

Ufipa Society Prior to the Advent of the Missionaries, 1885

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ABSTRACT

Fipa society, just like other African societies have never been static as it was believed by most Europeans. The Europeans travellers, missionaries and traders, perceived the Pre-colonial African continent as Barbaric, dark region, pagan and hence a continent with no any kind of history. When the white Fathers came in Ufipa for Christianization had the same notion. This article attempts to give an alternative narratives to the perception of the Europeans about pre-colonial African societies, it carefully examines the historical social, political and economic activities and exposes how strong the sense of religiosity was to among the Fipa society. In relation to the Marxist theory of Historical transformation, this article reveals that Fipa people had a rich history before the coming of the Europeans, and that their history shows a slow but steady evolution passing through different levels of social political and economic development. Religiously, in a social aspect; the article reveals that the Fipa people had developed to the level of giving rise transcendental religious ideas which were manifested through different practices at different occasions and the way the religion had evolved from historical social, political, economic and cultural experience and became the guiding ideological tool in Fipa society.

INTRODUCTION

African studies about pre-colonial period as undertaken by the Europeans were generally insufficient in explaining the social realities about pre-colonial African communities. This is because their writings were biased, full of lies and lacked indigenous involvement in interpreting their practices. Europeans views considered the pre colonial African societies as primitive, barbaric, stateless and as one of tribal stage development in which economic and social forces as exemplified by the Agriculture and stagnant at a very low level of development.[1] Trevor Ropers state that pre-colonial African history is the meaningless gyration of barbarous tribe, African had no history prior to the coming of European and lastly Pre colonial Africa is a darkness continent.[2] Hegel once asserted that “Africa is not historical continent, it is not part of the historical world; it has neither movement nor development to exhibit”. [3] As far as religion is concerned, African were regarded as savages people said to have no idea about the existence of God. This argument was strengthened by the claim that beliefs about deities were philosophical concept which savages were unable to conceive.[4] When the early missionaries arrived in Ufipa, they also applied these view. They considered the area to be part of Dark Continent. For them, Ufipa were among the areas considered as *tabula rasa* in establishing their civilization which include transcendental sense. Pre Christian Ufipa people were perceived as people living like animals with no any kind of organization.[5] This was amplified by Bishop elect Charbonnier who when arrived in Ufipa stated that, the people were so barbaric and backward, living by hunting, enslaving each other, and interacting without any social and political system. According to him, the page history to Ufipa people is blank, and insisted the missionaries to modernize them under European standards.[6] Although the missionaries encountered indigenous traditional religion which suited the material condition and their specific challenges, Fr. Lechaptois had the opinion that, paganism was the main problem in Ufipa. He even reported that elders were offering sacrifices to the spirit of their ancestors with the purpose of chasing missionaries and preventing them from establishing the missions to spread

Christianity and other European civilizations.[\[7\]](#)

Thus, in an attempt to reverse wrong perception of the missionaries about Ufipa society, this journal article attempts to reconstruct the history of Ufipa and their traditional religion in pre-colonial period.

In an attempt to reconstruct this historical knowledge, qualitative approach was used where data both primary and secondary were collected through interview and documentary review from sources such as books, journals, thesis, dissertations, missionaries archives and Tanzania National Archives (TNA)

The Historical Overview of Ufipa

Ufipa lays in the distant south-western border of Tanzania between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Rukwa, and East-Central Africa. It lays between latitude 5⁰ and 9⁰ south of the equator and 30⁰ to 33⁰ E longitudes. Ufipa has a total size area of about 6500 square kilometres and most of the place consists of a plateau between 1500 and 1800 meters in elevation. The region borders with Zambia in the south, Lake Tanganyika in the west, across the lake, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kigoma region lays to the North West, Tabora region to the north east, and Mbeya region to the south east.[\[8\]](#) The country is of tropical grassland by type of climate, has few large rivers making it quite easy to travel across. Ufipa can be divided into three major geographical units; the Rukwa valley, the Ufipa plateau and the shore of Lake Tanganyika.[\[9\]](#) Sources reveal that the name Ufipa was impacted by the Arab traders. It was taken on by the missionaries and later by the German and the British. After independence 1961, the region was called Rukwa and it was one of the largest regions before it was further divided to form Katavi region in 2012.[\[10\]](#) Thus, Ufipa of today covers two regions which are Rukwa and Katavi.

The peopling of Ufipa

The aborigines of Ufipa are known as Wafipa, and they speak a Bantu language called *IciFipa*. *IciFipa* is pronounced as /*ififipa*/ with a number of dialectical variants among which *icisukuma* is the most pronounced.[\[11\]](#) One of the best known documentary source suggest that the name of this ethnic group “Wafipa” means the people of the escarpment. This is because; the area they inhabit has a number of very long plateaus and escarpments. The name appears to have been bestowed on them by the Arabs traders in the 19th century. It was adopted by the missionaries and later by the Germans and then the British.[\[12\]](#) Consequently, it became the convenient icon for these people.

Wafipa are the Bantu people found in the South-Western part of Tanzania in today Rukwa and Katavi regions. Wafipa history can be traced from 16th to 17th century. Wafipa are the aborigines of Ufipa. However, in the 19th century, because of long traditions of movement of different Bantu speaking groups as described by John Illife,[\[13\]](#) had caused the Bemba probably from north-western Zambia and south-eastern Shaba province in Zaire present day Democratic Republic of Congo DRC to reconstitute themselves in Ufipa and become part of Wafipa.[\[14\]](#) Thus, the eponym Wafipa masks a dozen or smaller groups from within and outside the Tanganyika territory that speak different but mutually intelligible languages. Example include; Walungu, Wapimbwe, Wanyika, Wamambwe, Wawanda, Wanyamwanga, Wakwa Wachile, Wabende and Wasukuma.[\[15\]](#) However, majority of them were Wafipa and because of the intermarriage and increased interaction, the rest adopted the culture of the Fipa people and came to be called Wafipa.[\[16\]](#)

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN UFIPA

Ufipa area was inhabited largely by Wafipa mixed with other Bantu population. It is most probable that they were organized into a number of more or less independent groups or clans under a chief in each case known

as Mwene, about 24 clans by names were found in Ufipa. Among the earlier chiefs of the plateau areas, Mwene Milanzi appears to have been the most popular. He was the head of the whole Fipa Kingdom.[\[17\]](#)

With the invasion of *Watwaki* who are said to belong to *Wahinda*, clan of the *Watutsi* who are beyond the fact explained to have migrated from north of Lake Tanganyika and settled in various parts between lakes and Tabora, Ufipa became under the control of other Bantu speaking group. These invaders are thought to have come probably from Rwanda or Burundi in 1750. These invaders took control of Ufipa and established a dynasty called Twa and placed its headquarter at Milanzi.[\[18\]](#) With the establishment of the Twa dynasty, the chief of Milanzi and his successor remained in Milanzi, and he was one of the senior priests of all Ufipa.[\[19\]](#)

During the Milanzi dynasty, a new and important political idea of authority over territory and people was introduced in Ufipa. The chief of Milanzi was considered to be the controller over the whole chiefdom. He sent out his sons to find villages and govern them. These so called sons of chief were regarded as minor hereditary sub-chiefs or chief lings, and the relationship which was established between the chief and the sub-chief was like that of father and sons. This means that, all chief lings regarded the reigning chief of Milanzi as their father.[\[20\]](#)

Nevertheless, with the coming of Twa dynasty, the political situation changed. The Twa chiefs like the Milanzi chief divided the whole chiefdom into districts. Over each district, one person was chosen to govern on behalf of the chief. During the Twa dynasty, very often, these governors had no kin-relationships. They were chosen on their own merit because they enjoyed the confidence and faith of the chief in them. There was a personal bond between the chief and the governors. The latter therefore owed their offices to the chief and this fact made the chief capable of exercising more power through them than a father chief could do over sons who held the office through hereditary succession by right of birth as Roy Willis clarifies,

A chief, who can choose his sub-chief, can also build up a bigger and more complex system of government than it is possible for a chief with a merely ritual authority. And truly, the Twa dynasty exercised more power and authority over the whole chiefdom than did the Milanzi dynasty.[\[21\]](#)

It has to be understood that Fipa Kingdom under the Twa dynasty especially during the reign of Zumba Karonga eventually split up into two kingdoms. Such split was because of internal rivalry in which one branch of the royal family settled in the south and founded the Kingdom Lyangalile and the other one was called Nkansi Kingdom.[\[22\]](#) Hence, it is correct to say that long before the European came and established their administrative rule over Ufipa, the indigenous state structure in this area had already developed to a very high complex degree. Its political bureaucracy was hierarchically arranged. The “Epitome” of the rulers was a hereditary chief (Mweene) who was surrounded by a court of titled officials in order to govern the chiefdom effectively.

The ruling dynasty divided the chiefdom into districts. Under each district, the chief placed a follower whom he trusted to serve as governor. This official was placed in charge of tribute collection and defence. It deemed wise to place the border villages of the chiefdoms under the command of the general called “*Unndasi*”. This general was primarily charged with the duty of guarding the community from invasion. At the bottom of the hierarchical ladder, there was the village chief or headman who was assisted in his duties by a female magistrate called “*Wakwiifatila*”. *Wakwiifatila* had the function of hearing cases of alleged breach of public order by both men and women. She could impose heavy fines and in such cases, a proportion of such fines went to the chief.[\[23\]](#) Lastly, it can be deduced that the Ufipa chiefdoms developed a pyramidal and hierarchical system of organization having their own identity and boundaries. Their top leader (Mweene ‘chief’) had social, political and economic power. This shows that Fipa people had their own political-juridical superstructure which was well elaborated and complex long even before the coming of the

Europeans.

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that Ufipa was politically and administratively divided into chiefdoms and clanships (*Uluko*). Its political power rested to chiefs and among the clan heads. At the level of the chiefdoms, political power rested on two chiefs from two Kingdoms; Nkansi and Lyangalile. Chiefs solved disputes among the clans, acted as owners of all major means of production and above all guided religious matters in Ufipa chiefdoms. Clan heads as well, were the guardians of the land, solved disputes in the clans, distributed the land among the clan members. Above all, they were also religious leaders who exercised authority over all clan matters on behalf of the chiefs.[\[24\]](#)

Since religious ideas is an aspect of social reality which arises from concrete circumstances and specific conditions as argued by Osmund Kapinga,[\[25\]](#) Fipa people having reached this stage of developing such a political system had already acquired religious ideas. Certainly, such religious ideas were used by the chiefs and clan heads as an ideological tool for guiding and controlling all the social, political and economic aspects of the Fipa society. Emmanuel Kapele affirms that chiefs' appeal to supernatural power by commanding their spirit, and reside over religious and ideological functions strengthened their political authority and injected much respect, affiliation, command and terror to the minds of the Fipa people.[\[26\]](#)

ECONOMICS ACTIVITIES

Economically, the climate of Ufipa favoured and encouraged human settlement and agricultural activities. In agriculture activity, land/ soil is the essential means of labour because it is both the object and the instrument of labour. The principal crops grown among the Wafipa especially in the highland areas is eleusine or finger millet, primarily for beer and Ugali. Other crops are maize, beans, cassava (as a famine reserve) and rice.[\[27\]](#)

In the Fipa traditional society, the chief had the overall control of the land, and that's why people of Ufipa talked of *insi ya Mweene* meaning, it is the chief's land. And this is the reason for why part of whatever was produced from the soil of his chiefdom was given to the chief as a tribute. Although a chief enjoyed this great control of land, any other member of the Fipa society had the right over the use of the land wherever they wished by virtue of his membership on one condition; that they were to pay the regular tribute (*amalaambo*) to the chief through the local sub-chiefs (*aeene nkaandawa*).[\[28\]](#)

Animal husbandry was also important economic activity of the Fipa people; it was the second activity to form subsistence economy after agriculture in Ufipa. Ufipa land had lush pastured areas which promoted pastoral activities. They kept cattle of mixed strains, but a Zebu type predominated. They also kept sheep, goats, pigs and fowls.[\[29\]](#) P.Lemba observes that the land set aside by the villagers for grazing purposes was open for every body's use. That is any member of the village could take his cattle for grazing in these open grassland. The larger the number of animals one could have, the wealthier he was considered.[\[30\]](#)

Fishing was another potential part of Ufipa economy which supported the life of Wafipa by raising their standard of living and gave them greater power of exchange capacity. The two lakes; Tanganyika and Rukwa abound in the variety of fishes. The fish caught could be used for both consumption and exchange. The people smoked and dried fish on long elevated trays. The implements used in fishing included are canoes or boats, large conical hand operated nets, wood fires (placed in the bows). These means of production were either owned groups or an individual like a family head, and it was carried on the kinship basis. However, in contrast to agriculture, fishing activity especially in the case of catching *dagaa* 'sardines' (small "whitebait") was an industry on the lakes that was operated on the team work basis which could compose of either relatives only or people who were not related.[\[31\]](#) Usually, in Ufipa, fishing was the task of men although it happened sometimes that women went in groups to trap some fish with baskets in the

rivers or water ponds.[32]

Hunting was one of the oldest economic activities in all subsistence economies. In Ufipa, people hunted in groups where either the whole village would be involved in the activity of hunting on a particular day or domestic group like at family level where father hunted with his sons; however, hunting was also carried out at individual level. This activity was in most cases carried out by men. But when the production unit was the village, even women and children were involved. The unit was divided between the actual hunting and the group of beaters. In hunting wild beast “*ukusola inyama*”, Wafipa used nets of various sizes. Other implements used in hunting included arrows, bows, spears and manufactured traps.[33] Successful hunters of elephants had to give tusk to the chief. The chiefs used these tusks as a medium of exchange with Arabs traders. The chiefs also could exchange ivories with Arabs for guns and gunpowder. Equally, those who succeeded in trapping large animals were in each case expected to give a proportion of meat to the chief or his representative (the sub-chief).[34] Trading was done through exchange mainly of goods, grains or animals. This is because at this time, money as the medium of exchange was not introduced.[35] Blacksmiths also exchanged their metal hoes with cattle and at time with grains. Weavers of clothes from Rukwa valley came to Fipa plateau and as far as Namanyere to exchange clothes with beans and or other grains. In addition, people from central plateau descended the Lyamba Iya Mfipa Mountain to the Rukwa Valley carrying grains to exchange with clothes or salt which were found in Lake Wimbi near Mkulwe. Exchange was done at community, family or individual level. Exchange system within the Fipa society and with other societies outside Ufipa enabled Wafipa to obtain important items that they were unable to produce. For example, Fipa chiefs could exchange ivories with the Arabs for guns and gunpowder for defensive purposes.[36] The most important item of exchange that attracted foreigners into Ufipa was product from iron smelting.[37]

Hand craft industry or local industry also constituted part of the Ufipa economy. Ufipa people specialized in iron smelting and weaving of clothes. Both professions were reserved only for men and division of labour facilitated production.[38] According to Fipa traditions, the Twa chief or any other member of his family was forbidden to visit the smith while he was at work. Roy Willis states that;

Any other visitors have to pay tribute to the smith in acknowledgement of his authority. While engaged in labour of iron smelting and forging, the smith and his assistant are supposed to obtain from sexual intercourse and women are forbidden to approach the kiln or the forge.[39]

Iron smelting and workshop were surrounded by all sorts of talisman and magical materials. Black smiths, like witch doctors and sorcerers possessed a special bag of magical and fetish objects believed to offer help in knowledge transmission from father to son. Fipa village communities produced axes, building tools, as well as weapons of hunting and war including spears, axes, hoes, bows and arrows.[40] A clothes weaving was the principal activity in Rukwa valley. Roy Willis notes David Livingstone in his last journey in 1867 passing through Ufipa was struck by the amount of cotton grown there, he notes; “*Much cloth was made in these parts before the Mazitu (Ngoni) raids had begun. It was stripped Black and white.* The weaving of the cotton clothes (*seketa*) was the task of men. It was a job usually done by one individual and it was by done by hand.[41]

Other handicrafts works in Ufipa included mats, beds, stools, baskets and calabashes production. Pottery works was reserved for women. Some of the indigenous people who lived near lakes specialised on boat construction to facilitate fishing and movement on waters. Canoes and boats were made were made out of woods and other materials. This was exclusively men activity.[42]

Generally, the economy of Ufipa which was build-up of the mentioned activities forms the basis of the evolution of the religious ideas. This is because the economic activities reveal the level of production system

(feudalism) reached by Wafipa. This is supported by Karl Max who shows that religious ideas evolve in every society at a certain stage of societal development depending on the people's initiatives shaped by the material condition in the environment.[43] Thus, evolution of religious ideas in Ufipa is directly associated to their history of struggle against nature/ environment and the material conditions that are obtained there. Such developed religious ideas were used as the ideological superstructure in Ufipa society in guiding and directing all aspects including production so as to make people produce and consume for their existence.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Fipa people were organized into clans each constituted by families.[44] in Ufipa, family was the basic unit in man's life. The family was an instrument where by a man sought for his proper conservation and prosperity. The family was the centre where religion and all social life were practices.[45] Thus, every person belonged to an individual family which was governed by the father who was dependent on chief of the clan. Hence, at the family level, father was the leader of religious matter. In Ufipa society, the families were extended in nature and followed the Patrelineal system and also were starting point for social, political and economic interaction before the clan.[46]

Each clan (*uluko*) had its own ruler called chief. Several clans about 30 to 40 formed a chiefdom which was under one chief (*Mweene*). There developed different kinds of relationships between main chief and sub-chief, chiefs and subjects and among the subjects (the ruled). A single but most important social relation between the rulers and the ruled in Ufipa was the patron-client relationship based on ownership of land. This is because agriculture was the backbone of the Fipa economy and was practiced almost by every member of the chiefdom.[47] Therefore, patron-client relationship based on land enabled the chief to provide land to his subjects for production purposes but with the condition of bringing a part of the harvest (*amalaambo*) to the chief through sub-chiefs (*aeene nkaandawa*). However, between chiefs and sub-chiefs there was a familiar relationship based on father and son. The sub-chiefs considered a chief as their father, even though not all sub-chiefs were sons of the chiefs. Also, among the subjects, there developed a kind of relationships based on cooperative basis.[48] Under this point of view, different village men and women cooperated in different social- political and economic activities in the societies. In the production of finger millet, one of the principal crops among the Fipa, for example, cultivation was done on the cooperative basis. In this case, production unit was the village, or more precisely, practically all men of the village cooperated in cultivating the plots of one another at the time of the first cultivation namely, the making of the compost-mounds called *intuumba* in Fipa. At the time of harvesting the finger millet, all the women in the village participated, and with regard to the threshing of millet, men worked together. At the end of each day of such economic activities, the one who had invited his village mates organized a beer-party (*pombe party*) as a token of thanks, or he slaughtered a cow and every member who took part in the work received meat.[49] However, Cathleen R. Smythe asserts that a parent-child relationship remained at the core of the family. The parent-child relationship enabled the transfer of knowledge skills and values from parents to children from their child hood (*uwanche*) to adulthood (*untu umpuma*).[50]

As far as social organization is concerned, in Ufipa, the society was also characterized by division of labour and cooperation between sexes. There were some of the outstanding duties which were reserved for men, and as well there were others left for women. For example, the task of cultivating mounds (*intuumba*) and threshing millet (*ukupula malesi*) were reserved for men. Women, on the other hand cooperated among themselves in wedding and harvesting of crops.[51] Iron smelting was the job done by men only. Women were not even allowed to come near the smelting zones. Fishing activity as well, was done by men. However, sometimes women went in groups to trap some fishes with baskets in the rivers or water-ponds.[52]

Hence, in Ufipa women also played a significant role in economic production.

There were also different social stratifications that were created in Ufipa including; ruling dynasty which comprised of Twa or Watwaki from northern Tanganyika who acted as the chiefs (Mweene); the overall in charge of everything in the Fipa Kingdom who were assisted by sub-chiefs of the chiefdom. Below them, there were priests responsible for religious ceremony followed by commander generals “*unnda*” who were responsible in protecting the boundaries of the Kingdom. At the bottom, there were female magistrates called *Wakwifatila* who were responsible in solving disputes and providing punishments to wrong doers in the communities.[53]

The last class consisted of common members of the society; these didn't have any title in society and were required to follow all the directives from their ruler and observe all customs and traditions of the society. They produced for both; societal subsistence and small scale exchange especially by bartering. However, proportion of the produce was given to the royal ruling class as a tribute[54]. Since the labour force could be organized individually and means of production owned individually, this necessitated the rise of rich people. Rich people rose as a result of producing a lot due to their being in a position to own large number of cattle and means of production. Such people, because of their wealth, they could marry many wives who in return increased their wealth. In Ufipa, women increased wealth of the family because they played a great role in economic production by engaging themselves in various economic activities.[55] Henceforth, the more wives one could afford, the more likely he was to become rich, and his wealth enabled him to have some influence in the community he lives.

As far as habitat is concerned, the villages of Ufipa were built on rising open ground near streams of which majority never dried up. The villages were compact though of no settled plan. The individual huts were rectangular in shape, built of poles with thatch roof. The poles were frequently not plastered with mud. The huts were divided into two rooms with an outside door leading into one room, an open space to the left or right and the connecting wall forming the door between two rooms. No courtyard was built.[56] In Fipa traditional houses, parents could stay in with at least seven to eight children and the houses were of multipurpose as they were used for cooking, storing and sleeping. Crops, such as maize and millet were stored and preserved through hanging on the roof. The main staple food for the Fipa society was millet porridge with beans. Other foods included maize, groundnuts and rice.[57]

Marriage was also one of the important aspects of the Fipa social life. It took place between male and female who were not of the same clan. However, there was exceptionality among the Twa ruling dynasty who married among themselves within the royal families. Lechaptois maintains;

Once Watwaki had taken over the country, they closely guarded their racial purity and obliged their offspring not to intermarry. it was forbidden under pain of death to marry outside the royal family.[58]

And this is the reason to why the Watwaki of Ufipa never became so numerous. In Ufipa when a girl is grown up (*unsungu*) and a boy as well (*unumendo*), they were to live in *intuli* (special house for teenagers). There were *intuli* for girls and for boys. *Intuli* for girls was some time supervised by the grandmother who taught the girls everything including marriage matters while *intuli* for boys had no such a thing. The practical reason offered by Fipa for moving into *intuli* was avoidance of incest. As the children matured, separation from their parents' sleeping quarters provided protection against incest as well as respect for all involved. Within *intuli* teenagers of both sexes taught among themselves and got a chance to talk and know each other better.[59] Hence, it assured socialization among the teenagers. There was no *Jando* and *Unyago* in Ufipa.

Youths of Ufipa, after they had attained learning; *uwaanche*, *ulumendo* and *unsungu* were obliged to get fiancés and later on got married. It was a boy who was to seek for fiancé after permission from his parents. Fiancé could be obtained in two ways; being chosen by a boy's parents in which there were normally the

criteria for the choice, or boy could chose a fiancé by himself through social interaction with ladies during *intuli* or night traditional dance. A boy seeking for a girl to marry could often go to the night traditional dance until he sees the best to marry. After he had found one, he talked to her and gave her a gift. Receiving a gift meant, the request was accepted. However, gifts could also be sent through his friend on his behalf. To a very small extent, a fiancé was obtained through friendship after unplanned meeting of the two on their way.[60] Normally, courtship in Ufipa took longer time for the two to know each other. Girls who were married while still virgin were highly respected. The payment of dowry was done by a father of the boy and his relatives. Dowry included items that were used in daily life such as hoes, axes, baskets, mats, cows and goats. The dowry in Fipa society was interpreted as either a gift to the parents and other relatives of the girls for taking good care of a girl, or as compensation to the girl's parents for the loss of the labour force in the family. This is because girls in Ufipa played a greater part in the material production.[61]

Birth of the children was received with great joy. The child was celebrated by women through shouting (*akapuunda/vigeregere*). The more the Parents had many children, the more they were satisfied. In addition, baby boys were received with extra joy and special attention that they even received more love and care than girls. In Ufipa, when a child was born, *unnya* (a mixer of water and millet flour) was prepared as respect to spirits for it was believed that new born babies were new spirits coming on earth. Those who became pregnant before marriage were highly despised. The same happened to married girls who were unable to give birth (barren). It was a great shame to their parents, likewise the one caused it was heavily punished for such misconduct.[62]

Drinking alcohol seemed to be one of the most socializing agents in Ufipa. It takes large part in various social activities like in marriage ceremony, burial ceremony, in agricultural activities and traditional dance.[63] In Fipa society, Pombe (*isuute*) was very important and it formed a part of Fipa life as it was used in their greeting. When they greet each other, Fipa people say “*tufwiile kwi*” which means where should we die? Referring to where is local beer, or sometimes they simply say “*tunwe kwi*” which means where should we drink? However, this doesn't mean that Fipa people were drunkards. Pombe was used to bring people together for a certain social activity especially in celebration or as a sign of thanking people after work like after Shamba work. It was made out of millet by women. Furthermore, it was not for sale and it was taken in front of the house where an event was taking place.[64]

FIPA TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Prior to the coming of the missionaries, wafipa people believed in one supreme and omnipotent being to whom was attributed the creation and the maintenance of the universe, and in whose hands were the destinies of the people. God in Ufipa who is believed to reside on high “*umwi-yulu*” was known by two distinct names; *Ndesa* and *Mwene*. *Ndesa wa Kusi* is the Kifipa form of the same word *Lesa* or *Leza* commonly among neighbouring Wamambwe, Warungu and Awemba. *Mwene wa Kunkule* is a common address of *Ndesa*. [65]

Lesa or *Ndeza* was recognized as the creator and the almighty but remoteness and his unknowable rendered him unapproachable. In order to bridge greater gulf between God and man some intermediary was necessary. This function was performed by the *Maleza* or *Amaleza*. These were deities of spirits who were believed to dwell in different areas or subjects depending on their peculiar and outstanding characteristics. They were not gods but the abodes on the earth of *Lesa*. *Maleza* were exceedingly numerous. Each part of the country and each clan of the people had its own particular *Maleza*. However, the most important were those to whom the chiefs, as the representatives of the people made sacrifice and undoubtedly played the most important part in the lives of the people.[66] Some of the common *amaleza* or *imiao* include; *Katai* or *Katavi*, *Wampembe*, *Konde* and *Itwelele*.

Maleza could be appealed to at any time appropriated and sacrifices were made to him. Fipa believed that

prayers could not reach to the higher God and could not be answered unless supported and pressed by the Maleza. Each Amaleza had its important high priest and the office was hereditary. The Amaleza were believed to be living in mountain tops, big forests, caves, big rocks and rivers and in python. Appealing to Amaleza was done at different levels from society, family and individual level. It was done when people experienced different problems such as hunger, drought, and war or before they could actively engage in economic activities such as iron smelting and hunting, and for the success of the community like good harvest.[67] Wafipa believed some important people in the society such as chiefs (Wene), priests, and other influential people with good character including the rich and those who seemed to be extra-ordinary in carrying out their roles in the society to be Amaleza after their death. Most probably, it is because these people throughout their life lived by helping others and hence left indispensable mark in the society, and so were believed to possess good spirits. Therefore, even after death, the spirits of these people could be appealed on behalf of Supreme God by members of the society to seek help for the problems afflicting them. [68]

The guiders of Fipa traditional religion were Wene (chiefs) and traditional priests (*Kapepa*). The fact that Fipa people were religious just like every other society in the African context can be verified from its social, political and economic activities. All these activities were done and performed with religious overtone.

Furthermore, offering of the sacrifice was one of the traditional religious practices of the Fipa people. This was heavily accompanied by prayers. It was either a chief or a traditional priest called *Kapepa* who was responsible for this practice. *Kapepa* was the lowest rank in the hierarchy and he was supposed to be a person with good conduct and moral. However, at the level of the family, it was a father who offered the sacrifice for the welfare of the family. Neither mother nor children had the authority to offer sacrifices the gods.[69] Items offered as sacrifices included; millet flour called *umunya* carried in a calabash (*inkolo*) which is well decorated, goat, sheep or hen white in colour. Whiteness signified cleanliness. Animals were slaughtered and the blood was shed around sacrificial place. Part of the meat was prepared for Maleza or Miao and part for the same was consumed by the *Kapepa* and his assistants while the last part of the meat was taken to the villagers to let them participate in sacrifice of their Maleza. The major purpose of the sacrifice was to avert diseases, misfortune like hunger and drought, and invite good fortune to the society or family.[70]

Before engaging in any economic activities, Wafipa said prayers to ask Leza to bless them in order to succeed. In agriculture, for example, Amaleza were appealed for rain, but *Ziarungu* and *Kale* were regarded particularly influential in matters connected to hunting and fishing. Thus, in Ufipa, prayers were said according to the need and nature of work. Apart from the prayers, there was also a kind of greeting associated with their traditional religion. These greetings differed from one type of work to another and they involved mentioning of God. For example, when at shamba work, in greeting each other, one would say *mwalima taa* 'how are you?' and the other would respond *tataitu Kalesa* 'thanks to God'. In iron smelting the greeting was *mwalisulata*, the other would respond *tataitu Kalesa*. In fishing activity, the greeting was *mwaingata* and the other would respond *tataitu Kalesa*. All greetings have the same meaning in different context.[71] Apart from the mentioned activities, Kapere puts that these spirits were also called upon in the form of sacrifice to protect them from wild animals while travelling or hunting.

In times of success, especially of good harvest, Wafipa expressed their concern to their supernatural power. Traditionalists would arrange for the event, gather members of the society and offer special sacrifice to God. The purpose was to ask Leza's protection so that evil spirits called "*yakatai*" couldn't destroy the harvest.

Fipa people believed that troubles and problems especially hunger; drought, wars and diseases like epidemics were a result of bad spirits or Gods hatred and punishment to the society. Hence, they could only be solved by general observance. For example, among the *amalezain* Ufipa, *Katayi* was the one concerned with diseases. *Katayi* could cause and cure diseases and he was prayed to in case of sickness.[72] Generally,

these amaleza could be appealed for help in any kind of trouble. Societal or individual prayers or sacrifices could be made at any times. However, there were also public ceremonies. These would be held at times of general disaster or trouble and would be attended to by a large group of people headed by chiefs. Priests called Kapepa would be in charge of the proceedings for the sake of offering of sacrifices.[73] Not only in times of trouble and any other occasion but also Fipa people appealed to Leza through *Amaleza* spirits yearly for observance and worship. This was especially at the level of chiefdom.

All societies forming a particular chiefdom would gather to sacrificial place being represented by their chiefs and traditional priests. Fipa yearly traditional religious observance and worship went hand in hand with offering of sacrifices. Under this point, reference can be made from Nkasi Chiefdom whose headquarter was in Milanzi at Itwelele Mountain. People in this Kingdom being represented by their chief went to the top of mountain for observance and worship yearly. In so doing, sacrifice was offered for three days. The first day was the sacrifice to ask Leza to forgive their sins while the second day was the sacrifice for peace in the Kingdom and the last one was the sacrifice for protection of the Kingdom against external invasion. [74]

The birth of twins in Ufipa had also a religious connotation of its own kind and was of great interest. Unlike other societies in Africa, Wafipa did not put twins to death. They believed the twins were the people who shared spirits, and so certainly believed that two spirits could not be reincarnated together.[75] They further, believed that spirits possessed by the twins were of great significance to the community. On the day of their birth, a priest would say a prayer, and a special sacrifice was offered. Then, the new born twins would be placed in a basket “*ulupe*” and taken outside the house by a traditional priest, usually at 8 o’clock in the morning. The father would pick one and name it after one of his deceased ancestors. The mother would pick up the other and name after one of her departed. The two were then returned to the basket and taken inside the hut. Twins were particularly carefully handled tended by their parents and always treated alike. If a present was given to one, the other must receive exactly a similar one.[76] If one of the twins died, he or she was to be buried by a priest at an ant-hill close to a stream of water. Generally, twins in Ufipa had other number of beliefs and practices attached to their religion that once they were not done, problem such as lack of rain fall would be fall the society.[77] If a mother was ill at the time of her conception, it was believed to be because the two spirits were struggling against the re-incarnation. The priest was sought and he could discover which spirit was causing the trouble. The mother then could sacrifice to the *Amaleza* as directed by the priest and pray to him to stop the quarrels. She would say that her desires should enter her child. If both of the spirits were good ones and welcomed the incarnations, the mother prayed that one should give way now but return and enter her next child.[78] A religious custom still practiced by the Wafipa is the digging up of the bones of a dead person in order to burn them. A man finding his footsteps dogged by ill-luck seeks out a local priest and asks him to discover the cause. If the latter probably replies that all troubles result from the evil influence of the spirits of a dead ancestor, quite frequently, the body of a mother or father who has just died, would be dug out and burnt. To Fipa people, it seemed that ill-luck was caused by the direct and evil machination of the spirits or simply because that spirit was unhappy and could not find a suitable resting place. In any case the remedy was the same; the bones must be dug up and burnt.[79] On top of that, the practice of burning dead people was also done especially to those members of community who seemed to be misfits including those who killed others. This is because, Fipa people believed that if not burnt, the bad spirits in them would come back and continue to torture other members. However, this was common among the Wanyika and Wayamba clans.[80]

Dreams as well greatly influenced Wafipa and were often thought to be caused by departed spirits. If a man dreamed a departed relative and the following day met with a piece of good luck, it was a proof that the spirit of a particular deceased was an “*Umusimu Mfukusu*” ‘a good spirit’ while bad luck following a dream was an equally certain indication that the spirit had become a *Kilwa* or *Kiswa* ‘devil’. Under this circumstance, prayers at individual level and ritual observance were conducted to stop bad spirits coming into individual’s dream.[81]

CONCLUSION

In general, this journal article provides the situation of the Fipa society before their contact and hence interaction with Europeans particularly missionaries who are presented to be the key players in Ufipa. The facts presented reveal that, Ufipa had a history even before the coming of the foreigners. This is because of the various, economic activities, social and political organization as well as transformations that happened in the societies being guided by the existed social formation.

Religiously; as the most important social-cultural aspect of the Wafipa, it has been exposed that Wafipa were not ungodly but believed in one highest, most powerful and invisible God whom they called Leza or Ndesa and could be consulted through spirits called *Amaleza or Miayo*. Different practices and beliefs explained in this chapter had religious underpinnings which signify that Fipa society had been religious even before the coming of missionaries and this religion had helped them in attaining social transformation discussed. However, the most exceptional thing different from other communities to the traditional Fipa society is that Supreme Being recognized by their religion was mentioned through greetings and good wishes in different kind of their economic activities. The problem with Europeans studies on Africans particularly Fipa society is that their accounts were subjective and largely based on empiricism. Their argument about Fipa religion lacked credible evidence of cross-examination and epistemological underpinning of their practices. Hence, suffice it to say that missionaries distorted facts about Fipa people pre-colonial history and their religion practices.

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