

## Keynote

---

# Cultural and Natural Heritage in Tanzania: A Case of Southern Highlands

## I. Introduction

Cultural Tourism is a recent development in the tourism industry. In former times, we had classic tourism, tourism that one can see and understand easily, because it is about the appearance, or form (phenomena). However, cultural tourism is different from classic tourism because it is not about the form or appearance but it is about a function. For this matter, a tourist needs not only a guide who shows places, but, at a cultural destination, it is mostly indigenous people who can make the occasion lively. One example is the traditional clinic in one of the cultural destinations in Southern Corridor (*Selo*). At this place, there is a big cave that has been used by the inhabitants as a clinic since 600 years ago. The community had a senior midwife and several assistants. The traditional clinic was very famous as there was no single health center or hospital in the whole region. Therefore, in order to make the cave living, one needs to prepare tools and explanation from midwives who know about the place and historical background.

## II. Cultural Tourism in Tanzania

In the cultural tourism industry, some of the components are sacred places and cultural practices such as dances, beliefs, myths and legends. These aspects of cultural tourism faced opposition during colonial and missionary era. For the case of beliefs, Western people had a notion that Africa lacks a religion. In order to have a religion, you need to have an idea of a supreme God, a founder, a sacred book and a worldwide spread, all of which (according to Western people) are missing in Africa. Therefore, in Africa there is no indigenous religion instead, the two major foreign religions are the only ones deserving to be religions. The two foreign religions more than not recognizing presence of religion in Africa (Tanzania). Islam used to call Africans "*kaffir*" which means people who lack religion and modern culture, while Christianity called Africans "*pagans*" which originates from the Latin term "*paganus*" which means people who live at the outskirts of town, hence have no access to religion, modern culture, language and development. The British colonial government had an Act that suppressed also African culture, the 1928 Witchcraft and Sorcery Act. This Act discredited both good and evil cultural elements as harmful practices. Although in African life, a witch is an enemy of a community but a sorcerer is a defender of the community.

### III. Attitude of Berlin Missionaries towards African culture in Southern Highlands

When we talk of missionary era in Tanzania, it is about various Christian Mission Societies that introduced Christianity in the country. For the sake of this paper I will speak only about two Mission Societies: Berlin which worked in the Southern Highlands and Leipzig which worked in the Northern part of the country. Missionaries who were sent by the Berlin Mission Society were conservative. They were not academicians (university graduates) but practical oriented. These were totally against African culture and beliefs. They had a system of establishing Christian communities or villages or estates, especially for people who were converted to Christianity. These Christians had to follow 20 regulations for inhabitants in mission estates known as "*Platzordnung*."

In order to control observance of regulations in Christian communities, missionaries nominated two church elders, a male and female who were to report to the missionary about members who behaved contrary to the twenty mission estate regulations. Some of these regulations were about prohibiting new converts to practice cultural practices and beliefs. As it states in the 8th regulation, "***Heidnische Unsitten sind bei keinen der hier wohnenden Leute zu dulden; insbesondere sind verboten und sind zu bestrafen: Geschlechtliche Unsittlichkeiten aller Art, Trinkgelage, Taenze, Pubertaetsfeiern fuer beide Geschlechter, Zaubereien, Orakel und Gottesurteile...***" which means "Pagan immoralities shall not be tolerated by inhabitants of the station; especially, practices that are forbidden and punishable are: Immoralities in both gender, drinking occasions, dances, initiation ceremonies for young people, healing, divination and superstitious practices." (Ilomo, F. in *Christianity: A Secondary Religious Experience*, 2011, p.218).

The content of the regulation no. 8 above, shows clearly that in the mission stations there was no room for any African cultural practices and beliefs. Moreover, missionary teaching was not in favour of African understanding of extended family in this world and the other world. This includes the whole issue of forebears (ancestors) who are the mediators between the living members and the departed. In connection to that, the missionaries related the Western concept of Satan with forebears, although for Africans forebears are the fundament of family and clan because they protect the community values and mediate members with God. For Africans, the enemy of the community is the witch and not the forebears. In most cases, we hear African communities kill a witch, burn or depose him/her.

Since the missionaries teaching were not in favour of forebears, many potential cultural tourist destinations can be affected by the missionaries teaching as they are viewed as malevolent sites, although by Africans are viewed as sacred. Such sites are sacred forests that now are known as satanic, grave yards, traditional clinics, medicine-men and diviners (now known as evil people), medicinal herbal plants, and sacrificial and offering sites etc.

The sacred sites I have mentioned above are normally found at places where missionaries identified pagan communities. For this matter, Christians with influence from missionary teaching do not dare to visit or to be guided into places known as satanic. As a matter of fact, the cultural tourism industry in Southern Highlands is not popular and the infrastructure for the industry is underdeveloped. In connection to that, the economic situation in Southern Regions is not as good as in the Northern part.

#### **IV. Attitude of Leipzig Missionaries towards African Culture**

As reported before, the other missionaries who worked in Tanzania were from the Leipzig Mission Society in Germany. These missionaries, who worked in the Northern part of the country, were academicians, and therefore liberal and tolerant to African cultural practices. These missionaries formerly worked in India where they experienced *Caste* system. A system which was not only against human beings, but against Christian teaching. When they came to Tanzania, they found the African culture which was friendly and, compared to the fertile soil, suitable for planting seeds. Therefore, they found that the African culture was suitable for planting the seeds of the word of God. For that matter, the missionaries in Tanzania did not need to teach Christianity as a foreign culture since African culture was favourable for teaching Christianity. By applying this concept, the missionaries used indigenous culture to teach Christianity. Therefore, Christianity grew rapidly. Moreover, the economy of the Northern Region was also easily developed, including the cultural tourism industry, infrastructure, a phenomenon that can be easily seen even today.

#### **VI. Conclusion and Suggestions**

As we have seen above, the cultural tourism industry depends very much on people's cultural practices, beliefs and natural resources. At the moment, this industry is globally at its peak, whereby many countries not only earn a lot of income, but it has also created a lot of employment for their people. It is high time for African people to revisit our policies, religious teaching and socio-political economy and rectify the religious, socio-economic and legal systems we inherited from the West. A country without cultural values cannot progress. It is strange that a country like Tanzania with more than 120 ethnic groups has no single national holiday that is based on traditional values. Instead, all national holidays are either political or religious, referring to religions that are a secondary religious experience for the people and not the primary religious experience.

I believe that it is high time that Africans take part in the cultural industry as active members and not as imitators of other peoples' culture in the world. It is a double standard that there is little promotion of natural conservation and alternative medicine from Africa while promoting alternative medicine from China and India. A medicine practitioner in Africa is normally known as a "*witch doctor*" while in Asia and the West

is known as "alternative medicine specialist." A diviner in Africa is called "medium" or "witch-doctor", while in the West a similar diviner is called "fortune teller" or "ethnologist." Let us have a fair judgment of practitioners from all over the world. I would also like to conclude that all elements we Africans have inherited from colonial governments and foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) that are not friendly to cultural tourism, should be corrected by us. We should not continue complaining about the previous system, instead let us take steps to correct the past for the betterment of our life today. We can only change the negative side of the past by changing the mindset of people's attitude towards African heritage and cultural practices and make the heritage a contributor to sustainable development through the cultural tourism industry.

Prepared by

Dr. Falres Ilomo.

Senior Lecturer, University of Iringa- Tanzania (25th July 2016).