

The Power of History to Build a Nation: Tanzania's Educational Approach to the Zanzibar Revolution

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Introduction

THE opening pages of *A Short History of Zanzibar*, written by the education department of the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) in 1974, include an excerpt of a speech delivered by the President of the ASP declaring:

Our own affairs have always been written and interpreted for us by foreigners. It is our belief that these three books would pave the way for our own indigenous writers who would be made to realize the importance of presenting a history of Tanzania, Zanzibar that adequately embodies the thoughts, efforts and aspirations of those before them.¹

The ASP's decision to introduce their educational pamphlet with a quote emphasizing the importance of indigenous historical perspectives illustrates how Tanzanians used African history to unify and empower the nation after independence. Historical accounts of Tanzania and broader efforts to produce African-led histories served to discredit European narratives of the continent. During the colonial period, European intellectuals dominated knowledge production about the African continent and many scholars alleged that there was no history in Africa, only darkness.² This assertion helped justify European intrusion and exploitation in Africa by claiming that innovations and development only occurred on the continent after the onset of colonialism. Because of the hegemony of Euro-centric research and historical analysis, Europeans could perpetuate an image of Africans, still seen today, as passive actors in their own history. Following their independence in 1961, Tanzanian leaders revisited their history to challenge the European account and utilized new historical narratives to guide the burgeoning nation. The first President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, exemplified the government's pride in history. From 1966 to 1999, Nyerere served as the initial patron of the Historical Association of Tanzania (HAT), which published literature re-examining Tanzanian history through the lens of nationalism and socialism.³

These histories sought to inspire Tanzanians to take pride in their national identity and support government initiatives; however, they also marginalized alternative perspectives and non-governmental beliefs. For example, the Zanzibar Revolution, one of the most influential events in the history of Tanzania, remains historically disputed because of its ongoing influence on Tanzanian national identity and politics today. Following the revolution and the union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika, which created modern-day Tanzania, various political and academic groups developed distinct narratives on the Zanzibar Revolution based on their racial background and political ideologies. During the 1960s, the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), and the Historical Association of Tanzania (HAT) wrote their own historical accounts on the Zanzibar

¹ASP Executive Department and ASP Education Department, *A Short History of Zanzibar* (Printing Press Corporation, Zanzibar, 1974).

²Julius Chuhila Maxmillian, "Whose History is our History? Six Decades of the Production of Historical Knowledge in Tanzania," *Tanzania Zamani* 13, no. 2 (2021): 6.

³"Patrons," Historical Association of Tanzania, accessed January 8, 2026, <https://www.hattz.ac.tz/patrons>.

Revolution and its broader implications for the future of Tanzania. Despite the groups' different perspectives on the Zanzibar Revolution, these historical narratives all aimed to assert Tanzanian nationalism and liberation from colonial powers by interpreting the revolution through the lenses of anti-imperialism, class division, and unified liberation movements. This paper asserts that although each narrative of the Zanzibar Revolution constructed by the ASP, ZNP, and HAT contributed to distinct ideas of Tanzanian identity, they were unified in their reliance on history to create a nation centered on African capability and unity, which was reflected in President Julius Nyerere's hopeful vision for the future of independent Tanzania and Africa.

Historical Context of the Zanzibar Revolution

Zanzibar is located off the coast of Tanzania and consists of two islands: Unguja, often referred to as Zanzibar, and Pemba, the smaller, less inhabited area. For centuries, these islands have been a hub for international travel and exchange due to their location along the Indian Ocean trade routes.⁴ Starting around the first century AD, monsoon winds brought traders from India, Oman, and Persia to Zanzibar during their journey from the Arabian peninsula or Asian continent to East Africa.⁵ These trans-continental interactions cultivated a distinct cosmopolitan society as Zanzibar served as an intermediary between African and Indian Ocean traders.⁶ Zanzibar identity reflected the fluid and dynamic nature of this cross-cultural exchange and incorporated African, Arab, Indian, and Portuguese elements.

Zanzibar grew closer to the Arab world in the 19th century when Oman gained control of the island and Sultan Seyyid Said made Zanzibar the capital of Oman.⁷ Omani rule significantly influenced the structure of Zanzibari society and economy as a large number of Omanis immigrated and contributed to new racial and class divisions. These changes were accelerated by Zanzibar's prominent role in the ivory and slave trade business.⁸ By the 1860s, as many as 20,000 enslaved people from mainland Africa entered Zanzibar each year, either en route to other countries, or to work on the local clove plantations developed by Seyyid Said.⁹ As the Omani immigrant population continued to grow in Zanzibar, they helped form the wealthy, elite class alongside South Asians.¹⁰ Zanzibaris from Oman garnered wealth from urban properties, the coconut and clove plantations, and their involvement in the slave trade, whereas South Asians dominated the commercial, craft, and financial sectors.¹¹ Although forming the majority of Zanzibar's population, Africans were relatively poor and many were enslaved workers on the clove plantations.¹² Rather than one unified group, African identity in Zanzibar was nuanced and diverse. The racial classification applied to many different groups of people with African ancestry: historic migrants from Persia, known as Shirazis, who intermarried with local Bantu people and engaged in subsistence farming and fishing prior to Zanzibar's role in international trade and Omani rule, enslaved people from mainland Africa who arrived in the 19th century, and migrants from African countries who immigrated to Zanzibar

⁴Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (Boydell & Brewer, 1987), 8.

⁵G. Thomas Burgess, "The Zanzibar Revolution and Its Aftermath," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2018): 1, <https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e155>.

⁶Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 27.

⁷Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 2.

⁸Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (Yale University Press, 1977), 41.

⁹Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 43.

¹⁰Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 2.

¹¹Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 2.

¹²Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 59.

in the 20th century to work on the clove plantations.¹³

Racial categorizations continued in 1890, when Zanzibar became a British Protectorate. Under British oversight, Arabs were given preferential treatment for administrative and legislative positions.¹⁴ The distinction between Arabs and other ethnic groups solidified the class positions of Zanzibaris based on their race and ethnicity. Later, during the Time of Politics, a period of pre-independence party nationalism from 1957 to 1963, these racial categories influenced the backgrounds and ideologies of the major political parties which aimed to lead Zanzibar after British departure.¹⁵ The two main parties were the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) led by Africans and the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) primarily formed by Arabs and Asians.¹⁶ When the Zanzibar Nationalist Party won the national elections and became the leader of newly independent Zanzibar in July 1963, their rule mirrored the Arab Sultanate's from decades prior. Shortly after independence, the ZNP-run government replaced African police officers with Arab and Asian Zanzibaris, which confirmed Africans' fears of an Arab-run government and police state.¹⁷ The tensions between Africans and Arabs grew until January 12, 1964 when a group of militant ASP Youth League members overthrew the Arab government. In the early morning hours, this group surprised Zanzibar's police force, seized control of the islands' armories, and quickly removed the Arab government from power.¹⁸ After gaining control of the island, the revolutionary leaders killed up to 10,000 Omani-Zanzibaris, although the exact number of casualties is unknown, and destroyed Omani-owned houses and buildings, which led to the mass exodus of Omani-Zanzibaris to Oman.¹⁹ The new military government ruled Zanzibar for three months until they became overwhelmed by economic troubles and united with Tanganyika to create modern-day Tanzania on April 26, 1964.²⁰ This union provided Zanzibar with power over local matters and Tanganyika with control of defense, foreign affairs, immigration, and trade. Although the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution and subsequent union of Zanzibar and Tanganyika occurred decades ago, this event continues to be seen as one of the most fundamental moments in the history of Tanzania and reveals complicated questions about Zanzibari identity.

Historiography

Despite its importance to the formation of the nation, the Zanzibar Revolution holds a contested place in Tanzanian history. Each iteration of the event illustrates the political and cultural background of the particular individual who is telling the story as much as the history itself. Because of the divisive nature of Zanzibar's history, the island's first president Abeid Karume banned the teaching of history as a school subject in Zanzibar for twenty years immediately following the revolution. Karume believed that the contentious history would divide Zanzibar's new society and undermine Tanzania's goals of national unity.²¹ Karume's decision to eliminate history education in Zanzibar led to the erasure of alternative perspectives on the Zanzibar Revolution and the marginalization of non-governmental historical narratives. Conversely, around the same time as history education

¹³Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 2.

¹⁴Jonathan Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Indiana University Press, 2011), 42.

¹⁵Glassman, *War of Words*, 59.

¹⁶For the sake of this paper, I will be using the racial binary African and Arab to distinguish between groups in Zanzibar as these are the terms used in the political and academic sources that I reference. Zanzibari racial identity is more fluid than these categories, but often racial politics on the island are defined as African versus Arab.

¹⁷Lofchie, *Background to Revolution*, 268.

¹⁸Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 7.

¹⁹Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 8.

²⁰Lofchie, *Background to Revolution*, 280.

²¹Omar Ramadhan Mapuri, "Historia Kufundishwa Tena Zanzibar," *An-Nuur* (Dar es Salaam), 9–16 May 1997.

was removed from Zanzibar's curriculum, the University of Dar es Salaam's history department in mainland Tanzania was established. The program produced numerous histories about Tanzania, publishing magazines, articles, and books in an attempt to reestablish "African initiative" in history.²² The following historiography reflects these two distinct areas of literature: the various narratives of Zanzibar history during the colonial and revolutionary periods and their implications for Zanzibari society, and the development of a nationalist approach to Tanzanian history led by the University of Dar es Salaam.

Previous scholarship has analyzed the official narrative of the Zanzibar Revolution, but has largely focused on the influence of state-sponsored history on Zanzibar's political, racial, and cultural status. To demonstrate the complexity of this event, many historical articles focus on the narratives of Zanzibari identity beginning in the colonial period. In his article "Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper Wars," history professor Jonathon Glassman examines the formation of racial and ethnic division in Zanzibar during the colonial period. He asserts that racialized thought and distinction, rather than being entirely imposed by colonial powers, were solidified in Zanzibar by local intellectuals.²³ To support his argument, Glassman examines the opposing views of colonial-era Zanzibari newspapers, *Mwongozi* and *Afrika Kwetu*, where indigenous intellectuals utilized racial understandings to inform their goals for an independent Zanzibar. The authors of *Mwongozi* advocated for a society in which all Zanzibaris identified as part of a single, multi-racial nation founded in Arab-centric traditions, and therefore depicted British rule and the arrival of mainland Africans as a corruption of Zanzibar society.²⁴ On the other hand, *Afrika Kwetu* supported a pan-African identity under the campaign of the Afro-Shirazi Party and aimed to highlight similarities between mainland Africans and islanders.²⁵ They claimed that Africans were the true leaders of Zanzibar because it was their ancestral homeland. Glassman expands on this argument in his book *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* and claims that the racial distinctions exhibited in local newspapers initiated fears of racial violence and led to tense interactions between various ethnic groups leading up to the Zanzibar Revolution.²⁶ Glassman states that the racial divisions constructed by Zanzibari newspapers solidified racial thought in the island, which presented itself in violent riots and protests during the Time of Politics.

Sociologist Marie Fouréré and urban studies professor Garth Myers expand the literature on racial narratives, illustrating how the government utilized the colonial-era racial divisions to construct narratives on the Zanzibar Revolution during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods. In her article, "Reinterpreting Revolutionary Zanzibar in the Media Today: The Case of *Dira* Newspaper," Fouréré examines the history of the Zanzibar Revolution as presented by the Tanzanian government. She argues that the official narrative of the revolution served to legitimize the nation-building projects of the government through an unambiguous retelling of the racially and culturally fluid society.²⁷ In this portrayal, Zanzibaris were divided according to clear racial groups which placed the "Arabs" against the "Africans."²⁸ Myers supports Fouréré's findings through his cultural materialist interpretation of narratives on the Zanzibar Revolution. In his article, "Narrative Representations of Revolutionary Zanzibar," Myers studies the material context of the

²²Terence O. Ranger, *The Recovery of African Initiative in Tanzanian History* (University College Dar es Salaam Tanzania, 1969).

²³Jonathon Glassman, "Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper Wars," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 3 (2000): 398, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/183475>.

²⁴Glassman, "Sorting out the Tribes," 406.

²⁵Glassman, "Sorting out the Tribes," 408.

²⁶Glassman, *War of Words*, 21.

²⁷Marie-Aude Fouéré, "Reinterpreting Revolutionary Zanzibar in the Media Today: The Case of *Dira* Newspaper," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 4 (2012): 673.

²⁸Fouréré, "Reinterpreting Revolutionary Zanzibar," 672.

publication of texts about the revolution and the dominant and oppositional narratives produced.²⁹ In his analysis of the dominant narrative of the Zanzibar Revolution, he examines Swahili novels taught in Tanzanian schools and argues that these fictional novels perpetuate a rigid understanding of racial identity in the country. Specifically, *Kasri ya Mwinyi Fuad* by Shafi Adam Shafi depicts colonial Zanzibari society as divided between wealthy, foreign Arabs who are in control of the islands' economy and Africans who work the lands while secretly training to fight for their liberation from the abusive Arabs.³⁰ This portrait of Zanzibar firmly divided by race and class teaches Tanzanian students that the revolution was led by African liberators who sought to overthrow the control of the corrupt Arabs.

Despite the government's attempts to control the history of the Zanzibar Revolution, oppositional Zanzibari groups have worked to include their memory in the historical discourse. A significant area of the literature on the Zanzibar Revolution focuses on recovering the marginalized narratives remembered by oppositional groups. Fouréré argues that the *Dira* newspaper published in the 1990s challenged the race-based categorization of society and asserted that culture formed the basis of belonging in Zanzibar.³¹ Within this perspective, Zanzibaris were united not through an African heritage, but through their shared Islamic practices, Swahili language, and a cosmopolitan way of life informed by international trade. The newspaper editors overturned the argument that Arabs were foreign oppressors by claiming that mainland Africans were cultural outsiders and did not have a right to determine the island's future.³² This dissenting perspective denotes the power of the rise of the media in the 1990s that allowed for new perspectives to the previous historical monopoly of the government. Recently, scholars William Bissell and Marie-Aude Fouréré built upon Fouréré's earlier literature and published a comprehensive collection of essays titled *Social Memory, Silenced Voices, and Political Struggle*, which aims at illuminating the complicated and silenced histories of the Zanzibar Revolution. Each chapter provides aspects of the revolution that have previously been neglected due to their contradiction of the national narrative. For example, John Okello, a Ugandan who is often credited with the execution of the revolution, is eliminated from the ruling party's history of the Zanzibar Revolution because he does not fit their story of a Tanzanian-led resistance movement. In her chapter of the book, history professor Ann Lee Grimstad outlines the representations of John Okello in Tanzanian media and the various roles he plays—from a revolutionary to an irrelevant character.³³ These Zanzibar-specific literatures aim to increase the number of historical perspectives available on the Zanzibar Revolution and highlight the beliefs of marginalized citizens. However, the scholars of this literature mainly focus on the creation of racial division and suppression of diverse narratives in Zanzibar. Currently, there is a gap in scholarship related to the ways in which historical knowledge about the Zanzibar Revolution has been produced in educational institutions on the mainland of Tanzania.

Meanwhile, the literature on national history education in Tanzania has tended to focus on historiographies and departmental history recommendations at the national level without directly addressing the history of the Zanzibar Revolution. The articles by professors in the University of Dar es Salaam's history department such as Oswald Masebo, Yusufu Lawi, Maxmillian Julius Chuhila, and Ernst Wambia-dia-Wambia divide Tanzanian historiography into three distinct eras: a nationalist perspective in the 1960s–1970s, a materialist approach in the 1980s, a decline in the popularity of history in the 1990s, and a move toward thematic studies such as medical or economic

²⁹Garth Myers, "Narrative Representations of Revolutionary Zanzibar," *Journal of Historical Geography* 26, no. 3 (2000): 430.

³⁰Myers, "Narrative Representations," 436.

³¹Fouéré, "Reinterpreting Revolutionary Zanzibar," 678.

³²Fouéré, "Reinterpreting Revolutionary Zanzibar," 679.

³³William Cunningham Bissell and Marie-Aude Fouéré, *Social Memory, Silenced Voices, and Political Struggle: Remembering the Revolution in Zanzibar* (Mkuki na Nyoka Publishers, 2018), 79.

histories in recent years.³⁴ Oswald Masebo provides background to these separate periods and argues that the historical knowledge published by the University of Dar es Salaam indicates the social context in which it was produced.³⁵ During the time of nationalist literature, historians sought to inspire nation-building projects and relied on Tanzania's pre-colonial history to highlight their shared national identity. Yusufu Lawi elaborates on the nationalist period and argues that history during the 1960s was in line with the ideology of the ruling parties and their political agenda.³⁶ Historians ignored the problems brought on by politicians in order to consolidate an image of national unity and power. As a result, the majority of historical accounts focus on the achievements of pre-colonial African societies and post-colonial political institutions.

However, once Tanzania became established and the nationalist histories were no longer needed, history became less popular. In his article on the production of history, Maxmillian Julius Chuhila finds that Tanzanian students and government officials view history as a subject for people with low grades.³⁷ He argues that many students fail to see the importance of history because the subject has not evolved with time and remains a vague description of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial activities in the continent of Africa. As a result, the history taught in Tanzanian schools lacks relevance to the lives of students and fails to interest them.³⁸ Many of the articles produced about Tanzanian approaches to history conclude with suggestions on reviving the subject of history in Tanzania and strengthening the University of Dar es Salaam's history program. Their purpose, in addition to outlining the various historiographies, is to alter the history curriculum to reflect the experiences of modern Tanzanian students.

In addition to the overview of Tanzanian historical methods and critiques of the current curriculum, there is a specific field of literature focused on the University of Dar es Salaam's nationalist approach to history education in the 1960s. This historical style was coined as "The Dar es Salaam School of African History" by Professors Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper in their article, "Nationalist Historians in Search of a Nation: The 'New Historiography' in Dar es Salaam," which criticized the method as selective and biased. Specifically, the scholars critiqued Terence Ranger's inaugural lecture, "The Recovery of African Initiative in Tanzanian History," in which Ranger argued that the connection between all the publications of the University of Dar es Salaam's history department was their effort to demonstrate African initiative in Tanzanian history.³⁹ Denoon and Kuper denounced the history department's nationalist perspective because they believed that the focus on colonial-era resistance and Tanzanian capability limited the scope of their historiographies. Denoon and Kuper asserted that the history department, in an attempt to create a patriotic history, downplayed the influence of international factors on Tanzanian political movements and the impact of non-African actors in colonial and post-colonial activities.⁴⁰ Denoon and Kuper claimed that these historians analyzed Tanzanian history based on their modern idea of national identity and borders, which led them to mold African history around the assumption that nationalism is the key to understanding the Tanzanian past.⁴¹ Ranger responded to this article and the invention of a Dar es Salaam School of Thought by arguing that Denoon and Kuper had misconstrued his lecture and

³⁴Ernst Wambia dia-Wamba, "African History and Teaching of History in Dar es Salaam," *Tanzania Zamani* 1, no. 3 (1993): 17.

³⁵Oswald Masebo, "New Thematic Directions in History at the University of Dar es Salaam, 1990s to 2017," *Tanzania Zamani* 9, no. 2 (2017): 7.

³⁶Yusufu Q. Lawi, "Towards an Understanding of the Basic Problems in the Teaching of History in Post-colonial Tanzania," *Tanzania Zamani*, Vol. 1, (1995): 2.

³⁷Chuhila, "Whose History is our History?," 12.

³⁸Chuhila, "Whose History is our History?," 20.

³⁹Ranger, *Recovery of African Initiative*, 1.

⁴⁰Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper, "Nationalist Historians in Search of a Nation the 'New Historiography' in Dar es Salaam," *African Affairs* (London) 69, no. 277 (1970): 334, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a096044>.

⁴¹Denoon, "Nationalist Historians in Search," 338.

that a Dar es Salaam historiography does not exist. In his rebuttal, Ranger claimed that he and his colleagues did not limit their historical study to just Tanzania and that nationalism is an important framework but not the only lens to analyze history.⁴² However, despite Ranger's efforts, the Dar es Salaam School of African History is still regarded as the work of the history department to provide Tanzania with a "usable" history in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴³ Regardless of the historical topic, under this school of African history each publication sought to counter the colonial narrative of African history by proving that Africans contributed to the creation of their societies and economies.

This research paper aims to bring the literature on the official and marginalized narratives surrounding the Zanzibar Revolution together with the study of history in Tanzania by examining the diverse themes included in political and academic documents on the event. Although there is significant research on the various retellings of the Zanzibar Revolution, this scholarship focuses on discourse based in Zanzibar and the implications of the narratives on social identity in the island today. Additionally, there are well-known publications on the study of history in Tanzania and the influence of the University of Dar es Salaam on the history taught in Tanzanian public schools, but these works are mostly concerned with providing suggestions for new approaches on history and addressing the challenges in the field. There are no articles examining the national narratives of the Zanzibar Revolution within the Dar es Salaam School of Thought and there is a dearth of scholarship that locates the educational and political themes of the Zanzibar Revolution within Tanzania's nation-building projects. Examining political and academic documents on the Zanzibar Revolution will help reveal the various themes and perspectives surrounding the Zanzibar Revolution during the post-colonial era. These diverse sources will elucidate how the government and opposition parties aimed to teach Tanzanians about their own history and the future of the nation.

Sources

My primary sources consist of political and academic documents that were written to educate the public on the history of Tanzania, Zanzibar, and the revolution. Specifically, my paper examines materials produced by the Afro-Shirazi Party, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, and the Historical Association of Tanzania in conjunction with the University of Dar es Salaam's history department. To demonstrate the various ideologies of political parties and intellectuals following the Zanzibar Revolution and the creation of Tanzania, the sources analyzed in this paper were published during the 1960s–1970s. The three sources range in their backgrounds, beliefs, and goals for the country which reflect the diverse discourse on the history of Tanzania and the Zanzibar Revolution. These different perspectives form a holistic image of the interpretations and understandings of the Zanzibar Revolution during the post-colonial period.

The Afro-Shirazi Party and the Zanzibar Nationalist Party championed opposing political beliefs in Zanzibar. The Afro-Shirazi Party, initially known as the Afro-Shirazi Union, received the majority of its support from mainland African and Shirazi communities in Zanzibar.⁴⁴ The party leaders characterized ASP as the party of the African masses and appealed to fears of Arab domination in an independent Zanzibar.⁴⁵ During the transition of power from the British to Zanzibaris, ASP politicians centered their movement around five central claims: Zanzibar was ruled by two

⁴²Terence Ranger, "The 'New Historiography' in Dar Es Salaam: An Answer," *African Affairs* 70, no. 278 (1971): 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/720156>.

⁴³Gregory H. Maddox, "The Dar es Salaam School of African History," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources*, ed. Thomas Spear (Oxford University Press, 2019), 2.

⁴⁴Although the Afro-Shirazi Party aimed to unite Shirazis and mainland Africans against Arabs, some Shirazis considered themselves Zanzibari first and did not identify as African.

⁴⁵Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 4.

foreign imperialists under British and Arab control, Africans needed to represent themselves in an independent Zanzibar, Africans were underrepresented in government and educational institutions which hindered their access to upward mobility, they lived in poverty and ignorance due to discrimination, and the government's separate categorization of Shirazi and mainland Africans served to divide their community.⁴⁶ Consequently, their educational documents justified African rule of Zanzibar and highlighted the historic connections between the island and the mainland. Conversely, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party framed their organization around a multi-racial, Zanzibari coalition that emphasized Zanzibar's religious, cultural, and historic identity.⁴⁷ They received most of their support from the minority Arab and Asian population on the island and they built their political image as a party for all islanders compared to the ASP's emphasis on a common racial identity.⁴⁸ As a result, their political pamphlets and campaigns focused on unifying cultural elements such as Islam and their unique Zanzibari identity born from cross-cultural exchange. These leaders asserted that ASP tried to divide Zanzibaris and an ASP-led Zanzibar would lead to the intrusion of Tanganyika and mainland Africa into Zanzibari politics and government.⁴⁹ Following the Zanzibar Revolution, both of these organizations published literature to explain the history of Zanzibar and the implications of the revolution that were informed by their political ideologies and racial background.

In mainland Tanzania, the Historical Association of Tanzania published academic accounts of Tanzanian history which largely focused on pre-colonial and colonial Tanganyika, but included brief examinations of Zanzibar. The Historical Association of Tanzania was established in 1966 by history faculty at the University of Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian Institute of Education, and the Ministry of National Education with the intention of making African history available to students across the country.⁵⁰ The association organized numerous history events in Tanzania such as seminars and conferences to garner interest in the subject, while publishing educational pamphlets for school teachers and encouraging local historical research.⁵¹ Despite the organization's diverse activities, the central goal of HAT was to publish African history articles and books that could be taught in Tanzanian schools to discredit colonial teachings.⁵²

With this purpose, HAT developed several publications focused on promoting African history centered on Tanzania. They created *Kale*, a magazine of the university branch of HAT which enabled students at the University of Dar es Salaam to publish articles on historical questions surrounding Tanzania. Their objective, to "reconstruct the African past and put it in its correct perspective in time with the contemporary African peoples' struggle for liberation in all aspects of life," highlighted the broader mission of the Historical Association of Tanzania and the University of Dar es Salaam.⁵³ HAT also supported the publication of history books which analyzed Tanzanian pre-colonial and colonial history including *A History of Tanzania*, *The East African Coast: An Historical and Archaeological Review*, *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, and *The East African Slave Trade* among numerous others. These publications ranged in time period and focus,

⁴⁶Lofchie, *Background to Revolution*, 162.

⁴⁷Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 4.

⁴⁸Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 4.

⁴⁹Burgess, "Zanzibar Revolution," 4.

⁵⁰Isaria N. Kimambo, *Three Decades of Production of Historical Knowledge in Dar es Salaam* (University of Dar es Salaam Press, 1993), 6.

⁵¹John Lonsdale, "The Historical Association of Tanzania," review of *The East African Coast: an Historical and Archaeological Review*, by J. Sutton, *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave-trade*, by Walter Rodney, *The East African Slave Trade*, by Edward Alpers, *Records of the Maji Maji Uprising*, by G. Gwassa and John Iliffe, *The African Churches of Tanzania*, by Terence Ranger, *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 517, doi:10.1017/S0021853700036586.

⁵²Kimambo, *Three Decades*, 7.

⁵³Magazine of the University Branch of the Historical Association of Tanzania, "Editorial Comments," *Kale*, no. 3 (1974): 3.

but they all aimed to portray Africans as agents of change in their societies. This paper will primarily examine *A History of Tanzania* by Professors Isaria Kimambo and A.J. Temu since the book includes a section on Zanzibari history and the revolution, unlike the majority of the historical materials published on the mainland at the time. Additionally, Professor Kimambo was the first Tanzanian history professor at the University of Dar es Salaam and a founding member of the Historical Association of Tanzania.⁵⁴ Kimambo played a critical role in Africanizing the history department and his work reflected nationalist efforts to justify anti-colonial movements on the continent. *A History of Tanzania* illustrates the academic discussion that surrounded Zanzibari history and the efforts of the history department to liberate African history from the pessimistic colonial perspective. The educational pamphlets from the ASP and ZNP and historical books from HAT provide insight into the narrative of the Zanzibar Revolution for the Tanzanian public and the decisions each group made to represent their nation.

Post-Colonial Importance of Education and History in Tanzania

The first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, believed that education was integral to building the new nation after independence. He understood education to be a reflection of a society's goals and values rather than a standard, international curriculum imposed upon countries. Within this conception of education, Nyerere believed it should be used as a tool to pass cultural knowledge and national experiences from one generation to the next to prepare the new generation to contribute to the development of the country.⁵⁵ This perspective contrasted with the colonial education system which aimed to indoctrinate students to serve their colonial government by highlighting the supposed superiority of the European power. Nyerere argued that education under the British colonial system sought to change the values of Tanzanians and apply capitalism and foreign customs to family, work, and cultural practices.⁵⁶ Instead of educating people to participate in society and strengthen Tanzania, the colonial tactic of convincing Tanzanians that they were inferior to their British counterparts trapped Tanzanians in a subservient position both mentally and socially. This process maintained colonial rule because it discouraged Tanzanians from imagining a world without British rule and asserted that Europeans were essential for development and innovation.

After Tanzanian independence, Nyerere advocated for a restructuring of the educational system and encouraged education as a tool for self-reliance and liberation from British thought. Although independence was the first step to liberation, Nyerere argued that Tanzanians would not be free unless they re-learned Tanzanian cultural and societal values in school:

Education has to liberate the African from the mentality of slavery and colonialism by making him aware of himself as an equal member of the human race, with the rights and duties of his humanity. It has to liberate him from the habit of submitting to circumstances which reduce his dignity as if they were immutable. And it has to liberate him from the shackles of technical ignorance so that he can make and use the tools of organization and creation for the development of himself and his fellow men.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Bertram Baltasar Mapunda, "A Critical Examination of Isaria's Kimambo's Ideas Through Time," *History in Africa* 32 (2005): 267–279, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2005.0015>.

⁵⁵Julius K. Nyerere, "Education for Self-Reliance," *CrossCurrents* 18, no. 4 (1968): 415, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24457417>.

⁵⁶Nyerere, "Education for Self," 417.

⁵⁷Julius Nyerere, "Education and Liberation," *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement* 1, no. 3 (1976): 7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43657630>.

Because education had previously been used to divide mainland Tanzania into European-educated intellectuals and uneducated peasants, Nyerere modified its purpose to support his vision of a unified, liberated Tanzania. By emphasizing the capabilities of Tanzanians and Africans in schools, Nyerere hoped to undo the negative effects of colonialism and inspire his people to play an active role in the creation of the new country.

History played a significant role in the new conceptualization of education as a tool for empowerment and self-liberation. Many Tanzanian history professors and teachers revisited British narratives about pre-colonial and colonial Tanzanian society to reclaim their agency and cultural values following independence. For example, the Maji Maji Uprising, the armed rebellion of Africans against German colonial rule in 1905, became historically relevant during the 1960s and 1970s. During the colonial period, the event was a minor topic in educational curricula that, when taught, was described pessimistically; however, after independence teachers adopted an optimistic and patriotic interpretation of the event.⁵⁸ Textbooks and educational materials framed the Maji Maji Uprising as a predecessor to the larger nationalist movement organized by the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU).⁵⁹ This narrative shift illustrates efforts to unite Tanzanians under a shared past against the colonial powers and highlights African resistance to foreign intrusion. Portraying the uprising as a prelude to TANU's nationalist organization also strengthened the administration's status because they could argue that they had fought for the sovereignty of Tanzanians since the 1900s.

Finally, Nyerere's views on Tanzanian education reflected his socialist goals for the country. His socialist philosophy called *Ujamaa*, or familyhood in Swahili, was based on ideals of cooperative economics and self-reliance, which he hoped to implement through education. Nyerere aimed to foster *Ujamaa* goals of living and working together for the common good of the country and encourage young people to take an active role in the creation of a fair and equal society.⁶⁰ Leaving behind the colonial model of selective access to education, Nyerere sought universal education for all Tanzanians regardless of their economic background. He believed that everyone had something to contribute to society and could learn how to be better farmers, teachers, or neighbors through knowledge of shared Tanzanian values like equality, respect for human dignity, and unity. Within this perspective, education allowed Tanzanians to envision the future of the nation without ties to the colonial past:

But it is not useful for our educational system to stress values and knowledge appropriate to the past or to the citizens in other countries, and it is wrong to contribute to the continuation of those inequalities and privileges which still exist in our society because of our inheritance. Let our students be educated to be members and servants of the kind of just and egalitarian future to which this country aspires.⁶¹

Nyerere imagined education as an illustration of the beliefs, desires, and values of Tanzanian society rather than a reflection of British colonial objectives. The narratives depicted in post-colonial educational materials further reveal the goals of President Julius Nyerere and Tanzanians citizens to shift from the British educational system to teach about topics relevant to the future of the country.

⁵⁸Yusufu Q. Lawi, "Pros and Cons of Patriotism in the Teaching of 'The Maji Maji War' in Tanzania Schools," *Tanzania Zamani* 6, no. 2 (2009): 66.

⁵⁹Lawi, "Pros and Cons," 76.

⁶⁰Nyerere, "Education for Self," 420.

⁶¹Nyerere, "Education for Self," 434.

Theme of Anti-Imperialism

Although the educational materials written by the Afro-Shirazi Party, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, and the history department at the University of Dar es Salaam drastically differed based on the authors' political and ideological background, they all used an anti-imperialist framework to support their historical narratives. While the sources by the ASP condemned Arabs as imperialists and the ZNP blamed British rule, each group argued that internal division in Zanzibari society was caused by foreign interference. The Afro-Shirazi Party's historical narrative framed Africans as oppressed under the joint imperialist power of the Arabs and British, arguing that "for almost three centuries the Africans of their Islands who are in the majority and also the indigenous people were divided, ruled, and exploited by different foreign powers among whom were Arabs and the British. These, divided and exploited the people depriving them of all their rights. A slave/master relationship was established."⁶² In criticizing Arab and British rule, the ASP utilized anti-imperialism rhetoric to offer an unambiguous understanding of Zanzibari society as rightfully African. The quote's reference to a slave/master relationship is a striking illustration of imperialism that clearly distinguishes exploitation and power. Through the narrative of a slave/master dynamic, the Arabs were framed as foreign slave holders alongside the British and their historic connection to Zanzibar was erased.

The ASP furthered their anti-imperialist argument to assert that the ZNP, consisting of Arabs, served as an extension of Omani foreign rule. Because Arabs were not considered Zanzibari but imperialist foreigners, the Afro-Shirazi Party wrote that Africans would continue to suffer under ZNP rule in an independent Zanzibar, "All this was watched carefully and followed keenly by the Africans who realized that the aim of the Arabs and their party was using Africans in order to maintain and keep Arab rule through the Sultan. During all those years of autocratic rule under the Arab Sultan protected by the British power, there was no development for Africans nor was there any hopeful change for them."⁶³ By associating Arabs with the Sultan, the ASP sought to further legitimize their position because they portrayed themselves as willing to fight two foreign powers for independence. In this retelling, Arabs were forced to play the role of evil imperialists who wanted control of the country for personal reasons. Consequently, Arab efforts for independence were characterized as a continuation of imperialism, and the ASP argued that true African independence necessitated removing not only the British but also the Arabs from positions of power.

Similarly, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party asserted their claim to a Zanzibari identity through their discussion of imperialist divide and rule. The ZNP argued that British imperialists divided Zanzibaris into distinct racial groups to prevent a national campaign for independence. They refuted the claims that Arabs were the foreign imperialists, instead arguing that Arabs possessed historic ties to Zanzibar and racial distinctions were artificial, "The result of this mixture of races has been such that in many instances it is practically impossible even for a Zanzibari himself to distinguish between an Arab, a Comorian, a Shirazi and an African. The whole question of racial classification in this country is arbitrary."⁶⁴ This quote illustrates the racial diversity of Zanzibar and proposes that racial division is an unfamiliar practice in Zanzibari society. Rather than a division between the foreign minority and African majority, the ZNP interpreted imperialism as the separation of diverse racial and ethnic groups within Zanzibar's cosmopolitan society. In asserting that Arabs have the same claim to Zanzibari identity as Africans, Muhsin suggests that Arabs and the ZNP additionally have a right to shape the political future of the island and the independence movement, "This

⁶²Afro-Shirazi Party, *Afro-Shirazi Party, A Liberation Movement* (Printing Press Corporation, 1973), 19.

⁶³Afro-Shirazi Party, *A Liberation Movement*, 9.

⁶⁴Ali Muhsin, *Zanzibar Elections, The Truth* (Dinar Printing Press, 1957), 7.

division was carefully maintained for mischievous administrative purposes, so that the Zanzibaris instead of uniting and fighting against imperialism, were in separate camps each hostile to the other.”⁶⁵ As a champion of multiracialism and shared cultural elements, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party characterized itself as an anti-imperialist campaign that aimed to fight against the division of Zanzibaris among ethnic groups. In order to successfully gain their independence, the ZNP maintained that Zanzibaris must unite across differences to undermine the imperialist division.

The University of Dar es Salaam’s history department solidified the anti-imperialist narrative reflected in the ASP and ZNP educational materials through a broad criticism of imperialism. Instead of focusing on specific Zanzibari politics, the authors of *A History of Tanzania* emphasized the universal right to self-rule and autonomy. They used the Zanzibar Revolution as an example of the right of Africans to control their lives through political action:

The concept of political revolution is inseparately bound up with the belief that men are not only capable but that they have the duty to make, modify, or abolish laws and institutions which regulate their political relations. It is founded upon the notion that men have a meaning, a purpose, a destiny: and that since that purpose is not realized automatically irrespective of all the opposing forces, it follows that men must initiate and take measures in order to facilitate the realization of that purpose.⁶⁶

Although this quote appeared in a section on Zanzibar, it does not directly mention the island and could consequently refer to colonialism in mainland Tanzania, another African country, or any country under a restrictive government. This strategy helped expand the impact of the Zanzibar Revolution beyond the island and justify political revolution as the right of individuals to take action in the development of their government. By asserting that men must “initiate and take measures to facilitate the realization of that purpose,” the authors rejected the colonial idea that Africans are not capable of independence and are inferior to their European rulers. This narrative asserts that despite the efforts of imperialist governments to indoctrinate countrymen with the belief that they are unequal to their foreign leaders, African citizens have control over their destiny and the universal right to independence and liberation.

Without directly mentioning the British or Arabs, the authors reiterated the power of the people to control their government and representation by writing, “It should be quite clear by now that people are beginning to refuse any self-styled king, sultan or chief the right to tamper with their concerted efforts without their consent, and that any person who would disregard this clear sign is certainly looking for trouble.”⁶⁷ This quote warns the reader against imperialist action as Zanzibar and Tanzania proved that independence is for everyone and people will fight for their right to self-rule. The decision to use the words “king, sultan, or chief” implicates the various types of leaders in Tanzanian and Zanzibari history and, without revealing their party affiliation, demonstrates that any of these rulers can be removed from power by the people. This historical account upends the colonial efforts to create passive followers through history and instead emphasizes the right of Africans to control their lives through political action and revolution.

These narratives of imperialist-driven division in Zanzibar reflect a broader conversation about the future of Tanzania without foreign interference. The sources’ consensus, that imperialism was at the center of Zanzibar’s problems, reveals that Tanzanians contemplated the influence of foreign rule on their society. Returning to their history offered an opportunity to imagine an independent Tanzania without foreign intrusion, internal divide, or minority privileges. The documents’ discourse on a future nation without imperialism reflected the goals of Tanzania’s inaugural policies;

⁶⁵Muhsin, *Zanzibar Elections*, 8.

⁶⁶Isaria N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu, *A History of Tanzania* (East African Publishing House, 1969), 216.

⁶⁷Kimambo and Temu, *A History*, 238.

specifically, President Nyerere's policy on the development of Tanzania. Nyerere's idea of development for self-reliance centered around improving the conditions of all Tanzanians rather than prioritizing material advancements for the elite. Because imperialism brought material benefits to a minority population at the expense of the majority, Nyerere advocated for the development of people first:

By developing the people of Tanzania, we are developing Tanzania. For Tanzania is the people; and the people means everyone. No one person has the right to say, 'I am the people'. No Tanzanian has the right to say 'I know what is good for Tanzania and the others must do it'. All Tanzanians have to make the decisions for Tanzania; all have to work together, and all of us have to accept the discipline we impose upon ourselves.⁶⁸

By emphasizing the importance of all Tanzanians in his conception of the new nation, Nyerere reveals the substantial influence of imperialism on the past Tanzanian government. Nyerere's assertion of the right of all Tanzanians to contribute to the nation reflects the anti-imperialist discussions in the history sources because certain groups were excluded from political participation under colonial rule. Through the development of the majority, Nyerere provided a solution to internal division and worked to elevate previously ignored groups to obtain equal opportunities in the future. Instead of continuing the imperialist system of imposing economic, governmental, and societal decisions onto Tanzanians, Nyerere aimed to overturn the system to give people their own tools to contribute to the country. This demonstrated to the world that all Tanzanians are capable and will rely on themselves in the future, "For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions."⁶⁹ Nyerere hoped that Tanzanians would construct the new nation without outside interference in order to instill pride and self-confidence in themselves. Instead of solely discussing the division in colonial society and the broad right of Tanzanians to autonomy, Nyerere applied these experiences to construct a nation by Tanzanians, for Tanzanians.

Theme of Class Division

In addition to an anti-imperialist depiction of Zanzibari society, the Afro-Shirazi Party, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, and the history department at the University of Dar es Salaam cited economic inequality and class struggle as a major source of tension on the island. The ASP and ZNP both characterized their campaigns as serving the public; however, they diverged in their political and economic strategies to provide for all Zanzibaris. The University of Dar es Salaam history department furthered these perspectives and asserted that the Zanzibar Revolution was a consequence of the Arab ruling class's refusal to share their economic benefits. These examinations of the economic disparities in Zanzibar highlight the debate on the best approach to restructure Tanzanian society to provide for the majority population economically and socially. In tandem with their anti-imperialist claim, the Afro-Shirazi Party blamed the Arabs and the ZNP for the economic inequalities between racial groups in Zanzibar. They claimed that the Arabs brought unfamiliar capitalistic practices to the pre-colonial socialist Zanzibar:

A new way of life, different from the ancient socialist principles of living, was evolved. Instead of having to work for the development of the majority of the people in the country, now they were required to work for the benefit of the few....The ideas of possessing,

⁶⁸Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Development: Uhuru Na Maendeleo. A Selection from Writings and Speeches 1968–1973* (Oxford University Press, 1974), 70.

⁶⁹Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, 60.

buying and inheriting land began to grow in the minds of the settlers. These ideas were contrary to African beliefs of collective ownership of land and its usage for the benefit of all.⁷⁰

This rhetoric followed their anti-imperialist sentiment that Arabs were not Zanzibari and their arrival disturbed the traditional socialist system of providing for all members of society. In this narrative, capitalism and imperialism worked together to divide Zanzibaris by racial groups and class. Instead of working to support the community, the ASP asserted that Arabs instilled a foreign desire to prioritize individual gain at the expense of others. The Afro-Shirazi Party aligned themselves with the pre-colonial socialist system and argued that their political movement was a continuation of traditional African ideals. In supporting the mainland and indigenous Africans, they claimed that they were advocating for the majority, downtrodden population. Through this perspective the Zanzibar Revolution was the effort of the majority working class to take down the privileged, foreign elite, "...the workers and peasants of Zanzibar hoisted the flag of liberation and resolved to make a revolution to topple the old rule of the Sultan, aristocrats and capitalists, which was the major enemy of the workers and peasants of Zanzibar, and to establish a rule of the majority—the workers and peasants under their revolutionary Afro-Shirazi Party."⁷¹ This quote frames the ASP as a movement of the people and for the people compared to the ZNP which protected the interests of the foreigners. The Zanzibar Revolution was a necessary political action to violently upend the foreign capitalist economic structure and return to Zanzibar's socialist roots.

The Zanzibar Nationalist Party refuted the claims that they supported the individualistic and capitalist structure of Zanzibari society and maintained that they prioritized community. They asserted that the Arabs, and their party, cannot be elite capitalists because they advocated for the betterment of Zanzibar over their personal status in society. The educational materials written by the ZNP adopted an altruistic tone when describing their efforts for independence in Zanzibar, "It is not every day that you find a privileged minority demanding equal democratic rights for all, without even asking for safeguards for themselves. In their demand for universal adult suffrage on a common roll basis the Arabs have sacrificed their own communal interests for the sake of the country."⁷² This quote shows that Arabs and the ZNP were willing to fight for the rights of all Zanzibaris as opposed to solely their racial group. The phrase "without even asking for safeguards for themselves" highlights their sacrifice and connects the ZNP with the broader collectivist movement. In demanding universal suffrage, the ZNP claimed that they were using their privileged position to help uplift others. Their focus on providing for the majority countered the ASP's characterization of Arabs as an extension of imperialist capitalism:

The creation of Nationalism in the so-called plural society of Zanzibar was not the work of a single individual. The work was made much easier when the privileged Arab Association renounced all its privileges for the national cause. No where in the history of the so-called multi-racial societies has a minority group gone out of its way to fight for the right of the majority to have the vote.⁷³

By sharing their voting privileges and emphasizing that the work was not led by a single individual, the ZNP portrayed themselves as a party for all Zanzibaris. This depiction of the ZNP mirrored the ASP rhetoric that they would help lead everyone, regardless of race or class, to an independent Zanzibar.

⁷⁰ASP Executive Department and ASP Education Department, *A Short History of Zanzibar* (Printing Press Corporation, 1973), 18.

⁷¹Afro-Shirazi Party, *A Liberation Movement*, 264.

⁷²Muhsin, *Zanzibar Elections*, 8.

⁷³Zanzibar Nationalist Party, *Whither Zanzibar? Growth and Policy of Zanzibar Nationalism* (Imprimerie des Auteurs), 39.

Although the University of Dar es Salaam's historical accounts were broad in their stance against imperialism, the authors focused specifically on Zanzibari politics in their discussion of economic disparities. They supported the ASP's depiction of Arabs as prioritizing individuals over the community and maintained that the ZNP was unwilling to change the unequal political and economic system, "It is of course quite understandable that the ZNP should take such a stand, given the social, economic and political privileges which were enjoyed by the Arab minority. Any move aimed at raising the position of the African majority would certainly lead to the diminution of the Arab minority privileges."⁷⁴ This quote discussing why the ZNP organized a multi-racial campaign portrays the party as focused on their own status in society. Instead of working to unite all Zanzibaris for independence, the historical source depicted the ZNP's multi-racial coalition as an opportunity to continue Arab-led economic and political power. This simplifies the objectives of the ZNP from a multicultural party seeking independence to a reactionary elitist group that sought to sustain their privileged position in society. Consequently, the Zanzibar Revolution was a justified reaction to the political victory of the ZNP after independence. Because the ZNP represented privileged Arabs, African Zanzibaris would not be free until they gained control of the government:

Thus, political revolutions are often accompanied by physical violence and terror because of the frenzied and stubborn nature in which the ruling and possessing classes cling to their political instruments of power and to their sacred property. The situation which existed in Zanzibar before the revolution illustrates this very well. There the social pyramid consisted of three distinct classes: the African majority forming the lowest, poorest class; the Asians, the commercial middle class; and the Arabs, the ruling and landed aristocracy.⁷⁵

According to this historical narrative, the Arabs controlled both the economic and political sectors in Zanzibar and sustained the internal divisions in society to maintain their power. The Arabs are portrayed as selfish and unwilling to adapt to a new structure of society to support their community members. This perspective justifies the Zanzibar Revolution as a necessary action to end the Arab dominated Zanzibari society because, as the ruling and possessing classes, the Arabs will continue the unequal political and economic systems after independence. Although the political revolution was violent, it allowed for a dramatic change in Zanzibari society to distribute economic benefits to the African lower class.

The historical documents written by the ASP, ZNP, and University of Dar es Salaam's history department reflect a broader conversation on incorporating collectivist values in a post-colonial Tanzania. Although the sources diverged in their plans for an independent Zanzibar, they all highlighted the importance of providing for the majority. The ASP and ZNP both distinguished themselves as a party of the people, which demonstrated the widespread desire to structure a post-colonial society to reflect the diversity of the country. The goal to serve all members of society through an inclusive economy was outlined in President Nyerere's economic philosophy, *Ujamaa*, developed in 1962. Similar to the historical sources, Nyerere sought to create an economic system rooted in collectivism where society secured benefits for all instead of relying on worker exploitation. He relied on his understanding of pre-colonial Tanzanian society to develop his socialist model and incorporate indigenous Tanzanian values of community and familyhood:

Our first step, therefore, must be to re-educate ourselves; to regain our former attitude of mind. In our traditional African society we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us. We neither needed

⁷⁴Kimambo and Temu, *A History*, 230.

⁷⁵Kimambo and Temu, *A History*, 216.

nor wished to exploit our fellow men. And in rejecting the capitalist attitude of mind which colonialism brought into Africa, we must reject also the capitalist methods which go with it.⁷⁶

Nyerere viewed Tanzanian history as a guide to develop a collective Tanzanian society without a capitalist system. His emphasis on re-education and returning to the ways of traditional African society reflected the belief that Tanzanian history held the answers to their new society. Nyerere's quote that in the past "we were individuals within a community" drastically differed from the colonial situation where the minority received the fruits of labor from the working class and illustrates his reliance on history to provide an alternative solution to colonial economic practices. By developing his own version of socialism, Nyerere allowed African ideals and values to shape his policy rather than adapting a foreign system to fit Tanzanian society. Consequently, *Ujamaa* was the realization of pre-colonial African socialism which was built on community and shared prosperity:

The foundation, and the objective, of African socialism is the extended family. The true African socialist does not look on one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies. He does not form an alliance with the "brethren" for the extermination of the "non-brethren." He rather regards all men as his brethren—as members of his ever extending family.⁷⁷

Nyerere's vision of *Ujamaa* as an extended family is supported in the historical sources' discussion of a united Zanzibar. *Ujamaa* provided an opportunity for Tanzanians to think of themselves as one nation and family, which contrasted with the colonial policies of divide and rule. Without economic or racial divide, Tanzanians could support each other and strengthen their country in a post-colonial world.

Connection to Unified Liberation in Africa and Beyond

Finally, the Afro-Shirazi Party, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, and the University of Dar es Salaam's history department framed Zanzibar's independence efforts as part of a unified liberation struggle across the continent and the globe. The ASP and the ZNP both viewed their nationalist movements as a continuation of other independence campaigns in Africa and outlined the connections between their colonial fight and those in other countries. The University of Dar es Salaam emphasized the Zanzibar Revolution as representative of the end of minority rule in colonies and the progress toward an independent world. These perspectives reveal the desire in Zanzibar and Tanzania to find unity in a post-colonial Africa and work across national borders to build strength together. In their educational materials, the ASP maintained that Zanzibar was connected with other African countries beyond the shared experience of colonialism. Although the sources highlighted the common effects of imperialism in mainland Africa and the island, the ASP authors also contended that they have shared values and traits through a common ancestry and history:

Theories were formulated to explain and justify the differences between Africans of a particular area, and make differences between African tribes appear greater than the differences between African tribes and the exploiters. The plain and indisputable truth is that Africans are people of the same origin and this can be clearly seen in our

⁷⁶Julius K. Nyerere, "African Socialism: Ujamaa in Practice," *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 6 (1971): 4, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41163479>.

⁷⁷Nyerere, "African Socialism," 7.

dignity, humanity, generosity and patience, which are some of the remains of our ancient culture.⁷⁸

While the ASP acknowledged the shared violent history in their sources, they also allowed Pan-Africanism to be stronger than European colonialism. By naming positive traits such as “dignity, humanity, generosity and patience” the authors constructed their own narrative of Pan-Africanism that was centered solely on Africa. Under this interpretation, the Zanzibar Revolution enabled Zanzibaris to finally unite with the broader African community. Their fight for independence reflected the efforts of nationalist movements across the continent, “Zanzibar Africans, like all the other Africans, were awakened and they joined hands in the struggle for Independence, which took seven years of hard fighting against all the tricks of the rulers till they succeeded in 1964.”⁷⁹ This quote situated the Zanzibar Revolution within the broader African liberation movement; however, it also painted an image of Zanzibari identity as African. Although the authors promoted Pan-Africanism and transnational unity against imperialism, in specifically writing “Zanzibar Africans” they excluded Zanzibari Arabs from their movement. They aimed to finally connect Zanzibar with mainland Africa under the banner of liberation.

The Zanzibar Nationalist Party also portrayed itself as representative of a transnational fight for independence and upholding Pan-Africanism. However, instead of highlighting the historical and ancestral connections between Zanzibar and mainland Africa, the ZNP sources focused on their shared belief in the values of freedom, unity, and anti-racialism.⁸⁰ The authors viewed tribalism and racialism as deterrents to Pan-Africanism and an opportunity for imperialists to continue their control of the continent. Conversely, as a multi-racial campaign, the ZNP offered a path to a diverse coalition of nations united, not racially or ethnically, but through a shared hope for liberation:

...the Nationalists look forward to the day in the very near future when all these territories, now subjugated and divided shall be free and united under a free democratic government of the people themselves, each territory free to manage its internal affairs, but all bound in a bond of brotherhood in matters of common interest. A strong, united, free East and Central Africa will then be a vital contributor to the objective of the United States of Africa, a block deviating neither to the East nor to the West, powerful and impressive, adding enormously to the already enormous influence of the positively neutral Afro-Asian group of nations in the maintenance of world peace.⁸¹

This quote emphasizes the objective of the ZNP to unite with other African nations without pressure to assimilate to one culture or background. By stating that the independent countries can manage their internal affairs while relying on each other for common interests, the ZNP enabled each nation to maintain its individuality and respect cultural differences. According to the ZNP, the goal of Pan-Africanism is to support the common objectives of freedom and unity while remaining neutral in larger global divisions. By “deviating neither to the East nor the West,” the ZNP advocated for African countries to remain committed to themselves and avoid involving themselves in external affairs.

The University of Dar es Salaam’s historical materials underscored the changing global dynamics in the 1960s and the right of colonial subjects to self-rule. The authors of *A History of Tanzania* described the Zanzibar Revolution as the culmination of years of Zanzibari efforts to gain equal rights. Instead of focusing on the definition of Pan-Africanism or which groups are included in the

⁷⁸ASP Executive Department and ASP Education Department, *A Short History*, 6.

⁷⁹ASP Executive Department and ASP Education Department, *A Short History*, 116.

⁸⁰Zanzibar Nationalist Party, *Whither Zanzibar*, 42.

⁸¹Zanzibar Nationalist Party, *Whither Zanzibar*, 54.

definition of African, the authors asserted that Zanzibari independence is a preview of other nationalist efforts to come. The movement does not stand alone, but is part of a broader international effort to end imperialism and colonialism:

The Zanzibar Revolution is not an isolated incident. It is a part of the liberating force-process sweeping across the face of the earth. Sooner or later men will refuse to be treated like things or animals by their fellow-men. People are beginning to realize that social and political institutions are made by men in order to serve men and are not dropped from heaven to be worshipped by men.⁸²

This quote broadens the relevance of the Zanzibar Revolution from the island itself to the rest of the globe and warns imperialist powers and oppressive regimes that their time is ending. This perspective offers a hopeful narrative to the Zanzibar Revolution and serves to inspire other groups to fight for their liberation. The Zanzibar Revolution provides a hopeful outcome to the ongoing fight for independence and proves that in the future people will choose their own leaders and have a say in the development of their country.

The sources' location of the Zanzibar Revolution within Pan-Africanism and a broader liberation movement around the world demonstrates the belief that Zanzibaris are not alone in their fight for independence. Although the ASP and ZNP sources differed in their interpretations of Pan-Africanism and African identity, they both envisioned Zanzibar as connected to other colonies from Ghana to India. The historiographies outlined the similarities between their values and histories with other nationalist movements and advocated for continued unity in a post-colonial context. This champion of Pan-Africanism and unity beyond national independence was mirrored in President Nyerere's hope for a United States of Africa. Nyerere believed that one of the ways to maintain strength and remain neutral in international affairs was to partner with other African nations. He aimed to build a sense of unity that extended beyond shared experiences of colonialism and oppression, but to provide political and economic support to African countries post-independence.⁸³ Nyerere's goal for continental unity enabled nationalist leaders to think to the post-colonial future rather than dwell on their colonial past:

We are involved because we are all involved in the well-being and the development of Africa—our continent. Whether we like it or not, and despite our separate sovereignties, the outside world is interested in Africa much more than it is interested in Liberia, Tanzania, or any other African country separately. The powers of Europe, Asia and America will use us separately, but their objective is not control of this state or that, but the domination of the whole of Africa. And when each of us struggles for our independence from outside control, we are struggling as Africans for the independence of Africa.⁸⁴

This vision of a United States of Africa worked in tandem with the policy of development for self-reliance because it provided African countries the tools to pursue autonomy without outside aid. Although each country had specific challenges due to colonialism, together they could create an image of Africa as powerful and founded in strong alliances. This aimed to provide a counter-narrative to the colonial perception of Africans as incapable and controllable. African leaders must advocate for the freedom of their neighbors and support each other because their liberation is bound together.

⁸²Kimambo and Temu, *A History*, 238.

⁸³Julius K. Nyerere, "A United States of Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 1, no. 1 (1963): 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/158780>.

⁸⁴Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, 15.

Conclusion

Professor Edward Alpers, who worked at the University of Dar es Salaam from 1966 to 1968 during the post-colonial nation-building project, stated in an interview when reflecting on the campus atmosphere and goals of the history department at the time:

One was really swept up in that. There's no doubt that the University [of Dar es Salaam] was focused on that and the history department was, in their different ways, all very much part of that: building a nation. And these courses were part of the same thing, trying to fight against the legacy of colonialism, the intellectual legacy of colonialism, the historiography, and to build a nation.⁸⁵

During the 1960s, history was directly connected to the political envisioning of a future Tanzania as historical materials enabled Tanzanians to reflect on their societal values pre-colonialism and shared experiences. Each historical perspective represented an opinion in the national discourse on Tanzania's future and illustrated the desire to construct a unified national identity that extended beyond their independence movement. The Zanzibar Revolution, a key event in the creation of modern-day Tanzania, delineated the connection between history and national identity as each political party and historian depicted the events according to their idea of belonging and Zanzibari society. Specifically, the Afro-Shirazi Party, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, and the Historical Association of Tanzania with the University of Dar es Salaam wrote drastically different accounts of the Zanzibar Revolution due to their internal biases and historical understandings of Zanzibar. However, despite their varying conclusions and assertions of Zanzibari identity, these groups all interpreted the revolution through the common frameworks of anti-imperialism, class division, and a unified liberation movement. These shared themes amidst different historical narratives revealed the national desire to construct a new society that reflected Tanzanian capability and unity. President Julius Nyerere's initial policies such as development for self-reliance, *Ujamaa*, and Pan-Africanism mirrored Tanzanians' goals to create a nation without imperialism and united across class and national lines. These policies worked in tandem with the historical narratives to imagine a sovereign nation built by Tanzanians, for Tanzanians.

Through his socialist policies and an emphasis on Swahili language and culture, Nyerere was able to unite hundreds of tribal and ethnic groups together under the banner of unified Tanzanian identity. Although each tribe has a distinct culture and unique language, Swahili enabled all Tanzanians to communicate with each other. Nyerere's elevation of Swahili as a national, unifying language to build connections across tribal groups was significant because it was a non-European administrative language that promoted African solidarity and pride. This policy helped Tanzania avoid ethnic conflict caused by imperialist division, unlike its neighbors Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Because of Nyerere's concern for national unity, Tanzania is regarded as one of the most peaceful nations in Africa.⁸⁶ Tanzania's peaceful reputation further instilled pride in Tanzanians' shared identity and national unity with many Tanzanians citing Swahili as the foundation of Tanzanian identity.⁸⁷

However, despite these nationalist efforts, the country is still haunted by the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar and the complicated status of the island in the country. For the sake of national unity, Nyerere established a one-party system formed by the combination of the Tanganyika African National Union in mainland Tanzania and the Afro-Shirazi Party in Zanzibar to create

⁸⁵Edward Alpers, interviewed by Grace Enz, November 14, 2025, audio, 29:30.

⁸⁶Edwin Babeiya, "A Breakable Bond or Unity at any Cost? Rethinking the Control Mechanisms Against the 'Threats' to National Unity in Tanzania," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 60, no. 4 (2023): 2243–2256, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231215728>.

⁸⁷Interviews by Grace Enz, July 28–31, 2025, audio.

Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), or Party of the Revolution. This political system marginalized Zanzibar's Arab identity through the suppression of oppositional groups and illustrates the continual tension over Zanzibari identity. In 1992, Tanzania shifted toward a multi-party system; however, the CCM government prevented oppositional parties from running for office, abducted CCM critics, and banned political rallies.⁸⁸

The ongoing tensions over Zanzibar's role in the nation came to a head on October 29th, 2025, the day of national elections, when the government violently suppressed protesters who accused the CCM of electoral fraud. This clash resulted in the death of hundreds, if not thousands, of protesters and a nationwide Internet blackout to censor news. Although President Samia Suluhu Hassan was declared the winner of the election with allegedly 98% of the votes, the violent attack on protesters and oppositional repression demonstrates the tension between maintaining national unity and incorporating a multitude of political perspectives in the government. Sixty years after independence and the initial discussion on national identity, Tanzania still faces questions related to constructing its nation to incorporate the nuanced beliefs of its citizens; however, there also remains national pride in broad themes of Swahili language and culture. Although African history provided a space for Tanzanians to debate their national identity and imagine their nation, history does not provide a determinative path to the future and the exercise of nation-building is constantly evolving to reflect the diversity of all Tanzanians. The complex nature of contemporary Tanzanian and Zanzibari societies today reflects the legacy of imperialism and the continuous negotiation of post-colonial African identity.

⁸⁸ "What Next Following Tanzania's 'National Catastrophe'?", Africa Center for Strategic Studies, November 18, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/what-next-following-tanzanias-national-catastrophe/>.

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