

Burying, Unearthing and Archiving German Colonial Records in Tanganyika, 1914-1960s

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Abstract

This paper examines the processes and actions involved in hiding, searching for, collecting and archiving German colonial records during and after the end of the First World War in Tanganyika. The paper explains how the Germans, before leaving East Africa, hid their records to prevent the allied forces, or anyone else, from accessing them. It argues that German colonial records which were unearthed from different parts of the country after the war played a significant role in the administration of mandate Tanganyika and were inherited by the independent government of Tanganyika not only as a record of past for historians or researchers, but also as cultural objects that symbolize part of the country's historical continuity, collective memory as well as national identity. In explaining this legacy of German records, the author shares Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook's view that archives or records wield power over the shape and direction of collective memory and national identity, and over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups and societies. The paper draws on archival and other documentary sources.

Key Words: German, Records, Archives, Memory, Document, Administration, Mandate, Identity

1.0 Introduction

When the British acquired Tanganyika as a mandate territory, they were confronted with administrative challenges as they did not have much knowledge of the country, of its people's history, culture and distribution or of the environment. Therefore, they needed to acquaint themselves with Germany's experience of Tanganyika. With its land covering 943,000 sq. km., Tanganyika was much larger than Kenya (580, 367 sq. km.) and Uganda (241,559 sq. km.), with a wide diversity of culture, ethnicity, resources and traditions. Knowledge of this huge country, which was readily available in German records, would have definitely helped the British in their administrative matters. No wonder that during the First World War the early British Administrator in Tanganyika "spent much of his time studying the country and examining the copious German records in the hope of being able to formulate an administrative policy which could be adapted to the needs of the country when peace was restored."²⁹⁴ The fact that German records had been hidden underground posed the challenge of recovering them for their immediate and future uses. This paper reveals that the hiding, searching for and archiving German records was, indeed, a manifestation of the extent to which records play multiple roles. They serve as important sources of information for historians; exert an influence on the administrative matters of governments and above all, they shape collective memory and national identity.

²⁹⁴ Kenneth Ingham, *A History of East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green & Co Ltd., 1962), p.262.

The paper begins by conceptualizing text or record and its relation to social memory. Text constitutes an important genre of cultural memory, because the latter not only refers to topographical memories such as monuments, but also to records or documents which have accumulated over a particular period of time in a given society.²⁹⁵ These can be books, letters, reports, memoirs, maps, minutes, circulars or any other form of private or public document. Texts play the same role as monuments in representing the collective memories of society insofar as they are “embedded in and refer to [...] a specific social/cultural situation.”²⁹⁶ In fact, the current notion of records as cultural objects redefines the meaning of archives as “places that permanently memorialize what societies and institutions regard as essential transactions.”²⁹⁷ Based on this definition, archives are therefore conceived as places or institutions of cultural memory which “fix and monumentalize memory”.²⁹⁸ However, this conception, as Francis X. Blouin JR and William G. Rosenberg put it, does not mean that the archive “is a formal place of historical memory,” for the traditional assumption that archives are the prime sources of authentic historical evidence has come under

²⁹⁵ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”, *New German Critique*, No.65, (1995), p.129.

²⁹⁶ Hendrik van Gorp (ed), *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory* (Amsterdam – Atlanta: GA, 2000), p.iii.

²⁹⁷ Francis X. Blouin JR and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.17.

²⁹⁸ Ina Blom, “Rethinking Social Memory: Archives, Technology and the Social”, in Ina Blom, Trond Lundemo and Eivind Rossaak (eds), *Memory in Motion: Archives Technology and the Social* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), p.12.

attack.²⁹⁹ In fact, social memory, which is defined as “the joint memories held by a community about the past” or as “a socially articulated and socially maintained reality of the past”, has challenged archival records as being genuine historical facts.³⁰⁰ By and large, scholars across the social sciences and humanities have repudiated the long-held view of a *single past* or *unified past* in what has come to be known as a cultural or post-colonial stance.³⁰¹ The net result of this view was the birth of the post-modern theory challenging the modernist epistemological approaches to producing knowledge.³⁰² Such intellectual development is, as far as African history is concerned, reflected in the emergence of oral history methodology.

Moreover, past records as repositories of cultural memory are preserved for their political, socio-economic and symbolic value. An archive(s) housing such records is not only a state institution of power or ‘mere scholarly playgrounds for staff and researchers’, as argued by Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, but is also “a symbol of historical continuity.”³⁰³ Archives are

²⁹⁹ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, p.98.

³⁰⁰ For the definitions see, for example, Guy Podoler, *Monuments, Memory and Identity: Constructing the Colonial Past in South Korea* (Bern: International Academic Publishers, 2011), p.13 and Nigel C. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.97.

³⁰¹ Sebastian Jobs and Alf Lüdtke, “Unsettling History: Introduction”, in Sebastian Jobs and Alf Lüdtke., *Unsettling History: Archiving and Narrating in Historiography* (Germany: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, 2010), pp.17-19.

³⁰² See, for example, Donald E. Polkinghorne, “Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness”, in Jürgen Straub (ed.), *Narration, Identity, and Historical Consciousness* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p.3.

³⁰³ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, p.17; Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory”, *Archives Science*, (2002), p.13. Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, “Introduction”, in Richard J. Cox

therefore described as political institutions mirroring a particular cultural identity, hence they are “bastions of social memory and national identity.”³⁰⁴ According to Hendrik van Gorp, cultural memory signifies the following:

Our capacity, both of writers and readers, to remember in a present situation things (human experiences, individual or collective attitudes, feelings and discussions reflected in any document) that in the past have been relevant to us as far as our cultural identity, roots and self-image are concerned, and as far as their memory helps us to solve some problems we are confronted with.³⁰⁵

Collective remembering as an endless social process continues to influence archived documents and archival practices.³⁰⁶ This process has, in turn, created room for memory historians to use archives not only as repositories of past records with which to answer their research questions, but also as a focus of their studies. It has now been established that social memory influences archival practices and the other way round.³⁰⁷ As a

and David A. Wallace, *Archives and Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society* (Westport: Quorum Books, 2002), p.7.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.7.

³⁰⁵ Hendrik, *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, p.ii.

³⁰⁶ According to Jobs and Lüdtke, there are two types of archival documents: textual documents and textual monuments. Seen in Jobs and Lüdtke, *Unsettling History*, p.14. Archival practices refer to all activities performed by archivists and record managers in the archives such as processes of appraisal, collection, classification, preservation and destruction of records.

³⁰⁷Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, pp.111-112; Schwartz and Cook, *Archives, Records, and Power*, pp.2-3.

matter of fact, the actual act of using archival records (an exteriorized memory) to reconstruct the past is, according to Schwartz and Cook, an act of collective remembering taking place within ‘a framework of shared cultural understanding.’³⁰⁸ Exteriorization of memory occurs when memory is transformed from a collective memory stored in people’s minds to a written document, artifact, monument or any other form of concretized memory; that is, when ‘memory is preserved by means of an external medium.’³⁰⁹ An exteriorized memory is an “archive of external memory”.³¹⁰ Michael Foucault’s explains how the relationship between history and documents has changed over time:

...history, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which in themselves are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments.³¹¹

Implicit in this is the fact that archival usage and practices are mediums of memory operating “outside the human faculty of memory,” and not, as Maurice Halbwachs contends, within the

³⁰⁸ Schwartz and Cook, *Archives, Records, and Power*, pp.6-7.

³⁰⁹ Kurtz Danziger, *Making the Mind: A History of Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.3.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

³¹¹ Michael Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (UK: Travistock Publications, 1972), pp.7-8.

framework of individuals' memories.³¹² According to Blouin and Rosenberg, archives 'reinforce [...] abstractions of memory,'³¹³ which shows how inseparable records and memories are. Indeed, they are two sides of the same coin. From the point of view of memory, therefore, archives are an extension of human memory, which helps preserve part of "the collective memory of mankind."³¹⁴

2.0 Searching for hidden German Records in Mandate Tanganyika

German records were hidden underground and some were destroyed during the First World War by order of the Governor of German East Africa.³¹⁵ It should be remembered that during the German period, all records belonging to the central government were stored in the Central Office (*Zentral Buero*) in Dar es Salaam.³¹⁶ However, before the British forces attacked Dar es Salaam intending to capture it, the German seat of government was, for security reasons, transferred to Morogoro

³¹² Schwartz and Cook, *Archives, Records, and Power*, p.3; Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited, translated and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (University of Chicago, Chicago: Press, 1992), p.43.

³¹³ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, pp.115.

³¹⁴ Leopold Auer, "Archival Losses and Their Impact on the Work of Archivists and Historians", in M. Andr'e Vanrie and Mr. David Leitch, *Memory of the World at Risk: Archives Destroyed, Archives Reconstructed, International Council on Archives*, Vol.XLII (München: A Reed Reference Publishing Company, 1996), p. 1.

³¹⁵ John Iliffe, "The German Administration in Tanganyika, 1906-1911: The Governorship of Freihers von Rechenberg", Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1965, p.5; Juhan Koponen, *Development for Exploitation: German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884-1914*, (Finland: Finish Historical Society, 1994), p.679.

³¹⁶ J.M. Karugila, "A National Archives in a Developing Country", *TNR*, Nos.84 & 85, (1980), p.118; United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter URT), "Guide to the German Records: National Archives of Tanzania and Archivschule Marburg-Institut für Archivwissenschaft, Dar es Salaam/Marburg" Vol.I, 1973, p.48.

in 1914/15, and soon afterwards to Tabora, together with all the records of the *Zentral Buero*.³¹⁷ As the Belgian forces advanced on Tabora in July 1916, threatening its security, the Governor ordered his deputy, Mr. Brande, and the District Judge of Tabora, Mr. Kirsch, to bury all government records in and around Tabora.³¹⁸ Following this instruction, volumes of German records were put in cases and hidden underground in different parts of the country. By the summer of 1916, the Commandos of the *Schutztruppe* had managed to bury some records at Morogoro while retreating southwards.³¹⁹

As the skirmishes intensified, some remaining records were buried, some were destroyed and some were surrendered by the *Schutztruppe* while retreating to Mozambique.³²⁰ Most of the records destroyed were those pertaining to political matters.³²¹ Apparently, some records got lost because, given the environment of warfare, everything was done in a hurry. In addition, the fact that the records were moved from one point to another for security reasons means that some of them might have got lost or destroyed in the process. In 1916, the Land Register (*Grundbücher*) for Dar es Salaam was transferred to the southern part of the country, where it lay hidden until August

³¹⁷ Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.118.

³¹⁸ During the First World War Belgian forces attacked Tanganyika from Belgian Congo. They captured Mwanza, Tabora and Kigoma in 1916. See L. Evans, *The British Tropical Africa: A Historical Outline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p.331; Judith Listowel, *The Making of Tanganyika* (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd, 1965), p.60; URT, Guide to the German Records, p.48.

³¹⁹ URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.48

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Iliffe, “The German Administration”, p.6.

1923 when it was discovered at Liwale by the British and brought back to Dar es Salam.³²²

However, it should be emphasized that burying their records was not the only method used by the Germans to prevent them from falling in the hands of the ‘enemy’, nor did they manage to hide all the records in their possession before leaving the territory. For instance, of all the files found in Tabora, 96 were hidden in a log cabin formerly owned by the German Central Railway Authority or *Zentralbahn*.³²³ Some important papers and files in most District Offices were taken by German colonial officers on leaving office after the war, while the rest were abandoned, burned or got lost in the repatriation process.³²⁴ As shown later, records kept at *Wilhmestal* (now Lushoto), like District Registers (*Bezirksamtsregistraturen*), remained there until they were discovered later by the British. Between July and August 1923 volumes of German files were discovered at Lushoto and Tanga.³²⁵ While those at Lushoto were hidden in a cellar, volumes of files discovered at Tanga had been stored in a special records room.

Records “were kept top secret by the Germans.”³²⁶ For instance, when the British colonial government demanded the release of these records from the German government, they were initially told that they had all been destroyed during the war. In 1920, R.W. Gordon, the official British Translator of German

³²² URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.48 and p.51.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p.49

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.48-49.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.51.

³²⁶ Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.118.

documents appointed on 15th October 1919, discovered secret instructions that had been given by the last Governor of Tanganyika in 1916 to hide German records at Tabora.³²⁷ With the help of these instructions, Gordon was able to unearth “a huge amount of government documents in the Boma at Tabora.”³²⁸ This discovery, therefore, prompted the Berlin authorities to send a delegation of two former German East African officials, W. Brandes and Ludwig Schoen, to Tanganyika in 1921 to assist in searching for German records hidden in different parts of the country. The Berlin authorities agreed to support the British in searching for the records “on condition that those files, which would be discovered and were not of direct use to the British administration in Tanganyika, would be handed over to the authorities in Berlin.”³²⁹ Moreover, all current legal and financial records were supposed to be handed over to the German government.³³⁰ Most of these files, together with those taken away by the Germans on leaving Tanganyika during the First World War, formed part of the so-called “records of the Imperial Colonial Office, most of which were stored in the *Deutsche Zentralarchiv* in East Germany during the cold war.³³¹ After unification in 1990, these records were transferred to the Federal Archives in Berlin Lichterfelde (*Bundesarchiv*) and are now available online.

³²⁷ Before this appointment, Gordon was working in Nyasaland (Malawi). Seen in Tanzania Notes and Records, hereafter TNA, No. AB/158/28, Principal Secretary to the Governor of Tanganyika Territory, 17th December, 1924.

³²⁸ Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.119.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.119.

³³⁰ Iliffe, “The German Administration”, p.5.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

When the German delegates arrived in April 1921, they joined Gordon and toured Tabora where excavations were made. About 11 cases of files were discovered. The British government retained some of these documents and released the rest to the Berlin authorities as agreed earlier. Those which were discovered after the German delegation had left the country were retained by the mandate government, which form the majority of the files transferred to TNA after independence.

Searching for German records was a tedious task. It involved a lot of tours to different parts of the country where excavations were made. The records recovered were sorted to identify those which were of use to the mandate government and the rest were released to the German government. The records retained by the British colonial government were immediately transported to Dar es Salaam for archiving and translation. Some were distributed to different government departments on request. In Dar es Salaam, all records were kept in the office of the Keeper of German Records (KGR), the position Gordon held until 1926. The aim was to have all German records concentrated in Dar es Salaam which was the seat of government. A special post for this was created by the government so that there would be a permanent officer in charge of searching for, preserving, archiving and translating German records. Gordon was appointed as the Official Translator of German documents in 1919 and he immediately established “the Central Record Office for all German files and books” in Dar es Salaam.³³² By July 1924, the office of KGR

³³² TNA, No. AB158/46, R.W. Gordon to Chief Secretary, hereafter CS, 28th December 1925.

consisted of an Indian Clerk, Mr. Dharan, who was assistant translator, and an archivist. Mr. Dharan “assist[ed] KGR in preparing translations, typing and cataloging the German library books dealing with the laws of Germany and its late colonies.”³³³ There was also an African clerk or typist, who produced an index of German files and books.³³⁴ He had a “good knowledge of German [which he had] acquired at Oriental Seminary in Berlin.”³³⁵ Despite this, Gordon complained about the office being overworked due to the shortage of manpower. According to Gordon, there was increasing demand for translation from different government departments that was beyond the ability of the office of KGR to deal with.³³⁶ However, by the end of 1925, the office of KGR had managed to translate 914 German documents, which were distributed to different departments.³³⁷

Translating German documents was of crucial importance to the various departments, which used them for different activities. The work of KGR benefited these departments and any suggestion to abolish it was met with opposition. For example, the Government Treasurer was criticized when he suggested abolishing KGR:

The translation of German records, the treasurer wrote to the Chief Secretary on 4th July, 1924, appears to have

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ TNA, No. AB158/46, R.W. Gordon to CS, 18th July 1924.

³³⁵ TNA, No. AB158/46, R.W. Gordon to CS, 28th December, 1925.

³³⁶ TNA, No. AB/158/6, Gordon to C.S, 18th July 1924. According to Gordon, the high demand for translations of German records in 1924, for example, made them work for 8 to 9 hours every day, including weekends.

³³⁷ TNA, No. AB158/46, Gordon to CS, TNA, 28th December, 1925.

reached a stage when the work can be performed by the land officer who has an official (Mr. Nimmo) qualified to translate such documents as are required to support land titles. The general work of the Keeper of German Records, invaluable in the past, is, I suggest, not now of sufficient importance to justify a separate establishment. The German records relating to land could be handed over to the land office and stored in the same way as other important land documents. Records of general interest might be kept, under the supervision of the land office, in a special room (perhaps the room recently used for British Empire exhibits) with one of the present clerks of the Keeper of German Records to look after them.³³⁸

While the treasury wanted to abolish the KGR post, other government officials were of the opinion that it should be made permanent and pensionable, owing to the great work which had been done and much still to be done by Gordon. In 1924, Gordon himself advised the government that the post of KGR should continue indefinitely. He cautioned that, although he had “collected most of the important records dealing with all the Central Departments and with the Offices of nearly every District in the late German East African Protectorate,” there remained a lot work to be done.³³⁹ He pointed out that a number of unpublished scientific works of the German period had to be interpreted for government use. “To extract all the administrative and scientific information stored by the

³³⁸ TNA, No.AB/158/1, Treasury to CS, 4th July 1924.

³³⁹ TNA, No. AB/158/6, Gordon to CS, 18th July 1924.

Germans during their rule of nearly 30 years”, he argued, “could only be done by the systematic translation – based on academic knowledge of German – of the vast number of files now centralized in these Offices.”³⁴⁰ As a sign of disapproval of the remarks made by the Treasury above, Gordon wrote: “the character of my work in connection with German records is [...] of such a varied nature that the Honourable Treasurer can have no conception of its diversity or its importance.”³⁴¹ The Acting Governor, Mr. John Scott, in October, 1924, had a similar view when he wrote:

It is I think scarcely necessary to dwell on the value and importance of the great mass of official documents left behind by the German government, constituting as they do a complete record of the history of this country while it was under German rule, and containing information of the greatest value to the present government on all matters connected with the administration of the country. It is to my mind essential that such records should be guarded for a time with the most jealous care, and that they should always be looked after by an officer who is fully qualified to interpret and to report on their meaning and whose duty it would be to make himself completely familiar with their subject matter, their classification and their bearing on current affairs. Such is the policy which has been adopted by the

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

Ceylon government with regard to records of the former Dutch Administration, and the post of Government Archivist in that colony is I understand pensionable. Such is the policy which I strongly recommend that this government should adopt, and which I hope you will approve. This government is fortunate in having Mr. R.W. Gordon, an officer exceptionally well qualified to discharge the duties of the post of Keeper of German records, which he has performed to the complete satisfaction of this government during the last 5 years.³⁴²

Following the above suggestion and those made by other colonial officials afterwards, the post of KGR was officially declared permanent and pensionable on 8th January 1926.³⁴³ In April, Gordon's salary was even increased from £700 to £800 per annum.³⁴⁴ Implicit in these decisions was the fact that the work of KGR had become important for the government. After the retirement of Gordon in 1926, Mr. H. Nimmo was appointed as the new KGR on 1st January 1927, the position he held until his retirement in January 1932.³⁴⁵ The post of KGR but not the office

³⁴² TNA, No. AB 158/26, John Scott, Acting Governor, Dar es Salaam, to Principal Secretary of State, London, 7th October 1924.

³⁴³ TNA, No. AB 158/48, CS to R.W. Gordon, 8th January 1926.

³⁴⁴ TNA, No. AB 158/52, Governor, Donald Cameron to L.C.M.S. Amery, London, 23rd July 1926; TNA, No. AB 158/52, L.C.M.S. Amery to Governor, 14th September 1926.

³⁴⁵ TNA, No. 1284/138, Land Officer to the CS, 6th July 1932; TNA, No.1284/125, CS to the Land Officer, 10th May 1932; URT, "Guide to the German Records", p.49. Mr. Nimmo, the Translator of the German Records during the British administration, is reported to have abused his position by using his knowledge of German language to refuse African claims for land rights. See Lusugga Kironde, "The Evolution of the Land

ended with the retirement of Mr. Nimmo.³⁴⁶ However, owing to the high demand for translation service, Mr. A.R.M. Forrest was appointed as an interim official Translator of German records in 1932.³⁴⁷ Soon afterwards, however, this position remained vacant until July 1943 when Dr W. Weidman, an Austrian working with the Land Office, was appointed as official Translator of German documents for the Land Office.³⁴⁸ The former office of KGR continued to serve as the government archive for all German records except for those dealing with land, which were kept in the custody of the Land Officer.³⁴⁹ The Land Office, founded in 1926, was “the principal registry of titles and documents.”³⁵⁰ All land documents were stored in the strong room until the end of colonial rule in Tanganyika. These records were preserved without a proper reference system, posing a major challenge for scholars who used them in the 1960s.³⁵¹ According to the Registration of Documents Ordinance No.14 of April 20, 1923, all German records dealing with land tenure had to be housed in the office of the Register of Titles of the then Department of Land, Surveys and Mines.³⁵²

More German records were discovered in different parts of the country and continued to accumulate in the office of KGR during the 1930s and 1940s, except those identified as of a

Use Structure of Dar es Salaam 1890-1990: A Study in the Effect of Land Policy”, vol.1, (PhD thesis, University of Nairobi, 1994), p.119.

³⁴⁶ TNA, No.1284/125, CS to the Land Officer, 10th May 1932.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.53.

³⁴⁹ TNA, No.1284/121, CS to Land Officer, 26th February 1932.

³⁵⁰ Sayers, *The Handbook of Tanganyika*, p.120.

³⁵¹ Iliffe, “The German Administration”, pp.6-7.

³⁵² URT, Guide to the German Records, pp.51-52.

permanent nature, which were kept by the Chief Secretary.³⁵³ The office of KGR housed numerous German files beyond its capacity to accommodate them. A huge collection of records discovered in Tanga was transferred to Dar es Salaam in 1934.³⁵⁴ These included files of Tanga District, German newspapers and war diaries, which created the challenge of storing them. In an attempt to resolve this, on 23rd May 1934 the office of KGR asked for permission to release about 2000 unused German books to the German community so as to create more space for important German documents.³⁵⁵ In 1936, plans were under way to renovate the KGR office but this work was not carried out as quickly as anticipated. On 27th March 1936, the Chief Secretary wrote to the office of the department of works inquiring about progress of the work: “I wonder if you have forgotten about finishing off the German Record room where the files are still on the floor...”³⁵⁶ In fact, the lack of enough space for German records tempted officials to destroy some of them, as seen in a

³⁵³ TNA, No. 12841/159, Provincial Commissioner (Tanga), hear after PC to CS, 17th June 1935; TNA, No. 12841/160, the Acting CS to PC (Tanga), 2nd July 1935.

³⁵⁴ TNA, No.12841/153, Director of East African Agricultural Research Station of Amani to CS, 15th May 1934.

³⁵⁵ TNA, No. 12841/152, Anonymous to Mr. Gillman, 23rd May 1934. Some German records were presented to German companies working in British times. A case in point is the discovery of a box containing German records in Tanga in October 1934. The Provincial Commissioner had written to the Chief Secretary: “In going through some old records here a case was found with a leather satchel containing papers of the German East Africa Line, Tanga Branch, dated early 1914. Amongst this was a file referring to the building of the new pier at Tanga, with some blue prints [....] Unless you desire to see any of these papers, I propose handing over to the local Usagara Company’s office...” See correspondence in TNA, No.12841/155, Provincial Commissioner for Tanga to CS, 30th October 1934.

³⁵⁶ TNA, No.12841/164, The Secretariat, Dar es Salaam, to W. Organ, Esquire, Inspector of works, Dar es Salaam, , 22nd March 1936.

letter the Acting Chief Secretary sent to the Director of the East African Agricultural Research Station of Amani in June 1934:

I am directed to inform you that the files belonging to the former German District Office, Tanga, and the complete set of the '*Deutsches Kolonialblatt*' should be forwarded to this office [OKGR]. It is not considered that the copies of three German newspapers, viz., '*Deutsch-Ostafrika Rundschau*' and '*Usambara Post*' are now of sufficient interest to be retained and, if you see no objection, they should be destroyed.³⁵⁷

The three, "long and more or less complete sets" of newspapers in question were: (1) The *Deutschostafrika Rundschau*, (2) The *Deutsch-ostafrikanische Zeitung* and The *Usambara Post*.³⁵⁸ A few surviving copies of these three important German colonial newspapers are to be found in the East Africana Section of the University of Dar es Salaam main library.³⁵⁹ The *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, which represented the interests of the settlers, started as a private newspaper in Dar es Salaam in 1899.³⁶⁰ Funded by the German East African Company, The *Deutschostafrika Rundschau* started in 1908 as an anti-settler newspaper representing the interests of the German colonial

³⁵⁷ TNA, No.12841/154, Acting CS to the Director, East African Agricultural Research Station, Amani, 6th June 1934.

³⁵⁸ TNA, No.12841/153, Director of East African Agricultural Research Station of Amani to CS, 15th May 1934.

³⁵⁹ Seen by the author.

³⁶⁰ Ida Pipping - van Hulten, "An Episode of Colonial History: The German Press in Tanzania 1901-1914", Scandinavian Institute of African Studies Research Report no.22, 1974, p.9.

government.³⁶¹ Unlike the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, which was territorial, the *Usambara Post* (founded in 1903) was limited to the settlers of the northern District.

It is not difficult to discern how the destruction of records might have been carried out under government orders as the above letter reveals.³⁶² Juhani Koponen gives the following evidence:

Of the documents which were in fact produced in Africa a substantial amount proportion were destroyed when they were first buried in the ground during the First World War, then dug up in the 1920s. Part of this material was never found at all; part was eaten by termites till it was almost or entirely unreadable; and part was destroyed by British rulers who were overwhelmed by its sheer amount.³⁶³

Of 1000 documents discovered in Tanga for example, only 145 were transported to Dar es Salaam.³⁶⁴ Masses of district files discovered in Lushoto and Tanga in 1934 and 1937 were classified as *unimportant* or as containing nothing of historical interest.³⁶⁵ Most of these were destroyed. Of course, during British times the control of public records (except those affecting land) was based on what J.M. Karigila calls a “laissez

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Although archival sources at hand are silent, destruction of German records such as newspapers might have been carried out after British colonial officials had satisfied themselves that such papers were already stored in German libraries.

³⁶³ Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, p.679.

³⁶⁴ URT, Guide to the German Records, p.51.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.53-54.

faire attitude.”³⁶⁶ Government Circular No.5 of 1927, the so-called Destruction of Old Records circular, provided for the destruction of any public records except those dealing with land matters which were strictly protected.³⁶⁷

3.0 Searching for and Excavating German Records

At this juncture it is worth explaining the process involved in searching for German records in different parts of the country. As already mentioned, searching for and excavating German records started in 1919 with the appointment of Gordon as KGR. Gordon wrote: “On arriving in Dar es Salaam as Official Translator in 1919, I found that no German records had hitherto been collected or dug up. It was therefore my immediate duty to create a Central Record Office for all German government files and books for reference.”³⁶⁸ However, it must be pointed out that a systematic search for German records started in earnest with the arrival of German delegates in April 1921. This delegation, as mentioned earlier, was sent to Tanganyika by the Berlin government to assist in the exercise of searching for and excavating buried records. Prior to its arrival, Gordon, as already revealed, had managed to discover a huge amount of German records hidden at Tabora in 1920. Reporting on this discovery Gordon said:

During my first visit to Tabora in 1920, I discovered hidden in a loft of the Boma among a mass of

³⁶⁶ Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.118.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. Land records were strictly protected and preserved. By 1925, for example, 35 percent of all German documents which had been translated for various uses were those relating to land matters. The calculation of the percentage is based on the table provided above.

³⁶⁸ TNA, No. AB158/46, R.W. Gordon to CS, 28th December 1925.

German documents, mostly eaten by rats and ants, secret instructions, issued in 1916 by the last German Governor, that all the most valuable Government files should be buried in Tabora and other places, so as to prevent them from falling into the enemy's hands. This discovery led to negotiations with Berlin and to an agreement to send 2 German representatives in 1921, with whose aid I was able to dig up most of these buried records, which now form the nucleus of my present archives.³⁶⁹

This discovery prompted systematic tours by KGR to various places in the interior of Tanganyika to look for German records. The German delegates, who arrived in 1921, supplied new information about the whereabouts of German records. The table below shows that between 1921 and 1925 the searching committee, headed by Gordon, criss-crossed the interior of Tanganyika looking for German records. Places like Tanga, Lushoto, Tabora and Morogoro were visited more than once. Some 431 days were spent in this exercise.³⁷⁰ In April 1921, Gordon and the German delegates dug up 111 boxes of German files at Tabora.³⁷¹ The mandate government retained some of these documents and handed over the rest to the Berlin government.³⁷² In August 1921, the searches at Tabora revealed

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ URT, "Guide to the German Records", p.49.

³⁷² TNA, No. AB/254/22, Secretary of State for Colonial Office in London to the Clearing Office (Enemy Departments), London, 13th July 1921. Article 13 of the Agreement of the 31st December, 1920 between Germany and Britain stated: "the

German weather records in a German government building. In the same year, volumes of German records were also discovered in Morogoro, Ujiji and Kigoma. The searches done in Morogoro revealed buried cases with a considerable amount of records which had already decomposed.³⁷³

As said earlier, the searching task was herculean, because it sometimes involved excavating the ground to a depth of several metres. Whenever sketches of the whereabouts of sites were of no use, excavations were done based on trial and error, which often compounded the problem of searching. In the early 1920s for example, efforts to excavate business books and papers of the former DOAG did not bear fruit. In June 1921, a room at Ujiji was dug up to the depth of 8 feet, but not one document was found.³⁷⁴ In a similar incidence, the District Officer of Mwanza sent a memo to the Custodian of Enemy Property in Dar es Salaam, saying “every endeavour has been made to locate these books, boxes, etc., but without result. Have you any information you could give us on the distance between C&D, if so it might help, otherwise we might have to dig up roughly an acre of ground.”³⁷⁵ Although archival sources are

existing books of account of German businesses liquidated in the United Kingdom or other parts of the British empire above referred to, except where they have been transferred to the purchaser of a business, will be preserved and ultimately handed to the German authorities. In the meantime, the former German Owner will be permitted access to the said books on payment of any incidental expenses, and where such books are in the custody of a purchaser an endeavour will be made to procure access thereto for the former German owner on the like terms.’

³⁷³ URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.51.

³⁷⁴ TNA, No. AB/254/18, Memo from A.A.M. Isherwood (Tabora) to the Custodian of Enemy Property, 10th June 1921.

³⁷⁵ TNA, No. AB/254/23, Memo from District Officer (DO) of Mwanza to the Custodian of Enemy Property, 13th September 1921.

silent on the labour involved in the excavations, it is likely that many African labourers were used for this work.

Table 1: The Searching Tours, 1921-1925. Source: TNA, No. AB158/46, R.W. Gordon to CS, 28th December 1925.

Date	Places Toured	Records and Money Recovered
From 20.1.1920 to 10.4.1920	Tabora	Collecting and classifying German records surrendered by German forces at Tabora in September 1916.
From 2.12.1920 to 25.2.1921	Tanga, Lushoto and Moshi	Collecting and classifying newly found German records and books.
From 10.4.1921 to 21.6.1921	Tabora, Kigoma, Morogoro, Utete and Dar es Salaam	With the help of the German delegates German records were recovered and classified. A total of Rupees 9,000 was also discovered
From 10.9.1921 to 21.11.1921	Mahengo (Morogoro)	Buried German records were excavated under the foundations of the African hospital.
From 26.6.1923 to 1.8.1923	Tour via Itigi, Singida, Mkalama, Sekenke to Utamberale (Tabora District)	KGR discovered German government money worth Rupees 11,000 buried under the ground.
From 15.12.1924 to 1.2.1925	Tour to Kilwa, Lindi, Masasi, Newala and Makonde Plateau	Searching for buried and scattered German Government Records.

Although the official searching exercise ended in 1925, German records were still being discovered in different places, especially in Tanga and Lushoto.³⁷⁶ New sites of buried records were brought to light through the Germans' request that their records from different sites be excavated, and so the mandate government appointed a government official to supervise the excavation. A case in point is the searching for "a box of documents stated [by the Berlin government] to have been buried in the Madibira Mission Church during the war."³⁷⁷ The mandate government agreed to dig up the box on condition that it should be done "in the presence of a representative of the Government" and a German representative, and that the contents of the box, if recovered, should be made known to both parties.³⁷⁸ The excavation was carried out in the church building in May 1936 but nothing was found.³⁷⁹

4.0 Utility of German Records

It is not difficult to imagine the benefits the British colonial government received from the German records they had amassed from different parts of the country. Indeed, the British would have incurred a lot of administrative costs without the records. Gordon's report of 1925 indicated that the German records provided answers to problems, solution to which would have cost the government a lot of time and money. Survey

³⁷⁶ The reason could have been the fact that the Germans had established themselves in these areas commercially. In addition, Tanga and Lushoto were home to a relatively huge number of German settlers.

³⁷⁷ TNA, No.12842/165, PC (Iringa) to CS, 22nd March 1936; TNA, No.12841/166, Uhehe Trading Co.Ltd, Iringa, to PC through DO (Iringa), 23rd March 1936.

³⁷⁸ TNA, No.12841/169, CS to PC (Iringa), 28th April 1936.

³⁷⁹ TNA, No.12841/170, PC, Mr. J.L. Berne, Iringa, to the Manager, Uhehe Trading Co. Ltd, Iringa, , 9th May 1936.

reports such as “German land commissions, Land Registers, *Grundbücher*, and other land records [...] made it possible to define the position, boundaries and extent” of land owned by individual settlers, traders and missionaries as well as forest and game reserves.³⁸⁰ This information saved a huge amount of money which would have been spent on resurveying a total of 4,399,217 acres of land. ³⁸¹ This therefore provides a good example of how German records were used to resolve social problems.

German records were also used for settling different claims. They were used as evidence for the claims made by the Belgians to the mandate government of Tanganyika and as a source of information with which to cross-check the claims made by ex-German Askaris and by individual Indians.³⁸² Standard practice was that any claim that contradicted German records could not be approved by the British colonial government. The following Belgian claim reported by Gordon is a good example:

In 1922, the Congo government presented a large bill to repay Ph. Holzmann & Co., the German Contractors of the Central Railway, for railway material and installation requisitioned by that government during the German East African campaign. Again, the German Record Office was able to supply irrefutable evidence to prove that

³⁸⁰ TNA, No. AB/158/6, Gordon to CS, 18th July 1924.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² See correspondence in NA, No. CO 323/859, “Indian Claims against German Government”, 1921; NA, No. CO 691/102/15, “Claims by Ex-German Askaris”, 1929; NA, No. CO 691/90/12, “Claims of Ex-German Askaris”, 1927.

the said material was not private property but owned by the German government – payment of this claim was subsequently rejected.³⁸³

In general, German records were of the utmost importance for cross-checking claims of the above nature. The discovery of a large case buried by order of Lettow Vorbeck in October 1918 at Njombe, ‘containing full records of German troops and followers in the field’, produced records which were used to check the claims made by ex-German Askaris in the 1920s.³⁸⁴ Additionally, German records brought to light what Gordon called “municipal and communal property”, which may have prevented conflicts over resources between the local community and the government. The foregoing cases also exemplify how archival records, in this case German buried archives, provided legal evidence for different claims.³⁸⁵ According to Cox and Wallace: “records are not only artifacts for use by historians and genealogists but are also essential sources of evidence and information providing the glue that holds together, and sometimes the agent that unravels, organizations, governments, and societies.”³⁸⁶

The sharing of German records by Britain, Germany and Belgium promoted diplomatic relations between them. The

³⁸³ TNA, No. AB/158/6, Gordon to CS, 18th July 1924.

³⁸⁴ TNA, No. AB/254/49, PC (Arusha) to the KGR, Dar es Salaam, 13th February 1926.

³⁸⁵ In essence, during the middle ages in Europe, archives were exclusively used for legal purposes, before they proved useful to the historians in the beginning of the 19th century. The assumed authenticity of the original or validated documents as preserved by archives was intended to authorize and, thus bolster claims for titles. Cited in Jobs and Lüdtke, “Unsettling History”, p.14.

³⁸⁶ Cox and Wallace, *Archives and Public Good*, p.1.

imperial governments were actually willing to share colonial records on conditions decided by themselves. Two examples illustrate this point. First, in 1930, the British colonial government in Tanganyika agreed to release a massive amount of German war diaries, “weigh[ing] approximately ten hundredweight,” to the German government “provided that the German government will also give back any captured British documents (including war diaries).”³⁸⁷ Documents belonging to von Lettow Vorbeck as his war diaries were given back to him in November, 1929 as his personal documents.³⁸⁸

The second example was the exchange of German documents between the British mandate government of Tanganyika and the Belgian mandate government of Ruanda and Burundi, called Ruanda-Urundi at that time. The Belgian colonial government demanded the mandate government of Tanganyika to hand over the German *Grundbuch* [land register] dealing with Ruanda-Urundi in 1929.³⁸⁹ Archival records do not reveal whether this document was produced by the mandate government, but the Belgians were informed that “a number of files and records” relating to Ruanda-Urundi were stored in the

³⁸⁷ TNA, No. 12841/81 S. Gasele to Monsieur Friedrich Shamar, 18th July 1930. It is interesting to note that even when individual Germans asked (especially former businessmen whose records were kept with the office of the Custodian of Enemy Property in Dar es Salaam) for the handover of private documents by the mandate government they were also told that the documents would be released to them on condition that they would be willing ‘to hand back certain files the Custodian may require for his purposes.’ Seen in NA, CO 323/883, Secretary of State (Colonial Office) to the Representative of the German Clearing Office, 9th December 1921.

³⁸⁸ TNA, No. 12841/81, Gasele to Monsieur Friedrich Sthamer, 18th July 1930.

³⁸⁹ TNA, No.12841, Andre De Beys, Consul for Belgium in Dar es Salaam to CS, 27th December 1929; TNA, No. 12841/49, Donald Cameroon, the Governor of Tanganyika to the Governor of Ruanda-Urundi, 17th February 1930.

office of the Secretariat in Dar es Salaam, and that the British colonial government would release them in return for any documents “recovered from Tabora and Kigoma when these provinces were handed over by the Belgian authorities.”³⁹⁰ In March 1930, plans had already been made for this exchange of German records to take place.³⁹¹ Between August and December 1930, the Belgians received their documents from the British colonial government: sixty one volumes of Government files and eleven volumes dealing with the registry of residents.³⁹² Those records belonging to the Belgians were transported to Bujumbura.³⁹³ However, nothing is known of the records handed over to the British in return.

The use of German records for administration of Tanganyika suggest that there was a continuation of German colonial rule under British mandate. The knowledge of German colonial rule influenced the nature of British administration in many important respects. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss them. The following section examines how German records were archived.

5.0 Archiving German Records of the Land Office

From the late 1930s to the 1950s German records received a lot of attention in relation to preservation. Emphasis was placed on analyzing and classifying all records which had already been

³⁹⁰ TNA, No.12841/8, John Scott, Acting Governor of Tanganyika to the Governor of Ruanda-Urundi, 8th January 1929.

³⁹¹ TNA, No.12841/58, CS to KGR, 22nd March 1930; URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.51 Most of German records for Kigoma were confiscated by the Belgian troops which had occupied the area in 1916.

³⁹² URT, “Guide to the German Records”, *Ibid.*, p.52.

³⁹³ Iliffe, “The German Administration”, p.5.

discovered and those still being discovered in different places in the country. In fact, the attitude towards German records changed from that of selecting important documents of immediate use and ignoring the rest, to that of evaluating all records, selecting the historical or useful ones and destroying the rest. The ultimate goal was to classify and archive all important records and dispose of those which proved to be of no use. In 1945, Dr. Weidmann embarked on classifying volumes of German files lying in Tanga. About 300 to 400 volumes of records dealing with land, forest, mining and medical matters were carefully selected from a huge mass of files.³⁹⁴ A handful of records were abandoned as useless. A similar exercise was carried out in Tabora where a huge collection of German records remained unclassified. These files (3,000 volumes in total) were kept in the custody of the Western Province Office in Tabora to be distributed to government departments on request.³⁹⁵ Most land records were transferred to the Land Office in 1945 where they were systematically archived by Dr. Weidmann.³⁹⁶ Some were handed over to the Office of Enemy Property. The rest remained there until 1952 when they were transported to Dar es Salaam.

Modern archiving was started by Dr. Weidmann in the strong room of the Land Office in 1952. Dr. Weidmann was able to systematically archive German land files, which had hitherto been packed in sacks. He was assisted by Mrs. Organ, a German

³⁹⁴ URT, "Guide to the German Records", pp.53-54.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.54.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.55.

woman married to a British Colonial Officer, who worked with the Land Office until 1969.³⁹⁷ The files were indexed, listed, assigned names and placed on wooden shelves.³⁹⁸ They were classified in three groups: List A files which were marked “quite useless for any practical purpose;” List B files identified as useful for other departments, and List C files to be destroyed.³⁹⁹ Those under list B were distributed to various departments in 1953 and retrieved by TNA between 1963 and 1964. Files in lists A and C, numbering 1167, were to be destroyed in 1953 but the exercise was suspended following opposition by Makerere College of Uganda.

The foregoing classification of records is a reminder of how social memory influences archival records and how they are actually “objects of memory formation.”⁴⁰⁰ Social memory affects how archivists analyse and classify their records, which is purposely carried out to achieve different goals the owner of the archives wants to achieve.⁴⁰¹ Blouin and Rosenberg clarified that “the way documents are arranged and described [in the archives] has to be distinguished from the simple fact of preservation itself.”⁴⁰² The same is true when selecting documents for preservation and destruction. “Archival activities”, argue Jobs and Lüdtkke, “revolve around acts of

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p.57. Files on the wooden shelves were affected by insects, hence posing the challenge of fumigation/disinfection.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p.56.

⁴⁰⁰ Cox and Wallace, *Archives and Public Good*, p.2.

⁴⁰¹ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, pp.111-114. ‘All archives, the authors add, exist to support the needs of those who create them, whether these needs are public or private.’

⁴⁰² Ibid., p.111.

preservation and acts of destruction, which reflect people's experience."⁴⁰³ The last section of this paper traces the history of TNA and explains its cultural values.

6.0 Establishment of the National Archives in Tanzania

This section argues that the idea of establishing the National Archives by the independent government of Tanganyika in the early 1960s was to preserve German records in danger of disappearing. Public records at the time of independence were in a state of disarray. Hence it was necessary for the government to salvage colonial documents or files, which were in danger of getting lost forever by establishing a national archive, among others. The first government action was to legislate against the destruction of public records to prevent their further destruction. The second one was to collect German records which had been distributed to different government offices or departments.

It must be said at the outset that before the end of colonial rule in East Africa, the British colonial government had contemplated establishing "a joint East African Archive Service for Kenya, Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1951."⁴⁰⁴ This archive service was expected to be organized in a similar way to the Central African Archives, which acted as a repository for British colonial records of Northern and Southern Africa. The Chief Archivist of the Central African Archives, Mr. V.W. Hiller, was asked to come to Tanganyika in 1951 to carry out preliminary

⁴⁰³ Jobs and Lüdtkke, "Unsettling History", p.15.

⁴⁰⁴ Karugila, "A National Archives", p.117.

research on how East African Archives could be established.⁴⁰⁵ However, the project fizzled out, for two possible reasons. First, Zanzibar did not approve of its records being transferred to Entebbe which was chosen for the archives project.⁴⁰⁶ Second, colonial officials in Uganda, as Karugila observes, were engrossed in “more pressing matters,” and so were unable to execute the plan.⁴⁰⁷ Thus, the idea died despite several attempts to resurrect it.⁴⁰⁸

After independence, the government took this matter seriously, whereby action was taken to collect and preserve colonial records in an archival setting. In the first instance, a legal instrument was put in place to control the preservation and destruction of public records. In 1962, Wright, a PhD student from the United States, was assigned the task of reporting on the state of public records in Tanganyika by UNESCO.⁴⁰⁹ Her report indicated that public records, particularly German records, were “stored in a virtually roofless warehouse” where they “were in grave danger of disintegrating.”⁴¹⁰ She emphasized the value of preserving past records thus:

The records of the past of this country are a collective memory of the government. In them a vast amount of social, statistical, technical, legal and administrative information has been accumulated about Tanganyika, which will be of

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p.118.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., pp.117-118.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p.117; URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.58.

⁴¹⁰ *TNR*, No.66, (1966), p.180.

the utmost value to future historians and administrators. If papers are lost or cannot be found because they are buried in a welter of useless material, much of this information will have to be collected afresh, probably at considerable expense, as basic data for future government action. Even in a newly independent country continuity of administration has to be maintained and future policy must, to a considerable extent, be based on past experience and knowledge and on past mistakes.⁴¹¹

Wright, who was “seconded from the Library of Congress in Washington to be an important architect of the nascent Tanzania National Archives”, was actually referring to German records available in Tanzania, which were at great risk of being totally destroyed at independence.⁴¹² She therefore stressed the importance of preserving them for future use and national identity. As a matter of fact, some government officials held the view that German colonial records are the collective memories of German colonialism.⁴¹³ In this sense, TNA, which houses German records today, is one of the places in which memories

⁴¹¹ Marcia Wright as cited by Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.118.

⁴¹² Lorne Larson, “The Making of African History: Tanzania in the Twentieth Century”, Paper presented to the 12th Annual International Ethnography Symposium on “Politics and Ethnography in an Age of Uncertainty” at the University of Manchester, 29th August-1st September 2017, p.25.

⁴¹³ This notion was held by government officials in the 1960s. See National Archives of London, hereafter NA, FCO 12/70, Mr. Maurice Foley to Mr. Philemon Paul Maro, 5th November 1969; NA, FCO 12/70, Mr. Maurice Foley to Mr. Philemon Paul Maro, 6th November, 1969; FCO 12/70, Mr. H.G.G. Harcombe to Mr. Cheeseman, Library and Records Department Office, 29th October, 1969.

of German colonialism can be found in Tanzania. This view is shared by F.T. Masao who argues that “literary documents of local administration, pictures of rulers and the colonial masters” are part of “Tanzania’s movable cultural heritage”.⁴¹⁴

Wright’s report prompted Parliament to allocate a budget for the creation of a central state archive in Dar es Salaam.⁴¹⁵ On 2nd December 1963, President Nyerere issued Circular No.7 “which forbade the unauthorized destruction of records, invited cooperation in their collection, and announced the establishment of national archives.”⁴¹⁶ Mr. Jeffery Ede, the British Archivist (succeeded by Mr. Michael Cook) worked as Archivist for the government of Tanganyika with UNESCO’s support.⁴¹⁷

The President Circular No.7 of 1963, which formed the legal basis of the 1965 National Archives Act, was aimed at putting checks and balances on the preservation and disposal of public records. The 1965 National Archives Act, which came into effect on 28th December 1965, gave the Director of National Archives the power to select public records for preservation.⁴¹⁸ The Act legislated against the export or attempted export of records

⁴¹⁴ F.T. Masao, *Museology and Museum Studies: A Handbook of the Theory and Practice of Museums* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 2010), pp.152-155.

⁴¹⁵ URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.58.

⁴¹⁶ Mrs.Beryl L. Steele, “Tanganyika National Archives: Editor’s Summary of First Annual Report of the National Archives of Tanzania for the Year 1964/65”, Dar es Salaam, Government Printer, 1966, *TNR*, No.66, pp.180-181; Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.120.

⁴¹⁷ URT, “Guide to the German Records”, p.58.

⁴¹⁸ For this point and its subsequent elaboration, see Mrs.Beryl L. Steele, “Tanganyika National Archives”, p.180 Karugila, “A National Archives”, p.120.

already identified by the Director of National Archives as historical records. This offence was punishable by a penalty of up to 10,000 Tanzanian Shillings or six months in prison. In addition, the Act declared the duration of 30 years for government records to be closed and released for public consumption. Last but not least, the Act mandated the centralization of public records.

7.0 German Records in the National Archives

German records, disorganized and scattered as they were at the time of independence, called for immediate government action, which included the establishment of the National Archives. Public records, particularly German records, were collected from different government offices and departments to which they had been distributed in the early 1950, stored in safe rooms, and finally transferred to the National Archives. Those in the Land Office were transferred to an air-conditioned room of the Ministry of Land in the former Ardhi building, whereas those housed in the former German Record Room were transferred to a dry cellar in the Ministry of Education building.⁴¹⁹ Not all records distributed to the departments could however be recovered, as some had been lost. The majority of files in Dar es Salaam came from the Land Office, Survey Office, Forestry Division, Water Development and Irrigation Division, as well as from the offices of the East African Railways and Harbours.⁴²⁰ In 1963, records relating to education matters were kept in the care of the Headmaster of

⁴¹⁹ URT, "Guide to the German Records", p.61.

⁴²⁰ Iliffe, "The German Administration", p.7.

Tanga School.⁴²¹ Some German records still lying in District Offices of Kilwa and Lushoto in the 1960s were also transferred to the National Archives. In response to the Presidential Circular No.7 of 1963, an Archival Section within the Ministry of National Culture and Youth was established to supervise the preservation and destruction of public records in the country.⁴²²

Tanzania National Archives Building in Dar es Salaam



Source: Photo obtained from Tanzania National Archives' Information Desk

In 1964, Reinhard Spilker, a doctoral candidate from Hamburg, offered to arrange the German files in their original files using the German file lists of 1901.⁴²³ It should be remembered that

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Karugila, "A National Archives", p.118.

⁴²³ URT, "Guide to the German Records", p.59.

“the British Administration [had] superimposed a second filing system on the German one.”⁴²⁴ Spilker recorded and prepared a list of them. Two years later, the National Archives benefited from *Deutsches Hilfsprogramm*, by which the Federal Foreign Office of Germany agreed to provide personnel and technical support for archiving all German records.⁴²⁵ This work was assigned to the Marburg Institute for Archival Studies (*Marburg Archivschule*) of Germany, which sent Peter Geißler as Archive Inspector to Dar es Salaam in June 1967 to spend two years recording the files for archival use. He was assisted by Dr. Eckhart and G. Franz, who spent six weeks in the National Archives in 1967 and 1969 working as archive technicians. The *Deutsches Hilfsprogramm* was expected to accomplish the indexing and listing of all German records stored in the National Archives and those collected from the Land Office afterwards.⁴²⁶ The idea was to have a general list of all German records existing in the country, and have all files properly preserved in the National Archives for public use. The work of classifying colonial records continued during the 1970s. In 1971, for example, the government invited Dr.R.Rejman from Czechoslovakia to act as the Director of Tanzania National Archives.⁴²⁷ Rejman “started for the first time in Tanzania with systematic recording of nationally important documents” to be preserved for their historical significance.

⁴²⁴ Iliffe, “The German Administration”, p.6.

⁴²⁵ URT, “Guide to the German Records”, pp.59-60.

⁴²⁶ Not all German records affecting land matters were transferred from the Land Registry to the National Archives. Some of them remained there until 1973.

⁴²⁷ TNA, 126/6, “Tanzania-Czechoslovakia Co-operation”, 9th December 1971, Accession No.589.

After independence therefore, there was renewed interest in collecting the scattered German records, concentrating them in an interim archive and then archiving them. To ensure that this objective was attained, the government sought professional support from outside the country, which was readily provided by the Germans during the early years of independence. In 1998, the Minister for Education and Culture, Professor Juma A. Kapuya, underscored the point that his ministry was determined to protect the German records from white ants, fire, water, theft and faintness.⁴²⁸ “These German records”, he reiterated, “contain important administrative, legal and historical information.”⁴²⁹ He was proud to inform the public that the German records existing in the country had been chosen for the “Memory of the World Register.”⁴³⁰

By and large, preservation German colonial records has continued to attract government attention since independence. The reasons are obvious. German records are important sources of information for the reconstruction of Tanzania’s history, which have certainly benefited both local and foreign researchers. Moreover, these materials are symbolic for the nation’s identity as they foster a sense of shared identity or imagined identity.⁴³¹ Historians like Koponen have argued that

⁴²⁸ Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania, “Hotuba ya Waziri wa Elimu na Utamaduni Mhe. Professor Juma A. Kapuya (Mb) Kuhusu Makadirio ya Matumizi ya Fedha kwa Mwaka 1998-1999”, p.75.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, p.75.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ For these concepts see, for example, Allan Magil, “From History, Memory, Identity”, in J.K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Madison: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.195; Aleida Assmann and Linda Short, “Memory and Political Change: Introduction”, in Id., *Memory and Political*

Tanzania as “a geographical region bounded by arbitrary imperialist borders” could not have been formed without the Germans.⁴³² Last but not least, German records together with ancient Arabic records has, in addition to other types of cultural heritage, placed Tanzania on the list of countries rich in cultural heritage.

8.0 Summary and Conclusion

German colonial records played a major role in facilitating British administrative activities in the mandate Tanganyika. The fact that these records were buried posed the challenge of recovering them. The British colonial government had to familiarize itself with the vast territory of Tanganyika, knowledge of which had accumulated in German files for over thirty years. The easiest way they could achieve this was to have access to German documents. Searching for them was not an easy task, but eventually a substantial amount of German records were recovered, which were of great help in the administration of Tanganyika in settling various claims made in the aftermath of the First World War. After independence, efforts were made to gather the German documents distributed in different inherited colonial offices, which were in danger of being destroyed. As already argued, the rationale of archiving German records stemmed from the fact that they were as now symbolizing historical continuity, collective memory and national identity. Because volumes of German records were

Change (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.8; Tim Benton and Penelope Curtis, “The Heritage of Public Commemoration”, in Tim Benton (ed), *Understanding Heritage and Memory* (UK: Manchester University Press, 2010), p.44.

⁴³² Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, p.559.

destroyed or got lost during colonial period as revealed by this paper, historians using these materials to reconstruct the history of Tanzania are therefore advised to supplement them with social memory for two major reasons. First, social memory fills the information gaps caused by the destruction of German colonial records. Second, the use of social memory fosters an African perspective which can hardly be derived from the inherited colonial records, biased as they are.

This paper draws a conclusion that records are created for certain functions, and so are intrinsically valuable, but as they age they assume symbolic value, showing the extrinsic value of records. The various examples given in this paper confirm the view of Cox and Wallace that archival records, apart from the primary function for which they were created, “perform symbolic and memory functions.”⁴³³ However, this does not deprive them of the ability to provide practical solutions to particular social, economic or political problems in future, which is the secondary function of records.

⁴³³ Cox and Wallace, *Archives and the Public Good*, pp.3-7.