Social Deviance and Crime in Selected Rural Communities of Tanzania.
Monsieur Stephen Lucas

Résumé
S. A. Lucas — Déviations sociales et crime dans certaines communautés rurales de Tanzanie. A partir de cas de suicides féminins chez les Shambaa, de sorcellerie chez les Nyamwezi et de meurtre motivé par une insulte chez les Plehe, se pose la question des rémanences ou réactions socio-culturelles dans une situation de transformation socio-économique rapide (ici le socialisme agraire tanzanien). La notion de déviance se trouve affectée d'une double relativité qui complique les problèmes de normalisation, que les solutions proposées soient éducatives ou répressives. La comparaison avec certaines théories sur la genèse sociale des névroses en milieu occidental paraît pertinente ici.

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ÉTUDES ET ESSAIS

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Social Deviance and Crime
in Selected Rural Communities of Tanzania

‘One’s main regret is that he has failed to deal adequately with the problem of rural crime, but this puts him in good company, for this is one aspect of deviant behaviour which has seldom been adequately considered anywhere in the world.’

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary obstacles to a correct analysis of rural development problems is methodological in nature. It concerns the very definition of the rural situation to be studied, and is therefore not limited to the more common—albeit related—errors of:

a) treating rural phenomena as isolates rather than integral parts of larger systems;

b) narrowing the theoretical focus and actual collection of data according to the dictates of a single discipline instead of being guided by a multi-disciplinary framework;

c) failing to understand the fundamentally asymmetric power structure of the research enterprise.

As a further complicating factor, all of the above are inter-related so that a single faux pas in most social science analysis is quickly compounded geometrically until the original rural problem is twisted beyond useful recognition. In an essay of this length, I am not going to adhere

2. An interesting critique of the functionalist approach to social science is an essay by A. Mafeje, ‘The Octopus and the Clock’, University of Dar es Salaam, Department of Sociology, 1970, mimeo.

Cahiers d'Études africaines, 63-64, XVI (3-4), pp. 499-518.
to the exhaustive examination of conscience just advocated above; rather, it is my aim to concentrate on some aspects of rural development which I feel are often neglected. These are, if one insists on slicing development into categories, those areas which are usually lumped under the heading ‘social’ or, perhaps, ‘socio-psychological’, as distinct from economic or political. In order to do this, I intend to present in summary form four case studies for consideration, each having what I believe to be rather unique characteristics, which—when taken as an ensemble—should allow us to draw certain preliminary conclusions concerning the importance of the ‘social’ aspects of rural development.

My own position is of course not without bias, nor have the materials and discussion in this paper resulted from some Thomistic spontaneous generation. To speak of the latter point first, I am in no little way indebted to my 1973 criminology students who suffered the first presentation of the study materials and who, through their generous debate, participated directly in re-thinking the methodological issues involved in a much wider range of rural problems than are included in this essay.

As to bias, I admit to relying heavily on the analytical concept of ‘situation’ as it has been developed in recent years by authors such as G. Balandier, F. Fanon, J. Van Velsen, and R. D. Laing, although the latter uses more often than not the word ‘context’. Their writing appears to me to be of singular methodological import, mainly because of the emphasis they give to defining the unit of analysis with reference to the parameters of space and time, in direct relation to the differential group memberships of the individuals involved. This approach requires a fruitful conjuncture of the traditional academic fields of geography and economics with history, sociology, and psychology; it produces as a quality of intellectual endeavour what Mills has called ‘the sociological imagination’ and I do not believe he meant this as a property of a single discipline. A recent study which embodies this spirit of inquiry and which can serve as an example is E. Hobsbawm’s engaging *Bandits*, one of the more penetrating studies of urban-rural interaction published in recent times.

Further to the question of fundamental theme of all good situational analysis is the primordial role assigned to conflict, contradiction, and social tension not as necessary signs of disintegration, breakdown, or malfunction in society but rather as contributory forces in the process of social interaction and historical development. In

5. They are: E. Muhondwa, A. Kyando, O. Mhala, J. Nguma, S. Nyinda, S. Sikazwe, S. Teti; Mrs. R. Tukai; and Misses H. Maimu, C. Makame, J. Mdoe, E. Maambo.
addition to the centrality of contradiction—which thereby affirms an inherent deviance as a normal rather than abnormal state of social being—two lesser ideas will also need to be kept in mind: (1) that the norms (and values and laws), which group spokesmen say guide the behaviour of the group members, in fact affect the membership differentially according to their position in the structure of the group and according to the degree to which the norms and principles may themselves contradict each other; and (2) that the members of any defined social group also belong to other diverse groups which may be in conflict, or that smaller groups are subsumed in larger ones, so that the norms which guide behaviour in the local group may be at odds with the preferred values and customs of the supra-entity. Laing discusses this latter question when he takes up the problem of the ‘rationality’ of a social situation when examined at various levels of the wider system.9

In any given social situation, therefore, it is unimaginable that a single set of guiding values and principles might be discovered which will totally explain the phenomena under study, unless they embody a dialectic which successfully encompasses the dynamics of social contradiction and change.

I. — RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TANZANIA

Nevertheless, in the case of Tanzania, there has been a concerted effort on the part of President Nyerere to set out clearly what the basic principles should be, both in general terms and as they apply directly to the development of rural areas. His first major statement on rural development included an analysis of the precolonial situation, its transformation during the colonial period, and a brief conclusion in which he wrote: ‘... we in Tanzania should move from being a nation of individual peasant producers who are gradually adopting the incentives and ethics of the capitalist system. Instead we should gradually become a nation of ujamaa villages where the people co-operate directly in small groups and where these small groups co-operate together for joint enterprises.’10

The President also enumerated the immediate and long-term objectives of socialism in Tanzania: ‘To build a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities; in which all can live at peace

8. A. COHEN (Deviance and Control, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1966 : 1) makes an affable comment: ‘Why do so many people insist on behaving in certain ways despite rules to the contrary? Or to turn the question around: why, despite the manifest convenience and utility of violating rules, do so many people insist on complying with them so much of the time?’

9. LAING (1968) talks of contexts within metacontexts within metametacontexts, etc.

with his neighbours without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited or exploiting; and in which all have a gradually increasing basic level of material welfare before any individual lives in luxury.11 These objectives were further elaborated at the national level the following year in a document entitled ‘The National Ethic’ which was circulated among members of the Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic One-Party State.12

Now the striking feature of both the analysis of principles and the objectives and ethical guidelines is the emphasis given to their national character, whereas in fact rural areas are simultaneously local entities having certain varied styles of life and self-images even while participating as parts of the Tanzanian nation. Local populations therefore react differently to post-independence national norms just as they reacted differently to the imposition of colonial laws and imported religions. So that unless some incredible homogeneity is achieved, social deviance (or crime, if the norm is enshrined as law) should be expected to occur in rural communities. It is structurally predictable.

All of which leads to a rather interesting question of whether urban or rural communities are the most deviant. Clinard writes that crime rates are higher in cities than in the countryside, and the ‘development corollary’ he proposes is that as the rural areas are opened to increased contacts with the outside, with agents of ‘modernization’, then rural criminal activities will also increase.14 A great deal depends on perspective, but even more depends on the role rural people have in the development process, and on how development itself is defined. As Mao Tse-tung noted in 1930:

‘The development of the struggle has enabled us to leave the mountains for the plains. We have descended physically, but we are still up in the mountains mentally. We must understand the towns as well as the countryside, or we shall be unable to meet the needs of the revolutionary struggle.’

It is perhaps time for Ujamaa Vijijini (Socialism and Urban Development)! For obviously the processes of class formation as discussed in Issa Shivji’s recent papers16 are largely most applicable to the urban elites who, it should be said with reference to the asymmetry of research control mentioned at the beginning of this paper, are busily undertaking

13. The President has also set out plainly the assumptions he sees at the international level in ‘Socialism: The Rational Choice’, a speech delivered on his behalf in the Sudan and reprinted in The Daily News of January 1973.
both research on rural populations and planning of development for rural areas.

To sum up at this point, I would say then that while macro-level analysis of the international and national situations is necessary, it is not sufficient to local rural development needs; this is primarily so because of the decisive roles that may be played by some factors of decidedly local colouration. It is my hope that the case studies which are presented below will serve to illustrate this point.

II. — The Case Studies

Case 1: Pastoralism and the 'Masai Problem'

Perusal of only some of the many volumes that have been written about the Masai of East Africa brings one rapidly to marvel at the diversity of explanations which are given to what at first glance seems to be a disarmingly simple question—what makes the Masai so different?

There is first of all the ecological argument, according to which this people has over time learned to come to terms with a harsh environment where rainfall reliability is so low as to exclude agriculture.17 Thus, the Masai inhabit a land to which none of the nearby populations of Bantu-speaking agriculturalists are prepared to adapt themselves. As Gulliver has pointed out, not only has their reliance on pastoral nomadism set the Masai economically apart from other peoples, but it has also given them a certain autonomy based on a severe self-reliance which reduces to almost nil whatever little the ‘outside world’ has to offer them; the result is a conservative commitment to their established (tried and proven) way of life and a fierce reputation for resistance to change.18

Not that the wider society showed itself to be very understanding of the Masai ‘predicament’. Many years ago, one well-known anthropologist indicted Masai culture as being inexorably determined and dominated by the ‘cattle complex’,19 though in more recent years a cogent rebuttal of this argument has been provided by Schneider in his study of the Pakot.20 Academic researchers aside, one cannot claim that colonial government administrators demonstrated much insight either, as Rigby has pointed out in his biting critique of officialdom’s evolutionist prejudice

against herdsmen.\textsuperscript{21} The danger is, of course, that these beliefs and emotional states will be made part of the post-independence legacy from the past.

The debate may thus be narrowed to two central reference points. The first is internal, \textit{i.e.} how the Masai themselves, as a specific local group, react to their environment by forging a base for economic production, create their culture, and define themselves in relation to other peoples. The second is external and consists of the ways in which the Masai's neighbours, as well as the leaders of the wider society, define the Masai and their role in the new economy of modern society.

As concerns the first, the historical development of East Africa has seen the shift of real power from local entities (‘tribes’)\textsuperscript{22} to colonies and then to the new States of today; but in the case of the Masai—partially, it is argued, because of their greater geographical isolation—there was a continued non-involvement in much of this change, and therefore the perceptual dislocation was, when it did finally occur, considerably greater than for other local minorities who bit by bit were subjected to outside pressure to change. Banow has tried to capture the magnitude of this transformation of the Masai self-image in a comparative study of Kenya and Tanzania, and he concludes that the effects of Masai ‘status reversal’ leave them ‘clearly in a weak position to press their own group interests or to guide their own development’.\textsuperscript{23}

And as for the second (the external reference), outsiders have consistently dealt with the Masai in such ways as to reinforce the process described in the paragraph above. In 1972, a Masai student at the University of Dar es Salaam complained in a brilliantly argued paper that the Masai ‘complex’ is nothing but a ‘miniature of the wider body of misconceptions and prejudice held against the less developed communities by more developed ones’,\textsuperscript{24} and he questioned the extent to which a people can be developed as opposed to their developing themselves. ‘The cattle’, he noted dryly, ‘have received more attention than the Masai.’ The cattle complex seems to have changed camps.

It is not an easy task to sum up the rural situation as it exists in Masailand. But Masai deviance can be readily identified as a not too unusual case of modern development in which a formerly self-reliant


\textsuperscript{24} L. Parkipuny, ‘Reflections on the Masai Predicament’, University of Dar es Salaam, 1972, mimeo.
local society, whose highly egalitarian social values and culturally reinforced self-confidence served its effort to survive in a difficult physical surrounding, now finds that external power has redefined the basic unit of economic production. The interpretative focus must shift from the tribal to the national level, cattle will be required not only for local consumption but for market, and the people themselves will be engaged in new levels of social interaction which will be largely determined by the new behavioural norms of the wider society (school attendance, Swahili language, Western style dress). Hagen once wrote that the basic cause of such change is the perception on the part of the members of some social group that their purposes and values in life are not respected by groups in the society whom they respect and whose esteem they value. The Masai case is complicated by that very paradox: what is non-Masai is by (traditional) definition not worthy of emulation.

**Case 2: Female Suicide in Tanga Region**

Suicide among married women in northern Tanzania would probably not have come to the immediate attention of scholars, had it not been for the rather special circumstances of the means used: a woman commits suicide by breaking her cooking pot and asking that it take her life.

This traditional practice is prevalent among the Shambaa, Bondei, and Zigula peoples of Tanga Region, who—according to their oral traditions—have a common cultural heritage. Women who live in neighbouring populations to the north, west, and south do not follow this custom, although it is reported that intentional pot-breaking can be used to punish unapprehended (and unknown) social offenders, to curse or bewitch others, to make oaths, and in some cases to proclaim divorce of a woman from her husband.

There are then two distinct problems for consideration. The first is the fact of suicide itself, and the second is the somewhat peculiar means used to achieve it. Unfortunately, very little is known about suicide in Africa, since until recently few records were kept, even in areas where its incidence was rather high. A single book by Bohannan, which pays theoretical homage to Durkheim and Malinowski, takes (unsurprisingly) a very functionalist view: ‘suicide is common in situations in which the institutions are inadequate to bind people to their purposes’, and the


26. The first published mention of this custom was a brief note by R. E. Moreau, a British colonial administrator, who wrote an article entitled ‘Suicide by “Breaking the Cooking Pot”’, *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 12, 1941: 49-50.

author goes on to suggest that further study of suicide in Africa should focus on the role situation of the victim. 28 I have singled out the Shambaa for consideration on this point.

The following case histories were collected in 1970 by A. Mshihiiri, 29 a sociology student from the University of Dar es Salaam, and they provide excellent insight into the nature of the problem at hand:

History I: Ali and Christine

In 1964, somebody by the name of Ali married a certain girl known as Christine from Mtae. Unfortunately, Ali didn’t pay the dowry to the father of Christine. It is customary in Shambala society to value one’s daughter if she got married to a man who managed to pay dowry. As such Christine was not valued by her parents and other people from the place she came from. As a result of this, she pressed her husband Ali to pay the dowry, but Ali never took her words into account. At times Ali answered his wife rudely. Such negative response angered Christine. She resorted to kutua nyungu. Then she died. What was the outcome of this act?

As usual the kinsmen of Christine started questioning themselves, ‘Why did she die?’ Fortunately enough, the neck of Christine swelled and sweat was also found. Therefore the only thing to do was just to go to the oracle for proof of whether it was true that she died because of kutua nyungu. From the oracle they discovered that she died because she pressed her husband to pay the dowry but Ali never responded positively. For this reason she resorted to kutua nyungu and eventually died. For her kinsmen it was just to seek revenge. Ali was a bus driver on the Malo to Tanga route. Now the kinsmen of Christine went to a powerful African magician in whom they believed and who, without delay, manipulated his science. The result of this was that while Ali was driving, he cried to his fellow passengers, ‘Oh! My stomach is full of nails and I can’t breathe’; then he died while the bus was in the slowest speed. Fortunately enough, one of his turnboys was in the front seat and so he stopped the bus while the driver lay dead. Probably one would think that there would be a chain of deaths because of vengeance on one another, as in the case of Christine and Ali. Normally, people are never in sympathy if somebody causes his wife to resort to kutua nyungu. As such, in the case of Ali, nobody was moved by his death because he was the one who caused the death of Christine. On the whole, it acts as a check and balance system for the Shambala. Hence it is a social sanction if you wish to call it that.

29. A. Mshihiiri’s fieldwork has been collected as a single report and will appear as a chapter ‘Kutua Nyungu in Shambala Culture’, in S. Lucas, ed., Pottery as Social Force, forthcoming.
History 2: The Prisoner’s Wife

This year, 1970, one woman died at Mgwashi because of kutua nyungu. This woman died in the following way. Her husband was at Tanga Maweni Prison, jailed for two years. The woman alone at home never confined herself to her home boundaries. She played sex with other people in the area. In the course of doing so, she got pregnant. She tried to get rid of this locally by using some abortive medicines but she failed. Such acts to the Shambala are a very shameful thing. Now, since it would be known to the people, she was very much embarrassed. She didn’t want this to be known and so she resorted to kutua nyungu for she was afraid that if her husband returned from prison and found her in such a shameful state, it would be too much for her and she would not feel at home but would have to leave. So she spoke the ritual words cited in earlier pages, and for two days she couldn’t speak. Unfortunately, people took her to Bumbuli hospital where she died immediately. This time the experts of kutua nyungu did not play any role except to try and protect the people who were thought to have been included in the plot.

History 3: The Childbirth Offerings

Another case where kutua nyungu took place concerned a girl of 18 years of age. In 1968, this girl was married to somebody who was not preferred by her father. She was warned not to marry the chap but she never listened to this. She got married at her own choice. They stayed peacefully together and within that first year she delivered a child. According to traditional custom, the delivery took place at her father’s house. The father slaughtered a goat so as to show goodwill to his daughter. This is her vegetable [meat]. When this was over, the father expected his son-in-law to slaughter another goat to show his own response to his wife. Unfortunately, the son-in-law failed because he was not well off. But this is traditional law and custom that if your wife bears a child you are required by the law to give her meat and it must be a goat or cow. It depends on the status of the person concerned and also one’s economic position. Usually a goat is the minimum. Since the first goat was finished and the second one was not available, the daughter informed her father that she needed more meat. What the father replied didn’t appease the daughter. He said, ‘I told you and warned you not to marry such a man but you insisted, now can you see your choice!’ More than this, he insulted his daughter.

The daughter didn’t take her father’s words into account. Finally, the father slaughtered a second goat for his daughter. Thereafter, things went peacefully and in order. But this year, 1970, that daughter delivered a child again. Her father slaughtered a goat as usual; it got finished and the son-in-law had nothing to offer.
The daughter requested her father for more meat. This time, the father responded in an angry tone, with more abuses. Such a response angered his daughter very much. As a result of this, she decided to resort to *kutua nyungu* because she believed that her father didn't love her any more. So the only solution to this was to disappear for ever into the land of no return. She broke the pot and within two days she was dead. Calamity was in the family; people blamed the father for having killed his daughter but then it was too late.

The words spoken were: 'Iwe nyungu, ni weo nedikia, nekuita mtoi, nekuhakia na kukufuia, umbighwe ni wayye na unavua ni wayye, kwa ivyohu hambii ni weo mweika maisha yetu ivie na nakutua hangwe nave unikome na kunusha mwe inu dunia sa ivyo nave ni kutuievyo kwa sababu tale hanikunda, kia ni hevyaiya anikanaka.' ('The pot is our sole life, we use it for fetching water, cooking, bathing, moreover the pottery-makers are women. Therefore I break you so that you could do the same to me and take me to the underworld because my father doesn’t love me any longer for he insults me whenever I deliver. Therefore it is better to die rather than having him see me.') Surely, she died and the father blamed himself for causing that.

There are more cases of *kutua nyungu* but the words are always the same, with some slight alterations. From the three histories given above, a common theme can be readily discerned: the Shambaa woman who commits suicide does so when she is faced by extreme social embarrassment or when she is greatly angered. Among the patrilineal Shambaa, she appears to have no other recourse, being very dependent on male sanctions—from her father and male kinsmen as well as from her husband. In Winans' words, 'she retains strong links with her own lineage which are primarily expressed in terms of her father's continuing ritual responsibility for her well-being.' Divorce is rare, and the woman's chances of remarrying if she does leave her husband are not good. She runs the great risk of being socially ignored, until that day when—as an older person cut off from family support—she will present a fine target for witchcraft accusations.

It is not my intention to examine the problem of the cooking pot in this essay, but only to note *en passant* that the symbolism of life and death is bound up with pottery work and the use of pots in the cultural practices and folklore of many East African societies. Also, it should be noted that, as Mshihiri himself points out, the process of *kutua nyungu* can be reversed if the act is discovered in time. It may therefore be a final test of a husband’s concern, should he be care enough to check the whereabouts of his wife’s pots!

This would not be unreasonable to assume, as research by Laing and

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Esterson in psychiatry\textsuperscript{31} and Bott in sociology of the family\textsuperscript{32} have discovered. For it must be remembered that the married woman is part of a network, or social \textit{nexus}, which greatly influences her behaviour; thus, the wife's suicide is a product of group interaction and is not an isolated egoistic act. Social deviance and crime of this kind are therefore much more 'socially intelligible'—to use Laing's words about schizophrenic behaviour\textsuperscript{33}—than is generally supposed to be the case. So that, seen in this light, the decision to commit suicide may not be the last act of a wife who has been crushed socially by her station, but rather a statement of principle and a warning to the institutionalized group she belongs to. Clinard writes that, in the West, 'most attempts at suicide are carried out in a setting which makes intervention possible or probable'.\textsuperscript{34} The real thing is achieved only when redress of grievance or alternate solutions are unavailable.

The kinds of material that have been presented in this case study are such that they would rarely draw the attention of a development planner at any level. Yet, if the social aspects of rural development are to be heeded, then the family structure which serves as a basic cell to most village organisation must be allowed to develop also and in such a way that the individuals who make it up are not sacrificed to the institution for its own sake. Suicide is prohibited by Tanzanian law; but to date—in the case of the Shambaa at least—its structural and cultural causes are not brought to rein.

Case 3: Witchcraft and Underdevelopment

The practice of witchcraft is punishable by law\textsuperscript{35} in Tanzania, but the quantity of unapprehended offenders is thought to be enormous and it continues to be recognized as an on-going phenomenon which development efforts have largely failed to stem.

To a certain extent, this may be because witchcraft's traditional pejorative status as a 'backward' social custom encourages most leaders in Africa to pass over its existence without a word of official pronouncement concerning it; at the very least, one must admit that no concrete development projects are undertaken expressly in view of its eradication (although education may be proffered as the indirect antidote—I shall return to this possibility in the concluding section).

And yet, to a surprising degree, local development projects—be they urban, rural, or otherwise—are in varying ways affected at some

\textsuperscript{32} E. Bott, \textit{Family and Social Networks}, London, 1957.
\textsuperscript{33} Laing and Esterson 1964 : 13.
\textsuperscript{34} Clinard 1968 : 507.
\textsuperscript{35} 'Ordinance to Provide for the Punishment of Witchcraft and of Certain Acts Connected therewith', \textit{Laws of Tanzania}, Cap. 18, Suppl. 66-70.
stage of their implementation by the craft of witches at work. As an example of the diversity of this social affliction, here below are some introductory paragraphs which were written in 1971 by N. Mlolwa, then a student at the University of Dar es Salaam, who was attempting an analysis of witchcraft and underdevelopment in Kahama District:

‘Witchcraft in Unyamwezi is basically detrimental to development. Perhaps the only merit it enjoys is its maintenance of a kind of social cohesion based on fear: when the ordinary individual thinks of wronging others he must keep in mind the possibility of being bewitched in return. This is especially so since the nature of witches is such that they are hard to detect and therefore cannot be easily avoided!

Despite this merit of witchcraft, when it comes to development we find many cases where progress was hindered because of the practice of witchcraft. To show how witchcraft has really acted as a barrier to progressive trends we refer hereafter to several cases.

A well-known instance is that of replacing the thatching of buildings with corrugated iron sheets. Some Nyamwezi may have acquired some wealth in one way or another. These people may have gone away from their homes to places where they learnt modernity. But at home they did not dare, until very recently, to replace their thatched-roofed houses with iron sheets. They were afraid of being bewitched. But why bewitched? Because they would be thought of as being too rich and different from their fellows. It was not safe to be better off than the rest of society.

If one cultivates an extra large plot of land for one’s crops, society often raises eyebrows. ‘How has such-and-so managed to sow so wide an area? He must have been doing it with the assistance of extra hands, those of mitunga [that is, transformed human beings who are thought to be invisible helpers who do manual work under a master].’ This is what actually happened with the family of the writer of this essay. At home we happen to put an extra effort into sowing large plots of land and as a result we get plenty of harvested crops. Now, it happens that we have sometimes been branded to have used mitunga. Thus when my elder brother wanted to get married, he approached a certain girl and proposed to her. She would have agreed but for the rumours that spread. Some said she would not find a home to live in. And others said she would not even fill the role of an in-law. In preparing porridge, for instance, she would have to take the ladle out of the pot now and then and beat about the place to scare away the mitunga who would be around to take some shares if not restrained. So she heeded the people’s

rumours and lost a chance of being incorporated into a relatively well-to-do family.

*Ujamaa* too is meeting strong resistance in Unyamwezi. People are afraid to go and live together. The idea of different families from different clans coming together and living together is unthinkable to some of the Nyamwezi. For how can they be assured that all the individuals there will be good people? Some of the *wajamaa* may be witches who will annihilate their foes. Memories are still fresh of how many large villages disintegrated in the years just before the *Mzungu* (European) came in. At that time, people were living together because as large groups they could wage successful wars against other tribal groups and thus avoid being taken as slaves. But life was precarious and savage. When the inter-tribal wars stopped, people continued to live together but they were working individual plots. It appears that at a later stage this peace was destroyed from within by witches, who managed systematically to kill people in the villages until the community could stand it no more. All had to leave.

Furthermore, going to live in an *ujamaa* village would mean relinquishing the shrines of one's ancestors. The ancestors will be angry for being neglected in prayer and sacrifices at their traditional shrines. Thus, the drought last year was attributed to retaliatory measures by the ancestors. They were angered, it was said, by those who had gone to live in *ujamaa* villages and so they withheld the rains.

The examples which have been enumerated above apply in other areas of Tanzania as well, even to this day! In Kigoma Region, for instance, at Ujiji and at Kigoma itself an individual would not dare build a modern house without first taking the necessary precautions against sorcery. And therefore there are hardly any individuals who have gone very far towards modernizing their dwellings.

Again in Unyamwezi, other examples that depict how far innovation was impeded can be found during the period of the colonialist reign. Examples are many, such as the refusal to send one's children to school, or the refusal to use modern medicines.

It is my contention that these examples *mutatis mutandis* can be discovered countless times across the width and breadth of East Africa; their cumulative effect poses an immense obstacle to development. But it would be dangerous at this stage of our knowledge of this phenomena to leap to hasty conclusions concerning witchcraft. Many authors today assert that it exists as a body of beliefs ‘for explaining misfortune’,37 while others see it as a mechanism for the resolution of social conflict: ‘... accusations of sorcery bring to the surface, and thus to the possibility of adjustment, conflicts that have eluded settlement by the machinery of conciliation such as joking and avoidance relationships and

the arbitration of the Chief's court.'\textsuperscript{38} Others take a position entirely opposed to the latter statement; for them, 'witchcraft beliefs enable a society to go on functioning in a given manner, fraught with conflicts and contradictions which the society is helpless to resolve. Thus witchcraft beliefs absolve the society from a task apparently too difficult for it, namely, some radical readjustment'.\textsuperscript{39} Could it be that witchcraft and sorcery are intricately tied up with development and social change in Africa because they are essentially part of the contradiction of evolving social forms whose dialectic has been completely misinterpreted by Western anthropological analysis? Turner, in a forthright article, states flatly that the fault for this weakness of analysis 'lies with the declining adequacy of the theoretical frames employed'.\textsuperscript{40}

Without pretending to exhaust the debate on this issue, I believe the following points must be kept in mind:

\begin{itemize}
  \item [(a)] A central theme in much witchcraft case material is its egalitarianism. In Mlolwa's words, 'it was not safe to be better off than the rest of society.' Interestingly enough, this 'leveling effect' seems to operate both ways in that not only do witches practise their craft in order to get unwarranted wealth (\textit{viz}. Mlolwa's information above), but also those who do demonstrate innovation may be thought of as having been bewitched. A. Nyange,\textsuperscript{41} presently a University of Dar es Salaam student, recently wrote the following about a visit he made in 1973 to a Gogo elder in the south of Dodoma District:

  'I once visited a \textit{mgoli} who has over 400 cows but who was still sleeping on a skin in a house that did not have a door; when I said to him that it would do him better if he sold some cows so that he could buy a bed, a mattress, and build a good house, he replied 'I will sound mad! All this time I have been sleeping on the skin as my father did [, . . .] now if I go out and buy a bed and a a mattress people would think I have been bewitched!''

  (b) This raises the very important question of whether, in terms of the political economy of the situations in which witchcraft is practised, the egalitarianism mentioned above is actually lived or whether it is part of a false consciousness which permits those in power to better hide manipulation of the situation to their own benefit. Witchcraft, after all, is by consensus a form of power, although its realm is outside the normal sphere of secular exercise. Interesting enough, both Marx and

\textsuperscript{40} V. Turner, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery : Taxonomy versus Dynamics', \textit{Africa} XXXIV (4), 1964 : 314.
\textsuperscript{41} Written as part of the working papers of the Mtera Social Survey, A. Nyange's report is 'Ugogo : A General Overview', 1973.
Durkheim would no doubt agree that the supernatural or extraordinary power claimed for witches has social meaning as an ideological expression of the socio-economic relations obtaining in the society where they operate. Unfortunately, mostly due to the bias against the use of marxist models in much of the anthropological work in Africa, proper data correlating witchcraft cases with political economic background material is non-existent. A start is apparently in the making, however, if the works by Meillassouix and by Terray can be referred to as an example. In view of my own data, and if I understand their arguments correctly, this would mean that in societies where rigid class formation has not occurred and in which material surplus is not so plenty as to come to be unequally distributed in a degree which is socially meaningful, there may exist other inequality which is based on the unequal distribution of 'culturally created surplus' such as heshima (respect), certain ritual power, or age.

(c) Next, is it possible that 'witchcraft' is becoming a facile residual category which is used by people to describe situations which they themselves know perfectly well are not contaminated but for which no other immediate explanation is available? In other words, is witchcraft becoming a scapegoat? This argument was—to my knowledge—first advanced by M. Swartz in 1969 during his discussion of the differences between urban and rural witchcraft accusations. Swartz writes that 'although the number of competitions which are likely to engender witchcraft is reduced by the type of relations often or usually found between city competitors, the results of the competition may require explanation for the loser'. In a different context, B. Hall and I found a similar phenomenon during the 1970 national election in Tanzania, where the hoe symbol used by some candidates came to constitute for voters the explanation of the voting results. This question is therefore directly related to paragraph (b), where the problem of false consciousness is discussed.

(d) Lastly, too little attention has been paid to the psychological or socio-psychological aspects of witchcraft and sorcery. One of the few


43. See my attempt to apply this general idea to a well-known African institution, the 'joking relationship', in 'The Role of Utani in Eastern Tanzanian Clan Histories', a paper presented at the annual conference of the American Society for Ethnohistory, Edmond, Okla., October 1973.


real efforts to examine this problem in the East African context is by L. Kato of the Law Faculty (University of Dar es Salaam) who set out in a long essay his own thoughts on the linkages between ‘the fear of the effect of witchcraft practices and what psychiatrists have called functional psychosis’. If we re-examine Marwick’s work on witchcraft in Central Africa and note his persistent emphasis on the fact that its use and function in a social situation are related to conflict and tension, then we can very easily see that the psychological states produced by the aforesaid strain are akin to socially defined mental disorders as Laing described them in his own work. It is, however, important in this respect not to lose sight of the socio-economic conditions which give rise to psychological phenomena in a population, and which are in their turn acted upon by people who have been thereby affected.

Case 4: Basic Personality versus Class Struggle in Ismani

Ismani is a division in Iringa Region; it was here that, in December 1971, the Regional Commissioner, Dr. W. Klerru, was shot by a peasant farmer named Mwamwindi. The subsequent trial and conviction on murder charges of the latter was reported daily in the local Swahili and English press (mainly Uhuru, The Nationalist and The Standard; these latter two were merged in May 1972 to become The Daily News), where it was alleged that Klerru had insulted Mwamwindi and thus provoked him to violence.

Of interest to our study here is the fact that the prosecution argued the case in relation to its political economic class characteristics, while the defence rested its case with witness after witness who testified to the reputed sensitivity to insult and the violent response that this was bound to cause on the part of any member of the Hehe. In short, it was a debate that was carried on at two levels of analysis, between on the one hand historical principles of the class struggle and on the other the psychological principles of the ‘basic personality’!

Analysis of the economic situation in Ismani at the time of the crime is fairly complete, recent research having only just been published by A. Awiti. Earlier background papers on the same and related topics were done by R. and D. Feldman. All in all, the picture presented is

fairly clear: in Ismani a growing individualization of the land tenure system was taking place, with increasing class formation and the appearance of overt resistance to the national policy of socialism in the rural sector.50

As to the argument about Hehe fierceness, legends abound ever since the time of Muyugumba and Mkwawa,51 who fought neighbours first to create the Hehe chiefdom and then—under the leadership of the latter—stood firm for years against the German colonialists. Early anthropological accounts like that of Brown and Hutt (1935) attest to the Hehe ruggedness of character.52 So much so, in fact, that a Western psychologist included them in a wide comparative study of four East African peoples (the other three were the Kamba, Pokot and Sebei); the conclusion he came to was that the Hehe are astonishingly ‘sensitive to insult; a mild slight may give grave offense and precipitate great anger, an anger that may easily burst into physical onslaught’.53 Because of the quick escalation in such situations, Edgerton and Winans54 wrote in 1964 that ‘the expectation of affront constantly plagues men and women alike and makes them extraordinarily sensitive to insult’. They go on to give the following court case:

‘Insult is viewed as a grave offense and courts are not loath to exact fines and award compensation in any cases of this sort brought to them. The following case heard in the court of a sub-chief illustrates this type of litigation (Kalenga, N.A. 177/61).

Complaint: The defendant, Gidalika, insulted the woman Siyagumunyamale without reason and before many witnesses.

Defendant: I admit I insulted this woman but I was only joking with this grand-mother and I did not intend to harm her.

Siyagumunyamale: This woman said that I was a dirty old thing and this made me sad to be called that before many people who were there drinking pombe and enjoying themselves. I am not dirty and I never harmed this woman. Why should she abuse me so that many people can hear and despise me?

Judgement of the Court: Although the defendant says she was joking, she joked before many people and caused this woman Siyagumunyamale so much pain and therefore she is guilty as charged.

50. Other papers on the general economic conditions of Ismani area are available from the Bureau of Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning and Economic Research Bureau, both institutes of the University of Dar es Salaam.


54. E. Winans and R. Edgerton, ‘Hehe Magical Justice’, American Anthropologist LXVI (4, Part 1), 1964: 747-748. It is not probable that the ‘joking’ referred to in this case is the institutionalized joking called witanj; otherwise the Court would have found differently, if Hehe traditional law were respected. For further information, see N. S. Chalamila, ‘Utani Relationships: The Hehe’, in S. Lucas, ed., Utani Relation in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, I, 1974.
Although there is great emphasis on etiquette, tempers are explosive and both verbal abuse and physical assault occur impulsively. A male informant explained this in the following fashion: ‘When men become angry, no words alone will stop them [. . .]. You must hold them or they will kill each other. An angry man cannot think, he can only kill.’

So that even though the ethnographic evidence would seem to be sufficient to support belief in the existence of a volatile Hehe character in the tradition of A. Kardiner’s ‘basic personality’, it appears to be a singular distortion of the situation to argue that this was the single dominant causal factor in the murder case.

**Conclusion**

As stated in the introduction, it has not been my objective to bring this material forward in order to proclaim the primacy of the ‘social’ or ‘socio-psychological’ problem in the pantheon of rural development priorities for action, although I would certainly argue on behalf of its pertinence. For from this pot pourri of social case materials comes ample evidence concerning the existence of an immense variety of rural situations in Tanzania. They bear witness to the clash of social classes in process of formation, to the conflict between local and national interests, to contradictions of modern norms with traditional values and religious interpretations which vary from group to group, and to the inner tension of social change produced as outmoded socio-economic structures and conservative beliefs strain to hold fast against the construction of a new economic base and the diffusion of progressive ideology.

Its first lesson to us is that social deviance (or crime as a special case thereof) is an incredibly relative category to define, but that difficulty notwithstanding all societies do establish what they mean by one form or another of it, until that time shortly thereafter when history sees outmoded most of what was set out to be ‘permanently’ respected and abided by. I am saying therefore that the understanding of this fact should considerably affect our appreciation of what social deviance really is when we encounter instances of it on a first-hand basis.

Secondly, a practical conclusion we might draw from the cases above is that simple legislation, administrative decrees, or chiefly fiat, while perhaps necessary for strategic reasons of State, have never proved sufficient to alter more than superficial behaviour. Just because the Masai shed their shuka cloths in exchange for Texas blue-jeans, has a fundamental change in their socio-economic condition occurred? And if Shambaa women had their cooking pots confiscated, would they

no longer commit suicide? As for the Witchcraft Ordinance, which was first promulgated in 1928, has it in fact amounted to more than a colonial government’s official admission that witchcraft exists? Rhetorical questions are endless, and answers are few. Perhaps because the only true satisfaction to a rhetorical question is provided by a rhetorical answer.

Some serious attempts at suggesting solutions have however been made. President Nyerere himself wrote that ‘within the unity of Tanzania there is also much diversity so that it would be foolish for someone in Dar es Salaam to try to draw up a blueprint for the crop production and social organization which has to be applied to every corner of our large country’. And the recent proposal of a plan for decentralization—which is now in the early stages of implementation—provides official follow-through on his statement. Furthermore, in his ‘Conclusion’ to Socialism and Rural Development, the President goes on to suggest how social change could be achieved: ‘It is not a question of forcing our people to change their habits. It is a question of all of us together making a reality of the principles of equality and freedom which are enshrined in our national policy of Tanzanian socialism.’ These are fine words, but there is a danger that many will believe the words without realizing what concrete action must be taken lest the words correspond to an empty aspiration. And I am particularly concerned that in this regard education be not misconstrued as an immaculate panacea.

Educational institutions are, after all, part of social superstructure. They can influence to some degree other institutions in the superstructure and they may even produce some change—if their cumulative effects are massive enough—in the basic social and economic relations which arise from a specific mode of production. But I believe their real effect is minimal compared to the enormous belief we have ascribed to their potency.

To take a single example, that of witchcraft beliefs and practices, two authors have recently suggested that education is the proper solution to this problem:

‘To eradicate this belief completely among our people we have to start from where they are. This will enable us to start educational programmes taking into account the concepts people have regarding witchcraft and sorcery. Such education should aim at providing something better to replace this belief instead of ridiculing or illegalizing it.’

‘The purpose of this legislation is to eradicate witchcraft practices as well as to allay fears in witchcraft; but as we very well know, witchcraft, like belief in

58. NYERERE 1967.
religion or racism, may not be eradicated by the stroke of the pen and fortuitous prosecutions. As it will be elaborated later, the cure, if this is an appropriate expression, of all this is the removal of ignorance by introducing a scientific view of the world through educating the masses just as psychoanalysis treats those schizophrenics who are treatable.60

In my view, and thus I come full circle to where this paper began, trying to change the beliefs and norms and values of people will fail if the basic social situation within which they act remains unchanged. The problem is therefore not how to ‘cure’ believers in witchcraft, nor to ‘teach’ Shambaa women that they should not break their cooking pots, nor to instruct Regional Commissioners not to insult Ismani peasant farmers! The crux of the matter lies in the fundamental social conflict and contradiction of the situation itself; these can only be resolved when that situation is radically transformed to another stage of relationship. This is the constant task which characterizes Man.

Needless to say, there is no reason to think that this latter existence at a new level, once achieved, will be free of its own kind of dialectical movement. Unless, of course, the system has achieved the final equilibrium of rigor mortis.


S. A. Lucas — Déviations sociales et crime dans certaines communautés rurales de Tanzanie. A partir de cas de suicides féminins chez les Shambaa, de sorcellerie chez les Nyanwezi et de meurtre motivé par une insulte chez les Hehe, se pose la question des rémanences ou réactions socio-culturelles dans une situation de transformation socio-économique rapide (ici le socialisme agraire tanzanien). La notion de déviance se trouve affectée d’une double relativité qui complique les problèmes de normalisation, que les solutions proposées soient éducatives ou répressives. La comparaison avec certaines théories sur la genèse sociale des névroses en milieu occidental paraît pertinente ici.