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An Evaluation of a Shambaa Community's Tradition of Adaptation to Local and Global Forces to Maintain Socio-economic and Ecological Sustainability, and Plague Resilience in Lushoto, Tanzania

Raymond Ruhaak[1], *Philemon Mtoi*[2]

Abstract

Dramatic landscape change, as needed for cash-crop agriculture, promotes forest fragmentation and greater risk factors for zoonotic disease epidemics. The Lushoto District of Tanzania illustrates the cash-crop agriculture phenomenon that led to a plague epidemic, but a more traditional Shambaa community next to a Lutheran mission had been able to be remarkably resilient during plague outbreaks that swept through the district from the 1980s to 2004. This forested community of Mlalo has benefited from the connection to the mission to resume and adapt more traditional community and environmental practices than their neighbours, which resulted in their diminished risk for a zoonotic epidemic. Mlalo community member, Professor Kihiyo, gives insight of these community practices that this chapter puts in the larger Lushoto context and illustrates how Mlalo was able to largely avoid the plague.

Keywords: Plague; zoonosis; Lushoto, Tanzania; Shambaa; sustainability; resiliency

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[1]*Corresponding Author*; The Centre for World Environmental History, University of Sussex (UK); rr360@sussex.ac.uk.
[2] Department of Humanities and Social Science, Tumaini University Makumira (TZ); e-mail: academic@makumira.ac.tz.

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