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

Erdtsieck, J.

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Chapter 11

Kihami Healing from Ulanga

I have nobody to take care of me
Who will help me when I fall ill?
My whole family has died due to witches
They ruin our lives
Without protection we are all victims
Medicines from the Kihami will protect us
With the Kihami healer we are in safety

This popular Kihami song contains a core message about the role of Kihami spirits and their primary function to possess or guide spirit healers. The Kihami are of common tribal descent and originate from Ulanga district, in the southern part of Morogoro region. As territorial nature spirits, the Kihami seek attention from men or women of interrelated descent. The word Kihami refers to a spirit that moves from one to another person, derived from the verb kuhama 'to shift or move'. In this chapter I present the role and meaning of those Kihami spirits whose principal role is to guide southern spirit healers in the combat against witchcraft and magic. Subsequently, the Kihami healers have a reputation as witchdoctors (waganga ya uchawi). The aim is to complement the observations made from Nambela and Jeremana so as to give a broader perspective on how witchcraft (uchawi) can be intertwined with spirit illness (ugonjwa ya pepo), spirit vocation (inweso wa pepo) and spirit healing (uganga wa pepo) in Southern Tanzania.

Kihami medicine and healing is strongly rooted in the history of the 19th and 20th century. As explained in 2.2, Ngoni expansion has left its mark on the people of southern Tanzania who as a result, were regrouped. In the process of pacification following the tribal and colonial wars, the southern ethnic groups adopted various aspects of ritual and medical practice from the Ngoni invaders. At the time, Wabuyi spirits, originating from Kilombero, Ulanga district, inspired so called Wabuyi specialists who possessed military powers and rain making skills. They were also the ones responsible for maintaining customary religious rituals (see 2.2). The changes in the 20th century made the priestly and military tasks of the Wabuyi specialists decline. At that time Kihami spirits
emerged among the populations and dispersed to various parts of southern Tanzania, crossing the borders into Mozambique. The rise of the Kihami forces was marked by an event that took place at the beginning of the 20th century as people from Hehe and Ngoni tribes became afflicted by Kihami spirits during an epidemic. These were descendants of the Ndendeuli, Ngindo, Mdamba, Mbunga, Ndwewe and Nbwene. At the time of the spirit epidemic the German invasion had taken place and people were suffering from various social and economic constraints (see 2.1).

The Ndwewe tribe played a very particular role in the onset of the Kihami epidemic. Formerly the Ndwewe were a hunting- and gathering tribe and lived around a place called Ilongihola, situated between Mahenge and Mitimbira village, Ulanga district. The Ndwewe, like the Nbwene and the Ngindo worshipped nature forces. They communicated with the spirit world by means of large drumlike objects, called mikiri (lit. pounders in Kiswahili). The legend goes that around 1800 the elders requested the ancestors to communicate with them more directly so as to protect the community. For this purpose, the ancestors sent the Kihami spirits that could temporarily possess members of the Ndwewe community. As the Ndwewe tribe merged with the Hehe and Ngoni tribes in the twentieth century, the Kihami spirits began to possess an increasing number of people, some of who became official mediums. Also, among their offspring, a number of persons became a medium for the Kihami. Each of them developed special skills to protect people from the abuse of elimu dunia or 'the science of the world' which refers to the negative usage of witchcraft and sorcery. With the rise of the Kihami spirits, not only did the role and function of the Wabuyi specialists change, new (alien) spirits entered the realm of spirit healing.

Kihami mediums or healers combine Kihami inspiration with inspiration coming from other inland (nature, lineage or territorial) spirits or coastal spirits. The different sources of their inspiration are reflected in their behaviour, their speech, their power objects, and their songs. To all these healers the Kihami spirits form a special group. Those of a high degree bring magical and healing knowledge and skills for the good of the community at large. Those of a low degree seek an alliance and may serve for the good of the family of the medium. The most respected Kihami (tutelary) spirit group is named Nambembele.

11.1 Introduction to the healers

Among the Kihami healers with a national reputation are three women. Their working names are Kilimbiti, Kalembwana and Nangonyani and their practices are situated around a village called Malinyi, in the south of Morogoro bordering Ruvuma region. The area is primarily populated with the Pogoro. Nangonyani is still alive, but Kilimbiti and Kalembwana passed away some years ago. I had explored the possibil-
ity of doing elaborate research with Kalembwana, but this appeared problematic due to her age. Another difficulty was that she ran a seasonal practice. Malinyi area lay in the middle of flat countryside, which was flooded in the rainy season to allow for the cultivation of rice. Access could be difficult in these periods. As a consequence, people who wished to see Kalembwana had to meet her in the dry season.

During my stay in Iringa and Ruvuma region in 1998 and 1999, I tried to find other *pepo* healers with *Kihami* spirits. I reported to the cultural officers of the central district in Songea and Iringa town. Since the officers did not differentiate *pepo* healers, they had no idea which healer worked with *Kihami* spirits. In fact, they had never heard of the *Kihami*. As I was roaming around these areas in the company of an officer to search and visit popular practices, we found that three healers were much in demand, each inspired by *Kihami* spirits. Two were male and one was female. During the six months I studied these three healers, I was able to investigate the various aspects that are involved in *Kihami* inspiration and vocation.

The information I present concerning the *Kihami* healers will begin with Kalembwana, and is based on my visit with her in 1995 complemented and verified with information from Maia Green (1994: 24-45). This is followed by the life and practice of a male *Kihami* healer by the name of Alberto Kalovela. Both healers work primarily with inland spirits. The two other *Kihami* healers combine their work with coastal spirits, and therefore distinguish themselves in several ways from the healers Kalembwana and Alberto. I have chosen to present these healers on-line in an audio-visual presentation, because my recordings of them allow the reader to experience the way music intercedes with spirit manifestations in the healer as well as the clients. In addition, it illustrates the performance of the annual *Kihami* celebration, a rare event of which little is known. The presentation concerns the practice of a male healer, Joram Rupia, and a female healer, Asia Fusi. Both healers practice in Songea district, Ruvuma region (see 1.5 and 1.6).

11.2 The practice of Kalembwana

11.2.1 The setting and the historical background

Kalembwana, whose paternal family name is Magungu, was born around 1890 in Ipinde, 20 miles away from Malinyi, Kilombero district (Morogoro region). This area has a mixed population of Pogoro, Ngoni, Ndamba and Bena. In 1935, when Kalembwana was about 45 years old, she and many other people of her tribe, the Mdamba from Ulanga district, became afflicted by the *Kihami* during the spirit epidemic (see introduction). Some of Kalembwana’s relatives were among them. For nearly ten years Kalembwana suffered from madness and painful limbs until she accepted to work for the *Kihami* as a healer. Kalembwana was the only one among her
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In the beginning of Kalembwana's career she was an assistant of the female healer Kilimbiti (see 11.1) who was her tutor. After being widowed around 1950, Kalembwana began a practice of her own at Ihowanja which evolved into a huge healing camp, situated not far from her place of birth.

In September 1995, I took the bus to Malinyi village, eight miles from her camp at Ihowanja. Special buses came from Morogoro mainly filled with clients for Kalembwana. Close relatives of Kalembwana, who ran a guesthouse, lodged those who arrived late in the afternoon, like me. The next day people either walked to Kalembwana's healing compound, or like me, found transport by bicycle. Even when it was not rainy season, the trip by bike took about 90 minutes including two river crossings by canoes. As I entered the healing camp, I found a signboard with Kalembwana's name and a number of regulations by which people were allowed to stay in the camp. I soon learned that hundreds of people from different ethnicities from all over the country were present. To cope with the continuing flow of people Kalembwana had the cooperation of her entire family who had built large cooking spaces, dormitories and shops with essentials, like locally produced rice, maize, (soy) beans and cassava. Visitors who remained for treatment slept outside in open shelters, or slept in the houses of Kalembwana's close relatives living next to her. At all times, men, women and children remained in separate spaces.

Being unable to perform and organize the rituals herself due to her age, Kalembwana had appointed her grandson Shaibu Magungu to be her main assistant. Shaibu worked as an official with the Ministry of Natural Resources in Dar es Salaam. Upon my arrival, Shaibu told me that his grandmother was resting and that she had left him in charge to see me. That morning, she had received a message from the spirits announcing the arrival of a European lady.110 Later, after we had spoken for several hours, I was shown around the camp and was able to witness several ritual interventions to expose and counter-act witchcraft. Shaibu was assisted by several relatives to perform the daily *Kihami* rituals. The description below about the expertise of Kalembwana reflects not only the high esteem that Shaibu, her grandson, had for her powers, it also explains why she had an appeal to so many people. He said about her:

Kalembwana (*bibi*) is familiar with all the secrets regarding witchcraft even if each tribe has a different way of doing it. The *Kihami* ritual is an intervention that works for everybody. It is believed to be highly protective, as it works like a shield to ward off unseen danger. Besides this, she gives separate treatments to deal with individual complaints. She always finds a cure, no matter how bad! She also has powerful medicines to see witches. If you come again she will prepare them for you to convince yourself of their existence. These witches rub themselves with a special ointment to become invisible. You will recognize

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110 After I had introduced myself with a letter from the district office I was allowed to record information about Kalembwana's life and work.
them immediately because they walk around naked. My grandmother does not need these medicines to recognize a witch, the Kihami expose them through her. As soon as she identifies a witch the Kihami take away his/her powers. No harm can come to my grandmother.

As Kalembwan a started to practice around 1950 under the guidance of the Kihami forces, they transmitted knowledge to her about herbal remedies to treat all kinds of mental and physical problems, in particular barrenness and infertility. These medicines too were considered powerful, because the Kihami gave them their blessing. A few years later Kalembwan a was instructed by a specific group of Kihami spirits, the Kahungura, to perform the traditional kunyolewa (to be shaved) rituals. The process involved a rite of passage to suppress the powers of witches and to protect possible victims against bewitchment, which I will describe below.

11.2.2 Kunyolewa rituals

In the shaving ritual (vitendo vya kunyolewa), everybody would receive the same treatment. Before being shaved, separate groups of children, women and men had to dress in used cloths that were dirtied by their own sweat. The old cloths were laid on a huge pile that later was set on fire. The dress restrictions were associated with going to a sacred shrine, suggesting sanctioned practice. By wearing ‘traditional’ clothing, worn in the time of the ancestors, the wearers were aligning themselves with the ancestors and the past. After being shaved by formal assistants, the clients sat down in separate rows of men, women or children to be touched by a sacred Kihami knife, so as to be purified of any malevolent powers that enabled witchcraft. According to Shaibu, people were afraid that these powers came from a substance that was secretly mixed in food or drinks. Though this was hardly ever the case, it could be that a substance was inherited or passed on by magical means. Whatever was the cause, when witchcraft substances were contained in the body of a person, s/he would fall down asleep upon the touch of this knife. If this happened, the knife would be immediately placed on the stomach so that the person would throw up the witchcraft substance. After the knife had detected any witchcraft substances, it was cleansed with special medicines to prevent ‘contamination’. There were several sacred knives in use for the ritual.

To witness this ritual process, I was requested to dress solely in a traditional cloth. I watched how the assistants applied herbal medicines, in the form of a paste, to peoples’ heads in a cross from forehead to the back of the head, and from ear to ear. This was not to be washed off. As the assistants applied the paste, they cursed the clients in Ndweve, the language by which the Kihami spirits continue to speak. The curse was meant to prevent the clients from using witchcraft in the future. Most people did not understand Ndweve language, but it was something like: ‘let he who return to witchcraft be killed by a snake’ or ‘God will see him and take his life’. Each client had brought along a chicken and some maize flour that was used to prepare a mixture with
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herbs. Victims were encouraged by the assistants to clear their conscience while taking in the mixture to cleanse the body of ‘bad’ elements. Afterwards, the assistants added water to the paste and sprinkled this over the victim’s body. In addition, everybody was given a mixture of herbal medicine to drink for protection. By mid-afternoon the ritual would be finished. Upon departure, the clients were given a note. The note said Kunyolewa kwa Kalembwana (Shaved by Kalembwana) serving to help lift the suspicion of witchcraft at home or at work. Whenever persons had more specific physical or mental complaints, Kalembwana would invite them to remain for individual treatment.

In the practice of Kalembwana, assistant relatives recorded the names of people coming for treatment. Clients paid some money for the rituals, of which a part was to pay for the assistants, and another part to buy local beer as an offering for the Kihami spirits. Coins in-kind would be laid aside for the annual Kihami celebration (tambiko ya Kihami). At that occasion, Kalembwana offered the coins to all territorial spirits, being the Kihami and ancient ancestors that resided in the vicinity. Usually the celebration was carried out in a rocky area or around caves where spirits were said to dwell. Here, Kalembwana would ask for the protection of the spirits on behalf of all those people she had ritually cleansed from witchcraft. Furthermore, she would request to receive blessings for all those living in the area and to receive sufficient rains for prosperous yields in the way Wabuyi specialists did in the old kingdoms. For clients who suffered illness or misfortune due to a breach of taboo within the lineage, a black cloth (kaniki), some locally brewed beer, or a chicken would be given during a special ceremony addressing the Kihami.

To bring about good results with kunyolewa, Kalembwana followed food restrictions. She was not allowed to eat eggs (mayai), papaya (papai) and catfish (kambare). Ever since she was allowed to perform the ritual of kunyolewa, she abstained from sexual intercourse. She had to remain pure if she was to purify her clients. Clients too had to abide by Kihami regulations during their treatment. Following the camp regulations, they had to walk barefoot and abstain from alcoholic drinks and sex during treatment. Furthermore, clients were not allowed to move freely in Kalembwana’s compound. They had to use the same path by which they had first entered and they were not to give or receive fire from outside the compound. This restriction served to mark the separation of those inside and outside the compound. In fact, by not wearing shoes and not having sex or alcoholic drinks in the protected setting, was a way to point back to an idealized ‘traditional’ morality, sanctioned by the spirits. Within the compound, and on the day of the ritual itself, the separation of men and women replicated the everyday separation of the sexes. This separation was commonly marked in public events but also in rites of passage. In funerals and marriages, for instance, people would sit in separate sex groups, usually at opposite sides.
11.2.3 Considerations

My visit to Kalembwana puzzled me in a number of ways. First, I wondered if *kunyolewa* was a witchcraft ordeal, and if so, had it existed for a long time. Second, I wondered if other healers performed the *kunyolewa* rituals also, or, if Kalembwana had gained a monopoly on this ritual.

I found some answers in a study by M. Green (1994: 23-45) who wrote an article on the eradication of witchcraft by the healer Kalembwana. In her opinion, *kunyolewa* is not explicitly a witchcraft ordeal, although there are elements of an ordeal in it. Witches who still ‘remember’ their medicines are said to die on their way home due to Kalembwana’s curse. The same thing happens if they return to witchcraft at a later stage. M. Green mentions that she checked records from the British colonial period indicating that witches were ‘shaved’ in Ulanga as early as 1932 by the offspring of Magungu. In other words, other relatives in the paternal family of Kalembwana had already anticipated her as a medium for the *Kihami* spirits. In so doing, they contributed for a long time to keep peace in the local communities. Apparently, the *Kihami* spirit epidemic in 1935 (see 11.2) that victimized Kalembwana, and also many others, was a response to the emergence of witchcraft nationwide which demanded some form of control.

During my visit I had asked Shaibu’s opinion of why so many people from various ethnic backgrounds and distant locations came to Kalembwana instead of going to local indigenous healers. According to Shaibu, many people were uncertain about which healer to trust. Over the years, Kalembwana had exposed a number of healers practicing witchcraft. Next to exposing a large number of people, Kalembwana had also traced many artefacts directed for evil intent. Shaibu further explained to me that only a small percentage of all clients actually react to the touch of the *Kihami* knife. Mostly the ritual serves to take away anxiety in people who fear bewitchment or who are accused of witchcraft. To Shaibu, the value of the ritual is founded in clearing the conscience of the clients. Accusations of witchcraft, he said, are a strong means of manipulating each other, thereby suppressing development in the community. He regretted to say that sorcery and poisonous medicines are used out of jealousy or greed, wasting the lives of so many people. Children, he said, often grow up with such practices. Later, they often take after their parents. Upon Kalembwana’s death in 1996, when Shaibu took full charge of the rituals, he realized that his role and the continuation of the rituals had become uncertain. He would have to become possessed and instructed by the *Kihami* to bless the *kunyolewa* rituals.
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Over the years, various people had requested Kalembwana, and later Shaibu, to receive instructions how to perform the kunyolewa rituals. The Kihami spirit group Kahungura that guided Kalembwana, do not allow just anybody to perform the rituals. Without their blessings (madua), Shaibu said, the ritual would not be effective to reveal witches and stop them from using their powers. Before I visited Kalembwana, in 1994, I had met Farafara Moyo. This male healer also performed the kunyolewa rites and attracted many people to his healing compound in Songea district. During my visit Farafara Moyo told me that he had been trained by Kalembwana to perform the rituals. This followed after Kalembwana had helped him in the treatment of a healing call, some years earlier. Once Farafara Moyo started his own practice, not Kalembwana, but his famous sister the Kihami healer Nangonyani, passed him the blessings of the Kahungura spirit group. Nangonyani practiced not very far from Kalembwana in Mahenge district. Nyangonani worked with the Kihami spirit group Makendura that are specialists in divination. According to Shaibu, Kalembwana had not trained Farafara Moyo in the kunyolewa rituals since he did not have the guidance and blessings of the Kihami spirits Kahungura. Nobody can pass their guidance or their blessings on to another person, he maintained, not even Kalembwana or Nangonyani. At the time, I could not know who spoke the truth. Yet when I came back to visit the practice of Farafara Moyo in 1997, I learned from his wife that he had suddenly passed away without any clear signs of illness. According to spirit healers in the area where Farafara Moyo practiced, the Kihami spirits were behind his death. They had been offended because he had performed the rituals without their blessings and for personal gain only.

According to M. Green (1994) Kalembwana was widely recognized by the rural population as the government doctor (mganga wa serikali) because of the involvement of the local government administration in the witchcraft procedure. The support of Kalembwana by the district office encouraged people from all over the country to consult her. Given the fact that the kunyolewa rituals were so successful, why were only Kalembwana and Nangonyani authorized by the Kihami spirits to perform them? Did the national reputation of Kalembwana, and to a lesser extent that of Nangonyani, mean that other healers with Kihami spirits were not as capable as these two women? Besides, how did these other Kihami healers deal with problems of witchcraft and sorcery? These were some of the questions that I wanted to answer. The fact that I could not pursue an in-depth study with Kalembwana because of her age and the difficulty to communicate with her had motivated me to look for other healers guided by Kihami spirits. One of these healers was Alberto Kalovela.

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111 I met his wife at this occasion. She told me that all their riches had vanished after his death. Assistants had abandoned the practice immediately out of fear of the Kihami.
11.3 The practice of Alberto Kalovelula

Alberto Kalovelula is a Mhehe with Mbunga and Mbuye ancestry originating from Ulanga district, Morogoro region. His reputation extends up to the surrounding regions. Alberto lives together with his 6 wives and 13 children, and his mother, in the healing compound that is situated in Himbo, high up in the mountains of Kilolo district, Iringa region. The facilities at Alberto’s compound are very basic. Patients and their relatives usually sleep in one of the houses that Alberto has built for his wives and children. Several huts serve for cooking and patients or visitors often sleep there as well. For six weeks, from March to April 1999, my partner and I have lived in a house opposite Alberto’s compound. He had recently built this brick house for guests and offered us the house for the duration of our stay. If there were no special guests, patients would be sheltered there too. As it was the rainy season not many people came for treatment which had to do with seasonal situations. Generally, if treatment is not urgent, people tend to postpone a consultation with a healer until after the major agricultural activities. Those who need help more urgently come on weekends. A few male ex-patients were around to assist Alberto. They have been under treatment with him and now help him as token of their gratitude. Let me begin to outline the historical background to Alberto’s healing career.

11.3.1 Onset of an ancestral vocation

Alberto Kalovelula inherited the Kihami spirits from his paternal grandfather, Mwagawike, who was a spirit healer. Coming from a family of healers, he was destined to follow their footsteps. Mwagawike had taught Alberto’s father and sister about the use of plants and how this could help people. Alberto’s father later became a lineage herbalist until he died in 1995. His sister became a respected midwife and for many years she also had been responsible for circumcisions and initiations for girls in the community.112 During my stay in 1999, she was still active as a midwife at 78 years old. Neither Alberto’s father, nor his aunt, ever encountered spiritual problems during their life. In the case of Alberto this was quite the opposite. Alberto explains how his parents became aware of his healing heritage in the following way:

I was born with an adult belly button (kitumvi kimekoma) which indicated that I had inherited an old skill of the family (kwambukiza na uneso ya kizamani). This warned my parents about my prospects. When I went to school I was often under the influence of spirits resulting in feelings of lightness (hakiri ilihawa mwepesi sana). Consequently I could not easily learn. I was not troubled physically at the time, though strange events would take place. Either way I could not finish secondary school and once I returned home I started to help out my father.

112 Today circumcisions for girls are not held anymore, but occasionally women request Alberto’s aunt to cut away the outer labia. They believe it reduces the chance of sexual and reproductive ailments.
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Alberto was born in 1962 as the seventh child of Kalovela. His father worked as a farmer and herbalist, mostly helping people from his own community suffering from various ailments. Upon birth, Alberto's mother had blood in her milk. She had already lost three children and so it was decided that Alberto be brought to the nearest Italian mission so as to give him a sufficient chance to survive his first year. He remained longer than envisaged and was subsequently baptized with the name Alberto. After a few years, his father brought him back home to attend to the cattle. From 1972 to 1979 Alberto went to primary school. In that period, his father instructed him about medicines of the field or madawa ya miti shamba. Together they would collect them and Alberto would be eager to know what to do with them. By the time he was 16 years old, Alberto left home looking for a job. For some time he worked as a labourer for the government after which he decided to join the army. In 1982, when he had just joined the army in Zanzibar, he suddenly collapsed. He explains how this happened:

After I had been in Tanga region learning to become a carpenter, I left for Zanzibar to join the army. Seven months later I started having strange dreams. For instance I repeatedly saw how a part of me went up walking in the sky. As I awoke the next morning I could not stand up my feet. One of these days I got lost. I was drawn to a small lake unaware of what happened to me. Later I woke up besides the lake holding a particular fruit in my hand which I had never seen before. Someone accompanied me to the hospital because I felt very unstable. Nothing could be found to be wrong with me so I went back to work. A few days later, during an army training, I collapsed and lost consciousness for a few hours. At night, as I woke up, I started to hit everything that was around. I also took off my clothes and for days I walked around naked not allowing anyone to come near me. Clearly this was the end of my army training.

Once Alberto had calmed down he returned home. His father had proposed making offerings to the ancestors and consulting traditional healers. One was the famous Kihami healer Kalembwana (see 11.2). Alberto learned from Kalembwana that his attack had come about under the influence of his grandfather Mwagawike, who wanted Alberto to continue his work. Mwagawike himself had been 'taken hold of' by the Kihami at the time the spirit epidemic took place, as had happened to Kalembwana. She further told Alberto that his ancestors had repeatedly tried to warn him in dreams not to resist his calling. A few months after his visit to Kalembwana, Alberto went back to Ulanga district to work in road construction. Three months later he had another spirit seizure. As he explains:

I was forced to enter the lake convinced that strong powers were awaiting me there. As I disappeared in the water I encountered beings that told me my life would be successful if I accepted to become a healer like my grandfather. Also, they endowed me with several iron objects that had special powers. The objects once had been in use as tools by my ancestors. They also gave me several black cloths to wear. Actually, I came out of the lake dressed in the black cloths and covered with all kinds of strange artefacts (walipampamba na mambo za ajabu). In this way they wanted to make sure that I was going to experience their powerful presence.
Though impressed by the event, Alberto was reluctant to accept his healing career. Instead, he attempted to escape from the calling by making offerings to appease the ancestor spirits. When this did not help, he sought refuge at the religious healing churches. Instead of finding a solution, Alberto began to suffer from more problems. Besides emaciation and confusion, he had severe pains in the chest and the head, suffered from a skin disease, and lost his hair. His deteriorating state compelled him to seek help from a traditional Mbunga healer in Ilula, Iringa district. When I visited this healer during my stay with Alberto in April 1999, he confirmed to me how confused and emaciated Alberto was at the time. After several months of treatment, Alberto was instructed by his grandfather to go to a sacred mountain near his home area, called Yamwele. If he went there and vowed to the ancestors that he would consent to become a healer, he would recover. Alberto promised to go, but soon abandoned his promise. Once he returned home, Alberto became increasingly ill. His resistance had as much to do with his trust in Christian faith, as with his decision to become a military-man. Many of his predecessors had been active in tribal and colonial wars (see chapter 2).

After an internal struggle of two more years, Alberto returned to the healer in Ilula and told him he was ready to accept his calling. From that moment onwards he gradually started to regain weight and to have control over his senses. In the process of recovery, Alberto trained himself well. He stayed with several Kihami healers to learn their magical skills. In 1985, at the age of 23, Alberto started a modest healing practice in Ulanga district, Morogoro region. To give him strength in the beginning of his career, Alberto needed to use the various artefacts that were given to him by the spirits during his encounter in the lake.

In 1990, Alberto returned to his home village. Upon instruction by his spirits, he was to start a practice in the mountains that lay above his homestead. This would become his permanent healing practice. The location faced the holy mountain Yamwele, so as to remind him constantly of the presence of his forefathers. During tribal and colonial wars, the mountain had been a place of refuge for his predecessors of whom so many could not escape anymore. The first three years of his practice at home, Alberto primarily helped people with witchcraft problems, including people who were accused of being witches and were unaware of having such powers. Gradually, people came to see him in great numbers. Alberto made them attend the kunyolewa cleansing rituals which he performed in a similar way as Kalembwanu did. He did so, according to him, with the blessings of the Kihami spirits. Alberto also provided his clients afterwards with a note that stated the performance of the rituals at his premises. Alberto was well compensated by his clients for the kunyolewa rites. This allowed him to become an influential man in the community. Three years later, in 1993, the government officials of
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Iringa district intervened with the kunyolewa rites as they considered them to be illegal. Since people kept coming to see him for this purpose, Alberto began to introduce different magical interventions while he intensified the use of specific medicines for protection and counter-action of witchcraft and sorcery.

In sum, though Alberto had wanted to follow a different pathway in his life, this was made impossible to him. By accepting his ancestral calling, however, Alberto became a proud man who enjoyed his special skills and his position as a witchdoctor (mganga ya uchawi). To address his multiple skills he would also be called in Kiheme, malagusi (diviner in plural valagusi) or mukofi (medicine man in plural vakofi). In spite of his healing role, Alberto continued to show his initial passion as a military man by walking around in military clothes wherever he went. Nothing reminded anymore of the long period of suffering in his life. People around the area feared him and when they called him a ‘witchdoctor’ (mganga wa uchawi) they did so to place emphasis on his knowledge of magic. Alberto considered himself, however, as a keeper and a guardian of the good old ways. When he applied magic it was with respect to the traditional rules of the Mbunga and Mbuye ancestors. As the spirit forces had well integrated in his body and mind, he did not need the use of adornments anymore to invoke guidance of the Kihami spirits.

11.3.2 Treatment of natural and spiritual disorders

In Alberto’s practice, up to twenty people could await consultation early in the morning. According to the situation, Alberto used divination (kupiga ramli or kupiga bao), songs (wimbo), prayers (maombi) and ceremonial offerings (matambiko). Alberto treated a variety of natural and spiritual complaints. In the first case, people came to seek treatment for abdominal and respiratory complaints, while others came to consult him about sexual or reproductive problems. For a wide range of internal problems, Alberto used the Kihehe disease concept limlungu. He described limlungu as a disease caused by malfunctioning of the bile (nyongo), but he also associated limlungu with ancestral spirits (pepo ya mizimu). To Alberto, bile symbolized the bitter and strong powers in the afflicted caused by ancestors. He knew of a variety of limlungu disorders. For instance, there was limlungu lukwale (frenzied madness), and limlungu litawanga (inflammation of the lungs). After clients had described their complaints to him, Alberto would have a short conversation with them to draw his conclusions. If he had a remote feeling that the matter was more complex, he would perform a divination.

113 Ramli also uramli is Swahili and derived from the Arab words ramel, meaning divination, bao refers to a board used for a certain kind of divination in use by some coastal healers. Kupiga ramli or bao refers to the act of divination or the verb ‘to divine’.

114 I also refer to an article on Hehe medicine by Dr. Weck in Tanzania Notes and Records, No. 70, July 1969.
When Alberto suspected a spiritual cause, he would propose his clients to listen to what the spirits had to say. Divination was carried out in a special room in his house. Clients would be seated in a space separated by a wall, while Alberto explained to the clients what the cause of the problem(s) was and what could be done about it. While Alberto invoked the attention of the spirits he made several sounds, in particular a beautiful whistling sound. As Alberto would call on his guiding spirits, he would first mention the name of his grandfather Mwagawike, followed by the names of two chiefs who were the ancient forefathers of the tribes to which he belongs. These were Kimbunga and Kimbuye. Alberto further received guidance from over fifty territorial male and female spirits of respected chiefs, diviners and healers. The most frequently stated names of spirits were: Nyamkinga (Kingga), Mpandawego (Pangwa), Limbiruka (Mbuye), Mwondole (Hehe), Mugohadanda (Bungwa), Kilimbiti (Ndamba) the former tutor of healer Kalembwana, Nyamlima (Ngindo) and Ngulumbile (Ndwewe). During divinations, Alberto remained conscious and spoke directly with his clients. This was not always the way he divined. In the beginning of his career, he would be in a state of possession during divination. For this purpose, he needed the help of trained assistants who understood the language of the spirits and could translate it for the clients.

Once it was established what to do, Alberto would order his assistants to prepare one or more remedies of plant medicine(s). Generally, the assistants collected the commonly used plants. Special (magical) plants were only known to Alberto and gathered by him alone. Natural complaints were treated with a variety of plants composed of small parts of roots and bark packed into a bundle. These bundles were called *madawa za kisa*, literally ‘medicines to treat the alleged cause’ (see 10.3). The mixture of roots and bark had to be boiled in water and be taken as an oral medicine to purify the vital organs. In addition, one or more powders from dried plant parts could be given to clients. When infertility medicines were given, Alberto spoke of *madawa za ugumba*, literally ‘medicines to strengthen the reproductive organs’. His knowledge of plants was extensive and I learned from various people that they were very effective. Once, I was able to test Alberto’s remedies with an astonishingly positive result (see 4.6). For several weeks I had been suffering from a parasitic intestinal disease, called ‘giardia lamblia’ for which I had repeatedly applied modern drugs, without any success. As a consequence, I had lost weight and a great deal of fluid. Alberto gave me his *madawa za kisa* together with two powders. One powder served as a purgative that I had to repeat two times. I just needed a teaspoon of the powder to which I added a cup of water. The other powder was taken two times a day, also in a teaspoon with water, to combat the parasitic infection. I got rid of the complaints within three days, never to be troubled again. When I asked Alberto to identify the plants I had collected earlier with other healers, he succeeded without hesitation and added quite a number of other plants to the list.
Besides the herbal remedies, Alberto used magical remedies to treat spiritual afflictions. According to Alberto, various types of spirit powers could bring a spiritual intrusion. He used the concept of *mbepo* (Kihehe) in case people suffered from sudden mental confusion or epileptic fits.  

Alberto said that the Hehe identify eleven types of *mbepo* disorders:

- **Mbepo laika**: Madness caused by ancestral intrusion as a sudden response of *jinji lisoka* (Kihehe for *pepo ya mzimu* while *laika* refers to the angel-like nature or ancestral spirits who mean no harm but only wish to warn the offspring)
- **Mbepo ndeko**: Madness caused by paternal ancestors that is passed on by birth as in a state of coldness or *baridi* (in Kihehe *luleko*)
- **Mbepo kichaa**: A spontaneous attack of madness caused by spirit forces in cases of a state of coldness in the lineage
- **Mbepo lisaliko**: Inheritance of bad spirits from preceding generations through sorcery
- **Mbepo jini**: A sudden case of spirit possession as result of a curse or a spell, resulting in the disappearance of a person who then remains in a pool, at sea, or in the forest
- **Mbepo upepo**: Living dead who bring nuisance as in a state of coldness, primarily giving symptoms of a swollen belly, sudden loss of consciousness, and epileptic fits
- **Mbepo kichaa kilaluwe**: Madness as a result of witchcraft resulting in loss of memory and considered the most severe form of madness, also *kichaa kikali*
- **Mbepo lubapula**: The use of hallucinogens given secretly in food or drink results in a distorted view of the reality. This may happen in combination with *mbepo kichaa* and *mbepo kilaluwe*
- **Mbepo lyang’ombe**: Affliction that brings lack of breath or sudden fits of coldness
- **Mbepo imang’enyanga**: An affliction that causes constant sleep
- **Mbepo lidete**: Severe tensions in the body, trembling and/or infection of the bladder with blood in the urine.

Though Alberto identified variations in *mbepo* disorders, these were in fact like serious cases of *ugonjwa ya pepo* (spirit illness) and often connected to *baridi*. Clients suffering from *mbepo* illness had to go through a special ritual on a sacred location in the compound. It consisted of ‘public’ and a ‘secret’ area. In the public area, one could see several old iron objects (*chuma cha kale*) stuck into the ground while large bundles of roots and bark were piled together on a side table. According to Alberto, the iron ob-

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115 See also Edgerton in the Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 27, 1971, that deals with notions of *mbepo* held by a traditional Hehe psychiatrist.
jects originated from Ulanga district. His guiding spirits had pointed these objects out to him during the first years of his healing practice in Ulanga district. Over the years, Alberto had also confiscated a number of artefacts that had been in use for the purpose of evil magic. He had traced these objects with the help of his guiding spirits. These objects were piled together in the secret area of the ritual compound that resembled an ancestral grove. After he had purified the objects with the blessings of his spirits, they served as power objects.

The most regular remedy for mpebo consisted of ‘the pot of ancient times’ (chungu cha kale) which was basically a large metal cooking pot filled with magical objects and plant ingredients. Assistants would fill the large pot with water to which they added several iron artefacts\(^\text{116}\) (chuma cha kale) and a large bundle of roots (madawa za kisa). In addition, the blood and the spine of a sacrificed chicken were added. The parts of the chicken symbolized the most vital parts in the victim. This was an act of sympathetic magic (see 3.4). Eventually, the magical remedy was put on a fire for hours while Alberto mediated the blessings (madua) from the ancestors repeatedly. This procedure would reinforce the success of the ritual. Once the remedy was considered ready, it was used for steaming, drinking and bathing to drive away all bad spirit powers in and around the victim.

In other instances of spirit affliction, Alberto would identify inland nature spirits (mapepo ya bara). To emphasize the bad nature of certain spirits, Alberto referred to them as jini instead of pepo. Among these were pagan spirits (majini kafiri) and uncivilized spirits (jini ya kishemzi). Mostly these spirits were sent intentionally either by an act of sorcery or by the ancestors, to punish a person for an injustice. The nature spirits were symbolized with the colours black and red. Black indicated a connection with the ancestors who wore black cloths in former generations, called kariki (see chapter 9 and 10). Red indicated the wild nature of pagan spirits, some of which were associated with aggression and fighting. As in the case of mbepo disorders, Alberto applied a variety of the medicines that had an association with the disorder, or the spirit that interfered with a person. For instance, there were madawa za jini Moto (medicines of the ‘fire spirit’) to remedy sores all over the body making a person feel like being on fire, or madawa za jini Mahaba (medicines of the ‘love spirit’) to remedy a viral infection of the genitals. This affliction could affect men while they were copulating. Besides the specific medicines for each spirit type, Alberto used a general medicine to cure the symptoms from uncivilized spirits (dawa za jini kishemzi). Pagan or uncivilized spirits typical of Hehe territory were Kipangwa from Upangwa area, and Zuku and Mutu from

\(^{116}\) Iron rust is known too for its mineral properties and as such an ancient medicine, something that Dr. Weck (1969) recorded as being general knowledge among Hehe healers.
Iringa area. Other popular spirits were *jini Kinyamkera* originally from Dodoma (see 3.6 and 3.7), and *jini Inyavalunga*, causing people to break their bones. Also, coastal spirits could be sent to harm people on purpose. Occasionally, spirits could bring instant death or misery after appearing to a person.

Once in a while, Alberto suggested the performance of a musical healing session, with the purpose of invoking inland or coastal pagan spirits (*majini kishenzi*). Two instruments could accompany the singing and handclapping, respectively the Hehe drum (*ndutsi*) and the local xylophone (*marimba*). For coastal spirits, only the drum was used, sometimes accompanied by Arab mystical songs named *dhikr* (see 3.7) As soon as the spirit announced itself, Alberto would ask who had sent it and/or why it had afflicted the person. When it concerned a spirit who had been sent on purpose, Alberto would order it back to the sender with the help of a magical remedy. Sometimes the pagan spirits manifested aggressive behaviour. In Alberto’s practice, I never saw inland or coastal pagan (inferior) spirits inspire the afflicted to find curative medicines or to help a person in pain as happened in Nambela’s or Jeremana’s practice (part 2 and 3). Alberto told me that he had seen this happen one or twice during his career. In that case, it concerned clients who had a healing spirit.

11.3.3 Injustice and witchcraft, magic and sorcery
Alberto attracted a good number of people who suffered from the consequences of crimes - mainly robbery and violence - and were seeking justice. The clients were accompanied to the secret grove next to the ritual compound. The grove functioned much like a shrine as it was considered a symbolic graveyard of the ancestors. This was also the place where Alberto kept the various power objects. The secret grove was said to be a tribute to the Hehe ancestors who had played an important role in history, be it as a healer, a priest, or a chief. The clients had to enter the secret grove at one side and leave at another, which reminded me of the pathways on Kalembwana’s compound (see 11.2). Next to the power objects, the tiny forest consisted of (musical) instruments to call upon the spirits. Each musical object, notably a cowbell, a rattle, a bottle and a whistle, would refer to a specific spirit that was called for a particular problem. I always enjoyed hearing the musical sounds coming from the forest that lay opposite my temporary home. Often, this began early in the morning.

On several occasions, I was able to witness the procedures of these magical rituals. Usually an assistant of Alberto addressed the spirit forces, while the client kneeled
down in the middle of the grove’s pathway. An object closely related to the wrongs that had bestowed the client would be dug into the ground at a specific spot. Simultaneously, the client spoke aloud of his/her grievances. In this way, the client requested the spirits to intervene and ‘catch’ the person who had done evil (kushika mtu mbaya). According to Alberto, the spirit would soon frighten the evildoer with strange noises and occurrences (mambo ajabi). They would then come to the evildoer in dreams and give directions on how to end the frights, pointing to Alberto as their intermediary where they could confess their crime. Alberto called these performances vitendo la zamani or ‘the ancient acts’. Regularly, persons came to consult Alberto in reaction to the frights caused by the vitendo la zamani. They implored Alberto to help them and were prepared to show resentment. Mostly, they were males. After their confession to the spirits in the forest, they promised to compensate the victim(s). According to Alberto, persons who had used witchcraft would be exposed immediately by falling unconscious or by suffering from acute pain. These persons would be taken to the river for ritual cleansing. The confessions of crimes were written down by Alberto so as to show the police that he was requested to handle the matter. A signature or declaration of the thief or witch sealed the affair. In this manner, the spirits, through Alberto, not only rendered services to individual victims, but also to the law. With Alberto dressed in his military costume, his commanding posture and his low voice, he easily succeeded in impressing people. Due to this personality and the strong spiritual guidance he received, he was no match for anyone.

Alberto’s firm ways of handling matters of injustice also appealed to people who sought help in cases of intra-lineage witchcraft (uchawi ya ukoo). Witchcraft could be inherited by blood, whereas sorcery happened through ownership of magical artefacts or by having magical skills. In the first case, persons could be unaware of having this power whereas in the second case the person could consciously use the artefacts or skills to bestow evil on others (see 3.4 and 6.3). If one or more members of a family were accused of witchcraft, Alberto said there was mazingara, literally ‘a state of bewitchment’ (see 10.3). In such situations, a whole family could experience the consequences of mazingara. Alberto would usually visit their homes to place protective medicine in the ground around the house or the land. The procedure was called kuzindika nyumba, literally ‘to bury a protective shield’ (see 10.3). The shield contained a charm (hirizi) made of plant material to ward off evil spirits. Furthermore, Alberto applied aromatic plants that spread an odour via steam to expel any bad forces that surrounded the victims of bewitchment. It could also be that a family requested Alberto to take stronger measures, in which case he invited all relatives for a reunion of his compound.
Once I witnessed a reunion at Alberto’s compound of a family who requested him to act against *mazingara*. A grandmother, who was an old blind woman, was accused of having inherited witchcraft and of using magical artefacts that she kept in a box in the woods. Most of her children were worried that she possessed a substance in her belly that enabled her to hurt them. The box with magical items had belonged to her grandmother’s father who had been a witch in the old times (*mchawi ya kale*). The grandmother first maintained that she was ignorant of the powers the items contained. From the gathering it appeared that she had often gone to a secret place in the woods to pray to her great grandfather to set a curse in motion. This succeeded because the ancestors had withdrawn their protection of the family a long time ago. For many generations, members of the extended family had breached codes of conduct by performing witchcraft and sorcery. This had created *baridi* (a state of coldness) in the family. The extended family requested Alberto to do what was needed to deactivate the powers of the grandmother. Alberto proposed the family carry out a ritual of purification in the sacred location of his compound. The ritual act would help to purify themselves of any witchcraft substance in their bodies and would stop the curse. The ritual also entailed the sacrifice of a goat. The blood of the goat was given in offering to the *Kihami* spirits in the sacred grove at Alberto’s compound, with the request (*maombi*) to end all witchcraft in the family. The meat was cut and prepared in an old earthenware pot, *chungu cha kale*, after which each member of the family had to eat and drink from it. Once this ritual was performed, the old woman admitted that she had cursed her close relatives. She could not bear to see her children having a better life than she had. After this event, Alberto advised the family to await the results. If the family wanted to restore ancestral protection, however, they would have to perform ceremonial offerings at the graveyards of the departed relatives.

11.4 The healers in the audio-visual presentation

The audio-visual presentation is entitled ‘In the Spirit of Uganga’ and can be watched on-line at http://www.askmedia.org. It shows two presentations in the gallery under the subtitle ‘Musical and Ritual Healing’. One presentation focuses on a male *Kihami* healer and the other on a female *Kihami* healer. The two *Kihami* healers differ somewhat from the healers Kalembwana and Alberto. Though they are mainly inspired by the *Kihami*, the principal guide being Nambembele, they also feel guided by a number of other spirits, be it inland spirits (*mapepo ya bara*) or coastal spirits (*mapepo ya pwani*). Among the *Kihami* spirits, there are Kilimbiti (see 11.1), Makendura, Kaungungu, Ndimbiri, Lihowayai, Mwambuya, Mwangekaniri, Mwalikovela, Lipengamaji and Dwewe. Other guiding spirits are those of the mountains, like Rumbungo, Kitumbi, Nyani (the ape), Chalamanda, Jini Mawe (the stone spirit), Kipepeo, Kimanjo, Kumonera and Kumjimwa. Coastal divine spirits, the *Ruhani*, are Sharifu, Abdallah, Ismail, Bi Aisha, Adidja, Kititimtim and Yasini. Being inspired by a variety of spirits...
these healers will not only have a varied competence, they also make use of varied songs and artefacts. Since their remedies and rituals align with both inland and coastal spirit groups, the healers assist clients of different religious convictions.

To work with coastal spirits, these Christian healers have had to convert to Islam. They have also learned to recite Koranic hymns and prayers, to employ Arab and Swahili spirit songs entailing dhikr and the underlying ritual, medicinal and magical practices (see 3.7). Whenever these Kihami healers invoke their healing spirits, they use inland or coastal spirit songs. Regularly, the healers make ceremonial offerings to their guiding spirits. Among them is the Ruhani, an Islamic divine spirit (see 3.7). In contrast to the coastal type of Ruhani, the inland type appears to know much more about inland magical and medicinal interventions. To appeal to the various inland and coastal spirits, the healers make use of odours that are associated with the spirits. For inland spirits, these are local herbs that have a strong aromatic scent, and for coastal spirits these are Arabic gum (ubani) or aromatic aloe wood (udi). The healers may also use vapors from plants originating from the coast (kivumbasi) or a combination of spices (dalasini). The incenses are used for fumigation, either to call the spirits, or to give them the smoke as an offering. A cloth can be used to cover the afflicted clients whenever (lower) spirits are invoked.

The audiovisual presentation of the male healer concerns the practice of Joram Rupia in Songea district (Ruvuma region) who was born in 1962 and began to practice in 1986. Joram is married and has 2 children. As is the case with Alberto, he too has a healing heritage, which means that he was chosen at birth to become a healer. His paternal grandmother, who was a Kihami healer, had foretold this before she died. Similarly, Joram’s family knew baridi (a state of coldness). During the last three generations, his family suffered the loss of many of its members due to intra-lineage witchcraft which in response, had initiated a calling of some members by Kihami spirits so as to control the situation. Since Joram did not resist his calling, he did not suffer mental confusion or severe physical constraints as in spirit illness (ugonjwa ya pepo). During his childhood, his parents often assisted him in making small offerings to the Kihami spirits. On these occasions Joram vowed to accept his call once he matured. Before spirit guidance became manifest in 1984, Joram was able to work a few years as a cook in a European household in Mozambique. During this time, he regularly visited a Kihami healer who helped to prepare him for his calling. This calling was marked by a spirit attack during which Joram spoke with the voice of intermediate spirits, an Islamic spirit couple by the name of Ismail and Amdala. These spirits were messengers and announced him and his family to prepare for the healing career. The higher Kihami

\[118\] Islamic magic is also called kitaba and makes use of the power of written and verbal text.
spirits came three months later after Joram had begun to integrate the intermediate spirit forces. Had they come immediately, he said he would have suffered from their strong impact.

In the presentation I introduce Joram’s compound, the clients who await consultation and the performance of a divination session. Before the divination session, I show that Joram prepares himself to be temporarily possessed by his tutelary spirits. Accompanied by songs that express the presence of the spirits, Joram reveals the problems of his clients who sit beside him in a small working space. He has the assistance of his wife and an ex-patient who interpret the language of the spirits. The session is followed by a procession of the healer, the (ex) clients and initiates who join the healer in a yearly event. They go to a sacred Kihami area to assist in an annual celebration to honor the spirits and receive their blessings. The pilgrimage takes them to a sacred area in a mountaintop. After a ritual prayer, the participants show their appreciation to the Kihami spirits by following the possessed healer to various sacred dwellings in the rocks. After the religious ceremony, a ceremonial meal is prepared followed by a ngoma. The ngoma is performed with the help of drums, singing and/or dance and functions as an invitation to the lower inland and coastal spirits (mapepo and majini). The video shows that, as in Swahili (coastal) spirit healing, the inland and coastal spirits are called by songs accompanied by drumming (ngoma). During the event, the healer Joram Rupia makes a sacrificial offering (tambiko) with chickens to honor the Kihami spirits and the ancestors (mizimu or mababu).

The presentation of the female healer concerns the practice of Asia Fusi, also known as mganga Maliki.119 She was born around 1940 and began to practice in 1990. The first signs of spirit illness (ugonjwa ya pepo) with Asia Fusi started way back in 1957 after she had married. As was the case with the other healers, her family suffered for generations under baridi which was manifested in regular family struggles, sudden deaths, and the practice of intra-lineage witchcraft. Asia’s complaints of spirit illness did not prevent her from giving birth to 14 children of which 8 died as they grew up. At least 5 of these children were suspected to have died from witchcraft. The pain Asia had over the loss of her children made her finally decide to accept her calling to bring peace to her family. Just as happened to Joram, an intermediate Islamic spirit couple (named Selemani and Asuna Husbar) prepared the way for the Kihami spirits to guide Asia.

In the presentation I show some impressions of a divination session and Asia’s reaction to temporary possession. In one video-shot, Asia can be seen possessed by a Ruhani

119 Maliki is the name of her late father who died suddenly when she was young. The name is used out of respect for him.
spirit speaking a mixture of Ndendeuli and Arab words to her clients. Once her normal consciousness returns, assistants are present to interpret the information conveyed by the spirit. After this, I show the way a ngoma performance is held during the annual Kihami celebration in Asia's healing compound. This ngoma is celebrated with homemade beer that is mediated through the female initiates who have an alliance with the lower Kihami spirits. The initiates express the joy of the spirits as they dance, laugh and roll through the mud in the sacred compound of the healer. No coastal spirits are invoked or manifested during this ngoma. Though male and female clients join this event, mainly female (ex) clients participate in the musical celebration.

11.5 Discussion and conclusions

From my observations with the Kihami healers it appears, that apart from Kalembwana, mainly clients from the southern regions consulted them. The clients respected the healers because of their knowledge of medicinal plants, but even more so because the healers worked with the blessings from the Kihami spirits to counter-act witchcraft and sorcery. It is interesting to mention that all the Kihami healers shared ancestry from Ulanga district, Morogoro region. Many of the skills in witchcraft or sorcery (uchawi) and its medicines were in fact brought into the south and southwestern areas of Tanzania by the Ulanga tribes (see M. Green 1994: 28). It is no coincidence therefore, that all the Kihami healers became reputed witchdoctors. Whenever the healers made use of magical interventions, it served to counter-act the power of a curse or a spell, for instance by sending a troublesome spirit. The principles to return this form of bad magic were much the same as the initial procedure entailed in the magical spell or curse. As the curse or spell was returned back to the sender, the spell or curse would afflict him/her instead.

The etiologies in use by the healers were quit culture-specific. In the case of Alberto Kalovela, there were Hehe spirit etiologies, such as limlungu and mbepo. After my research with Alberto, I had visited a Hehe physician, who directed a mission hospital in Iringa district. I had asked him if he knew these Hehe etiologies, but he did not. Traditional Hehe disease concepts, he said, have no equivalent in medical terms as they refer to the spiritual nature of disease. This, he admitted, forms a wide gap of understanding between the physicians and the local peoples. The culture-specific skills of each Kihami healer were to a large extent influenced by the territorial spirits who inspired them, among which were the higher Kihami nature spirits, the tribal spirits of chiefs, warriors or healers and, to a lesser extent, family spirits. Because of the cultural differences between the four Kihami healers, their power objects, their outfits, their songs, their knowledge of plants and their skills to combat witchcraft and sorcery would vary.
The same can be said about the degree by which spirits were integrated in their life and practice. In the beginning of their career, Alberto and Kalembwana would wear an outfit to enhance possession by the spirits during divination. Several power objects were used as adornments, as demonstrated in the practice of Joram Rupia (see website). After some years, they had no more need for the outfit or the objects. The inspiration was directly transmitted to them without a state of possession. The songs in use by the four Kihami healers were different and more so was the frequency by which they were in use. Besides ancestral and local spirit songs, the healers Joram Rupia and Asia Fusi also applied Swahili songs. Some of them would be used to invoke the inspiration of coastal spirit in divination and others were songs for clients who were afflicted by coastal spirits. Both these healers would temporarily be possessed in divination so as to reveal the problems of their clients. Generally, all the healers felt that the main inspiration of the Kihami spirits came during the night through instructions in dreams.

What the healers had in common was the use of ancient or sacred power objects, special magical medicines and verbal invocations (madua) to bestow ritual acts. In the eyes of the clients, this reflected the pact that the healers had with the Kihami spirits which gave them confidence to be purified and guarded against evil. If the magical remedies and rituals applied in the healer’s compound failed to bring a relief, the healers suggested the clients make offerings at places where the Kihami spirits were said to dwell (caves and rocky areas). Offerings existed of coins, animal sacrifices and home brewed beer. Clients also had to join the annual Kihami celebrations if they wanted to be sure of a definite and lasting cure (see website). The healers would send a message out to warn their ex-clients whenever such a celebration took place. Even when a ngoma was an important feature of this ritual celebration, the Kihami healers involved musical therapy too a much lesser extent than Nambela and Jeremana did in the treatment of spiritual affliction. Clients who demonstrated to have inland or coastal nature spirits never showed any impulses to fetch medical plants or to reveal hidden magical objects. In fact, these spirits appeared to have little or no knowledge of inland ingredients and plants.

If all measures failed, clients were advised to perform customary rites at their home ground. In such cases, it always concerned baridi (a state of coldness). Interesting to mention is that originally the annual celebrations incorporated a fire ritual to give power to the Kihami healer. Yet at each of these occasions, relatives of the healer would suddenly die. Ever since it became common knowledge among Kihami healers, that the fire ritual demands the lives of relatives to increase the powers in the healer, they abstained from its use in the annual celebrations. This feature merely demon-
strates that a narrow line may separate the good from the bad in spirit healing, for *elimu dunia* (the science of the world) always demands an exchange in powers.

In contrast to Alberto Kalovela, Joram Rupia and Asia Fusi (video), Kalembwana had a great appeal to clients because of the *kunyolewa* rituals (11.2). For some time Alberto also had performed these rituals (11.3). In the recent past mass shaving rituals were held by tribes from Iringa and Morogoro region.\(^{120}\) Also specific medicines to counter-act witchcraft and sorcery were commonly used among them. Green (1994: 37) confirms that the shaving rituals proved ineffective without the cooperation of the ancestors. For a successful anti-witchcraft treatment through shaving, or *kunyolewa*, three interconnected elements were needed. These were the medicines, the involvement of the ancestors (*mizimu*, *mahoka* or *mababu*), and the physical act of being shaved. The medicines in use for *kunyolewa*, called *shirala*, would be ground from roots passed down from the father’s side. These medicines had been in use also by Alberto’s grandfather Mwagawike, who was of Kalembwana’s generation. Like she, Mwagawike had been ‘taken hold of’ by the *Kihami* at the time that the spirit epidemic took place. *Shirala* medicines were not used for the treatment of illness but to correct potentially dangerous bodily states. It changed the state of the person, either for curing, protecting and empowering, or in case of those who had witchcraft in them, the substance was weakened or drained from the body.

An aspect that puzzled me was that in 1993 the government officials of Iringa district had intervened with Alberto’s *kunyolewa* rituals on the count of being illegal. Yet, in Kilombero district, government officials had encouraged people to attend the cleansing rituals of Kalembwana. I began to wonder: was it the influential power of Kalembwana or was it the government authorities of Kilombero that impeded on Alberto so as to stop the rituals? It could also be that since he began to enrich himself from the rituals he was corrected by the *Kihami* spirits. I personally believe it was a combination of all aspects. Regardless of the changes Alberto had to face, many people continued to consult him in the years that followed 1993. At that time, Alberto started to spend more time on his private business affairs that entailed investments in land and housing constructions in the area. He was conscious, however, that he should keep his business strictly separate from his healing profession. Still I wondered how this could be, for did the guiding spirits not touch upon all aspects of the healers’ life?

\(^{120}\) At the occasion of funerals it is also habitual for the next of kin to shave the head.
In the Spirit of Uganga

The ritual space next to the healing compound of Kalembwana with clients seated in a row ready to undergo the famous shaving ritual.

Old garments of the clients are piled up in the ritual space and will be burnt during an act of purification.

Patient receives *kinga* by an assistant to create a shield for protection against bad spirits that are sent through an act of black magic.

Alberto Kalovela in army costume performs a symbolic rite with a chicken above the pot of ancient times (cunguchka kale) to avert a magical spell that troubles the patient.