

Cover Page



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Nilotic, as well as Cushitic and Khoisan variants, mostly relative to respective population group sizes. Compared to other countries in the region it is one of the lowest ranking, measured to the national basic needs' poverty line, where, according to the Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, 38% per cent of the people are currently situated. The role of rural agriculture is dominant, as an estimated 80% of all available labour is employed in local produce, while the sector in its entirety yields about half of the gross production. It implies that the dependence on this sector and the economic bias is large, but Tanzania is also equipped with many natural resources which have not yet been submitted to concessions, and their contribution to the development of the country is still subject of assessment. Regarding regional stability Tanzania stands out, and even the influx of refugees from regional neighbours Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Congo, has in the short term not led to tangible disruptions, although their impact on environment or local economic features may be felt in certain areas of the country. Overall, the consolidation of traditions and lifestyle is evident, as well as the adaptation to the wildlife conservation parameters which restricted the movement of local groups.

The National Bureau of Statistics reports that for a projection until 2035, the population growth of the country will decrease from 3.1 percent in 2013 (at 46,3 million) to 2.8 percent in 2035 (at 89,2 million). Tanzania's mainland population growth rate is expected to decrease from 3.1 in 2013 (at 45 million) to 2.8 percent in 2035 (at 86,8 million). As for Infant Mortality Rates (IMRs) for the mainland, they are expected to be reduced from 43 / 1,000 live births in 2013 to 13 / 1,000 live births in 2035, for both genders. Tanzania is currently still considered one of the lesser developed countries, while GDP growth revised in 2018 reached 6.8%. The country has recorded a relatively strong economic progress over the last years, ranking 22nd worldwide in 2014. A per capita income from ca. \$ 950 and a Gini index around 37.8 are currently the standard references, while the poverty level is estimated at 33.6% (rural) 21.7% (urban), excluding the capital with a 4.2% rate. The nation's development index of 0.488 makes it rank 152nd out of 187 classified countries. After the discovery of natural gas coupled with a favourable GDP growth, the chance of reaching a middle-income status became feasible in a longer term. In spite of these movements, apparently 80% of all transactions are outside the formal sector, a substantial challenge in securing revenue for the government, including the budgeting for health services (ref. CCS III, WHO 2016-2020)

4.2. Serengeti District Profile.

Serengeti District Council is one of the eight local authorities which make up the Mara Region with its headquarters in Mugumu. It is one of the larger rural councils in Tanzania (*compiled from: Serengeti District Council Comprehensive Health Plan 2015, via Public Health Dept.*)

The district is features sloping areas from the south and west lowlands to the highlands in the north and eastern part scattered with hills and mountains series parallel to Mara River. The central and southern part of the district are covered with plains and hills intersected with seasonal streams towards Rubana and Grumeti rivers flowing to Lake Victoria. It has a total of 10,373 square kilometres of which Serengeti National Park occupies 7,265 square kilometres, Ikorongo Game Reserve 189,6 km², and Grumeti Game Reserve 68,3 km². The remaining open area is projected at 2,456 km². In total an estimated 659 km² thereof are in use for agriculture, livestock and as residential areas. Serengeti borders to Tarime in the North, Rorya in the North West, and the Republic of Kenya in the North East, Arusha region in the East, Shinyanga region in the South,

Bunda district in the South West and Musoma district in the West. Administratively the district is divided into one Parliamentary constituency, 4 divisions, 28 wards, 85 villages, 335 *vitongoji* or hamlets and 37,356 households.

The district is divided into three agro-ecological zones namely high, middle and lowlands. It has a rainy season from August to April, whereby the rainfall pattern differs with altitude where the highlands experience averages above 1,200 mm, the midlands between 600 – 1000 mm, but the lowlands may experience dry spells as low as 100 mm per annum. In favourable years, the average rainfall in the highlands can be as high as 1,235.4 mm while the midlands can show up to 1,023.7 mm. The district reaches average temperatures around 26° C during the rainy season running up to 30° C during the dry season.

According to the Mara Region projections, the district is currently estimated to have a population of 243,270 (women 124,067 and 119,203 men) in the year 2012. The population density is expressed as 45 per km² with the exclusion of the designated wildlife areas, and the groups are scattered over all arable land with extensive mingling and interaction. The ethnic groups are heterogeneous in culture and practice, although they share some customs, norms and values. They include Ikoma, Ngoreme, Issenye, Natta, Sukuma, Kurya, Luo, Zanaki and Jita, among others.

Regarding gender related topics which are currently on the Government's social and health agenda; though on a small scale, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM - *clitoridectomy*) is still being practiced in secrecy. Incidentally there are arranged marriages for under 18's, relative low education participation for young girls, polygamy, and female marriage (*a.k.a nyumba ntobu au nyumba mboke*) i.e. pragmatic unions as an alternative to protect single women from social exclusion or economic abuse.

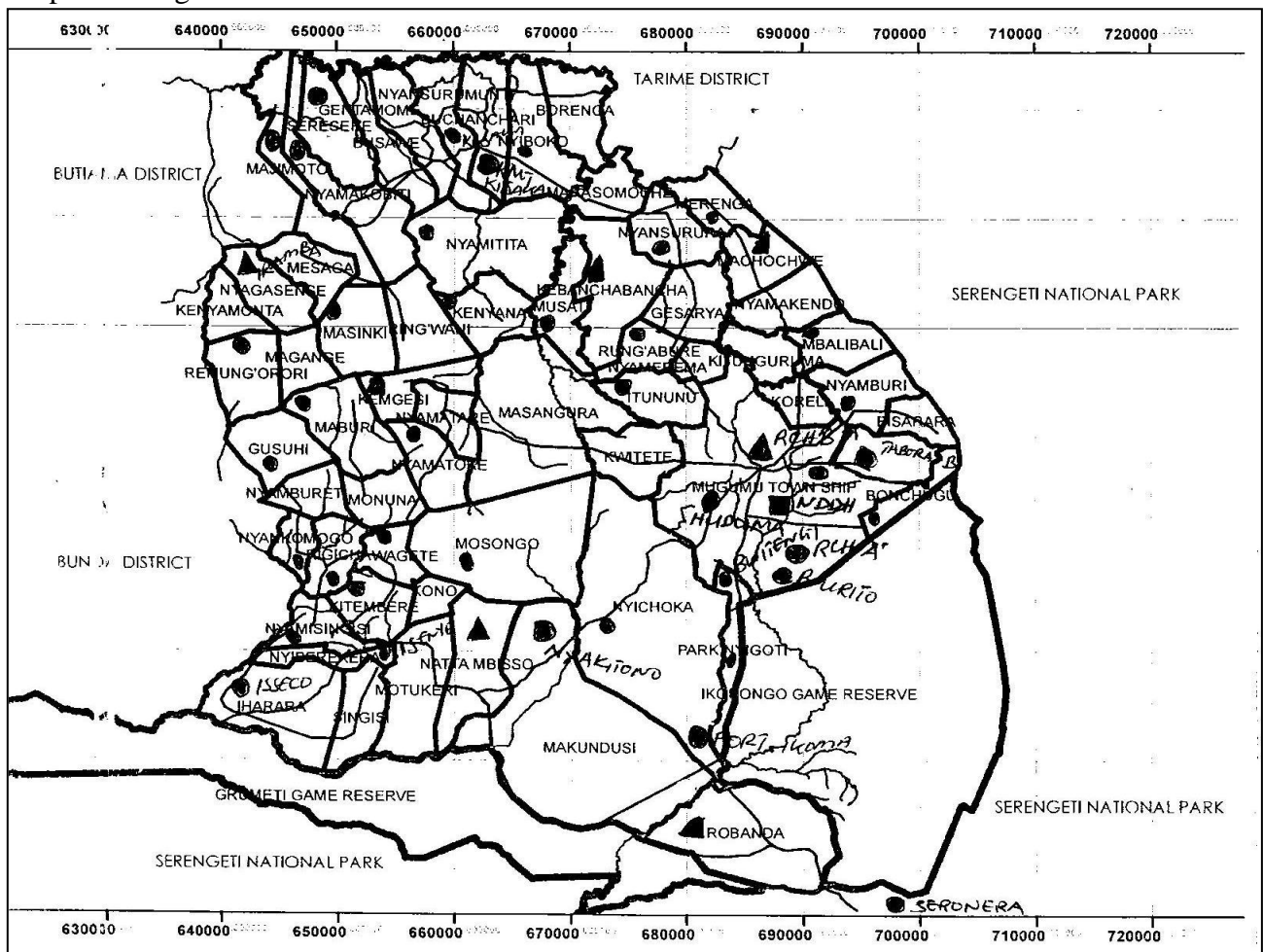
The road network of 1,189 km is largely unpaved, and only accessible for an estimated 70% during the rainy season. There is a connection to the National Electricity grid, while additionally a number of institutions rely on back-up power by generators, *e.g.* hospitals, schools and hotels. The main power sources for the rural communities however are based on biomass and kerosene. The district water supply is based on 457 boreholes, and 211 improved traditional wells, 29 gravity water schemes, 140 rainwater harvesting tanks. The council maintains 19 Diesel water pumps for community supply. Mugumu urban relies on the Manchira dam, which also provides for the hospital. There are several internet & communications providers, but the service is not stable, and disruptions occur frequently also related to the consistency of regular electricity supply. There are several airstrips (five) of which one is expected to be upgraded to an airport to increase benefits from local tourism.

The major economic activities in the district include farming, livestock keeping, small business enterprises, small scale industries and employment in various organisations. The majority of the people in the district (85%) are engaged in agricultural undertakings (farming) and livestock (cattle rearing). Food crops include maize, sorghum, finger millet, cassava, beans, peas, sweet potatoes, bananas, groundnuts. Although many of these are produced in excess there is no reliable market to distribute that surplus. The main cash crop is cotton. Coffee is being experimented with in high altitude areas, while crops such as tobacco and sunflower are introduced as alternatives. Livestock husbandry amounts to the second largest economic activity, closely related to social status and a wealth indicator, which is estimated to cover more than 300,000 heads of cattle. The ownership is also related to polygamy (through bride wealth) which is considered a status indicator. Poultry places second with an estimated areal of 250,000. The share of formal employment hardly reaches

31%, and is concentrated with local government functions, parastatal organisations, private institutions, including the tourist industry, and some minor trading activities. Most residents, between 80 to 85% live in rural areas and are engaged in multiple or complementary economic activities. All daily, weekly- and monthly markets are supervised and subjected to levy collection by the District Council, although some are contracted out to private operators. Since the market business operators travel all over the region, they are considered an epidemiologically relevant factor in transmitting infectious diseases, e.g. STI's or HIV/AIDS.

There are 106 primary schools (57,154 pupils) of which three are in private ownership. The 23 secondary schools are all run by the government, for two exceptions, run by religious organisations. Only two are designated as A-level secondary schools, Machochwe and Natta. The coverage is 11,260 students with a gender distribution of 64% male and 36% female, which indicates the low degree of participation of the latter. There are five higher education institutions, i.e. Kisare College of Health Sciences in Mugumu, Chipuka Polytechnic, Utalli College in Mugumu and both Mugumu and Natta Vocational Training Schools. The indicators are presented as 0,45% drop out-rate, a teacher to pupil ratio of 1:53, and a desk to pupil ratio of 1:3. Illiteracy is estimated at 0,04%.

Map 2. Serengeti District Health Facilities.



As referred to in the geographical description a total of 70% of the District has been allocated for wildlife preservation. Of the three national parks, Serengeti is the largest, and contains 35 species of plain animals among the other species contained in its ecosystem. The wildebeest (1,6 mln) zebra (500,000) are among the most populous. Other species, especially elephants, big cats, and giraffes, are already under threat although they are still around in numbers. In all the number of species contained in one area is what makes the Serengeti unique in the world. There are however still open areas where hunting is allowed, namely Ikoma, Sibora, Nyichoka and Issenye. The five large tourist hotels are integrated into the wildlife areas, extended with another 21 tourist camps which have non-fixed facilities. Although employment and amenities from supply to the Tourism industry do benefit local people, the numbers involved are disproportionately low to the actual branch turnover.

Map 2 provides an overview of health care infrastructures according to the comprehensive report of the Serengeti Public Health Department. The single square marking at three o'clock marked NDDH is the Nyerere District Designated Hospital in Mugumu, a C-level referral in the capital of Serengeti. It covers 2 Hospitals, 2 Health Centres and 48 Dispensaries (40 Government, 3 Private for Profit, 3 Parastatals and 2 FBO (Faith Based Organisations) and 1 Nursing & Midwifery Training Facility (converted into 'College of Health Sciences', extended to train Clinical Officers). The district key indicators are listed in the Council Comprehensive Health Plan as follows:

A. Health Services Coverage (source: District Council Comprehensive Health Plan 2015)

• Health services within 5 km radius	80%
• Doctor/population ratio	1: 28,163
• Health facility/population ratio	1: 4,866
• Nurse/population ratio	1: 2,233
• Latrine coverage: permanent 20%, temporary 62% without latrine 18%	

B. Vital Health Indicators (source: District Council Comprehensive Health Plan 2015)

• Total population (2014 projection)	251,399
• Growth rate	3.3%
• Birth rate	6.4% at 16,090
• Children \leq 1 year	5.25% at 13,437
• Children \leq 5 years	22.5% at 56,565
• Women of childbearing age	21,5% at 54,050
• Maternal mortality rate	90 / 100,000
• Infant mortality rate	7 / 1,000
• Neo-natal death rate	2 / 1,000
• Under five mortality rate	2 / 1,000

The number of employees in the district is under level with a reported 273 (42,8%) of the required 639 (100%). The shortage of qualified health staff cadres is projected at 366, encompassing several disciplines, i.e. Clinical Officers, Nurses, ANO's, Dental Surgeon, Clinical Assistants, as well as Laboratory Technicians. It occurs that newly posted employees do not report, while others leave because of the remoteness of the area (according to the district profile out of 116 required and applied for staff, at the end of the 2015 recruitment year, only 28 were actually retained).

Image 1. Outpatient Department Morbidity Rates 2015

Diagnosis		Above 5 years			
		M	F	Total	% of total OPD Cases
1	Malaria	11547	11989	23536	43.0
2	Other diagnosis	5269	5485	10754	19.7
3	ARI	3938	4100	8038	14.7
4	Diarrhea disease	1155	1579	2734	5.0
5	Intestinal worms	1329	1385	2714	5.0
6	Clinical AIDS	700	1720	2420	4.4
7	Pneumonia	662	694	1356	2.5
8	PID	0	1250	1250	2.3
9	Skin diseases	513	516	1029	1.9
10	Oral conditions	405	452	857	1.6
Totals		25518	29170	54688	

Comment:

- High malaria prevalence rate of 27.8% for under fives and 40.3% for above fives.
- High cases of ARI 8.6% for underfives and 13.8% for above fives.
- High diarrhoea cases (4.1%) among underfives cases and(4.7%)to above five years.
- High intestinal worms infestation rate among above fives years by 4.6%
- High prevalence rate of HIV by 4.1%
- There is low detection of patients with cardiovascular diseases only 185 patient was seen and traeted amounting to 0.3%
- Increased prevalence rate of fracture case from various causes including accidents of 0.4%

N.B.: In the top morbidity rates the third largest - Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is not represented because the Public Health Department could not add morbidities into the supplied software.

The district council supervises a total of 42 health facility governing committees, who are simultaneously responsible for the so-called Community Health Fund. The fund faces a number of challenges which are reported as follows; It is established there is a low enrolment and renewal rate (est. 10%). The matching grants from the government are frequently delayed in release which decreases the expectations among community members, as they are not visualised for their intended purpose. There is also a low awareness of the importance of the fund by the general audience. The council suspects a lack of social mobilisation skills in their approach to promote and maintain these facilities in the various communities. Moreover, the report talks of misconception of the idea of solidarity, meaning that contributors consider their fee a loss when they do not fall ill. Lack of community level social mobilisation is a contributing factor as well. The Ministry of Health distinguishes two particular areas on A-level which are considered of basic importance to delivery and collecting data on household level. The first is the village health post and the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA). The second one, since recently, is the registration of traditional healers who apply mainly traditional herbal medicine. In this health post, the so-called Village Health Workers (VHW) are responsible for monitoring and delivering health services, including the satellite hamlets (*vitongoji*). In 2014 there were 85 VHW's across the district, i.e. two per village, while a number of

20 untrained volunteers were also operational. The challenge facing the VHW in his role is twofold, a lack of recognition by some villagers of their status, and a motivational problem from not receiving a full-fledged salary. Most community members start to appreciate the referral system only with the clinical officer at a dispensary. For overcoming both, the VHW must possess high intrinsic motivation to maintain his duties. Having established that, the utilisation data however show that the VHW are frequently consulted and the impact of their advice is measurable.

The Traditional Birth Attendants are the mainstay of managing deliveries at community level, and in all there are 182 TBA's registered. The entry level in the medical system is faced with insufficient equipment and infrequent supervision, monitoring and knowledge exchange. The availability of delivery kits for the trained TBA's was a problem, as well as a low Intersectoral collaboration between the local facilities and individual TBA's which results in a lack of proper data recording. It is stated that village committees report data without passing through health facilities. The acting in charge for public health stated that TBA's were no longer being trained or monitored as a result of finding insufficient suitable candidates who could attain the level the training was aiming at. Traditional healers are recognised in the community for accessible health service delivery. They are commonly the first people to be consulted according to the report on the basis of the remoteness of health facilities, but that is not supported by the data.

The adherence to traditional beliefs and practices is widespread, and the entry level of the traditional system includes herbalists, spiritual healers as well as soothsayers. The challenges facing this particular group are reported by the council as: inadequate knowledge of disease control and management, insufficient tools and equipment, poor working environment and structures, insufficient communications for those living in remote areas. There is a local association of traditional healers known as CHAWATIATA (*Chama cha Waganga na Wakunga wa Tiba Asilia Tanzania*) which has a local branch chairman in Mugumu. The district has registered 129 traditional healers in five different wards, of whom various herbs were also investigated by the Ministry of Health. Initiated in 1988 by the local branch of the Mennonite church (KMT) and known by its acronym IMARA, this NGO has a centre across from the hospital in Mugumu and strives to enhance the ability of Mara residents to identify and solve health problems as much as possible by using local resources. It promotes a holistic approach taking social economic, cultural and psychological aspects into consideration. It pays special attention to mental health care, people with disabilities, and identified HIV persons. The focus is on training auxiliary staff from villages and support them with knowledge or basic equipment. They are currently opting to be integrated in the JHPIEGO (annex Johns Hopkins University) initiative in Tanzania. Consecutively there is the Community-Based Rehabilitation Project (CBRP) which deals with the rehabilitation of physically disabled children under 18 years, by training them to be self-reliant and create awareness of their human rights, aiming to prevent social exclusion. The SEDIDEA project is aimed at identifying and developing a local cadre who become community health development facilitators. They are instructed to create awareness of local endemic preventable diseases, and their related health problems. Their second task is to identify traditional ways of maintaining a healthy lifestyle in collaboration with community members, and co-ordinate local efforts to manage their own health system. Thirdly, they are to act as intermediaries between organisations such as the CBRP (IMARA), the Public Health Department, local health facilities, the Council and community members. However, the Council report states that these community-based initiatives suffer from inadequate community involvement, but the report does not provide an analysis to that extent.

4.3. Household Survey Area

4.3.1. Nyamburi, Ikorongo, Serengeti District

The household survey in June 2016 was carried out in the settlement of Nyamburi central (Kiabakari) and its peripheral sections respectively known as Saliganda, Buchegera and Mahembuhembu, which together compose the larger community. Nyamburi, named after the crossing with the river of the same name, is a satellite of Mugumu, at approximately 6.5 miles distance. It is accessible only by motorbike via an accidented unpaved road which is cut by several rain induced eroded gullies. It becomes nearly inaccessible during heavy rains, and there is no regular organised public transport. Individual motorbike riders perform taxi service to Mugumu. The population consist of approximately 5.700 inhabitants within its periphery, predominantly of Kurya origin, with approximately 8.300 in the dispensary's larger catchment area (*Serengeti Public Health Dept. demographic data 2016*). Their main occupations are a combination of farming, herding, animal husbandry, poultry or petty trading. The food crops may be a combination of cassava, millet, sweet potatoes, with cash crops such as maize, tobacco, beans, sugar cane and groundnuts. Farmers can be both pastoralists and vice versa, the majority (72%) involved in some sort of farming activity, whereas about 16% is simultaneously herding cattle. An estimated 11% engages in petty trading or has official employment next to their individual subsistence farming (*household survey 2016*).

Image 2. Aerial View of Nyamburi Central and Dispensary.



N.B.: The large H-shape building just left of the middle is the local government dispensary (or A-level clinic), staffed by a Clinical Officer, a (male) Midwife, complemented by a Nurse and an Environmental Health Officer, and provides anti-natal services among others, see paragraph 6.3.7

Although it is a village with a main street and elementary facilities, most of the population are still scattered in homesteads around the central settlement (Kiabakari), intersected by large farming and grazing areas. The other three sections as they were identified (i.e. Saliganda, Buchegera and Mahembuhembu) in total encompass an area of approximately three miles in diameter. The town has its own Village Executive Committee, educational facilities, churches and a C-level dispensary, described in 6.3.7. Central is located on an elevation in the countryside, but not all peripheral settlements. Although many young people migrate, new houses are also being constructed around the central settlement, either for future residence or as new homestead for returning urban migrants.

4.3.2. Kurya Ethnographic Historical Perspective

From both Kenya and Tanzanian national census data (2011) it is estimated that at the moment this group consist of approximately 1.3 million people, who currently reside on both sides of the border between Kenya and Tanzania, whereby the Tanzanian share is estimated to be larger than the Kenyan (appr. 700,000 vs. 600,000). Their Bantu language is named Igikuria. There may be traces of Nilotic elements in their language because of historical mingling, as a result of earlier migration by smaller groups. They are said to have links with the Kisii people in Kenya, both in language as well as in cultural features. *'...between AD 1400 and 1800 when migration into Bukurya took place, the foundation was laid for the future Abakurya cultural and political developments. Early inhabitants of Bukurya came from both Bantu and Nilotic speakers who brought into Bukurya their peculiar cultures. Predominantly agricultural Bantu came into close contact with predominantly Nilotic pastoralists. Thus, a blend of cultures took place among the early inhabitants of Bukurya from the start by combining agricultural practice with pastoral pursuit as well as tendencies towards nomadic life. Today elements of Abakurya agriculture is much like that of the Abagusii and the Luo while in cattle keeping, they have borrowed practices of the Maasai, Zanaki and Nguruimi'* (source: Creative Commons 2013)

In other sources such as Fedders (1979) there is reference to the early Bantu communities stemming from the Victoria Lake area and as far away as Katanga (DRC) before that, as being primarily food producing agriculturalist, which fuels the discussion whether the Kurya were either sedentary or pastoralists originally. He places the origin of the group as an entity around AD 1600's, based on the calculation of the number of age-groups recognised at his time (thirty-four) multiplied by an interval of eight to ten years (*cf.* Shetler 1998). Recently Adada (2016) presented references pointing at the Mount Elgon area and a place called Misri, out of historical ethnographic data (colonial records ca.1910). The general impression is that Bantu members used to occupy lakeside areas to begin with, and adapted southern Nilotic features through absorption, thereby acquiring the cyclic age group system. In any case the descriptions show that they were always migrating in clans, not simultaneously, but consecutively, never settled in an area which was not already inhabited by others before their arrival, and always moving from north to south. The consensus now is that they adopted herding from the residents they met at their new destination. Consistent with the declarations of the elders interviewed in Nyamburi, the most original recordings in terms of early date according to Rwezaura (1982), are collected through oral transmission by Chacha (1963) a clan member himself. The migration took place from the Nile area in smaller groups, branching off at the lakeside, while intermarrying other groups on the way. They ended up in the current wider Mara area, including Tarimé, and recently Serengeti. They were apparently descendants from pastoralist groups,

as is currently disputed as well, as indicated by the residents. Simultaneously there is the notion that moving from Kenya to Tanzania was invoked by the advance of -and potential conflict with-neighbouring Maasai and Luo groups (*cf.* E.C. Baker, quoted by Rwezaura 1982) leaving the move from cattle herding to sedentary agriculture as yet undetailed. The suggestion made by Rwezaura, as his reasoning moves along, is that the impulse to get involved in farming was copied from the inhabitants of their newly acquired lands after migration, which, noticeably, is exactly the opposite from Fedders' chronology of earlier date. Although subject to debate among different sections of clans, the chronological sequence of subsistence activities according to the majority of current residents in Nyamburi has moved from hunting to herding to farming. Of course, having the emphasis in these economic activities alternate over time, during an extended pattern of migration is ultimately possible, especially when ecological conditions demanded such a move. The most distinctive feature however, in retrospect, is the forming of new subdivisions, creating new clans, and the intermarrying with other resident groups, as is currently manifest also in other areas of Mara, including Serengeti District. In the 2015 Natta pilot study sample, thirty different group origins were registered. As Fedders indicates, sovereignty resides with the clan, not with the group to which the clan belongs, that is why they were able to consolidate such a large number of diverse entities. The people in Nyamburi now recognise twelve clans, of which they themselves represent two.

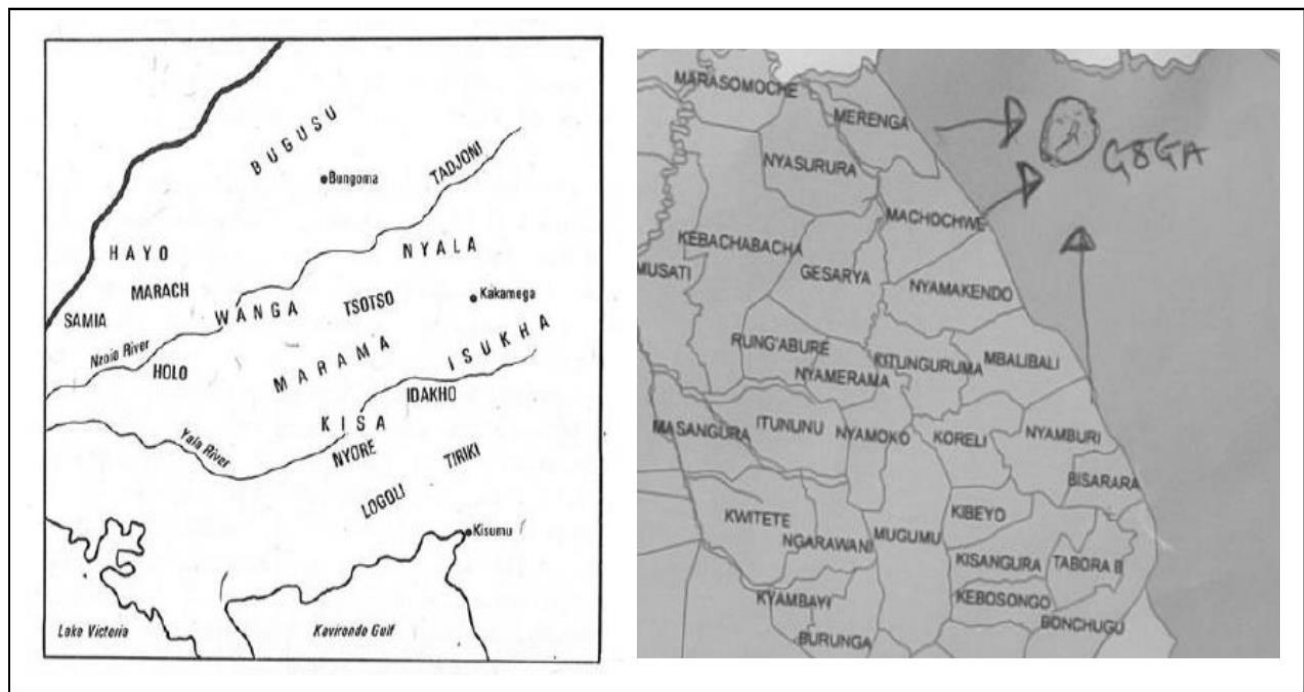
The history of the Nyamburi settlement is closely related to the village forming exercise (ca. 1974) introduced by former president Julius K. Nyerere after independence (1961), to create larger communities in answer to the dispersion of the local population which made it difficult to organise and facilitate social services or infrastructure, referring to the Arusha Declaration of 1965 made during the *Ujamaa* period (*cf.* Mandal 1989; Kwaako 2011). The elders indicate that at the time the original population in the area was limited to fifty families in all. As the Kurya people are resident in both Kenya and Tanzania (Abakurya) they furthermore place the migration of their original settlement at Tarimé to the south as a result of population pressure, but that was before independence. The current inhabitants of Nyamburi are designated to be members of the 'Wanyabasi' and the 'Watimbaru' clan, probably similar to 'Nyabasi' and 'Batimbaru' as transcribed in other sources, *e.g.* Fedders (1979). They are two branches of clans of one descent, signified by their Zebra totem, which hoofs symbolise the unity of the family, while the striped colours represent the two branches. Killing a zebra, either intentional or not, is heavily fined with up to thirty cows. The descendants of these clans have now moved to the settlements of Nyamburi, Mbalibali, Bisarara and Bonchugu. *'The Zebra totem started with Waighari the father of Mtimbaru and Mnyabasi. Waighari selected this animal to be the totem because it is a hoofed animal, this was regarded as a symbol of unity between his sons. It has two colours; each represented one of his sons, black for Mtimbaru and his descendants, white for Mnyabasi and his descendants. The Zebra totem is an identity to distinguish Watimbaru and Wanyabasi from other clans of Kurya people such as Abanchari, Abakira, Abanyamongo, Abairege and Abasweta.'* (Nyamburi elder, transcribed by Daniel Matinde, fieldwork 2016).

The historical transit as relayed by the elders who were consulted [18] is that the Kurya people regard themselves as being on the way (from southern Egypt and Sudan) to their final destination. Heralded by a prophet whose name was not mentioned, succeeded by Binagi and Gesegwe, more recent prophets and guided by the time span of a generation called *Abhakihanga*. They were to arrive at their destination as they would reach old age. That particular age group is now encroaching their seventies, and therefore the prophecy would be about to unfold. For a more specific explanation of

the ‘age group’ phenomenon, reference is made to the comprehensive monography of Jan Bender Shetler (1998) who has elaborated on the use of attributing cultural events, metaphors, symbols, milestones or landmarks to an age group as a key to their position in an historical timeframe.

The said destination is a mountainous area generally referred to as ‘Goga’ -consisting of Gutura and Ng’ong’o mountains- which currently is encompassed by the boundaries of the national park and therewith inaccessible to the aspiring migrants, which is complicating the envisaged future. The prophecy itself could not be traced to a specific period or event by the respondents but is assumed to have a divine origin which transcended directly on the prophet as the chosen medium. Their migration does not hinder the members to become sedentary in their lifestyle as the journey can take a lifetime to complete and all phases during the transition are considered inherent to the process. The origin of the legacy, as the elders see it in hindsight, it was a result of a lack of general education so the spirits would select one person to lead the others, being the prophet and his disciples thereafter. It is maintained in oral transmission that the prophets themselves did not indicate what the location of Goga was at the time the prophecy was conceived.

Map 3. Original Area of Descent and Prophesised Destination of Kurya People.



Left: The original area of descent (migratory route) of the Kurya according to Fedders’ compilation of Kenyan historical cultures (map by Cynthia Salvadori) situated north of the Lake Victoria coast, resp. south of Mount Elgon. The suggested Egyptian root is disputed (Fedders 1979).

Right: The mountain destination of “Goga” as indicated by Nyamburi elders on a local Serengeti district map with a pencil, within the Serengeti National Park boundaries (fieldwork photo by D. Matinde).

4.3.3. Physical Environment, Lifestyle and Cosmology

The building of circular corral type residences (mainly stick and thatch, either or not with mudbrick, 'boma', is still widespread and their circumference is apparently correlated to the family unit's size, influenced by the polygamous nature of their social life. The number of wives can determine the number of separate elements in the circular structure, i.e. they have their own quarters integrated into the corral wall which constitutes the enclosure (*cf.* Mandal 1989). As is the case in Nyamburi, these elements are still scattered around the central settlement, which has facilities such as schools, churches, shops and a dispensary, but modern building styles are on the move for residency. Although cattle will be kept within the stockaded corral, the agricultural produce may be kept in storage outside the perimeter (granaries). This specific feature is according to Aberi (2015) a result of the focus on cattle by the Kurya's adversaries, as well as their lack of interest in agricultural produce, referring to the Maasai's nutrition preferences. Furthermore, it is indicated that the structure of the circular boma's is somehow discriminate between Kenya and Tanzania as the threat of being a target for raiding was higher in Kenya's context. Mention is made of ill-reputed cattle raiding on a substantial scale in the past, apparently in contest with the neighbouring Maasai, purposely documented by Fleisher (2000) which indirectly led to a diminished importance of animal herding; The phenomenon reoccurs in Chacha; *'Apparently just around world war one the raiding escalated (as result of the rinderpest and drought) and the introduction of cash crop was being promoted together with taxing cattle, the government incidentally seizing it, reducing bridewealth norms, in order to get the Kuria away from raiding, and to enable them to pay taxes.'* (Chacha 1999: p.66)

The combination of farming and herding activities is still widely practiced, although most sources agree that the emphasis is now on cash crops and is slowly changing society. One of the distinctions made here is that land cultivation was primarily a female occupancy, while men either cleared the land or herded cattle, but the introduction of cash crops has drawn more men into becoming farmers, sometimes having their cattle tended by someone else. The combination of land pressure through population increase and enhanced agricultural activity, combined with income generation through cash crops, may further reduce cattle ownership in the future, but because of the capital involved it may last as a status attribute beyond its economic importance. Not in the least because it is noted to be the financial basis for polygamous family extensions *i.c.* bridewealth, as well as for formal education of the young people of their owners.

Although committed to strong adherence to cultural traditions, the clans simultaneously present themselves as a largely Christian community, involved with both Seventh Day Adventist and Roman Catholic churches, but the critical community members estimate the number of active Christians to nearly half. In our survey 74% of the households claim to be Christian, the remainder adhere to what is labelled as 'African Traditional Religion' (*cf.* Veilleux 2013). The beforementioned subdivisions in turn consist of groups of families which form a sub-clan, and as such groups of groups build up a structure which shares the same totem or ancestors, and performs its rituals *e.g.* circumcision, within its own territory. At the same time though an "age set" (*irikora*) can transcend these segmentation lines because they belong to the same generation and are therefore bound by their 'circumcision' class (*cf.* Shetler 1998). They represent an historical period inherently, without conflicting with other family, lineage or clan ties. They may take a name derived from an event or milestone which is placed at the time of conception, with which they identify themselves. In physical appearance, Adada (2016) also notes that a number of objects still show the features from early colonial documented

illustrations, e.g. pots, baskets, knives, as well as clothing styles, regalia and decorative patterns, all indications of the important role of tradition. In contradiction to this, in his historic reflection, Rwezaura (1982) makes note of the changes within Kurya society with regard to this adherence to traditional norms, by stating that incorporation of their activities into a market economy (-as an extension of global capitalism) diminished the influence of the elders and made the younger generation less subordinate to their ruling. He mentions the legalisation of property rights, the changing emphasis from kinship and family relations to individualism, and the development of post-colonial national policies, among others. In the period's documented importance of cattle ownership and bridewealth, there may very well have been a decline in many of these cultural factors, which prove consistent with the increased role of agricultural activities beyond subsistence and tied into a market economy. The question whether this increased role was a consequence of enforced state policy and local jurisdiction, instead of internal dynamics, does not take away its impact on society. The parallel movement relevant to this duality of agriculture and herding, is that land allocation was no longer left to individual lineage heads, on account of availability and reciprocal mechanisms. It became subordinate to ruling as a result of colonial intervention, first with the chieftaincy, and subsequently with registered ownership by a local area government (*cf.* Rwezaura 1982).

In a later review by Mhando (2014), concerning Kurya marriage arrangements in particular, she refers to Rwezaura's analysis as well, but shows that despite the changes in society as a result of post-colonial ruling, religious institutions, economic development, urbanisation and modernisation, the Kurya as a group maintained their traditions. Aberi (2015) in his analysis points at the introduction of sedentary agriculture, formal education, Christianity, and population pressure, which eventually led to the abortion of activities such as cattle raiding. He suggests the raiding was mainly induced by the need for bride-wealth, tied to a code of conduct which displayed competitiveness, as the raiding was confined by 'rules of engagement'. As such it was an arena of masculine behaviour, but also sanctioned by the elders if certain lines were crossed. The loss of area for grazing due to agriculture is remarkably still mentioned today as a reason for a diminishing role of keeping cattle.

The jurisdiction over community matters in Nyamburi is organised through a council of senior men, called the '*Abhaghaka bha ikimira*' equivalent to *Abhanchina*, *Inchamaa*, or *Abhanchaama*, who perform arbitration in the majority of cases of controversy or conflict, as long as there is no - external- official legal action involved. There is an indigenous authority in place called '*Sungusungu*' a collective volunteer force which ensures adherence to the decisions made in the community analogous to a conventional police force. These are not members of the Village Executive Committee, but there is consensus over their mutual legitimacy. The informants expressed that people even prefer bringing criminals before the elders instead of taking them to court because of the stronger influence within the social code of conduct. Allegedly, if public denial was found to be unjust, the person and his family would be struck with bad luck, including mortality. During the trial the allegations are presented publically and countered in the presence of the totem, in this case the skull of a zebra (*Inchage*). In other parts of East Africa, the *Sungusungu* groups were criticised for operating outside an official legislative procedure and thereby becoming akin to vigilante type security, crossing the lines incidentally themselves (*cf.* Heald 2009; Jangu 2012).

With regard to social relationships and coherence, the community is described as patrilineal and polygamous, and traditional values are very much in place. Cultural events and rituals are performed with specific intervals intact, including circumcision for both men and women as a gateway to adulthood, which is considered mandatory before marriage. The candidates mark the transition by

'*Ritungu*' music and dance which is used to celebrate special social occasions, named after an 8-string musical instrument -not to be confused with 'Ritongo', which refers to a Kurya traditional court- comprising all adults both male and female in December, with an interval which is currently set at two years. The change in interval, it was four years originally, resulted from population increase, necessitating a higher frequency to accommodate all age groups. Circumcision is an important milestone, indicated by detailed elements. If one of the candidates dies before the circumcision event, or right after, it is perceived as a wrath to the community, and he would not be buried locally. Such incidents were originally associated with witchcraft from neighbouring communities. The person who is performing the circumcision surgically is identified and appointed by the elders. The story goes he will find knives at his doorstep to indicate that he is the chosen one. The function is also handed down as the newly appointed surgeon will have been taught by his predecessor, but in seclusion. He will not be announced as the new surgeon until after training.

'A circumciser is chosen by ancestors ... he might be sleeping and wakes up to find out that there is blood all over his bed, or he may be walking and pick up circumcision knives, or he may wake up with a knife on his hand. This is how he recognises that he has been chosen for the task' (Mshana et al. 2011; p 113).

In respect of the division of labour there is the '*ogosagaria*' whereby cattle are herded by people other than the owner, in a delegated fashion, comparable to land lease, or 'outsourcing' as known in other economic activities, but the responsibility is inclusive (*cf.* Fleisher 2008). There is a gender related phenomenon of households consisting of two women who form an economic unit (*Nyambu ntobhu*), surrogate to a nuclear family, and so maintain access to resources they once shared with their either deceased, divorced, or absent husbands. They may result from remaining childless, or as a result of only female offspring. These situations may not be received well everywhere, they were not recognised as marriage by Christian churches, and at times could even be contested by the husband's relatives, as it is a patrilineal society (*cf.* Mhando 2014). It is often defended by the elders because it prevents the community of having to cater for single women without any domicile or livelihood, and keeps them on par with normal relationships and social economic status, comparable to "Boston Marriages" as known in New England (*cf.* Haworth 2016).

With regard to cosmological principles, there are references made to the existence of a supreme being, a God (*cf.* Aberi 2015: *Enokwi/Nyasae*) who supervises the universe and is responsible for nature and all living creatures, formerly apparently symbolised by the sun, although not as a personified entity (*cf.* Adada 2016). In Adada's accounts there are ancestral spirits who relay the wishes of the Supreme Being, and these ancestral spirits could be the focus of worship for any request from ordinary community members, accompanied by the ritual of pouring libation. According to the elders in Nyamburi, there are only a limited number of people who are capable of communication with this Supreme Being, similar to the early prophets. In this case there are spirits who express their concerns to the selected elders, the beforementioned *Abhanchamaa*, but alternately, the elders can also consult the spirits on their own account (*cf.* Aberi 2015). A prophet (*umuroti*) can be a member of the selected elders or any person chosen by the spirit as a suitable medium. The message is relayed to the prophet in a dream (*cf.* Aberi, 2015: '*Abaroti*').

In the transcriptions made, the spirit will be tied to a specific event or milestone, for example planting, harvesting, circumcisions, or a natural hazard. It means that this specific spirit must be consulted when the event arrives. The whereabouts of the spirit's location might not be disclosed by the elder. When he decides to consult a spirit, he will visit the place, and by putting food there he

sends an indication of seeking contact. So, these intermediaries carry much weight, as their communications are ultimately the translation of the desire of a supreme being. The concrete communication is perceived by the respondents to be mostly unilateral, from spirit to people, not from people to spirit, although ancestors are worshipped. The elders can express a certain issue to a prophet who in turn receives directions from his spirit the following night, but it is not clear if he can communicate other than through dreaming. Aberi (2015) mentions the location of a ‘shrine’ for the Kurya community in Tanzania at Nyamieri, which was apparently visited by selected elders as late as 2010, following a conflict solving expedition. Such situations make the non-disclosure of the dwellings of spirits a relative concept [19]



Image 3: *'Ritungu' eight-string instrument accompanying social events*

Notes Chapter IV

18. i.c. Joseph M. Siriti, and Zakayo Enoch Mbota, among others, members of the 1940's age-set generation, residing in Nyamburi, interviewed with Nemes J. Sianga (WEC) in June 2016 – names are used with permission from the respondents.
19. *'Furthermore, as recently as September 1st 2010, the Kuria elders visited their holy shrine, Nyamieri, in Tanzania to plead to their gods for help to resolve a protracted community feud revolving around cattle and which had become a main source of conflicts between the Maasai and Kuria communities'* quoted from Muchiri (2010), in Aberi (2015; p.26)

