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Mumiani: The White Vampire

A Neo-Diffusionist Analysis of Rumour*

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Shortly after I started my fieldwork in the Matombo area of the Uluguru mountains in Eastern Tanzania, a man was murdered in the village where I stayed. The body of the victim had been found in the Mfizigo river just a day before I returned to the village from Dar es Salaam, where I had gone to meet my girlfriend at the airport. When we went to Matombo mission so she could introduce herself to Father Gumbo, he showed himself unusually concerned about my progress and repeatedly asked whether everything was alright. My puzzlement about his behaviour was clarified when my guide and interpreter, Thomas, gravely announced that his (Thomas') reputation had been irrevocably damaged: people thought he had killed the man so as to provide me, his employer, with the blood of the victim. I was rumoured to be the *mumiani*, the white vampire, and Thomas my murderous assistant.

Father Winkelmolen, whom we shall meet again in this essay, had already warned me of the suspicious nature of the Matombo people, and their *mumiani* rumours in particular. In a move calculated to prepare me for the worst, he told me the story of the South African prospector who, in 1960, had been identified as the *mumiani* and barely escaped a lynching mob by taking refuge in the mission church. He also counselled me not to react when *mumiani* rumours about my person were about and simply go on with business as usual. Whether it was through following his advice or not, the rumours passed by after a few harrowing days in which our waking dreams were filled with angry groups of villagers armed with machetes and sticks. Thomas probably exaggerated his predicament in order to heighten my regard for his dedication to our work – and, perhaps, increase his remuneration. Soon, I found out that the murder was one in a series of quarrels between members of a criminal gang and that most people thought that the murderer had started the rumour about me. The villagers gradually accepted me as an amusing nuisance; later, a good friend. Still, it was disconcerting, when passing through Morogoro Town, to hear small children say – with malice rather than awe – *mzungu mchinja*, ('white butcher'), or *unataka damu?* ('do you want blood?').

Who is this white butcher and why does he roam the Uluguru mountains at times? In the following pages, I hope to show that the kind of evil personified by the mumiani can be linked to similar 'subaltern' discourses (cf. Guha and Spivak 1988) in India and that this raises questions about the diffusion of rumour under colonial circumstances. Three different contexts in which the rumour can be located will show that the rumour's concepts of evil allowed – to paraphrase Parkin (1985:23) – the colonized to reflect on the boundaries of the colonizers' humanity.

Mumiani

The Standard Swahili-English Dictionary gives the following description of mumiani:

a dark-coloured gum-like substance used by some Arabs, Indians and Swahili as a medicine for cramp, ague, broken bones, &c. It is used as an outward application, also when melted in ghee for drinking as medicine. It is said to be brought from Persia, but many natives firmly believe that it is dried or coagulated human blood taken from victims murdered for the purpose, and when a rumour is started that *mumiani* is being sought for, the natives of a town are filled with terror and seldom go out of their houses after sunset. (Pers. *mumiyai*, a medicine, substance with which mummies are preserved.) (Johnson 1939:314).

Father Sacleux's definition is more concise but essentially similar, except that he argues that the word comes from the Arabic *mumia*, mummy (1939:625). The *Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu*, however, adds that apart from indicating a medicine, mumiani also means 'someone who drains people of their blood until they die, in order to sell it' (Kamusi 1981:199; translation mine). This additional personified meaning appears to have been current as early as the 1930s, when the rumour first reached the Uluguru mountains.¹

The etymology of the word is open to dispute, but both the Arab *mumia* and the Persian *mumiyai* refer to a substance which has much in common with bitumen. Bitumen was used to preserve mummies and 'mummy,' according to one source, literally means 'bodies preserved in bitumen.' Both Vergil and Pliny referred to bitumen as medicine (Huntingford 1934). The *Encyclopedia Britannica* noted that a further stage in the use of the word came when 'the bituminous and fatty matters found about the mummies and their wrappings were employed as a sovereign remedy particularly for wounds and contusions and a brisk trade began in the exudations of mummies' (quoted in Baker 1946:108). The Persian word also refers to a black substance resembling bitumen and used for curing, but *Mom-i-yai* is said to mean 'wax from Yai'² and in Persian, 'bitumen' is translated by *silajit*, although *mumiyai* is also associated with it. In one version, *mumiyai* is made by preserving a human body in a big jar, in another, it seeps from certain rocks (Gordon 1933; 1934).

In India, however, *mumiyai* carried the more specifically colonial meaning which also characterized the Swahili mumiani. There, it was a substance, 'the peculiar possession of the English in general and the Government in particular'; a dictionary called it 'a kind of bitumen said to be brought from Persia ... extracted from the heads of coolies who emigrate to the colonies, by hanging them head downwards and roasting them over a slow fire.' He who possessed this essence of the human body was practically invulnerable. Some Indians attributed the, to Indians, astonishing British inclination to exert themselves by sports during leisure time to the invigorating effects of *mumiyai*. The Government was supposed to use it to turn base metals into gold and silver. It was extracted from people in hospitals: when their death was certain, they would be taken to a secret room to take *mumiyai* in the way described above (which is why people took dying relatives home rather than leave them in hospital). In 1896, the Indian plague epidemic and the harsh British measures against it provoked a lot of *mumiyai* rumours, which contributed to suspicion of and attacks on hospitals (Arnold 1988:406/7).

There is a possibility to trace this Indian³ rumour to Eastern Africa through the sepoys who were recruited around Delhi in 1889 for the Kenyan garrisons. They made up part of the East African Rifles, which was founded in 1895 and had its headquarters in Mombasa. It contained a contingent of 300 Punjabis who served together with 300 Swahili soldiers and 100 Sudanese. When the East African Rifles were converted into the King's African Rifles in 1902, a contingent of 400 sepoys became the 5th battalion; many more Indian units joined the British Army during the First World War (Hollingsworth 1960:39–45). An administrative source claims that the first mumiani rumours started in Mombasa between 1904 and 1906, where they referred to a Parsee (an Indian Zoroastrian of Persian descent) who was supposed to perform the operations necessary for obtaining mumiani from coastal natives.⁴ From there, the rumour spread to Nairobi and other parts of Kenya; natives believed that the Government was at the back of it (either by doing it itself or being paid by the mumiani for a licence to do it). During and after the First World War, it spread to Tanganyika.⁵

The first occasions where the belief caused 'great unrest' among Tanganyikan Africans in the interior were in Mahenge and Musoma in 1921 and 1923, respectively, where Government emissaries were said to waylay natives to get their blood. The rumour was linked to *mumiyai* by the administrator writing about it.⁶ For the broader Morogoro region, similar rumours can be traced through the reminiscences of a catechist, who, when bought free as a boy by the Holy Ghost Father of Kilosa Mission around 1895, feared that the Father would throw him in the cooking-pot or in the sea (which would return the favour by washing some loads of cloth ashore) and who thought the red bricks of the mission building were made with human blood (Litzler 1934).⁷ In 1918, a Matombo Christian refused to be treated at the Morogoro hospital because he feared the British would disembowel him and cut him up after his death.⁸ In the 1920s, the native people

of Mandera would always be scared of a European, missionary or not, until he spoke to them in their own language.⁹ None of these cases, however, mention the word *mumiani* nor do they refer exclusively to the taking of blood as medicine.

In 1938, the Morogoro District Commissioner, E.E. Hutchins, reported that *mumiani* rumours had been there for some years, but never as insistent as at the time of the report. He thought they originated in the Kilosa region west of Morogoro when officials of the Veterinary Department were taking blood samples from the population for yellow fever research. The rumour spread to Morogoro at around 1930 and since that time, miners on the Ruvu river and officers of the Survey Department suffered its consequences. The former, who started a small gold rush to claims close to the mission of Matombo in 1933, complained of lack of indigenous labour. They attributed the rumour to their consumption of red wine. The holes they made in the river were supposedly used for the disposal of bodies.

Surveyors were also suspect, although Hutchins didn't know why.¹⁰ In the 1950s, a regular suspect was an engineer who build bridges and camped at the building site with his assistants (who were all strangers to Uluguru).¹¹ Father De Vries wrote that especially the *Bwana Nyama*, the cattle and game officer, was suspect in all districts: he was supposed to go out in the bush to collect blood (in this guise, the rumour appeared in Northern Rhodesia in the 1930s, where the vampire was called *banyama*, a word referring to Tanganyikan game wardens - White 1991:7). One of the stock *mumiani* stories of the Holy Ghost Fathers was about the European visitor at Mhonda mission who terrified the 'boy' who served dinner until the blood that trickled from the back of his lorry had been identified as belonging to two antelopes he had shot on the way (De Vries 1936; Scheerder 1948).

Hutchins had difficulties trying to account for many features of the rumours. He could not say why natives who came to sell their crops in Morogoro refused to enter the market buildings and fled when pressed to do so; the general fear of entering the Morogoro hospital was more easy to explain. He ventured that the rumour was spread by 'bad characters': robbers claiming they were the *askari* ('soldiers') of the *mumiani*. They extorted sums from people waylaid on the road in return for the promise not to deliver them to their employer. This tallied with the Holy Ghost Fathers' idea that the rumours were most widespread in February and March, the seasonal food shortage which forced people out on the road in search for food or employment. The missionaries also attributed the rumour to their regular enemies, the witchdoctors, and to man-eating lions who wandered closer to human settlement during the February droughts. At the same time, there were no reports on murders or missing natives; people who were asked usually denied that they knew of anyone missing because of *mumiani* (Scheerder 1948).¹² However, in one case a series of murders in Morogoro Town had reinforced the rumour, because Hutchins' advice to people to stay inside at night (because he could not guarantee their safety) was taken to mean that he

wanted to be rid of responsibility: the real message, people thought, was that if someone was caught at night by Government *mumiani* agents it was his or her own fault (De Vries 1934).

In some cases at least, Africans used *mumiani* as an explanation of the feats which Europeans, these *watu wa ajabu* ('men of wonder'), were capable of: the red colour of British Army petrol was attributed to the fact that it contained human blood (Scheerder 1948); cars and aeroplanes were thought to be able to move because of its extraordinary power.¹³ As far as I can tell, the Holy Ghost missionaries themselves were only very rarely suspected of being the *mumiani*; the cases on record only show their annoyance, when *mumiani* rumours were about, with the fact that it became difficult to get carriers for their foot-journeys through the mountains, or to attract a sufficient crowd for the midnight mass on Christmas Eve.¹⁴ The Holy Ghost Fathers, when questioned, usually said that they had not been bothered by the rumours, one even confusing *mumiani* with another (less specifically colonial) rumour about *wawanga*, witches digging up corpses from their graves. The rumour seems to have been largely restricted to the Northern and Eastern slopes of the Uluguru mountains, and Matombo and Morogoro Town in particular, where it usually concerned white men other than the Holy Ghost Fathers (this contrasts sharply with Luise White's (1991) findings on Northern Rhodesian 'vampire priests,' which will be discussed below).¹⁵

Two missionaries, however, told me how they had been accused of being *mumiani*. Brother Rudolf was appointed as supervisor of the Matombo carpentry workshop in December 1959, and shortly after his arrival, a corpse was found in the Mfizigo river close to the water-wheel which provided the workshop with power. *Mumiani* rumours were about and fastened on Rudolf: didn't it happen shortly after he came? Hadn't things always been peaceful while his predecessors, Brothers Patrick and Nico were there? People no longer dared to have their maize ground at the workshop's mill and the workers were scared. One day when he returned from the workshop, about fifty people were waiting for him at the bridge across the Mhangazi river, carrying machetes and sticks. Although he passed the bridge unscathed, a teacher counselled him not to venture outside the mission house anymore; at the workshop, he was openly accused. Suspicion was only diverted when it fastened on the South African prospector mentioned above, who barely escaped a lynching mob by hiding in the mission church. When a month later, the true culprits were caught, Matombo people completely changed their attitude towards Rudolf and he became one of the most popular Brothers of the mission.¹⁶

The rumours about Father Winkelmolen of Kibungo mission also seem to have started in Matombo by the coincidence of the discovery of a man who had died (from a heart-attack) on the road where the Father had passed the night before. *Mumiani* rumours followed Father Winkelmolen like a shadow: the Luguru version of his name was *Winga*, which bears the ominous connotation of the Kiluguru verb *ukuwinga*, 'to hunt.' When he preached against the *mumiani*

rumours which were triggered by the presence of a British officer (who tried to prevent a plague of army caterpillars by hunting butterflies), the people thought he was defending his fellow-mumiani (which was the reason why he advised me not to react when such rumours were about). Numerous fantastic tales, partly fueled by occasions when the Father's quick temper flared, went round and even inspired a Mhehe to offer himself to the Father as his criminal assistant (the man was duly arrested). He has retired to Morogoro now, but still the rumours go round, not in the least because of Father Winkelmolen's involvement with and dedication to the improvement of Morogoro hospital.¹⁷

Diffusion and rumour

We have seen that the mumiani is a personification of colonial evil, a kind of Mephistopheles supported by a retinue of African Fausts (cf. Parkin 1985:19). If the link with *momiyai* can be accepted, however, this personification of evil was produced in the East African hinterland, and preceded by a concept of commodified evil (a medicine to be sold and resold) in India and on the Swahili coast. The rumour, during the course of its distribution along routes taken by the colonized, changed its shape and content, although it remained a way to comment upon the 'boundaries of humanity' (Parkin 1985:23) as they appeared to 'subaltern' groups (cf. Guha and Spivak 1988) in situations created by colonial contact. It is necessary to reflect on diffusion and rumour before we try to understand the way this specific rumour was located in the different colonial contexts sketched above.

If there is any speech act which lends itself to reflections on diffusion (as a historical process) and diffusionism (as an anthropological doctrine), it is rumour. On the one hand, rumour is by definition connected to diffusion: it exists because of it. Rumour is rumour because it is passed on and because, in being passed on, it both retains and changes its shape. On the other, however, rumour is the antithesis of the object of early twentieth century diffusionism, because the origins of rumour are unknown and cannot be ascertained. To call something a rumour is to say that we cannot answer questions about its 'truth': the 'real' or authentic bases from which it sprung (what Graebner called *die Echtheitsfrage*, 1911:25). Luise White rightly remarks that to deal with rumour in terms of its truth or authenticity is to import authoritarian principles about the transmission of messages¹⁸ into a discourse which is not meant 'to deliver information, but to exchange it' (1991:1).

Current anthropology has entered a phase in which it reflexively criticizes its own claims to authority, 'truth' included (Pels and Nencel 1991). If anthropological claims to truth are questioned, and anthropology itself becomes a discourse which does not deliver, but exchanges 'actively contested' information (Clifford 1986:18) across cultural boundaries, the difference between the information

exchanged by anthropologists and by rumour-mongers may not be as big as it seems. In fact, an anthropology of rumour takes over some of its traits, and with reason, because anthropologists take pride in the fact that their 'cultural theory ... is not its own master,' and, in a sense, merges with its object through an interpretive dialectic (Geertz 1973:25 and *passim*). Like rumour, anthropological interpretations constitute debates about social relations in which nothing is told 'without contradiction or argument or correction' (White 1991:2). That means that it shares with rumour a rather loose connection to specific historical circumstances: its 'truths' are tenuous, and it draws, like rumour, upon coincidental linkages of stated facts and historical circumstances (like the coincidence of a murder, mumiani tales, and the presence of an as yet unknown anthropologist).

However, there is a possibility of excess in this interpretive merger of subject and object. To conclude a discussion about the white or mestizo hunter of Indian fat (the *nakaq* (Taussig 1987:237-41)¹⁹) with the ominous words 'we are all *nakaqs*' (1987:241), may provide a, to some, satisfactory closure of the hermeneutic circle, but does not get us beyond the point of acknowledging that all societies create their 'fetishized antiselves' (1987:240), something which has already been sufficiently demonstrated (by, among others, Barker et al. 1985 and Said 1978). It does not provide a line of reasoning that clarifies why I, or anyone else, was, at a specific time and place and for specific people, accused of being the mumiani.

I think a reinvented diffusionism, one that has shed the urge to prove 'that all of culture originated in Egypt,' as an unsympathetic observer put it (Powdermaker 1966:37), may help us avoid all-too-inclusive ('charmed' - Scholte 1986) hermeneutic circles. After all, diffusionist thought was historical: it did not easily fall prey to the ahistorical reification of 'cultures,' 'structures,' or 'symbolic systems' of later anthropological doctrines. Moreover, it paid a lot of attention to the analysis of the material articulations of culture and the questions when, why, by whom and for what purpose they were generated. Fritz Graebner, in particular, produced an anthropological programme of some methodological sophistication, mainly by taking its cue from historiography, and the critique of sources in particular (Graebner 1911:3,7 ff.).²⁰ Still, his critique is burdened by the quest for 'true' origins and cultural authenticity. On the one hand, material objects (*unmittelbare Zeugnisse*) ought to be related to their culture of origin, and the study of their material, technique and form are subordinated to this question of their authenticity (1911:21-31). On the other hand, messages (*Berichte*) about culture have to be based on direct observation of the culture in question (1911:33,38).

Cultural authenticity is questioned in current anthropology (Handler 1986) and, in the case of rumour in particular, the question of the truth of its content is, as we have seen, not immediately relevant to the object studied. Once the authenticity of cultural origins and the regime of truth are questioned, the distinction between material objects and messages, on the grounds of the truths

we can draw from them, can be questioned, too. A material object can carry any number of messages, if we take care not to subordinate its physical presence to the dominance of linguistic or interpretive models (cf. Miller 1987:96). Moreover, and most important for the study of rumour, any message, truthful or not, can be studied in the way Graebner suggested we study material objects: where and when they were produced, by what material, technique and form. In other words, we ought to ask when, where and how rumour is constituted, by whom, for whom, and at whose expense (cf. Scholte 1986:10); *contra* Geertz and Ricoeur, to question the event of speaking before we judge the validity of the 'said' of speaking (its 'meaning,' Geertz 1973:19).

In that way, we can salvage some of the respect for historical analysis which diffusionism contained. In the case of the diffusion of rumour, we can acknowledge that diffusion takes place through specific sequences of speech events (the 'material' and 'technique' of Graebner's critique) which we can associate because of similarities in form (*momiyai* resembles *mumiani*, *mumiani* resembles *banyama*). This interlocking is metonymic, however, and we cannot ascribe any metaphoric finality to the similarities in form (that classifies the speech event as belonging to a 'culture' or 'symbolic system': *momiyai* is not *mumiani*, even more, one *mumiani* rumour is unlike the other. In fact, there is no way to say where the rumour begins and ends, where it attains and changes shape in such a way that we can, without hesitation, draw a significant boundary around our 'object.' Consequently, we cannot replace this elusive 'object' by another, only seemingly less incomprehensible, like 'psychological mechanism' (Oliver-Smith 1969:366).²¹ We have to accommodate our reasoning to the fact that rumour can lead us anywhere, instead of accommodating rumour to our reasoning in terms of truth or origins.

Even if I resist the tendency to find the origin of every single event in the invisible hand of Capital (as some more modern diffusionists, rightly criticized by Taussig (1989), do), a neo-diffusionist perspective can show the relevance of colonial capitalism to *mumiani* rumours. It may be able, through precisely the kind of metonymic linkages which constitute rumour itself, to connect exchanges of information about whites, to exchanges with (among others) whites, without the reduction of explaining the former by the latter. These colonial contexts change, and the rumours, in the course of their diffusion, change with them, but the following discussion of three of these contexts should not be taken as an analysis leading up to an explanation of the rumours, but as a way of sharing in them which enhances our understanding.

India and *momiyai*

If I start with Indian *momiyai* tales, it is from sheer convenience: firstly, I have sufficient sources to say something about it (although much more detail could

and should be added by regional specialists); secondly, the link with East Africa is plausible; and lastly, they contain a sufficient number of 'family resemblances' (Wittgenstein 1972:§67) with East African stories to make comparison both possible and enlightening. Particularly David Arnold's way of putting *momiyai* rumours in the context of the Indian plague epidemic heightens our awareness of relationships which may also be relevant to East African contexts.

Arnold shows that at the beginning of the plague epidemic, the colonial government was not a 'remote and shadowy presence' but directly intervened in the lives of the people. This intervention was focussed on Indian bodies: 'The body (...) was exposed not just to the "gaze" of Western medicine but also to its physical touch, an intrusion of the greatest concern to a society in which touch connoted possession or pollution' (1988:396). Plague victims should be segregated in hospital, where opportunities for isolation, observation and control were maximized (1988:397). The 'indifference and callousness' of hospital treatment, the fact that it isolated patients from relatives and friends and put them at the mercy of mere strangers, and the fact that hospitals were perceived as places of pollution, sharply antagonized the indigenous population and led to several attacks on hospitals and militant refusals to have patients sent there (1988:396-99). House searches, and public examinations at railway stations (often involving the polluting touch of Indian, especially female, bodies by European doctors) increased indignation, while the disposal of corpses without regard to Indian burial practices inflamed people even more (1988:400/1).

Within this context, rumours abounded. In Bombay and Gujarat, fear of and attacks on hospitals were related to belief in *momiyai* or in other ways of extracting vital oil (by grinding in an oil mill or pressing). In Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh) a rumour was about that blood was needed for wounded soldiers in the Boer War, while some Dublas of Gujarat believed that livers were sent to Bombay as cure against the plague (Arnold 1988:406/7). Arnold notes that one of the striking features of these rumours (in contrast to many other forms of popular discourse) was their 'secularity': the fact that they reported an assault, not upon Indian (religious) customs, but on the body (1988:405). Moreover, given the ruthlessness of the assault through European medical discipline,²² and the suspicion raised by the fact that Europeans were apparently immune to the disease, the assumption of 'British self-interest and spite, a readiness to victimize and sacrifice Indians for the preservation of British power,' was particularly plausible (1988:412).

In this case, *momiyai* rumours gained wide currency in the context of a medical offensive characterized by an excess of alienated contact from the top down: 'touching the body' through a microphysics of power not mediated by reciprocity. When a form of reciprocity was introduced through employing native leaders in combating the plague, the rumour, instead of abating, fastened on these leaders (1988:412). Thus, while *momiyai* rumours were increasingly produced during a period of alienating colonial contact, they expressed this contact in terms of an

alienation of the body itself: the rumour said that Indian body substances were commodified by the British as medicines, and even as parts of an alchemical technology (*momiyai* as touch-stone, transforming base metals into bullion).

Mumiani on the Swahili coast

There is no certain way of establishing the fact of the diffusion of *momiyai* to the Swahili coast: contacts between Indians and Africans predated the arrival of the sepoys of the East African Rifles in Mombasa. One can only imagine that the yarns spun among Indian and African soldiers referred to these kinds of fantastic tales. Moreover, a kind of 'independent invention' is evident from the tale of the Kilosa catechist referred to above, where, around 1895, the taking of blood for the making of bricks was mixed with other forms of European cannibalism or a magical trade of bodies with the sea. Conclusions about 'who says what about whom in which context' are therefore particularly tenuous here. Still, the link with Indian *momiyai* is too plausible not to be entertained as hypothesis, and this hypothesis itself suggests a connection with commodity exchange which is interesting for an understanding of mumiani rumours.

The story of the 'start' of mumiani rumours in Mombasa can be linked to the contact between Indian and Swahili soldiers, because the rumour referred to a Parsee in particular. Parsees were thought to be the most 'Westernized' Indian community (Arnold 1988:403). Moreover, their funeral customs could give rise to rumour among other ethnic communities in India: a corpse was laid out in secrecy in a tower and few people knew what exactly was done with it.²³ This knowledge was not available to the Africans of the Swahili coast, so it becomes more plausible to relate it to tales told by other Indian ethnic groups about Parsees (see also note 4). This is confirmed by the fact that the first Tanganyikan rumours appear in places where support of British interests in World War One, and therefore contact with and recruitment into the British Army, was most evident (see note 7).

More interesting is the fact that neither the rumour about the Parsee, nor Johnson (1939:314) and Sacleux (1939:625),²⁴ nor another mumiani tale from the Swahili coast (Baker 1946:108), refer to a European making, receiving or distributing mumiani. Instead, a Parsee, 'jews' (Sacleux 1939:625) or *washihiri* (according to Baker, any non-European foreigner except a (slave-holding, plantation-owning) Muscat Arab – 1946:108) are mentioned as culprits. Mumiani, moreover, only appears in commodified (not personified) form: as a medicine with, for the culprits mentioned, primarily commercial uses. Both Parsees and 'jews' (and, if we can believe Baker's interpretation of the word, *washihiri*,²⁵ too) are members of classes predominantly engaged in trade.

Both the absence of Europeans as mumiani and the emphasis on a cannibal form of commerce gain in significance when related to the hypothesis of the

spread of mumiani rumours by soldiers. Although small retail trade existed before the beginning of this century, we cannot ignore the extent to which payment for military service gave both poor sepoys and poor African soldiers from the interior the possibility to engage in it as clients of the predominantly Indian shopkeepers. I do not know to what extent East African soldiers were literate,²⁶ but the fact that shopkeepers often used Gujarati for book-keeping or kept their accounts in their head (Iliffe 1979:265) obviously created possibilities for cheating clients, or – more important – rumours about it. In other words, the Swahili coast context suggests an association between mumiani rumours and the unequal exchange of commodities: taking money, taking blood (an association also hypothesized by Luise White – 1991:22 ff.).

Mumiani in Uluguru and surroundings

The Uluguru material gives the opportunity to give much more precise answers to the questions when, where, for whom, by whom and at whose expense the rumour was constituted.²⁷ In Uluguru and surroundings, 'mumiani' was and is personified (in fact, I never heard people speaking of mumiani as medicine: the medicine referred to was 'blood' (Swahili: *damu*). The persons identified as mumiani were generally not (yet) in close daily contact with local people: gold prospectors on the Ruvu river, passing medical researchers, veterinary and game officers, surveyors and engineers, a new Brother in the first months after arriving at the mission, an anthropologist who had only just started fieldwork.

Moreover, the contact they had was often through wage labour (either by employing local people or through the non-Luguru Africans they employed): the miners needed labour for their claims, while officers of the Game, Survey or Public Works Departments always travelled with a retinue of assistants; their retainers negotiated with the local population to obtain food, and, in at least one case, women.²⁸ Brother Rudolf employed scores of workers at the carpentry workshop, while Father Winkelmolen was so much engaged in building projects that the times he did not have a substantial number of people in his employ must have been few and far between. In the early days of my fieldwork, contact with local people, my hosts and some local leaders excepted, went mostly through Thomas. I will deal with these two elements: lack of contact and contact through wage labour, in turn.

There is a qualitative side to the relatively few instances of contact with local people: the fact that, to many Waluguru, the accused moved outside of human society (or, in the case of brother Rudolf and myself, had not yet been accepted as part of it). Gold prospectors, cattle and game officers, surveyors and engineers all had work to do in the bush, away from human settlement, where they usually camped in tents.²⁹ Waluguru generally regard the bush with great suspicion; it is inhabited by dangerous animals and nature-spirits and the repository of both

good and evil medicine; it is there that the *mumiani* does his gruesome work. Father Winkelmolen preferred to travel in the cool of the night, something which few Waluguru like to do because it is the time that both *mapembe* (horns of malignant sorcery), the *wawanga* witches, and the *mumiani* were about.³⁰ The comparison with the *mwanga* witch is illuminating: in Uluguru, they are old men or women who are out at night for their evil work: they feed on corpses dug up for the purpose, feed unsuspecting people with human meat so they will die, or carry them away to till their mysterious fields until dawn, when the victim wakes up tired but oblivious of his nocturnal exertions. *Wawanga* are always naked, although only very strong counter-medicine can make them show it during the day. Some people suspect the *mwanga* is more powerful than any of his opponents, the *mganga* (medicine man) in particular.³¹

The *mumiani* is in many ways similar to the *mwanga*: he is also out in the bush at night; his power, too, is secular, as it is derived from the ability and willingness to sacrifice fellow-humans (and not from the spiritual support claimed by medicine-men, headmen and catholic priests).³² Both the *mwanga* and the *mumiani* occupy an imaginary realm of anti-social consumption of human bodies which stands in contrast to the ordinary political uses to which *mapembe* sorcery is put; whereas *mapembe* sorcery can be combated by the medicine-man, he is (nearly) powerless in relation to *mwanga* and *mumiani*. There is a significant difference, however, in that the *mwanga* uses human bodies for food, or for labour (in which case the victim escapes tired but unharmed). The *mumiani*, in contrast, uses the blood of his victim as a commodity: as medicine or as fuel. As in the tales from the Swahili coast, human bodies are the raw material for valuable commodities which are up for sale, but unlike them, the producer is identified as a European.

This picture of the anti-social European can be associated with a context of – to some extent anti-social – Luguru-European interaction. The time of the rise of *mumiani* rumours is significant. The advent of the rumours around 1930 followed the introduction of Indirect Rule³³ (with its emphasis on the creation of a cash-cropping peasantry) and coincided with the Depression, which hit Luguru cash croppers most severely from 1931 onwards and forced more and more of them to sell their labour on the Morogoro sisal estates to earn money for tax. A historical coincidence like the small gold rush to the Ruwu in 1933–35, with its extension of wage labour relations into the mountain area itself, may have contributed to the further spread of the rumours. In 1935–36, a few years before Hutchins reported the rumours were most insistent, there was talk of forced migration of Waluguru to the unoccupied bush in the plains to the east of the Uluguru mountains, a measure which most Waluguru have resisted during the whole period of British Rule. A failure of the cotton crop due to diseases struck those who had followed the British exhortation to migrate in 1936.³⁴

The next *mumiani* cases mentioned by the mission diaries are from the war years.³⁵ The Matombo Fathers received a request at the time to promote cotton

planting among Waluguru, but there is no evidence that the policy of forced migration was revived at the time. However, the British tried to conscript Waluguru in the army (at times through force), which particularly scared the people of Singiza and Kasanga missions (where the reports of *mumiani* came from).³⁶ Around 1947, during the post-war famine, there is another report of *mumiani* rumours,³⁷ while the next batch of reports is from the late 1950s, after the Uluguru Land Usage Scheme riots (see Brain 1979/80) and during the rise of the Tanganyika National African Union to prominence among Waluguru.³⁸ Most cases involve an increase in tension between the British Government and Waluguru; it is even more significant if we take account of the fact that some Waluguru say that each instance of resistance against the colonial authorities results in the loss or death of a *Mluguru*.³⁹ In other cases (such as the 1947 famine) food shortage led to increasing dependence of Waluguru on income through wage labour.

The rumours were most frequent in February and March. That was not only the time when most people were about in search of food (and could therefore be waylaid by crooks posing as the *askari* or soldiers of the *mumiani*), it was also the time when most Waluguru went to Morogoro to work on the sisal estates. The ambivalence with which wage labour was regarded in a predominantly cash cropping society like Uluguru should not be underestimated. It was a potential threat to household and lineage relationships because, through the independent income of the youngsters working in Morogoro, it upset both the balance of power between males and females and between young and old (the young males were generally the ones to win out, while women and elders suffered the consequences). The elders (as lineage heads, both male and female) and the women (as lineage carriers) were more tied to lineage land, and the emphasis on cash crops imposed by the British government merely reinforced the tendency of Waluguru to stick to their soil. The drain of young men's labour power was, at best, a mixed blessing for these peasants.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that among themselves, Waluguru exchanged labour in the context of community relationships which, as among Nuer, were expressed in an idiom of kinship (Evans-Pritchard 1940:143). Close relationships labelled as kinship were the context for the exchange of labour power, while the exchange was effected through the ceremony of reconciliation (*tambiko*) with the ancestors – which implied the ritual drinking of a lot of beer after the communal job (clearing a field, thatching a house, and the like) was finished. Beer was made through cooperation between groups of women, some producing a sufficient amount of millet, others, often known for their skills, overseeing the preparation (the better the beer, the larger the number of workers). In other words, labour was exchanged through relations of production expressed by, and continually reproduced through, kinship and reciprocity.

In contrast, in plantation work or other forms of wage labour, the exchange was impersonal, only mediated by money. Moreover, in wage labour relationships, a body was put at the disposal of the European, subjected to a factory-model

discipline for a purpose which was remote from personal or local interests: building bridges or roads at a time when Waluguru were not interested in them, harvesting and planting sisal for which they had no use. Thus, while wage labourers were attracted by the money which they got in exchange for their labour, they were ignorant about the nature of the exchange in a way which sharply contrasted with their own society: to what use were their bodies put? Why did they have to work on schedule? I suggest that wage labour among Waluguru implied a surrender of the body to a labour discipline which was far more alienating than the mere fact that it was repaid in money brings out. As among Bemba, the replacing of bride-service with a bride-price suggests that it was not money which was fetishized, but the relationship of labour power to money (White 1991:23).

The case of the *banyama* accusations levelled at the White Fathers in Northern Rhodesia produce, therefore, an interesting contrast with Uluguru. Luise White argues that these priests were accused because they were not exchanging goods and services for money, in contrast with the exchange of labour for money in the mines of which most Bemba men had experience. She suggests that 'vampire accusations may have taken hold when relations of work and remuneration were severely disfigured' (1991:25). But for Luguru youngsters, and even more for the elders and women who had to stay behind, wage labour *itself* was a 'severe disfiguration' of labour relationships in the context of a society which was attuned to cash cropping and the relationships of communal obligation which it supported. The question 'why are these people working?' (White 1991:25) was, I presume, raised among Waluguru even when remuneration was thought to be sufficient.

Thus, it may be better to understand the seasonality of mumiani rumours in the context of food shortage and the concomitant necessity to go out and earn money by putting one's body at the disposal of a European. (At least for Uluguru, this seems more plausible than the invocation of psychoanalytic 'oral aggression' beliefs and speculation about bodies as food (White 1991:18). As we have seen, cannibalism was applicable to the *mwanga*, but not to the mumiani.)

Moreover, it explains why the Holy Ghost Fathers in Uluguru, in contrast to the White Fathers in Northern Rhodesia, were not (systematically) accused of vampirism: they were not as engaged in wage labour (except in their carpentry workshop, which was a vocational school at the same time). They even opposed it vigorously: they did not want to see their schoolboys play truant because of sisal estate work. Of course, they paid their catechists and teachers to do the work of schooling, but the position of the catechist was more like an overseer than an individual surrendering his labour power: he effectively took part in the relations of religious production and did not merely surrender his body to it.⁴⁰

In wage labour relationships, the body became a commodity, a thing to be exchanged for an abstract value expressed in money, and a similar perspective on the body is unfolded by mumiani rumours. Again, the contrast with *wawanga* rumours is significant: the *mwanga* actually steals his victim's labour power for

agricultural purposes, while the mumiani steals his life and body, specified in terms of blood, for industrial or medical ones. That leads to an important conclusion: whereas the *mwanga*'s crimes take place within relations of production well understood by Luguru cash croppers, the mumiani's take place within ill understood ones: the disciplinary relations characteristic of factory work and of a hospital, similar to the kind of depersonalizing discipline that antagonized the Indian population at the time of the plague.

That also implies that we may be able to interpret the lack of contact with the local population characteristic of many of those who were accused as a lack of, or, better, as unequal, exchange. Soldiers on the Swahili coast put their money at the disposal of merchants on terms of exchange about which they were uncertain. Wage labourers in Uluguru put their bodies at the disposal of plantation owners or public works engineers on terms of exchange about which they were uncertain. Luguru lineages had to allow game wardens, surveyors and engineers in their neighbourhoods about whose work they were uncertain and which they might well interpret as a kind of exploitation of resources of which they were kept ignorant. (It takes a few months of fieldwork in Uluguru to realize to what extent Waluguru fear strangers who have not been related to them through greetings, gifts, or other forms of exchange.) This may also explain why Father Winkelmolen was so often accused, because he was one of the few priests who disdained of the kind of magical exchange through the distribution of blessings, Masses for the deceased, medals and rosaries which was so popular among Waluguru.⁴¹

However general these interpretations through lack of contact and exchange, and doubts about wage labour may be, they still leave unanswered one of the more important questions about mumiani rumours: why blood? I feel that the symbolic interpretations offered by Luise White do not suffice here. One might try to link the red colour of blood to red wine and its consumption (in the catholic Mass) and to the ambivalence which characterizes the colour within the tripartite scheme of colour symbolism (Turner 1967; White 1991:19/20), but the meanings of the white-red-black colour scheme (in contrast to the signifiers themselves) cannot be generalized from Ndembu or Bemba society to the rest of Africa.⁴² Its link to the Mass is very tenuous indeed:⁴³ Mass wine is white, and the link between the blood of Christ and Mass wine gives rise to the question why, if the body of Christ was also eaten during the Mass, Christian missionaries were not suspected of being cannibals at the same time that they were accused of being *banyama*.

Among Waluguru, however, *sharing* blood is very significant in discourse about kinship relations. Not only does blood connote the continuity of the generations passed on through women (descent is reckoned matrilineally), people who are not related through blood can become related by a kind of blood-sharing. The most important bond other than descent, marriage, is confirmed on the day of the marriage itself by the mixing of the blood of the future husband and

wife (Wendelini 1990:10/11). One should realize that kinship relations are the foundation of the agricultural relations of production in Luguru society, and that these relations of production were threatened by the young men working on the sisal estates, both when they were absent from home and when they returned with money which they did not necessarily have to share with their elders and women. In that context, the metaphoric potential of the taking away of blood (which also indicates descendants and other kin and their productive capacities) without giving anything in return (except, perhaps, money) becomes profound indeed.

Conclusion

The interpretation of mumiani rumours advanced here deliberately moved away from the content of the messages to the contexts in which they were produced. While in India, *momiyai* could be associated, in one case at least, with an excess of alienating contact through medical discipline, further, African, stages of the rumour embodied a lack of contact. This lack of contact was qualified by involvement in relations of production characteristic of the colonial economy: ignorance of accounting, lack of personal participation (through kinship or reciprocity of obligation) in a disciplinary economy. It therefore supports Luise White's finding that the rumours were a kind of 'popular economics' (1991:24), but with the additional insight, gleaned initially from the Indian context, that a specific microphysics of power applied to bodies (through medical, industrial, or plantation discipline) may have been important in the kind of interpretations which it advanced.

But can these conclusions claim a 'scientific' status more advanced than the rumour itself? My interpretation may seem to tally with certain Western pre-suppositions about what could have happened and what not: it is difficult to agree with the idea that blood was used as fuel for motor-cars or aeroplanes, and that I was therefore inclined to look for another 'explanation.' However, we do use blood as medicine in our hospitals (Africans know that as well as we do), and Western metaphors of blood are as rich and at times as revolting as any tale about mumiani. More important is that if we only look upon these debates as instances of cultural difference, of 'irrationality,' that is, statements with which Westerners cannot easily agree, we fail to produce an understanding of the rumour and its spread from one colonial context to another. The understanding of mumiani which I have tried to advance may be slightly less coincidental with the occurrence of the rumour because of the way in which I tried to list several cases of its enunciation, and tried to spell out the historical circumstances in which these enunciations were made. If it is slightly less coincidental, it is because I concentrated on the colonial contacts – the actual points where European and African culture touched⁴⁴ – that accompanied fluctuations in mumiani rumours.

I feel this 'neo-diffusionist' approach produces more tenable rumours than strictly symbolic analyses, or explanations which replace it by psychological or economic mechanisms.

But 'neo-diffusionist' rumours remain rumours: their understanding is the product of associations between speech events and specific contexts which are as loosely connected as mumiani rumours were connected to me. If, then, I have been spreading mumiani rumours beyond the contexts in which they were originally produced, I hope the preceding paper provides sufficient reasons why I think anthropologists should engage in rumour-mongering as much as anybody else.

Notes

- * The research on which this essay is based has been sponsored by the Graduate School of Social Science (PdIS) in Amsterdam and the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). Many of the conclusions drawn in the essay are worked out in more detail in my dissertation (Pels 1992). I am most indebted to Luise White, who advised me to write it. She has taken the initiative in drawing the attention of Africanists to vampire rumours (see White 1991) and, despite the fact that we disagree on some points, has been a source of inspiration and encouragement since. I have profited from the comments of Gosewijn van Beek, Johannes Fabian, Jojada Verrips and the editors of *Etnofoor*, who cannot, however, be held responsible for the imperfections that remain.
- 1. Tanzania National Archives (hereafter TNA) 21855: H.M.K. to Assistant Secretary of Native Affairs, 19.10.33; TNA, Microfilm 19, Morogoro District Book (hereafter MDB): 'Mumiani or Chinjachinja,' by E.E. Hutchins, 1938.
- 2. Yai being a Persian village (Gordon 1933).
- 3. Although Gordon (1929; 1933; 1934) only gives examples from Northern India and the soldiers recruited for East Africa were also from around Delhi or the Punjab, Arnold's account of the plague epidemic in India (1988) shows that *momiyai* rumours were also prevalent in the Bombay region, and Gujarat in particular. The reason why the rumours were brought by the Indian sepoys may be that this was the first time when Indians from the lower classes (in contrast to the merchants who dealt with the Omani Arabs of the Swahili coast) were shipped to the East African coast in large numbers. I thank Hein Streefkerk for the reference to Arnold.
- 4. Another tale refers to Khalifa Haroun al Rashid meeting *mumiani* makers in Bagdad and extricating himself from their grasp by one of his usual tricks. Together with the Mombasa rumour, these two are the only tales known to me in which *mumiani* is not reported to be made by white men; it may be significant that these tales are both from the Swahili coast (Baker 1946:108/09). Father Sacleux, who also gathered his data on the Swahili coast, refers to the ones who made and traded it as 'jews' (1939:625). For an interpretation, see below.
- 5. TNA 21855: H.M.K. to Assistant Secretary of Native Affairs, 19.10.33.
- 6. TNA 21855: Acting Provincial Commissioner Lindi to Chief Secretary, 9.10.33. It may be significant that both Musoma and Mahenge were places where opposition to the Germans was most pronounced and conscription into the British Army during

- the First World War, and therefore contact with Northern Indian soldiers, most likely (see Iliffe 1979:251, 254).
7. The rumour can be dated because the catechist recalled how his first-born son died, 10 years old, in 1910; this puts his marriage at around 1899; as marriage usually followed baptism which was only possible after a four-year catechumenate, the boy could not have arrived at the mission much later than 1895 (Litzler 1934).
 8. Diocesan Archives Morogoro (hereafter DAM): Matombo Mission Diary, 8.12.18.
 9. KomMissieMemoires Archive, Katholiek Documentatie Centrum, University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands, interview 514, tape 1, side A: 035.
 10. TNA, Microfilm 19, MDB: 'Mumiani or Chinjachinja,' by E.E. Hutchins, 1938; On the Eastern Uluguru gold rush, see DAM, Matombo Mission Diary, 27.12.33, 31.12.33, 28.1.34, 1.2.34, 4.9.35, 13.10.35.
 11. DAM: Matombo Mission Diary, 13.5.57; Father Th. Winkelmolen, Morogoro, 18.9.89.
 12. TNA, Microfilm 19, MDB: 'Mumiani or Chinjachinja,' by E.E. Hutchins, 1938; Father J. Elbers, Nijnsel, 2.5.90.
 13. Brother Rudolf Schoonderbeek, Gemert, 1.5.90; Mzee Petri Mloka, Kiswira, 5.2.90.
 14. DAM: Singiza Mission Diary, 17.10.40, Kasanga Mission Diary, 3.11.43.
 15. Father J. de Boer, IJsselsteijn, 25.4.90; Father P. de Boer, IJsselsteijn, 8.5.90; Father W. v.d. Eeden, Oyen, 17.12.90; Father J. Elbers, Nijnsel, 2.5.90.
 16. DAM: Matombo Mission Diary, 19.12.59, March–April '60; Brother Rudolf Schoonderbeek, Gemert, 1.5.90; Mzee Petri Mloka, Kiswira, 8.–15.10.89.
 17. Father Th. Winkelmolen, Morogoro, 30.11.89, 19.12.89, Mzee Shetani, Morogoro, 28.11.89, Brother Rudolf Schoonderbeek, Gemert, 1.5.90. The involvement with Morogoro hospital is a continuation of Father Winkelmolen's life-long dedication to the material improvement of the communities in which he worked (as one of my informants said, if you want *maendeleo* ['development'], get Winkelmolen – Mzee Mikaeli Mlosa, Nyingwa, 23.11.89). Father Winkelmolen's unconditional hospitality and generous support, especially in putting the mission diaries at my disposal, were indispensable during my research.
 18. The two authoritarian principles are: 'information should be transmitted passively, and (...) no one has the right to alter or amend received statements' (White 1991: 1).
 19. Also *ñakacho* (Spier 1992, forthcoming) or *pishtaco* (Oliver-Smith 1969). Fred Spier pointed out to me that whereas *pishtaco* is a rural rumour about the use of Indian fat for several purposes (including industrial ones: one of the latest rumours was that Indian fat was used as fuel for the US space shuttle), in Andean towns it has a complement in the figure of the *sacaojo* (the 'eye-plucker' – see Ansion 1989).
 20. Graebner's methodology was sufficiently sophisticated to prevent him from indulging in speculations about the 'origin' of European culture, as was done by his British colleagues, Perry and Elliot Smith (to whom the quote by Powdermaker referred) (Graebner 1911:77ff.).
 21. Or 'colour symbolism' (White 1991:19). Although I admire Luise White's analysis of the *banyama* rumours in Zambia and have tried to emulate many of its features, I feel her interpretation through colour symbolism is, like the original essay by Turner on which it is based (1967), singularly unconvincing. Interestingly, Turner's essay on color symbolism is explicitly directed at staking a speculative claim about human universals which is seemingly more profound than historical diffusion (1967:90).
 22. Arnold refers here to the Foucauldian analogy between the prison and the hospital, and especially its emphasis on isolation, observation and control (Arnold 1988:397; see Foucault 1979).
 23. I owe this information to Nico Kielstra. The image of the tower may be suggestive, too, because the *momiyai* room in a hospital was usually thought to be on the second floor (Gordon 1929:204).
 24. Both Johnson and Sacleux gathered the majority of their dictionary material on the Swahili coast (see also note 5).
 25. A Parsee, K.A. Master, was one of the first leaders of the Dar es Salaam Indian Association founded in 1918, in which organisation shopkeepers and merchants predominated (Iliffe 1979:264/65). 'Jew' carried both racial and socio-economic connotations for Europe's Roman Catholics at the time; it is therefore difficult to assess whether Father Sacleux used the word to refer to semites as a racial category, to adherents of the Jewish religion, or to mercantile classes (including Indians) in general; the mercantile connotation, however, is present in all these interpretations. Johnson (1939:302) and the *Kamusi* (1981:188/89) do not support Baker's description: for them, a *mshihiri* is an Arab from Sheher, usually engaged in manual trades and labour. Although this denies the mercantile interpretation advanced in this section, the reference to wage labourers is interesting (see next section).
 26. It is probable, given the fact that colonial education had not yet attained the ubiquity of the 1930s, that only a small number was literate.
 27. And consequently, more precise answers about how the rumour itself was constituted (when, where, for whom, by whom, and at whose expense mumiani was thought to be made). The two sets of questions and answers cannot be disengaged: answers to the question who produced mumiani indicate when, where, for whom and by whom the rumour was produced.
 28. DAM: Matombo Mission Diary, 13.5.57.
 29. Veterinary work implied going into the bush because, in the neighbourhood of Uluguru, it mostly dealt with the nomad Maasai cattle-owners. Surveyors were, for instance, engaged in setting up geodesic measure-points on mountain tops which Waluguru think are peopled by (at times evil) spirits; they would also plan the track of a new road, which again involved 'bush-work.' Engineers very often had to camp at the site where they were building a bridge for one of these new roads; again, in the bush. I have never heard of political or agricultural officers, whose contact with local people was more frequent and who usually stayed in the villages during their work, being accused of mumiani.
 30. Both I and Brother Rudolf and his colleagues at the mission scrupulously avoided being out at night except when necessary, and then accompanied by Waluguru (Brother Rudolf Schoonderbeek, Gemert, 1.5.90). Being out at night, however, is not the sole reason for Mumiani suspicion, at least if we take account of another missionary who used to travel at night but was never accused (Mzee Petri Mloka, Kiswira, 25.12.89). *Mapembe* are little horns filled with evil medicine made by a sorcerer and bought by people to harm others. A *pembe*, however, is a liability not only for people whom they are meant to harm, but also for innocents and even for the owner himself (Archive of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, Gemert: MSS Vermunt 6.0: 'Mapembe. Gamahembe').
 31. Camillus Kunambi, Mama Mkoba, Kiswira, 30.9.90; Archive of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, Gemert: MSS Vermunt 6.0: 'Uganga. Mwanga.' It seems the *mwanga* occupies a less prominent place on the Swahili coast: according to

- Lienhardt, they are 'minor sorcerers' who cannot compete with medicine men or witches (Lienhardt 1968:61).
32. Both the *mganga* (Swahili) or medicine man and the *mwenye issi* (Kiluguru) or local lineage head claim the support of *mizimu* or spirits (nature-spirits in the case of the former and spirits of ancestors in the case of the latter) in their magical practice; the catholic missionaries either condemned the invocation of *mizimu* (as a violation of the First Commandment) or accommodated to it by saying that all spiritual power derived from God. They tried to replace ancestor-worship by Masses for the deceased and catholic feasts like All Souls' and All Saints' Day.
 33. Indirect Rule, a little more benevolent than apartheid but racist nonetheless, can be compared with the imposition of the colour bar in Northern Rhodesia which coincided with the rise of *banyama* rumours (White 1991:15). One might speculate that both the colour bar and Indirect Rule institutionalized a lack of contact between African and European.
 34. TNA 11676/V: Annual Report Eastern Province, 1932; TNA 11676/VI: Annual Report Eastern Province, 1933; TNA microfilm 19, MDB: Summary of a 1936 Memorandum on Cotton Planting Propaganda in Morogoro District, by J.F. De S. Lewis-Barnes, 26.9.60; Mlahagwa 1974: 23/24.
 35. DAM: Singiza Mission Diary, 17.10.40; Kasanga Mission Diary, 3.11.43.
 36. DAM: Matombo Mission Diary, January '41, 28.8.41; Kasanga Mission Diary, 12.8.42; Father W. v.d. Eeden, Oyen, 17.12.90.
 37. Father Piet de Boer, IJsselsteijn, 8.5.90.
 38. DAM: Matombo Mission Diary, 13.5.57, 28.3.60.
 39. At least, that is the interpretation of Mzee Pius Wendelini when summing up his description of conflicts with both German and British authorities which led to the death or deportation of one or several Waluguru (Wendelini 1990:52). The deportation of the ring-leaders of the ULUS riot (see Brain 1979/80:188) did not lead to their disappearance, according to Mzee Pius, because of the intervention of TANU (Wendelini 1990:51).
 40. I feel White does not take account of the fact that many catechists were not simple wage labourers, but a kind of headmen of the local group of Christians. The relationship between catechists' strikes and *banyama* rumours which she demonstrates (1991:25) may be explained by other, intervening variables (f.e. an economic crisis affecting both remuneration of catechists and other wage labour relationships).
 41. Coupled with his quick temper, this may account for the fact that he was one of the few missionaries accused; showing one's temper is a show of *moto* (Swahili: 'fire' or 'heat'), which Waluguru suspect as it does not fit their ideal of a cool (Swahili: *baridi*) relationship in which people restrain their desires. As we have seen, the *mwanga* breathes fire when discovered; the association between fire and blood may have some significance in this respect (cf. Bemba: Richards 1982:30/31 and *passim*).
 42. Luguru color symbolism does not adhere to Turner's (1967) conclusions, which Luise White summarizes: 'Of these colors red represents life and death, depending on context, while white represents purity and health; black is the color of disease, witchcraft and death' (1991:20). For Waluguru, black is the color which the spirits like, and although the spirits are often dead ancestors, they can also be nature spirits who are not dead but very much alive; moreover, black (cloth) is necessary for communication with spirits, which is the way to cure disease and witchcraft, not the color of disease and witchcraft (here, the term 'represent' does not exactly clarify

things). Moreover, corpses are buried in white cloth in Uluguru, and although this has to do with 'purity' the relation with 'health' is tenuous in such a case.

43. In White's paper, the link of the Mass with *banyama* rumours is supported by only a single piece of evidence: a report by a local British officer (1991:15/16).
44. Contact has to do with tactility: the (predominantly metonymic) sense of touch. Epistemologically speaking, anthropological theories have neglected tactility in favour of an aesthetics ('lore of the senses') that privileges vision (Fabian 1983). Despite the fact that my analysis is very much indebted to it, Fabian's critique of 'visualism,' and other critiques like it, emphasizes verbal exchange ('conversation' or the oral/aural senses) at the expense of tactility (cf. Taussig 1991).

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