In the spirit of Uganga - inspired healing and healership in Tanzania

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Chapter 9

Ancestors: A Spell or a Blessing?

It is the spirit of my grandfather
My illness is madness of the ancestors
My illness is due to coldness mother
The spirit’s heart is in pain
I will have to help our grandfather

In this chapter I address the incentives for the complaints and problems of clients who suffer from baridi (a state of coldness), and the main solution that Jeremana provides them, to reach a pact of harmony with the ancestors. The above text (in Kibena) of a popular song in use by Jeremana resonates the core message of her approach to remedy baridi (see 9.3) Songs in use by Jeremana are fundamental to address departed family spirits and may be part of prayers, offerings and symbolic rites but primarily they play a role in the daily musical sessions.

Human relationships with spirits vary from society to society. It is, however, a real, active and powerful relationship, especially with the spirits of those who have recently died or those Mbiti call the living dead (see 3.3). In fact, for as long as the ancestors are remembered, they remain spiritually and physically attached to their offspring. In the case of the healer Jeremana, who is a specialist of rituals for lineage ancestors from Bena-affiliated tribes, clients consult her to learn if their problems come from failure to perform symbolic acts for the family spirits. These acts entertain contact with the spirits and may involve the placing of food and other articles, or the pouring of beer, milk or water. Failure to observe these acts means that human beings have completely broken off their links with the departed, and have therefore forgotten the spirits. Mbiti (1969: 82) states that this is regarded as extremely dangerous and disturbing to the social and individual conscience; as people are likely to feel that any misfortune that befalls them is the logical result of their neglect of the spirits, if not caused by magic or witchcraft.

Traditionally, the Bena hold small offerings (matambiko) and prayers (maombi) to the family spirits at shrines around the house or in the woods, whereas burials are held at one’s home ground. With traditional religious practices being disrupted under
the influence of various dynamics, protective influences from ancestors diminished (see 8.5). According to Jeremana, Bena ancestors do not have claims without a good reason. The claims of the departed grandparents are referred to by Jeremana as *madai ya mababu*. Given the unhappy or dissatisfied state of the departed, the offspring experience this in the form of spirit illness (*ugonjwa ya pepo*). Actually, the departed have two reasons to seek the attention of the living family members. First, they want to make an end to their own wandering or suffering, and secondly, they want to prevent *baridi* from spreading in the lineage.

To Jeremana, ancestral spirits are protective (*ulinzi*) by their very nature and can be addressed as living persons. According to her, ancestors can be the cause of great dismay when grievances exist among them but they may also be the cause of luck and happiness, provided that they are being remembered. Once the ancestors have sunk into people's memory, after five generations in general, they loose their human names and become strangers, foreigners or outsiders (*wageni*). The ontological mode of the ancestors thus becomes a depersonalization of the individual. As the personality evaporates, the name disappears and s/he becomes a thing instead of a human (see 3.3). To emphasize the impersonal nature of spirits, especially when they are bad or annoying, Jeremana speaks of bugs, *wadudu* (sing. *mdudu*) or creatures, *viumbe* (sing. *kiiumbe*). When Jeremana refers to spirits that have no historical ties with the afflicted client she will call them 'strangers to the family' (*wageni ya ukoo*), which fall under the general notion of nature or inland spirits (*mapepo*). When bad spirit forces (*mapepo mabaya*) are involved, Jeremana will establish by means of divination if *baridi* exists in the family of the client. If this is the case she will try to discover what has caused *baridi*, like serious blemishes or breaches of conduct, and how the past and the present relate to it. Once the cause for *baradi* is defined, treatment in the form of ritual, magical and herbal interventions will be proposed so as to overcome the problems involved. If the patient, and his family accept treatment, they can contribute in bringing back health and harmony for the self as well as the family group. In other words, what is a spell at first can turn into a blessing.

The way Jeremana confronts her clients during divination sessions, and the revelations and propositions she has, forms the basis of this chapter. As in the case of Nambela, I daily observed and registered the divination sessions of Jeremana. These could take place at any hour of the day and occurred from one to five times daily, taking between ten to fifty minutes. I was always invited to sit next to Jeremana or an assistant and witnessed about thirty consultations during my stay. Usually the sessions started off in vernacular (Kibena or Kikinga), but every so often Jeremana or the assistant would switch to Kiswahili to facilitate my understanding. If not, they would explain the case to me afterwards. In total, I have recorded fifteen sessions on
taped and five on video. In other instances I made notes (see chapter 4). I did not have to dress in a special way to be part of the sessions, but I did have to take off my shoes as a token of respect to ancestral presence. In contrast to Nambela, who is an allround spirit healer and not a traditional specialist, two examples are sufficient to show in what manner Bena traditional religious concepts are tied to baridi. At the same time, it will demonstrate that baridi is in essence an expression of a personal struggle for identity and recognition in the departed spirit as well as the patient. As they are both suffering, they form a united ill spirit (pepo mbaya).

The diagnostic sessions are followed by an in-depth case study of one client and his family to show what stages may be involved to remedy baridi, also considered as an ancestral affliction (ugonjwa ya mzimu). Against this background, I will explain the role and performance of musical sessions, which are an essential component in the treatment of baridi. The mode and frequency by which these sessions are performed show a number of similarities with Nambela's practice. Some of the songs are even shared by both healers. Nambela's songs have been passed on to Jeremana by her tutor Atuwoneyeje Wilangali (see 7.3 and 8.4). Instead of emphasis on the impersonal (divine) spirits in pepo, the songs and actions in use by Jeremana stress the communication and interaction with spirits that intermediate or speak for the ancestors. This different approach leads to a number of alternating terms to express notions about spirit forces. Another feature is that Jeremana plays an active role as intermediary in the musical sessions in contrast to Nambela who does not partake in the sessions.

9.1 The divination sessions

When people come for a divination, they have to take off their shoes and leave their money behind (as with all ceremonies). According to the situation, clients are invited to rest and receive something to eat and drink, especially after a long journey. Occasionally, Jeremana anticipates the arrival of certain people with the help of her spirit guides. Clients whom she already knows usually have a private talk with her ahead. Otherwise nobody speaks about the reason for coming beforehand. The diagnostic sessions are repeated in between interventions or whenever a person wishes to return home (temporary or permanently). On such occasions, Jeremana finds out if the ancestors agree, so as to prevent anomalies from happening. The location to perform diagnostic sessions is in the midst of the compound in front of a huge tree. Usually Jeremana dresses in white and black, which is according to the preference of the guiding ancestors.\footnote{In general white stands for healing forces, black for ancestral forces, and red for foreign spirits.} Yet this is not a rule and has much to do with the need to appeal to other ancestral spirits of hers for specific matters. Before and after the session she holds a short prayer in front of the tree so as to address the ancestors, in particular

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Mtulahenja, her grandfather. This helps her to properly receive and end the communication with Mtulahenja or other spirits. If she forgets to do this, she tends to experience their presence during the day, resulting in dizziness or restlessness.

Jeremana refers to a divination as *kipimo* (taking a measurement) or *kupiga ramlī* (to pick up omens). Exposure of psychic abilities or picking up clues given by ancestral spirits is very distinct from communication with the ancestral spirits during possession trance. Most of the trainees are in great difficulty to obtain the clues. In difficult cases, the revelations need to come from Jeremana herself, as in the two examples given below from two Christian males. The insights go hand in hand with the reactions given by the clients. As does Nambela, Jeremana expresses spiritual omens in a subtly conscious way and exchanges these with the client, who is requested to give feedback. During all divinations Jeremana, as well as assistants, express now and then the presence of spiritual forces by shivering, uttering cries, sighing or yawning.

**Case - 1**

The first case concerns four men who come to see Jeremana for divination on December 17, 1998. They are brothers, all farmers, between the age of forty and fifty coming from Chalowe, an area that borders Mdandu division. One of the men is much in pain. He is very weak which is reflected in his fragile appearance. For this reason he is taken aside immediately to rest from the journey. Together they have come on foot, a few hours walking. The three men take their place on the ground and wait for Jeremana to speak first. Alternately, the men respond to her revelations.

**Jeremana:** This problem is from long ago and has affected the whole body... the complaints of your brother may vary and occur in the feet, the chest, the belly, the head or the arms... regularly he suffers from diarrhea or he feels very sick... at times he is very confused and speaks in riddles... he often experiences how his soul moves elsewhere (roho inahamahama)... the same problem occurred before with other members in the family... do you see the relevance... a voice tells me that somebody left the lineage and moved to another area...it has to do with numerous deaths in the family... correct?

**Men:** Yes other members have died one after the other, but they live elsewhere.

**Jeremana:** It is a ‘trap’ that goes on for some time now... at each occasion family members die for the same reason... this continues for the ‘trap’ was never closed... now your brother is a victim... he is punished... until today nobody has ever made an offering when someone died in the family... the ancestors regret this very much and would like to see this compensated with the offering of a cow...

**Men:** You are probably right, as far as we know no offerings have ever been made after the various relatives died.

**Jeremana:** It is a ‘trap’ that goes on for some time now... at each occasion family members die for the same reason... it has to do with the traditional burial customs... since a long time these customs have been completely ignored in your lineage... the ancestors have tried to signal this to you... eventually all died a bad death... they
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wanted you to become aware of their grievances... they tried to make you see a traditional healer to explain this to you... they wanted to end the trap... nobody in your family understood that the burial customs need to be restored to end the trap... this is a clear case of coldness in the family...

Men: It is true that ever since the time of our great grandmother these customs were abandoned.

Jeremana: Now you have the answer to your problems.

The revelations bring along a number of implications for the three men, who were seeking agreement among each other before answering Jeremana. If the men are to end the sufferings of their brother, they have to request other family members to participate in the offering of a cow and to reinstall the burial rites. This implies that they have to contact close relatives, of whom some live far away whereas others are difficult to trace, due to losing contact. A message to each of them will have to state the danger presently posed to the brothers. What is needed, according to Jeremana, is the participation in so-called ndeko rituals can further help trace back the circumstances of the former paternal ancestors and seek agreement with them. All this can avert the fate of baridi to the extended family. From each generation still alive, a representative will be needed declaring willingness to compensate for serious mistakes or violations, or from abstaining or erroneously performing traditional rites. The claims may demand a payment (lit. to pay a debt or kulipa madai) to satisfy the ancestors. The next step is to perform the symbolic burials taking place in the presence of various relatives. This will have to be done in combination with prayers and sacrificial offerings.

For the four men, the various objectives place a great burden to them, implicating a long research to unfold the process in which ancestors had died by a renewed gathering of the social relationships among their next of kin. The question is if the brothers are sufficiently motivated to take up this responsibility. Jeremana has often told me that relatives are reluctant as long as they have not experienced the effect of baridi. Since baridi works as a ‘trap’ mechanism (tego), other lives are constantly at risk. Jeremana further explains to the brothers that temporarily relief can be found with the help of the singings sessions in which the afflicted daily participates to open the way for the spirits to speak. Before this occurs, the ancestral spirits have to be communicated with through requests in a daily prayer (maombi), accompanied by small offerings of flour (sembbe). In this way, the ancestors are informed that something is going to be done about the matter. Next to the prayers, medicinal plants will be given to regain the bodily strength of the afflicted, next to reducing his tense pains. As the brothers return home to consider their options, they leave their sick brother behind for immediate treatment. Jeremana places a trainee in charge of him until someone from his family returns with news and extra food supply. The rest depends on the willingness of the extended family.
Case - 2
The second case from January 8, 1999 deals with a trader. He is well-educated and well-dressed, around thirty-five years old coming from Mbeya region (Usango). His name is James and he is a brother-in-law of Jeremana’s daughter who lives near to him in Mbeya region. The daughter had suggested James to consult Jeremana after having failed to find help from a number of indigenous healers in Mbeya region. Jeremana receives him in the company of a male initiate and trainee, called Lucas. Before the session started, Jeremana spoke shortly in private with James, only to hear about the news he brought from her daughter.

**Jeremana:** Your condition changes all the time [lit. inahama or ‘it moves’]. This pain (homa) makes that you have no energy... it affects your sexual desires and capacities (hana nguvu)... your waist often feels tight (lit. feel closed) resulting in an oppressed belly... other times you feel like carrying a heavy load on your shoulder making your neck and chest feel tensed... You have not been able to produce children for some time... you would like to have them... tensions exist over this with your wife... at times your heart is palpitating (roho inatekemeka) as if you had a sudden fright (kama kustuka)... You feel depressed (hana raha) as if your death is approaching (kusDri a kam a utakufa)... this results in having bad thoughts (mawazo mbaya)... At other times you feel so sick that you want to throw up...

**James:** Yes this is all true.

**Jeremana:** Your brother and your mother have been suffering for quite some time of similar complaints... especially your mother is much in pain though she cannot explain well what the problem really is... did you try to find help for her...

**James:** You are right about my mother and brother. We did not see anyone for her troubles.

**Jeremana:** Do you remember the appearance of an owl that took you by surprise one day?

**James:** Yes, that was a long time ago however.

**Jeremana:** In the past it occurred that a lot of your money was lost... this happened around the time of a loss in the family... is it true that your father was killed... yet you wanted to think that his sudden death was natural [lit. a death by God or ‘kifo cha Mungu’]...

**James:** Yes, this is correct. I never quite understood what killed him.

**Jeremana:** Am I right to say that at times you want to remember him with a special gift (sada) but yet you never actually acted on that... a voice tells me [lit. it starts to say or ‘maanza kusema’] that your complaints originate from the day of your father’s burial when you were much upset... you had become suspicious of relatives... your feelings about his death affected the whole family [lit. it is the beginning of this condition to walk around in the family or ‘ni chanjo za kutembea kwabo’]... it was the first time you felt that a death in the family was due to something other than bad luck (bashi mbaya)...
James: Yes this is right. My suspicious feeling became stronger once all sorts of bad things happened to me. Starting in 1994 a lot of money disappeared regularly. This was followed in 1995 by the loss of my car, which caught fire. In 1996 I had an accident with a bus, which resulted in the loss of my luggage. In 1997 I lost a big sum of money, around 80,000 TSH. (equivalent of about 120 US$). Before my father died I had been working hard on the land to enable me to study and make a good living.

Jeremana: But you have never respected any of the old traditions... you lived in prosperity, but never once did you make an offering to your ancestors... now I 'hear a lot of noise' when your car was on fire... people were shouting,... you were not around... you were never aware that your ancestors protected you... the fact, that you worked hard to get money to study was achieved by working the fields... these were the fields of your ancestors and they brought you luck and paid your efforts... but you never showed any thanks to them... your father was a devoted Christian and never told you or other children to respect the old customs... it is time that you all do this... starting with the offering of two goats and two chickens you thank your paternal ancestors... a father (brother of his father) will have to execute this offering in order to stop the ancestral influence... if you do it yourself you will pass the influence on to another member of the family (mizimu watamaha)... I see your grandmother is still alive (father's side)...

James: Yes she is still alive. My fathers' parents moved to Tukuyu (Mbeya region) when he was still very young and there he was raised a Christian. They were told by the government to abstain from traditional customs and so my father was never instructed about them.

Jeremana: All your problems come from the ancestral spirits... via your father, all ties with the past are broken... he is the one in whose name the first offer will have to be made... When the owl came close to you it was a sign of the ancestors (walipiga hodi) as to remember them (walipiga hodi)... before your father died he was in pain for some time... another son of his was in pain also and died in a fire...his pain too was meant as a warning to make you see a traditional healer and learn of the ancestral presence... but nobody paid any attention... all the lineage ancestors (wahenga) want is belief (imani) in them! They are crying (mizimu wanalia) because they are denied! [By now the man has his head bent down in deep thought as he tries to figure out his situation]. Now if you want to end the difficulties (matatizo) I see only one solution... offerings (matambiko) need to be made to the ancestors in the presence of an elder... this is the only way you can heal from ancestral illness (mgonjwa ya mizimu)... know that bad spirits (pepo mbaya) walk side by side with the ancestors (wanatembea pamoja na mizimu) when bringing upon you baridi... those bad spirits must be chased away first of all... they are attracted to you because of your worries about your father's death... show your repentance and you will recover... they always protected you before... that is why you were so successful... give them what they demand (wanadai) by making the offerings of two goats and chickens... do this in the presence of two more elderly family members... both from your mothers' and fathers' side... they also want you to make offerings in the
future whenever a child is born... for they are family (ukoo) and remain part of your lives... at the time your father lived in Tukuyu he was raised among the Nyakyusa tribe... it is true that they installed a law by the government that prohibited offerings to the ancestors... your father and his relatives began to ignore their Pangwa origins... this also changed the way they performed the burial rites... things will have to be set straight for all deceased who are Pangwa... starting with the generation of your grandfather (mhenga) as he was the first one to be hit by the ancestors... he suffered from various complaints for years and died unknowingly under their influence... through him a state of coldness was triggered in your family...

James: Yes, I see what you mean. Ever since my father was a child many of his family members had come to live around Tukuyu area. Most had become Christians and abandoned their traditional customs.

Jeremana: Do not wait too long to make the first offering... I foresee that you will be seriously troubled by their influence in case of delay... now you know what is the cause of your problems and I leave it to you to solve the matter within the whole family... anyone of them can address the ancestors (kuombe a mizimu) just by sitting next to a tree... they can hear you really... after the offering they demand that you execute the cleansing rites (wanada i kutekres a lyogo) as part of their burial... this too was denied to them... all this can be done over a longer period and needs not to be rushed... God will make your work lighter (Mungu atalainika kazi yako) once you show your good intentions... so go back and ask your close relatives to assist you with the offering in order to stop your complaints (homa yako)... the loss of your possessions (mali yako) will end then... you have no customs anymore at all (hana jadi yoyote)... it is the very reason for all your problems... did you never wonder where you came from... now do you realize what is going on?

James: Yes, I have understood.

Jeremana: I see that your grandfathers' motive to abandon the customs was linked to his poverty... he tended to delay the yearly offerings to the ancestors at harvest time until he gave them up entirely... but even if you have little you can remember them... they do not demand much... but if you have the means to make offerings it seems to them more apparent that you remember them... so they took it from you by force to make you see their healer (kuona mganga wake)... if you cannot give them an offering you must tell them why... this is the nature of our ancestral spirits... understand me well I do not personally demand anything from you and I do not commit you to do anything. It is up to you to decide... I see that your wife is Nyakyusa... she appears to have various symptoms for similar reasons... her parents too abandoned their original customs and now she is suffering from the consequences... she is often short of breath, feels pain in her head and belly, hears voices in her sleep and regularly she is in a state of confusion... the voices she hears come from her grandfather and grandmother... also it appears that three children of your brother have died mysteriously... this too is linked to baridi... the ancestors have placed claims on all of you (hiyo ni mambo ya mizimu ya madai)... upon return home I suggest you instruct an elder to place a small offering of flour (semba) to show your regrets... if not, bad spirits will spoil the lives of many more people (pepo mbaya anaharibika
maisha ya watu)... now people around are saying that you sacrificed the children of your brother in order to get a lot of money... this is what happens if people do know about the ancestral influences... once the door has been opened to the ancestors this invites all kinds of evil to come along through the same door... witchcraft too evolves in this manner.... but now you are the prime suspect!

Jeremana: For now we have closed this case (tumefunga case hapa).

In the beginning of this session, Jeremana reveals that James is suffering from typical symptoms of spirit affliction, which have been experienced by the client’s mother and brother as well. Besides, three children of his brother have died mysteriously. Jeremana relates these sufferings, and the emotional strain of James, to strange events that have occurred in the family after the burial day of his father. Several relatives of James have died or suffered from hardship. None of them knew why. Under the given circumstances, James has gotten under suspicion of witchcraft within the family. He has been accused of the murder of three of his nephews, to secure his wealth. Yet, Jeremana tells him that his wealth comes from having worked the ancestral fields. He did so without ever thanking the ancestors, literally paraphrased as “you ate the sweat of the ancestors without thanking them ever” (wenzake walikula jasho wa mizimu bila kwashukuru). James’ grandfather was the one to completely break off the family ties with the departed and this initially gave cause for an ancestral ‘trap (tego ya mizimu). The trapped condition enabled witches and other evil forces to assert their powers on relatives (mapepo mabaya na wachawi wanajia kwa mizimu hizo). The negative occult powers that brought harm in the extended family refers to intra-lineage witchcraft (uchawi ya ukoo). In other words, when ancestral claims exist (modai ya mizimu), ancestral spirits are the biggest magicians or wachawi.

While I saw James reflecting on his personal problems and the history of his family, Lucas, the novice healer spoke to him of similar problems that once existed in his extended family. Lucas, also a Christian, could not believe that ancestral spirits had so much impact, but this conviction changed after he was taken seriously ill. He too fought long against the idea of baridi, but when he had finally accepted its existence and took ritual measures, his troubles came to an end. Whether or not Lucas’ words were comforting to the client was hard to tell. For now, he had to come to terms with the demand of two goats and two chickens to be offered to his ancestors in the company of an elder of the family. This was the way of the spirits to do something soon about the problems in his family from which James’ personal complaints also derived.

From this and the first case, and also other cases I have witnessed, it appears that baridi brings a lot of damage to a family and sometimes affects the whole lineage. The way baridi is set in motion can differ, but the overall message about the implications of baridi, are almost identical. That the baridi phenomenon is not only limited
to Bena-related tribes became clear from the remark that Jeremana made in the first case about the wife of the clients who also suffered from *baridi*. The question is, however, why s/he experienced this sudden spiritual intrusion. Did other relatives too suffer its consequences? This feature puzzled me throughout the research as it had during my stay with Nambela on the affliction of *pepo*. Does emotional disdain or distress of the afflicted set in motion *baridi* because of *pepo* illness? Is there a fundamental relationship between the spirits who impose themselves on humans and those persons who become afflicted? With the help of an extended case study I try to look into this interrelationship further. Simultaneously, this will expose what a client and his family go through and their reaction to Jeremana’s solutions.

9.2  Gotfried and his family

The extended case concerns a man called Gotfried who made up part of the thirty patients following intensive treatment at the time of my presence. Gotfried, a Bena of thirty-eight years old, lives with four children in Rugenge (Njombe) mainly working his fields. On the first day of my stay with Jeremana, December 1, 1998 she showed me around the compound introducing me to all the patients. I was acquainted with Gotfried who appeared to be in great agony, hardly able to stand up. He looked skinny and pale as if suffering a major disease. He had just arrived in the company of three male relatives and lay down to rest. Upon seeing Gotfried, Jeremana spontaneously started to help him. She took some water and directed loud prayers to the ancestors, while spitting the water around and on top of him as a token of purification and well intent. She repeatedly implored spirit forces to leave him in peace and not to blame him for the death of his father. He had to be excused for having sought help at healers who treated him against witchcraft intrusion. This had insulted the ancestral spirits and as a result he experienced how their spirit forces (energies) got stuck inside his body (*mizimu* *wanabana mwilini*) giving severe stabbing pains. In order to reduce the pain, Jeremana firmly stretched his limbs so as to make the forces move away and prevent them from getting stuck in his limbs. All this took around twenty minutes.

9.2.1  The current state of affairs

The intervention for Gotfried would only temporarily relieve him of the worst pains. A more definite solution was to be found by himself and his relatives, who had ignored Jeremana’s advice in 1996 to participate in various lineage rites. This had to do with the fact that, as devout Christians, the family opposed traditional customs and interventions that recognized spirit forces. Jeremana would summon his elders and brothers to come and speak about the seriousness of the situation. When I asked her if his condition could also be due to a serious disease other than *baridi*, she answered affirmative, saying that she would find out more by means of divination. A few hours later, this took place in the presence of the three relatives and myself while the patient was left to
rest. The day after his arrival in December 1998, Jeremana performed a new diagnosis for Gotfried. It was held in my presence, after a short prayer by Jeremana at the compound tree. In his absence Jeremana disclosed his problems to the three male relatives, all seated in front of her. Jeremana began by saying that Gotfried experienced strong stabbing pains in his belly (*vichomi ndani ya tumbo inavuta sana*), next to having painful shoulders and a stiff back (*mbega mzito na mgongo inasimama*). His right side was totally numb (*upande kwa kulia umeku fa garzi*) and his joints were stiff. To this, she added that he felt as if he was dying (*anasikia kama anakufa*). Jeremana related his peculiar condition to a combination of events. First of all, she mentioned how the end of a relationship with a quarrelsome woman affected him. Secondly, severe disputes went on in his family over money owed by Gotfried and his father. Relatives had sought to avenge themselves and killed his father even though Gotfried had tried to settle the matter by paying a cow. Thirdly, Gotfried and his family had ignored settling certain ‘claims’ with the deceased so far. The spirit attack from which Gotfried suffered this time was, according to Jeremana, to remind him and his family of the initial promises made by the family in 1996.

In brief, the initial claims came from deceased paternal grandparents who were not shown the customary respects at their funeral. On top of this, his father was not honored either and was denied a sacrificial offering. Gotfried’s mistake was that he had not abided by the traditional rule of performing a celebration for his father at his home forty days after the funeral (*siku arobami*). At this occasion homemade beer (*pombe*) should be brewed and offered to friends and family to end the mourning period. The ceremonial day was kept at the house of a younger brother and a lot of bad talk went on about Gotfried and his father. Bad gossip and disputes had resulted in little sympathy when asked to share in the cost of the father’s funeral, which otherwise is a normal thing to do. Local beer parties and cattle slaughtering are normally events designed to bring the family and lineage together, but under these circumstances this was not the case. Later, in the course of his treatment with Jeremana, Gotfried had been reluctant to settle the problems that existed among the departed. Gotfried had made an initial promise to do so when he and some male relatives had participated in the annual instructive rituals in September 1998. At this occasion, he promised to see to the execution of a sacrificial offering for his father. Gotfried, however, found little support from his family and gradually felt how his energy drained away from him. Jeremana said that it was as if he experienced a bad spirit that sucked out his life force (*inavuta nguvu kama kipepo kibaya*).

The following day, the third of December 1998, mostly male family members came to visit Jeremana. All were invited in her house. After the formal greetings she introduced me to them and pursued her concern about Gotfried. In great length she started
to explain what was wrong with him and related this to her own illness history. The relatives clearly did not feel comfortable as they whispered among each other regularly. Then one spokesman said, that they had always been opposed to her interventions. Ever since 1996, they had discouraged Gottfried from following her advice and to abstain from traditional religious rites. As good Christians, they considered that ancestral forces could not affect them anymore. The matter was not to be discussed in the family and the methods of Jeremana were seen to be no better than that of a witch (mchawi). In the meantime, however, they had come to realize the seriousness of the matter. Their denial to listen to the ancestral claims started to have its repercussion on the whole family. Many of them, mainly men, started to suffer from similar symptoms as Gottfried. With this in mind, they had finally come to the decision that they should collaborate in the ritual treatments that Jeremana had suggested earlier. Now they came to implore her to help and save them all.

Jeremana did not appear to be offended by their frankness. Rather she seemed relieved about their decision and proposed that they make an offering of a rooster (jogo ya kuchinja) as a preliminary gift (sadaka) to Gottfried’s father. His sudden and revengeful death needed to be settled soon to prevent more victims. To this she added, that her healing powers were not like those of some other healers who used arbitrary omens from unknown forces (waganga wa rami). Instead, she was guided by good powers of faith (mganga wa katabiri na imani), which she showed yesterday by directing prayers to the ancestors resulting in a relief of Gottfrieds’ pains. That very same evening, Gottfried was able to walk and make his own request (maombi) to the ancestors by means of a test with millet flour (vipimo za ulezi). The next morning, they found that the flour had been untouched by animals or insects, indicating consent of the ancestors. Jeremana ended the meeting by saying that a good healer will never compel clients to do something (mganga hakubali kudazimisha watu).

When I went to see Gottfried later the same day, he said to have indeed experienced a relief soon after Jeremana had spoken to the ancestors yesterday. The pain had reduced and he could even stand up a bit. This occurred before he took the tablets from the mission hospital to ease the pain. He was willing to do anything to end his agony and was happy to learn that his family finally would support him. He admitted that a strong case of lineage coldness (baridi ya uko) had existed over the last few years and confirmed that several close (male) relatives were suffering from the influence. Also, a number of distant lineage members had shown to be in trouble. Two had already been in treatment but failed to execute the requested settlements. Presently, three others were under treatment, one of them was Lucas (see 9.1). He had been in treatment with Jeremana over the last two years and so far was the only one to have received a calling to heal. During my stay, he was preparing to start his own practice
near Njombe town. It was during this time that Gotfried and his family decided to meet with the claims of the ancestors and awaited further instructions from Jeremana.

9.2.2 The illness history

Upon checking the whole situation with Gotfried in the midst of December, I learned that his brother had come to see Jeremana in 1990 with identical complaints. This happened some time after the father had died. As a result, a ritual of agreement (ndeke za mapatano) had been performed in the presence of Gotfried and several of his close relatives (see later 9.3). On that occasion, all present were informed about what was wrong and what was needed to settle the matter correctly. The most pressing issue was the murder of the father, who had been killed by a family member with a chopping-knife. His troubled life and the consequent violent death (or sudden death as in kifo cha ghafula) left its marks on his offspring (see 6.3). During the gathering, the family learned that the father had been under the influence of various deceased relatives. Both male and female ancestors from the paternal line were involved. The grief that existed in the past and which manifested itself in the present had evolved from an ancestral struggle for recognition, literally homa ya magombano ya mizimu.

But, the matter was left unattended and Gotfried’s brother died.

The complaints of Gotfried started shortly after the death of his brother in 1995. At the time, Gotfried did not go straight to see Jeremana, instead he sought treatment at the hospital. They diagnosed malaria and he was given chloroquine. Nothing changed. After this, he went to other hospitals but nothing was found to be wrong. Later that year he consulted local healers who practiced in Iringa region. In total, Gotfried followed treatment of ten different healers, who claimed that he suffered from an internal infection (tambazi), caused by intra-lineage witchcraft (uchawi ya ukoo). They applied herbal medicines via incisions on the painful areas of the body. For this intervention Gotfried had to pay between 2000 and 5000 TSH (3 to 8 US$). One of the local healers had a large modern traditional hospital with a dispensary in Njombe district. He used divination of the gourd (ramli ya kibuyu), which entails a small calabash meant to receive omens from spirit guides. For this, he charged a small sum of money 400 TSH (less than 1 US$). He, too, diagnosed witchcraft as the cause of his pains and gave him medicine to counter-act this for which he charged 5000 TSH (8 US$). All this did not help Gotfried, instead his symptoms only worsened.

In 1996, Gotfried came to consult Jeremana. She told him during divination that his initial symptoms were stabbing pains (vichomi) in his neck, arms and hands together with palpitations felt throughout the body as if his blood ran too fast. The symptoms had worsened in reaction to the interventions of healers using counter-active remedies against witchcraft. In this way, Gotfried had insulted the ancestral spirits, for he had
defied their signals. Gottfried remained for treatment and admitted his personal mistakes by making several small offerings to the ancestral spirits. He also promised to sacrifice a cow to his father and to consider participation in the yearly rituals with other male relatives. Next to the offerings, Gottfried participated in the singing sessions to rid himself of bad forces or mapepo mabaya. After a few weeks of treatment, Gottfried’s condition improved a lot. He soon returned home in good shape and with great confidence. But the next year (1997), soon after his wife died, his complaints returned with even greater consequences. The concern for his children and the family problems made him ignore the ‘claim’ of the ancestors, thereby breaking his promise. On top of that, male relatives still opposed participation in the rituals that were directed to repair the disharmony in the family. Desperately Gottfried went to see other healers again, who once more treated him with counter-active medicines against witchcraft. By November 1998 his symptoms had become so severe that a few relatives decided to bring him to Jeremana. It is at this point that I started the case of Gottfried.

9.2.3 Prospects and interventions

Upon arrival of Gottfried and his three relatives, Jeremana had taken up the task to inform the ancestors and prepare Gottfried protective medicine or dawa za kinga or kuzindika. The word kinga stems from the verb kukinga, meaning ‘to ward off evil’ or ‘to shield against evil’ (see 6.3). Zindiko is a shield to protect a person. The plant ingredients of this remedy were prepared in an earthenware cooking-pot called ‘the medicine from the pot’ or dawa za chungu. Besides this remedy, Gottfried, like all baridi patients, had to follow a series of ritual interventions to become an initiate of the ancestors. In general, Jeremana refers to ritual interventions as vitendo, literally meaning acts or performances. In line of priority, these are:

- The musical sessions to help express ‘ill’ spirits and/or ancestral spirits.
- The rites of agreement to reach a settlement with offended ancestral spirits.
- The fertility rites that needed to be restored or re-introduced in the family.
- The annual teaching rites to learn how baridi can be prevented and resolved.
- The burial and cleansing rites for departed relatives who have been deprived of this.
- The ceremonial (offering) rites to communicate messages and gifts to the ancestors.

Apart from the musical sessions, I will present the other rites in depth in the next chapter. The common aim of all these rites is to bring reconciliation between the spirit of the afflicted, the living, and the departed relatives. In other words, the rites are a means to redress the situation in the lineage felt in one or more families who experience a loss of harmony in the way that Jeremana also had experienced before she became a healer. To give an idea what the rites entail, I briefly outline them while linking them to the case of Gotfried and his family. The first rites involved were the ndeko rites that aim
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at an agreement between the living and the departed to settle payments for the wrongdoings of the paternal relatives, in the past and in the present.

In the case of Gotfried, the death of his brother in 1990 needed to be addressed by the family. Certain agreements were made but not fulfilled by the family, which consequently gave rise for a new series of severe complaints for Gotfried. Only many years later, in 1999, three more ndeko sessions were held to establish if the payments were still in line with the wishes of 1990, recorded in so-called ndeko booklets. In the booklet it said that a he-goat (beberu) had to be offered to the brother who died in 1990. Secondly, two sheep (kondoo) had to be offered to compensate for the lasting tensions between his father and other family members. Thirdly, a sheep and a he-goat had to be offered for the general wellbeing of Gotfried's whole family. Fourthly, Gotfried's father had to be compensated with a cow for a bad death (kiparazzi kibaya).

After the solemn promise of Gotfried and his family members to attend to these offerings he made a miraculous improvement. It was at this point that the ancestral forces finally spoke through him during the musical sessions. Within three weeks his body color became normal again and he was soon putting on some weight. By now it was December 27, 1999 and Gotfried looked in good shape. He had finally succeeded in becoming the 'lineage seat' of the ancestral forces (kiti ya ukoo). Happily, he explained to me that he had made the offering of a black and a white cloth (nguo nyeusi na neupe) and a traditional necklace of beads (ushanga) as a personal gift to the ancestors for receiving their help and advice. These were to be left behind on the special tree at the compound. With this token, he accepted to take good care of family interests as a medium. He was allowed to go home so as to prepare for the offerings, which he promised to execute in January 1999. By February 1999, I learned that the first offerings had taken place. After a series of burial- and cleansing rites (kuogesha lypo), Gotfried and his brothers would return for the performance of the sacrificial offering of a cow to honor his father. After ten years of denial in his lineage, the sufferings finally seemed to come to an end. Gotfried's recovery became stable and allowed him to return home.

9.2.4 Discussion

Gotfried's case shows that ever since 1995 onwards he went through various torments. The year 1995 marks the time of the loss of his father, his brother, and his wife. The emotional torment of Gotfried was met by a fraction of remorse within the extended family. This fraction was tied to the many debts that his father had left to relatives. Gotfried and another brother, who were the oldest sons and responsible for their father debts, could not repay these. His father was killed on account of his debts. Gotfried's older brother was the first one to suffer from spirit affliction after
his father’s death and went to seek help with Jeremana. To remedy his problems, several male relatives including Gotfried, joined in a ritual gathering to straighten out the murder of the father. This did not resolve in a satisfactory outcome, however. A series of ancestral claims were brought to the surface for which more relatives needed to participate. Yet, these relatives were opposed to joining the rites. The whole matter was left unresolved and Gotfried’s brother died. Gotfried already owed several people money, and now he had also his father’s debts to carry on his back. Obviously, he started to fear for his life. He also feared ancestral wrath due to the strong opposition in the family to reconcile with the departed. Several other members of the family who had sought treatment with Jeremana earlier had already gone through various agonies. And so, Gotfried knew what to expect. Not only had he and a number of relatives become familiar with the etiology of baridi, they had developed a lot of fear. Without the dedication of the whole family, there was little prospect for a lasting cure for Gotfried. The trap caused by baridi was met with ever increasing difficulties within the extended family.

In brief, the opposition in the family created a situation in which the bad spirits or mapepo mabaya could continue to bother the afflicted relatives. As with Gotfried, they suffered from confusion, stabbing pains and stress related symptoms. These symptoms could not be remedied by staff at hospitals or by herbalists. As long as the ancestral forces could not express themselves and find a proper medium for the family (also kiti, ‘seat’ or ‘chair’) to sort out the mistakes made in the family, the agony went on. What they wanted, according to Jeremana, was to have an official lineage mediator to end baridi from spreading itself among the paternal family. Gotfried’s daily participation in the musical sessions did at first not bring any benefits, but this changed when a series of rites were held in which he and male relatives recollected all serious wrongdoings by them, by their father, and grandfather. In the next chapter I will come back to Gotfried’s case and the various redressive rituals.

9.3 Interaction with spirits in musical therapy

In general, Jeremana detects during divination what kind of spirit forces are involved. In her opinion, spirit forces of various spirit groups can afflict people in a family that has baridi. In other words, baridi goes hand in hand with bad forces (mapepo mabaya) that cause patients to experience feelings of oppression and dismay. The stronger the claim of the ancestors, the stronger is the impact of the bad spirits on patients so as to compel the victims to consult a traditional healer. In Jeremana’s practice, musical healing sessions are an important means of gaining access to bad spirits that afflict persons who are trapped by baridi. To a large degree the sessions resemble those held in Nambelu’s practice. I will therefore mainly focus on the differences that exist, be it in interaction between patients, novices and Jeremana; in spirit experiences and expressions;
or in songs and ways of speech. The various aspects and patterns are best explained in light of Jeremana’s notions and concepts of spirit forces.

As was briefly mentioned in 9.1, ‘foreign’ or ‘alien’ spirits to the lineage or wagoni ya ukoo, are mainly Bantu (mapepo ya Bantu) and thus inland spirits (mapepo ya bara). To Jeremana, all inland spirits are nature spirits as they can reside in caves, in trees or in rivers, just as coastal spirits reside in the sea or in trees or caves along the shores. Coastal spirits (mapepo ya pwani) are rarely involved in baridi as these make up part of Islamic religion and customs. In contrast to inland and coastal spirit groups, the ancestral spirit forces identify themselves by individual names instead of groups. According to Jeremana, a majority of spirit healers identify, remedy, or expel ‘alien’ spirits, but when it concerns deceased relatives or inner forces, they do not know what to do.

To healers who work predominantly with coastal spirits, the concept of pepo is a synonym for jini, the Arab word for nature or alien spirits. Bad spirits are called either mapepo or majini mabaya. Some coastal spirits are ‘sent’ with the help of Arab or Islamic magic. For this purpose, a curse may be used, but also an object may be transformed into a bird or an animal that may be sent to the victim. If a client of Jeremana suffers from a coastal spirit, Jeremana will recommend treatment with a coastal spirit healer, for only s/he knows what countermeasures are needed. Often herbs, minerals and/or bones are part of the countermeasures. Specific Swahili songs can invoke the coastal spirits. Often these songs are used in combination with specific odors and vapors either to appeal or to chase the spirit away (see chapter 3).

The major goal of the musical sessions with Jeremana is to favor communication with the ancestral spirit forces (mapepo ya mizimu) that can both ‘send’ and ‘combat’ evil spirit forces (mapepo mabaya). The condition in which the ancestral forces express woes and wishes during the musical sessions is of primary concern here. When Jeremana states that ‘inner’ forces (pepo ya mtu as in 6.3) are troubling a person due to worries (mawazo mengi), she will soon connect this to troubled ancestors who are trying to make a person realize something. One way or the other, when pepo is felt as a negative energy, this needs expression through the body and the spirit. How are Jeremana’s notions and beliefs in spirits manifested in the songs and the musical sessions? The sessions with Jeremana are held in the open, just as with Nambela. Mostly, the sessions are held once a day, usually in the late afternoon continuing until late in the evening. On Saturday, there are two sessions, one in the morning and one in the evening. On Sunday, after Jeremana holds a general prayer for all those present, singing takes place in the way that it happened at Nambela’s. All patients are supposed to join these gatherings and attention is given to those who are most in pain or confused due to spiritual intrusion. On most occasions, Jeremana participates in the group sessions. She or a novice healer will initiate the songs and guide clients who loose control
as they fall in a state of trance. In practice, this means that she or a novice healer will encourage and support the participants throughout the sessions. Rattles (*chekechea*) made of tin cans with dry maize corns inside accompany the singing.

Songs in use by Jeremanana originate from grandfather Mtulahenja. Other songs originate from Nambela or from the Church and are sung in Bena language. The songs emphasize the *mababu* (grandfathers) or *mizimu* (ancestral spirits) instead of *pepo* (inner or inland spirit) or *Mungu* (God). To express the interrelationship of *baridi* symptoms with the pain of ancestors, the song of the beginning of the chapter is used.

Lead:  
*Amalile ndilisoka babu wee*  
It is the spirit of my grandfather

Chorus:  
*Uwutamwa wangu livali lukwale wee*  
My illness is madness of the ancestors  
*Uwutamwa maleko mama unene wee*  
My illness is due to coldness mother  
*Amalile kumbawa kumwoyo wee*  
The heart of the spirit [grandfather] is in pain  
*Uwutamwa uvange babu wangu wee*  
I will have to help our grandfather

New songs are usually communicated through dreams or temporary possession and are said to come from the spirits. Few songs are in use to appeal to Swahili or Arab spirit forces. These are ‘foreign’ songs to Jeremanana that are introduced by patients with Swahili ancestral ties during a state of trance. Transmission can also come from patients who have learned the songs during treatment with coastal spirit healers. In this way, Jeremanana began to familiarize herself with the various coastal songs and spirits. Basically, Jeremanana approaches clients in musical sessions from the idea that bad or negative forces (*mapepo* or *majini mabaya*) manifest themselves under the influence of ancestral forces, as is reflected in the following song in Kiswahili:

Lead:  
*Wela moyo wane njini wee*  
To get well you have to free your heart of the spirit  
*Wela kwa waganga wee*  
Go to the healer who knows what to do  
*Kweli saidie njini wee*  
Go and help the spirit

Chorus:  
*Wela kwa uwanja wee*  
Go to the compound of the healer  
*Wela inamaliza mataito wee*  
Go so as to end the problems  
*Wela na bibi wee*  
Go with the guidance of your grandmother  
*Kwa imani njini wee*  
Go in faith to meet your spirit
According to Jeremana, the ancestral forces actually push or drive out the bad pepo forces from the body via the head (mizimu wanamsukuma juu kwa kupanda kichwani). They do so if the patient, being their ‘seat’ or kiti, has consented to recognize and respect them, giving them the opportunity to speak about their identity and their grievances. To appeal to the family ancestral spirits, participants shout: chema, chema mababu or ‘get heated grandfathers’ or amka, amka mababu meaning ‘wake up grandfathers’, and karibu mizimu or ‘welcome ancestral spirits’. The songs may express similar notions like in the following song in Kiswahili/Kibena:

Lead: Chemka na mababu
      Let the grandfathers get heated
Amka na mabubu
      Let the grandfathers wake up
Chima na mababu
      Let me be inspired by my grandfather
Furahi na mababu
      Let the grandfathers be happy

Chorus: Longola wababu wee
      Follow the wishes of the grandfathers

Other songs in use by Jeremana give expression to the appreciation for the ancestors, like the song Kwewilonga kwewiliolele that says ‘When the ancestors come they will show me what is wrong, thanks for opening my eyes for as a child I was alienated from you and incapable of feeling your protection.’ Or, the song Hongera mama/baba that says ‘Honor is to our mother and father, but when madness happens I have to address the ancestors’. There are also songs to refer to the sadness that is experienced due to a rupture with the ancestors, like in Ndng’ulang’ula ndivemba that says ‘As long as I do not dress like the ancestors, I merely cry’. The general wish of the ancestor(s) for a traditional cloak has to do with the fact that this was once their indigenous garment. Sometimes a cloak is offered and hung on the tree in the compound (see 8.2), but in this song it is the initiate who has to wear the cloak to identify with the ancestors. Once the initiate has done so, the feelings of sadness disappear. In sum, the songs convey the problems that patients have and how these are resolved with the help of the ancestral spirits.

As soon as a patient manifests the negative spirit force s/he may shiver, cry aloud and fall down on the ground in a trance. In some cases, the patient will roll over to the side (kugaragara) after which s/he lays down with arms open wide, sometimes shaking the whole body. Upon seeing a patient in this state, Jeremana or another experienced person, mostly assistants, will react by fetching water that has been placed on the compound. Often the event triggers a dissociation state in them as they experience guidance by their ancestral spirit(s). This becomes apparent by the way Jeremana or the assistants stagger toward the patient lying on the ground, until they carry water in a calabash
spoon and spit the contents over the face and body of the patient. Then, they pour some water besides the head and the feet of the patient on the ground as token of consent to the positive forces driving out the negative forces. This is followed by lying down flat on the belly, putting the crown (fontanel) of the head on to the crown of the patient, while firmly pressing their hands on those of the patient. The moment the ‘bad’ force is expelled from the head, Jeremana or the assistant experiences an electric shock. The patient consequently feels a relief of bodily tensions and pains. Remarkably each patient reacts immediately to this intervention by opening their eyes and rolling over the ground. After a while they stand up and sway over the compound. Sometimes they dance or climb in a tree. In many ways, this behavior resembles that of Nambela’s clients when they are in a pepo trance.

Occasionally, one of Jeremana’s initiates runs away to find medicines to help another patient. I saw this occur only to initiates who were chosen to become healers. At these occasions the initiates were said to react with a strong guiding spirit that compelled them to take a hatchet from the medicine-hut and dig out certain plants. Generally, inland or coastal nature forces did not bring about such an incentive. Whenever persons remain silent for some time, sitting or laying on the ground, they did so to incorporate the presence of the ancestral forces. Once a fusion emerges between the ancestor and the patient, shouting or weeping follows. At this stage, a dialogue can start, allowing the ancestral force(s) finally to express their anguish and identity though intermediate spirits. As these speak, they do so softly, with a sheer of sadness transmitted in jolts. The ancestral forces are addressed as: *Who are you? What is your name? Are you family? Welcome here, and make yourself known to us.* In general, it takes more than one session in order to achieve this stage of communication and for some clients it can take months. Amazingly, those who speak out clearly the needs of the ancestors, soon experience a recovery. Unless other spirits and/or ancestors need to be heard, participation in the singing sessions is abandoned as soon as the client has become an initiate and medium for the ancestors.

9.4 Discussion and conclusions

Various components of Jeremana’s story align with the problems clients bring to her. Those suffering under ‘state of coldness’ (*baridi*) would have physical complaints as she did. Besides emaciation due to a loss of appetite, stabbing pains and confusion, there would be the feeling of a heavy load on the shoulders, bad dreams, and hearing voices. Culminating in a loss of energy, resistance would be lowered, triggering respiratory or organic dysfunctions. Severe symptoms would lead to paralysis, epileptic fits and madness, being an advanced form of *pepo* illness (see 6.3). During divination sessions, Jeremana would explain to her clients that *baridi* springs from the interruption of various customary lineage rites. Traditionally these rites transmitted codes of
behavior to keep unity and safety in the extended family and the lineage. The disruption of these religious rites, as a consequence of wars, colonialism, Christianity and modernization, alienated people from their indigenous means to deal with social crisis and conflict. Not only has the abandonment of rites given cause for spiritual intrusions in the families of the lineage, rites that are incorrectly performed also produce a similar effect (see 8.5).

According to Jeremana, personal and social dismay as this happens in *baridi*, implicates that a person suffers from ‘an ancestral illness’ (*ugonjwa ya mzimu*) or ‘pain caused by ancestral claims’ (*homa ya madai ya mababu*) that originates from the paternal lineage. The cause is often an accumulation of ‘sins’ or ‘mistakes’ by members of the paternal lineage that have not been given proper consideration during life in ceremonial rites. Subsequently, the departed wander among paternal offspring who have inherited *baridi*. In line with Jeremana’s story (8.3), this is marked by sequences of sudden deaths in this and/or previous generations. A particular characteristic in *baridi* appears to be that complaints of *pepo* illness are passed through paternal relatives. Men complain of problems of impotence and loss of sexual desire and women appear to have problems of infertility. In either case, their condition endangers the survival of the extended family. Furthermore, *baridi* brings misfortune on a social and material level. Next to conflicts in the family, there are continues breaches in conduct, but also debts of money and loss of business. In turn, this situation can lead to failures in reciprocity among the (extended) family. In the course of this situation, more and more family members suffer from this ancestral illness, while accusations of witchcraft or sorcery increase and relatives suddenly die. In other words, a range of events can upset the livelihood of a family, and with it, that of others close to them.

From the example of Gotfried (9.2) it appears that persons, who are emotionally instable or have a spirit in disharmony, are prone to feeling the influence of *baridi*. Jeremana’s opinion shares a lot in common with Nambela with regard to how *pepo* can fluctuate and attract positive and also negative spirit forces (see 5.4 and 6.3). The practice and success of witchcraft occurs mainly when positive forces are diminished and negative forces dominate. This is precisely the state of being in which *baridi* becomes manifest. Since ancestral forces are intrinsically bound to the state of *pepo*, Jeremana feels that they are accountable for much in daily life, whether good or evil, including the practice of intra-lineage witchcraft. As vengeance by the ancestors is directed to the whole kinship group, its negative forces can be used to manipulate each other. This had happened to Jeremana’s paternal family as it did in the paternal family of her husband Edward Chove (see 8.3). In practically all families of her clients, a number of personal losses had been experienced, often considered to have a magical origin.
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Overall, Jeremena’s clients face baridi in much the same manner that she and her family once did. On the one hand, they are made aware that baridi carries the danger of a genealogical inheritance and functions much like a family spell. On the other hand, baridi serves as a warning about a state of disharmony that endangers the extended family. Signals from the ancestors to their offspring are meant to catch their attention, but are often ignored or misunderstood. Indications of a lengthy dismaly in departed spirits can be reflected in illness, but also in the practice of intra-lineage witchcraft (uchawi ya ukoo) and/or a series of sudden deaths (kifo cha ghafula). Proper ceremonial attention, in which spirits of relatives are purified from the negative conditions in which they died, can prevent but also end the negative energy they exert on the living. In other words, provided that proper measures are taken, a process of healing in the elementary family may contribute to restore the harmony in the extended family. Being once more under the safe protection of the family spirits will be a blessing to all.

With respect to the above, what can be said about the purpose of the musical sessions as performed in Jeremana’s practice? I have shown that musical sessions are used as a psychotherapeutic tool in Jeremana’s practice to express suppressed emotions of internalized spirit forces; while more immediate physical complaints are met by the intake of plants. Emphasis is placed on the actual speech event of ancestors who themselves are considered patients that seek rescue from emotional distress. In fact the concern here is the life crisis of the spirit(s) that stress the need for ritual acts, like that of initiation, fertility or burial rituals. Both the songs and the dialogues during the musical sessions in Jeremana’s practice concentrate around communication with the spirit(s) in question. To some extent, however, these musical sessions can be seen as both redressive and liminal rites. Redressive in the sense that they help create reflexivity in the psyche of the individual as s/he gains access to the subconscious state. Liminal in the sense that they accentuate the liminal period which is so important in a rite of passage. This is marked by the separation from the previous position as patient, to the incorporation of being an initiate or intermediary (also ‘seat’ or kit) of the troubled spirit(s).

The experience of a loss of the self allows for the incorporation of intermediate spirit(s) to whom a voice temporarily serves to express the pain or anguish of the ancestor(s). At this liminal moment the emotional and physical pain of the afflicted and the spirit(s) merge together, also part of the ‘communitas’ that Turner has spoken of (1968: 25, 1974: 20-60). Indirectly, the songs propel suppressed emotions to come to the surface, giving an opportunity for both the afflicted and the ancestral forces to communicate their grievances. From the same subconscious level, the afflicted or ‘seat’ (kit) is provided with the solution that allows him/her to live in harmony again.

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with the family group (*ukoo*). The drastic changes that can be experienced during or after the session would soon convince the clients of the beneficial spiritual powers that come from the ancestors. Once a transition in the patient has taken place, s/he becomes an initiate, also referred to as ‘the child of the ancestors’ (*mtoto wa mizimu*) or ‘pupil of the ancestors’ (*mwanafunzi wa mizimu*). In this phase, one or more spirits have expressed the wish of the ancestors to become an intermediate for the family group. The main task of the initiates is to pay respect to the ancestors by means of ceremonial offering (*mizimu za kutambikwa*). By uniting the self with the intermediate forces of the ancestor spirits, positive forces in her/his *pepo* return and recovery takes place. The primary purpose of becoming initiates is to restore the relationship between the family and the ancestors.

Exceptionally initiates have healers among their ancestors. If they do have a healing ancestor (*mzimu za kuganga*), they become novices and remain with Jeremana for a longer period. By assisting in divination sessions, these novices exercise their healing capacities by using visionary and sensory skills. They will sit next to Jeremana on the ground, wearing white or black cloths (*kitambaa nyupe* or *kaniki*), according to the preference of their ancestral guide(s) to indicate their willingness to receive clues or messages. Novices await instructions from their lineage spirit guides (*wauguzi wa mizimu*) about when and how to begin a practice. In 1999, Jeremana was tutor to two men and a woman who each had started their own healing practice. Another man and a woman were in the process of preparation while still finalizing settlements with the ancestral spirits.
Chalowe ritual area for the annual instructive fertility rites performed by the healer Jeremana Livefile.