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Marginalized, Forgotten, and Revived Political
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Tanzania: A Nation without Heroes

Speaker

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TANZANIA - A COUNTRY WITHOUT HEROES

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Nyerere: A Lone Hero of the Struggle for Tanganyika's Independence

The heading of the paper is from words which the late Hamza Aziz told me during discussion about the political history of Tanganyika. Hamza Aziz was a police officer in the colonial force and one of the TANU informants during the struggle for Tanganyika's independence in 1950s passing on information to TANU top leadership as to what the police was plotting against the party. After independence Hamza Aziz was made Inspector General of Police (IGP) by Nyerere. Reflecting on what was the end of his elder brother,¹ the once rich and flamboyant Dossa Aziz and his contribution to the struggle for independence, first as a party financier and second as Nyerere's close friend, ally and right hand man and retrospectively coming to the painful reality that his brother died a poor man; and the fact that his brother does not feature anywhere in Nyerere's life or in the history of the struggle or in TANU's history, the party which he was among the 17 founder members in 1954, he sadly uttered these words, "Tanzania is a country without heroes. Tanzania has one hero only and that hero is Julius Kambarage Nyerere."

Hamza Aziz's sadness could probably among other things be deduced from the fact that a street near Mbaruku Street where Dossa had lived during the struggle was at that time recently named after a non entity controversial Muslim politician Yusuf Makamba who together with a Catholic priest Camillus Luambano were a source of Muslim killings in the infamous Mwembechaji Mosque raid by the paramilitary in 1998.² It was not possible to understand what compelled the city authorities to honour Yusuf Makamba or what

¹ Dossa and Hamza Aziz were sons of Aziz Ali a building contractor and one of richest Africans in colonial Tanganyika.

² For details on the killings see Hamza Mustafa Njozi, *Mwembechaji Killings and Political Future of Tanzania*, Globalink Communications Ottawa, 2000. The book is banned by the government.

criteria was applied to immortalise the man who majority of Muslims consider has Muslim blood in his hands and forget to honour Dossa Aziz after what he did to the country and to Nyerere. Dossa's house was among two centres where the young nationalists used to meet to organise and strategise against the British. The other place was at Abdulwahid Sykes's house at Aggrey Street. These two houses should have been preserved and made national monuments for posterity.

The official version has conveniently omitted the decisive role of many patriots. The corrective version has attempted to insert back into history those forgotten patriots including the unpalatable realities and hard facts. Yash Tandon has lamented on the neglect of patriots who fought for independence of their countries. Tandon called the forgotten heroes like Abdulwahid Sykes and other patriots like Chege Kibachia, Makhan Singh, Fred Kubai, James Kivu, I.K. Musazi, Erika Fiah and Gama Pinto as "veteran leaders of the struggle of the peoples of East Africa... whom our recent historians have forgotten."³

Having purposely buried those who fought for independence consequently part of the history of these countries is lost. Students of political history in East African countries are in the dark about important events which took place and carried out by the forgotten patriots. For example few are aware that there was an attempt in 1950 by Kenya African Union (KAU) and TAA through their leaders, Kenyatta and Abdulwahid to link the Kenyan struggle during Mau Mau with that in Tanganyika and a secret meeting was held in Nairobi between the two. During the Meru Land case in 1950 Tanganyika sought help from Kenya to assist them in confronting the settler community in Meru.⁴ There were also Kenyans in TAA Executive Committee prominent among them were Dome Okochi Budohi, Patrick Aoko and C Ongalo. These three Kenyans in the TAA executive committee held office alongside Abdulwahid Sykes and Nyerere and were among the

³ Yash Tandon, 'In Defence of Democracy' *Inaugural Lecture Series* No. 14, Dar es Salaam, 1979, pp. 47-48.

⁴ See Iliffe A Modern History of Tanganyika, Cambridge University Press, London 1977 pg. 502 quoting letter by Sykes to Sablak 8 December 1952 Also Japhet Kirilo's papers TNA.

early members of the African National Union (TANU) when the party was formed in 1954.⁵

In 1955 Dome Budohi and Patrick Aoko and other Kenyans were among Kenyans rounded up in Dar es Salaam following "Operation Anvil" which came into operation in Kenya in 1954. Budohi and Aoko the two active Kenyans in TANU were remanded at Central Police Station⁶ in Dar es Salaam and were all the time kept in chains. Budohi was the first Kenyan to join TANU and was the proud bearer of TANU card no. 6.⁷ Budohi and Aoko were interrogated for six months and then sent to a camp in Handeni to be transported to detention camps in Kenya. Budohi was detained in Lamu Island. The Kenyan nationalists were packed in cattle wagons chained and they passed through Korogwe and Taveta on their way back to Kenya. Ally Sykes then transferred to Korogwe as punishment for being among the 17 founders of TANU went to the railway station to see them off.

The Forgotten Patriots, Heroes and Heroines

The struggle against British colonialism in Tanganyika was fought by many and from every angle. There were the known front liners, patriots of the TAA like Abdulwahid Sykes and his young brother Ally, Dossa Aziz, John Rupia,⁸ Steven Mhando, Dr. Vedasto Kyaruzi, Hamza Mwapachu (1913 – 1962)⁹, Idd Faiz Mafongo,¹⁰ Mshume Kiyate,¹¹ Joseph Kasella Bantu,¹²

⁵ *Tanganyika Standard*, 19 th June 1953.

⁶ This building still stands in its original form although it is not now a police station. A plaque on the building to honour the nationalists who spent time there will help in preserving that history.

⁷ Julius Nyerere card no. 1; Ally Sykes card no 2, Abdulwahid Sykes card no 3; Dossa Aziz card No. 4; Denis Phombeah card No. 5; Dome Okochi Budohi card no. 6 John Rupia card No. 7; Bibi Titi Mohamed card No. 16; Idd Tosiri card No. 25.

⁸ Abdulwahid Sykes, Ally Sykes, Dossa Aziz and John Rupia were the financiers of the movement from 1950 to 1961 when independence was achieved.

⁹ See Andrew Bomani in *Raja Mwema* of 19 October 2012 "Hamza Mwapachu na Nyerere Kuelekea Uhuru wa Tanganyika." Hamza Mwapachu and Abdulwahid Sykes are the ones who recruited Nyerere into colonial politics in 1952 when Nyerere came to Dar es Salaam to work as a teacher at St. Francis College, Pugu. Hamza Mwapachu has been honoured in Kenya. Through efforts by Ali Mwakwere after learning that Mwapachu was a fellow Digo and that he was the first Digo to attend Makerere College in 1943 Mwakwere had a street in Kwale District his own home area named after Hamza Kibwana Mwapachu.

¹⁰ Idd Faiz Mafongo was among the first 20 members who attended the first TANU meeting in August 1954. He was the Al Jama'atul Islamiyya and TANU treasurer at the same time. As TANU treasurer he was responsible for collecting funds for Nyerere's first trip to UNO in 1955.

¹¹ Mshume Kiyate a rich fish monger at Kariakoo Market and a strong member of TANU Elders Council adopted Nyerere as his own son in 1955. Mshume Kiyate was among TANU financiers. In 1964 when the

and Zuberi Mtemvu in Dar es Salaam, Ally Migeyo,¹³ Saadan Abdu Kandoro and Paul Bomani from the Lake Region, Yusuf "Ngozi" Olotu¹⁴ from Kilimanjaro, Bilali Rehani Waikela,¹⁵ Germano Pacha, Fundi Muhindi from Tabora, Yusuf Chembera and Salum Mpunga from Lindi, Hamisi Heri, Sheikh Rashid Sembe,¹⁶ Mohamed Kajembe from Tanga... the list is long. There were also the not so well known like Lameck Bogohe who is also in the list of founding members of TANU.¹⁷

In this category there were the Swahili women groups and societies who turned "lelemama" songs into songs of protests and revolution. Famous among them was Bibi Titi Mohamed (1926 – 2007),¹⁸ Hawa Bint Maftah, Tatu Bint Mzee of Dar es Salaam, Shariffa Bint Mzee of Lindi, Halima Selengia¹⁹ of Moshi, Dharura Bint Abdulrahman of Tabora, Mwanamwema

army mutinied and Nyerere came back to power after the army was disarmed by the British TANU held a mass demonstration in support of Nyerere in which Nyerere gave a speech. Mshume Kiyate was the elder politician who was nominated by the party to go up the stage with Nyerere to cloth him with a traditional Swahili attire known as "kitambi" as show of love, support and respect to him. Mshume Kiyate died a poor man failing even to pay his medical bills. His contribution to TANU and support to Nyerere remain unrecognised. Efforts to name Tandamti Street which he lived during the struggle after him has been resisted by City Council authorities.

¹² Kasella Bantu was the one who took Nyerere to Abdulwahid Sykes's house to introduce them in 1952.

¹³ G. Mutahaba, *Portrait of a Nationalist: The Life of Ali Migeyo*, East African Publishing House, 1969.

¹⁴ Yusuf Ngozi was responsible for founding TANU in Kilimanjaro in 1955 despite of efforts by the colonial government to sabotage the party. History will remember Yusuf Ngozi for organising the Chagga to register as voters in the hated Tripartite Vote of 1958 which was known as "Kura Tatu" in which an African was required to vote for a European, Asian and African candidate. Yusuf Ngozi died a poor man in 1989.

¹⁵ Bilali Rehani Waikela one of the TANU founder members in Western Province in 1955 and Regional Secretary of the East African Muslim Welfare Society (EAMWS) was detained by Nyerere in 1964 for "mixing religion and politics." His personal papers were of great help in understanding the EAMWS crisis of 1968 and the reasons why Nyerere detained prominent sheikhs and banned the society in 1968. A documentary of his political life has been made and although not officially recognized as a patriot, Muslims now consider him as one of the heroes of the independence movement. For more information see Mohamed Said, "In Praise of Ancestors," *Africa Events* (London) March/April 1988.

¹⁶ Sheikh Rashid Sembe (1912 – 1999) was among the TANU inner circle in Tanga who with Julius Nyerere plotted to circumvent TANU majority membership who were against contesting the Tripartite Election of 1958. This interesting story has never been made public. Other members to the Tanga Strategy were Amos Kissenge, Mwalimu Kihere and Hamisi Kheri. At the Tabora Conference of 1958 Nyerere was able to convince TANU to participate in the election. The outcome of this was resignation of Zuberi Mtemvu from TANU and formation of African National Congress (ANC) to oppose TANU and soon after a faction detached itself from TANU to form All Muslim National Union of Tanganyika (AMNUT). Nyerere referred to this story publicly only once in his lifetime and it was in passing. For details see M. Said *ibid.* *The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes*...pp. 233–252.

¹⁷ Lameck Bogohe after many years of oblivion wrote an article (*Nipashe* 7 Julai 2010) giving details of his contribution in the founding of TANU IN 1954.

¹⁸ Titi Mohamed fell out with Nyerere soon after independence on issues concerning the role of Islam in free Tanganyika and was hounded out of TANU eventually charged in treason trial in 1970 with Oscar Kambona. She was given life sentence but was pardoned after serving few years in jail.

¹⁹ Halima Selengia died in 2013 her contribution to the struggle for independence unrecognised.

bint Sultan of Tanga and many others pushing their struggle against colonialism through Muslim women societies and "taarab" groups like "Bomba Kusema," "Egyptian," "Al Watan," "Saniyyat Hubb," "Arab Congo" etc. etc. Unfortunately all of them are missing in Tanganyika's political history.

Fallacies, Half Truths and Omissions

The trend in Tanzania has been to down play the quarter century history of African Association and its leadership. The achievements of the African Association remained undocumented and very little were known about its leadership.²⁰ In 1986 after a silence of almost 25 years Ally Sykes (1926 – 2013) one of the 17 founder members of TANU in 1954 and a person who holds TANU card no. 2 and the person who issued card no. 1 to Nyerere the card which bears his signature gave an interview to a British journalist Paula Park. Park wrote a full page article on the Sykes's family contribution to the political development of Tanganyika culminating into the founding of TANU in 1954.²¹ Shortly after, Park was paid a visit by immigration officials and quietly asked to leave the country. In 1988 an article was published in *African Events* (March/April) 1988 (pp 37- 41) in which Abdulwahid Sykes and other forgotten TANU pioneers received prominence. It is the norm that anything contrary to the official history is met with threats, hostility and at times sheer contempt. The author received sharp rebuke from Party historian, Dr. Mayanja Kiwanuka, a leading member of the panel which wrote *Historia ya Chama Cha TANU 1954-1977*, the official history of TANU and that particular issue was quietly removed from circulation.²² The article could not be allowed to be read because it contradicted the official TANU history.

In 1951 Abdulwahid and Ally Sykes, Mwapachu Dr Joseph Mutahangarwa, Chief Abdieli Shangali of Machame, Paramount Chief Thomas Marealle of Marangu, Chief Adam Sapi

²⁰ At various times between 1945 and 1950 the African Association then known as Tanganyika African Association was led by the best brains in Tanganyika among them was the five doctors: Dr. Luciano Tsere, Dr. Joseph Mutahangarwa, Dr. Michael Lugazia, Dr W.E.B. Mwanjisi and Dr. Vedasto Kyaruzi. Others were Ali Juma Ponda, Hassan Suleiman, Ali Migeyo, Abdulwahid Sykes and Hamza Mwapachu to name a few.

²¹ 'An Unsung Hero?' *Africa Events*, London, November 1986 p.48.

²² The editor of *Africa Events* was Mohamed Malamali Adam. Other contributors were Ahmed Saleh Yahya Ahmed Rajab and Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu. *Africa Events* magazine was considered a hostile paper to office in London. The government made a deal with the magazine that it would be allowed to circulate in Tanzania without molestation and will be allowed to repatriate its funds back to United Kingdom if it fulfils certain conditions. *Africa Events* obliged.

Mkwawa, Chief Harun Msabila Lugusha, Dr Mwanjisi, Abdulkarim Karimjee, Dr Vedas Kyaruzi, Juma Mwindaji, H.K. Viran, Stephen Mhando and Dossa Aziz.were requested by Ivor Bayldon, ²³ Brig. Scupham and V.M. Nazerali ²⁴ to support formation of a multiracial political party. A glaring omission from this list is the name of Julius Nyerere. Bayldon, Scupham and Nazerali were members of the Legislative Council. African members of the Legislative Council who were enthusiastic about this new development of interracial alliance in politics were Chief Kidaha Makwaja and Yustino Mponda of Newala. Abdulwahid and the TAA inner circle refused to support this idea because TANU existed in their minds.

It is not possible for any researcher to trace the origin of TANU outside the circle of the Sykes family. When Abdulwahid Sykes died in 1968 Brendon Grimshaw then Editor of *Tanganyika Standard* wrote an obituary in which he paid a glowing tribute to the Sykes family on its contribution to the political development of Tanganyika and without mincing words and without fear stated that "much of the desire among Africans for a powerful political party in Tanzania came from the drive of the Sykes family."²⁵ Any attempt to rewrite TANU history by focusing on Nyerere and marginalising other patriots is bound to be met with many obstacles. Chief Kidaha and Abdulwahid Sykes are hardly mentioned in the history of TANU. Was Nyerere aware of what had transpired between Abdulwahid Sykes and Chief Kidaha before he appeared on the scene?

²³Ivor Bayldon was the founder president of United Tanganyika Party (UTP), formed by Europeans in 1955 to oppose TANU. The Vice-President was Sheikh Hussein Juma, a prominent Manyema in Dar es Salaam.

²⁴ V.M. Nazerali to Ally Sykes 12 th October, 1953 Sykes' papers.

²⁵ *Sunday News*, 20 th October, 1968.

