

**“Our Mother is Afro-Shirazi, Our Father is the Revolution”**

The 1964 Zanzibar Revolution in Tanzanian History



*Zanzibar City gate, reading “Mama Yetu ni Afro-Shirazi, Baba Yetu ni Mapinduzi,” 1968.*

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## Introduction

**Packaging the Past: Historical Effacement and the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution**

“History is subversive. And it is because it is actually subversive of the existing system that there have been attempts to arrest it. But how can one arrest the wheels of history? So they try to rewrite history, make up official history [...] then maybe they and the people will not hear the real call of history, will not hear the real lesson of history.”  
– Ngugi Wa Thiong’o<sup>1</sup>

When UNESCO designated the Stonetown area of Zanzibar as a World Heritage Site in 2000, the Tanzanian government released a history of the Zanzibar archipelago specifically for the tourist trade. Tourism to the islands had increased dramatically since Zanzibar opened to foreign visitors in the mid 1990s, and the UNESCO designation was seen as a great success for the Tanzanian historians and archaeologists who had lobbied for it. Reports and papers were published, the municipal government placed signs and plaques describing the merchants’ mansions and palaces of the old city throughout Stonetown’s labyrinthine squares and alleyways, and a lavish state museum opened inside a nineteenth century dispensary that was formerly a symbol of the city’s decay and poverty. Zanzibar’s history received wider international attention than it ever had before, and the level of interest in the islands reached a high point both in academic circles and in popular histories.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic stories of the Zanzibari slave trade, the extreme wealth of the Sultans in pre-colonial days, and the seductive image of khaki-wearing Englishmen playing out colonial politics on cricket fields and verandahs all captured the public imagination, and the people who control the tourist trade capitalized on that fascination.

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<sup>1</sup> Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, *Moving The Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1993), 96-97.

<sup>2</sup> The perfect example of where these circles converge is in the perennially popular memoirs of Princess Salme, a nineteenth century member of the Sultan’s family whose diary has been the focus of much academic enquiry, as well as being sold in Zanzibar’s tourist markets next to picture postcards and travel-sized spice samples.

Emily Ruete (Princess Salme of Oman and Zanzibar), *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar*, (New York: M. Wiener Pub., 1989).

Zanzibar's history quickly became part of a package, right alongside the hotel room and the seafood buffet.

However, both UNESCO and the tourist trade that profited from the World Heritage Site designation left out an important part of Zanzibar's history. Nowhere among Zanzibar's many monuments and historical markers is a single reference to the 1964 Revolution, in which thousands of people were killed, the Sultanate was overthrown, and Tanzania as it is known today was born. In the World Heritage Committee's voluminous documents relating to Zanzibar's history, the revolution is mentioned in one sentence, and the year 1964 is only referred to because certain construction codes changed in that year.<sup>3</sup> The codes changed because the entire legal system was rewritten by the revolutionary government, but that is not mentioned. The effacement of the revolution from the official history is complete, and it leaves considerable gaps in the history of the islands from colonialism to the present day. Simply walking around Stonetown hints that something is missing. Why is part of the city called "East Berlin"? Why are there so many opposition party graffiti in certain neighborhoods? And why are the nurses at the municipal hospital Chinese?

Historians have had difficulty fitting the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution into any kind of narrative of Tanzanian history, even when sanitizing it for tourism is not part of the goal. The kind of effacement represented by the UNESCO case is one way that the 1964 Revolution has been treated, but it is only one of many. Other histories of Tanzania have neglected Zanzibar entirely, treating it as a separate country with an entirely separate history. This conception is sustained by the fact that, although they are still one country,

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<sup>3</sup> "The Stone Town of Zanzibar" [sic], World Heritage Committee Nomination Documentation, 2 December 2000, No. 173rev, 161.

Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania operate relatively autonomously today. They have different domestic policies, different laws, and different immigration authorities. In a constitutional arrangement that was loosely modeled after Northern Ireland's confederation with Britain, they share a foreign office, a tax code, and their armed forces. Despite their relative autonomy, they are united by a single citizenship (Tanzanian) and a national language (Kiswahili). Alternatively, it has also been seen as a rupture in an otherwise peaceful history of trade and cosmopolitan interaction among peace-loving people. The fact that Tanzania has not had a successful military coup since becoming independent, and has never initiated a war with another country,<sup>4</sup> is a point of pride for many Tanzanians. The 1964 revolution has to be explained away for that history to make sense, and many historians have attempted to do just that. It is constructed as a brief aberration, a just uprising against an aggressive foreign government, or as a conflict that was really perpetrated by outsiders (whether Chinese, American, or Russian).

Conceptions of racial identity and citizenship are central to discussions about Zanzibari politics, but they cannot be treated as un-interrogated truths. Terms like "Arab," "African," "mainlander," and "Zanzibari," are used extensively here, but none of them have universally agreed-upon meanings. Race and ideas about race develop and are mediated through complex social and material relationships, and they cannot be detached from those relationships. Moreover, North American ideas about race cannot be easily mapped onto Tanzania, or East Africa. While many of the sources cited here use the terms "Arab" and "African" to refer to physical appearance, that does not explain their meaning sufficiently. They operate as indicators of lineage, regional identification, and

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<sup>4</sup> The war to depose Idi Amin is almost universally seen as a response to Amin's invasion of Tanzania, rather than an act of aggression by Tanzania.

class identity, which cannot be reduced to physiology. Nadra Osman Hashim argues that the true fault lines in Zanzibari society are not racial, but economic and linguistic.<sup>5</sup> It is true that speaking Swahili with a “Bantu” dialect, being able to read Arabic, and having access to economic resources all determine race to a greater extent than physiology. However, whatever the “true” nature of race in Zanzibar’s history, the terms that have passed down are “Arab” and “African,” rather than other, more neutral ones.

Since many Zanzibari historians articulate the history of the archipelago using a language of race and racism, that language is worth investigating. Not all of the sources used here acknowledge the process by which Arab and African identities came to be in Zanzibar, and many of them treat them as inherent, rather than constructed. When a source says, for example, that a man was killed because he was Arab, this should be taken seriously and not dismissed as “colonized” or pathological thinking. But it should also be remembered that “Arab” can mean many things, only one of which has to do with phenotype. While terms like “Arab” and “African” are contentious, they are the terms that most of the sources on Zanzibar’s history use, and will be used here as well.

This thesis does not aim to provide a history of race in Zanzibar, nor does it attempt to provide an authoritative idea of Zanzibari history. Rather, it will attempt to do two things. First it will link the 1964 Revolution, in all of its violence and discord, with the Nyererean idea of Tanzanian citizenship that developed in the years following unification. This notion of citizenship as non-racial, non-ethnic, non-regional, and united through the Swahili language is often linked to Nyerere’s personal objectives and opinions. While Nyerere was certainly an important figure in that process, his force of

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<sup>5</sup> Nadra Osman Hashim, *Language and Resistance in Zanzibar*, unpublished dissertation (University of Virginia, 2006), 2.

will does not sufficiently explain why the United Republic of Tanzania came to look the way it did. This thesis will investigate the role that the 1964 Revolution and the memory of it played in defining and mediating Tanzanian nationhood. Secondly, it will narrate a history of the 1964 Revolution that does not sever it from the rest of Tanzanian history. While the revolution was unexpected by nearly everyone, that does not mean that it came out of a historical vacuum. The revolution has to be explained in terms of what went on before it – not as an outside intervention by the US or the USSR, or as an isolated instance of racial or tribal warfare, as it has often been discussed.

Tanzania is unique today for many reasons. It is the only African country with an African language as its official and national language, and one of the few countries in Africa that is still ruled by the political party which ushered in independence. It is also unique in that, with the possible exception of Cameroon, it is the most important offspring of the Pan-African movement to have survived into the present day. The other states and blocs that were formed in the spirit of Pan-African unity – the Mali Federation, East African Community, the United Arab Republic – all collapsed shortly after they were founded. The union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika that followed the 1964 Revolution still exists today. A good question, which is beyond the scope of this thesis but should still be kept in mind, is why that is. Part of the answer lies in the character of the revolution itself, and in the complex relationships that characterized Zanzibari political life both before and after it. This is not to say that there is a direct line between the 1964 Revolution and what Tanzania is today. The revolution was instrumental in formulating an idea of what it means to be Tanzanian, but it should be recognized that Tanzanian identity was created through a discursive process, and the revolution is not the

only element that informed it. In fact, many Tanzanians have never been to Zanzibar, and most have probably given it little thought beyond hearing about it in primary school.

Nonetheless, the revolution influenced many of the social and political movements in early postcolonial Tanzania which made the state what it is today, and there is some causation there. The debates that took place over what constitutes Tanzanian citizenship, how Tanzanian language policy ought to look, how the country should orient its foreign relations, and a number of other factors were directly influenced by the 1964 Revolution. This connection has been overlooked in the past. It will be developed in chapter three. Historical scholarship was often the location of those debates, and scholarly discourse was the mechanism by which the memory of the revolution affected the social transformations described in chapter three. Chapter four will map some of the historiographical terrain of the revolution in order to show the link between the memory of the revolution and the political situations that it influenced. This is necessarily a selective process; there is a wide body of Tanzanian literature on the revolution in Swahili, English, and Arabic. This thesis will focus primarily on Swahili and English sources, especially ones that have traditionally neglected. Swahili pedagogical materials used in Tanzanian public schools, memoirs of the revolution by people in the Zanzibari diaspora, and Swahili official histories of the revolution will be emphasized. These are sources that have often been dismissed as biased, marginal, or propagandist. This may be true, but they tell a great deal about how the Tanzanian state constructed and presented the 1964 Revolution for the Tanzanian reading public.

The tendency to see the mainland and the islands as two distinct entities operating completely autonomously is problematic, and perhaps represents a tendency in historical



scholarship on Africa to take borders too literally. Although Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania do function with considerable autonomy, this obscures the fact that contemporary conceptions of what is Tanzanian have been mediated by interactions between the state's constituent parts.



*Map of East Africa*

United Nations Cartographic Section



Map of Zanzibar and Pemba

Perry-Castañeda Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin

## Chapter One

**Zanzibar and Tanganyika Before the Revolution**

“The islands of Zanzibar are places of mixture, you can’t say that an African is truly an islander or an Arab is truly an islander or a Shirazi is truly an islander.” – Amani Thani<sup>6</sup>

Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania have historically been part of commercial and intellectual networks which encompass the Middle East, the African interior, South Asia, and Europe. Zanzibar, especially, has been an important commercial and intellectual entrepôt. At various times it was a territory of Oman, the seat of the Omani sultanate, the metropole of an inland African empire based on the slave trade, the center of the clove trade, a British protectorate, and an independent “Arab” state. All of these experiences are reflected in the Zanzibar of 1964, and Zanzibar’s pre-revolutionary history had a considerable impact on how the revolution and its aftermath developed.

*Geography and demographics in Zanzibar and Tanzania*

Zanzibar is an archipelago twenty two miles off the coast of the Tanzanian mainland, consisting of the islands of Unguja (also referred to as Zanzibar Island, or simply Zanzibar) and the smaller Pemba. The islands have been densely populated throughout their recorded history. At the time of the revolution, Unguja had a population of 165,253 and Pemba had a population of 133,858.<sup>7</sup> Zanzibar’s political and intellectual life has historically been concentrated in Stonetown, which is the old part of the city where the Omani sultanate was headquartered. Surrounding Stonetown is the much larger area of Ng’ambo (also known as the “African quarter”), which is where the majority of

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<sup>6</sup> Amani Thani, in Sauda Barwani (ed.), *Unser Leben von der Revolution und Danach - Maisha yetu kabla ya mapinduzi na baadaye* (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2003), 138.

<sup>7</sup> John Middleton and Jane Campbell, *Zanzibar: Its Society and its Politics*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 10-11.

the city's population lives. As in Dar es Salaam and many other East African cities,<sup>8</sup> urban space in Zanzibar City has historically been organized along racial lines.

Stonetown was traditionally where Zanzibar's Arab, Asian, and European populations lived and worked, and as such it was the center of both the sultanate and the British colonial government. Ng'ambo developed into the area reserved for "Africans," both Zanzibaris who identified as such and more recent arrivals from the mainland.

*African identities in Zanzibar – Waafrika wa bara and Washirazi*

Zanzibar's demographic composition results from centuries of immigration from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. The racial classifications and categories that exist there are complicated and constantly shifting, but there are some broad currents in Zanzibar's demographic history. There has historically been an "African" majority who can trace their roots back to various tribes on the mainland. Many identify as members of the Tumbatu and Hadimu tribes, which are thought by many to be Zanzibar's indigenous ethnic groups. Many members of these groups also identify themselves as "Shirazi", and claim ancestry from Persian traders who operated in Zanzibar until the Omani sultanate took power. Despite the name, most Shirazis have historically identified themselves as Africans, and have more frequently allied themselves with Africans from the mainland than with Asians or Arabs.

The rest of the "African" population is made up of more recent immigrants to the islands. Mainland Africans came to Zanzibar in large numbers as slaves, and for many years they formed the majority population. In the late nineteenth century the British colonial government estimated that Pemba consisted of two thousand Arabs, sixty

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<sup>8</sup> James R. Brennan and Andrew Burton, *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*, (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2007), 4.

thousand slaves, and twenty five thousand “Wapemba,” or Shirazis.<sup>9</sup> Descendants of slaves came to see themselves as Shirazi, and they were generally accepted as such. This demonstrates that ideas of racial identity in Zanzibar are often fluid, and the categories that divide the island can be crossed in a number of ways. Taking on a Shirazi name, becoming Muslim if one was not already, marrying a Shirazi, or settling in a Shirazi area as a peasant farmer or fisherman were all ways of taking on that identity. This was an attractive prospect to many slaves and their descendents who wanted to rid themselves of the stigma of slavery.

In the twentieth century, mainlanders came to Zanzibar as wage laborers in order to take lucrative jobs on clove and rice plantations. In 1948 there were approximately 50,000 people living on Zanzibar and Pemba who had been born on the mainland, mostly in Tanganyika and Nyasaland.<sup>10</sup> This represented a considerable demographic shift for the islands in that many of them did not identify themselves as Shirazi. Many mainlanders were not Muslim, and many did not speak Swahili. Africans from the mainland confronted Zanzibar’s Arab minority as a source of competition for government jobs, and as a class enemy Arabs controlled the majority of the plantation economy.<sup>11</sup> This kind of animosity was not universally felt, and there are examples of immigrants from the mainland who succeeded within the plantation economy. However, there was a considerable divide between those who thought of themselves as Arab, as African, as Shirazi, and as Asian at the time of the revolution.

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<sup>9</sup> British Vice-Consul for Pemba, “Annual report for 1896,” (London: Printing Office, 1896), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Middleton and Campbell, 21.

<sup>11</sup> D. Mukangara, “Race, Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in Zanzibar,” in T.L. Maliyamkono, *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, (Dar es Salaam: TEMA Publishers Company Ltd., 2000), 42.

Many Zanzibaris from the mainland felt alienated from the islands' commercial and political life before 1964, and their feelings of powerlessness contributed to mainlanders' support for the revolution. The revolution happened when it did partially because of this demographic change, and it should be interpreted in the context of increased migration from the mainland. The African interior had ceased to be merely an economic hinterland and a source of labor for Zanzibar, and it became the place of origin, literally and in the popular imagination, for a significant portion of Zanzibar's population.

*The "immigrant minorities" in pre-revolutionary Zanzibar*

Arabs made up the second-largest racial group in Zanzibar in 1964. They constituted about seventeen percent of the population, but controlled nearly all of the land and much of the archipelago's political power. Many were descendents of the Omani families that had ruled the African littoral since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The royal family of the Omani Seyyid Said bin Sultan and his descendents, who first arrived in the early nineteenth century, controlled the best land and were given a high degree of political autonomy by the British colonial government. They were viewed as upstarts by many of the older Arab families in Zanzibar, but by the twentieth century they had become the wealthiest and most well-connected of the Arab groups. During the colonial period, Britain developed a policy of indirect rule in Zanzibar designed to administer the government through the most efficient, lowest cost method possible. This meant only keeping the minimum possible number of British bureaucrats on the islands, and drawing extensively from local populations to staff offices. They recognized that the Sultan's government was already effective, and as they did in other places, they used the existing structure of his authority to pursue their own ends. This created a large class of Arab

administrators, teachers, and professionals<sup>12</sup> who would come to form a large portion of Zanzibar's educated elite. Not all Arabs on Zanzibar were wealthy, though. There were large numbers of recent, poor immigrants who worked as hawkers, laborers, and sailors. Many had intentions of returning to the Arabian Peninsula, but few did so until after the revolution. They, and generally not the Omani upper class, were targeted in the pogroms that accompanied the 1964 Revolution.

Asians made up roughly ten percent of Zanzibar's population at the time of the revolution. Many of them had been brought to Zanzibar by the British as civil servants, and the face of British colonialism in Zanzibar was more often Asian than European. There was also an Indian and Goan commercial class that pre-dated the British incursion. Many of them were involved in trading, and the island's import-export businesses were mostly run by Asians. They benefitted from linkages with South Asia, Europe, and other Asian communities in East Africa. Intercontinental kinship networks ensured that trade was often a family affair, and this was one of the most common grievances that East African communities had against their Asian neighbors, both on Zanzibar and on the mainland.<sup>13</sup> Asian involvement in the British colonial bureaucracy reinforced the idea that they were clients of the British, and contributed to their image as foreigners in Zanzibar. They were targeted as enemies of the state during the revolution and the period that followed it. Although there was a European population on Zanzibar, it peaked at less

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<sup>12</sup> Michael F. Lofchie, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 62.

<sup>13</sup> Bert N. Adams, "The Kin Network and the Adjustment of the Ugandan Asians," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* Vol. 36, No. 1, (Feb., 1974): 190.



than half of one percent, and was almost entirely concentrated in a single neighborhood in Stonetown.<sup>14</sup>

Mainland Tanganyika was similarly diverse, but the larger size and population of the mainland made dynamics different than they were in Zanzibar. Tanganyika had a population of 10,179,000 in 1965, and there were approximately 120 ethnic groups and 130 languages spoken in mainland Tanzania. Largely thanks to an aggressive policy of language standardization, Swahili was spoken by nearly everyone as a second language.<sup>15</sup> As in Zanzibar, there was a South Asian minority of 85,900, and an Arab minority of 25,600. Most were concentrated in coastal cities, including the capital at Dar es Salaam. These groups maintained significant contacts with the South Asian and Arab communities in Zanzibar, which would become important when they were compelled to leave Zanzibar during the revolution. There was a small population of European settlers centered around the city of Arusha and in Dar es Salaam, but unlike in other settler colonies they did not play a large role in post-independence Tanganyikan politics.

#### *Zanzibari history up to the 1964 revolution*

Much of Zanzibar's political history is tied up with the interactions and developments that took place between and within the different groups described above. They are not always static or discrete identities, but at certain points in Zanzibar's history they have been treated as such. Since Zanzibar's history figured so large for both those who carried out the revolution and those who criticized it, it is necessary to look into how these groups interacted long before 1964. Although the revolution's mid-twentieth century context is important, Zanzibar's colonial and pre-colonial history was mobilized

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<sup>14</sup> Middleton and Campbell, 11.

<sup>15</sup> John Hatch, *Tanzania*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 8.

widely during and after the revolution. Therefore, it is not only important for explaining the background of the revolution, but for determining how the different revolutionary parties conceived of themselves.

The islands were ruled by families originally from Southern Arabia, and there were strong ties between Pemba and the powerful Mazrui family that ruled Mombasa on the mainland. The Portuguese declared sovereignty over Zanzibar in 1510. As nominal as it was, Portuguese rule was reviled by the ruling families, and when the Portuguese fortress at Hormuz in the Persian Gulf was captured by Omani Arabs in 1622, the East African ruling families wasted no time in appealing to the Omanis for help in overthrowing the Portuguese. The sultan of Oman agreed to help, recognizing both the Omani ancestry of the ruling families and the economic opportunity that involvement in Zanzibar offered. The Portuguese were expelled by 1698, and Zanzibar and the East African city-states came under Omani suzerainty. The families that had ruled before the Portuguese arrival continued to hold power.

As trade in the Indian Ocean region increased and Oman's empire in East Africa expanded, Zanzibar became highly important, and the Busaidi Sultan Seyyid Said moved his court from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1832. Zanzibar went from being a far-flung territory that was only nominally part of the Omani empire to being its metropole. The empire became extremely rich through trade in slaves and agricultural products, and Seyyid Said and his successors Seyyid Majid and Seyyid Barghash consolidated Arab rule in the African littoral throughout the nineteenth century.

Germany began to take interest in East Africa in the 1880s, and in 1885 Kaiser Wilhelm I annexed 60,000 square miles that were part of the Sultan's mainland

territory.<sup>16</sup> The next year, Germany and Britain met to divide up the Sultan's territories on the mainland, leaving the Sultan only a ten mile wide strip of land along six hundred miles of coast. The period between 1890 and 1910 was characterized by a creeping development of British authority in the Sultan's territories and court, much of which was accomplished under the aegis of the anti-slavery movement. Britain used its navy to stop the trade in slaves and other goods in East Africa and the Indian Ocean for supposedly humanitarian purposes throughout the nineteenth century,<sup>17</sup> but Britain was undoubtedly also looking to expand its sphere of influence in the region. Germany already controlled much of the East African mainland, and Britain wanted to set up an opposing sphere of influence.

Seyyid Hamoud was succeeded by his heirs, all of whom were close to the British government. The most important of them was Seyyid Khalifa bin Harub, who encouraged the idea that all people who lived on the island were "Zanzibaris," which was a more important political identity than Arab or African. He reigned from 1911 to his death in 1960. He was authoritarian, but was widely respected by his subjects, both Arab and non-Arab. Seyyid Khalifa bin Harub maintained stable, peaceful relations between Zanzibar's various communities and instituted moderate wealth re-distribution policies aimed at decreasing the divide between Stonetown's wealth and the poverty of the rural areas. Although he maintained peace between Zanzibar's constituent populations through political maneuvering and authoritarianism, his successors were not able to continue that legacy. He was succeeded by his son, Seyyid Abdullah bin Khalifa, who was sickly and

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<sup>16</sup> Norman R. Bennett, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1978), 124.

<sup>17</sup> Great Britain, Parliament, House of Lords, "Abstract of the report of the Lords Committees on the condition and treatment of the colonial slaves, and of the evidence taken by them on that subject: with notes by the editor," (London: Printed for the Society for the Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions, 1833).

died in 1963. His son Seyyid Jamshid bin Abdullah, the last sultan, was young and inexperienced, and was known more for his five hundred man pig hunting retinue than his political prowess.<sup>18</sup> When the revolution took place in January 1964, the complicated history of the islands described here was mobilized by all of the parties involved.

*Zanzibar's conflicting nationalisms*

The nationalist experience in Zanzibar is different from the nationalist movements that developed in Britain's mainland colonies in East Africa. This is a result not only of the agency and character of the nationalist leadership in Zanzibar, but of Zanzibar's demographics. The Tanzanian legal scholar Issa Shivji makes the point that African nationalism developed out of the Pan-African movement, and not the other way around. Pan-Africanism undoubtedly influenced at least one iteration of Zanzibari nationalism, but there was not only one version of nationalism at work. Zanzibar's history is unique in East Africa because two distinct nationalist movements developed, one "Zanzibari" (often mislabeled as "Arab") and one "Black African,"<sup>19</sup> in Shivji's terms. While the terms that Shivji uses to characterize these movements are contentious for various reasons, his basic idea is not. Zanzibar's nationalist history is characterized by a complicated antagonism that resulted in considerable bloodshed and deeply influenced how Tanzania came to be. These movements split the islands after the British colonial state was no longer around to heavy-handedly stifle democratic rule, and the fragile peace engineered by Seyyid Khalifa bin Harub unraveled under the authority of his descendents.

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<sup>18</sup> Annie Smyth and Adam Seftel, eds., *Tanzania: The Story of Julius Nyerere Through the Pages of Drum*, (Lanseria, South Africa; Bailey's African History Archives Reproduction, 1998), 86.

<sup>19</sup> Shivji himself was involved in Tanzania's early nationalist period, and he was particularly important as the intellectual face of "African socialism."

Issa G. Shivji, *Pan-Africanism or Pragmatism?: Lessons of the Tanganyika-Zanzibar Union*, (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2008), 18-19.

“Zanzibari” nationalism is exemplified by the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), which “sought legitimacy in the Zanzibari culture and custom rather than any form of Arabism.”<sup>20</sup> It expounded a multi-racial view of Zanzibar and Zanzibari history, and it articulated an idea of citizenship that was based more on adherence to a set of Islamic values and historical traditions than on racial identity. While Shivji and others accept the idea of the ZNP as legitimately multi-racial (though he disparages it as a party of the land-owning elite), many others saw its multi-racial rhetoric as a façade. The ZNP leadership remained primarily Arab throughout its existence, and it retained a close relationship with the Sultan that many took as evidence of an Arab bias.

The other main current in the islands’ nationalism is represented by the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP). The party primarily appealed to Shirazis and mainland Africans living on Zanzibar, and it was rooted in a racial idea of Zanzibari citizenship. It drew on the historical legacy of immigration and slavery to construct an idea of Arabs and Asians as foreigners in Zanzibar, and *black* Africans as the original inhabitants and legitimate rulers of Zanzibar. Both parties ultimately fractured under the stress of the independence movement, but even then they retained these basic identities.

*The Arab and African Associations: precursors to the parties*

The parties that determined the direction of Zanzibar’s politics in the post-colonial period largely had their roots in the colonial period. Although there was no doubt that Britain and the British client government of the Sultan were in charge, the limited democratic institutions that Britain allowed in Zanzibar were one of the early locations of nationalist discussion. The Legislative Council (Legco) was established in 1926, and was composed half of British officials and half of representatives of Zanzibar’s various racial

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 19.

groups. The most important political group to take part in the Legco was the Arab Association, which organized itself in the early 1950s partially in order to remove the British “before the African community could become politically organized”<sup>21</sup> for independence.

Meanwhile, the African Association and the Young African Union were formed around the same time by groups of civil servants and trade unionists in Zanzibar. Fearing the growing influence of these groups in the Legco, the British tried to eviscerate the parties by enforcing its ban on civil servants (who made up the majority of all of the parties’ leadership) from taking part in politics.<sup>22</sup> This forced out leaders on both sides, making room for a younger generation of politicians that included Abeid Karume, a dockworker who would become revolutionary Zanzibar’s first president. Significantly, many of the political elites who made up this generation had been trained in socialist countries. Egypt had instituted austerity measures that prevented young Muslim scholars from studying there as they had in the past, and as a result many of them turned to Cuba, Russia, and China for scholarships. When they returned home, they came, in the words of the historian Ali Saleh, “with their diplomas, but also with automatic weapons,”<sup>23</sup> (at least figuratively).

The African Association became increasingly militant throughout the 1950s, and in 1955 its newspaper *Afrika Kwetu* (*Our Africa*) warned “our foreign friends should not forget that our aim is self-government by Africans, the true leaders of Zanzibar, not self-government by Zanzibaris.”<sup>24</sup> This kind of language was common at the time, and it

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<sup>21</sup> Lofchie, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Shivji 2008, 21.

<sup>23</sup> Ali Saleh, *Zanzibar 1870 – 1972: Le drame de l’indépendance*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007), 109.

<sup>24</sup> *Afrika Kwetu*, 5 May 1955.

reflected the growing importance of distinctions like “Arab” and “African” in Zanzibar, which would later be the terms in which political identities were articulated and debated on the islands. These associations were not the direct predecessors of the ASP and the ZNP, but they set the stage for the parties to develop in the immediate years before the revolution.

*The origins of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party and the Afro-Shirazi Party*

The Zanzibar Nationalist Party was founded by radical members of the Arab Association and young people like Ahmed Lemki and Ali Muhsin al Barwani, both of whom had studied in Egypt and come into contact with the ideas of Pan-Arabism.<sup>25</sup> In 1953 they formed a multi-racial organization called the Zanzibar National Union, which two years later merged with a small peasant party called the National Party of the Subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar (NPSS) to form the ZNP. While most of its leadership was Arab, the ZNP was a multi-racial party that articulated Zanzibari citizenship as irrespective of race, although it was accused of excluding Africans from the mainland from its activities. Since many mainlanders were not born in Zanzibar or had few roots there (and because they formed the core of opposition to the ZNP), they were cast as foreigners in ZNP propaganda.

The Afro-Shirazi Party was formed in 1957 from a union between the leadership of the African Association (which was mainly composed of mainlanders) and the Unguja Shirazi Association (which the British had recognized as the African representatives to the Legco). The party was divided from the beginning, with Shirazis from Unguja enthusiastic about joining while those from Pemba were not. Pemban Shirazis did not

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<sup>25</sup> Ali Muhsin al Barwani, *Conflict and Harmony in Zanzibar: Memoirs*, (Dubai: Privately Printed, 1997), 109.

have the same close linkages with mainlanders that those on Unguja did, perhaps because there were fewer mainlanders on Pemba and they did not live together in close quarters as Shirazis and mainlanders did in the African neighborhoods of Stonetown. The party was led on Unguja by a Koranic teacher and a former railroad fireman, Thabit Kombo, who would later take charge of the revolutionary government's armed forces. Kombo was Shirazi, and had been deeply involved in Zanzibari politics since the early 1950s. He was especially important for his ability to bring Shirazis over to the side of the party, which otherwise would have mostly been made up of Africans from the mainland.<sup>26</sup> An important characteristic of the ASP was that it developed a close relationship with the Tanganyika African Association, later to become the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) under the leadership of Julius K. Nyerere. TANU was the major nationalist party in Tanganyika, and the linkages between the African nationalist party on the mainland and the one on Zanzibar would later facilitate the unification of Zanzibar and Tanganyika.

In the lead-up to the departure of the British, elections were organized to give greater autonomy to the Legco. The first elections were to be held in July of 1957, and the ethnic affiliations of Zanzibar's different political parties crystallized during the campaign process. Both the ZNP and the ASP thought that the British policy of ethnic representation rather than representation based on population size was unjust, and that the British used that policy expressly to ferment racial infighting.<sup>27</sup> Whether or not this was the intention, in the end it would be policy of a common electoral role that would

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<sup>26</sup> Minael-Hosanna O. Mdundo, *Masimulizi ya Sheikh Thabit Kombo Jecha*, (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1996), 75.

<sup>27</sup> Zanzibar Nationalist Party, *Whither Zanzibar? Growth and Policy of Zanzibar Nationalism*, (Zanzibar: Zanzibar Nationalist Party, 1960).



precipitate the most violence. At the beginning, both parties had similar political goals. Both called for independence and membership in the British Commonwealth, and for a localization of the civil service that would give Zanzibaris priority for lucrative government jobs. Both respected the authority of the Sultan, though the ASP would later call for (and accomplish) his removal.

The parties eventually developed different political platforms, but their differences remained primarily in their constituencies' racial composition. Both initially wanted a constitutional monarchy, but the ASP advocated a more gradual advance in order to allow Africans time to "catch up" with the Arabs and Asians who had enjoyed better access to education and employment under colonialism. In 1959, Sheikh Ameir Tajo of the ASP admitted at a public rally "that he had concurred in secret with the British Resident, Sir Henry Porter's views that Zanzibari Africans were not ready for independence."<sup>28</sup> The ZNP used this statement to claim that the ASP was opposed to *any* independence from Britain, while the ASP claimed that it was only calling for a delay so that African civil servants could become better integrated into the government bureaucracy before independence.

The main differences between the parties were not their policies, however, but their bases of support. The ASP was supported mainly by those who identified as Shirazis and mainland Africans, and it set itself up in opposition to the Arab support base of the ZNP. ASU propaganda claimed that "both the Arab Association and the Nationalist Party as a whole are composed of a majority of aliens, most of whom are foreign Arabs from Oman. The Arab Association and the ZNP jointly represent the immigrant minority class

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<sup>28</sup> Omar R. Mapuri, *Zanzibar: The 1964 Revolution: Achievements and Prospects*, (Dar es Salaam: TEMA Publishers Company, Ltd., 1996), 22.

[...] the ZNP was only organized as a bait to gain a majority [of African supporters] but it was and still is a vain attempt.”<sup>29</sup> Whether or not this is actually the case, it is important that *Afrika Kwetu* and other forms of ASU propaganda articulated the conflict between themselves and their political opponents as one between indigenes and foreigners.

The ASP was not the only party to tar its opponents as “foreigners.” The ZNP newspaper *Al Falaq* stated that “the majority of Africans in Zanzibar are aliens [...] the merger of Shirazis with the Africans was not a sensible move and foreign hands are really responsible for the great blunder which Shirazis were led to commit. And that, too, for the benefit of foreigners!”<sup>30</sup> The ZNP leadership presented themselves as the legitimate inheritors of political power in Zanzibar, and they used the Sultan’s stamp of approval to support that idea. Although the Sultan was a symbol of authoritarianism to many mainlanders, to Shirazis and others his reputation as a foreigner was tempered by the fact that he was also a figure of great wealth, power, and prestige. The ZNP continued to recruit Shirazis to their ranks by driving a division between them and mainland Africans, and they were largely successful.<sup>31</sup>

American historian Jonathan Glassman claims that many of the racial divisions that existed in Zanzibar at the time of the revolution came about as a result of the political maneuvering that took place during colonialism and the early nationalist era, when party propaganda and the popular news media caused “significant numbers of Zanzibaris of all political stripes [...] to think in terms of an *exclusionary national categorical order*.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Afrika Kwetu*, 9 May 1957.

<sup>30</sup> *Al Falaq*, 17 April 1957, cited in Lofchie, 175.

<sup>31</sup> Erik Magnet de Saissy, *The Role of the Ethnic Factor in the Politics of Pre-Revolutionary Zanzibar*, unpublished thesis, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 1979, 42.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathon Glassman, “Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar’s Newspaper Wars,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2000), 397.

This kind of thinking would increase in both the Arab and African presses as time went on and the revolution grew closer. A good illustration of the lack of a unified nationalist project can be found in the controversy over the newspaper *Al Falaq*. The newspaper ran editorials criticizing British rule in Zanzibar and elsewhere, and as a result the Arab Association committee, which owned *Al Falaq*, was arrested. The sedition case against the newspaper helped to consolidate Arab opposition to British colonial rule, but did not incense the African community in the same way. The majority of Zanzibar's African political leadership did not side with the Arab Association.<sup>33</sup> While they did not side with the British openly, this was a clear snub to the Arab political leadership. Tanzanian historian Lawrence E.Y. Mbogoni has called this reaction "the first sign of the polarization of Zanzibar nationalist politics along racial lines, despite the predominance of Muslims in Zanzibar's population."<sup>34</sup> Whether or not it was the first sign of this divergence of interests, it was certainly a clear one.

The ZNP was defeated in the 1957 elections, though not decisively defeated by the ASU. The majority of the seats in the Legco went to independents who were supported by the ASU,<sup>35</sup> which reflects that the party had considerable popular support, but it was not well-organized enough to field its own candidates in all of Zanzibar's constituencies. The main result of the 1957 election was a growth of political and racial antipathy in Zanzibar, which set the stage for the ethnic violence of the 1960s. They also precipitated the first in a series of splits in the two main parties that would shift the leadership and ultimately make the racialized associations of the parties even more

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<sup>33</sup> Lawrence E.Y. Mbogoni, "Censoring the Press in Colonial Zanzibar," in Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Giblin (eds.), *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 213.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Lofchie, 176.

concrete. In December of 1959, ASP leader Mohamed Shamte announced the formation of the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP), which was led by Shirazis and took an anti-mainlander stance. This weakened the ASP's vision of Shirazi-mainlander unity considerably, especially on Pemba where the new party's main support came from.

### *The elections of 1961*

The election of 1961 was the most important election to take place in Zanzibar to date because it would have self-governing powers for the first time. Zanzibar remained a British protectorate at that time, but the islands were to become effectively independent. The election was especially important because whichever party won in 1961 would likely lead Zanzibar into formal independence. The election itself was accomplished peacefully, with the ASP winning 49.9 percent of the vote and the ZNP 35 percent, and each party winning ten seats in the legislature. The ZPPP won three seats, with thirteen percent of the vote.<sup>36</sup> The ZNP and the ZPPP formed an alliance, and suddenly the parties that had received a lower percentage of the vote could control the legislature. This resulted in popular outrage.

On June 1, 1961, mobs gathered at polling stations and violence ensued. Hundreds were injured, and at least sixty people were killed, most of whom were Arabs. The magazine *Drum* reported that Arabs were found "with hands crudely chopped off at the wrists or with other terrible wounds. The injuries inflicted on them were all of the same pattern. They were too much like the atrocities the slavers had carried out to be accidental."<sup>37</sup> The invocation of slavery is important, and will be discussed in full in chapter four. The violence of 1961 prefigured the pogroms of the 1964 revolution on a

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<sup>36</sup> Smyth and Seftel, 88.

<sup>37</sup> *Drum*, July 1961, *ibid.*

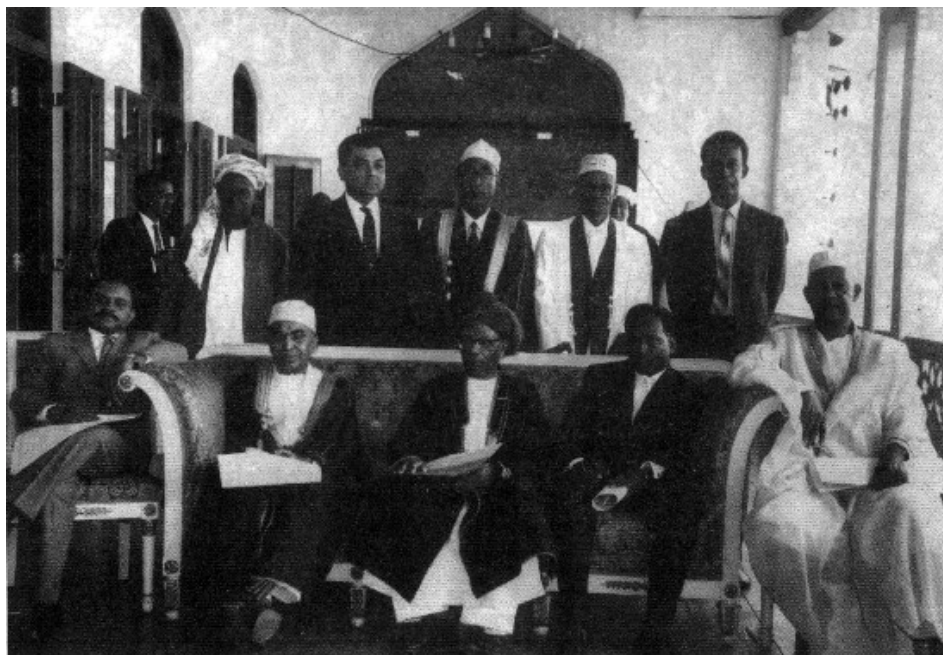
smaller scale, and both were fuelled by the feelings of alienation and resentment that were felt by (or ascribed to) Africans opposed to the ZNP/ZPPP monopoly on political power. Troops were brought from Kenya to stop the violence, and with British help the joint ZNP/ZPPP government took power. This government kept a tenuous hold on political power in Zanzibar through the 1962 Constitutional Conference in London, and up to Zanzibar's formal independence from Britain on December 10, 1963.

At that time, Mohammed Shante was elected Prime Minister in another contested election, and the Union Jack was lowered on Zanzibar for the last time. The formal ceremony when Prince Philip handed power over to the Sultan took place on a hot December night on a cricket pitch south of Zanzibar Town. Government officials, diplomats, and the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslim community, were all present as guests of honor. Leaders of the African opposition parties were seated behind them, and an American diplomat present interpreted their “ominous”<sup>38</sup> silence throughout the ceremony as opposition to what was seen as “*uhuru wa waarabu tu*” – freedom for Arabs only. A Tanzanian historian with close ties to the ASP, Omar R. Mapuri, claimed that the British “left behind a political mess and a complete failure to deliver justice of which they surely cannot be proud. Alternative routes had to be sought by the victimized African majority and the final solution was to come through the 1964 Revolution.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Don Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar: An American's Cold War Tale*, (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 2002), xvii.

<sup>39</sup> Mapuri, 38.



*Members of the ZNP government*

Immediately before the revolution, one more political realignment took place on Zanzibar which changed the political dynamics of the islands. A break took place within the ZNP, which resulted in a large number of defectors allying themselves with the ASP. This was led by Abdulrahman Mohammed Babu, who created the Umma Party in August of 1963.<sup>40</sup> Babu disagreed with the ZNP leadership about the timetable for independence. The ZNP did not call for immediate independence, which Babu saw as weak and indicative of too close a relationship with the British. He took some of the most radical members of the ZNP with him and formed an opposition party, which was socialist. The Umma Party developed close linkages with the ASP, and would later merge with it to form a Revolutionary Council in the days following the revolution.<sup>41</sup> The radical Umma Party would an important role in laying the ideological groundwork for the post-revolutionary government, but the connection between Babu and the revolution itself

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<sup>40</sup> Middleton and Campbell, 61.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

remains ambiguous. Whether or not he was a pawn of Nyerere's administration as his detractors in the ZNP claimed, or of the Chinese, he remained close to TANU and to his allies in the ASP throughout the revolution and unification. Babu played an important role in the formation of Tanzanian national identity, but his disagreement with the party establishment over the unification process would later alienate him from the party that he helped create.

Ideas of alterity and racial otherness were extremely important in the nationalist discourses going on in Zanzibar, and those ideas would provide the zeal that made the revolution as destructive and violent as it was. While nearly everyone in Zanzibar was Muslim, Islam did unite the political leadership there as it did elsewhere. Class divides sometimes corresponded to divides within the Muslim community, and political significance was often ascribed to religious differences. Zanzibar's Muslim community was highly diverse; within the majority population of Sunni Muslims, smaller groups of Ibadhis, Ismailis, and Itthnasheriis all claimed religious and political privileges which prevented a unified Islamic leadership from developing. The contradictory and restrictive ideas of Zanzibari citizenship that developed in the 1950s and early 1960s meant that no one in Zanzibar could uncontroversially call him or herself "Zanzibari," and this situation presented a unique set of challenges to the post-revolution government and the unified Tanzanian state that rose out of the revolution.

#### *Nationalism and independence in Tanganyika*

Meanwhile on the mainland, a more peaceful lead-up to independence was taking place. After World War II, the British Colonial office "resolved not to retreat from Africa in disarray but to take the initiative in creating viable and friendly successor states,"

including in Tanganyika.<sup>42</sup> This was probably the British intention in Zanzibar as well, but the different conditions surrounding independence there ultimately resulted in an independent regime that was decidedly cool towards Britain. Although there were often tensions between Tanganyika's larger tribes, with European settlers, and with the Asian entrepreneurial elite, Tanganyikan nationalism did not take the same racially oriented character that nationalist movements on Zanzibar did. The leadership of the Tanganyikan African National Union made attempts to be respectful of Tanganyika's "foreign" minorities, while still constructing an idea of Tanganyikan citizenship that was first and foremost African. TANU articulated the idea that "this territory, although multi-racial in population, is primarily an African country and must be developed as such."<sup>43</sup> The emphasis on Africanization would eventually fade away, which had a great deal to do with the revolution.

As in many African colonies, the vanguards of the independence movements were made up primarily of educated elites, many of whom had attended universities in the colonial metropole and worked as civil servants in the colonial regime. TANU had its roots in the Tanganyika African Association (TAA), which was formed in 1929 with the approval of Governor Donald Cameron. In the 1940s, a group of radical Tanganyikan students at Makerere University in Uganda attempted to gain membership in the TAA, which denied them membership for fear that the association's moderate stance would be compromised. They realized that it would be easier to use the TAA, with its many

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<sup>42</sup> John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 475.

<sup>43</sup> James F. Scotton, "Tanganyika's African Press, 1937-1960: A Nearly Forgotten Pre-Independence Forum," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (Apr., 1978), 10.



branches and well-organized infrastructure, than it would be to establish their own network for political organizing.<sup>44</sup>

Upon returning to Dar es Salaam, the students sought out a group of sympathetic ex-servicemen, formed an opposition to the TAA leadership, and in 1950, took over the TAA. This group included Julius Nyerere, who would later become Tanganyika's first president. In 1953, the TAA was reorganized as the Tanganyika African National Union with a mandate to take all action possible to ensure Tanganyika's independence, and, as its charter said, to combat "tribalism [...], racialism and racial discrimination."<sup>45</sup> Calls for African unity were not officially articulated until later, in the late 1950s. Party membership also remained racially exclusive until 1962, and even then non-Africans sometimes were discouraged from joining.<sup>46</sup>

Although much of TANU's membership consisted of rural subsistence farmers, it also had considerable support in urban areas and among trade unionists and ex-servicemen. One of TANU's strengths was its ability to draw support from many different social strata, but its leadership remained primarily urban, educated, and male.<sup>47</sup> This ability to cut across different demographics and classes would later serve TANU well during the process of unification between Zanzibar and Tanganyika. TANU's main opposition came from the United Tanganyika Party (UTP), which had the support of the British government. It was a multi-racial party that mainly represented the interests of Asians and Europeans, though it had some support from African colonial bureaucrats

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<sup>44</sup> Hatch, 107.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>47</sup> Bibi Titi Mohammed, one of TANU's founding members and head of the party's women's recruitment activities, is a notable exception.

Andrew Burton, "Townsmen in the Making: Social Engineering and Citizenship in Dar es Salaam, c. 1945-1960," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2003), 362.

who were not permitted to join TANU by the British government. It was disparagingly called the “*utupu*” (“nothingness”) party<sup>48</sup> by critics who saw it as little more than Britain’s sham attempt to placate settlers and maintain their own interests during the democratization process. The UTP was important in that it allowed TANU to “sharpen [the party’s] weapons,”<sup>49</sup> analytically and administratively, but it never truly threatened TANU’s ascendancy as the main nationalist political party on the mainland.

One of the most important characteristics of TANU, and in fact of independence movements in many parts of Africa, is the importance that it attached to unity. The way that TANU constructed its idea of Tanganyikan citizenship was influenced by what John Iliffe called the party’s “obsession with unanimity, its concern for collective rather than individual freedom,”<sup>50</sup> and its insistence on African unity. The idea of a non-“racial” Tanganyikan citizenship was not to come until after the revolution, and in fact it was one of the revolution’s major contributions to Tanzania’s constitutional development. However, the non-“tribal” conception of what it meant to be Tanganyikan was part of TANU’s vision from the beginning. The other idea that strongly influenced Nyerere and TANU was Pan-Africanism. Nyerere said that Africa’s colonially-constructed borders were “ethnological and geographical nonsense,” and that “it is impossible to draw a line anywhere on the map of Africa which does not violate the history or future needs of the people.”<sup>51</sup> While Nyerere made frequent entreaties to other African leaders in East Africa and elsewhere with varying degrees of success, he recognized that the most direct way to implement Pan-African ideas was to use them in domestic policies. This helps to explain

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<sup>48</sup> Iliffe 1979, 561.

<sup>49</sup> Hatch, 117.

<sup>50</sup> Iliffe 1979, 549.

<sup>51</sup> William Edgett Smith, *Nyerere of Tanzania*, (Nairobi: Transafrica Publishers, 1974), 88.

why Nyerere was so keen to develop linkages with the Afro-Shirazi Party, and why unification was facilitated so quickly (and relatively smoothly) after the revolution. It was consonant with his own political convictions, but that was not the only reason why it happened.

## Chapter Two

**The Field Marshal Arrives: The Revolution and Unification**

“Violence is not its own explanation.” – Mahmood Mamdani<sup>52</sup>

Most accounts of the revolution tell it as if it appeared from nowhere. And in fact, to many people who were there, it *did* come from nowhere. Almost no one, including those who would make up the revolutionary government, had predicted it. The American diplomatic community (which consisted of three men) claimed to know nothing beforehand, and it is likely that the British were not aware of it either. The month-old Zanzibari ZNP government had no idea what was being planned.<sup>53</sup> In his last message to Washington before the revolution, American Consul Fritz Picard claimed that “Babu and his *Umma* Party are bought and sold by Peking,”<sup>54</sup> but made no mention of any unrest or plans by the ASP. The people who led it did not operate under the aegis of any party, but were clearly opposed to the ZNP and the administration of the Sultan. The Zanzibar Revolution does not neatly fit any kind of analytical template, and it has to be assessed in the particular context of a small, densely populated island with the demographic conditions described in chapter one. The speed and ease with which the revolution was carried out attests to the weakness of the Arab-led government under Shamte, rather than the strength or organization of the revolutionary militia.

*The Revolution Begins*

At 3:00 A.M. on January 12, 1964, about eight hundred men set off from the Mwembe neighborhood of Ng’ambo for different parts of the city. They were led by the previously unknown Chairman of the Afro-Shirazi Party youth league named John

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<sup>52</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, “Why Africans Fight,” *The East African*, 19 December 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Petterson, 31.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Okello. The insurgents overtook two armories in Stonetown, distributed the weapons to their supporters, and overtook the entire island within a matter of hours.<sup>55</sup> There are no objective reports of what happened that night and in the days that followed, and the lack of communication infrastructure on the islands meant that few knew what was going on even a few kilometers away. Most of the diplomatic community was evacuated immediately, with the exception of the American consular staff left behind to look after a Project Mercury satellite tracking station (which was closed shortly after the revolution).<sup>56</sup> Reports on the number of people killed vary from a few dozen to about 14,000, in the estimation of John Okello himself.<sup>57</sup> The real number is probably closer to two or three thousand people, mostly poor Manga Arabs in the North of the island and African and Shirazi sympathizers. In the early hours of the revolution, though, no one had any idea how it would play out.

Self-appointed “Field Marshal” John Okello played a brief but important role in the revolution, and he would later become an important part of the reconciliation process between Arabs and Africans that accompanied the constitutional unification. Okello was a Ugandan policeman stationed on Pemba who had only a tenuous formal attachment to the ASP. He was an alarming figure to many Arabs, who espoused Marxist rhetoric and claimed that God spoke to him regularly. He steadfastly denied that communists were involved at all, claiming that “it was myself and God who were behind the revolution that is all.”<sup>58</sup> Many of the people he rallied together on the night of the revolution were members of the Paint Workers Union and the Construction and Building Workers Union,

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<sup>55</sup> Lofchie, 257.

<sup>56</sup> Petterson, 38.

<sup>57</sup> John Okello, *Revolution in Zanzibar* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), 160.

<sup>58</sup> “My Fantastic Life by John Okello,” *Drum*, September 1964.

both of which Okello was involved in.<sup>59</sup> Accounts vary, but it seems that many of the people who took over the first target, the Police Mobile Force station at Mtoni, were coming from a large party near Mnazi Moja.<sup>60</sup> They then proceeded to the armory at Ziwani, which was captured by 5:30 in the morning. This was essential for the revolution's success, because it allowed Okello to arm many more men than he would have been able to otherwise.

From there Okello's forces moved to Raha Leo, where the undefended Sauti ya Unguja radio station was captured immediately, and at 7:00 Okello made his first announcement. Although only two police stations had actually been captured, his appearance on the radio made it seem like the rebels controlled much more than they actually did, and undoubtedly incited people who would otherwise have been reluctant to take part in the revolution to action. This terrified the sultan's government, and many fled to the mainland before any further announcements were made. The content of Okello's addresses was alarming; he incited violence against Arabs and Asians through long, angry radio addresses, and commanded the Sultan and Mohammed Shamte to commit suicide. In his first, more restrained address, he said:

I am the field marshal. Wake up, you imperialists; there is no longer an imperialist government on this island. This is now the government of the freedom fighters. Wake up, you black men. Let every one of you take a gun and ammunition and start to fight against any remnants of imperialism on this island. Never, never relent, if you want this island to be yours.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Okello, 99.

<sup>60</sup> Petterson, 49.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 52.

In Lugandan-inflected Swahili, he claimed throughout the day that if Arabs were allowed to continue their rule in Zanzibar, “all male African babies would be killed, and African girls would be forced to marry or submit to Arabs so that within a few years there would be no pure black skin on the island.”<sup>62</sup> He also ordered that “those [Arabs] between 18 and 55 must be killed where necessary, and without hesitation.”<sup>63</sup> His incitements were taken literally by the members of his militia and by ordinary civilians, and many who had little or nothing to do with the ZNP government were killed.



*John Okello (seated center) with members of the revolutionary council and soldiers*

With the Sultan’s government isolated along the waterfront in Stonetown, Okello focused his attention away from Zanzibar City. Okello got word that Manga Arabs in the

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<sup>62</sup> Okello, 120.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 126.

rural areas of north Unguja had killed a few rebels with their own hunting guns, and he sent a cadre of men and weapons to the settlements at Bububu, Mangapwani, and Ras Nungwe. In an act of retribution, hundreds of Arabs were systematically killed.<sup>64</sup>

Although many killings took place at Makunduchi in the south and in Zanzibar City, the greatest number of those killed and interred was at Ras Nungwe. The scale of the violence is hotly contested, but nearly all of the diasporic histories of the revolution describe massacres of Arabs and Arab sympathizers. Orgiastic violence is described in great detail, and frequent reference is made to the African “savages” or “murderers”:

One of the leaders of the usurper government came upon a group of worshippers in a Shia mosque at Kiponda. He shot dead a number of them for no reason at all. What justice could poor Zanzibaris expect from such a gang of criminal aliens?<sup>65</sup>

Hundreds of women were raped to death, and even young children were not spared and many were defiled and some met their deaths by having their limbs mutilated.<sup>66</sup>

A group of British civil servants and tourists also reported extreme amounts of violence, and left Zanzibar aboard the *Jamhuri* deeply shaken by the “tribal”<sup>67</sup> violence they had witnessed.

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<sup>64</sup> Petterson, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Anonymous, “The Nobility and Blessings of Zanzibar,” available at: <http://www.fortunecity.com/victorian/abbey/313/truth11.html>, accessed 9 March 2009.

Since the 1990s, the internet has become an important location for Zanzibaris in the diaspora to meet and disseminate information about contemporary Zanzibari politics, and about the revolution. Many of these websites tell the same kinds of stories as the diasporic narratives published privately in the Middle East, but while those editions may only be printed in an edition of a few dozen, the internet offers much greater opportunities for dissemination.

<sup>66</sup> Babakerim, *The Aftermath of Zanzibar Revolution* (Muscat: Privately printed, 1994), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Patrick Robertson and Allan Pearson, Letters to A.P. Robertson, former Deputy British Resident from friends and colleagues including Anne Trace, wife of Captain of Zanzibar Government steamer *Jamhuri*





*Members of the revolutionary militia with a prisoner*

These recollections also emphasize that the revolution was initiated and supported by outsiders, particularly non-Muslims. The fact that Nyerere was Christian figures prominently in all of them, and Britain's refusal to intervene on the side of the government (as it did in the other former East African colonies) is taken as evidence of a Christian conspiracy to destroy the island's Muslim character. Observers from the Zanzibari diaspora later claimed that the "Catholic Crusade against Islam in Zanzibar"<sup>68</sup> was supported by European missionaries, the governments of Uganda, Tanganyika, Britain, and the United States. The participation of Muslims like Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu in the revolution is explained away by corruption and moral weakness, and it is presented as an attack on Islam broadly rather than specifically on Arabs. With a few exceptions, the emphasis in these recollections is not on the political intrigues that took place during the revolution, or the political transition from the ZNP to the ASP. Rather,

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regarding the revolution, 7 January to 25 May, 1964, Oxford Colonial Records Project (hereafter OCRP), Rhodes House Library, University of Oxford, Mss. Afr. S. 2116.

<sup>68</sup> Khatib Rajab Al-Zinjibari, "THE CATHOLIC CRUSADES AGAINST ISLAM IN THE NAME OF ZANZIBAR REVOLUTION," available at: [http://www.zanzinet.org/journal/jan\\_00\\_wk2.html](http://www.zanzinet.org/journal/jan_00_wk2.html), accessed 9 March 2009.

they focus on individual experiences of violence and humiliation. Perhaps because personal recollections made for a more dramatic story, or because most of the people targeted were not part of the government milieu, many writers chose to focus on their own experiences.

Ras Nungwe is also where the most iconic image of the revolution was made. Two Italian filmmakers named Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi were in East Africa during the revolution making a documentary about the end of European colonialism in Africa. The purpose of the film was to show that African countries were unfit for self-governance, and the “shockumentary” that they produced, *Africa Addio*, is a deeply racist, sometimes pornographic account of postcolonial violence.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, it contains one of the only depictions of the revolution’s violence. Images of executions, open mass graves, and forced marches were taken from a helicopter. The image of a beach at Ras Nungwe covered with the bodies of those who had tried to flee by dhow was picked up by the western news media, and the massacre became one of the few facts about the revolution reported to the outside world. Typical of international reporting on Africa even then, the political content of the revolution was virtually ignored (or reduced to a “red victory”<sup>70</sup>), while its violence was widely reported.

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<sup>69</sup> Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi, *Africa Addio*, released in the United States as *Africa Blood and Guts*, (Los Angeles: Blue Underground, 1966).

<sup>70</sup> For example, “Leftists Strengthen Hold Over Zanzibar,” the *New York Times*, 20 January, 1964.

“Toll Expected to Reach 3,000,” the *New York Times*, 19 January, 1964.

“Slaughter in Zanzibar of Asians, Arabs Told; Hasty Mass Burials Prevent True Count,” the *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January, 1964.



*A still from Africa Addio showing a mass grave near Ras Nungwe*

Of course, a description of the revolution's violence does not give a complete picture of it. It does not help to explain the reasons why the revolution took place, nor should it be interpreted as the most important element of the revolution. However, it is important to understand the scale of the violence in order to understand the challenges that the post-revolution government faced in 1964. That government had to build a cohesive state in the aftermath of a deeply jarring series of events, and that was a formidable task given the violence described here. Also, because some of the sources which constructed and mediated the history of the revolution treat its violence as its most important characteristic, some discussion of what that violence looked like is necessary.

*The end of the ZNP government and the establishment of the Revolutionary Council*

With the help of the American consular staff, many of the leaders of the Arab government were successfully evacuated from Zanzibar on board the royal *Salama* and

an American ship called the *Manley*.<sup>71</sup> Most of the high-up members of the Arab government went into exile in Mombasa, the UK, and the Middle East. Those who could afford to went to London, including the Sultan, who lived out the rest of his life as a middle-class refugee in suburban London. While Britain was not willing to take the risk of militarily propping up the independent government that it had supported in Zanzibar, it was willing to provide refuge for select members of the royal family who had been targeted.<sup>72</sup> The Zanzibari diaspora communities that developed in Muscat, Mombasa, Dubai and elsewhere would later play an important role in Tanzanian politics, both as actors, and as symbols of the “conspiracy” to reconquer Zanzibar from Tanzania.

Britain considered sending forces to uphold the Arab government that it had endorsed a month before, but events in Tanganyika prevented it from doing so.<sup>73</sup> A week after the revolution a mutiny occurred in independent Tanganyika, and Nyerere was forced to call in British troops to put it down. A chain of mutinies took place in Britain’s former East African colonies almost simultaneously, so troops that might otherwise have been sent to Zanzibar remained tied up on the mainland.<sup>74</sup> The fact that Britain supported Nyerere but not the ZNP government in Zanzibar led to charges of conspiracy between Britain and the ASP, and created great animosity between the ZNP and its former British patron.

While the Arab government was being dismantled, Okello created a revolutionary council that consisted of himself, some members of the Afro-Shirazi Party’s leadership, and a smaller number of Umma members. In a forced statement, Sheikh Ali Muhsin al

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<sup>71</sup> Petterson, 94.

<sup>72</sup> K.S. Madon, Transcript of an interview on recollections of the Revolution in Zanzibar as first and last speaker of the National Assembly, OCRP, MSS. Afr. S. 1690, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>74</sup> Hatch, 159.

Barwani of the ZNP and Mohamed Shamte of the ZPPP asked their parties' loyalists to stop resisting in order to prevent bloodshed. Ali Muhsin said "there is no point in resisting now. The event has taken place whether one likes it or not. What is now needed is to build a new Zanzibar and we must all co-operate in doing so."<sup>75</sup> The ambiguous language of these speeches meant that they were later used by Zanzibaris in the diaspora who claimed that they were innocent victims of the revolution's violence, and by people in the revolutionary government who claimed exactly the opposite.

The Revolutionary Council was keen to extract statements of support from everyone, even the groups which were being attacked or stripped of their citizenship. Some of these statements were not drafted until the month after the revolution. In an article that testifies both to the paranoia of the new government and to the diversity of its constituents, the *Samachar* reported that "messages of support, loyalty, and obedience to the new government had been read out by enlisted men in English, Swahili, Gujarati and Arabic."<sup>76</sup> In an "act of magnanimity"<sup>77</sup> on the part of Abeid Karume, all of the ministers and leaders of the former government who were captured were held captive by the Afro-Shirazi Government for their protection.

The new government was weak and poorly organized, but the first thing that the revolutionary council did was to eliminate John Okello. Okello had effectively handed control of the newly independent country to Abeid Karume, and Karume wasted no time in disposing of the man who led the revolution itself. Okello had immediately become a liability, and his propensity for exaggeration in his radio speeches alarmed nearly everyone on the island. ASP moderates, including many of the Revolutionary Council

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<sup>75</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party, *The Afro-Shirazi Party Revolution*, (Zanzibar: Afro-Shirazi Party, 1974), 9.

<sup>76</sup> "All Will Be Equal, Says President," *The Samachar* (Zanzibar), 23 February, 1964, 6.

<sup>77</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party 1974, 10.

members, feared him. Okello later said he was “prepared to serve under Karume, for he was older than I and must have my respect,”<sup>78</sup> but this did not reassure anyone. Okello was declared *persona non grata*, and spent the rest of his life in relative obscurity in Kenya. In his memoirs, he claimed that “I acted alone during the Revolution and had to remain alone afterwards. If anyone can claim that he was with me during the planning and thinking through of the Revolution, let him come forward and explain it – only God Almighty knows what went on in Zanzibar.”<sup>79</sup> This statement became enormously important for the post-revolutionary government because it allowed them to claim that Okello acted without the approval of the ASP, and all of the killings were attributed to him rather than to the new government. Dealing with the revolution’s violent character was one of the new government’s first orders of business, and Okello proved himself to be the perfect scapegoat.

On March 8, 1964, the People’s Republic of Zanzibar nationalized all land and began a process of land redistribution that would continue into the 1970s. On that day, Abeid Karume addressed the nation for the first time as president. In his speech, he proclaimed the Afro-Shirazi Party as the sole political party in Zanzibar, established a home for the aged, and abolished all discrimination “on grounds of race, religion, wealth etc.”<sup>80</sup> While the speech was received well, the People’s Republic had only a tenuous hold on power. Ghana, Cameroon, the German Democratic Republic and the People’s Republic of Poland were the first countries to recognize independent Zanzibar, but Britain and the United States would not recognize it for nearly a month.<sup>81</sup> China

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<sup>78</sup> Okello, 183.

<sup>79</sup> Okello, 186.

<sup>80</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party 1974, 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

immediately sent 185,000 pounds in aid to the new state, but this was barely enough to cover the government's expenses, and certainly not enough to solve the economic crisis.<sup>82</sup>

### *Unification with Tanganyika*

Karume was anxious about becoming involved in east-west or Sino-Soviet conflicts, which at that point were developing in the Indian Ocean region.<sup>83</sup> Nyerere had given Karume some police support in January in the days following the revolution, and the friendship between the ASP and TANU on the mainland facilitated discussion between them. Nyerere, too, was concerned about the possibility of Zanzibar becoming a base for international powers to interfere in East Africa, and he was intent upon becoming involved. Many have argued that Nyerere pushed for the union hastily. The controversial Tanzanian journalist Jenerali Ulimwengu suggested that Nyerere saw unification as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to kill two birds with one stone - rid himself of a 'communist' threat on his doorstep while at the same time fulfilling a long standing yearning for unity."<sup>84</sup> The new Zanzibari state was also too small to survive economically. Much of the islands' wealth left with those who fled, and the revolution had diminished the clove production that sustained Zanzibar's economy. Union with Tanganyika "could offer a pooling of resources to the benefit of both parties,"<sup>85</sup> which was especially needed following the economic chaos of the revolution. Whether it was opportunism or concern for Zanzibar's well-being that motivated him, the process took place remarkably fast.

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<sup>82</sup> "China Will Send Aid to New Regime," *The Samachar*, 1 March, 1964, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Clayton, 112.

<sup>84</sup> Jenerali Ulimwengu, "Nyerere - How He Manipulated Zanzibar," *The East African*, 29 June 2008.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

A flurry of visits took place by Karume, Nyerere, and their ministers in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. Abdulrahman Momamed Babu, who had been appointed Karume's foreign minister, was not in favor of unification. Karume and Nyerere took advantage of his going on a state visit in Indonesia, and initiated the process of formal unification. The process was extremely rushed, and it was reported that Nyerere threatened to withdraw police support for the ASP if things stalled.<sup>86</sup> This was a rumor, but it is not inconceivable that Nyerere could have used his clout to speed up the process. An Act of Union was quickly pushed through the Tanganyika National Assembly, and on April 26, 1964, Tanganyika and Zanzibar were joined together as one state, with Nyerere as president, and Abeid Karume and Rashidi Kawawa of Tanganyika as joint vice-presidents. The made-up portmanteau "Tanzania" was announced at a public soil-mixing ceremony a few days later, and has been causing disagreement on how to pronounce it ever since.



*Julius Nyerere mixes soil from Zanzibar and Tanganyika together using "traditional" implements*

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



Babu claimed that “US leaders pressed for the union in order to stem the revolutionary tide before it swept throughout East Africa and beyond,”<sup>87</sup> and there may be some truth to this. While most records related to the unification process remain closed, it is not inconceivable that the United States exerted some pressure for Nyerere and Karume to speed up the process before other countries could become involved. From exile in London years later, Babu said that

Tanzania is the last country that one could even remotely associate with collusion with the CIA at a time when we were harbouring the OAU [Organisation of African Unity] Liberation Committee and hosting liberation movements. But the evidence is beginning to emerge that this was indeed the case, uncomfortable as it may sound.<sup>88</sup>

Relations with the United States and Britain, while they were not particularly close, were amicable. Tanzania’s relationship with Britain did not weaken until Britain became embroiled in Rhodesian politics some years later, and remained relatively close with the United States until the Arusha Declaration, which established socialism as the guiding principle in Tanzanian domestic politics. American diplomats expressed fears that Zanzibar could become “the Cuba of Africa.”<sup>89</sup> The American Ambassador to

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<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Petterson, 189.

<sup>88</sup> Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, *The Future That Works*, ed. Salma Babu and Amrit Wilson, (Trenton and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2002), 168.

<sup>89</sup> “Nationalism Is Viewed as Camouflage for Reds - Toll 2,000 to 4,000; CUBANS TRAINED ZANZIBAR REBELS,” the *New York Times*, 19 January 1964.

In fact, the rebel forces had not been trained by the Cuban government. This rumor was started after a few American tourists heard rebels shouting slogans in Spanish and thought that they were Cuban, but they were not. The soldiers may have picked up the slogans from propaganda materials from the FRELIMO movement in Mozambique, which circulated in Spanish, Portuguese, and English throughout Africa. While some members of the ASP leadership had received scholarships to study in the USSR and other communist countries, no military training had taken place in Cuba.

Tanganyika, William Leonhart, was publicly in favor of integration in order to prevent the weak Zanzibari state from becoming a Soviet client. Diplomats thought it would be better for Zanzibar to become part of the then-innocuous Tanganyika rather than become a Soviet satellite. The extent to which the United States actively encouraged integration, though, is unclear. At any rate, the 1964 Revolution deeply affected Tanzanian politics in spite of attempts by the Tanzanian government (and possibly others) to moderate its effects through unification.<sup>90</sup>

The Eastern Bloc countries' attitudes towards integration were disapproving. The Soviet and East German diplomats who had just opened their embassies in Zanzibar reacted to integration dismissively, and though the Chinese government never made any direct statement, those in the know claimed that they too were disappointed by the unification plans.<sup>91</sup> The Umma Party leadership which had wanted to deepen the relationship with the Eastern Bloc was dismayed by the union as well, but they realized that what had happened was more or less irreversible. On his return from Indonesia, Babu found that his power had diminished considerably, but he worked to reinsinuate himself in the government of the United Republic of Tanzania, which he eventually did. With him he brought a more radical and internationally connected political perspective to the government in Dar es Salaam, which would have a significant effect on how Tanzanian foreign and domestic policy developed in those first years.

As this chapter demonstrated, the 1964 Revolution did not take place in a vacuum. While historians like Michael Lofchie and Anthony Clayton have interpreted the revolution as taking place outside of the mainstream of Tanzanian political history, the

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<sup>90</sup> Horace Campbell, "Abdulrahman Mohammed Babu 1924-96 – A Personal Memoir," *African Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1996), 243.

<sup>91</sup> Clayton, 114.

two were deeply involved with one another from the beginning. Despite the maritime border that existed between Zanzibar and the mainland, there were strong linkages between ASP and TANU political leadership, and many of the people involved in the revolution came from the mainland. John Okello was thoroughly tarred as an outsider after the revolution, but it is important to remember that there were many people like him from the mainland who participated in both the revolution and the process of crafting Zanzibar's new notions of citizenship after it ended. TANU and Nyerere had not fully fleshed out the idea of "African socialism" yet at this point, and it was only after unification that serious developments took place in that direction. The next chapter will investigate what role the revolution played in that development, and how the two states' interactions affected the character of the nascent United Republic of Tanzania.

## Chapter Three

**From *Kujitegemea* to the Cold War:  
Tanzanian Nationhood and the Inheritance of the 1964 Revolution**

“Paint me as I am. But if you leave out the scars and wrinkles, I will not pay you a cent.”  
– Sosthenes T. Maliti<sup>92</sup>

Much has been written about how the 1964 Revolution changed Zanzibar, and undoubtedly it represents a fundamental change in how Zanzibar was politically oriented, who controlled it, and how the islands were conceived of and conceived of themselves politically. Relatively little has been said about how the Revolution changed Tanzania, though, and how it impacted the formative first years of Tanzanian statehood. The revolution is seen as an aberration in an otherwise peaceful postcolonial history, and the tumult of Zanzibar’s postcolonial experience is seen as culturally and politically distant from what happened on the mainland. The violence of the revolution has been largely written out of Tanzania’s history, even though that violence fundamentally changed the way that Tanzania thought about its past and its definition of citizenship. In fact, many of the most essential characteristics and important events of postcolonial Tanzanian history were at least informed by the experience of the revolution, if not caused by it. Tanzania’s foreign policy, the advent of African socialism, and the construction of Tanzanian citizenship with reference to race were all affected by the revolution, and more importantly, how the revolution was remembered.

*The Revolution and Tanzania’s Foreign Policy*

One of the conventional beliefs about Zanzibar’s postcolonial history is that it was a site for one of the many proxy conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union.

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<sup>92</sup> Candid Scope [Sosthenes T. Maliti], *Honest to my Country*, (Tabora, Tanzania: TMP Book Department, 1981), 4.

Undoubtedly, there were some ways in which it was, and the US, the USSR and China were all concerned with what was going on in Zanzibar in 1964. This does not, however, mean that it can be described as a proxy conflict, nor were those countries as heavily involved in the process of revolution and unification as they are conventionally thought to be. While China and East Germany became fairly closely involved in Zanzibari development projects and political consultancy after unification (often to the chagrin of one another), this involvement should not be overstated. Zanzibari political life took place in Stonetown and Dar es Salaam rather than Beijing or Washington, D.C., and Karume was not a pawn of any government but his own. Independent Tanganyika had little interest in becoming involved with foreign powers, and Nyerere rejected most of the overtures made to him by those countries before the revolution. A major effect of the revolution would be to bring Tanzania, in many ways reluctantly, into the Cold War system of aid and alliances. This, in turn, would significantly affect Tanzania's conception of its place in the world.

Both Karume and Nyerere were wary of Cold War alliances, and neither made significant attempts to foster relationships with countries outside of East Africa. In their speeches and writings, they repeatedly warned of the danger of becoming involved with foreign powers, and Nyerere saw a non-aligned union as a means by which Tanzania could reap the benefits of international alliances without incurring their dangers.<sup>93</sup> Despite their reluctance, though, certain relationships with countries in the Eastern Bloc did develop. The United States' small satellite tracking station on the island was closed immediately after the revolution, and the US Consulate in Zanzibar was closed on

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<sup>93</sup> Clayton, 113.

January 24, 1964.<sup>94</sup> American diplomats were ostensibly expelled because the US still had not recognized the revolutionary government, but it also indicated a hostile attitude towards the United States. The establishment of consulates and visits of high-level diplomats from Eastern Bloc countries also shows that the revolutionary government had its alliances, even if it was not always comfortable with them.<sup>95</sup> Karume does not appear to have initiated any of these relationships, but some observers at the time claimed that he was receptive to offers of aid from China and the USSR.<sup>96</sup>

However, more important than the was-he-or-wasn't-he debate about Karume is what the other powerful people in the ASP were thinking. Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, the former Umma Party leader who joined the ASP government, took a different approach. He was forthright in his socialism, and very close to China in a way that the more moderate Karume was not. He said that "Cuba was an inspiration for us. Like Cuba we want to transform the people on the island, we want to transform our revolution into a socialist one in the quickest possible time."<sup>97</sup> Despite his admiration for Cuba, though, he was still wary of foreign aid. While he would accept the assistance of China and admired Zhou Enlai's famous statement that Africa was "ripe for revolution," he did not consider himself or his government to be the clients of the Chinese. He disparaged the "imperialist notion which portrays Africans as unable to do anything except on instruction from either Moscow, Peking or Cuba – anywhere except Africa. They think Africans are children, just like in colonial days."<sup>98</sup> Despite this criticism, though, Babu was much more

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<sup>94</sup> Petterson, 135.

<sup>95</sup> "USSR Ambassador Presents Credentials," *The Samachar*, 29 March 1964, 7.

"GDR Deputy Foreign Minister Wolfgang Kiesewetter in Zanzibar," *The Samachar*, 5 April 1964, 7.

<sup>96</sup> OCRP, Mss. Afr. S. 1690.

<sup>97</sup> "Babu Bounces Back," *Drum*, November 1964.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

involved in international communism than others, both in the ASP and on the mainland. Babu credited his Umma Party with “broaden[ing] the objectives of the uprising from a narrow, lumpen, anti-Arab, anti-privilege, anti-this and anti-that perspective into a serious social revolution with far-reaching political, social and economic objectives,”<sup>99</sup> specifically a Maoist-influenced form of socialism.

All of this is important because it forced Tanzania to engage with the outside world in a way that it would not have otherwise. Integration united Zanzibar and Tanganyika’s foreign affairs ministries, and forced them to work together despite their different objectives and orientations. Nyerere was content to pursue an aggressive policy of self-reliance in Tanganyika, with diplomatic and economic relations with the outside world kept at a minimum. He was profoundly conscious of the pressures that he faced from the outside. In response to those pressures, he clearly stated that “we, in Africa, have no more need of being ‘converted’ to socialism than we have of being ‘taught’ democracy.”<sup>100</sup> Nyerere believed that African countries had to learn to be self-dependent, and reliant on each other rather than on Europe, the United States, or China. He admonished other African leaders to “open your eyes now – be careful – some of the baskets of aid pouring in are poisonous.”<sup>101</sup> The ideas of *kujitegemea* (self-reliance) and *kujichagulia* (self-determination) remained the cornerstones of his foreign policy at least rhetorically, and he was reluctant to give up the policy of non-alignment that TANU had carefully cultivated. Nonetheless, the more well-connected members of the Revolutionary

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<sup>99</sup> Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, “The 1964 Revolution: Lumpen or Vanguard?” in Abdul Sheriff and Ed Ferguson (eds.), *Zanzibar Under Colonial Rule*, (London: James Currey, 1991), 240.

<sup>100</sup> Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity/Uhuru na Umoja*, (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1970), 170.

<sup>101</sup> “Mwalimu Warns ‘Big Blocs’: Hands Off Our United Republic,” *The Nationalist* (Dar es Salaam), 2 July, 1964, 1.

Council in Zanzibar had to be integrated into the Tanzanian state, and this required a reorientation of the unified government's foreign policy.



*The Michenzani apartment blocks under construction in Stonetown, built with the assistance of the East Germany, and pejoratively referred to as "East Berlin."*

Largely because of Babu and others' critical-but-friendly attitude towards China, the Chinese developed a very close relationship that Tanzania would inherit when the two countries became one. Only days after the revolution, China had already dedicated funds and diplomatic support to the new state, and this support would continue for years after the revolution. Mr. Liu Kan was appointed the charge d'affaires of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China the week after the revolution, and he justified China's interest in Zanzibar in an intriguing way. He said that "the friendship between the Chinese and Zanzibari people dates back to several hundred years ago. Our two peoples have always supported each other in the long struggles against imperialism and colonialism,"<sup>102</sup> and in some respects this was true. Zanzibar and China had interacted in the Indian Ocean

<sup>102</sup> "Wachina wafika ubalozini," *The Samachar*, 26 January, 1964, 1.



region for centuries, and this provided China with a pretext for becoming involved in Zanzibar. The appeal to Zanzibar's distant history was not a tactic limited to revolutionaries and revisionist historians.

As time went on, this new closeness with China would significantly alter the way that the young united republic developed. China invested huge amounts of money into both Zanzibar and the mainland, and only a year after unification it had already dedicated ten million pounds to Tanzania.<sup>103</sup> Nyerere claimed that Tanzania continued to be non-aligned, and that the new friendship between Tanzania and the Eastern Bloc countries did nothing more than balance out Tanzania's preexisting relationship with Britain and the West. He disparaged the Western perception that Tanzania was becoming a patron of China, and was frustrated that "even the suits I wear have been adduced as evidence of pernicious Chinese influence!"<sup>104</sup>

Despite Nyerere's protests, China *did* become much more involved in Tanzania after the revolution and unification, and Tanzania's domestic policies took on some Maoist characteristics only after Zanzibaris like Babu became more involved in the planning process. In his capacity as Minister of Economic Planning in Tanzania, Babu heavily influenced the path that Tanzania pursued in the years following unification, and in many ways he, not Nyerere or TANU, was responsible for how Tanzania came to orient itself in the world. He introduced Nyerere to Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, and he arranged Nyerere's landmark visit to China in February 1965.<sup>105</sup> Even though he was not Tanzania's Foreign Minister, he often acted like he was, and even used the

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<sup>103</sup> Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism - Uhuru na Ujamaa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 51.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Campbell 1996, 243.

Foreign Minister title that he had formally had for the few weeks between the revolution and unification. The Arusha Declaration of 1967 initiated the *Ujamaa kijijini* villagization policy that would drive Tanzanian domestic policy for the next twenty years, and it was largely implemented by Babu. The plan was also influenced by Maoism and by Chinese theories about economic development. This is not to say that the Arusha Declaration was created at the behest of the Chinese, or anyone else. The goal was “to place Tanzania irrevocably on the road to a genuinely socialist society both by the breadth of their coverage and by a major mobilization of mass support behind [TANU],”<sup>106</sup> not to appease or emulate China. However, the similarities between China’s program of agricultural development and Tanzania’s cannot be ignored.

An important moment was in May 1964, when Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa of TANU was accompanied by Babu on a state visit to Beijing in order to discuss Chinese assistance in the building of the TAZARA railroad,<sup>107</sup> which became one of the most important state projects that Tanzania undertook. The idea that the project would be funded by China would have been almost inconceivable before 1964, and it almost surely would not have worked out that way without Babu sitting at the negotiation table. If the revolution had not happened, he would never have even reached the table, at least not as a representative of Nyerere’s government.

#### *The Zanzibari diaspora and the fear of insurrection*

The violence of the revolution was intense and memorable. It profoundly shook the sense of unity and cosmopolitan identity that Zanzibar’s elites prided themselves on before the revolution. Those who went into exile after the revolution felt a deep sense of

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<sup>106</sup> Cranford Pratt, “Julius Nyerere: Reflections on the Legacy of his Socialism,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1999), 148.

<sup>107</sup> Clayton, 115.

nostalgia for the place they left behind, and, as in many narratives of exile, Zanzibar was frozen for many of them in the pre-revolutionary past. They also took a great deal of wealth with them. Those who could afford to settle in the Middle East were generally wealthy merchants, government functionaries, or members of the royal family. Those who went to Mombasa and other parts of East Africa were not as rich, but still wealthier than the average Zanzibari who stayed behind. Many entered the civil service in Oman, and to this day there is a Zanzibari elite in that country that occupies a number of high bureaucratic positions.<sup>108</sup>

The existence of a wealthy, well-connected network of exiles who had been targeted and humiliated during the revolution made the Tanzanian government extremely nervous, and continues to be a cause of concern today. In the summer of 1964, Sultan Jamshid left exile in England for a three month trip to visit Zanzibaris displaced by the revolution. He visited Saudi Arabia and Aden in order to “see my people,”<sup>109</sup> which was alarming for the Tanzanian government. The visit was reported by *Drum* and in the Tanzanian news media, and no suggestion was made that the trip was anything other than a social visit. Nonetheless, this and other developments in the Zanzibari diaspora were watched with interest and concern by Karume, who continued to fear that the Sultan or other wealthy exiles would lead an effort to return to Zanzibar and reassert their authority.

Sultan Jamshid also appealed to the United States for help in overthrowing the ASP government. He said that every day that passed would mean “increased Communist control of Zanzibar and greater potential for subversion of the East African mainland,”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Most notably, Oman’s Minister of Higher Education, and one of the most important women in Omani politics, is the Zanzibar-born Dr. Rawiyah bint Saud Al Busaidi.

<sup>109</sup> Smith, 135.

<sup>110</sup> Petterson, 106.

and that the only way to stop it was an armed invasion, supported financially by the United States. Although the embassy officer who processed the request in London “took care to discourage any anticipation on [Jamshid’s] part”<sup>111</sup> that the US might be willing to grant his request, he repeated his appeal for help in overthrowing Zanzibar’s government many times after that.

A small community of Zanzibaris in Mombasa and elsewhere remained committed to overthrowing the ASP government, although they were never able to do so. In his memoirs, Ali Muhsin says that he kept informants in Zanzibar, including his wife and nephew, who kept tabs on the revolutionary government and maintained communication with those who still lived in Zanzibar. He was also visited in Dubai on multiple occasions by “a number of secret missions were able to come and see me from the islands. Some serious and worthy of consideration, and others adventurous and risky. We did not countenance anything rash. There were some who responded well to our cautious advice; and there were others who thought us cowardly or not militant enough.”<sup>112</sup> Ultimately, Ali Muhsin turned down all of them for fear of incurring the disfavor of the Kenyan and Tanzanian governments, and for fear that some of the people who approached him may have been agents of the Tanzanian government trying to entrap him. Those exiles powerful enough to initiate or fund a counter revolution were unwilling to do so, so the propagandist histories and calls to arms written by people like Babakerim did not achieve their goals.

Tanzania remained very wary of any kind of treachery from within the state ranks, largely because it was feared that Zanzibar might secede. The TANU government

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ali Muhsin al Barwani 1997, 287.

imprisoned a great number of people who made up its leadership, and Nyerere was criticized for taking a heavy-handed approach to dissent, especially as it related to Zanzibar. Ali Muhsin al Barwani remained in prison for twenty years even though other political prisoners from the ZNP were permitted to go into exile,<sup>113</sup> and there were many like him who languished in prison. Bibi Titi Mohammad, one of the most important nationalist figures and a friend of Nyerere, was herself imprisoned for treason in 1969, along with other high ranking officials. Although her arrest was unrelated to Zanzibar, it served as a warning to government officials and to those outside of Tanzania that Nyerere was not tolerant of any kind of challenge to his authority. Even if, as the case turned out to be with Bibi Titi Mohammad, his concern was unfounded.<sup>114</sup>

The fear of an insurrection or an invasion from outside also made Karume's regime on Zanzibar increasingly authoritarian. A pervasive sense of paranoia characterized the ASP after the revolution. Government publications claimed that "at present they [those who fled] as exiles in different countries abroad are desperately trying to bring back to Zanzibar the old minority regime so that they could continue to exploit the country."<sup>115</sup> Zanzibaris, particularly Arabs and Asians who still lived on the islands, were frequently required to demonstrate their loyalty to the ASP regime, and publications were strictly censored. The ASP crackdown on opposition sought to rout out and punish the regime's enemies at home, and prevent the enemies that it was convinced it had abroad from communicating with their informants in Zanzibar.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 248.

<sup>114</sup> Bibi Titi Mohammed only served two years of the life sentence she was given for supposedly plotting to overthrow the TANU government. Her trial and sentence ruined her life, but after she was released the Tanzanian government recognized its debt to her and named one of Dar es Salaam's major streets after her. She died in South Africa in 2000.

<sup>115</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party 1974, 8.

It quickly became clear that Karume was not the mild-mannered politician that he appeared to be, and his administration became increasingly erratic and repressive over time. His cadre of East German-trained security operatives was widely feared, and he was an arbitrary leader who frequently came into conflict with Nyerere and with those in the “government by clique”<sup>116</sup> that controlled nearly all of the islands’ resources and political power. Karume became more and more of an embarrassment to Tanzania; he refused to implement many of the principles of the Arusha Declaration, he was (incorrectly) thought to be illiterate, and in 1970 four young girls of Persian origin were married to senior government officials against their will, including to two members of the Revolutionary Council,<sup>117</sup> at Karume’s behest. His assassination in 1972 was the result of years of infighting in the ASP, but it only resulted in greater fear on the part of the Nyerere government that Zanzibar was liable to secede, or generally make trouble. Thirty four people, including Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, were sentenced to death for allegedly participating in the assassination. Most of them were eventually pardoned, and Babu lived out the rest of his life as a professor at Birkbeck College in London.

Also in London was the Zanzibari Association, a shadowy organization that united exiles in the United Kingdom and elsewhere for purposes which were not always clear. It initially helped Zanzibari refugees settle in the UK and the Middle East, and is referred to in some of the memoirs of those who left. The purpose of the organization in the years after the initial exodus, though, is unclear. The branch of the Zanzibari Association in Dubai was founded by a man named Sayyid Hashim Abdul-Muttalib Hashim, but little is known about it aside from that. A Jamaat was founded in Dubai in

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<sup>116</sup> George W. Triplett, “The Politics of Revolutionary Inequality,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Dec., 1971), 614.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 616.

1972 for the purpose of assisting uprooted Zanzibaris, but was opposed by people in power who feared “that the Jamaat would be considered as a rival to the Zanzibar Association which had mainly sociopolitical interests.”<sup>118</sup> What those interests were is not revealed, and the association’s secretive element is one of the reasons why it has been feared so much in Tanzania.

Since 1995, the closely moderated Canadian website Zanzinet has served as a meeting point for Zanzibari exiles to discuss politics, coordinate meetings, and relay a certain history of the revolution to the outside world.<sup>119</sup> Most of the discussions going on in the Zanzibari exile community today are about the Tanzanian government’s alleged repression of the Civic United Front (CUF) opposition party in Zanzibar, but the memory of the revolution remains an important topic both in relation to current politics, and as a topic of debate in itself.

#### *Racial identity, the 1964 Revolution, and Tanzanian citizenship*

The racialized character of ASP policy was out of step with Nyerere’s conception of citizenship, and integration required certain compromises by both TANU and the ASP. Before the revolution, Nyerere pursued a policy of Africanization in government service, but it was a fairly moderate policy that did not systematically target Asians or Arabs in the way that ASP policy often did. Nyerere wanted to carefully balance the interests of Tanzania’s different racial groups, and this required a nuanced view of citizenship that did not categorically exclude certain people who were not politically popular (like Asian merchants or European settlers).

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<sup>118</sup> Mulla Asgharali M. M. Jaffer, *An Outline History of the Khoja Shia Ithna Asheri Community in Eastern Africa*, (London: Privately printed, n.d.),

<sup>119</sup> Available at <http://www.zanzinet.org/index.html>, accessed 18 March, 2009.

Afro-Shirazi Party membership was difficult to obtain, and it remained exclusive even long after the revolution. It required that the applicant be “a citizen of Zanzibar [after unification, Tanzania] who is either a peasant or worker or belongs to the peasant/worker class” and that “he is not a member or has not been a member of any party or organization which is not approved or is opposed to the Afro-Shirazi Party.”<sup>120</sup> The number of organizations which that included was large, and coupled with the membership fee, many people were not able to become party members. With very few exceptions, Arabs and Asians were excluded.

While the revolution considerably narrowed the definition of who is Zanzibari, it had the opposite effect on the mainland. Pan-African thought greatly informed the different representations of Zanzibari history, and the development of the Tanzanian government’s attitude towards race and citizenship. Many of the histories of Zanzibar produced elsewhere in Africa, especially in Ghana and other nodes of the Pan-African movement, advocate African majority rule while at the same time questioning the very meaning of “African.” A pamphlet from the Bureau of African Affairs in Accra says

It is not an issue of bone structure or hair texture and the attitude of one group of people towards these but one of a clash of interests. It was not a racial but a political issue and essentially nationalist issue. [...] In fact [Zanzibar] is an African State where African majority rule should obtain.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party, *The Fifth Congress of the Afro-Shirazi Party, Chake Chake, Pemba, 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1972: The ASP Constitution Established to defend and preserve the fruits of the Revolution for which the late Karume worked and died*, (Zanzibar: Printing Press Corporation, 1973), 3.

<sup>121</sup> Bureau of African Affairs, “Historical Facts about the Zanzibar (Unguja) National Struggle,” (Accra, Ghana: Bureau of African Affairs, 1963), 15.



The denial that physical characteristics corresponded to citizenship in African nations ultimately would become part of the ruling party's philosophy, but not because of the materialist critique alluded to here. For the two years prior to the revolution in Zanzibar, Tanganyika had pursued a comprehensive policy of Africanization, in which only people defined as Africans would be eligible for jobs in the civil service, the railroads, and other parastatal organizations that employed large numbers of people. This racially exclusive policy was abandoned right at the time of the revolution.

The 1964 Revolution coincided almost to the day with Julius Nyerere's announcement of a sea-change in Tanganyikan domestic policy. In early January, he made the unpopular decision that Tanganyikans of any race would be equally eligible for government positions. This greatly angered the unions that formed the basis of his support, and it was a politically risky move for Nyerere. The head of the powerful local government union said that "if Tanganyika is to gain respect outside by neglecting its indigenous citizens, then we don't want that kind of respect."<sup>122</sup> But despite its unpopularity, Nyerere defended the change in policy. It is not clear that the decision to abandon Africanization had anything to do with the revolution directly, but it does represent a change in thinking that was concurrent with, if not caused by, the revolution.

Nyerere knew that integrating Zanzibar into Tanganyika, which he was keen to do almost immediately when the revolution broke out, would lead to considerable demographic changes in the united republic. Zanzibar's Arab and Asian minorities were sizable – much more so than they were on the mainland. While an Africanization policy would only affect a tiny percentage of the mainland's total population, it would effectively disenfranchise a third of Zanzibar's. This would not be a popular idea, which

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<sup>122</sup> Smith, 109.

helps to explain why Africanization schemes were scaled back throughout the 1960s. The revolution also represented a cautionary tale for Nyerere and TANU: if the state denies a group status as citizens, whether legally or figuratively, as the Arab minority had denied that mainland Africans were Zanzibaris, the state risks creating discontent. Nyerere knew that he had to treat all Zanzibaris as Tanzanian citizens if he wanted to prevent another revolution from happening, and this is ultimately what he did. While the debate still goes on about how Zanzibaris of Arab and Asian descent fit into the modern Tanzanian state, one thing is for sure. All people born in Zanzibar are eligible to become Tanzanian citizens, and this legalistic definition of citizenship through *jus soli* is ultimately the only one that most people can agree upon.

## Chapter Four

**A Revolution Revised: Writing About the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution**

“Writing a history of Zanzibar is like making curry; you need strong spices.” – Abdullah Muhammed Abubakar<sup>123</sup>

The 1964 Revolution continued to exert an influence long after it ended, both in Tanzanian historical scholarship, and in notions of what it meant to be Tanzanian. The historical memory of the revolution greatly influenced both the revolution itself, and the social and political transitions described in chapter three. The ways in which Zanzibar’s history was written about before and after the revolution had considerable effects on what Tanzania looked like, and this chapter will trace a few currents in Tanzanian historiography. The historians described here were important agents of Tanzania’s postcolonial history, and they did more than simply describe what happened. They were instrumental in creating a usable past for the new state, and utility is an important factor to keep in mind when interpreting these works.

More than any other event in twentieth century Tanzanian history, the Zanzibar Revolution is a point of contention. The stakes of this debate are high; Zanzibar remains part of Tanzania, but its membership in the union is still tenuous. It is a center of opposition to the ruling party (some say the only real center of opposition in the entire country), and there is constant talk that Zanzibar could secede even today.<sup>124</sup> Much of the discussion about Zanzibar today draws on history, and the revolution is used by different sides to make political points that sometimes directly contradict one another. In the end,

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<sup>123</sup> Abdullah Muhammed Abubakar, *Zanzibar hapo kale*, (Zanzibar: Masomo Bookshop, 1998), 4.

<sup>124</sup> Chambi Chachage, “It’s a Question of African Unity at What Cost,” *The Citizen* (Dar es Salaam), 28 March, 2008.

Salma Said, “Msajili wa vyama atoa onyo kwa vyama vya siasa Zanzibar,” *Mwananchi* (Dar es Salaam), 12 March, 2009.

“Why Zanzibar’s Demands to Secede Are Premature,” *The Standard* (Nairobi), 5 February, 2006.

most of the discussion about Zanzibar's history that goes on in Tanzania is actually about the present and the future. Ali Muhsin al Barwani, especially, was acutely aware of this.

At the end of his life, he said that

we have a long and honourable history and civilization behind us. Like so many of the great peoples of the world our roots are sprung from many different sources, from Africa primarily, but also from Arabia, from the civilization of Asia, Persia, from India and from many others. [...] While in the modern world we do not intend looking back to our past, it is this tradition on which we intend to build our future.<sup>125</sup>

Ali Muhsin al Barwani was not the first to build a vision of Zanzibar's future on a specific notion of its controversial past, nor will he be the last.

Ali Muhsin's memoirs and the state-sanctioned histories of the revolution tell at least as much about the specific contexts in which they were written as they do about the revolution itself. Most of them were written in the 1970s and 1990s, with a long gap in between during which Tanzania went through a devastating economic crisis, which eviscerated the state's public institutions, and helped bring the economically unsuccessful policies of African socialism to an end. In 1977, fearing that the union was growing weak, TANU and the ASP were merged into one political party, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution), or CCM. The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar continues to operate semi-autonomously, but it is still represented by CCM candidates. CCM has won every national election since its inception, but in the 1990s it began to face opposition from the Civic United Front, which is an opposition party centered primarily in Pemba and Unguja. Despite violent and disputed elections in 1995, 2000, and 2005,

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<sup>125</sup> Al Barwani 1997, 214.

CCM has managed to narrowly hold onto political power on the islands. This is the context in which these histories were written, and it should be kept in mind in assessing the biases and lacunae of the stories that they tell.

The historian Garth A. Meyers is correct when he says that the narrative of the 1964 Revolution “is not an idle memory or an uncontested tale.”<sup>126</sup> This chapter will discuss some of those different tales, in order to demonstrate how the different memories of the revolution have influenced Tanzania as it is now. This necessarily involves a selection process, and the histories discussed here by no means describe the whole historiographical terrain.

*Conversations between the Arab diaspora and the Tanzanian academy*

One of the things that the Zanzibari Arabs who were displaced by the revolution did to occupy themselves in exile was write. Many of them wrote memoirs of the revolution, one created a new Swahili translation of the Koran, and others wrote novels. Many of these works attempted to narrate a history of the revolution that was organized around its violence. Babakerim calls the 1964 Revolution a “feast of violence,”<sup>127</sup> and he spent much of his life in exile writing about the injustice and brutality of the ASP government. He and others like him wrote in order to mobilize opposition to the ASP government, with the ultimate goal to remove the ASP from power. Ali Muhsin’s memoirs have a different aim than many of the other revolutionary histories. He is less concerned with vilifying the African revolutionary government than some of his contemporaries. Rather, he attempts to redeem the period of independent Arab rule. He critiques the view of the Arab minority as a wealthy elite, and he claims that “the ZNP

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<sup>126</sup> Garth A. Myers, “Narrative representations of revolutionary Zanzibar,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (2000), 429.

<sup>127</sup> Babakerim, *Afro-Shirazi Party and Zanzibar Revolution* (Muscat: Privately printed, n.d.), 3.

did not depend on the finances of rich Arabs, conservative or progressive. It depended on its own members, the overwhelming majority of whom were peasants from the rural areas and Pemba. [...] The ZNP/ZPPP government and party were predominantly African, and even those minority so-called Arabs were in fact of African descent as well.”<sup>128</sup> He still maintains the view that the ZNP/ZNPP was a multi-racial organization, and that it, rather than the ASP, was the legitimate party of progressivism and multi-racialism.

A large body of literature was created by the ASP that demonized the ZNP/ZPPP and the Arab community, and Ali Muhsin al Barwani writes partially in order to challenge their version of events. For example, an ASP historian claimed that the ASP offered to participate in a coalition government with the ZNP/ZPPP, but the Shamte government turned down the offer for cooperation and demanded that the ASP be dissolved.<sup>129</sup> This was an important part of the ASP’s project of legitimization for the revolution, but Ali Muhsin will hear no part of it. “One wonders where such people get their information!” he says. “I would not think that even the ASP itself would coin such fantasies.”<sup>130</sup> Muhsin’s book presents an Arab perspective on the revolution in a much more nuanced way than some of the others that only describe its violence, but like the memoirs of Babkerim and others, it is difficult to tell where his narrative is and is not factual. Like virtually all of the sources used here, it is a politically motivated history from a non-objective source.

In contrast to the diasporic histories, there is a large body of historical scholarship about the revolution produced in Tanzania. Early Tanzanian historical scholarship was

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<sup>128</sup> Al Barwani 1997, 40.

<sup>129</sup> Samuel G. Ayany, *A History of Zanzibar: A Study in Constitutional Development 1934-1964*, (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), 105.

<sup>130</sup> Al Barwani 1997, 43.

heavily influenced by Marxist thought. Because postcolonial Tanzania became a socialist country, much of the historical scholarship produced in Tanzania, and in fact by non-Tanzanian scholarship as well, takes a material approach towards the revolution. The University of Dar es Salaam, for many years the only university in Tanzania and a major center for left-wing scholarship, has always had a close relationship with the state. There was a fine line between high level politics and high level academics in Tanzania, and their interests were often one and the same. The Swedish social scientist Goran Hyden identified a “slavish adherence to Marxist-Leninist theory”<sup>131</sup> at the university in the 1970s and 1980s, and this is reflected in many of the histories that came out of that period. Marxist historians at the University of Dar es Salaam privileged class as the main point of difference in the revolution, often at the expense of its ideological, racial, religious, and demographic components. The Afro-Shirazi Party itself claimed that “the Zanzibar Revolution abolished class privileges and allowed workers and peasants the opportunity to serve themselves,”<sup>132</sup> effectively removing race from the discussion altogether. This view is exemplified by the British Ugandan historian B.D. Bowles, who claimed that the ASP was a “petty-bourgeois party”<sup>133</sup> first and foremost, and only nominally a representative of “African” or “mainland” interests. In a statement that many historians of Zanzibar have taken issue with, he claimed that

understanding and analysis of Zanzibar history depends on thinking of workers as they actually were, that is, workers, rather than mainlanders or

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<sup>131</sup> Goran Hyden, “Alternative Pathways to Democratic Governance: What Role Can Universities Play?” in Isaria N. Kimambo (ed.), *Humanities and Social Sciences in East and Central Africa: Theory and Practice*, (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 2003), 122.

<sup>132</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party 1974, 8.

<sup>133</sup> B.D. Bowles, “The Struggle for Independence, 1946-1963,” in Abdul Sheriff and Ed Ferguson (eds.), *Zanzibar Under Colonial Rule*, 100.

Africans, and to think of employers as employers, and not as Zanzibaris or Arabs and Asians. To do otherwise is to write the history of images.<sup>134</sup>

They may in fact be images, but they are images that have great significance to the people who ascribed meaning to them. A materialist analysis of inter-group relations in revolutionary Zanzibar not only risks being totalizing, it also disparages the terms in which many people who were involved in the revolution articulated themselves.

Responding to Bowles and others who share his opinion, British historian Thomas Burgess sarcastically remarks “evidently locals have no explanations to offer about why they instigated the Zanzibari Revolution, because they think in ‘images’ not recognized by Marxist scholars.”<sup>135</sup>

Marxism aside, the official histories of the revolution produced by Karume’s government and by party-connected historians at the University of Dar es Salaam are similarly controversial, and are largely concerned with explaining and legitimizing the revolutionary government’s conduct in 1964. The pre-revolutionary period is presented in a 1974 ASP work as a long period of exploitation of African labour by “the exploiting classes, the Indian businessmen and the Arab landowners.”<sup>136</sup> The revolution is claimed to be a last resort in the face of centuries of injustice, and the Arabs are made out to be active combatants rather than victims. The simplified Marxist rhetoric of the ASP historian describes an “armed conflict that was waged between the class of exploiters and that of the downtrodden.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> B.D. Bowles, quoted in Thomas Burgess, “An Imagined Generation: Umma Youth in Nationalist Zanzibar,” in Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Giblin (eds.), *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 219.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party 1974, 128.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 2.



The fact that the conflict is *between* rather than *against* the “exploiters” is significant. This directly contradicts the claim made by Babakerim and others that the Arabs did not take up arms against Africans during the revolution.<sup>138</sup> It is hard to believe that all Arabs passively accepted the revolution and were beaten or killed nonetheless, but it is equally improbable that the Arab minority could have mounted the kind of armed opposition to the revolution that the official histories suggest. Another ASP history claims that the Afro-Shirazi Party revolutionaries “confronted the sultan’s forces at Bomani and Mtoni Camps” armed with “pangas, arrows, clubs and even stones.”<sup>139</sup> The implication of the ASP’s history is that the revolution was followed by something approaching a civil war, in which Arabs committed atrocities to at least the same degree as the revolutionaries. Even Abdul Sheriff, the long-time chair of the history department at the University of Dar es Salaam who has been very vocal in condemning the “populist autocracy”<sup>140</sup> of the ASP government, has lent credence to this belief. He has stated that the “Time of Politics” surrounding the revolution was similar to a “civil war, not between Arabs and Africans but between two halves of a nation, including the divided Shirazi majority.”<sup>141</sup>

Omar R. Mapuri, a later historian with close ties to CCM, challenged the assumption that Arabs had suffered most during the revolution, and claims that histories which claim otherwise are “not only false, but also discriminatory in essence. [...] The

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<sup>138</sup> Babakerim, 3.

<sup>139</sup> Afro-Shirazi Party, *Speech Delivered by His Excellency the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and President of the Afro-Shirazi Party During the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Zanzibar Revolution, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1975*, (Zanzibar: Printing Press Corporation, 1975), 14.

Alternative accounts say that most of the people killed at least at Mtoni were civilians. At any rate, the revolutionary forces were certainly armed with more than farming implements and stones at that point, because both of Stonetown’s armories had been raided earlier.

<sup>140</sup> Abdul Sheriff and Ed Ferguson (eds.), 261.

<sup>141</sup> Abdul Sheriff, quoted in Myers, 434.

apparent cry for Arab lives without regard to those of Africans seems only to reveal a feeling that the life of an Arab is more precious than that of an African.”<sup>142</sup> In fact, many Africans were killed during the revolution, but many of those who died seem to have been sympathizers killed by the revolutionary forces rather than by Arabs.<sup>143</sup> Because much of what happened during the revolution was not recorded by the press or by outside observers, and because the story of the revolution has been revised so many times by all groups involved, questions of how many people were killed may never be satisfactorily answered. When Mapuri’s book was published in 1996, it was burned in the streets in Zanzibar. The next week, it was awarded the Noma Award for African book publishing on the mainland.<sup>144</sup>

Even during the 1990s, atrocities committed during the revolution were contentious for historians in Tanzania and in the Arab diaspora. A more moderate state-sanctioned history, K.S. Khamis’ *Historia Fupi ya Zanzibar*, avoids the terminology of revolution entirely, and stresses the democratic character of the 1964 revolution over its less palatable characteristics. No mention is made of the Arab pogroms, and the disorder of the post-revolutionary period is attributed to civil disobedience rather than the chaos and violence of the revolution itself.<sup>145</sup> The tendency here is to ignore the figure of the Arab in Zanzibar’s history as anything besides an exploiter, while in the diasporic histories it is to treat that figure as a victim. Of course, Tanzanian historians and Zanzibari émigrés are not the only ones with opinions on the matter. The American

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<sup>142</sup> Mapuri, 55.

Incidentally, Mapuri is very well connected in CCM, and is currently the Tanzanian Ambassador to China.

<sup>143</sup> Okello’s accounts, while not very trustworthy, also detail many killings and “court martiallings” in which those with real or perceived connections to or sympathies towards Arabs were killed.

<sup>144</sup> Myers, 430.

<sup>145</sup> K.S. Khamis and H.H. Omar, *Historia Fupi ya Zanzibar: Sehemu ya Mkutano wa Kwanza wa Kimataifa ya Historia na Utamaduni wa Zanziba*, (Zanzibar: Al-Khayria Press Ltd., 1993), 113-115.

diplomat Don Petterson said in his recollections of the revolution that “*genocide* was not a term that was in vogue then, as it came to be later, but it is fair to say that in parts of Zanzibar, the killings of Arabs was genocide, pure and simple.”<sup>146</sup> But really, to quote the last line of John Iliffe’s landmark history of Tanganyika, “it was more complicated than that.”<sup>147</sup>

*The teaching of the 1964 Revolution in Tanzanian schools*

The debate over how the revolution is represented in the academic world is important, but ultimately more Tanzanians come into contact with the ideas around the revolution through the medium of public education, rather than through academic journals and monographs. Public primary education in Tanzania has only recently become universal and compulsory, but it has always been focused on cultivating a specific idea of Tanzania’s history and national identity. Julius Nyerere’s 1967 *Education for Self-Reliance* established much of the precedent for how Tanzanian education is structured, and although it was officially relinquished as a set of guiding policies, its Pan-African, socially-focused guidelines were so pervasive that their influence remained visible even after CCM abandoned African Socialism.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the university was a major center for radical thought, and for research on historical pedagogy. Under the chancellorships of Presidents Nyerere and Mwinyi, it became known for leading the intellectual debate on liberation, social justice, and development in East Africa, much of which had to do with educational policy.<sup>148</sup> The establishment of the Department of Kiswahili in 1970 initiated Swahili instruction in

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<sup>146</sup> Petterson, 94.

<sup>147</sup> Iliffe 1979, 576.

<sup>148</sup> Matthew L. Luhanga, *Higher Education Reforms in Africa: The University of Dar es Salaam Experience*, (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 2003), 48.

language and literature courses intended to train teachers and other public servants, and signaled a change in orientation away from English language education, and towards the more “pragmatic” goal of educating the Tanzanian public in Swahili.<sup>149</sup> One major goal of this movement was to create an official, agreed upon idea of Tanzanian history that could be taught throughout the country’s primary schools. This took a number of forms.

The first was through *tenzi*, a genre of Swahili historical poetry designed to be memorized by students. *Tenzi* were traditionally written on events in pre-colonial history and were part of oral tradition, but the Tanzanian government mobilized the genre to teach about independence, the history of CCM, and the revolution. The revolution is reduced in these poems to a righteous seizure of power from the “colonial” rule of the ZNP government. The period of British colonialism and the period of ZNP rule are conflated as one, and the Revolution is compared to Mau Mau as a distinctly anti-colonial popular struggle. The ZNP government is portrayed as an extension of the British state. “That Sheikh Shamte,/ and his crony Muhsin,” one poem reads, “tried to send for help,/ and call up the British!”<sup>150</sup> This view of the revolution holds that ultimately, it was African bravery that defeated the “evil sultan” and his troops. Again, the revolution is constructed as a conflict between a revolutionary cadre of ordinary citizens and the sultan’s *military* force. Another poem goes; “those Arab soldiers,/ they didn’t put forth a good enough effort;/ the night of the conflict,/ all of them fell.”<sup>151</sup> Most people who

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<sup>149</sup> G.A. Mhina, *Taarifa ya semina ya Kiswahili iliyofanywa tarehe 5-9 Juni, 1970*, (Dar es Salaam: Baraza la Taifa la Lugha ya Kiswahili, 1970), 21.

<sup>150</sup> E. M. Mahimbi, *Utenzi wa Chama cha Mapinduzi*, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, Ltd., 1981), 49.

<sup>151</sup> Ramadhani Mwaruka, *Utenzi wa Jamhuri ya Tanzania*, (Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1968), 55.

fought on the Sultan's side were in fact civilians, but this is not how the revolution is portrayed.

No mention is made of the difficult times after the revolution. Of Karume's regime, it is only said that "the people were made happy,/ all of them thanked God/ to see that happiness had come/ to greet them."<sup>152</sup> This kind of sunny description obscures the more brutal parts of the revolution, but it served a purpose in uniting most of the country against the common enemy of colonialism, which in this interpretation includes the ZNP, Arab-led state.

There were also a number of novels which were part of school curricula on the revolution. Shafi Adam Shafi's *Kasri ya Mwinyi Fuad* [*The House of Boss Fuad*]<sup>153</sup> is a story of African newcomers to Zanzibar who live on the outskirts of a large Arab plantation, and it keeps closely to the ASP's version of events before and during the revolution. The novel is a depiction of Arab wealth and African poverty, and it is filled with references to the proletariat and the exploitative Arab landowning class. The two African protagonists are involved in the revolution, one of them as a soldier, and he embodies the virtues of bravery and masculinity that run throughout ASP propaganda. There are also suggestions throughout the book that the Arab landowners are homosexual, which is a widely circulated stereotype about Zanzibaris that was abetted through revolutionary propaganda.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Muhammed S. Khatib, *Utenzi wa Ukombozi wa Zanzibar*, (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1978), 39.

<sup>153</sup> Shafi Adam Shafi, *Kasri ya Mwinyi Fuad*, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1978).

<sup>154</sup> For a particularly sensational example of the news coverage of homosexuality in Zanzibar, see "Broken Marriages, Homosexuals Rate At Increase in Zanzibar," TOMRIC News Agency (Dar es Salaam), 27 June, 2001.

Ahmed Mohamed's *Asali Chungu [Bitter Honey]*<sup>155</sup> is the story of Dude, a young man of mixed Arab and African descent who works for and becomes involved with an Arab family. When the revolution comes at the end of the book, Dude has to decide whether to stay with the Arab family he has grown close to, or join in the revolution. He decides to stay with his adopted family, which the author roundly condemns. The ending of the book is a vindictive warning to those who would sympathize with Dude's position or his decision to join the Arab "usurpers" – "the world has had its revenge," the author says. "Forever, Dude will now remember where he came from."<sup>156</sup> These novels serve a clear pedagogical purpose; they tell a triumphant version of the revolution, while warning their young readers, both those in Zanzibar and on the mainland, that any diversion from the revolutionary dogma of socialism, progress, and Africanity will not be tolerated.

*The slave trade and the East African littoral*

The historical memory of slavery occupies an especially important place in twentieth century Zanzibari accounts of the sultanate. Approximately five million people were traded as slaves in East Africa and the Indian Ocean region up until the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century (independent of the trans-Atlantic slave trade),<sup>157</sup> many of them through Zanzibar or by Zanzibari traders and merchants. Slave routes terminated "all over the Arab world, but even those routes leading to [mainland Arab settlements at] Bagamoyo, Tabora and Ujiji"<sup>158</sup> went by way of Zanzibar. Zanzibar's wealth was largely based on the slave trade until the late nineteenth century, and it occupies an important place in the islands' history and identity. Some historians absent slavery from the history

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<sup>155</sup> Said Ahmed Mohamed, *Asali Chungu*, (Nairobi : Shungwaya Publishers, 1978).

<sup>156</sup> Mohamed, quoted and translated in Myers, 438.

<sup>157</sup> Leda Ferrant, *Tippu Tip and the East African Slave Trade*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

<sup>158</sup> B.F. Mrina and W.T. Mattoke, *Mapambano ya ukombozi Zanzibar*, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, [1980]), 23.

of early Zanzibar altogether, and present the islands as if it had never happened.<sup>159</sup> It is impossible to deny the existence and importance of the slave trade in Zanzibari history, though, so the more common tactic is to shift the responsibility for slavery in East Africa from Arabs to Europeans and other Africans. One historian asks “who was it that carried out slavery in East Africa and Mozambique long before we [Arabs] were welcomed there? The answer is the Ethiopians and the Portuguese.”<sup>160</sup> Surely Zanzibari Arabs were not the only ones involved in the slave trade, but Zanzibar’s status as the center of the trade and main source of its demand gives it an added importance in terms of responsibility.

There is also an argument that the slavery that took place in Zanzibar was more benign than other forms of slavery. Ali Muhsin al Barwani claimed that slavery in Zanzibar was “entirely devoid of the cruelties that were its usual concomitants in the other parts of the world [...] such was the happy state of slaves that they loathed freedom.”<sup>161</sup> Drawing on the work of the Kenyan historian Ali Mazrui, Zanzibari-Omani historian Issa bin Nasser Al-Ismaily cites a difference between “European slavery” which is based in a desire for labor and has no social component, and “Arab or Islamic slavery” which enslaves people “irrespective of tribal or racial difference” and usually takes place within the context of the family. Slaves became part of family units, intermarried with the non-slave community, and did not pass the condition of being enslaved on to their descendants.<sup>162</sup> The scale and brutality of this type of slavery may in fact have been less than the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but it was extractive and brutal nonetheless.

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<sup>159</sup> Abubakar, 16-19.

<sup>160</sup> Issa Nasser Issa Al Ismaily, *Uzanzibari na Usultani*, (Muscat: Privately printed, 1996), 23.

<sup>161</sup> Ali Muhsin al Barwani, “Slavery as it used to be practiced in Zanzibar,” *Makerere College Magazine*, Vol. 1 No. 4, (Aug., 1937), 111, cited in Glassman 2000, 420.

<sup>162</sup> Issa bin Nasser Al-Ismaily, *Zanzibar: kinyang’anyiro na utumwa*, (Muscat: Privately printed, 1999), 258.

The representation of the slave trade was drastically different in accounts by Africans and others who supported the 1964 revolution. The figure of Tippu Tip is especially important in African accounts of Arab rule. Tippu Tip was a Zanzibari Arab slave trader born in 1830 who operated trade routes for ivory, agricultural products and slaves between what is now Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zanzibar, and was one of the wealthiest and most powerful people in pre-colonial East Africa. He was known for his brutality, and he was a cornerstone of the East African slave economy. He was not the only slave trader, but his wealth and the extent of his business interests made him the most visible one. Tippu Tip and his contemporaries did not practice anything like benign slavery, and most African accounts of the slave trade make this clear. The Tanzanian historian Benjamin Mrina claims that African slaves were used “to build the very economy which had destroyed their nations and sapped their physical strength.”<sup>163</sup> Although many of these slaves became integrated into Zanzibar and take on the identity of Shirazis, the brutal experience of Arab slavery was not immediately forgotten.<sup>164</sup>

Sultan Seyyid Said bin Sultan, who came from Oman to establish the Omani sultanate there, came to Zanzibar, in Mrina’s words “not as a conqueror but at the request of his blood-brothers,”<sup>165</sup> which was an important fact in the context of the revolution. In fact, the real reason that Sultan Seyyid took interest in Zanzibar probably had more to do with the enormous amounts of money circulating in the Indian Ocean region, which

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<sup>163</sup> Mrina and Mattoke, 22.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 4.

His “blood brothers” being Arabs from the gulf who had lived and worked in Zanzibar as traders for generations, and had little connection to the Omani Sultanate other than a popularly conceived shared lineage.



presented great opportunities for profiteering,<sup>166</sup> than it did with any kind of racial solidarity. The Omani period that he initiated is remembered in the branch of historical scholarship by Arabs in the diaspora, exemplified by Ali Muhsin al Barwani, as a period of enormous wealth and international importance. Zanzibar became a center of Islamic scholarship, and Swahili became a language of learning and international relations in the Indian Ocean region. For Ali Muhsin and others like him, the nineteenth century was a golden age of Islamic civilization in the East African littoral, which is seen as intrinsically connected to the idea of Islam and Arabness, or *ustaarabu*.<sup>167</sup> This term is often defined as the Swahili word for “civilization,”<sup>168</sup> which demonstrates the pervasive association of the Sultanate with literacy, wealth, and Islamic learning.

Not everyone shares this view. For Shirazis and the mainlanders who were brought to Zanzibar as slaves, it was a period of ruthless brutality, oppression, and forced conversion to Islam. The palaces, forts and mosques that made Stonetown a city of great importance in the Indian Ocean and the Islamic world meant little to slaves and tenant farmers working on plantations in the island’s interior. For many, the sultanate was a colonial state more brutal and extractive than the Portuguese had been, and this is reflected in the histories of Zanzibar that were written by Africans around the time of the revolution.

An official ASP history claims that “it was the Omani Arabs who organized the slave trade on a large scale. The penetration of the Arabs for slave hunting brought a state

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<sup>166</sup> J.E.G Sutton, *Historical Association of Tanzania Paper No. 11: Early Trade in Eastern Africa*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), 27.

<sup>167</sup> John Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 33.

<sup>168</sup> *Kamusi ya Kiingereza – Kiswahili Toleo la Pili*, (Dar es Salaam: Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili, 2000), 125.

of terror and suspicion in the African mind.”<sup>169</sup> The authors go on to state that the 1964 revolution was a direct result of slavery, and was retribution for centuries of oppression. Here again, the figure of the Arab is either the exploiter and colonial lackey, or the hapless victim of ethnic violence. There is little room for subtlety or multidimensionality in these narratives, and both the supporters and detractors of the revolution rely on racial categorization of people in order to explain away deeper conflicts that have to do with class, religion, and historical memory. Despite the temporal distance of slavery from the “time of politics” and the revolution, its history remained an important point of mobilization both for those who supported the revolution as an act of liberation, and those who saw it as a betrayal of Zanzibari civilization by outsiders.

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<sup>169</sup> [Afro-Shirazi Party], ASP Executive Department and ASP Education Department, *A Short History of Zanzibar*, (Zanzibar: Printing Press Corporation, 1977), 71.

### Conclusion

On May 21, 2008, Zanzibar lost all electrical power. The single undersea cable that connected Zanzibar to the mainland and provided Zanzibar with all of its power somehow became disconnected, and the archipelago was left in the dark. Hotels and businesses related to the tourist industry were able to rely on generators, but hospitals pumping stations struggled to find enough diesel to continue operating. The outage lasted for four weeks before it could be repaired, and the water shortage that it caused created a small-scale public health crisis.<sup>170</sup> There are many possible reasons why the outage could have happened, and the Tanzanian electrical utility has failed on such large a scale before. However, many people did not accept incompetence as the outage's explanation. Rumors circulated that the outage was a deliberate act by the Tanzanian government, designed to punish a recalcitrant Zanzibar for being a center of opposition to CCM. The Zanzibar-based Civic United Front (CUF) remains one of only two political parties in Tanzania that come even close to challenging the Chama Cha Mapinduzi in terms of popularity, and CUF remains committed to greater autonomy for Zanzibar.

The power outage was probably not intentional, but it added to an ongoing debate about how integrated Zanzibar really is in contemporary Tanzania. The idea of a single cable connecting Zanzibar with the mainland is symbolically powerful, and the power outage strained an already fraught relationship even further. How long the union will last is frequently a topic of discussion in the Tanzanian media and in academic circles, and it continues to inform the country's political and intellectual life. Zanzibar remains the site of some significant debates about national identity, the legacy of Pan-Africanism, and the

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<sup>170</sup> Salma Said and Orton Kiishweko, "No End to Electricity Crisis in Zanzibar," *The Citizen*, 26 May 2008. Salma Said, "Zanzibar Blackout to Last Another 90 Days, Says Expert," *The Citizen*, 4 June 2008. Vicent Mnanyika, "Electricity Restored to Zanzibar," *The Citizen*, 19 June 2008.

future of party politics in East Africa. The way that the 1964 Revolution is remembered, or consciously *not* remembered as the case may be, continues to be part of those debates. To understate the importance of the revolution is to participate in the process of effacement that has surrounded it since the 1960s.

All histories of the revolution have their objectives and their biases, including this one. No history of the revolution can be truly authoritative, because everything about it is contested. The important thing is that contestation itself has been a source of change in Tanzania's postcolonial history. The historians who contest the revolution participate in a complicated process of mediation and identity-constructing, which has real meaning for how Tanzanians see themselves today. Historical scholarship is both the arena where those discussions take place, and the mechanism by which the Tanzanian nation is defined and made meaningful. The revolution, and the processes of effacement and reinterpretation that followed it, have been instrumental in creating the Nyerereian narrative of national unity, political stability, and peace, all articulated in a language that draws heavily on Pan-Africanism. The 1964 Revolution pushed Nyerere, TANU, and the people who mediated Tanzanian nationhood in its early stages to think in entirely new ways about who was Tanzanian, what Tanzania's place in the world was, and what kind of history the people of the East African littoral do and do not share. Whether or not the narratives that came out of that process are accurate or true, they defined the state in ways which are still relevant today.

When leaders of the Afro-Shirazi party wrote "Our Mother is Afro-Shirazi, Our Father is the Revolution" on Zanzibar City's gate, they meant it in the narrow sense of the political power that they inherited after the revolution. In a broader sense, though,

their slogan revealed a larger truth about Tanzania – or at least a half truth. As Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania grow further apart, the political divide between CCM and the opposition increasingly becomes oriented as a divide between the mainland and the archipelago. One of the few things that unites Zanzibar and the mainland as part of the same political lineage is the 1964 Revolution. The revolution, and more importantly the histories that were written of it, affected the United Republic of Tanzania's nationhood in many ways, only some of which are described here. The 1964 Revolution will surely continue to have value as part of a usable past, but what uses it will be put to can only be imagined.

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