African Imaginations of Moral Economy: Notes on Indigenous Economic Concepts and Practices in Tanzania

TADASU TSURUTA

Abstract: In response to economic influences emanating from abroad, African people have always created unique socioeconomic relationships and ideas. Examining four well-known Swahili words, *utani, chama, ujamaa,* and *ujanja,* this paper offers some tentative and exploratory comments on 'indigenous' moral-economic concepts in Tanzania. These terms convey not only notions about social relations but also relations, which one could consider economic, along with unique cultural connotations. Various things Westerners consider separate are impossible to disentangle in these concepts; joking and mutual aid, dance and politics, wit and cunning, all related to people's subsistence economy. These phenomena cannot easily be put into pre-arranged Western categories nor should they be disregarded from a modernist perspective, because these concepts and practices reflect a rich tradition of self-help solutions in Africa, thereby serving as a source of imagination for alternative visions of economic development.

We start from a full acceptance of our African-ness and a belief that in our own past there is very much which is useful for our future. (Julius K. Nyerere "The Purpose is Man")

L'imagination au pouvoir! ("Power to Imagination!") (A popular slogan coined in 'May 1968' uprising in France)

Introduction

On any estimate, sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region on the planet. After a fruitless attempt of each nation to gain economic independence, there is a growing sense that freemarket prescription is the only solution to get out of poverty, however difficult it may be. At present, however, deregulation of national economies in general has resulted in appallingly uneven distribution of wealth, both in the region and worldwide. At the same time, given the notorious inefficiency of governments, Africans cannot safely rely on the protection of the state against rampant market forces. The only remaining option for the majority of people is to take refuge in the existing communal ties.

That is why we are concerned with the economy of communities, i.e. economy based on moral considerations or 'moral economy' in Africa. Moral economy is not the 'traditional' or

Tadasu Tsuruta is currently a lecturer in School of Agriculture at Kinki University, Japan. He holds a Ph. D. in agricultural economics from Kyoto University, where he conducted dissertation research on socioeconomic changes of a rural community in Thailand. He is currently working on social history of urban Tanzania, focusing on its popular culture such as music and football.

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© University of Florida Board of Trustees, a public corporation of the State of Florida; permission is hereby granted for individuals to download articles for their own personal use. Published by the Center for African Studies, University of Florida. ISSN: 2152-2448 'indigenous' norm *per se*, as often alleged by critics of the concept. Rather, this is the norm created in response to external forces, such as harsh climate, clamorous government, and most specifically, capitalist economy. We have to note, at the same time, that it does not spring up in a vacuum, but takes shape as collective imagination inspired by the existing communal values, as demonstrated by the works of two eminent proponents of the moral economy concept, E. P. Thompson and James Scott. Both described how the populace behaved resolutely but sensibly to defend inalienable rights of subsistence amidst the upheavals brought about by the capitalist economy.¹

As Karl Polanyi convincingly argued in his classic work, a large part of the significant social changes that occurred since the 18th century can be understood in the context of a countermove of society against the stormy forces of a self-regulating market.² Africa is no exception. The capitalist economy, which expanded rapidly since the early 19th century, did not leave even the Africa's deep interior immune from it. To take today's Tanzania as an example, its history may be grasped from the viewpoint of constant pressure from world capitalism; from slave and ivory trade in the 19th century, through the colonially imposed modern economic system and ensuing socialist backlash, to the present-day economic liberalization. Along the way, people have become increasingly involved in commercial activities.

Looking at the situation from the increasing cash or wage nexus, however, gives us only half of the picture. In each stage of these economic changes, people in Tanzania devised a variety of unique forms of economic relations and concepts, which grew alongside the increasingly powerful market economy. In this paper, I would like to focus on four social/ economic concepts which have come to my notice. They are *utani*, *chama*, *ujamaa*, and *ujanja*, all of which have been among the familiar vocabulary of KiSwahili, the lingua franca of East Africa. While *ujamaa* (socialism) will be regarded as an economic concept, some may be surprised that the terms such as *utani* (joking relationship), *chama* (association or club), and *ujanja* (craftiness) are also regarded here as such. Admittedly, they are not straightforwardly 'economic' concepts in a modern sense, but they certainly have elements of economic arrangement or transaction as well as a social function.

In his thought-provoking works, Goran Hyden argues that underdevelopment of Africa is mainly due to the structural constraints inherent in the peasant economy, which he calls the 'economy of affection.'³ Economy of affection is, as he stresses, not based on traditional or backward value itself. Rather, it is a creative action based on imaginative qualities inherent in man (because the affection is the product of imagination), to deal with ever-changing political and economic situation. Hyden also suggests that this imaginative ability manifests itself in a very unique way in Africa, besides urging us to be sensitive about the difference between African and Western perceptions. It is this insight that my paper attempts to build upon. I will try to shed some light on Africans' unique imagination and practices of economic relations, by examining some indigenous concepts, which are not easily translated into Western notions and ideas. Such an attempt must have a contemporary relevance, as these concepts can in turn offer inspirations for alternative forms of desirable economic relations to those associated with Western-derived models of capitalism or socialism. I shall discuss the four concepts one by one drawing on existing literature.

UTANI: THE JOKING RELATIONSHIP

Origin and Traditional Practices of Utani

Utani is an extraordinary custom which can be found across Tanzania. Since *utani* is characterized by exchange of jocular abuse, it has always been referred to as the 'joking relationship,' as with the cases in other parts of Africa.⁴ It is, however, not a mere symbolic interaction, but often entails sharing of goods and money among *watani* (sing. *mtani*), or joking partners. Thus *utani* performs an economic as well as a social and political function. Here we are mainly concerned with the former aspect. It may be convenient to divide *utani* into two large categories: external and internal *utani*. The former, or inter-'tribal' *utani*, has been practiced between different ethnic groups, while the internal *utani* is found between different clans (or families) within one particular ethnic group. The privileges and obligations of internal and external *utani* appear to have been basically the same, though not always so.⁵

External *utani*, seemingly more recent than the internal one, probably became widespread in the 19th century, an era of "widening horizons" marked by a rapid expansion of the longdistance caravan trade.⁶ At the time, there were increased contacts between different ethnic groups due not only to the expanding internal trade which linked the interior and coastal entrepots, but also due to ethnic warfare. Under the German colonial rule, which lasted from the 1880s to 1910s, plantation agriculture and other employment opportunities further enhanced labor migration mainly from inland to the coast. External utani originated from either inter-ethnic warfare and ensuing armistice or regular movement of people including both caravan trade and labor migration. For example, the warlike Ngoni tribe had the most extensive utani ties with various ethnic groups, reflecting its bloody history of raiding and warfare.⁷ The Nyamwezi, which has a long history of long-distance trade and migration, had *utani* relationships with those groups which reside on their way to the coast.⁸ In both cases, *utani* may have allowed one to secure assistance and hospitality in foreign soil, when traveling beyond the confines of one's own ethnic group. If the traveler died in his *watani*'s territory, he would be reverently buried by them. Thus external *utani* ties developed as a kind of mutual aid institution among people who had been forced to move from their home villages to alien environment. Significantly, the external joking relations were always called by the same word (*utani*) by every ethnic group.9

Based on extensive interviews, Moreau gives the most detailed account on *utani* custom in Tanganyika.¹⁰ A point of great interest is the way property is shared between *watani*. It is marked by astonishing display of generous hospitality, in that one can take his/her *mtani*'s possessions "without asking permission or without being blamed for it," though "such sharing of property is mutual and restricted by the laws of custom."¹¹ An *mtani* can ask you whatever and whenever he likes. He may demand foods, a shirt, a goat, even a cow or a daughter (as wife). He may even break into your locked house to eat and drink. You cannot refuse your *mtani*'s request, because of the fear of witchcraft.¹²

Another way of sharing property is forfeiting. Examples of property that may be forfeited include meat carried in the hand without wrapping, clothes which are put on inside out, new clothes worn before they have been washed, clothes put out to dry on the roof of a house, etc. Some of these items are taken because they have ominous appearances and can cause bad

consequences to the owner. If one finds his clothes eaten by rats, which is also a very ill omen, he must seek an *mtani* and press the sinister object on him. This way the *mtani* saves his friends from bad luck. In the event of forfeiture, the owner can ransom the confiscated object afterwards by paying a proper sum of money.¹³

Probably the most important occasion for *watani*'s interaction is burial, which constitutes an essential part of *utani* concept. When a death occurs, *watani* of the deceased within reach have an obligation to attend the funeral and are expected to play some important ritual roles. *Watani* are often preferred to a relative for digging the grave. In many ethnic groups, *mtani* performs the ritual obstruction of the burial process, by entering the open grave and lying down in it, or lying on the bed where the corpse is to be placed. He refuses to move until he is given a customary fee. *Watani* may bring money or a beast as a contribution to the funeral expense, and in turn earn the right to some particular parts of the slaughtered animal. The *mtani* also acts as the deceased's executor by disposing of his property, a share of which the *mtani* himself has the right to claim. As has been mentioned, if one were to die away from his homeland, he would be buried by his *watani* there.¹⁴

Some examples may help to clarify the picture. Moreau personally observed the following at Amani, a settlement in the present Tanga region:

(1) At Amani when a Nyamwezi died his funeral was conducted not by his fellow-tribesmen, who are quite numerous in the neighborhood, but by Ngoni living here. (2) A Nyaturu, representative of a tribe very rarely seen at Amani, when he arrived as servant of a visiting European, sought out the only man with whom he could claim *utani*, a Nyiramba, and received hospitality from him. (3) My cook, Ngoni, on a week-end stroll, seeing shoes put out to dry on the roof of a hut here inhabited by a Nyamwezi, made forfeit of them, later accepting a hen as ransom.¹⁵

Transformation of Utani

Spies, who studied *utani* among the Ngoni, confirms the outline described above, and adds some interesting details especially on the changing nature of the custom. He states that, by the early 1940s, conflicts of opinions between the older and younger generation had arisen, in that the latter became increasingly disrespectful of the custom. He cites as evidence two court cases of 1942 to resolve a dispute over property taken by one's *mtani*. In both cases, there was a lack of recognition of the right of the *mtani* to seize somebody else's belongings without asking permission. Spies also suggests that there was an alternative explanation for forfeiture, which looks more modern than the interpretation based on supernatural beliefs. According to this, one will take meat or clothes laid out on the roof away to punish the person who "wants to show that he is richer than other people."¹⁶

Moreau states that, in the 1940s, it was already impossible to practice the external *utani* custom as formerly done in full-scale, because the modern environment would not allow frequent violation of individual property rights.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the notion of *utani* was still alive in mid-century Dar es Salaam, the capital where various ethnic groups intermingled. Based on observations made in the late 1950s, Leslie argues that *utani* ties contributed to bind several different ethnic groups together, which shared the same route of migration to Dar es

Salaam.¹⁸ According to him, the long-established *utani* institution might have not only assisted the migrant in his journey through alien areas, but also facilitated inter-ethnic alliance and even had an influence on residential patterns in Dar es Salaam. Although Leslie further suggests that *utani* ties could relieve difficulties and loneliness of those hailing from remote areas, it was not clear to what extent *utani* was actually important in their everyday life at the time, as Leslie offered no coherent evidence except for a brief reference to *utani* in a burial occasion.¹⁹ At least in the early 20th century, *utani* seems to have functioned as a practical way of mutual assistance in urban life, as seen in Scrivenor's account: "[T]he writer's personal boy (a Nyamwezi) claims that when in Dar es Salaam he can always rely upon the hospitality and assistance of his Zaramu *watani* even to the extent of a gift of four or five shillings in cash if he is in real need of it."²⁰

In the post-independence Tanga region, an interesting observation was made on the relationships between the indigenous Bondei people and other migrant workers from outside Tanga. The Bondei were said to have almost no external *utani* with other ethnic groups, and their internal *utani* was perhaps already on the decline in the early 1940s.²¹ But according to Lucas, the verbal or behavioral exchange between the Bondei and *wanyika* (a pejorative term referring to migrant workers from the upcountry) tended to take place in terms of *utani*, though the Bondei considered themselves superior to the migrants, who were less civilized in terms of Swahili coastal culture. Interestingly, he added that the *utani* relations between the two groups might have reflected a situation of little economic differentiation, where few opportunities exist for exploitation by one or the other.²² This seems to resonate with the suggestion that *utani* ties were often based on the supposed equal relationship between partners. An *utani* contract was usually made between the two warring ethnic groups, only when the fight was fair.²³ When one group had been defeated by another, *utani* bonds as a set of mutual obligations may have arisen to replace "a potential master-slave situation," and this eventually contributed toward "dissipating hostility and maintaining harmony between groups."²⁴

Though external *utani* custom as practiced in the past is dying out today, the term is still frequently mentioned in people's daily conversation, as a playful remark referring to interethnic fellowship. It is also still practiced at funerals, albeit in vestigial terms. The liveliest display of the *utani* concept today, however, is seen in the field of urban popular culture. There the term is used to refer to rivalry between popular music groups or football teams. Sometimes the fierce rivalry or *utani* relations between particular musical groups or dance bands, which abuse each other in their songs, are deliberately produced in order to achieve popularity and increase commercial gain.²⁵ In the case of football, the most notable example of *utani* relationship is the longstanding rivalry between two popular football clubs, the Simba and the Yanga, which are often referred to on a nationwide scale as longtime joking partners (*watani wa jadi*). While the supporters of the two teams often exchange playful insults with each other, they also attend each other's funerals, which they express as the relation of *ku-zikana* (to bury each other).

The *utani* custom flourished in one particular time in Tanzanian history, as a very complicated way of sharing goods and services especially in case of need and burial occasions. It was also a remarkable system to avoid all-out confrontation and social tension between groups, as seen in the dramatic inversion from past enmity to openhanded hospitality. It is no

longer a practical mutual-aid institution, but is still inspiring people's imagination when referring to friendly rivalry between equals in inter-*chama* (club) relations, to which I now turn.

CHAMA: URBAN WELFARE SOCIETY

The Origin of Chama in Tanganyika

Chama(plural: *vyama*) is a widely used generic term for association, guild, or club. It can stand for all sorts of associations ranging from political party to dance club, though, after independence, *chama* often came to be used as a synonym for the ruling party TANU (the Tanganyika African National Union).²⁶

The word *chama* is said to have originally meant a secret society or witches' coven.²⁷ In former Swahili coastal communities, witches were believed to belong to associations of evildoers known as *vyama*, which also stood for associations of people possessed by spirits.²⁸ However, *chama* seems to have acquired a much wider and more secular sense, covering any voluntary associations including even football teams by the 1920s, the early years of British rule.²⁹ The term became particularly popular during the subsequent three decades under the colonial order, when welfare societies and quasi-political associations flourished among Africans. These *vyama* sprouted especially in urban areas, where communal assistance and hospitality would not easily be provided.

Writing shortly after independence, Whiteley seems to have been puzzled by the flexibility of the term *chama*, which could denote all organizations with specific aims, ranging from political parties, trade unions, cooperative societies, to dance bands.³⁰ As a linguist with much concern about KiSwahili's future, he may have worried that the blanket use of the term would impair the language's precision, by blurring distinctions between different kinds of clubs and associations. At the same time, he also attributed the widespread use of the term and actual proliferation of *chama* to the success of the political party TANU and trade unions. But he overlooked the fact that the word *chama* had been used long before political groups thrived, and earlier *vyama* combined various elements including mutual assistance, companionship, pastime, education, political activism, and even entrepreneurship. Before criticizing the usage of the word as inaccurate or unrefined, we have to explore why these apparently different categories are compressed into the same word.

I suspect that the direct precursor of today's *chama* is an institution widely seen in the precolonial communities on the East African coast, from which its multiple functions derive. According to Glassman, *chama* was a social organization manned by subofficers of the *jumbe* (chief) in Swahili villages and towns in the late 19th century.³¹ *Chama* members took ranked titles, the highest of which was the *akida*, an immediate subordinate of the *jumbe*. *Chama* could also be translated as dance society or festive guild, because it played a crucial role in various ritual occasions marked by feasting and dancing, which was sponsored by *jumbe* or other wealthy families. Glassman suggests that, by the 1880s, the rapid growth of caravan trade and growing Arab domination in the area had put unprecedented strains on existing patrician-led hierarchies, and community rituals became increasing competitive between patrons, including both impoverished patricians and the new-rich from outside. For example, around the turn of the century, each of two moieties of Lamu town had its own *chama* under the patronage of noble families. The rivaling *vyama* competed actively in their dance performances, and in the number of cattle slaughtered for feast.³²

Immediately after British and German invasion in the 1880s-90s, *chama*, as a competitive dance society, suddenly developed in a new fashion. Under the impact of the European military activities, a movement of dance called *beni ngoma* emerged in coastal Swahili settlements. *Beni ngoma* was an innovative form of existing *ngoma* (song-and-dance performance), adopting dance steps and instruments inspired by European military drills and their accompanying brass band, along with military titles such as king and general. *Beni* dance societies had spread all over Tanganyika by the late 1910s. The idea was disseminated by young Africans working for the colonial government (civil servants, police officers, and war veterans) through already existing Swahili communities built along the former caravan routes. In each urban community in Tanganyika, *beni* was always divided into two rival factions, with each achieving remarkable territory-wide networks. Joining a *beni* society was one of the ways to gain social and political clout within a given community, because it became an important means to express rivalry between groups in competitive dancing and feasting. At the same time, it functioned as a mutual aid association among members.³³

Apart from the *beni* movement, derived from coastal communities, interior ethnic groups such as the Sukuma and its southern neighbor Nyamwezi invented their own dance society networks as "multi-purpose self-help organizations."³⁴ As these ethnic groups had long been involved in the long-distance caravan trade as porters, rapid expansion of ivory trade in the 19th century threatened social cohesion in their homeland. In response to the crisis, secret or dance societies flourished as mutual aid associations. In Sukumaland, along with dance societies, there were secret societies of snake charmers, porcupine hunters, elephant hunters, and diviners, each with strong magical and medicinal concerns. Among the Nyamwezi, the ivory trade increased the importance of hunters' guilds, and such secret societies came to acquire a new function of mutual aid. Both among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi, these societies had wide connections, and a traveler could expect help and hospitality in their branches located far from home. In the early 20th century, a competitive relationship between two dance societies developed and spread rapidly across Sukumaland, each absorbing other existing societies.³⁵ Competitive chama dancing was brought from Sukumaland by the Iramba people (neighbors of the Nyamwezi) to a multi-ethnic pioneer settlement in the Arusha region, where the dance contest with medicinal practices was observed until the 1950s. A chama had to take care of its member's families, and also issued 'passports' to members traveling to an alien land so that he could get hospitality from members of the same *chama* there.³⁶

Thus as in *utani*, the spread of *chama* (dance societies with welfare and other social functions) was a direct outcome of "enlargement of scale" of socioeconomic activities from the late 19th to early 20th century, which was marked by rapid expansion of caravan trade and eventual European incursion.³⁷ A greater number of people began to move between the coast and the interior, with increasing contacts between alien ethnic groups. *Beni ngoma* achieved its far-flung development across the territory, partly because of its integrating role to create social cohesion amid a socioeconomic upheaval, especially in disorderly urban situations. It was also the first modern grass-roots organization with a Western makeup in Tanganyika. Immediately after the *beni* frenzy was gone, other kinds of *chama* with various 'modern' purposes flourished

in urban areas on an unprecedented scale, as we shall see below.

Proliferation of Chama in Urban Areas 1930s-1960s

It seems that *beni* dance societies made a decisive and lasting impact on succeeding patterns of forming *chama* in Tanganyika. After the 1920s *chama* no longer referred just to an association of dancers but also to a welfare society, ethnic association, trade union, dance club, football club, semi-political group or mere social club for discussion. However, despite its different purposes, each *chama* had important features in common. They were generally multi-ethnic (except for ethnic associations) and each *chama* was run by contributions from its members (*wanachama*), including some elected officers (president, treasurer, and secretary). These *vyama* often combined different functions together (notably recreation and welfare), and also formed networks of alliance linking similar clubs in different city centers. They would open a clubhouse, sometimes as their own property, which functioned as an important meeting place for townspeople. *Vyama* would organize special events and parties as festive occasions.

The first modern organization by Africans after the *beni* movement probably was TTACSA (Tanganyika Territory African Civil Service Association), which was established in Tanga in 1922.³⁸ It was a "half welfare society and half trade union" mainly for governmental clerks. It ran a library, evening classes and a football team, and raised funds to build their club house.³⁹ TTACSA inspired the establishment of similar elite clubs in other urban areas. Most members of its branch in Dar es Salaam eventually joined the African Association (AA, or *Chama cha Umoja wa Watu wa Afrika* in KiSwahili), itself the ancestor of TANU. Founded in 1929, AA recruited some 300 members by 1931 and began to build a clubhouse. Probably inheriting the pre-existing network of *beni* dance societies, AA branched out rapidly throughout the territory, claiming 39 branches by 1948. Branches held tea parties, built up libraries, and organized festivities and dance parties, besides intervening in local politics from time to time. Members who visited another branch enjoyed its hospitality and "were treated like officials on tour."⁴⁰ A local branch of AA in North Pare was derived from the Usangi Sports and Welfare Club. Established by local modernist elites in 1935, it built a clubhouse, ran a football team, and voiced their concern about education of native adults and children.⁴¹

In the 1930s and 1940s, there was economic distress resulted from the Great Depression and later World War II. The years of austerity witnessed the flourishing of *vyama* as welfare societies for ordinary Africans, alongside inactive elite clubs such as TTACSA and AA. One such association was the Tanganyika African Welfare and Commercial Association (TAWCA), a trade union for small African retailers in Dar es Salaam, launched in the mid-1930s with the aim to unite against rival Asian merchants and government restrictions. Influenced by Pan-Africanism, the association also undertook to bury any African townspeople without relatives (indeed it buried 54 people), and planned to care for orphans and provide schooling for children.⁴² Members of TAWCA also had the benefit of using post box of the association as their postal address, an important function of *chama* as the hub of communication, which is still observable today.⁴³

Some Dar es Salaam dockworkers launched the African Labour Union in 1937. In spite of its militant-sounding name, this *chama* was primarily intended as a modest mutual aid society

to help members who were sick, unemployed, or in distress. Though it probably did not last long, its proposed rules reveal what kind of welfare society they wished to establish. The members were to pay a monthly subscription, and all the newspapers in the town were to be bought every day. It had a plan to have a clubhouse, and open a shop for members to buy things at affordable prices. The rules also promised that there would be a class to teach the members to read and write, besides exhorting them to save money in a bank for use in the event of unemployment or reaching old age.⁴⁴

In the mid-1940s, a trade union of domestic servants (*Chama cha Maboi*) was formed in Dar es Salaam and soon acquired a wide following, though it was also short-lived. The *chama* sought government assistance to establish members' entitlement to better wages and other benefits (medical benefits, gratuity, etc.), and even desired to have an office, a shop, and a hostel of its own, for the sake of the domestic servants in general.⁴⁵ It is worth noting that its key organizer was the leader of Arinoti, a *beni* dance faction in Dar es Salaam.⁴⁶ In a similar association in the southwestern town of Mbeya, members paid a monthly subscription, and one of the aims of the fund was to provide "financial assistance to unemployed servants."⁴⁷

Ethnicity, place of origin, and hobby were also very important catalysts for forming a *chama*, along with the affiliation based on occupation or workplace. In Dar es Salaam, a number of ethnic associations had been established from the 1910s mainly as mutual aid societies especially for burial purposes, an important function for long-distant immigrants. They often served other purposes as well such as ethnic dancing and promotion of education.⁴⁸ During the British colonial period, dance clubs and football clubs also proliferated in towns, often with mutual aid functions such as finding accommodations or jobs and assisting a member in a difficulty.⁴⁹

A *chama* would sometimes embark on commercial enterprises, though often without success. As early as the 1930s, a dance society opened a cooperative shop "with an advertisement board" in the remote inland town of Tabora.⁵⁰ From the 1930s to 1950s, cooperative societies for marketing burgeoned in rural areas where cash crop production (coffee, cotton and tobacco) had expanded. Some of them were established by African businessmen to compete with dominant Asian traders. These cooperatives, including government-sponsored ones, were also referred to as *vyama*.⁵¹ The Uzaramo Union, established in the late 1930s by indigenous Zaramo people in Dar es Salaam, aimed at the economic and political development of the whole Zaramo region. In an attempt to challenge Asian domination on rural trading and transportation businesses, the union launched a cooperative shop to deal with agricultural produce and purchased lorries to carry passengers between the capital and countryside in the late 1940s.⁵²

Even when it did not venture into commercial undertakings, the *chama* served as an economic organization with its own fund and property. While such assets enabled a club to extend practical assistance to its members, its financial management system sometimes undermined its very existence. First, most *vyama* relied only on *ad hoc* collection from poor members, who were not always willing to pay their dues. Secondly, mismanagement of the club fund often led to the collapse of the *chama*. Many did not last long because they were prone to embezzlement. An article in a privately-run Swahili magazine stressed the importance of

administering funds properly, and that the role of secretary and treasurer is crucial in order not to lose members and money, a problem which was bedeviling many clubs at that time.⁵³

Vyama developed as remarkable multi-functional welfare societies under colonial rule, though many of them were short-lived because of their poor financial basis and administration. Yet a handful of them not only survived after independence but even achieved nationwide popularity. Among them were football clubs and dance bands, but the most notable example is the TANU party, the direct successor of AA. With the anti-colonial struggle gathering momentum in the late 1950s, TANU moved into the forefront of the nationalist movement, involving various other *vyama* in its campaign.⁵⁴ After independence in 1961, TANU became the single ruling party in Tanzania, and a variety of trade unions and cooperative societies were eventually merged under its nationwide umbrella. In this process, the term *chama* acquired connotation of nationwide organization, in close association with the official *ujamaa* or socialist ideology.

UJAMAA: AN AFRICAN SOCIALISM

Ujamaa is the only concept in this paper that can be defined by explicit theory enunciated in various political statements of the late president Julius K. Nyerere. First formulated in an essay of his published in 1962, it was officially adopted as state policy when the landmark Arusha Declaration was issued in 1967. In the outside world, *ujamaa* is known as one of many forms of African socialism, which were advocated across the continent immediately after independence. African socialism in Tanzania, however, is unique and outstanding in that it was a deliberate attempt to redefine the Western concept of socialism in an African context, and importantly, expressing it in an indigenous language, KiSwahili.

Ujamaa derives from *jamaa* (relative or companion), which had long been a very familiar word for KiSwahili speakers. The original meaning of *ujamaa* (to be *jamaa*) is family ties/ relationships, or it could also be translated as familyhood.55 Nationalist leaders of independent Tanzania intended to build socialism as the extension of traditional communal values inherent in rural extended families, which they found 'socialistic.' Therefore, the term *ujamaa* does not escape "the connotations and associations of bonds of kinship, tribal hospitality, and the welfare obligations of the extended family," even when it is used simply to mean 'modern socialism.'56 In his classic essay Ujamaa - The Basis of African Socialism, Nyerere emphasizes that the new nation must be built upon the already existing 'tribal socialism,' which is marked by classlessness and egalitarian distribution of benefits.⁵⁷ He admires the traditional social security system, in which every member of the community has a right to basic needs, and denounces indolent persons who would abuse others' hospitality, quoting a Swahili adage Mgeni siku mbili; siku ya tatu mpe jembe (Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a hoe). This quotation is made to forestall possible parasitism, by emphasizing the importance of reciprocal obligations. Thus *ujamaa* ideology seems to represent two basic principles of moral economy defined by Scott; the right to subsistence and the norm of reciprocity.58 As Nyerere reiterates, *ujamaa* is essentially an attitude of mind, or ethic, based on three key elements, i.e. mutual respect, sharing of property, and work.59

Apart from the theoretical contents of *ujamaa* policy, its most unique feature is that new KiSwahili political terminologies with rich cultural connotations were elaborated to disseminate the doctrine. A set of political rhetoric or slogans was created mainly by using colloquial idioms to capture public imagination. For example, to make people realize the unfairness of capitalism, feudalism and imperialism, three villains who personified these vices frequently appeared in nationalist discourses. They were bepari (capitalist), kabaila (feudalist), and beberu (imperialist), each shifting away from its original meaning. Bepari is a Gujarati-derived word with the denotation of a wealthy merchant, while kabaila, a loanword from Arabic, had originally been used to denote a noble person or a landlord.⁶⁰ Beberu in everyday usage means a he-goat, or "a man who takes a thing by force or by fighting."61 Darubini, a series of propagandist pamphlets issued by TANU, carried stories criticizing mabepari (capitalists) and makabaila (feudalists) who had been engaging in the exploitation (unyonyaji) of the African underclass. Reflecting the actual connection between race and social stratum, many makabaila are described as Arabs and one of the mabepari carries an Indian name.⁶² Unyonyaji, derived from a Bantu verb ku-nyonya (to suck), was one of the most frequently used terms in anti-capitalist/feudalist rhetoric. According to Brennan, unyonyaji was often associated with vivid images such as the tick (kupe), a biological embodiment of parasitism, and persons sucking another's sweat or blood with straws.⁶³

The Ujamaa ideology is by no means a simple extension of traditional values. Besides talking about the socialist belief or way of life, Nyerere also addresses the practical measures to build a socialist and self-reliant national economy, such as nationalization of major companies and promotion of 'import substitution.'64 Such nationwide industrial programs, however, sound strange in the whole argument of *ujamaa*, even though Nyerere stresses that wider communities, including the nation, exist as the extension of the extended family as a basic social unit.65 The essence of the ujamaa ideology, therefore, is well embodied in his argument about rural development, but again not without contradiction with the reality. For example, the universal virtue of hard work, one of the key elements of the ujamaa doctrine, may not have fitted well in the actual village situation, where, as Nyerere himself points out, men worked far fewer hours than urban men and rural women.⁶⁶ A real conflict arose after 1967, when the policy was especially focused on achieving the ambitious goals of discouraging capitalist agriculture and increasing production at the same time by creating 'ujamaa villages.' In an ujamaa village, individuals were expected to work together for the sake of village community as a whole, whereas the traditional allegiance of rural residents was basically confined within the limits of extended family. The pre-existing way of cooperation beyond family was ujima or labor exchange, which was based on bilateral reciprocity between neighbors rather than on the local community as a collective entity.67

The mainstay of *ujamaa* policy was this village collectivization scheme but it ended in a spectacular failure, especially in terms of increased production. The main reason for this fiasco seems to have been the glaring contradiction between Nyerere's emphasis on community initiative (which itself contradicts existing social relations) and actual central control by the government.⁶⁸ In the 1980s, the socialist policy was eventually renounced altogether. For today's Tanzanians, *ujamaa* ideology may be a relic of a nostalgic bygone age, or an outmoded ideology, or an otherwise disgusting symbol of the dark past. Nonetheless, Nyerere's writings are still impressive in his honest endeavor to interpret the Western concepts of political economy such

as socialism and capitalism for ordinary Africans. For better or worse, it was a serious attempt to seek an alternative based on African experience and perceptions, which is not very dissimilar from the community-based development approach of today.

UJANJA: A SURVIVAL STRATEGY IN THE CONTEMPORARY URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Facing serious economic crisis, Tanzania's *ujamaa* socialist policy was formally abandoned in the mid-1980s. From then onward, the government accepted the structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and implemented various measures to deregulate economic restrictions. Prolonged economic stagnation adversely affected people's daily life especially in urban areas at the time. There was a large gap between real wages and inflated consumer prices, making people leave wage employment and become part of the 'informal economy.' Tripp describes how residents in Dar es Salaam coped with the harsh economic reality, in which it appeared to be statistically impossible for them to survive.⁶⁹ It was in informal sectors of the economy that hitherto marginalized people, especially women, made the most of their informal networks to fend for themselves. In line with the arguments made by Scott and Hyden, Tripp also stresses that people displayed considerable savvy, especially in resisting or evading irksome state controls on the informal economy. Such an 'everyday forms of resistance' eventually led to the relaxation of government controls on the informal sector.

I would like to add another dimension to Tripp's argument on urban moral economy in Tanzania. This is well-expressed in the term *ujanja*, which may encapsulate survival strategies in contemporary urban situations, particularly in relation to the booming informal economy. *Ujanja* can be translated variously as craftiness, roguery, deceit, cunning, and cleverness.⁷⁰ *Mjanja* (a person with *ujanja*) is a sly, cunning, or wily person, but sharp and clever as well. So the term *ujanja* is not straightforwardly negative or positive concept, and may be tinged with either disapproval or admiration according to context, or sometimes both. In the context of today's urban environment, *mjanja* may mean a person who knows how to succeed by using his/her wit, which sometimes comes closest to cheating and deceiving. Ogawa, who conducted research on the informal economy in Mwanza (see her article in this volume) argues that *ujanja* is one of the most admirable qualities among traders of secondhand clothes.⁷¹ In their frame of reference, *ujanja* means the skill of negotiation with wholesalers, business partners, and consumers, or more generally, the art of survival of the underprivileged. For them, to be *mjanja* is synonymous with being a full-fledged secondhand cloth trader.

For Swahili-speaking people, *ujanja* is closely associated with the image of the hare (*sungura*). In African folk tales in general, the hare tends to be described as a sly and cunning character, as the fox is in Western folklores. There are a variety of Swahili folk tales in which the cunning hare deceives fellow animals stronger than itself, such as the hyena, lion, and elephant, in order to have something valuable all to itself.⁷² That is, in a sense, the reversal of the normal order of the world where the stronger prey upon the weaker. Every Tanzanian is familiar with such *sungura mjanja* ("hare the trickster") stories, which also appear in textbooks of KiSwahili. A primary school text first published in 1971 carries a story entitled "*Mchoyo hana Rafiki* (A miser has no friend)."⁷³ The story is about a hare and a hyena traveling together. The hare repeatedly

employs cunning to take food away from the hyena, which is finally infuriated and breaks off their friendship. As with the other stories in the same textbook, this tale was probably expected to have a didactic function to instill the ideal of *ujamaa* socialism into students. *Ujanja*, itself stemming from *uchoyo* (avarice), may have been seen as inconsistent with *ujamaa* ideology, which stressed the virtue of hard work and reciprocity.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, such a straightforward criticism of a cunning hare would not have been made by ordinary people who instead are often admirers of *ujanja*. To examine this concept from a cultural perspective, Wazaki's remarks on the association between *ujanja* and 'Swahiliness' are interesting.⁷⁵ Based on his fieldwork in a remote village in the Arusha region, he states that the word *ujanja* can bear both a positive and negative overtone, which is not easily understandable from the viewpoint of the Japanese or Western value system. Wazaki argues that such ambiguity of *ujanja* may stem from an unique attitude of mind inherent in Swahili culture, in which one's skill or ability (be it cleverness or cunning) is appreciated as an inseparable part of his/her personality as a whole. Another KiSwahili word *fundi* (an equivalent for craftsman), not only stands for a person skilled in one specific field but also refers to character or habit of individuals, be it positive or negative. For example, a drunkard is *fundi* of drinking alcohol, and a chatterbox is *fundi* of chatting, and they are not straightforwardly criticized. Thus each *fundi* (or *mjanja*) is equally regarded as an independent personality beyond merit or moral judgment, in contrast to the modern analytical view in which the human qualities are disaggregated and measured by moral, merit, efficiency, or other standards.⁷⁶

The concept of *ujanja* is also deeply associated with urbanity. The following account made from the 1950s is revealing in this respect: "(When in home village I) had heard from my brothers of the big town at the coast (Dar es Salaam).the street lights, the cinemas, the dance halls..and the *clever town men*."⁷⁷

In urban settings, where people from different backgrounds are living side by side, you cannot trust your neighbors or colleagues unreservedly. Anyone can deceive you any time, but, at the same time, you may have to hesitantly cheat somebody in order to survive a hostile environment. That is why people have ambivalent sentiment towards *ujanja*, oscillating between admiration and criticism. *Ujanja* may be morally criticized but can also be admired as the ability to draw personal gain out of social relations without causing serious confrontation.

*Ujanja*embodies moral dilemmas which today's urban Tanzanians face. One might think *ujanja* is part of an 'immoral' rather than a 'moral' economy, because it sometimes comes closest to deceit and fraud. Indeed, applying *ujanja* is not morally upright, but it could be justifiable and sometimes even an admirable action as a necessary strategy to survive, which may allow even have-nots to live by their own wits. Furthermore, the acquired gain may be used to help others or redistributed among relatives and friends. One *sungura mjanja* story is about a hare that helps a poor horse by cleverly tricking a lion.⁷⁸ *Ujanja* probably should not be regarded as a purely selfish act of jostling for success in a do-or-die struggle for survival. It is implicitly sanctioned by people, who even "enjoy the diversity of *ujanja*," as seen in the variety of amusing stories of the cunning hare.⁷⁹

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Conclusions

This paper has argued that *utani, chama,* and *ujanja* may be regarded as forms of moral economy, if it is defined as people's undertaking to protect their well-being and dignity against the disintegrating force of a capitalist economy. *Ujamaa* as a state policy can be contrasted with these grass-roots actions especially when the ideology was translated into practice, but the *ujamaa* concept itself is built upon moral-economic principles. Notably, none of them is an ethnically bound concept that thrives in only one particular area. Instead, they are widespread among a large segment of population as a source of imagination. These concepts and practices reflect strong attachment to African 'traditions' concerning burial ceremony, collective dancing and feasting, mutual joking, and egalitarianism. Nevertheless, people have never clung tenaciously to such 'traditional' values as they were; they always discovered old methods and terminologies to achieve new ends, reformulating inherited customs and ideas, including Western-derived ones. There is no evidence that a globalizing capitalism will eliminate this reinvention of tradition. In fact, globalization may be enhancing it, leaving the door open to alternative institutional approaches to dealing with social and economic problems peculiar to African societies.

Notes:

- 1. See Thompson 1971 and Scott 1976.
- 2. Polanyi 1957.
- 3. Hyden 1983 and 1980.
- 4. This word is said to be derived from the Arabic word *watan* ('to reside in'), though some cast doubt on this explanation. See Moreau 1944, 386; Moreau 1941, 3; and Spies 1943, 49.
- 5. Moreau 1944, 387.
- 6. Ranger 1969, 168-172.
- 7. Moreau 1944, 387-388. Gulliver asserts that external *utani* of the (Songea) Ngoni originated not from ethnic warfare, but from labor migration to the sisal plantations and other places of employment in the early colonial times, though, in most cases, only brave adversaries of them in former warring days were entitled to be their *watani*. See Gulliver 1957.
- 8. Moreau 1944, 388-389; Christensen 1963, 1323.
- 9. Moreau 1941, 3.
- 10. Moreau 1944 and 1941.
- 11. Spies 1943, 51.
- 12. Moreau 1944, 394-395 and 1941, 7.
- 13. Moreau 1944, 392-394.
- 14. Ibid., 395-397; Leslie 1963, 33.
- 15. Moreau 1941, 2.
- 16. Spies 1943, 51-52.
- 17. Moreau 1944, 398-399.
- 18. Leslie 1963, 2, 33-37.
- 19. Ibid., 41.

- 20. Scrivenor 1937, 72.
- 21. Moreau 1944, 389, 398 and 1941, 3.
- 22. Lucas 1972. As I could not obtain Lucas's original paper, I draw on Reeves for the quotation here. See Reeves 1979, 103.
- 23. Moreau 1944, 3-4.
- 24. Christensen 1963, 1325.
- 25. Gunderson and Barz 2000, 84, 302-317.
- 26. Since *chama* has a strong connotation with the ruling political party nowadays, the term *kikundi* is often used to refer to a small group of people which formerly would have otherwise been called *chama*. TANU later reorganized and renamed CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi*, the party of revolution) in 1977.
- 27. Whiteley 1964, 218; Iliffe 1979, 497.
- 28. Middleton 1992, 177, 182.
- 29. Football teams mainly from government sections are referred to as *vyama* in an article carried in a Swahili monthly *Mambo Leo*, December 1929.
- 30. Whiteley 1964, 218.
- 31. Glassman 1995, 146-174.
- 32. Ranger 1975, 25-30.
- 33. Ibid., passim.
- 34. Gunderson 2000, 417.
- 35. Ibid., 407-419; Ranger 1969, 167-168.
- 36. Wazaki 1966, 250-255.
- 37. Ranger 1969, 170.
- 38. Though its official KiSwahili name is unknown, it was referred to as *chama* in newspaper articles, including "Chama cha TTACSA, Tanga, Mwaka 1923," *Mambo Leo*, March 1923, and "Chama cha Wenyeji," *Mambo Leo*, April 1923.
- 39. Iliffe 1979, 267.
- 40. Ibid., 408-409, 413, 426. An article ("Vyama vya Waafrika") in *Mambo Leo*, June 1940, states that there were a lot of *vyama* in Tanganyika territory at that time, and their branch networks would help a teacher or clerk transferring to another workplace to travel through alien lands.
- 41. Iliffe 1969, 141.
- 42. Iliffe 1979, 393-394.
- 43. Kwetu, 21 February 1939.
- 44. The African Labour Union: Umoja wa Wenyeji Watumishi wa Kazi, etc. Sheria na kanuni za chama, TNA (Tanzania National Archives) 61/14/14/2. See also Iliffe 1979, 400 and 1970, 125-126.
- 45. Provincial Commissioner to the African Servants Association, 28 March 1944, TNA 61/679/1/22; Memorandum of a meeting with representatives of the Personal Servants Association, 23 January 1944, TNA 61/679/1/15.
- 46. Iliffe 1979, 397-398.
- 47. Director of Intelligence and Security to the Labour Commissioner (Dar es Salaam), 19 January 1945, TNA 61/679/1/28.

- 48. Tsuruta 2003b.
- 49. Tsuruta 2003a.
- 50. "Tabora Ngomas," Tabora District Book. See also Ranger 1975, 102-4.
- 51. Kifungu cha 4 cha sheria ya 7 ya mwaka 1932 (a Swahili translation of a section of the Cooperative Ordinance), TNA 61/450/47. See also Iliffe 1979, 296.
- 52. Tsuruta 2003b, 66.
- 53. "Clubs and Associations: Reserve Fund," by A. R. Ismail, Kwetu, 23 February 1941.
- 54. Tsuruta 2003a.
- 55. TUKI 2001, 337; Nyerere 1968a, 12.
- 56. Reeves 1979, 73.
- 57. Nyerere 1968a, 1-12.
- 58. Scott 1976, 167.
- 59. Nyerere 1968a, 1, 107-108 and passim; Nyerere 1969, iii.
- 60. TUKI 2001, 122; Brennan 2002, 322.
- 61. Scotton 1965, 537.
- 62. See, for example, TANU 1971a and 1971b.
- 63. Brennan 2002, 320-326.
- 64. Nyerere 1968a, 16, 27.
- 65. Ibid., 12.
- 66. Ibid., 30, 109.
- 67. Hyden 1980, 99.
- 68. Ibid., 96-128.
- 69. Tripp 1997.
- 70. TUKI 2001, 337-338.
- 71. Ogawa 2005.
- 72. Steere 1870; Wazaki 1983
- 73. Ministry of Education and Culture 1971, 53-57.
- 74. Nyerere states definitely: "A man who cheats his fellows by dishonesty, who fails to do a full day's work..is exploiting other men." See Nyerere 1969, 33. To quote from another essay of him, "If you abandon the idea and the goal of equality, and allow the clever (*wajanja*) and fortunate to exploit the others.the temptations of individualism will be further increased." See Nyerere 1968a, 111 and 1968b, 108.
- 75. Indeed, a KiSwahili dictionary gives '*mjanja*' as one of definitions of a Swahili (*mswahili*). TUKI 1981, 192.
- 76. Wazaki 1983, 330-331.
- 77. Leslie 1963, 102. Emphasis is my own.
- 78. "Hadithi ya Sungura na Farasi," Mambo Leo, September 1929, p. 1144.
- 79. Wazaki 1983, 324.

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