

Whose History is our History? Six Decades of the Production of Historical Knowledge in Tanzania.

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Abstract

This paper examines the historical significance of the histories we research, publish, and teach in Tanzania in the past six decades of active historical scholarship. By using a qualitative approach, it looks at curriculums and education policy documents to see what patterns were emerging in the teaching of history, with a particular focus on secondary schools and university histories. The main argument is that little progress has been made to teach our history in Tanzania at all levels. Schools and universities place greater emphasis on the colonial content than on the pre- and post-colonial contents, and on general African issues at the expense of issues particular to Tanzania. History instruction would be more significant if it demonstrated African-centred history rather than European-centred history or the impersonal impact of western capitalism. If this is not done adequately, Hugh Trevor-Roper's observations in the 1950s that Africa had no history will still be valid today. As we consider the topics and methodologies of historical scholarship in Tanzania during the last six decades, the question of whose history is 'our history' becomes crucial. As pacesetters, rather than passive victims of global trends and actions, we should write and teach our own history.

Key words: Knowledge decolonisation, African history, Tanzania, Teaching curriculum.

1.0 Introduction

In 2018 I published an article questioning the intellectual process into the writing and learning of what is considered an African history.¹ The article dwelt with the general trends of knowledge creation and consumption with reference to African history. Historical knowledge is by its nature a negotiated reconstruction of some selected aspects of the past that pass through intellectual, ideological, political and socio-economic filtrations.² As what E.H. Carr points, no history comes in its pure form but rather as a hybrid product of the historian's choices, his intellectual architect and portion of what really existed in the past.³ Historians have a duty to define the process of the production of historical knowledge that in the end may be used for learning and teaching. In the 1990s Henry Slater and Isaria Kimambo provided reflections of the journey towards the thirty years of the production of historical knowledge at the University of Dar es salaam.⁴ They based on the thematic and

¹ For further debate, see Maxmillian Chuhila, "Who Writes and Reads African History and Why? Locating African Voices in the Twenty-First Century, From 1960 to the Present", *Utafiti* 11, no. 1-2 (2018), 67-83.

² Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, "How is historical knowledge recognized?", *History in Africa* 13 (1986), 331-344; Edward H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1990).

³ Carr, *What is History?* 7-30.

⁴ Henry Slater, "The production of historical knowledge at Dar Es Salaam: thoughts on two recent histories of Tanzania", *Tanzania Zamani* 1, no. 2 (1992), 114-132; Isaria Kimambo, *Three decades of production of historical knowledge at Dar es salaam* (Dar es salaam: Dar es salaam University Press, 1993); Bertram Mapunda, "A critical examination of Isaria Kimambo's ideas through time", *History in Africa* 32 (2005), 269-279.

methodological strengths, weaknesses and what would be the way forward in historical scholarship in Tanzania. Since then, historical research has expanded in different directions with new thematic areas coming in and the number of local historians and Universities teaching history increased.⁵

The teaching of history in Tanzanian secondary schools and universities is contextualized in this study. The conceptualisation of this article began with the realization that there had been little effort put towards teaching Tanzanian-centred history, with the focus instead being on subjects that were less relevant to local and continental contexts. This comes at a time when the political landscape of Tanzania seems in favour of teaching African/Tanzanian centred contents at all levels. On 9th December 2020, the late president Dr. John Magufuli sworn in newly appointed leaders and made an impassioned appeal concerning the way he thought history should be taught as a compulsory subject at all levels of the education system in Tanzania. The current president too has reiterated the need for curriculum review in general and that of history of Tanzania in particular. Subsequently there has been considerable public debate on the question of what Tanzanian history is and whether it

⁵ See for example a summary of one of the conferences of the Historical Association of Tanzania in Immanuel Rafael Harisch, "Reflections on Post-Colonial History of Tanzania 'Ein Tagungsbericht zur Annual Conference of the Historical Association of Tanzania an der Universität Dar es Salaam, 17-18 November 2016'", *Stichproben, Vienna Journal of African Studies* 32 (2017), 133-142.

necessitates a completely new subject or a modification of the existing curriculum to add more Tanzanian content. This brings history as a discipline and historians in general to a self-reflection on our relevance to this move. In this article I concentrate on the thematic and methodological reflections of the history of Tanzania. It is hoped that, the current contribution will enhance attention on the debate on what should be ‘our history’.

Tanzania Zamani has remained a leading local platform for shaping debates on historical scholarship in Tanzania. In 1993, in the first volume of a revived *Tanzania Zamani* Wamba-dia-Wamba echoed on the teaching of history in Tanzania.⁶ Three years later Yusufu Lawi – Wamba-dia-Wamba’s student elaborated further on the subject by focusing on the mechanics, motivations, relevance and incentives of history teaching in Tanzania.⁷ There was then a long hiatus before this thematic discussion resumed. It was in 2018 when Oswald Masebo came back to this subject in the journal while in 2019 Lorne Larson articulated another view of historical scholarship in Tanzania, expanding on

⁶ Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, “African history and teaching of history in Dar es Salaam”, *Tanzania Zamani* 1, no. 3 (1993), 1-19; see also the evaluation by Gregory Maddox, “The Dar es Salaam School of African history”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2018).

⁷ Yusufu Q. Lawi, “Towards an understanding of the basic problems in the teaching of history in post-colonial Tanzania”, *Tanzania Zamani* 1, no. 4, (1996), 1-9.

Masebo's approach.⁸ The current article builds on those previous theoretical debates to contemplate on the research and teaching of history in Tanzania.

2.0 The Starting Point: Africa without History

In the 1950s there were general academic arguments in regard with the existence and relevance of history in Africa. What triggered the debate was a remark made by the Professor of History at Oxford University who categorically said there was no history in Africa. He was quoted saying 'perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none; only the activities of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness'.⁹ This statement sparked criticisms and brought the development of African history in the spotlight of the day. Critiques accused Trevor-Roper as racist and ignorant of the African history. Since then, scholars in European and American institutions have been engaged in the study of Africa in a more scholastic way

⁸ Oswald Masebo, "New thematic directions in history at the University of Dar es Salaam, 1990s to 2017", *Tanzania Zamani* 9, no. 2 (2018), 1-67; Lorne Larson did not publish his article in any scholarly journal. Still, it is useful in understanding the dynamics of history teaching in Tanzania. See Lorne Larson, "The making of African history: Tanzania in the Twentieth century", (2019), at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333644117> The Making of African History Tanzania in the Twentieth Century 1 accessed on 8.07.2021.

⁹ See Zeinabu Badawi, "One of Africa's best kept secrets – its history", (2017) at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40420910> accessed on 1.12.2021.

to refute Trevor-Roper's comments.¹⁰ In the 1990s a Norwegian historian Finn Fuglestad returned to Trevor-Roper's remark suggesting that there was no need to attack Trevor-Roper because what he said based on his own worldview about Africa.¹¹

Finn Fuglestad noted that, '... it seems to me that while Africanists have negated Trevor-Roper's central contention – Black Africa has no history – they have seldom questioned his premises or the chain of reasoning which led him to draw the conclusion he did'.¹² Roper's statement remained a reference from the 1950s until the 1980s when the UNESCO programme endeavoured to write African history.

An upsurge of Africans who got scholarships to study abroad after the Second World War provided a mechanism for future directions of scholarship in the continent. Coming back home they formed the first generation of historians of African origin and participated in the writing of nationalist historiography. Nationalist historiography radicalized intellectual activity and critiqued assumptions that Africa

¹⁰ Kenneth O. Dike, "African history twenty-five years ago and today", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 10, no.3 (1980), 13-22; Paul T. Zeleza, "Academic freedom in the neo-liberal order: government, globalization, governance, and gender", *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, (2003), 149 – 194; Ian Brown, *The School of Oriental and African Studies: imperial training and the expansion of learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹¹ Finn Fuglestad, "The Trevor Roper trap or imperialism of history: an essay", *History in Africa* 19 (1992), 309-326.

¹² *Ibid*, 310.

was ahistorical continent. This was a movement anticipated to provide a framework for studying African past on its own merits in addition to how that same past was both shaped and re-shaped by the interactions with others.

The aftermath of the Second World War saw establishment of education institutions in Africa, Europe and America that became baselines for research and writing about the continent. University colleges like Ibadan (1948) and Makerere (1949) were first centres of African studies in the continent while others followed later. On a negative note, the colonial emphasis on the teaching material continued long after independence and this formed the colonial heritage of knowledge landscape. It predisposed the interpretation of African past that was taught as an integral history of the continent. Little has changed in the past sixty years of postcolonial historical scholarship. In a way, political independence meant the beginning of intellectual decolonization – which has remained a hard nut to crack. Six years after the independence of Ghana – President Kwame Nkrumah in his famous book *Africa Must Unite* criticised colonial legacy in African education systems by saying;

We were neither fish nor fowl. We were denied the knowledge of our African past and informed that we had no present. What future could there be for us? We were taught to regard our culture and traditions as

barbarous and primitive. All this must be changed. And it is a stupendous task.¹³

Nkrumah's observations were followed by the emergence of nationalist historians in the 1960s, themselves being products of western institutions were well equipped with western perspectives and approaches. Nationalist historiography therefore came to present both nationalist and patriotic historiography as the main purpose was to demonstrate that Africa had history.¹⁴ The innovative use of oral sources in the 1960s was a breakthrough in nationalist historiography because it targeted pre-colonial history.¹⁵ When Trevor-Roper suggested that there was no history in Africa he was probably right because; there was little interest among Europeans to study Africa which in turn provided less material to be used in teaching African history in Europe. In this period Europe was advanced in the art of archives and documentation where historical analysis derived evidence from. In Africa similar institutions came later; the Tanzania National Archives for example, opened in 1964.

¹³ Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa must unite* (London: Heinemann, 1963), 49.

¹⁴ Terence Ranger, "Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe", *Journal of southern African studies* 30, no. 2 (2004), 215-234.

¹⁵ Jan Vansina, *Oral tradition as history* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Isaria N. Kimambo, *A political history of the Pare people of Tanzania, c.1500 to 1900* (Nairobi: EAPH, 1969).

The 1980s UNESCO-sponsored study of history in Africa, was another watermark in scholarship.¹⁶ The whole of its first volume is dedicated on methodology and sources on African history. In the first chapter, the editors begin the volume with the statement, 'Africa has a history'.¹⁷ This is too bold. It is a self-affirmation to the existence and misrepresentation of history in Africa. The volume then goes on to provide the sources and methods of African prehistory and awakening scholars to be open minded when doing historical scholarship. However, it is now more than half a century since Trevor-Roper gave his opinions but what was criticized about him is what goes on in historical scholarship of the continent. It is an unpleasant fact that for the past half a century scholar interested in studying history in Africa have turned to study colonial activities in the continent while side-lining other aspects of that history. It has become an accepted normative that the colonial past is synonymous with history as it provides reliable sources compared to the postcolonial counterpart. This has allowed the use of colonial archives to reproduce and teach the activities of the colonial enterprise in the continent. What is researched takes a big chunk of what is taught at all levels of education. Emphasis on writing about colonial history influences the teaching of colonial activities that leads into representing a

¹⁶Consider the eight volumes produced under the auspices of UNESCO with the sub-title *UNESCO General History of Africa*.

¹⁷J. Ki-Zerbo, "General Introduction", in *UNESCO General History of Africa Vol. I: Methodology and African prehistory* edited J. Ki-Zerbo, (California: Heinemann, 1985), 1-9.

dichotomy of inferior and superior participants in history. More often than not, this is ‘their history’ in Africa than ‘our history’. Therefore, what is our history as a people?

3.0 History Teaching in Tanzanian Universities

The first higher education Institution in Tanzania was Dar es salaam campus of the University of East Africa being established only months before the Independence Day of Tanganyika, on 25th October 1961. This means it only takes us six decades to talk about university education in Tanzania. The university started with the establishment of the faculty of law. Several more academic units and programmes followed later and made the University of Dar es salaam the leading university in Tanzania for a long time. The department of history was established three years after the university was established together with other departments like languages and linguistics, education, political science, literature and economics.¹⁸ This marked the importance that history was to serve during the formative days of the nation. The liberalisation of education sector and the establishment of more universities in the 1990s and 2000s did not escape the University of Dar es Salaam effect. They were influenced through recruitment of academic staff from UDSM to start new programmes in newly established universities or through imitating what was taught at UDSM. In the long

¹⁸ Isaria N. Kimambo, “Establishment of teaching programmes”, in *In search of relevance: a history of the University of Dar es salaam* edited by Isaria N. Kimambo, Betram B. Mapunda and Yusufu Lawi (Dar es salaam: Dar es salaam University Press, 2008), 109.

run, curriculums in the later universities look more or less with the same format and content with that of the University of Dar es Salaam.

Doing history like other humanistic counterparts in Tanzania was difficult in the formative days as they lacked the developmentalist agenda to a postcolonial nation.¹⁹ At the department 'history research seminars' later in 1985/86 named 'History Evening Seminars'²⁰ from 2015 it changed again to Isaria Kimambo History Seminars providing avenues for enhanced discussions and contestations of historical ideas, philosophy and thoughts relevant for history research and teaching. Writing, teaching and learning of history in Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s were not a simple thing or something to be done with pride. Students and government authorities placed the subject in the margins. While students with high entry qualifications opted to study other disciplines, those with low grades went for history.²¹ Adding difficulty and lack of interest to learners, colonial materials remained in schools, as little was available from nationalist scholars.²²

¹⁹ Wamba-dia-Wamba, "African history", 5-8.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 8.

²¹ Yusufu Qwaray Lawi, "A history of history teaching in post-colonial Tanzania, 1961 – 1986", (MA Diss., University of Dar es salaam, 1989), v-vi; Wamba-dia-Wamba, "African history", 8; Lawi, "Basic Problems in the Teaching of History", 1.

²² Some of the books that were used in teaching history include: Reed Brett, *Europe since the renaissance, 1789 – 1914*, (London: Murray, 1967);

Frederick Cooper notes that the end of colonialism paralleled the rise and development of colonial studies from the 1970s.²³ Colonial subjects became under systemic scholarly interventions making colonial societies recipients of western interpretations about themselves. In the long run, such scholarship has not only remained in the Western tradition but has also shaped self-interpretation in Africa. In his book, Cooper with convincing rigour, narrates the western influence on global understandings and processes that come through historical strides. Connections through slave trade and slavery and colonization have shaped relations that always regard other parts of the world as peripherals and extensions of western empires.²⁴ The end of formal colonization did not end such relations because at the apex of colonialism they had become cultural and accepted standard practices.

Decolonization of knowledge is nothing new but has recently revived into a buzz word. It has been both a radical process in the 1960s to 1970s and coming to a somehow passive phase in the 1980s. Steven Feierman notes that 'historical writings in Tanzania had highly serious goals from the early days of the history department at the University of Dar es salaam',

Laurence Ernest Snellgrove, *The modern world since 1870* (Essex: Longman, 1981)

²³ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge, history* (London: University of California Press, 2005).

²⁴ Cooper, *Colonialism in question*; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

he goes on to say, ‘historians have aimed at decolonization of intellectual life, the construction of a national historical identity and the achievement of a just society’.²⁵ The only challenge to this movement, he observes, is the localization of the effort and blockage of knowledge circulation to and from African academics. What is produced in Tanzania is not well communicated with other scholars in the discipline internationally.

In 1992, the editorial to the first volume of *Tanzania Zamani* made a bold statement and shouldered the Historical Association of Tanzania (HAT) by saying; ‘the objectives of the Historical Association of Tanzania are to encourage the study, writing and teaching of history throughout the United Republic’.²⁶ The only weakness of this otherwise well thought pathway was a failure to specify the future thematic scope. Such a silence was a disadvantage to ‘our history’ for what continued to be researched and written was colonial activities in Africa and Tanzania in particular (See Table I below for details). HAT became active from its establishment in 1966 by organising research and writing sessions. Under its auspices up to 1985 there were four major publications targeted at secondary school and college use.

²⁵ Steven Feierman, “Writing history: flow and blockage in the circulation of knowledge”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 37, no. 1 (2019), 3.

²⁶ See editorial section in *Tanzania Zamani: A Journal of the Historical Research and Writing* 1, no. 1 (1992).

The publications included; *A history of Tanzania*, edited by I. N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu (1969, reprinted in 1997), *Tanzania under colonial rule*, edited by M.H.Y. Kaniki (1980), *Landmarks in South-African history*, edited by J.R. Mlahagwa, L. Sago, F. Lutatenekwa and G.T. Mishambi (1985), *Zanzibar under colonial rule*, edited by A. Sheriff. These publications had little about Tanzanian history but mainly focused on the colonial history in Tanzania. Whatever followed after this productive phase of the Association were individualised efforts largely pre-determined and informed by similar mentality that equated history with colonial activities. Decades away since these volumes were produced; no similar effort has been done especially with a focus on what I consider 'our history'. Tanzanian history needs a fresh look that avoids overemphasis on the impact of empires and its western manifestations under the rubric of globalisation. While there are global trends and forces, still it is important to understand local dynamics and actors of history than simply side-lining them for any excuses.

Table I: Postgraduate Research at UDSM

Master of Arts and PhD in History, 1970 – 2021				
Year	Dissertations Produced	Dissertations with colonial elements	Dissertations with African elements/ theories	Percentage of Dissertations with African elements
1970 - 1980	35	31	04	13
1981 - 1990	20	18	02	10

1991 - 2000	06	04	02	33
2001 - 2010	25	23	02	08
2011 - 2018	44	37	07	16
2019 - 2021	6	04	02	33
Total	136	117	19	13.5

Table II: Examples of Dissertations/Thesis with colonial and African elements

With colonial Elements (content)	With African elements (content)
A Historical Survey of Banyambo Economy in Karagwe District, 1860-1960 (1975)	Building Socialism in a Post-Colonial State: The Case of Rombo District, Tanzania (1977)
Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Unyanyembe ca. 1900—1960 (1975)	A History of History Teaching in Post-Colonial Tanzania, 1961-1986 (1988)
A History of Colonial Production in the Songea District, 1871 - 1961 (1977)	A History of the Kagera War: Social and Economic Impacts on Kagera Region, 1971-1990 (2017)
Colonial Education in Tanganyika, 1920 - 1950: A Historical Critique of Agricultural Education (1977)	The Role Played by Tanzania in the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa: The Case of Mozambique, 1961-1974 (2003)
Soil Erosion Crisis in Dodoma Region, in the Inter-War Years, 1930-1950 (1980)	The Role of the University of Dar es Salaam in the Development of Ujamaa in Tanzania (1967-1991) (2010)

4.0 History Teaching in Tanzanian Schools

History carries forward past memories and experiences particular and useful to a society intended to maintain identity of a small group, nation or even national sovereignty. Teaching of history in the Tanzania school context has been a protracted and negotiated endeavour from independence to the present. Methodological, ideological and nationalistic challenges have been central to the process. Such challenges are coupled by the status of history in relation to other humanities disciplines. History seems to be a lesser brother that makes it lack acceptance and relevance to students and the society at large. While it is noted to be used as a nationalist and nation building tool in the 1960 and 1970s, after that period it became irrelevant and faced threats of extinction from the national curriculum.²⁷ This was a period when the nationalist movement and national building initiatives were intense. A type of nationalist historiography was employed to explain and establish relevance of an African society and define past evils in relation to probable future making. At this time history operated in line with the political tune that saw the first President Julius K. Nyerere officiating the African Congress of Historians at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1966 and in the same year agreeing to be the first patron of the Historical Association of Tanzania.

²⁷ Lawi, “Basic Problems in the Teaching of History”, 1.

The teaching of history has been obstructed from institutional designs and the thematic selections of what needs to be taught in our school system that questions our curriculum review processes.²⁸ Yusufu Lawi notes that the history taught up to 1990s lacked local experiences that made the subject less appealing thematically. History was instead, ‘...universalistic and developmentalist...’ which lacked the touch of local specificity and experiences.²⁹ More than twenty years later now we might see little change in this characterisation. History has remained synonymous with colonial activities and the education system functions with a syllabus largely based on colonial topics.³⁰ The late President John P. Magufuli, wanted this kind of decolonisation where an African centred story could be taught in our school systems.

For almost three decades, the teaching of history in schools remained a struggle between seeking relevance to political and developmental contributions and on the other hand

²⁸ The current curriculum has categorized history as a compulsory subject for secondary school education. Although commendable, the question is whose history are we teaching to Tanzanian children? Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, *Curriculum for Ordinary Level Secondary Education in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: TIE, 2007), 19.

²⁹ Lawi, “Basic Problems in the Teaching of History”, 5.

³⁰ Consider both O-level and A-level history syllabuses. their contents are more of colonial activities and glorification of the same, than a specific African experience. Take an example of form six topics, nearly all of them are colonial and imperialistic topics. Very little is said as a linkage with Tanzanian Socialist experience. Form three topics are all colonial experiences without linkage to whatever African experience of the time.

maintaining it as a discipline with basic research inclinations.³¹ The developmentalist supporters probably were right given that what was being taught in schools still concentrated on colonial perspectives with little to do with our societies. 'In explaining this situation, it is argued that throughout history the status of this subject has been a function of class struggle and class rule'.³² However, the other side of the narrative might centre on it not as a result of 'class struggle and class rule' but a struggle between establishing developmental relevance and maintaining its rules of the thumb as a discipline of study.

Commenting on colonial history teaching Lawi notes that '... colonial history teaching denied the colonised of their history placing them outside the humanity or making them understand themselves as inferior breed of human race'.³³ This tendency continues with new publications that focus on colonial encounters and general African survey. General discourses exist with little details on the role of the common people in making history. Where a postcolonial history is mentioned for example, it is about what the government has done over time or what rulers have done. This is also a colonial mentality. Colonialism belittled its subjects and the government occupied a central patron role to shape whatever could take place.

³¹ Lawi, "History of history teaching", v-vi.

³² *Ibid.*, v.

³³ *Ibid.*, 28.

History teaching as a national project needs a strong focus on the national values that we want our current and future generations not to miss. Yet, in some incidences, as Toyin Falola puts it, colonial hangover has limited how to define which histories should be regarded as national or ethnic in the continent.³⁴ To achieve this, an endless decolonisation process of the curriculums and the teaching methods is necessary. It should reach a time when teaching and learning of African history in Africa becomes African, enjoyable and relevant to African local contexts. Wamba-dia-Wamba notes that ‘as the kind of history taught had increasingly no relevance to the problems, needs, interests, politics of the lives of the popular masses of the people, it become {sic} less and less exciting’.³⁵ Similarly, students and teachers who considered history as less interesting had little interest to teach and learn it in the 1980s, 1990s and 2010s.³⁶

Little might have changed on state bureaucratic perspective about the applied utility of historical knowledge. But the persistence on colonial history takes the subject far away from relevance and makes the threats to it become lively today. Teaching relevant history by itself makes it more attractive than teaching colonial activities or that of societies

³⁴ Toyin Falola, “Writing and teaching national history in Africa in an era of global history”, *Africa spectrum* 40, no. 3 (2005), 505.

³⁵ Wamba-dia-Wamba “African history”, 9.

³⁶ Lawi, “Basic Problems in the Teaching of History”; A. Namamba & C. Rao, “Teaching and learning of history in secondary schools: history teachers’ perceptions and experiences in Kigoma Region, Tanzania”, *European Journal of Education Studies* 3, no. 3 (2017), 172-195.

far from the immediate learners.³⁷ Even at the time when the fashion is to go global, other scholars have maintained the need for continued research, writing and teaching of national and continental histories.³⁸ This is not to suggest however that global historical approach is irrelevant but that it should not be used to silence local and continental histories.

The teaching of history in lower levels determines the nature of heritage that a society wants to transmit from one generation to another. In this way, if what are taught are colonial activities, the danger remains transmitting colonial heritage and strengths from one generation to another perpetually eroding the novelty of historical scholarship to its society. In the 2000s, the Historical Association of Tanzania in collaboration with the Department of History at the University of Dar es salaam embarked on a project to produce sources for school history. This was a praiseworthy initiative. Despite the noble intentions of the initiative, it

³⁷ To observe what is taught in schools in history syllabus see United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter URT), *History syllabus for secondary education I – IV* (Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2005); URT, *History syllabus for advanced secondary education, V – VI* (Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2009).

³⁸ Barbara Johannesson, “The writing of history textbooks in South Africa”, *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 24, no. 1 (2002), 89-95; Falola, “National History in Africa”, 519; Felisa Tibbitts, “Learning from the past: supporting teaching through the facing the past, history project in South Africa”, *Prospects* 36, no. 3 (2006), 295-317.

ended up producing colonial and imperial histories for schools in Tanzania.³⁹

Imagine a 21st century African peasant society learning about the 15th century British transition from feudalism to capitalism. No African contemporaries were covered in this discussion to draw some similarities and differences. Out of such unimaginable initiative, history becomes nothing but a glorification of western capitalism, civilisation and its all-colonial instruments like mentality and education. Similarly, such type of history is not only irrelevant but colonial and boring to both teachers and learners all the same. Oral texts projects in the 1960s would bring more relevant and interesting histories than teaching colonial histories making African history synonymous with colonialism and the evils of capitalism. For how long should Africa wait to produce its own history? For the context of oral histories, the only documentations available serve palliative undertones to the big challenge of decolonisation though they are not used in teaching school history.⁴⁰

The document Transition from Feudalism is colonial by itself as it is based on western perspectives. In the 2000's, the references used are Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, Christopher Hill, *The Century of*

³⁹ HAT, "History manual for Tanzanian secondary schools – Transition from feudalism to capitalism and the rise of capitalism" (2003).

⁴⁰ Cf. Kimambo, *History of the Pare*; Gregory Maddox and Mathias Mnyampala, *The Gogo: history, customs, and traditions* (London: M.E Sharpe, 1995).

Revolution 1603 – 1714, Rodney Hilton et al, *The Transition to Capitalism*, E. Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol.1, Chapter IV and Karl Marx, ‘The Secret of Primitive Accumulation’ in *Capital* Vol.1. From these sources, what else could be expected from the manual? What is the relevance of these sources and what is produced as a result into an African society in the 21st century? At least in the same year another manual called ‘Non-Alignment’ was produced and stands a comparative advantage to an African context than the one dealing with the development of western capitalism.⁴¹ Curriculum reviews over time have insufficiently paid attention to the inclusion of relevant issues of the history of Tanzania. Major reviews happened in 1967 – socialist ideology, 1979 – self-reliance, 1997 – multiparty politics, 2005 – competence based, crosscutting issues and Tanzania Development Vision 2025.⁴² By implication, the current syllabus has undergone several changes but little content specific to Tanzania is a common manifestation (see Table III below).

⁴¹ HAT, *History manual for Tanzanian secondary schools – ‘Non-Alignment’* (2003)

⁴² Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania (hereafter JMT), *Mfumo wa Elimu ya Tanzania, 1980 – 2000* (Dar es Salaam: Wizara ya Elimu na Utamaduni, 1982); JMT, *Maboresho ya mitaala toka mwaka 1961 hadi 2010* (Dar es Salaam: Taasisi ya Elimu Tanzania, 2013), 7-19; see also the evaluation of curriculum developments in Peter S. Kopweh. “Curriculum development in Tanzania: an investigation of the formulation, management and implementation of the 2005 curriculum reform in selected disadvantaged districts” (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2014).

The thematic coverage of secondary school history education in Tanzania is much of a general survey of history with little interest on Tanzanian issues in particular. Tanzania appears by passing when discussing general African issues. Little content is devoted to Tanzanian experiences at large that make Tanzanian history merge within the continental narratives. The move towards teaching Tanzanian history would mean therefore a more effort to include issues specific to the history of Tanzania and reducing those of inferential importance. One of the major aims of education in Tanzania is; 'to promote the acquisition and appreciation of the culture, customs and traditions of the people of Tanzania'.⁴³ This can only be met by a detailed analysis of historical makings of such developments. While this is one of the general goals of education, the general subject objectives remain too broad where it focuses on understanding African historical processes with insignificant mention of Tanzania as an example of particular processes. This makes the study of history less relevant to the immediate society as it becomes a subject of others than us.

⁴³ URT, History syllabus for secondary education, iv; also repeated in URT, History syllabus for advanced secondary education, iv.

Table III: Content of History Syllabus at Secondary School Education

Class	Topic	Colonial	Tanzania	Other
Form I	Meaning and Importance of History			Provides theoretical introductions to the study of history in general
	Evolution of Man Technology and Environment			Central to African pre-colonial history, the emergence of human civilisation and development
	Development of Economic Activities and their Impact			General overview of economic development in Africa with emphasis on environmental variations
	Development of Social and Political Systems			Pre-colonial development of African political systems. General overview.
Form II	Interactions among the People of Africa			General overview of African development and interactions
	Socio-economic Development and Production in Pre-colonial Africa			Pre-colonial production relations in Africa. General overview.
	Africa and the External World			Pre-colonial African

				interactions with the external world, trade, slave trade etc.
	Industrial Capitalism	Development of European capitalism with emphasis on development of capitalism in Britain.		
Form III	Establishment of Colonialism	Colonial encounters in the imposition of colonial rule in Africa. General overview.		
	Colonial Administrative Systems	Establishment of colonial rule in Africa. General overview.		
	Colonial Economy	Colonial enterprises in Africa. General overview.		
	Colonial Social Services	Colonial enterprises with special focus on social services. General overview and character.		
Form IV	Crisis in the Capitalist System	Influence of western capitalism on		

		colonial encounters in Africa. General overview.		
	Nationalism and Decolonisation			General overview on African responses against colonial enterprises. African reorganisation against colonialism.
	Changes in Political, Social and Economic Policies after Independence			The negative mirror image of colonialism. General overview of African effort to nation building. Several examples drawn from Tanzanian experience.
	Africa in International Affairs			Continental and regional co-operation of independent African states. General overview.
Form V	Pre-colonial African Societies			General overview of topics covered in form one. Provides reflections of African development before colonialism.

	Africa and Europe in the 15 th Century			Expands an O'Level topic on Africa and the external world. Provides a general overview of Africa's development up to the 15 th century compared to Europe.
	People of African Origin in the New World			General survey of the legacies of slave trade and how the remnants of slave trade re-organised for their rights in the New World.
	From Colonialism to the First World War (1880s – 1914)	General overview of the influence of colonialism and western capitalism in Africa		
	Colonial Economy and Social Services after the 2 nd World War	Colonial enterprises in Africa. This is an extension of issues covered in form three. General overview.		
	Influence of External Forces	General overview on		

	and the Rise of Nationalism and the Struggle for Independence	the impact of colonialism and the rise of nationalist movements.		
	Political and Economic Development in Tanzania Since Independence		Postcolonial political and economic development with special focus on Tanzania. Abridged overview of Tanzania's history.	
Form VI	Rise of Capitalism in Europe	European capitalism. Focus on European industrial development with a single subtopic on its relations with Africa.		
	Rise of Democracy in Europe	European democratic developments. Revolutions and the making of states in Europe. Detailed coverage.		

	Imperialism and the Territorial Division of the World	Development of European capitalism and its impact on the ultimate colonisation of Africa. Detailed coverage.		
	The Rise of Dictatorship in Germany, Italy and Japan	Part of political development of Europe and Asia. Provides a detailed coverage of European's political systems and emergence of political superpowers.		
	The Rise of Socialism	The influence of Soviet Socialist theory, its practices and implementation. Detailed coverage on how it shaped relations with the capitalist systems.	A single subtopic covers Tanzania's Socialist Experiment, 1967 – 1985 in brief.	
	Emergence of the US as a New World Super Power	Development of US capitalism and its influence on world order.		

		Decline of European dominance and ascendance of US dominance.		
	Threats to World Peace after Second World War			Covers how global powers shaped relations after the second world war. Detailed coverage of competing interests of global powers of the time post 1945.
	Neo-Colonialism and the Underdevelopment of Third World Countries			General overview on the influence of neo-colonialism on third world countries.

Source: Compiled from O-Level History Syllabus (2005) and A-Level History Syllabus (2009).

5.0 What to Decolonise

This is a central question in the decolonisation narratives. What has it been so difficult that half a century later we are still indulged in a debate about coloniality in African history? Decolonisation is a process, a process that needs commitment, resources and cooperation from different actors. The first-generation historians of Tanzania did a

reasonable job but as time went on their direction was overtaken by global trends in disadvantage of local initiatives. Western scholars have set research and writing about Africa from which makes local initiatives of rare importance. There have been various movements to include the study of Africa into the expanding frontiers of scholarship but not much is achieved. African scholars have remained perpetrators of western perspectives in African history because they do not set the agenda.⁴⁴ Toyin Falola, has for instance asserted that national history is an unfinished agenda, propelling us into global history approach is silencing national initiatives and indirectly propelling western contemporary dominance.⁴⁵ Chapham contends 'a genuine decolonisation of knowledge production for Africa must return to its roots within the continent itself'.⁴⁶

To decolonise African history is to write African history that puts focus on people and their daily struggles. The thematic position of historical research and writing has more frequently been colonial than African for the past six decades. It is impossible to decolonise when historical writing has always been colonial than African in its theory, themes and methods. It is impossible to decolonise when

⁴⁴ Chuhila, "Who writes".

⁴⁵ Falola, "National History in Africa", 503; Christopher Clapham, "Decolonising African studies?", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 58, no.1 (2020), 137-153.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 137.

historical writing has always been liturgical than innovative in taking up new themes and approaches. A cursory survey of the research done in Tanzania (see Tables I above & IV below) suggests that colonial history is well represented than Tanzanian history; meaning history of people and their encounters.⁴⁷ Unfortunately this time, African scholars who ought to be leaders in the decolonisation movement produce this type of colonial history; their history. Our themes have been, colonial labour, colonial administration, colonial health services, colonial infrastructure, colonial environmentalism name all, you will find that African participation is treated as passively responding to colonial functions and activities.

In the 1960s efforts were underway to quickly decolonise western approaches in African history. A reasonable work of its time was done and shortly after the 1970s and 1980s scholarship came to be webbed in universalisms – trying to underscore African localities from theoretical approaches used to understand circumstances in other areas. Apart from the economic hardships of this period, scholarship was also tempted thematically where the influence of Marxism and underdevelopment schools became widespread.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁷For an overview of research in the department for the last thirty years see, Masebo, “New Thematic Directions in History”.

⁴⁸ Martin H. Kaniki ed., *Tanzania under colonial rule*, (London: Longman, 1982), Walter Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (Nairobi: EAFP, 2003).

danger of this shift was continuation of colonial and capitalist narratives in our history.

It would be facile to speak of underdevelopment for example without reiterating the influence of western capital and colonial enterprise. In these narratives, the themes based on state or cooperate coordinated activities and the way local people were affected/adjusted as a result.⁴⁹ By doing this, the type of nationalist histories initiated in the 1960s almost came out of fashion as little interest continued in its favour. Again, from the 1980s to 1990s to the present, thematic development has been copious of western agenda obviously for known reasons. African scholars have remained passive in setting research agenda.

For decades now, the research agenda was set in the west and then African scholars tuned in, in the name of new 'scholarship' or 'new scholarly trends'. In this way, what Hopkins and Austin warn about running away from African circumstances in favour of western scholarship becomes more realistic.⁵⁰ This trend has and will in the future cement

⁴⁹ James Giblin, *The politics of environmental control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Gregory Maddox, James Giblin & Isaria N. Kimambo eds., *Custodians of the land: ecology and culture in the history of Tanzania*, (London: James Currey, 1996); James Giblin & Blandina Giblin. *A history of the excluded: making family a refuge from state in twentieth-century Tanzania* (London: James Currey, 2005).

⁵⁰ Anthony Hopkins, "The new economic history of Africa", *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 2 (2009), 155-177; Gareth Austin, "Reciprocal comparison and African history: tackling conceptual Eurocentrism in the

coloniality in studying Africa and erode completely the trace of African history. Academic fashion makes African scholarship faint and copious of whatever comes in the name of 'new trends'. In the end, it makes us forget that we have a duty to write a history based on local dynamics and demands. To understand this well, the table below provides a summary of what has been researched and published in the *Tanzania Zamani* journal – the main outlet for Tanzanian historians.

Colonial history in this case entails all articles written on or starting from the colonial period and the colonial period taking a considerable share in the analysis. African history entails the history that has covered typically African history such as theory, pre-colonial period and postcolonial history.

Decolonisation should also proceed methodologically. The themes produced so far are determined by the methodological approaches used. In the 1960s and 1970s the dominant methodology was oral history and archaeological methods. Conversely, they were able to reconstruct both pre-colonial and colonial histories. It is surprising however that those collaborative projects no longer exist at the peril of marginalising a complete grasp of our history. Historians and archaeologists work on different fronts though at the dawn, they produce histories entirely from historical or archaeological approaches and perspectives. It is also

study of Africa's economic past", *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (2007), 1-28.

unfortunate that there are no records of oral histories in Tanzania after half a century of scholarship.

Table IV: Summary of research publications in *Tanzania Zamani*

<i>Tanzania Zamani</i>	No. of articles published	No. of articles with colonial history	No. of articles with African/Tanzanian/Theoretical history	Percentage of African content %
Volume I, 1992,1993,1994	10	7	3	30
Volume II				
Volume III, 1997	4	4	0	0
Volume IV, 1998	2	0	2	100
Volume V, 2008	2	2	0	0
Volume VI, 2009	7	4	3	43
Volume VII, 2010	4	2	2	50
Volume VIII, 2016	7	5	2	29
Volume IX, 2017	8	0	8	100
Volume X, 2018	8	3	5	63
Volume XI, 2019	8	1	7	88
Volume XII, 2020	9	2	7	78
Total	69	30	39	57

Source: Compiled from *Tanzania Zamani* journal issues, 1992-2020.

One can record Kimambo's Oral Text on the Pare deposited with his courtesy at the University of Dar es Salaam main library. Also, another traceable oral text is Steven Feierman's Oral Text of the Arusha and Meru, deposited at the Department of history at the University of Dar es salaam.

One may wonder what is wrong? After decades of using oral history still few transcripts exist. This tells us that, methodologically, it is becoming more challenging to deal with pre-colonial histories. Without an enhanced collaboration with archaeological approaches, what is produced out of the existing historical methods will remain to be colonial history.

Oral history does not only present histories of illiterate societies but also provides histories not covered in official historical documentations. While it has become fashionable in recent decades to depend on colonial documents as reliable sources of our history, revival efforts are underway to go back to using oral histories and mythologies intensively. Albertus Onyiego, one of the adherents of oral articulations, has demonstrated that through careful analysis of mythical traditions we can learn history devoid of colonial overview.⁵¹ This is not a new invention by the author because oral historical methodology was applied in the 1960s and 1970s, what is encouraging is its application today.⁵²

Archival research is the most traditional method in historical research. But what are we likely to get from these sources? They are statist narratives and documentations. It is widely

⁵¹Albertus K. Onyiego, "Symbolism and Gender among the late pre-colonial Luo people in northern Tanzania: lessons on how to interpret African mythical traditions", *Tanzania Zamani* 11, no.2 (2019), 1-29.

⁵² Kimambo, *A Political history*; Israel Katoke, *The Karagwe Kingdom: A History of the Abanyambo of Northwestern Tanzania c.1400-1915* (Nairobi: EAHP, 1975).

accepted among historians that archival sources are central in historical research. Topics that fall without enough reliable archival accounts are skipped for there is little evidence to make conclusions. In this way, we have ended up producing colonial histories and mainly British colonial history, as few in Tanzania are able to use German sources. Consequently, this makes a huge chunk of British colonial history in our schools, universities, libraries and in scholarship in general. Are we capable and equipped enough to write African history from colonial sources? Should we avoid colonial sources entirely? This is not the point.

All sources stand equal chance with conscious intentions to understand African dynamics from within. Archival research in Tanzania benefits colonial period and activities in Tanganyika as no single local historian has made a good use of German documents. Again, little exists on the postcolonial statist history, as little archival documents are available. Although archives do not represent a history of the people, at least use of postcolonial documents would produce something of an African making. With this methodological strand, it is possible for a self-reassessment on whether for the last half a century, African historians have done enough in responding to the claim that Africa had no history but what exists are colonial activities in Africa.

Whether they have managed to crystallise the existence of African history or confirmed existence of colonial activities in the continent requires more debates. To what seems

obvious, the latter have been worked more than the former and hence affirming that what exists in Africa is a history of colonial presence. This is to say, without colonialism and the evils of western capitalism, African historians would have nothing to write about. To decolonise history teaching would mean a herculean undertaking that will revise even the existing scholarship. While following universalised standardisations, local African centred initiatives on the creation of historical knowledge needs to be in the active move. They should consider local realities and demands on the ground to produce a history of an African flavour.

6.0 Conclusion

History must be appealing to the current era's society. This can be achieved in part by teaching pertinent topics that are important to the learner's society as part of a national effort to spread best practices and learn from past mistakes. Colonial histories, capitalism's history, and her sister globalisation have less to give to a rural Tanzanian youngster. There is a lot that can be taught as part of 'our history project' because history does not happen in a vacuum. Teaching societal history awakes students' interest to study other societies in comparison to their own. What is currently taught in schools reflects the nation's postcolonial ideological and political roles after independence to the present, which is only a small section of our history. The ongoing arguments about history curriculum revision can be utilised to determine the type of history we wish to have as a nation.

A history that focuses largely on colonial themes enslaves current and future generations to colonial thinking and mentality, making them second-class global citizens. Alberto Rosa considers history as a tool for identity construction, "... history is a way of producing values and inoculating them via discourse."⁵³ It is critical to teach a history that has social and national ideals that can be passed down through generations. History has been given the green light as a strategic nation-building weapon by the political push of the last three years. We must reinterpret the topics and approaches employed in order to use it as a tool. Today's history research and teaching includes a little portion of our own past, rendering history obsolete.

Acknowledgements:

The author wishes to express gratitude and appreciations for the comments received from several readers, the 2020 HAT conference at Ruaha Catholic University (RUCU), graduate students, secondary school teachers and the anonymous reviewers.

⁵³ Alberto Rosa, "What History to Teach? Whose History?" in *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* edited by Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio and María Rodríguez-Moneo (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers, 2012), 63.