



The Colonial Days

1960

James Kirkman, archaeologist, Ft. Jesus, Mombasa, Kenya

Hamisi Ali, caretaker, Cheke III stone site, Tanzania

Walter Reece, District Commissioner, Kondo, Tanzania

Mary Leakey, Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania

Samuel Mbonye, artist, Kampala, Uganda

Walter Baumgartel, gorilla researcher, Kisoro, Uganda

Ruben, gorilla tracker, Kisoro, Uganda

Jean Pierre Hallet, friend of Ituri Pygmies, Congo

After landing in Mombasa, my first trip across East Africa was by road through Kenya and Tanzania, across Uganda, into the Eastern Congo, and then north through the Sudan. These were peaceful times in the region, and I was able to trek in good weather, use rural buses and find rides with traders or truckers and occasionally missionaries. In fact, it was the good luck on the road that was so different from India and most of Asia. African truckers took me home to meet their families, Indian *duka* (store)

keepers gave me shelter in their shops at night, and an array of English and Belgian “colonials,” mostly ranchers or farm managers, were glad to have company on the road.

On a desolate stretch of road that ran through the middle of the huge Tsavo game park I flagged down an oil truck, saw the African driver nod, and climbed the ladder to the passenger’s seat.

“We never see Europeans flagging us down, they all have cars,” said the burly trucker, Judson Mutiso. “But we drivers, none of us picks up Africans unless they wave shillings. Sure, Bwana, when they pay, even I will stop. I will pick them for sure.”

Then, without a trace of rancor, he added, “But you Europeans... your white face is your passport. No one will pass you by.” He paused to shift gears and after the grinding stopped, Judson Mutiso looked over and smiled. “You are welcome in my country, Mister Norman. Africa will take care of you.”

As events unfolded, he was right, most of the time.

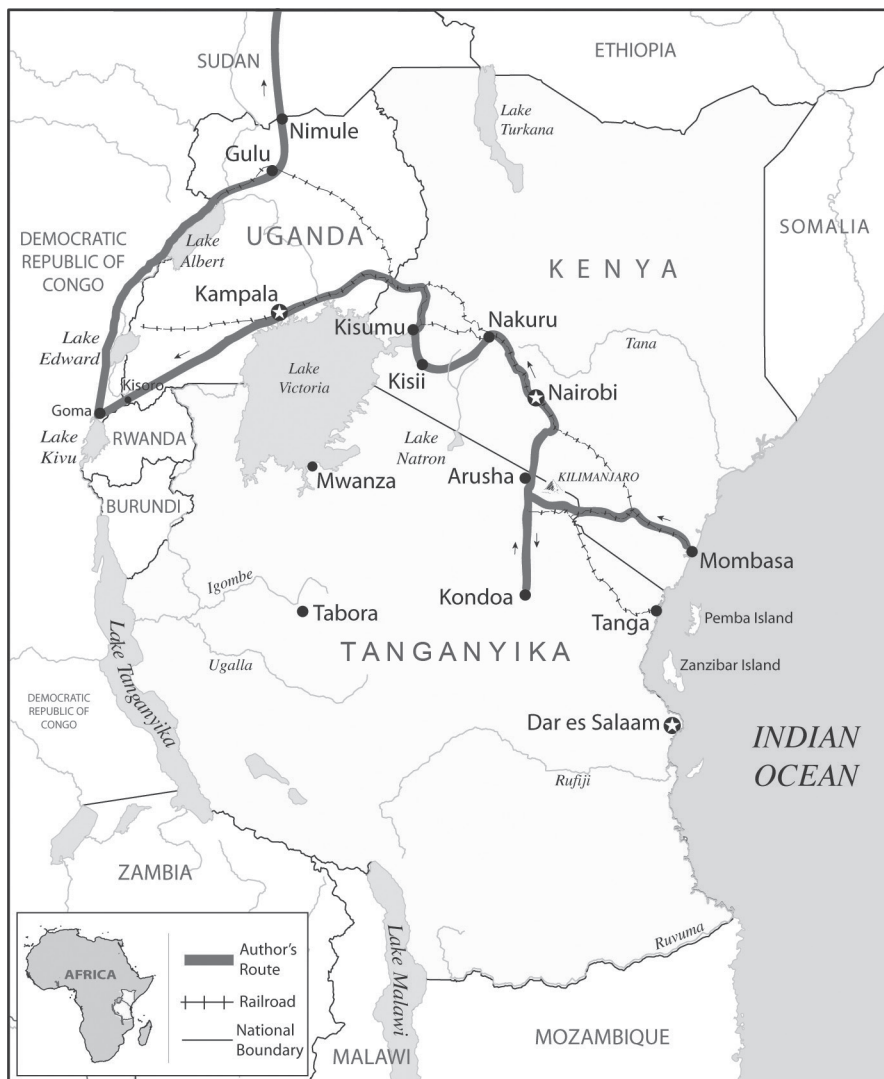


I was enthralled by the human landscape on the Kenya coast, the melange of African, Indian, Arab and European. The things I remember most about traveling inland were the vast open spaces, the shouts and waves of herd boys, the spectacular birdlife and the majestic mountains that rose abruptly from the grasslands—especially Kilimanjaro and Meru. The wildlife sanctuaries at Tsavo, Serengeti, Amboseli and Murchison Falls were still largely undiscovered by tourists. Mt. Kilimanjaro had a high crown of snow, and when I struggled up the mountain in April of 1960 on a five-day climb and signed the book at Gilman’s Point, my signature was only the 32nd of that year. Nearby, Mary and Louis Leakey had just discovered *Zinjanthropus*, the 1.7 million-year-old hominid, at Olduvai Gorge and, because of their work, East Africa was increasingly seen as the “birthplace of man.”

Before leaving Mombasa, in order to learn more about witchcraft I spent time with Dr. James Kirkman, curator of the Ft. Jesus museum. He was an Englishman who had been in East Africa since World War



Author with wreath of flowers for completing climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro, 1960.



Map of East Africa showing author's route, 1960.

“Forget ‘witch doctor,’” he said. “It’s a journalistic term.”

II, a well-respected archaeologist who specialized in the Islamic history of the Swahili coast. I made an appointment and found him in a dank office under the north rampart of the fort. He greeted me with pipe in hand and a slight stutter and then apologized for the dank smell.

“Back in 1800 this room was either a fish house or a...a dungeon where the prisoners pissed in the corner. You should have smelled it last year,” he laughed. “This pipe is my defense.”

When I told him I had come from Asia on a long “walkabout,” that I needed advice on where to go and what to see, and that I had a new interest in witchcraft and witch doctors, he waved me to a chair and immediately put his finger up in the air.

“Forget ‘witch doctor,’” he said. “It’s a journalistic term. It confuses things. For Africans, for all of us here, a witch is evil, a doctor is good. There is really no such thing as ‘witch doctor.’ Swahili distinguishes between a good healer, *mganga*, and a bad ‘witch,’ *mchawi*.” He watched me scribbling notes and patiently spelled out the Swahili words, then relit his pipe and smiled, “How can I help?”

I told him my plan was to spend four months traveling in East Africa, that I wanted to see several archaeological sites and museums, and two or three game parks, to try to get to know rural Africans, and that the witchcraft business was a new interest. I thought I might someday study anthropology, and I wanted to know more about the beliefs.

“Should I talk to missionaries, teachers, storekeepers, policemen?” I asked.

“Not missionaries,” he said, shaking his head. “Not if you want unbiased information. They have the same kind of ideas as the Africans who believe in witchcraft. African spirits or Christian devils, all the same things. New missionaries out here don’t know anything. Old timers? Chances are they are rabid, almost irrational on the subject. Most see witchcraft as the devil’s work, the belief of heathens. Especially the fundamentalists from your southland, those ‘born-again’ people.” He tamped his pipe and thought for a moment.

“African teachers would be good to talk to, and local government officers and local magistrates in the districts you pass through. Anti-witchcraft

laws give them a lot of trouble. Not African police or constables—they won't talk. Sometimes they won't even investigate a witchcraft case.”

“Won't investigate?” I asked.

“For fear of revenge, afraid their families might get poisoned or attacked by the witch they are investigating. Fear like that is everywhere. That's why most of the violent attacks against 'witches' are by gangs or vigilante groups.” He waved two fingers in the air when he said “witches.”

“Why the quotes?” I asked.

“Witches don't exist,” he answered, “not the way Africans and most others imagine them. True, plenty of people claim to be witches, and plenty confess to witchcraft to save themselves. Plenty more make money as healers diagnosing witchcraft or witch-hunters. But the powers people think 'witches' have, that's rubbish. Witches are imaginary. There are no witches—no unicorns, no flying dragons out there either. No one turns a cousin into a crocodile. It damn well can't be done.”

Kirkman patiently defined several terms that dealt with witchcraft. I wrote as fast as I could.

“If you are serious about this business,” he said, “start a glossary. Right, do a glossary. Look up *juju* and *muti*, too.”



Dr. Kirkman had an African teacher and five students waiting to see him, so he gave me a few things to read and we agreed to meet the next afternoon. One article was a translation of an old Portuguese chronicle that described what the Europeans thought witchcraft was in the early sixteenth century. It made me wonder about the origin of early witchcraft ideas. When we sat down again, I had my question ready.

“What about the roots of witchcraft?” I said. “The origins. How far back can you trace these African beliefs?”

Kirkman stared at me. Then he slowly began to stutter and shake his head.

“I...I have never heard that question asked before,” he stammered. “Witchcraft is too soft a topic for archaeology. It's hard to...to get beliefs out of the ground.”

KIRKMAN'S GLOSSARY

Diviner One who explains a mystery, reveals hidden truths, a soothsayer or foreteller, believed to have magical powers.

Evil eye The belief that looking askance, staring or prolonged glances, particularly toward a child, can cause sickness.

Juju Venerated object or medicine in West Africa; also a term for witchcraft.

Muti Poison or dangerous potions in southern Africa; general term for witchcraft.

Oath In East African context, an enforced promise, often under threat of bewitchment.

Ordeal Enforced drinking of concoctions or other physical trials to prove innocence of witchcraft.

Shaman Healer, diviner, one believed able to enter the spirit world to discover reasons for illness or misfortune. Term used in southern Africa among hunter/gatherers. Origin in Siberia.

Sorcerer Individual with acquired or learned powers to do malicious acts, a technician.

Spirit medium One who is able to communicate with the spirit world.

Uchawi Swahili for witchcraft; Mchawi, a witch; Wachawi, witches.

Voodoo. From *voodoo* in West Africa, a spirit belief system in Haiti involving ancestor worship, rituals, candles, special foods, a mixing of African and Caribbean beliefs. Has parallels to witchcraft.

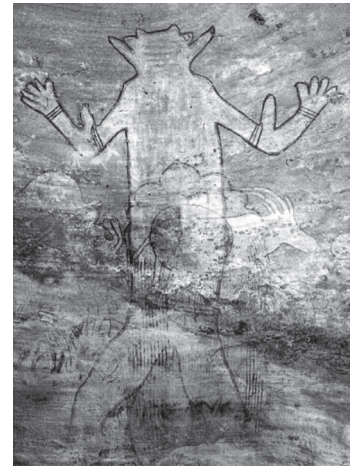
Witch A living person *believed* to have innate powers to do evil (compare Sorcerer). Some ethnic groups believe a person may not be conscious of being a witch.

Witchcraft A set of beliefs *and* practices, a social process, a system of thought that lacks the dogma and trappings of organized religion. A belief in the power of evil.

Witch-finder Those who hunt for witches and often name or accuse someone of witchcraft. Witch-finding may include forms of "cleansing" such as head shaving of alleged witches, and other forms of exorcism. Extensive witch-hunting movements occurred across central Africa, including southern Tanzania between 1910-1960's.



The Makapansgat stone found in a cave in the northern Transvaal, South Africa (6 cm wide), is dated at 2.5 to 3.0 million years.



The Great God of Sefar
An early rock art image from Tassili Massif in the central Sahara (Algeria) depicts mysterious spirit beings and strange animal forms, similar to modern witchcraft images in East Africa. (Poznan Archeological Museum, Poznan, Poland)

He sat looking dejected, then suddenly brightened. “OK, if you see witchcraft as one specific belief in early religious ideas, like one stick in a bundle, then you at least know the context. It is certain there were very early ideas of spirits, and a spirit world is seen in cave art for at least 25,000 years. The idea of life after death goes back much farther—with the tools, weapons, and food buried with people for use in the next world. In early cave art there are also images that hint at creation ideas, a distant creator—for some, a sun god. So we know a little about early beliefs.”

“Hard evidence of a witch, of witchcraft ideas? The first images?” I asked.

Kirkman again looked perplexed. “Earliest images? I...ah...I don’t know. The carved wooden images, the masks are all gone, rotted centuries ago. Bronze, the Nok masks, still exist, but they are from the early Christian era.”

He still looked perplexed, but then he jumped from his swivel chair, hurried across the room and began rummaging in an old file cabinet.

“Look at this,” he said, pulling out a tattered black and white picture. He seemed to have found an old friend.

“This guy is bad. Really evil. It is the Makapansgat stone, from a South African cave, found with tools of proto-humans who lived two and a half million years ago. Is that old enough for you? It looks like a

*“When did
witchcraft come
on the scene in
Africa?”*

witch to me. It may have been what our ancestors thought witches were like. It at least suggests they had aesthetic ideas. They brought it back to their cave from a jasperite site 30 miles away. And look at this other image, some spirit beings from the Central Sahara. Don't they look like witchcraft ideas? Here is another image. Is that witchcraft?”

Kirkman then put on the brakes. “Of course this guy, this stone—it only proves proto-humans had a stone in their cave that today *we* think looks evil, or that there are ancient images that look like a spirit of some kind. None of this is hard evidence of early witchcraft practice. Your best bet is with the paleolinguists.”

“Paleolinguists?” I said. “How do they prove witchcraft?”

“They trace words in early languages. A man named Malcolm Guthrie is the guru. The words for ‘witch,’ ‘witchcraft’ and ‘bewitch’ he reports are found in proto-Bantu, the language family that was around before Bantu—called the *Benue Kwa*. Bantu emerged around 3500 BC in West Africa. The word ‘witchcraft’ would have come across Africa with the Bantu migrations. A few pre-historians claim to see evidence of witchcraft in language and ritual items at around 5000 BC.”

“What is your view?” I asked. “When did witchcraft come on the scene in Africa?”

“My guess is these ideas started when ancient hunter-gatherers settled and began to domesticate crops and build villages. For Africa that would have been around 9500 BC. There was a transition, when people no longer lived in hunting and gathering bands of thirty or so individuals. When they settled into groups of over a hundred, they needed a leader, a chief or priest who had authority, some kind of control. I think witchcraft was needed by leaders to accuse someone of evil, of being a traitor; they'd call him a witch. I think witchcraft was an early form of power and control, of very early government.”

The next day when I came to say good-bye to James Kirkman in his dungeon, I asked him where I might see some of the cave art he talked about, where I might get hints of early witchcraft ideas.

“Try the stone paintings at Kondoa,” he said. “You'll find some interesting images... They were hunter-gatherers.”

He started to stutter, so he lit his pipe again and waved the smoke

away. The faint smell of fish was still there. “If...if...if you find something interesting,” he said with a broad smile, “write me a letter. Hell, write me anyway.”



Ten days later, after my struggle up Mt. Kilimanjaro, I stepped off a rural bus at a sign that read “Cheke III Rock Site.” It was some 220 miles south of Kilimanjaro, on the Arusha-Dodoma road, a desolate, wind-swept place with only a sign and a track leading into thick bush. The driver and one of the wizened old men I had made friends with on the bus both motioned me ahead.

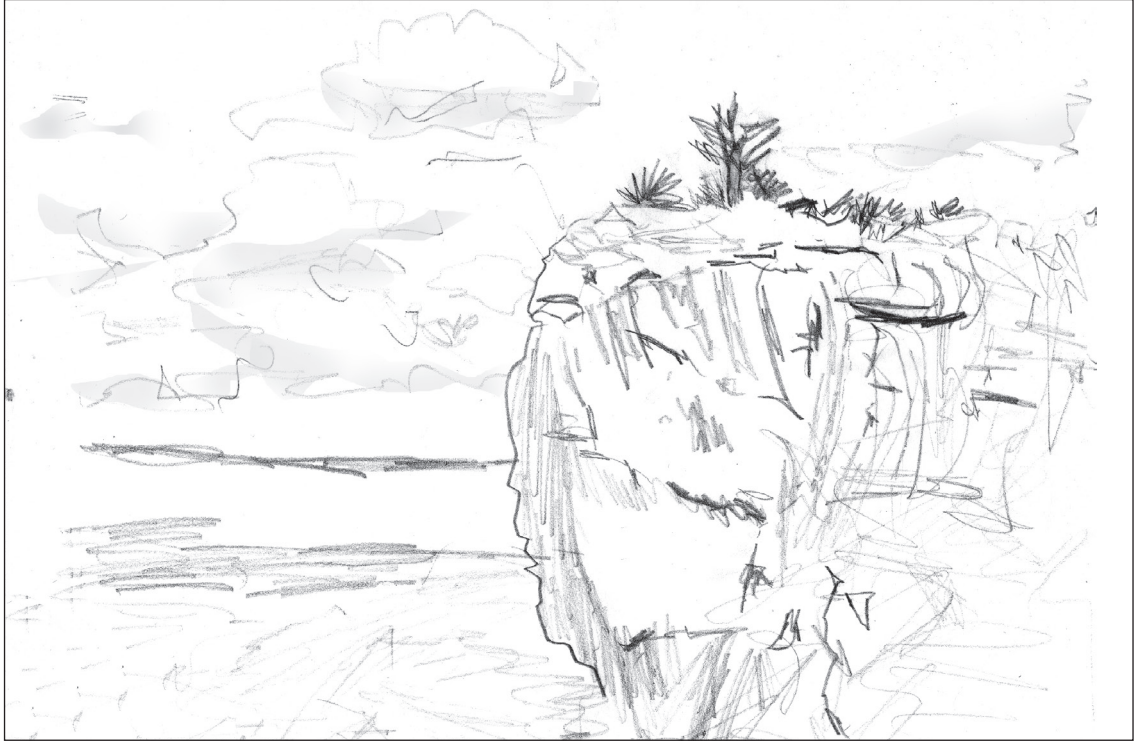
“*Sawa, sawa* (OK, OK),” they shouted, pointing down the trail. “No *simbas*, no lions.”

In spite of their assurances, I picked up a stout stick and hurried down the track looking over the wavering grass for anything that moved. The day was still hot, there was a dusty haze in the air and it seemed like an uneasy, forbidding place. In less than a mile I began to see large rocky outcrops, and soon another sign announced “Cheke III.” At the end of the track was a thornbush fence that stretched around a cluster of boulders. Inside the enclosure was a grass lean-to where a caretaker dozed in the shade. Beyond him a steep hill with cave openings rose abruptly from the plains. There were goats on the hillside.

The caretaker’s name was Hamisi Ali, and with the help of my Swahili dictionary, I learned he had a *shamba* (farm) nearby, that he was Muslim, and that he had only one wife, plus three daughters and a son. He took pains to tell me that he very much wanted a second wife and was saving for the bride price. In the visitors’ book he gave me to sign the signature above mine was six weeks old.

Hamisi’s job was to guard the rock paintings, which meant cutting the brush back and keeping the goats from licking the rocks for traces of salt. He used thornbushes for a fence against the goats, keeping the brush in place with a row of stones he had painted white. After I had paid a two-shilling fee, he led me to one of the rock paintings situated under a low-hanging ledge. It was near the ground, only three feet off the sand.

“*No simbas,
no lions.*”



*Author's rough sketches
of Cheke III. Redrawn by
Susan Whelihan.*

“*Zamani, watu wa fupi* (In the past, people were short),” he said as I found a place in the shade to sit and sketch the figures.

Sometime later I noticed him watching the horizon and followed his gaze to where small puffs of dust were kicked up by the wind. In the shimmering heat, they looked like tiny people moving quietly across the savannah. It was an eerie moment, as if we were looking back in time, seeing ancient humans en route to a ceremony. The only sound was the wind around the huge boulders, the rustling of the bushes and then a distant birdcall.

“*Shetani* (spirits, ghosts, witches),” Hamisi said, seeing my gaze.

I remembered his earlier description of the small ancient cave painters and looked up the word for “short.”

“*Shetani fupi*,” I said, holding my hand three feet off the ground.

He nodded and smiled. He had seen the dust devils before, but



Author's sketches of figures from Kondoa area stone art. Redrawn by Susan Whelihan.

probably not imagined them as the ancient people who had painted the rocks centuries earlier. Hamisi sauntered off to doze in the shade but after a while came back with typed notes about the Cheke III site, plus an article from an archaeological journal.

I learned there was still a mystery about when and why Stone Age people painted here. Painting sticks have been found in 19,000-year-old soil deposits, although most evidence points to human activity 10,000-12,000 years ago. The artists were hunter-gatherers, but no one knows why they painted as they did. The many animal depictions suggest more vegetation was here then and that the area was a ceremonial meeting place where small bands came together for hunting rituals. Elands are important animals in the paintings.

The article compared the Kondoa paintings to similar rock art in South Africa where medicine-induced trances, rainmaking and other



A Sandawe ceremonial shield (circa 1920s) carries decorations similar to those found in early stone art in the Kondoa region of Tanzania. (National Museum, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)

magical activities are depicted. Kondoa may have been an open-air religious site, some kind of Stone Age cathedral. One of Hamisi's reprints showed a nineteenth-century Sandawe shield with decorations suggesting a tie with the earlier rock art.

After I had sketched several rock paintings, and hiked across the area, I wandered back to the gate to find that Hamisi had tied my backpack to the carrier on his bicycle. He pulled the gate closed behind him and blocked it with a stone.

"*Hakuna mbuzi* (no goats)," he said to the gate.

As we set off, Hamisi seemed to know I found Kondoa's Cheke III a mysterious place, made more so by the emptiness and the dust devils blowing in the distance. We walked along in silence and then waited on the road. Eventually a pickup truck came racing over a distant hill creating a rooster-tail of dust. Hamisi stepped out into the road and held up his hand. At what seemed like the last possible moment, the driver slammed on his brakes and covered us in dust. I was waved into the front seat and my pack placed carefully in the back.

"*Kwaheri shetani* (farewell spirit)," Hamisi said, clasping my outstretched hand with both of his. The driver was totally bewildered, but Hamisi didn't care. He pointed toward Kondoa town and simply said: "*Hoteli.*"

After a night in Kondoa, in a tiny room freshly painted light blue, with a sagging bed and a mosquito net with at least three holes, I decided to follow James Kirkman's advice and try to learn how the British colonial government handled witchcraft cases.

The Kondoa District Commissioner's office, called a *boma* (fort), was near the edge of town. It was also surrounded by thornbushes, but in this case had a gatehouse and a guard. He motioned me around the pole that swung up and down, and pointed up the hill to a U-shaped building. Near the front steps the Union Jack fluttered on a wooden pole. A second guard in a khaki uniform dozed in a canvas chair, a carbine leaning against the wall. To my surprise, when I approached he suddenly jumped up, stamped one foot, and saluted.

"Sir!" he said in a loud voice and for a split second we stared at each

other. He then stepped back, opened the office door and pointed to a clerk sorting mail.

The guard's stamping must have been heard behind a green door marked "District Commissioner." It opened, and a tall, sandy-haired European strolled out. I guessed him to be in his late thirties.

"Good God, a visitor!" he exclaimed. "First one in a week!" He was smiling and holding out his hand. "I'm Reece, Walter David Reece to be exact. I'm Acting."

"Acting?" I said, after introducing myself.

"Ah yes—you're a Canadian or something strange. The DC is on home leave for three months. I'm standing in for him. My proper post is Iringa. Here, I'm the Acting District Commissioner."

Walter Reece was to become a lifelong friend. We would later teach together at the University of Dar es Salaam, do research together, and visit one another over the years. He was fourteen years my senior, an Oxford graduate who had been posted to Somalia as a military officer at the end of World War II. He served there in the administration in peacetime and then was transferred to the Tanganyika colonial service in Iringa. There, at the Iringa provincial hospital he met a young English nurse.

"We married in 'far off Africa' and her mother has yet to forgive me," Reece said as he poured tea. "She is in Iringa with our girls...two girls."

Nothing I had imagined about officious colonial officers fit Walter Reece. He was open and good-natured to a fault. He loved Africa, especially the safari life, and had an obvious respect for the Africans he worked with, particularly the elders. Like Kirkman, his only prejudices were white missionaries, mainly American Southern Baptists, because of their proselytizing.

In colonial Tanganyika, because of the remoteness and long distances between government posts, district offices usually had small guesthouses for official visitors. In order that I might explore the surrounding area, I was invited to use Kondoa's guesthouse as long as it was not needed for an official visitor.

"What do you want to be?" Reece laughed as he signed me in. "Road engineer, pans and dams man, tsetse fly officer?"

*“Frankly,
witchcraft cases
are nightmares.”*

Like James Kirkman, Walter Reece was an instinctive teacher and he soon clarified my misunderstanding of the dust devils at the Cheke III rock site. *Shetani* is not a term for a witch, but rather the Islamic idea of a spirit or jinn, often a prankster, more like a ghost, and a *shetani* could be either good or bad. Later, when I asked him how the colonial administration dealt with witchcraft cases, he thought about the question for quite a while.

“OK, let me give you an example of how these witchcraft beliefs can work, how they can cause havoc. Have you heard of the lion-men cases? They were reported in England, perhaps not in America.”

Reece explained that many cultures in East Africa and the Congo believe in transformation myths, that some humans, using witchcraft, could turn themselves into animals or turn animals into humans. Before World War II, in Singida District just to the south of us, there were killings that looked like lion maulings, the victims slashed with claws. In the late 1940s, an outbreak of killings terrified the region and began nearly two years of investigation by the colonial police. Eventually it was learned that the killers were assassins, paid to start political terror campaigns, to sell protection and carry out revenge killings. The actual murders were done by drugged, often demented, young men who were kept by handlers. “Lion-men” were treated as animals, given raw meat, tethered and forced to sleep in hyena holes. They were armed with both knives and lion claws attached to heavy gloves. Most killings were ambushes in thickets, the habitat of lions.

The murders terrified thousands of villagers, not only because of the grisly killings, but because the instigators spread rumors that the lions were controlled by witches, and that some humans could transform themselves into lions. Protective medicines and amulets were sold, which Reece thought might have created a side business and prolonged the terror.

“Sure, some people made money on the widespread fear,” he said. “No doubt about it.”

After investigating nearly 200 incidents, the colonial authorities brought 30 individuals to court. Six cases were tried, all with multiple defendants. Twenty-two people were found guilty, eleven hanged.

Eleven others avoided death on appeal. Those convicted included the male “handlers” of the “lion-men,” some of the actual killers, and several women who had contracted for the murders of their husbands. The reign of terror was based on the belief that witchcraft could be used to turn someone into a lion.*

Walter Reece also knew a lot about the anti-witchcraft laws because his duties included serving as a magistrate at the district court. “Frankly, witchcraft cases are nightmares,” he said. “People kill suspected witches because they believe they themselves have been bewitched, or that their child has been killed by a witch. In every murder case I have ever seen the defendant, the killer, claims he or she was bewitched. If the family can hire someone to advise them, they usually enter a plea of self-defense or insanity because of witchcraft.”

“Does it work?” I asked. “Does believing yourself bewitched equal insanity?”

“Not usually,” Reece replied. “At the district level of court, there is usually a guilty verdict.”

“Then what happens?” I asked.

“If found guilty of murder, they are sentenced to hang. Then an appeal is entered, and sent to the provincial level. If sustained as guilty, the case is sent to the Governor in Council. That’s the final appeal.”

“Then?” I continued.

“Nearly always, in capital cases, the Governor sends a district officer back to the village of the condemned person—to talk to the elders.”

“I don’t understand,” I said. “Your colonial legal system puts the African through a murder trial under colonial law, finds him guilty, then your Governor sends the case back to the village elders for a retrial?”

“Not a retrial,” Reece said defensively. “Just a check on the condemned person’s reputation. Remember a lot of people think killing a witch is a good idea, that the man, sometimes a woman, did a public service.”

“What usually happens?” I asked.

Reece thought for a while, as if he were about to reveal a colonial secret. “OK...true, it is a bit of a dual system. We send a European district officer back out to the village to sit with the elders and ask if the sentence is justified.”

* From the beginning authorities believed the murders were political, because of similar killings across Lake Tanganyika in the Congo. Those lion-men cases were carried out by Africans who had lost their land to Christian mission stations, the violence directed against African Christians who had been given land near the missions. British authorities also looked for parallels in the “leopard cults” of West Africa, because of their violent political activities.

“... Their women... They are shy in the day, but wild in the night.”

I nodded to encourage him.

“It is not talked about in this way in the colonial service, but in all the capital cases I know, when the elders think the man was bad, really evil, and that he should swing, they hang him. When the elders report the condemned man was a good person, and the case involved a crime of passion, the governor commutes to a jail sentence... usually of some years.”

“A dual system,” I exclaimed, as if I had found a great truth. “How can your legal Lords in London justify a dual system?”

I thought Reece would argue, but he didn’t.

“Simple,” he said. “It keeps the peace, prevents unrest and keeps us from hanging good people. Remember our colonial predecessors around here, the Germans? They wouldn’t fool around like this. There was summary justice for murder, with or without witchcraft pleas. It was usually quick. A firing squad. Most often in front of all the local chiefs as a way to teach them German justice. It worked—there was very little theft in those years.”

The next day I was able to ride along with the district water engineer, an Asian named Hamid Khan, who was on a one-day safari to find new water sites. He hoped to drill for water and build earthen pans, backed up by small dams to help cattle survive in times of drought. At one point we stopped and he talked to a group of men in Swahili about where a dam might go. They were the Sandawe, the people Kirkman mentioned who spoke a form of the Khoisan language and whose grandfathers carried shields with ancient decorations. The men talked to Khan in Swahili, but when they were speaking together I heard the distinct clicks of the ancient Khoisan. I told Hamid Khan that I was fascinated by the way the men spoke because it was a hint of the oldest languages ever known, thought to have developed 40,000 years ago right here in East Africa. He gave me a shrug.

“I don’t know about their language, but their women are very passionate. Wild, just wild. No. Let me correct that. They are shy in the day, but wild in the night.”

When I was dropped at the guesthouse, there was a book with a note on the doorstep. Reece had found an article about the conflicts

colonial officers had with “witch-finders.” I was also invited for tea, or a drink if it was past six o’clock.

When we met we sat on his porch with cold beers. I gave him a report on the day, then asked about the article he had left for me. It concerned witch-hunting. “How do you government folks handle the witch-finders? Don’t they help keep the peace?”

“Depends on the situation,” Reece said. “In cases involving violence or unrest caused by the witch-hunters, there is prompt action. We use the police, break up crowds, make arrests. But when violence is not an issue, a lot of colonial officers allow small-scale witch-finders to operate. They can help reduce the general fear of witchcraft.”

“Are there witch-finders all over East Africa?” I asked.

“Among agriculturalists, any Bantu village can launch a witch-hunt, usually through a local healer or diviner. There have been big movements across southern Tanganyika and many of these people push religious messages and claim to be prophets. Around here most are just local healers. As I said, they can be useful in keeping the peace.”

Reece got up and came back with two more beers, plus an envelope, then sat and put his feet on the railing.

“Part of the problem is the missionaries. Most see all witch-finders or healers as evil, as tools of the devil. A lot of them won’t let healers into their church, and will destroy a healer’s kit whenever they can. Some of these people are really misinformed because healers do a lot of good things. Let me show you two pictures I got from a researcher named Gus Liebenow who was working near the coast.”

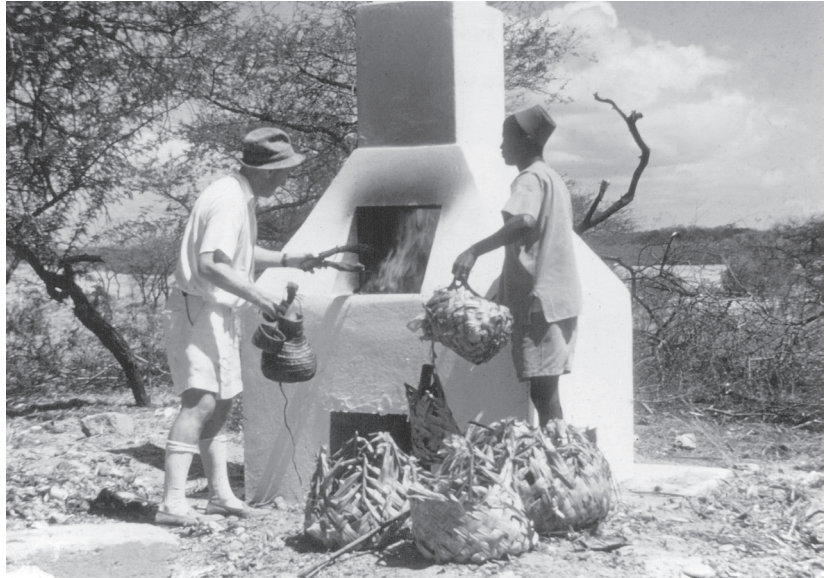
The next day, before I left Kondo, Reece wanted to clarify his view on missionaries.

“They do a lot of good,” he admitted. “Their schools, the health work, some teach farming techniques, bee-keeping, and other things. The Catholic ‘white fathers’ still go out on bicycles, they go miles in the sun to teach and say mass.”

“You have changed your tune!” I exclaimed.

“A bit maybe—because there are all kinds of church people, some like saints. Others are really racists who won’t let Africans into their gardens without ringing a bell. Some of the fundamentalists

A missionary and an African assistant burn a healer's paraphernalia believed to be used for witchcraft, at a mission station in Mtwara District, southern Tanzania. (J. Gus Liebenow collection)



The items include a large woven basket with medicinal leaves, flywhisks as power symbols, wooden rattles with string figures, and small dark gourds for medicinal powders. (J. Gus Liebenow collection)



see sin and Satan everywhere, particularly if a witchcraft case arises. A lot of the African sects that have broken away from mainline Christian churches actually use witchcraft ideas in their churches and do witch-hunts. Huge numbers! You'll see them in Kenya and Uganda. In fact a lot of them use witch-hunting as a reason to exist, as a way to recruit members."

Before I could understand more about the breakaway churches, my ride—the government's northbound supply truck—was ready to leave. Reece walked me to the supply shed and introduced me to the driver, who took my pack to the back of the truck.

"Good hunting," Reece smiled as we shook hands. He then said essentially the same thing that James Kirkman had said three weeks earlier: "If you learn something interesting out there, send me a letter."



Later that day the truck dropped me at a seedy "guesthouse" in Arusha, the supply town for the Serengeti and Ngorogoro wildlife areas. After a mosquito-filled night and a fried egg breakfast, I found a local bus going north toward the Kenya border. I wanted to visit the *Zinjanthropus* site at Olduvai Gorge and, by the time we reached the crossroad to Olduvai, I was friends with two Africans on the bus who worked for Louis and Mary Leakey—one a cook and another a worker on the excavation. They were on a supply run and, at the Olduvai road, a camp Land Rover was waiting. I helped transfer the boxes of food and caught a ride to the excavation.

At that time of year, Olduvai Gorge was a long, dry, parched valley on the western side of the Eastern Rift Valley, which runs through Kenya and Tanzania. Olduvai had been investigated in 1913 for fossil remains by Hans Reck and again, in 1932, by Reck and young Louis Leakey, a Kenya-born archaeologist. In 1935, Mary and Louis Leakey set up camp here and began systematically collecting artifacts, animal bones and fossils.

At Olduvai, I found several canvas tents near the parking area and, further on, a work tent with the side-flaps rolled up. Inside, Mary

* In the years since 1960, Mary Leakey's discovery has been renamed *Paranthropus boisei*, one of a species that lived in both the Pliocene and the Pleistocene epochs, from about 1.2 million to about 2.6 million years ago. Another *Paranthropus* find, found by H. Mutya and Richard Leakey at Koobi Fora near Lake Turkana in Kenya in 1969, encouraged Richard Leakey to argue that *Paranthropus* was the first hominid to use stone tools.

Leakey was at a table strewn with artifacts, talking intently with two African assistants. When I was introduced by the cook, she immediately rose to shake hands, brushed the dust from her khaki skirt, and waved me to a canvas chair.

"Good, oh good," she said with a broad smile. "An excuse for lunch and word from the outside world."

In due course it was agreed that, since I was not there to work on the dig, I should have lunch, have a good "look about," and after tea take the mail and a box of artifacts with one of the drivers to Nairobi.

Over a lunch of sandwiches, fruit and tea, I learned that Mary Leakey had discovered *Zinjanthropus* on July 17, 1959. The find was a well-preserved cranium of a 1.75 million-year-old male that she and Louis Leakey named "Nutcracker Man." They called the discovery *Zinjanthropus boisei*, "Zinj" for the Arabic term for East Africa, "anthropus" for ape-human. "Boisei" was for Charles Boise, the philanthropist who supported the work at the time.

"Why 'Nutcracker Man'?" I asked as we hiked along a path to where a crew was digging.

"These people had big teeth with thick enamel," she said, "and a diet of hard nuts and seeds and roots. The ground cover then was full of vegetation, not so dry, a lot more to eat, more animals to hunt. I see this place as a great refrigerator, a great food store. The easy food, I think, was the reason these creatures, or their ancestors, wandered from the rainforests." *



In Nairobi, after I dropped the mail, I spent time trying to get a visa for the Sudan, which turned out to be a long process, and collecting information on Uganda and the Eastern Congo. It was also in Nairobi that I learned witchcraft beliefs could have a lot of social applications. The Mau Mau rebellion was one. Although Kenya was peaceful at that time, the Mau Mau land war that had raged across the country's central highlands six years before was still a vivid memory.

Witchcraft threats were used extensively by Mau Mau leaders to terrorize recruits into submission and to keep them from breaking