, these trees served as sources of healing (Budoya, 2020; Ntimba, 2020; and Joseph, 2020). Given the aforementioned claim, Tanner (1959) shared this opinion when he claimed that this relationship was broken by the adoption of colonial environmental conservation laws, especially the Tsetse Fly Act. The Maswale forest, which was once a source of traditional remedies, was impacted by the tree-cutting (Tanner, 1959).

Similarly, Koponen (2009) noted that before colonial environmental regulations were enforced, certain woodland grasses were used to make little baskets called "itangwa/jidabuka" in Sukuma. The Sukuma and Sumbwa people used these baskets to gather grain from farms. The aforementioned grasses, however, completely vanished as a result of the colonial environmental conservation laws, especially the Tsetse Fly Act, which forced the locals to remove the bushes and woodlands (Koponen, 2009).



Plate 2: Small Baskets Called "Itangwa/Jidabuka"

Source: Shinyanga Environmental Museum (Maarifa Centre)

The depicted image illustrates one of the small baskets known as "itangwa/jidabuka," traditionally crafted from grasses and ropes. Culturally, these baskets were used by the Sukuma and Sumbwa communities for collecting grains from farms. However, these particular grasses are currently unavailable.



Plate 3: Leopard Skin

Source: Environmental Museum (Maarifa Centre) in Shinyanga

The image above displays a leopard skin that served as a carpet for traditional healers during their rituals and incantations to connect with ancestral spirits (Nchmbi and Alawi, 2024).

An in-depth analysis in Simiyu revealed that colonial environmental conservation policies significantly influenced Sukuma people's culture. Prior to colonialists' entrance in Simiyu, certain regions were labeled as "Yabujije." These so-called forests were used for the worship of ancestral spirits and were thought to produce rainfall. However, the people were forced to cut down trees to stop tsetse flies from lodging there once colonial environmental conservation rules were implemented. The Sukuma people's culture was greatly impacted by this initiative (Nchimbi and Alawi, op. cit).

In a similar way (Alawi, 2014) articulated that in Shinyanga, it was disclosed that colonial environmental conservation policies had diverse effects on local conservation practices. Numerous forests were cleared, leading to the unavailability of certain animals crucial for ritual activities. Animals such as lions, leopards, and "mbushi," along with specific body parts like horns, which were essential for healing practices, became scarce. Traditional healers relied on these animals for their rituals. Drawing from Alawi's (2014) assertion, Koponen (1996), had the same view in his analysis, when he asserts that the colonial environmental conservation policies created an unsustainable situation in which African rights appeared to be simultaneously eradicated and preserved (ibid).

In addition to the impact on animals, certain tree species became unavailable due to the reasons mentioned earlier. Some of these trees, like acacia tortilis, held medicinal properties. For instance, the small roots of acacia tortilis were burned, and the smoke inhaled to alleviate colds and coughing. The fresh pods of this tree were boiled in water and used as a general preventive medicine. Furthermore, the shade provided by the tree was essential for people and lactating livestock, aiding in the production of sufficient milk for both humans and young calves (Barrow & Mlenge, 2003).

Soil Conservation Act

In order to achieve its goals of reducing erosion and conserving soil and farm water resources, this Act attempted to amend the Crown Lands Consolidation Act 1913 and certain other Acts, which resulted in its subsequent amendment in 1938 and was subsequently renamed the Soil Conservation Act of 1938. Simiyu implemented a parallel policy that demonstrated the impact of environmental conservation policies on land use, replacing the traditional cultivation of indigenous crops like millet and sorghum with cash crops like cotton and exotic plants, which represented African traditional crops and agriculture (TNA, Acc. No. 215, Sukumaland Federal Council Minutes, Vol. I 1940).

In another context, it was noted that a species of animal called "Negele" (honey eater) had its skin used by Sukuma diviners. Consequently, these policies diminished and restricted the Sukuma community from obtaining such animals and trees essential for medicinal purposes (Ibid). A similar sentiment was expressed by an interviewee in Shinyanga, who stated, "the colonial Soil Conservation Policy restricted people from getting trees for medicine and some animals for rituals. I'm one of the traditional healers who have been affected by these practices" (Kobela, 2019).



Plate 4: Skin of an Animal Called Negele (Honey eater)

Source: Environmental Museum (Maarifa Centre) in Shinyanga

This represents the skin of an animal known as Negele (Honey eater), utilized in divination practices by the Sukuma and the Sumbwa communities.



Plate 5: Cultural instruments

Source: Shinyanga Environmental Museum (Maarifa Centre)

The depicted image illustrates various cultural instruments employed by witchdoctors, which have a connection to the environment. Among these instruments are horns utilized in the healing process (Nchimbi and Alawi op.cit).

Overstocking Policy

In Shinyanga and Simiyu, among the Sukuma community, the implementation of the overstocking policy had a direct impact on their culture. According to interviews in Shinyanga, the overstocking policy negatively affected traditional commercial grazing practices, as it did not offer any incentive for individual pastoral peasants to reduce their livestock. Consequently, reducing the number of cattle did not result in direct benefits for the pastoral peasants in terms of available land for grazing (interview with Ntimba, 2021). Similarly, Schuknecht (2010) notes those livestock owners perceived the policy as disadvantageous, asserting that cattle were the most valuable and secure form of wealth, providing security during challenging times. Livestock also played a crucial role in the social structure of the tribe, being utilized for customary payments such as dowries (Schknecht, 2010).

Similar views were expressed by Koponen (2009) in Simiyu, who offered a more thorough comprehension of how the colonial era's overstocking program affected several pastoralists. For them, cattle were extremely important, and the policy's mandate to cut herds had a big effect. Since cattle are essential to the Sukuma way of life as a whole, it is stressed that cattle and Sukuma culture are linked. For example, some Sukuma shrouded dead bodies with cow's hide at funerals. Thus, their cultural practices were immediately impacted by the decrease in cattle numbers (Koponen, op. cit).

Wild life policy

Another perspective contends that colonial environmental conservation policies displaced Africans to make way for wildlife management and conservation projects, including the government's initiative to isolate and reserve certain pockets of land (TNA, op cit). According to the Annual Game Department Report, the 1950s witnessed a growing tension between wildlife and people. The Game Ordinance of 1951 revealed that in 1959, the establishment of Serengeti National Park led to the relocation of resident Maasai pastoralists from the park. A subsequent National Park Ordinance mandated the eviction of all inhabitants from the Serengeti and any future national park areas, establishing a significant precedent as the colonial era approached its end (Annual Report, 1956).

Furthermore, it is said that traditional crops and animals utilized in rituals have vanished as a result of environmental conservation laws in Shinyanga and Simiyu. The Sukuma cannot reach some of these animals because they are now in the Serengeti National Park. For instance, these measures made leopard skin, which is highly sought after by traditional healers for ceremonial purposes, unavailable (Annual Report, op. cit).

In another account, respondents in Shinyanga noted that one of the colonial environmental conservation policies affecting the Sukuma was the establishment of the Serengeti National Park and later the Maswa Game Reserve. These reserves prohibited people from accessing wild animals and plants, which were traditionally used for medicinal purposes and rituals. Entry into the reserves required special permission, and individuals found without authorization faced fines or imprisonment as punishment. Consequently, these policies kept the native population away from their environment, where their cultural practices were traditionally conducted (Interview with Kisusi, 2019).

Both Shinyanga and Simiyu it emphasized how colonialists viewed the locals as environmental destroyers and disapproved of their environmental management practices. Policies for environmental conservation were introduced as a result of this attitude. The creation of the Serengeti National Park had another effect on Sukuma culture, limiting their access to certain tree species for medicinal uses and animals for rituals (Alawi, op. cit).

The Annual Report of the Game Department in the Tanganyika Territory similarly reflects the conservationists' concern regarding the excessive destruction of wildlife species in the East Africa Protectorate. Consequently, the colonial government enacted conservation policies to safeguard unique wildlife attractions and species. African methods of natural resource use were viewed as unprogressive or barbaric, prompting the need for elimination. Local inhabitants were prohibited from entering parks and utilizing park resources, including pasture, wildlife, water, and fuel wood—resources vital for the subsistence of indigenous African communities. Traditional African hunting practices were also outlawed, depriving African culture of opportunities for expression (Annual Report, 1952 op cit).

Building on this perspective, Adams & Hutton (2007) note that the declaration of national parks in Rhodesia in 1926 did not recognize the presence of traditional hunters and gatherers. Shrines and sacred places existing within the designated parks were inaccessible to natives, underscoring the impact of these policies on the cultural practices of the indigenous population (Adams & Hutton (2007) op cit).

A similar perspective presented by Majamba (2003) posits that the advent of colonialism in Africa significantly impacted various aspects, including the suppression of traditional hunting rituals within pre-colonial societies in the region. According to Majamba (2003), the colonial wildlife policy primarily aimed at favoring the interests of the white population while dispossessing Africans of ownership rights over natural resources (Majamba, 2003). He contends that in Tanzania, for instance, the policy failed to recognize that certain community members engaged in hunting specific animal species for cultural and traditional rituals (Ibid).

Expanding on Majamba's argument, an interviewee in Shinyanga offers a more detailed perspective by explaining that traditional Sukuma cultural practices were fundamentally grounded in methods of conserving and safeguarding natural resources against overexploitation. This involved the use of taboos and totemic affiliations with localities, as well as various wild flora and fauna species. Additionally, institutions were established to oversee and regulate resource use in a sustainable manner (interview with Kisenge, 2021). The arrival of colonialists disrupted these practices through the imposition of new modern policies focused on environmental conservation. These policies perceived the Sukuma as lacking knowledge in environmental protection, thus disrupting their traditional methods of environmental conservation intertwined with their culture.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper argues that the Sukuma's environment and culture cannot be separated, as colonial environmental policies significantly influenced the dynamics of both. By examining the period from 1922 to the 1950s, this study contributes to the understanding of the intricate connections between environment and

culture among the Sukuma of Shinyanga and Simiyu in Tanzania during the colonial era. Recognizing and appreciating these connections is essential for comprehending the enduring impact of colonial legacies on contemporary environmental and cultural landscapes in the region.

The Sukuma culture in Shinyanga and Simiyu regions was significantly impacted by colonial environmental conservation policies. It is important to highlight that the extent of the impact on cultural aspects increased with the number of colonial environmental conservation policies implemented. The Sukuma people in both regions experienced severe consequences due to these policies. While all the colonial environmental conservation policies played a role in undermining the Sukuma culture, it is evident that the overstocking policy emerged as the most detrimental, inflicting substantial damage on the Sukuma cultural practices.

In post-colonial period, colonial environment conservation policies were inherited and in 2000s local opposition to the loss of access rights to land and forest resources has been triggered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which has resulted in a new paradigm of demand for autonomous governance. The locals see the intervention as an infringement, even though the post-colonial state is the rightful steward of the land. Although community-based management of natural resources is emphasized by both the state and non-governmental organizations, the decentralization of government has resulted in dishonesty and the acceptance of environmental conservation efforts. Property rights have become a socio-political battle, and forms of resistance like "poaching" and "encroachment" may emerge.

RECOMMENDATION

Research on environmental discourses of any historical paradigm can be conducted using the theoretical applications employed in this study. Environmental conservation researchers and academicians must examine and investigate the narratives and organizational models for encouraging more significant local involvement in environmental management in order to enhance the society's culture. It was also suggested that the previously standing of local communities regarding the ownership of environmental resources can be redefined.

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