Indigenous Communication Systems: Lessons and Experience from among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi of West-central Tanzania

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1.

Sungusungu groups began to be formed sometime in 1981 and spread very rapidly (Abrahams 1987). They started among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi of west-central Tanzania. The rise and spread of these groups raise important questions, important here being their means of communication and information exchange, not only among themselves, but also between them and their rulers. Some of the questions that I seek to explore here include: who are the Sukuma and Nyamwezi, among whom these groups arose? What is it among these people that gave the impetus for the formation of *Sungusungu* groups? What are their indigenous methods of communication and what are the potential and/or limitations in sustainable development?

The Sukuma and Nyamwezi are semi-sedentary agro-pastoralists. They keep cattle, goats and sheep. They also grow maize, rice, groundnuts, cassava and sweet potatoes. A favourable rainy season (October - April) is synonymous with a good harvest of foodstuffs, whereas the opposite proffers a good harvest of cotton. It was observed by informants that the two cannot be achieved simultaneously. Maize and rice are the principal food crops. Cotton used to be grown on a large scale and as the main cash crop until 1988. However, allegations of misappropriation and embezzlement of the dues, by the Regional Cooperative Union in general and the rural primary cooperative societies in particular, made the villagers change their production patterns to rice and maize.

Informants say that this change in the farming patterns has two advantages. Firstly, a person who plants maize or rice is assured of food for him- or herself and their family members. Secondly, such a person is free to sell the maize or rice at the prevailing market price or to exchange the crop for other things as needs arise. The person with cotton, however, does not have that freedom and is dependent on the will of the cooperative society, both for the purchase price set for that crop and the timing of its purchase. After the 1988 experience, one is not even assured of receiving payment for the crops.

The villagers' fears in respect of cotton farming were demonstrated vividly in the 1991/92 farming season. The president had announced that the price of a kilogramme of cotton would be Tshs. 94. When the cotton purchasing exercise began, sometime after the president's announcement, the villagers learnt that the purchase price was only Tshs. 60. This change was said to be due to a fall in the cotton price on the world market. Secondly the buying of cotton from the villagers was delayed by more than two months. The Regional Cooperative Union was unable to start buying cotton because of the changes in bank procedures regarding the disbursement of overdrafts. The International Monetary Fund is said to have imposed stringent procedures on the commercial banks in the country, which in turn affected the cooperative societies, which borrow money for crop purchase.

The Sukuma and Nyamwezi are probably the largest tribal group in Tanzania. I say 'probably' because two population censuses in Tanzania which included the 'tribe' aspect of the respondents were carried out in 1957 and 1967. In 1957 the Sukuma featured as the largest group with 1,245,908 people living in the districts of Kwimba, Maswa, Mwanza, Geita and Shinyanga. The area covered by these people was 19,050 square miles. The second largest group was the Nyamwezi with 363,258 people living in the districts of Kahama, Nzega and Tabora, which covered an area of 37,000 square miles. In 1967 the Sukuma numbered 1,529,917 while the Nyamwezi were 405,976. Since the 1967 population census the districts have increased in number and boundaries have been redefined. Notwithstanding this redefinition of boundaries, the two groups can still be said to inhabit the regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora, which together cover what in 1957 and 1967 were the districts in which the Sukuma and Nyamwezi lived. According to the 1988 population census the total number of people in the three regions was 4,687,113. Not all the people who live in these three regions are Sukuma and Nyamwezi nor do all the Sukuma and Nyamwezi live only in these three regions. I am convinced that, with some allowance for migration in and out of the three regions, Abrahams' estimation (1989) that the Sukuma and Nyamwezi are "probably between 4 and 5 million people" is not an over-statement.

It is important to raise the issue of the number of the Sukuma and Nyamwezi and where they live because of the conception that the phenomenon of *Sungusungu* started among them. What then is the justification for treating these two groups together when some researchers have treated them separately in the past? Before attempting to answer that question let me first show how past researchers have dealt with them. Some writers have written about the two groups separately while others have treated them together. Those who have treated the Sukuma separately include: Cory (1951, 1953 and 1954); Malcolm (1953); Tanner (1955, 1956 and 1957); Liebenow (1960); Nicholson (1973) and Varkevisser (1973). Those who have written about the Nyamwezi separately include: Cory (1955); Abrahams (1965, 1967a and 1981); Miller (1968 and 1970) and Brain (1978). Treating these peoples separately gives the impression that they are different. In order to avoid that impression some authors have taken the trouble to indicate what they thought were the similarities between them. Writing about the Nyamwezi, Abrahams (1967a: 5)

observed that there was "no doubt that the Nyamwezi and Sukuma are in many ways a single people. They speak the same language with some differences of dialect." He observed further that the two were similar to each other both in their general culture and in their political organizations.

The similarities noted by Abrahams above have also been acknowledged by authors writing about the Sukuma (Tanner 1970: 11; Malcolm 1953: 10, 21; Liebenow 1960: 231). In the language of both tribes the word *sukuma* means North, *dakama* means South, *kiya* means East and *mweli* means West. It is very common among both tribes to refer to a person or a group of people by the direction from which that person or group comes. A person from the north, for example, is referred to by those in the south as *mnasukuma* (pl. *banasukuma*); whereas a person from the east will be referred to as *mnakiya* (pl. *banakiya*) and so forth[1].

Some authors, though, have written about these two groups together (see for example Cory 1960 when dealing with the religious beliefs and practices, Brandstrom 1986, Abrahams 1967b, 1987 and 1989). There is strong evidence of similarities among the two groups. I will therefore discuss the Sukuma and Nyamwezi together on the strength of their cultural similarities, which are the very bases on which *Sungusungu* arose and which are relevant to indigenous information exchange and communication. I rely heavily on Cory (1953, 1954 and 1955), Malcolm (1953) and Abrahams (1967a and 1967b) for the ethnographic background and the similarities between these two groups that justifies the exercise of treating them together[2].

Abrahams observes that there are at least five distinct sets of relationships within which individual Nyamwezi are linked with one another. These are the chiefdom citizenship, neighbourhood, kinship and affinity, and domestic groupings as well as the secret societies (Abrahams 1965: 170). Cory (1953: 5-11), discussing the special tribal characteristics of the Sukuma, lists the political and economic organizations, judicial institutions and secret/dance societies. It can be gathered from both authors that they are in fact talking about the same thing but in different ways. The political organizations that Cory talks about are the chiefdoms, which are hierarchically organized under the leadership of the chiefs and subordinate office-holders, to which individuals belong as citizens. This is what Abrahams means by the first set of relationships among the Nyamwezi. Before chiefdoms were officially abolished in 1963, there were some 30 chiefdoms in Nyamweziland and some 50 in Sukumaland. The chiefdoms amongst both the Sukuma and the Nyamwezi were independently organized entities in their own right, without centralized control.

In the chiefdom, the smallest of the recognized territorial subdivisions was the village to which people belonged. It is within the villages that individuals related to

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[1] Abrahams (1967a: 7) notes that the origin of the word Nyamwezi is obscure and has been subject to speculation.

[2] Campbell (1989: 9) acknowledges that the Sukuma and Nyamwezi "share certain cultural traditions." He, however, suggests that the similarities between the two are exaggerated.

each other in a variety of economic activities. Abrahams calls the resultant relations a set of neighbourhood relationships which enable the performance of practical and ceremonial activities ranging from cultivation, millet threshing and house building to weddings and funerals. Cory, on the other hand, refers to these relations as economic organizations which include the activities performed by *basumba batale* (organizations of young men) and other voluntary associations.

Within the chiefdoms there were what Cory calls the judicial institutions, the three courts of law. These are: the elders' courts (*mabanza ga banamhala*), the courts of *banangwa* (village headmen) and the court of the *ntemi* (chief). In his discussion of neighbourhood organizations among the Nyamwezi, Abrahams discusses the forums for dispute settlement and distinguishes between chiefdom courts and neighbourhood courts of village elders. He notes that these were traditional institutions amongst both the Sukuma and Nyamwezi (Abrahams 1965: 177).

Both Cory and Abrahams discuss the importance of secret societies in the cultural life of the Sukuma and Nyamwezi. In both there are secret societies of diviners, spirit possession societies, societies of porcupine hunters and snake charmers and many others. They are organized in the same way, follow broadly similar initiation procedures, perform broadly similar functions and observe similar restrictions. One further point can be made here which also sheds some more light on the similarities between the two groups. The above-mentioned organizations, institutions and processes that are found to operate among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi are usually called by the same names. This applies from kinship and domestic terminology to the political, economic and religious through to the secret societies. This cannot be sheer coincidence, but is rather evidence of cultural similarities.

Another area of shared terminology deserves some comment here. This is the extension of some of the vocabulary of traditional chiefship to other forms of organizations including *Sungusungu*. Similar forms are also found in some secret societies, and Abrahams (1965: 176) also noted their use in neighbourhood millet threshing groups. The most important term in this context is *ntemi*, but other terms such as *ntwale* are also used. In the case of *Sungusungu*, the issue has been politically important, since the groups were at first mistakenly accused by local officials of trying to reintroduce traditional chiefship to the area. This made little serious sense, since these and other groups did not recognize the existence of particular chiefly dynasties and families which were a key feature of traditional chiefship.

At the same time, however, it is clear that the use of such terms depends on the presence of a hierarchical structure in such groups. In the case of *Sungusungu* and many of the secret societies, leadership was based on wisdom and the acquisition of a high level of expertise in divination and other ritual practices. This again differs from traditional chiefship since the chief was not so much a ritual expert as a sacred

figure who had ritual experts in his service and that of the chiefship more generally[3].

The existence and operation of different kinds of societies and organizations among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi partly illustrate the phenomenon of organizational pluralism. Abrahams' treatment of the way the five sets of relationships interact reveals this pluralism. He observes that there is some overlap between the different sets in both their personnel and in the functions which they serve. He emphasizes the need to treat these sets of relationships separately in order to avoid distortion and confusion. He concludes that:

> Such interaction can be classified according to whether sets of relationships
> are complementing, supplementing, or substituting for one another. They may
> also be in conflict with each other (Abrahams 1965: 173).

All except one of the "special tribal characteristics", as Cory calls them, or the "sets of relationships", according to Abrahams, still exist and operate among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi and, as I will demonstrate later, they played and still play an important part in the formation, leadership and operations of *Sungusungu*. The only characteristic that no longer exists is the membership to the chiefdom because chiefdoms were abolished in 1963 and new administrative structures erected in their place. Notwithstanding that abolition and the creation of new structures in their place, a careful survey of the Kahama District reveals a substantial physical and spatial continuity with the structures they replaced (see Abrahams 1981: 35). Some elders I spoke to in these areas still refer to the villages in which they live as *gunguli* and even the ruling Party ten-cell leader as a *mwanangwa* (headman). In a broad sense the observations that Abrahams makes above seem to be true of all the areas which were, and probably still are, predominantly inhabited by the Sukuma and Nyamwezi. Mwalugulu, the village where I worked, is sometimes referred to as *Mwalugulu kwa Basu*, because Basu was the village headman in service at the time when the chiefdoms were abolished after independence.

2.

Anthropologists have for some time now acknowledged the fact that local communities, organizations and processes have to be analyzed in the context of the wider world of which they are a part (see Abrahams 1981: Chapter 5; also Moore 1990). It has been recognized that it is necessary to examine the extent to which

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[3]   Abrahams has stressed the egalitarian nature of neighbourhood organizations, and this makes sense in contrast to the dynastic structure of chiefship and chiefdom headmanship. But it seems likely that neighbourhood itself was traditionally more hierarchically structured than in the 1950s. In addition to the hierarchical distinction between elders (*banamhala*) and youth (*basumba*), there is also evidence that elders were traditionally expected to acquire ritual expertise as part of their leadership role in village communities (c.f. Abrahams 1967a and Cory 1953).

external events, processes and factors affect and influence the local events and processes and how the two interact. In the case of the Sukuma and Nyamwezi the impact of the contact with outsiders - fellow Africans from other tribes, Arab and Indian traders, German and British colonialists - have been adequately documented[4].

The fact that *Sungusungu* started in the 1980s and not before has to be traced back to the events and processes of the 1960s and 1970s, details of which are described elsewhere (Bukurura 1994a and 1994b) and need not be repeated here. Most important here, however, is the abolition of chiefdoms and the reorganization of the administrative system and the impact and consequences that this had on local communities, especially with regard to the weaknesses and inadequacies of state machinery, increase in criminality and lack of security and protection of lives and property. In so doing I follow the signposts marked by Abrahams, who in his research in the mid 1970s took note of what was potentially in store. He mentioned, for example, that achieving consensus and establishing effective communication between Government officials and grass-roots organizations at the village level was a widespread problem for nation states engaged in the process of integration. He concluded that for a country like Tanzania, where most people live in the rural areas which are only imperfectly coordinated culturally, linguistically and economically, "political integration has paradoxically contributed to the problem it set out to solve" (Abrahams 1981: 39-40). With the benefit of hindsight, it is valid to suggest that, taken together, these developments contributed to the rise of *Sungusungu* among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi. *Sungusungu*, therefore, is a reflection of both the vacuum that occurred as a result of the integration process and the availability of local and traditional mechanisms for filling such gaps. Let me elaborate.

The colonial regimes, both German and British, are partly associated with the reorganization of the political organizations of the people under study as part of their general administrative strategy. They meddled with the chiefdom systems in different ways and even changed the succession to chieftainship from matrilineal to patrilineal descent in some areas. Notwithstanding these modifications, the chiefdom structures were retained. At the same time the traditional administrative system was allowed to operate among the local people with some modifications. The continued existence of the chiefs, the chiefs' courts and the neighbourhood courts ensured that major aspects of general social control were dealt with at the local level. It is important to note that the closeness of the chief, headmen and/or his advisors to the people they ruled had a lot of impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative system in general and on the resolution of disputes and social control in particular. These were local leaders, not only well acquainted and associated with the subjects, but also conversant with the overall

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[4]   For a list of publications on Sukuma and Nyamwezi see Abrahams (1967a: 5) and a collection of essays edited by Lang (1977) on the Sukuma.

circumstances in which they lived, and sometimes aware of the facts and grievances as and when they arose.

The two institutional changes which took place immediately after independence were part of a political integration and nation building process. Without going into the details of the aims and purposes for which these changes were made, it is probably fair to say that they were part and parcel of what political scientists call the "political penetration" process. This is a process through which the government was attempting to reach the majority of its citizens who lived in the rural areas (Cliffe et al. 1977). Abrahams (1981: Ch. 2) deals with these and indicates the extent to which they were felt by the Nyamwezi. The attempts of the 1960s do not seem to have delivered the results that the government required, or alternatively the results were not forthcoming at the speed which the government wanted. New measures were taken in the 1970s for similar purposes. The government was restructured in 1972 under the process known as Decentralization and the ruling Party was reorganized in 1977. Hyden has observed that all these measures were meant to capture the peasantry (see Hyden 1980).

The Tanzanian political and economic policies of the 1960s and 1970s have been much discussed as the volume of the current literature suggests (Boesen et al. 1986; Campbell and Stein 1992; Forster and Maghimbi 1992). Some common conclusions have been drawn and two are relevant here. First, in the 1970s the government changed its tactics from that of persuasion to that of confrontation and coercion, and second, most of these policies led to crises of one kind or other. The change of approach from persuasion to coercion was manifest in the villagization programme of 1974 and 1975, and in the manner in which appointed officials resorted to high - and heavy - handedness in their dealings with the villagers. Instead of villagers taking part in decision making as they were expected to under the persuasion model, they were given *maagizo* (instructions) and expected to obey. The presence of Divisional and Ward Executive Officers, with the assistance of other government functionaries who had been dispatched to the villages, was meant to ensure that the instructions issued from above were observed. But the existence of "exit options", as they have been called by Hyden (1980), meant that not all such instructions were obeyed and that the people were able to proceed with their own priorities.

When the economic difficulties and crises of the 1970s crept in, the political penetration process was partly affected. The cutbacks in financial resources that the government experienced meant that the penetration process was an unfinished exercise as a result of inability to finance it. The local communities' ability to take control of their surroundings and processes was enhanced as opposed to being curtailed during the period when demands were being imposed on them by the government officials (Abrahams and Bukurura 1993). The government, on the other hand, found itself unable to enforce its own instructions, and had to rely more and more on reports, prepared by distant officials, which could not be verified. In effect, the gap between the government institutions and the rural community, which the political penetration process was attempting to bridge, widened as a result of the

economic difficulties of the 1970s. The consequence of this is part of the 'dangers' which Abrahams had in mind after analyzing the relationship between the local and national political processes that were taking place in the mid 1970s. He reached the following conclusion:

> there appears to be a persistent and substantial danger that even official policies designed to make central government more accessible may misfire;...and moves such as the greater decentralization of administration down to the Regional level... may have the unhappy and undesired opposite effect of appearing simply to bring the power of government to bear yet more firmly on the people (Abrahams 1981: 53).

These developments invariably affected the efficiency, effectiveness and even legitimacy of the state administrative system (see Mazrui 1988).

3.

Before *Sungusungu* started, the exchange and communication of information among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi villagers regarding urgent matters and emergencies was through the raising of a hue and cry (*mwano*). This was invoked for the purpose of tracking stolen cattle as well as for rescuing drowning children and putting out fires in burning houses. The increase in the intensity of crime, however, proved that this old mechanism was inadequate. The frequency of cattle thefts increased, and on each occasion the number of cattle stolen also increased, which meant that more people had to spend time tracking them down and the tracking party took even longer to come back home. The use of arms by cattle rustlers also meant that the tracking party was exposed to danger; they might encounter physical resistance in the course of arresting the rustlers. These were new demands which required a reconsideration of methods and approaches.

New kinds of information dissemination and exchange were introduced which involved different kinds of alarms for various activities and audiences. The first is the *ndulilu* (gourd-stem whistles),[5] an alarm raised in regard to the commission of thefts in general and cattle thefts in particular. The blowing of the *ndulilu* means a theft has been committed and people are called to pursue the thief or thieves, and villagers from neighbouring villages are expected to participate in the chase. People responding to the *ndulilu* have to be armed with traditional weapons (spears, bows and arrows) because they have been summoned for an impending or imminent war against thieves.

It is thought necessary to use the whistle instead of a call in order to disguise the identity of the person raising the alarm and thereby provide protection against

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[5] The *ndulilu* was previously used by children as a playing instrument. With the formation of *Sungusungu* its use became restricted. Blowing it without good cause is punishable.

possible retaliation by the criminals or their collaborators. The *ndulilu* is a summons to the people of the village. It is blown to call people to come together to set out to track the stolen cattle. But it also means that the people in the neighbouring villages are informed of the event; they should be on the alert and prepared to participate in the search, just in case the cattle thieves happen to be going in their direction or even passing through their villages. This means that the use of the traditional *mwano* or call is today restricted to alarms within a single village and village emergencies, like the burning of a house, that are not related to cattle theft. People attending the *mwano* have to respond quickly but need not come with spears or bows and arrows, since these are not needed. Such an alarm does not attract people from other villages.

The third means of communication, invented with the rise of *Sungusungu*, is the village bell. Like the *mwano*, it is restricted to calls within the village. It is meant to summon the villagers to the village assembly as a matter of emergency when thieves have been caught red-handed. At such a meeting villagers need not be armed. The village assembly is convened in these circumstances in order to reveal the identity of the thief or thieves to the villagers, who might have some other information to give in regard to the conduct of the offender and his collaborators. Such a gathering serves as a means of collecting additional evidence against the criminal or criminals who are already in *Sungusungu* custody. It is not an exaggeration to say that the village assembly summoned in this way also turns out to be a public trial of the thief or thieves. Raising any of the above-mentioned alarms without good cause is a very serious matter and is punishable after a hearing by the people who responded to it. Similar consequences are applicable for the failure to attend these alarms without good cause.

Also relevant here is dancing and singing as channels of information exchange and communiation in society in general[6] and among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi in particular.[7] The inadequacy of government administrative machinery and state sponsored institutions also affected the communication system between government and its subjects. Visiting Government dignitaries addressed the villagers, leaving very little opportunity for them to air their views or record their grievances and complaints. The little chance for the villagers to communicate with these officials has been dancing and singing, which is meant to be an entertainment. Through this channel, however minute it might appear, important messages are delivered. The contents of the following Sukuma and Nyamwezi song, sung and danced by

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[6]   On dancing and singing a means of social control see Ranger (1975), Rasmussen (1991) and Spencer (1985).

[7]   Singing and dancing as means of communication and information exchange among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi are discussed by Abrahams (1967: 175 and 1981: 39), Hall (1936), Knudsen (1977) and Pambe (1978: 129) among others.

Sungusungu in one village, illustrates the humour with which serious messages can be delivered[8].

> *Sababu gani, abakalimi,*
> *aba Mwana Mwinyi; tunateswa.*
> *Tukugujaga ubuluba.*
> *Abana Kahama.*
>
> *Ulumukuyomba, aba Mwana Mwinyi,*
> *tugaleke, tulime lwa manyanya - duhu,*
> *twanguha kupokela, abakalimi.*
>
> *SHIRECU yetu ina kazi gani?*
> *Paulo Nghwani walya shoti, kubenki; alilema kufidia.*
> *Tunkalange.*

Translation
For what reason are the peasants,
the children of Mwinyi harassed.
Our cotton has not been bought.
The people of Kahama.

So, now that you say, the children of Mwinyi,
that we stop cotton farming and produce tomatoes instead,
from which we can get our money immediately, we, the peasants.

This SHIRECU of ours - what is it doing?
Paulo Nghwani has run into trouble, with the banks,
and has refused to compensate. So, let us beat him.

The characters being addressed in the song include President Mwinyi, SHIRECU (Shinyanga Regional Cooperative Union) and Paul Nghwani. Villagers, calling themselves children of the President, were complaining about their inability to sell their cotton. It is said that the villagers would stop cotton farming and resort to tomato production, from which they derive instant and immediate payments on the free market.

SHIRECU is another character in the song. There had been allegations of misuse, misappropriation and embezzlement of funds in the Union for a very long time and Kahama residents were attempting to form an independent District Cooperative Union that was to be known as KACU (Kahama Cooperative Union).

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[8] *Sungusungu* songs and their messages are discussed at length in Bukurura (1994a: Appendix 1).

These attempts were being resisted by SHIRECU[9]. The question posed in the song is: what is the role of SHIRECU if it cannot buy cotton and do so in time? Paul Nghwani was the Chairman of SHIRECU. While the Union was running into trouble with the lending banks the businesses of its Chairman (some of which were associated with the transportation of the villagers' cotton) were said to be flourishing. The singers retorted that the Chairman had failed or refused to compensate the lending banks and deserved a beating.

4.

The above discussion has shown different indigenous means of communication and information exchange among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi. These people communicated with each other, not only within the villages in which they lived (in local groups in which they belonged) but also with villagers beyond their own localities. These information exchange systems helped the Sukuma and Nyamwezi to pursue and deal with suspected cattle rustlers and other kinds of rural robbers even beyond the village boundaries. The use of indigenous communication methods also enabled the Sukuma and Nyamwezi to communicate and pass on important information regarding rural complaints and desperation to government officials in restricted circumstances where communication breakdown was considered to be unbearable. There was a constant exchange of information in times of stress as well as during peace and tranquillity.

It is also clear that these communication methods, though culturally based, can be modified to deal with new needs and demands. It has been shown how the traditional *mwano* was found to be inadequate in spreading information about rampant cattle rustling and how it became restrictively used and was replaced with *ndulilu*.

Because these mechanisms are culturally and locally based they are not only acceptable to the local community but also have the legitimacy that very few other devices can have (Bukurura 1994c). They also have in-built cultural measures against default. These factors make indigenous means of communication and information exchange sustainable in comparison to the imposed ones.

Notwithstanding these strengths, however, there are also inherent weaknesses. It is, for example, due to the cultural base that indigenous methods cannot be replicated from one culture to another or imposed on other cultures. That is to say that Sukuma and Nyamwezi cultural practices cannot be imposed on the Gogo or Maasai and vice versa. What can be done, however, is to learn, understand and assess what has been done or is being done in one cultural setting in order to ignite

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[9]   I have been informed that this matter has been settled because KACU was formally launched in April 1994. I would like to thank Mr. Stephen Ihema of the Law Reform Commission in Dar es Salaam for this information.

and set in motion what exists in other cultures. In other words, the question to be asked is: do other cultures have the means and methods of communication and information exchange which we have seen among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi? If so, what are they and what has been done to put them to good use? Alternatively, what has not been done and why?

There is also a weakness related to the manner in which defaulters are dealt with in cultural settings. The example in point is the call to give a beating to the Cooperative Union Chairman suspected of being behind the Regional Union deficits and misappropriation. There are similar calls for dealing with cattle rustlers and robbers. Some questions need be asked here. What are these traditional sanctions and punishments against defaulters that are alleged to amount to excesses? How widespread are these practices and supposed excesses? What, if necessary, are the ways of dealing with or eliminating such excesses whenever they arise? This is not an appropriate occasion to go into these questions. What can be said here, however, is that these weaknesses should not overshadow the strengths discussed above. Thinking about the above weaknesses should be a starting-point for understanding these indigenous communication mechanisms and their potential for long-term use and sustainability.

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