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## **Colonialism and the spread of disease: the case of Ileje district, Tanzania 1890-1950s**

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This study examines the relationship between colonialism and the spread of diseases in Ileje district from 1890 to the 1950s. The theoretical framework of social constructionism or political ecology guided the study. The basis of this theory is that diseases emerge and spread in response to the social, economic and political transformations that take place in the society. The methodology used in the study was the historical approach. The approach integrated library, archival and oral data in reconstructing the history of diseases in the district. The study developed three main findings. First, conducive environment for the spread of disease in Ileje district began from the second half of the nineteenth century. This period was associated with the spread of smallpox, cholera, jiggers and dysentery. The basis of these diseases was long distance trade, slave trade as well as Bemba, Ngoni and Sangu raiding. Second, the period from 1890 to the 1920s, was characterized by the penetration of colonialism and fast spread of diseases. The penetration process led to consolidation of portage, development of transport networks, taxation, wars and intersociety interactions. These transformations became determinant of diseases such as rinderpest, jiggers, sleeping sickness and influenza. Third, the consolidation of British colonialism in the district from the late 1920s to the 1950s transformed Ileje district into peasantry coffee production and migrant labour system. These conditions became the basis of diseases such as tuberculosis, malnutrition and sexually transmitted diseases. The study concludes that the history of the spread of diseases in Ileje district is embedded in the history of integration of the district into colonialism.