

TANU's Bombay Delegates: Stephen Mhando, Ali Mwinyi Tambwe, and the Global Itineraries of Tanganyikan Decolonisation

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Abstract

Despite the recent move to understand African decolonisation in more global and transnational terms, the history of TANU's struggle for independence remains understood primarily through a nationalist paradigm. Tanganyikans remain largely overlooked in the new historiography of 'Afro-Asian' connections in the 1950s. This article addresses this lacuna by sketching out the dual biographies of two less prominent TANU leaders, Stephen Mhando and Ali Mwinyi Tambwe. Using recently declassified colonial intelligence reports, it follows their journeys to the meeting of the Asian Socialist Conference in India in 1956 and subsequent travels around the Indian Ocean coastline. Through these life-stories, the article argues that activism under the auspices of African nationalism provided a platform for aspiring politicians to pursue their own projects in a decolonising world. These included the organisation of pan-African conferences, creating transoceanic solidarities between Muslim organisations, securing patronage from Cold War powers, and advancing anticolonial causes in Africa's Indian Ocean basin. By stepping away from a narrative focused squarely on a struggle for national independence, the article argues

for a more inclusive, globally connected and open-ended history of Tanganyikan anticolonialism.

Keywords: Tanganyika, decolonisation, TANU, Islam, global history

1.0 Introduction

In December 1956, Julius Nyerere addressed the United Nations in New York. In his message to the UN's Fourth Committee, which dealt with the question of 'trustee' territories, TANU's president set out the case against British colonialism in Tanganyika. Nyerere stressed the limited opportunities for Africans to receive an education in the territory, from primary schooling to university degrees. 'Our leadership and progress towards self-government depends on higher education', he argued. 'During the last five weeks I have been travelling in [the United States] trying to explore possibilities of obtaining scholarships for students from Tanganyika. At the same time the secretary of our organization has been doing the same thing in India.'¹

That secretary – in fact, TANU's organising secretary-general – in India was Stephen Mhando. He headed a small delegation which had attended a meeting of the Asian Socialist Conference (ASC) in Bombay in November. After the meeting, Mhando and two other Tanganyikans – Ali

¹ 'Statement to the UN Fourth Committee, 1956', in Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity: A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 42-46.

Mwinyi Tambwe and Lawi Sijaona – travelled across South Asia and beyond, in an arc which stretched from Burma to Sudan, by way of India, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Egypt. On the way, they formed a strikingly diverse set of connections with politicians, religious clerics, diplomats, and revolutionaries. We know all of this because of the surveillance activities of the colonial police. When Mhando and Tambwe eventually returned to East Africa in April 1957, their private papers were secretly photographed by the Special Branch. The correspondence, bills, aeroplane tickets, telephone directories, and scribbled notes on hotel stationery offer insights into the networks which TANU's Bombay delegates opened, extended, and deepened on their travels.²

This article builds on a wave of recent historiography on African anticolonialism which rejects the methodological nationalism of earlier work and instead draws attention to the significance of global and transnational connections in shaping a world after empire. Tanganyika's early political generation was a mobile one. As Emma Hunter observes, histories of TANU note the circulation of party representatives around Tanganyika in order to drum up support for the movement.³ Yet these initiatives also

² The original papers themselves were unfortunately not retained; the archives contain only summaries of their contents.

³ Emma Hunter, "The History and Affairs of TANU": Intellectual History, Nationalism, and the Postcolonial State in Tanzania', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 45 (2012), 365–83 (373–74).

stretched beyond the territory's borders. From the interwar years onwards, political activity in Tanganyika had a strong regional dimension. TANU's predecessor, the African Association, had branches outside of the territory's borders and drew on ideological currents from beyond the continent.⁴ Makerere College in Uganda became a focal point for the formation of Tanganyikan anticolonialism elite.

By the 1950s, the horizons of this political geography widened. As colonised states in Asia won their independence and Cold War competition intensified in the Third World, African politicians became integrated into intercontinental 'Afro-Asian' revolutionary networks such as the Asian Socialist Conference.⁵ Their incorporation into these networks brought new opportunities for Africans to travel in the name of anticolonial solidarity. Conference rhetoric was cemented by more transactional forms of support, especially in terms of the provision of scholarships – a motif which runs

⁴ Ethan R. Sanders, 'James Aggrey and the African Nation: Pan-Africanism, Public Memory, and Political Imagination in Colonial East Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 52 (2019), 399–424.

⁵ Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, 'Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Asia and Africa', *Radical History Review*, 131 (2018), 176–82. For examples relevant to East Africa, see Gerard McCann, 'Where Was the *Afro* in Afro-Asian Solidarity? Africa's "Bandung Moment" in 1950s Asia', *Journal of World History*, 30 (2019), 89–123; Ismay Milford and Gerard McCann, 'African Internationalism and the Erstwhile Trajectories of Kenyan Community Development: Joseph Murumbi's 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 57 (2022), 111–35; Ismay Milford, *African Activists in a Decolonising World: The Making of an Anticolonial Culture, 1952–1966* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

through this article. Whereas Tanganyikans seeking a higher education had previously been confined to Makerere – or, for a select few, a degree in metropolitan Britain – subsequent scholarship places came from diverse sources. Yet Tanganyika’s anticolonialists did much more than act solely as representatives for TANU. This article argues that the connections they forged in Asia demonstrate how politicians could simultaneously act on behalf of the organisation *and* follow their own agendas, which frequently rubbed up against those of Nyerere and other party cadres.

This article also challenges a literature on Third World internationalism that often gravitates towards leading statesmen and prominent intellectuals. The political theorist Adom Getachew has popularised the notion of anticolonial ‘worldmaking’. She presents the intellectual visions of anticolonial leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere as attempts not just to attain formal independence, but to secure meaningful decolonisation through federal and pan-African projects.⁶ Yet this focus on major figures masks the activities of lesser known anticolonialists, like TANU’s Bombay delegates. While these individuals certainly developed their own visions of a world after empire, this article instead focuses on the processes of building patronage networks and political alliances across borders and between institutions. As such, it pays less attention to grand

⁶ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

ideological statements made on conference platforms and more to encounters away from the public eye.⁷

This article examines these networks through the biographies of two TANU politicians who attended the Bombay conference: Stephen Mhando and Ali Mwinyi Tambwe.⁸ Neither Mhando nor Tambwe published their own life story, so this article turns to colonial intelligence reports contained within the ‘migrated archive’ files held at the National Archives in London. The existence of these files came to light through a legal case against the British government brought by survivors of colonial violence against Mau Mau suspects in Kenya.⁹ These files, with the reference ‘FCO 141/...’ include a wealth of previously undisclosed police reporting on anticolonial movements.¹⁰ Despite ongoing

⁷ Su Lin Lewis, ‘Skies That Bind: Air Travel in the Bandung Era’, in Stephen Legg, Mike Heffernan, Jake Hodder, and Benjamin Thorpe (eds), *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 234–51.

⁸ In the text, I give his name in a standardised form of ‘Ali Mwinyi Tambwe’ for clarity. But he used many combinations and spellings of this name, in a fashion not atypical for Comorians. Colonial officials and other third parties were likewise inconsistent in rendering his name. During his earlier career, the inclusion of ‘Haloua’ or ‘Haluwa’ was commonplace; ‘Tambwe’ appeared only later; ‘Mwinyi’ was sometimes spelt ‘Mogne’.

⁹ David M. Anderson, ‘Guilty Secrets: Deceit, Denial, and the Discovery of Kenya’s “Migrated Archive”’, *History Workshop Journal*, 80 (2015), 142–60; Riley Linebaugh, ‘Colonial Fragility: British Embarrassment and the So-Called “Migrated Archives”’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 50 (2022), 729–56).

¹⁰ The catalogue of files for Tanganyika and Zanzibar (numbering over 600 in total) is available in an online finding aid:

campaigns to have these files repatriated to former colonised states, they remain only available to researchers in London. Their contents must be treated with caution. Often their focus reveals more about the anxieties of colonial officials than the intentions of the Africans who are their subject. Nonetheless, used critically, the depth of reporting allows us to explore TANU's politics in unprecedented detail.

Before beginning, it must be pointed out that there was a third TANU member in Bombay: Lawi Sijaona. Though his biography remains to be written, Sijaona's story is better known, as a politician in Mtwara, TANU Youth League leader, and holder of multiple cabinet positions after independence.¹¹ Sijaona's own travels in South Asia were less extensive than those of Mhando or Tambwe; in fact, as we will see, Sijaona's reports about their behaviour back to Dar es Salaam contributed to their temporary marginalisation within TANU.

cdn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/migrated-archives-8-tranche-guide.pdf, accessed 8 June 2022.

¹¹ See George Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War, 1961-1974* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); J. Gus Liebenow, *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania: The Case of the Makonde* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971); James R. Brennan, 'Youth, the TANU Youth League and Managed Vigilantism in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1925-73', *Africa*, 76 (2006), 221-46.

2.0 Paths into TANU

Stephen Mhando was born in Moshi in 1918.¹² He attended Tabora Boys School and then continued his studies via a teaching diploma at Makerere – the same route later taken by Nyerere, his junior by four years. Designed to produce a class of colonial civil servants the region, Tabora and Makerere were key sites in the formation of a new African political elite. Mhando graduated from Makerere in 1939 and returned to Tanganyika, where he worked as a schoolteacher. He earned a reputation as a self-styled modern man: a contemporary-recalled story of him boldly rejecting the traditional *kanzu* and teaching instead in an all-white uniform.¹³ Mhando's return to Tanganyika coincided with the reinvigoration of local political life through the relaunching of the African Association, which he joined in the 1940s. In 1951, he was briefly appointed president of the renamed Tanganyika African Association. He also took on multiple offices in Tanganyika's burgeoning scene of representative organisations: in 1952 he became secretary for both the African Government Servants' Association and the African Teachers' Association.

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, the biographical information in this and subsequent paragraphs is drawn from Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 27 July 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17802/71 and 'Stephen Mhando', enclosed in Hart to Holmes, 6 June 1969, UKNA FCO 31/434/18.

¹³ Erasto A. M. Mang'anya, *Discipline and Tears: Reminiscences of an African Civil Servant in Colonial Tanganyika* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1984), 118–19.

In a pattern that dogged his career, Mhando attracted allegations of financial misconduct. First, a partner in a small secretarial business in Dar es Salaam accused him of misappropriating the company's funds. More seriously, in September 1951 Mhando resigned his position as president of the Tanganyika African Association after just nine months, having been accused of taking money provided to him to tour the provinces. Finally, in 1953, Mhando was found guilty of embezzling funds from the African Government Servants' Association, which again he had been given to enable him to travel around Tanganyika. When the colonial government asked the headmaster at Tabora Secondary School about Mhando's activities, he replied that Mhando was a very good teacher, though a 'powerful character' with 'all the makings of a trouble maker'.¹⁴

Despite this reputation, Nyerere valued Mhando's political experience and acumen. Mhando did not immediately join TANU after its foundation in 1954, since civil servants were barred from membership. Nonetheless, he maintained contact with the organisation's leadership. Eventually, in March 1956, Mhando accepted an invitation to serve as TANU's organising secretary-general, a position which was vacant after Oscar Kambona took up a scholarship in London.¹⁵ Mhando resigned from his teaching position at

¹⁴ Director of Education to Member of Social Services, Secretariat, 13 October 1955, UKNA FCO 141/17938/26.

¹⁵ Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 29 March 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17802/16.

Tabora and began work at TANU's headquarters in Dar es Salaam in August. At this time, TANU was experiencing growing pains. Its rapid expansion had stretched its organisational capacity and was creating severe financial problems. Mhando therefore began to restructure TANU by streamlining the hierarchies linking grassroots branches to the headquarters.¹⁶ Mhando also sought to reform the Central Committee, which contained members of an older elite who still mistrusted Mhando due to his past financial impropriety.¹⁷

Ali Mwinyi Tambwe took a different path into politics. For a start, he was not originally from Tanganyika, having been born between 1916 and 1918 in the Comoros Islands, which was a French colony.¹⁸ His family left Comoros for Zanzibar when he was a child. They joined a small but growing diaspora community, who were enticed by the business and employment opportunities available in the Sultanate. The Comorians occupied an ambiguous and contested niche within Zanzibar's colonial racial hierarchies. Though somatically similar to Africans, Comorians drew on

¹⁶ Mhando to TANU Provincial Secretaries, 11 August 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17802/92A.

¹⁷ Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 19 March 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17802/10; Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 14 September 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17802/104.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, the biographical information in this and subsequent paragraphs is drawn from 'Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 1 November 1955, UKNA FCO 141/17916/111; and Broadbent to various, 16 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17744/127.

genealogical and civilisational arguments to claim ‘non-native’ status, like the larger Arab population.¹⁹ Tambwe’s background and education gave him command of English, French, and Swahili. After finishing secondary school, Tambwe moved to Tanganyika, where he began a peripatetic career in the civil service around the territory, which eventually brought him to Dar es Salaam.

In the capital, Tambwe became active in a vibrant but often fractious scene of Islamic associational life. In 1933, prominent African Muslims in Dar es Salaam formed the Jamiatul al-Islamiyya (Muslim Society of Tanganyika). They alleged that the city’s Muslim institutions were dominated by Asians, who failed to provide adequate education for Africans.²⁰ Sometime in the late 1930s, Tambwe became the organisation’s secretary. He did so at an inopportune time, as the society’s primary school had been closed by the colonial administration amid tensions among the Jamiatul’s members, especially concerning the role played by its president, the liwali of Dar es Salaam.²¹ The liwali, who administered justice to the city’s ‘native’ population’, had

¹⁹ Iain Walker, ‘The Comorians, the British, the French, and the Arabs: Struggle for Status in the Protectorate of Zanzibar’, *ZIFF Journal* (2007), 97–106.

²⁰ James R. Brennan, ‘Constructing Arguments and Institutions of Islamic Belonging: M. O. Abbasi, Colonial Tanzania, and the Western Indian Ocean World, 1925–61’, *Journal of African History*, 55 (2014), 211–28 (218–21); Ezekiel Kamwaga, ‘Ali Mwinyi Tambwe ni nani hasa?’, *Raia Mwema*, 5 July 2017.

²¹ Said, *Life and Times*, 47–49; Ali Mwinyi Haluwa, letter to the editor, *Tanganyika Standard*, 20 December 1940.

become a controversial figure in urban political life. After its establishment in 1921, the office of the liwali was held exclusively by Arabs, to African criticism. Some urban elites, mostly Arabs and elder African townsmen (*wenye mji*), continued to support the liwali. But a younger, more assertive group of more recently arrived African migrants (*watu wa kuja*), including Tambwe, challenged the blatantly racial injustice of these arrangements.²² Tambwe's activities also created unrest among Dar es Salaam's small Comorian community, the more conservative of whom associated themselves with 'Arab' interests. In 1946, Tambwe was held responsible for a split in Dar es Salaam's Comorian Association. In these overlapping controversies at the Jamiatul and among his fellow Comorians, Tambwe embraced the more racially circumscribed idea of African identity which increasingly formed the basis for political organisation in Dar es Salaam. This was strikingly different from the choice made by most Comorians, particularly in Zanzibar, who aligned themselves with Arab interests. These incidents also demonstrate how Tambwe had already developed a reputation as a divisive character, capable of building bridges in urban society while simultaneously burning others.

²² James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 66–69; Andrew Burton, 'Adjutants, Agents, Intermediaries: The Native Administration in Dar es Salaam Township, 1919–61', *Azania*, 36–37 (2001), 98–118.

Tambwe resurfaces in the archival record again in the early 1950s, as African political life picked up pace. He became active in the African Association in Mwanza, meeting with the British Minister of State for Colonial Affairs on his visit to Tanganyika in 1950.²³ Tambwe returned to Dar es Salaam in 1952, where he briefly worked for the Public Works Department. He resumed his involvement with the Jamiatul Islamiyya, where he again served as secretary-general.²⁴ Tambwe was also instrumental in the creation of the Central Society of Tanganyika Muslims in 1954. This organisation included Africans, Arabs, and Asians in an attempt to patch up the sectarian and racial differences within the country's Islamic community.²⁵ This initiative again brought him into conflict with the liwali, who was uneasy at the role played within the Central Society by younger, more radical African Muslims like Tambwe.²⁶ Tambwe renewed his battles with the Comorian Association, which cultivated good relations

²³ Note of African Association's interview with Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, Mwanza, 26 August 1950, UKNA CO 691/208/12.

²⁴ Based on interviews with Tambwe, Mohammed Said (*Life and Times*, 35) states that he was not a member of the African Association, but this is contradicted by multiple colonial documents.

²⁵ 'List of the management committee of the Central Society of Tanganyika Muslims – Dar es Salaam', enclosed in Hon. Secretaries, Central Society of Tanganyika Muslims, to Chief Secretary, 7 May 1956, TNA, acc. 226, ABJ 52. In minute 3 of 21 May 1956 to the same document, a colonial official noted that 'there was some difficulty in arousing enough enthusiasm to get this Society started.' See also Brennan, 'Constructing Arguments', 223–24.

²⁶ District Commissioner to Provincial Commissioner, Dar es Salaam, 8 October 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17858/47.

with the liwali.²⁷ The association's president called on the District Commissioner to expel Tambwe from Dar es Salaam.

Tambwe translated the political and social capital he had acquired through his involvement in both the African Association and Muslim political life into TANU's activities in Dar es Salaam. After being recruited into TANU by Zuberi Mtemvu, the new organisation's first secretary-general, in January, Tambwe was elected to the party's Central Committee in 1955.²⁸ His organisational acumen and language skills proved valuable resources for TANU. In June, Tambwe served as a translator and guide for John Hatch, an official from the British Labour Party, who left Tanganyika with a favourable official of TANU.²⁹ In December, Tambwe accompanied Nyerere on successful regional tours to expand membership of the party throughout Tanganyika.³⁰ As TANU sought to build support among a society scored by racial divisions, Tambwe emerged as a key broker between Dar es Salaam's African and Asian communities, drawing on his experiences in groups like the Central Society. He collected money on behalf of TANU from Dar es Salaam's Asian population and, for a brief period in early 1956, served as a paid informant of the Indian Commission in Nairobi on

²⁷ See Sule Herith, President, Comorian Association, to Chief Secretary, 30 March 1955, TNA, acc. 226, ABJ/9, f.1, in which the Comorian Association invited the Chief Secretary to a party in honour of the liwali.

²⁸ Said, *Life and Times*, 49n10.

²⁹ John Hatch, *New from Africa* (London: Dobson, 1956), 51–56.

³⁰ Said, *Life and Times*, 203.

developments in Tanganyika. Yet Tambwe also continued to court controversy. His role in Muslim politics caused disquiet among some TANU members, given the involvement in the Central Society of several Asians who were vocal opponents of the African nationalist cause.³¹ Like Mhando, he was also accused of misappropriation of party funds.

Mhando and Tambwe took contrasting paths towards TANU but demonstrated their ability to forge connections in a political landscape marked by the proliferation of associational culture. Mhando's trajectory was that of the more conventional African nationalist. Tambwe's was more unusual and cosmopolitan, as revealed by the networks of relationships he forged in Dar es Salaam, which simultaneously bridged racial divides while triggering confrontations among the city's Muslim and Comorian communities. Yet the cards of both men were already marked with a chequered financial past which attracted the distrust of rival TANU leaders.

3.0 Tickets to Bombay

As TANU's campaign for *uhuru* gathered steam, their contemporaries in Asia debated how to translate political independence into economic development. Indonesia proclaimed independence in 1945. Colonial rule ended in Burma, India, and Pakistan in 1947. Pushed to the political

³¹ Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 3 March 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17801/11.

margins in their own states, Asian socialists channelled the spirit of internationalism to form the ASC, which held its first meeting in Rangoon in 1953. In a precursor to Tanzania's own African socialist policies, the ASC provided a forum for discussing models of development which were adapted to the realities of post-colonial state-making rather than derived from European blueprints.³²

The ASC's political horizons stretched beyond Asia, as it found common cause in its support for the cause of African independence. It established an Anti-Colonial Bureau in Rangoon to coordinate these activities and produced newsletters to publicise African liberation struggles.³³ Concerned about the 'subversive' threat posed by the Asian socialists, the colonial administration in Tanganyika banned ASC publications. Nonetheless, TANU supplied news about its independence struggle to the ASC via Jim Markham, a Ghanaian member of the ASC's Anti-Colonial Bureau.³⁴ Through ASC channels, TANU also secured scholarship

³² Su Lin Lewis, 'Asian Socialism and the Forgotten Architects of Post-Colonial Freedom, 1952–1956', *Journal of World History*, 30 (2019), 55–88; Talbot Imlay, 'Defining Asian Socialism: The Asian Socialist Conference, Asian Socialists, and the Limits of a Global Socialist Movement in 1953', *International Review of Social History*, 66 (2021), 415–41.

³³ Said (*Life and Times*, 123) suggests contact between the African Association and the ASC dated back to 1950, yet this was before the formation of the latter.

³⁴ Markham to [recipient unclear], 26 March 1955, UKNA FCO 141/17809/36A. On Markham, see McCann, 'Where was the Afro in Afro-Asian Solidarity?'

opportunities in Yugoslavia.³⁵ In September 1956, TANU accepted an invitation from the ASC to send eight delegates to Bombay as observers for its second meeting. At the time, Nyerere was in Britain and his own travel plans meant that he was unable to attend. This left responsibility with determining who would take up the invitation to the remaining TANU leadership in Tanganyika.³⁶

The British administration was concerned about the impact which participation in the Bombay meeting might have on TANU, especially given the context of the Cold War. It registered its opposition to the participation of TANU members in the ASC meeting. 'We should be no more ready to allow our charges to attend it than we would a similar conference behind the Iron Curtain', wrote the deputy governor. The administration proposed denying new applicants' passports to prevent them from travelling.³⁷ But the Colonial Office was less certain, noting that the ASC 'has in the past shown itself explicitly anti-communist.' Nonetheless, it was wary of the links between Afro-Asian activism and the communist world. It therefore gave the green light for the Tanganyikan government to frustrate

³⁵ Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 13 April 1955, UKNA FCO 141/17809/36.

³⁶ 'Asian Socialist Conference', 24 October 1956, UKNA KV 2/3887/22A.

³⁷ Fletcher-Cooke to Lennox-Boyd, 26 September 1956, UKNA CO 936/351/46.

delegates from attending, provided this was done discreetly – actions which proved ultimately unsuccessful.³⁸

In the face of colonial obstructions, TANU leaders scrambled to obtain passports and money for air tickets to India.³⁹ Although the ASC organisers proposed to pay for the delegates' expenses while in Bombay, the financial burden of travel proved too much for some TANU leaders.⁴⁰ One aspiring delegate in Tanga obtained access to local cinemas from their Asian proprietors free of charge as part of his branch's fundraising efforts, but still failed to raise sufficient funds.⁴¹ In the end, only three TANU members travelled to Bombay. Mhando paid a £150 deposit to secure a passport. His air ticket, which was booked for him by the Anti-Colonial Bureau, was reportedly valid for a tour that took him through Nairobi, Bombay, Rangoon, Karachi, and Cairo. Sijaona already possessed a passport, so faced fewer bureaucratic hurdles. By virtue of his Comorian background, Tambwe held a French passport and so could travel

³⁸ Lennox-Boyd to Twining, 23 October 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17744/24.

³⁹ On air travel and Afro-Asian conferences, see Su Lin Lewis, 'Skies That Bind: Air Travel in the Bandung Era', in Stephen Legg, Mike Heffernan, Jake Hodder, and Benjamin Thorpe (eds), *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 234–51.

⁴⁰ Sipalo to Mhando, 16 October 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17744/22A.

⁴¹ 'Extract from Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, November 1956', UKNA CO 822/859/133.

unhindered.⁴² Yet he funded his journey privately, using sums pocketed from donations to TANU from Asian sponsors.

The three Tanganyikans arrived in Bombay on 5 November. They immediately involved themselves in the meeting, which was attended by a small number of other Africans, including the Kenyan Joseph Murumbi. As observers, the Tanganyikans did not have voting rights but were allowed to address the conference. Mhando and Sijaona participated in the sub-committee on African liberation. They left their mark on the meeting, which issued a resolution that called on Britain to declare that Tanganyika would be developed 'primarily as an African state', with the introduction of democratic elections without communal representation reserved for different racial groups. It also raised concerns about the alienation of Tanganyikan land by foreign settlers, especially from South Africa, so that 'the story of Kenya is not repeated' – a reference to the Mau Mau conflict.⁴³ Outside of the conference hall, Mhando addressed a rally to mark Dependent Peoples' Day on 11 November. He told a crowd estimated at 20,000 people that the rally was a 'grim

⁴² Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 29 October 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17744/35; Twining to Lennox-Boyd, 5 November 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17744/42.

⁴³ 'Socialists want adult suffrage here', *Tanganyika Standard*, 12 November 1956. On fears about the creation of an East African federation to support settler claims, see Ismay Milford, 'Federation, Partnership, and the Chronologies of Space in 1950s East and Central Africa', *Historical Journal*, 63 (2020), 1325–48.

reminder' that millions of people remained under colonial oppression. Mhando stated that the goodwill he had experienced at the conference would inspire Africans in their struggle for independence.⁴⁴ All in all, then, the Tanganyikan contribution to the ASC was marginal. More generally, reports about the meeting in Bombay were drowned out by epoch-making crises elsewhere: the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Franco-British-Israeli humiliation over the Suez Canal at the hands of Nasser's Egypt. But, as Mhando's and Tambwe's papers revealed, their time in Bombay was merely a landing stage for altogether more interesting itineraries.

4.0 The rogue anti-colonialist? Mhando after Bombay

After the conference, Tanganyika's Bombay delegates went their separate ways. Mhando was tasked with securing political and especially material support for TANU. He embarked on a journey which took him around South Asia, through the Middle East, and back into Africa. Yet though Mhando travelled as TANU's representative, the documents colonial officials copied on his return show that he did so while simultaneously pursuing his own political projects.

On his travels, Mhando worked closely with Munukayumbwa Sipalo, who had also attended the ASC conference. Sipalo was a law student from Northern Rhodesia, who came to India on a scholarship in 1954. He

⁴⁴ 'Asian socialists pledge full support', *Times of India*, 12 November 1956.

established an 'Africa Bureau' in Delhi, which was linked to the ASC headquarters in Rangoon. Sipalo also set up an 'African Liberation Committee', based in Cairo.⁴⁵ Mhando first travelled eastwards towards Burma at the invitation of the local government and with Sipalo's support. Touring Burma, Mhando was impressed with the functioning of co-operatives and the training of school leavers in practical skills, as well as Burma's enthusiasm for the cause of African liberation. Mhando told Nyerere that, in contrast to the assistance offered by India and Pakistan, Burmese commitments was 'genuinely given with no ulterior motive'. Burma's socialist leaders even proposed the installation of a TANU representative in Rangoon to coordinate this activity.⁴⁶ Sipalo helped Mhando to secure Burmese financial assistance for TANU and the donation of a printing press – an important gift, as the party sought to communicate with its growing membership across Tanganyika.⁴⁷

After his visit to Burma, Mhando returned to India. He met up again with Joseph Murumbi, as the pair addressed a public meeting in Delhi through Sipalo's Africa Bureau.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ismay Milford, "Just an African Radical"? A Zambian at the Edge of the Third World', in Laura Almagor, Haakon Ikononou, and Gunvor Simonsen (eds), *Global Biographies: Living History as Method* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 105–23.

⁴⁶ Translation of Mhando's report to TANU, in Commissioner of Police to Ministerial Secretary, 11 November 1957, UKNA FC) 141/17776/6.

⁴⁷ Alijah Gordon, *On Becoming Alijah* (Kuala Lumpur: self-published, 2003), 292.

⁴⁸ 'The Mhando Papers', UKNA FCO 141/17938/51A.

Mhando spent the next month in India and Pakistan. In the former, he was particularly interested in the depth and vibrancy of trade union activity, while in the latter he observed the success of small-scale industries and craft workshops. In all these countries, Mhando sought out scholarships for Tanganyikan students – a goal which, given the excerpt from Nyerere’s speech to the UN quoted at the beginning of this article, appears to have been a key motivation behind TANU’s acceptance of the invitation to the Bombay conference.⁴⁹

Mhando then began a prolonged journey home via the Arab world. After a fruitless stay in Beirut, he arrived in Cairo. At that time, the Egyptian capital enjoyed the status which Dar es Salaam itself later assumed as a mecca of anticolonial revolution in Africa.⁵⁰ Mhando claimed that the Egyptians initially treated him with scepticism, suspecting that he was a British agent. Once he had overcome these initial problems, he was provided with board and lodging, organised through Mohammed Fayek, head of the African department of Egypt’s military intelligence.⁵¹ Mhando urged

⁴⁹ Translation of Mhando’s report to TANU, in Commissioner of Police to Ministerial Secretary, 11 November 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17776/6.

⁵⁰ Reem Abou-El-Fadl, ‘Building Egypt’s Afro-Asian Hub: Infrastructures of Solidarity and the 1957 Cairo Conference’, *Journal of World History*, 30 (2019), 157–92.

⁵¹ See Mohamed Fayek, ‘The July 23 Revolution and Africa’, in Khair El-Din Haseeb, *The Arabs & Africa*, vol. 3 (London: Croon Helm, 1985), 90–128; Helmi Sharawy, *Political and Social Thought in Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2014), 27–40.

the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to employ East Africans in order to liaise with the liberation movements in the region. He argued that ‘the time has indeed come for TANU to become militant without being violent, to organise non-cooperation without fighting our rulers’.⁵² The Egyptians proposed that Mhando stayed in Cairo permanently, as TANU’s representative – an offer Mhando declined. Instead, on 1 April, he left for Sudan, but explained to TANU that ‘the people I hoped to meet were not present’ and so immediately left for Dar es Salaam.⁵³

However, Mhando did not explain to TANU the real purpose of his Sudan visit. The most startling part of his papers detail plans for organising a ‘Pan-African Conference’ in Khartoum. Mhando proposed bringing together political movements from across Africa – he listed twenty-three in total – to coordinate the formation of a permanent secretariat, which would then seek to raise support for its anti-colonial cause around the world. At least initially he had the sponsorship of Sipalo’s Cairo-based African Liberation Committee. The pair proposed a meeting of East and Central African liberation movement leaders in Dar es Salaam in February 1957, to lay the groundwork for the main event in Khartoum.⁵⁴ This was not Sipalo’s first effort to organise a pan-African meeting in

⁵² ‘The Mhando Papers’, UKNA FCO 141/17938/51A.

⁵³ Translation of Mhando’s report to TANU, in Commissioner of Police to Ministerial Secretary, 11 November 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17776/6.

⁵⁴ Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 30 January 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17744/81.

Sudan. He had tried to hold an 'All African Youth Festival' in Omdurman in 1955, prior to Sudan's independence in November 1956, but during a transition period of self-government.⁵⁵ Just like Sipalo's earlier initiative, Mhando's proposed conference was blocked. The Sudanese government informed Britain that it had refused permission for any event supported by the African Liberation Committee.⁵⁶ It is telling that while the papers copied by Special Branch contains extensive information about these plans, there is no mention of them in an internal report which Mhando produced for TANU.

The solidarities which Mhando forged through his travels were fragile and could be quickly undermined by personal grievances. Sipalo had been instrumental in the genesis of the planned Pan-African Conference. But at some point in December 1956 and long before Mhando's arrival in Cairo, he appears to have fallen out with Sipalo. Mhando warned Special Branch in Tanganyika of Sipalo's intention to travel to the country for the preparatory meeting. Mhando explained that he had concerns about Sipalo's communist associations. 'Mr Sipalo has been to most of the capitals of Europe, including Moscow', he wrote. 'Not that a fleeting visit to Moscow does anyone any harm, but I have closely studied and watched Sipalo, and I am not happy about his political leanings.' Mhando believed it was in the interests of

⁵⁵ Milford, "Just an African Radical"?, 111-12.

⁵⁶ 'The Mhando Papers', UKNA FCO 141/17938/51A.

both TANU and the British government to prevent Sipalo from staying in Tanganyika; he claimed to have written to TANU headquarters to convey the same message.⁵⁷ Sijaona alluded to this split between Mhando and Sipalo in an intercepted letter to TANU's Central Committee, which asked the party to help Sipalo. 'Let us forget the people who sling mud at their fellow men', he wrote – most likely with reference to Mhando's own letter.⁵⁸ Thanks to Mhando, the Tanganyikan authorities were already aware of Sipalo's plans and declared him a prohibited immigrant. There is nothing in the archive to suggest what precipitated Mhando's denunciation of Sipalo to the colonial regime. But Mhando clearly knew what he was doing by flashing the threat of communism before the eyes of the police.

Indeed, British conclusions about Mhando's travels coalesced around questions regarding the extent of his own relationship to communism. As they pored over Mhando's papers, colonial administrators projected their own Cold War fears onto their fragmented content. The Special Branch report concluded that Mhando was 'a very ardent African nationalist' and 'prepared to approach any organisation or government which he supposes will be sympathetic to his aims'.⁵⁹ Mhando was 'certainly not a Communist or even a fellow traveller', yet his 'extremely naïve' ideas might make

⁵⁷ Mhando to Connolly, 17 December 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17744/57A.

⁵⁸ Sijaona to Mtamila, n.d. [early January 1957], UKNA FCO 141/17744/80A.

⁵⁹ 'The Mhando Papers', UKNA FCO 141/17938/51A.

him vulnerable to communist approach. Another official disagreed with this verdict: Mhando was neither naïve nor an extremist but rather attuned to the need to speak in different political tongues to secure support. Nonetheless, the official was also dismissive: ‘the reflection is more truly that TANU as a political organisation is juvenile by international standards.’⁶⁰ Despite this, the governor of Tanganyika, Edward Twining, informed the Colonial Secretary in London that Mhando as ‘a dangerous extremist who has been thoroughly indoctrinated in India and Egypt’.⁶¹ All these conclusions were wide of the mark. Mhando’s political project – the Khartoum conference in particular – might have been ambitious paper dreams, but his courting of multiple sources of aid, especially to access scholarships, was in tune with TANU’s newfound confidence in a mobile revolutionary world, rather than its ‘juvenile’ nature. The conclusion which reached the Colonial Office – that Mhando was a pro-Nasser extremist – represented deeper anxieties about the direction of political change in Africa after the humiliation of the Suez Crisis.

Mhando finally returned to East Africa on 2 April 1957. By this point, he had incurred the wrath of TANU’s inner circles. There had been disquiet about Mhando’s leadership even before his departure for India; this was amplified by the money and time spent on his journey. TANU’s finances were

⁶⁰ [author unclear], 8 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/1938, minute 52.

⁶¹ Twining to Lennox-Boyd, 15 May 1957, UKNA CO 822/1361/61.

in a dire condition, as it struggled to pay off various debts. While in South Asia, Mhando complained that TANU had not provided adequate funds for his expenses. He then misspent money which was sent to him.⁶² Sijaona informed the Central Committee that the money sent to the delegates to pay for their return air fare had been spent by Mhando 'on his own pleasures.'⁶³ Certainly, a trip to the 'matchless' Taj Mahal was hardly consummate with his political task.⁶⁴ Shortly after his return to Tanganyika, the Central Committee removed Mhando from his position. He was accused of embezzling party funds, although the colonial police decided that there was insufficient evidence for criminal charges.⁶⁵ Nyerere told an acquaintance in London that Mhando's misbehaviour had led to the loss of expected financial help from the ASC when it learnt that Mhando had informed the police of Sipalo's intended visit to Tanganyika. Nyerere was also disappointed by Mhando's loose talk about Egyptian military aid, which ran counter to TANU's image of moderation.⁶⁶ Amid these controversies, Mhando was

⁶² Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, UKNA FCO 141/17744/76.

⁶³ Sijaona to Mtamila, n.d. [early January 1957], UKNA FCO 141/17744/80A.

⁶⁴ Mhando to Connolly, 17 December 1956, UKNA FCO 141/17744/57A.

⁶⁵ Fletcher-Cooke to Mathieson, 30 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17938/66; Superintendent of Police to Assistant Commissioner of Police, 3 October 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17938/76A.

⁶⁶ 'Julius Nyerere and the Tanganyika African National Union (T.A.N.U.)', 19 June 1957, UKNA KV 2/3887.

rumoured to have considered forming a new party with other marginalised TANU members.⁶⁷

Nothing came of these developments. Instead, Nyerere moved Mhando back into the TANU fold. Mhando's capacity for organisation, political acumen, and extensive range of contacts within Tanganyika and beyond was simply too great a resource to ignore. By March 1958, he was back at TANU's headquarters, this time as editor of its newsheet *Sauti ya TANU* – to the irritation of senior party cadres.⁶⁸

5.0 Islamic internationalism? Tambwe's travels in Asia

Like Mhando, Ali Mwinyi Tambwe merely started his journey in Bombay. He had not travelled as an official TANU delegate yet continued to present himself as the party's representative as he moved through South Asia. But whereas Mhando worked within the cadre of African nationalism, Tambwe's papers suggest that he pursued quite different aims: the development of transterritorial connections among the Muslim *umma* around the Indian Ocean. He juggled the promotion of TANU's struggle with the interests of Tanganyikan Muslims, especially by obtaining scholarships. His papers were replete with the details of Muslim religious leaders and the ambassadors of Muslim states.

⁶⁷ 'Extract from Tanganyika Intelligence Summary from November 1957', UKNA CO 822/1362/169.

⁶⁸ Commissioner of Police to Ministerial Secretary, 18 March 1958, UKNA FCO 141/17806/115.

After Bombay, Tambwe arranged a month-long stay in Pakistan, via its commissioner in Nairobi. Despite his previous contacts with Indian diplomats in East Africa, Tambwe turned his sympathies towards Pakistan. He spoke on national radio in support of the Pakistan's claim to Kashmir.⁶⁹ But it was Islam, not regional geopolitics, which drove Tambwe's agenda. Post-independence Pakistan had become a dynamic node of transnational Islamic politics and culture. Tambwe's correspondence shows that he took the opportunity while in Karachi to meet prominent Muslim clerics and politicians. He met Abdul Hamid Qadri Badayuni, a Muslim leader with a long record of anticolonial activism, initially in the interwar Khalifat movement and then later in the Muslim League. Tambwe claimed that he and Badayuni had agreed to form a sub-committee between their respective organisations, the Central Society of Tanganyika Muslims and the Jamiat Ulama-i-Pakistan. He also discussed the challenges of Muslim education with the well-travelled Algerian, Bashir Ibrahim.⁷⁰ In a letter to the Central Society, Tambwe claimed that Ibrahim had promised to secure 'us' scholarships at universities in the Middle East. Tambwe also appealed for support for the Central Society in letters written for publication in Pakistani newspapers.⁷¹ His activities in Pakistan were evidently

⁶⁹ Broadbent to various, 16 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17744/127.

⁷⁰ See Allan Christelow, *Algerians without Borders: The Making of a Global Frontier Society* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 119–30.

⁷¹ Broadbent to various, 16 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17744/127.

motivated by his desire to strengthen Muslim organisations in Tanganyika rather than furthering the cause of the independent struggle.

After Pakistan and an extended trip to Burma, Tambwe intended to travel even more widely in the Muslim world. He approached the Indonesian socialist, Sutan Sjahir, a founding member of the ASC, with a view of visiting Jakarta. When this fell through, Tambwe informed two Muslim interlocutors that he now hoped to go to Saudi Arabia.⁷² It is unclear whether any of these endeavours yielded fruit: it is not improbable that Tambwe was exaggerating fleeting encounters in Pakistan with the likes of Badayuni and Ibrahim. Viewed from a distance, though, the reasons for Tambwe's eagerness to attend the ASC by using stolen money become clearer. It represented a chance to build pan-Islamic relationships with influential members of the *ulama* in South Asia as much as furthering a nationalist struggle.

Tambwe returned to Tanganyika in April 1957, shortly after Mhando. He received a similarly cold reception. Tambwe had been removed from TANU's Central Committee while still out of the country, due to his misappropriation of party funds.⁷³ Back in Dar es Salaam, Tambwe made a pro-Pakistan statement on the question of Kashmir. He told the *Tanganyika Standard* that whereas the Indian government had obstructed his efforts to visit contested territory of

⁷² Broadbent to various, 16 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17744/127.

⁷³ Broadbent to various, 16 May 1957, UKNA FCO 141/17744/127.

Kashmir, the Pakistan government had placed no such barriers before him.⁷⁴ Nyerere responded indignantly. He clarified that Tambwe was not an official member of TANU's delegation to Bombay and that his statement on Kashmir in no way reflected TANU's policy.⁷⁵ Thus marginalised within TANU, Tambwe was undeterred in his support for Pakistan. He continued to align himself with the country's cause in Tanganyika, including by speaking at events held to mark the country's Independence Day.⁷⁶

Muslim politics in Dar es Salaam remained fractious, especially as TANU increasingly dominated the city's public sphere. The Central Society of Tanganyika Muslims lost much of its energy in 1957, owing to disagreements between TANU-supporting African members and the body's Asian leadership, some of which aligned themselves to the United Tanganyika Party, which supported an official policy of multiracialism.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, Tambwe continued to advocate for improved Muslim education. In 1959, he publicly supported the financial commitment of the Aga Khan towards African Muslim education. Tambwe called on

⁷⁴ 'Situation in Kashmir Explosive – TANU Man', *Tanganyika Standard*, 20 April 1957.

⁷⁵ Julius Nyerere, letter to the editor, *Tanganyika Standard*, 22 April 1957.

⁷⁶ *Tanganyika Standard*, 14 August 1959.

⁷⁷ Brennan, 'Constructing Arguments', 224. The Society survived into at least 1958, where a list of Hajj committee members contains a mixture of influential Ismaili UTP members, more radical TANU members, and Tambwe's principal opponents: the liwali and the conservative Comorian leader Sule Herith. *Tanganyika Standard*, 6 June 1958.

Tanganyika's 'leading Muslims to take full advantage of the [Aga Khan's] offer, before it is too late, by creating a professional class amongst African Muslims.' He stressed that 'Tanganyika's immediate need is not mosques but professional people among [Muslim] Africans.'⁷⁸ Yet when his contemporaries turned towards partisan politics to redress such grievances by founding the All-Muslim National Union of Tanganyika (AMNUT), Tambwe kept his distance. AMNUT was led by the more conservative coastal elites with whom Tambwe had previously clashed; for similar reasons, the new party gained little traction in the face of TANU's dominance.⁷⁹

6.0 Afterlives

Alongside a trickle of students who took up scholarships in India and Pakistan, more senior Tanganyikan politicians followed in the footsteps of Mhando, Tambwe, and Sijaona to conferences in India. In 1958, the trade unionist Rashidi Kawawa attended a meeting of the World Youth Organisation and Bibi Titi Mohamed participated in the All

⁷⁸ Ali Mogne Haloua, 'Offer for Muslim Education', *Tanganyika Standard*, 4 July 1959, 2. On Muslim education in Tanzania more generally, see Abdin N. Chande, 'Muslims and Modern Education in Tanzania', *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs Journal*, 14 (1993), 1-16.

⁷⁹ On AMNUT, see James R. Brennan, 'Print Culture, Islam and the Politics of Caution in Late Colonial Dar es Salaam: A History of Ramadhan Machado Plantan's *Zuhra*, 1947-1960', *Islamic Africa*, 12 (2022), 92-124 (117-24).

India Women's Conference at Kanpur.⁸⁰ But rather than pursue this history of TANU's South Asian connections further, the final section of this article turns to the trajectories of Mhando and Tambwe after their travels. Again, they turned in different directions. Mhando advanced his career via new sources of patronage in Eastern Europe. Tambwe, drawing on his Comorian background, turned towards unresolved questions of decolonisation off Tanganyika's Indian Ocean coast. In both instances, their connections outside of the country proved valuable assets in building their own careers and pursuing the party's – and later, the government's – political objectives.

Despite some colonial officials' fears that Mhando was an 'extremist' on his return from India, he appears to have had little contact with the communist world. This changed in the late 1950s, as the Soviet Bloc took a greater interest as the process of decolonisation gathered pace in Africa. In 1959, colonial intelligence reported that Mhando, who was working at the independent newspaper *Ngurumo*, was trying to contact Soviet African experts. He asked to be put in touch with Swahili teachers at Russian universities and

⁸⁰ 'Kawawa tells of his Indian visit', *Tanganyika Standard*, 12 September 1958; Ismay Milford, Gerard McCann, Emma Hunter, and Daniel Branch, 'Another World? East Africa, Decolonisation, and the Global History of the Mid-Twentieth Century', *Journal of African History*, 62 (2021), 394–410 (402–403).

offered to serve as a Soviet news correspondent.⁸¹ While Mhando was unsuccessful in gaining Soviet support, he did secure an invitation to work in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Between 1961 and 1963, Mhando spent eighteen months in the GDR, where he taught Swahili. He married an East German and compiled a Swahili-German dictionary with a local linguistics expert.⁸² He was suspected by the British of encouraging other Tanganyikans to study in the GDR. Just as securing scholarships for Tanganyikans had been a core element of his 1956–57 travels, Mhando now embraced new sources of educational aid, this time from a minor Cold War power.⁸³

On his return to Tanganyika in 1963, Mhando took on a series of short-term jobs, then readily available as the government sought to Africanise its expanding administrative apparatus. He initially took up a teaching position at the newly founded University College, Dar es Salaam. Mhando then re-entered the newspaper sector: between 1965 and 1967, he first edited the TANU titles, *Uhuru* and the *Nationalist*, and then the trade union newspaper *Mfanyakazi*. Mhando next served as the managing director of the Tanganyika Sisal Corporation,

⁸¹ Director of Intelligence and Security, Nairobi, to Director of Special Branch, 7 November 1959, UKNA FCO 141/17938/93A.

⁸² Hildegard Höftmann and Stephen Mhando, *Suaheli-deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1963).

⁸³ Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, March 1961, UKNA, CO 822/2062/18.

where British diplomats believed he sought to engineer a new marketing scheme which would have principally benefited Eastern Bloc trading partners.⁸⁴

Mhando's relationship with the GDR was instrumental in his surprise appointment to the position of minister of state for foreign affairs in November 1968.⁸⁵ This reshuffle came at a moment when Tanzania's relationship with the Eastern European socialist states was strained. Tanzania condemned the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 as a grave violation of the principle of national sovereignty. It also criticised the Soviet Union's support for the Nigerian federal government in its struggle against the separatist state of Biafra, which Tanzania chose to back. At the same time, Tanzania was deepening its relationship with China. Out of concern to maintain an image of non-alignment and to secure Eastern European support for the African liberation movements which were based in Tanzania, Nyerere turned to Mhando.

Mhando immediately set about rebuilding Tanzania's relations with the Eastern Bloc. At the time, Tanzania did not extend full diplomatic recognition of the GDR – the consequence of a complex set of Cold War dynamics. Behind the scenes, Mhando pressed the GDR's cause on his

⁸⁴ Biographical details here come from notes drawn up British diplomats: briefing by East African Department, 18 December 1968, UKNA FCO 31/434/9; Hart to Holmes, 6 June 1969, UKNA FCO 31/434/18.

⁸⁵ President Nyerere retained the full foreign affairs portfolio himself.

colleagues and Nyerere himself. Mhando also served as the president of the GDR's 'All-African Initiative Committee', a group of African elites who worked to build 'friendship' with East Germany. Yet while his appointment improved Tanzania's relationships with Eastern Europe, Mhando had little success in improving the political standing of the GDR.⁸⁶ He was eventually dismissed from his position in November 1970, shortly after winning election as an MP for Tanga region.⁸⁷ After serving his five-year parliamentary term, Mhando faded from the political scene. He died in 1987.

Tambwe's career took a different trajectory. After his fall from grace in TANU, he had retreated to the margins of local political life. Yet his cosmopolitan background meant that he became an essential middleman between the Tanganyikan elite and anticolonialists in East Africa's Indian Ocean archipelagos. While usually explained separately, the independence struggles in Tanganyika and Zanzibar were closely entwined. After all, the African Association had been a transterritorial organisation, with an influential branch in Zanzibar.⁸⁸ As Zanzibar's racial associations transmuted into political parties in the late 1950s, TANU's leadership took an

⁸⁶ Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making*, 122–25.

⁸⁷ Electoral Study Committee, University of Dar es Salaam, *Socialism and Participation: Tanzania's 1970 National Elections* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1974), 431–32. Mhando had served since 1965 as a nominated MP.

⁸⁸ Sanders, 'James Aggrey'.

active interest in events across the channel. Once attempts to reach an agreement between the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) and Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) broke down, TANU threw its support behind the ASP.⁸⁹

Tambwe was a key broker in this relationship, mobilising local and international support for the ASP and assisting Zanzibari students who had received scholarships to study abroad via the ASP. He was among the leaders of the Zanzibar Association of Dar es Salaam, a de facto branch of the ASP. The Zanzibar Association was established in 1959 and set up an office inside TANU's headquarters in 1961. By this time, Tambwe was working in the same building, having resumed his membership of TANU's Central Committee, with a responsibility for education matters.⁹⁰ The ASP directed its scholarship holders towards Tambwe to receive

⁸⁹ On Zanzibar's racial politics, see Glassman, *War of Words*. One journalist noted that Nyerere accomplished the task of founding the ASP 'with the able assistance of Sheikh Ali Mwinyi Tambwe'. But the ASP was created in February 1957, while Tambwe was still in South Asia. The inclusion of his name nonetheless points to its lasting association with Tanganyikan involvement in Zanzibari politics. [Ahmad Saleh Yahya?], 'Hero or Humbug?', *Africa Events*, October 1986.

⁹⁰ Information about the Zanzibar Association is scarce, but see Zanzibar Protectorate, Central Intelligence Committee, Monthly Report – March 1961, UKNA CO 822/2068; Minael-Hossana O. Mdundo, *Masimulizi ya Sheikh Thabit Kombo Jecha* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1996), 90; Amina Ameir Issa, "From Stinkibar to Zanzibar": Disease, Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Urban Zanzibar, 1870–1963', PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal (2009), 310.

their travel documents.⁹¹ Drawing on the same dynamics of Cold War competition that took Mhando to East Germany, Tambwe travelled around the communist world to scope out opportunities for Tanganyikan and Zanzibari students: in 1962, he visited China, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia for consultations about scholarship programmes. A Czechoslovak official observed that Tambwe ‘spoke of Zanzibari affairs as the internal affairs of Tanganyika’.⁹² Tambwe also made regular visits to Zanzibar itself to channel financial assistance to the ASP especially around crunch election periods.⁹³

Tambwe’s name crops up frequently in the debates which surround the Zanzibar Revolution and the Act of Union. Here, archival silences loom large. In the absence of documentary evidence, innuendo roams freely. At the time of the revolution, Tambwe was serving as an area commissioner for Tanga. These stories allege his involvement in trafficking Africans from the mainland to

⁹¹ Ali M. Mwinyigogo, Secretary-General, Afro-Shirazi Youth League, to Mwinyimadi Khery, Dar es Salaam, 18 September 1962, reproduced in Mdundo, *Masimulizi ya Sheikh Thabit Kombo Jecha*, 67.

⁹² ‘Záznam o styku s H. TEMBWA’ [‘Record of contact with H. TEMBWA’], 30 October 1962, Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive), Prague, 11700, ff. 213–14. I am grateful to James Brennan for sharing this document with me.

⁹³ Zanzibar Protectorate, Central Intelligence Committee, Monthly Report – January 1961, UKNA CO 822/2068; Zanzibar Special Branch Headquarters, Supplementary Intelligence Summary, 23 April–22 May 1961, UKNA CO 822/2068; Zanzibar Special Branch Headquarters, Intelligence Summary, 7–10 July 1963, UKNA CO 822/3063.

Zanzibar to carry out violence around elections and then to participate in the bloodshed which followed the ASP's seizure of power.⁹⁴ These claims remain unsubstantiated by the thin written evidence surrounding the revolution. Likewise, Tambwe's precise involvement in the act of union remains unclear. Contemporaries described him as a 'kingpin' who brokered the secretive negotiations.⁹⁵ Tambwe certainly acted as an intermediary between Oscar Kambona, Tanganyika's minister for foreign affairs, and Zanzibar's leadership. Kambona described Tambwe to American diplomats as his 'closest associate' on Zanzibari affairs.⁹⁶ Tambwe's involvement is cited in arguments that present the revolution and union as being masterminded by mainlanders, forestalling the future of an 'Afrabian' Zanzibari state.⁹⁷ But in the absence of concrete evidence, it is prudent to leave this an open question.

Having put his Zanzibari background to use in one political project, Tambwe drew on his Comorian roots to pursue another. In late 1962, a small group of Comorians in Zanzibar founded the *Mouvement de Libération Nationale des Comores*

⁹⁴ See for example 'Kisa cha Ali Mwinyi Tambwe', YouTube, 9 June 2017. youtu.be/fg74SD8grbc, accessed 8 June 2022.

⁹⁵ Kamwaga, 'Ali Mwinyi Tambwe ni nani hasa?'

⁹⁶ Leonhart, US Ambassador, Dar es Salaam, to State Department, 18 April 1964, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, National Security Files, Country Files, Box 103.

⁹⁷ Harith Ghassany, *Kwaheri Ukoloni, Kwaheri Uhuru!* (Dubai: self-published, 2010).

(National Liberation Movement of Comoros, MOLINACO).⁹⁸ Through the support of TANU members with close links to the ASP, including Tambwe, MOLINACO established its headquarters in Dar es Salaam. Tambwe again used his cosmopolitan background to triangulate between MOLINACO, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the OAU's African Liberation Committee, which was chaired by Kambona. MOLINACO was a small, cash-strapped organisation; such personal connections mattered in maintaining a foothold amid Africa's international revolutionary networks. When in 1965 the Tanzanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked for a visa to be arranged for Tambwe (who had renounced his French nationality in 1962) to visit his family in Comoros, the French authorities denied the request, fearing that the mission had ulterior motives in drumming up support for MOLINACO.⁹⁹

Tambwe played this instrumental role within MOLINACO while officially working for the Tanzanian government in Zanzibar. Under the terms of the union, Zanzibar ceded control of foreign relations to the mainland government. However, the major Cold War powers maintained consulates in Zanzibar. In June 1964, Nyerere therefore appointed

⁹⁸ Ahmed Ouledi, *Abdou Bakari Boina: Une figure emblématique du MOLINACO* (Moroni: Editions Komedit, 2016); George Roberts, 'MOLINACO, the Comorian Diaspora, and Decolonisation in East Africa's Indian Ocean', *Journal of African History*, 62 (2021), 411–29.

⁹⁹ Francois-Poncet to de Bourdeille, 24 February 1965, Archives Nationales (AN), Paris, AG/5(F)/3523.

Tambwe as a junior minister for foreign affairs, but based in Zanzibar rather than Dar es Salaam, in order to keep the islands' government in check as it continued to strike deals with the Eastern Bloc and China. Despite Tambwe's long-standing connections with the ASP leadership, his relationship with President Abeid Karume and other party hardliners seems to have deteriorated rapidly. In early 1965, he resigned his ministerial position and returned to Dar es Salaam. The CIA reported that he was disappointed by Zanzibar's resistance to greater integration into the union.¹⁰⁰ In any case, the post-revolutionary regime Zanzibar was hostile to the islands' Comorian community, which had predominantly supported the ZNP. These frictions reached their zenith in 1968 when the government announced that Comorians who refused to naturalise as Zanzibari citizens and renounce their French nationality would henceforth be regarded as foreigners.¹⁰¹

Just as in the mid-1950s, Tambwe's fall from power owed to the loss of confidence of influential figures within the party. In an apparent bid to establish a political career on the mainland, Tambwe attempted to stand as an MP in the seat of Lindi East in the 1965 elections. But, despite heading the nominations in the district party conference, TANU's National Executive Committee passed over him. According

¹⁰⁰ CIA, 'Zanzibar: The Hundred Days' Revolution', 21 February 1966, 122. [cia.gov/readingroom/docs/esau-28.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/esau-28.pdf), accessed 8 June 2022.

¹⁰¹ Toibibou Ali Mohamed, 'Les Comoriens de Zanzibar durant la "Révolution Okello" (1964-1972)', *Africanistes*, 76 (2006), 137-54.

to US diplomats, this was the outcome of an intervention by Kambona, the minister of foreign affairs and TANU's secretary-general. Kambona was reportedly unhappy at Tambwe's insubordination when he refused to return to his position as a minister in Zanzibar.¹⁰² After leaving government and taking up positions working for an import-export house and then an international minerals firm, Tambwe continued his work with MOLINACO. However, in 1969 he was suddenly extradited to Zanzibar and accused of participating in a treason plot against the government. Though Tambwe survived the fate of the former ASP leaders Othman Shariff and Abdullah Kassim Hanga, who were executed without public trial, he was nonetheless imprisoned. Reliable details of these events are again scarce. By late 1971, he was again working for MOLINACO, though he seems to have withdrawn from political life thereafter.¹⁰³ Tambwe died in 2003.¹⁰⁴ No CCM politician was present at his funeral.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Liebenow, *Colonial Rule*, 313; Lionel Cliffe (ed.), *One-Party Democracy: The 1965 Tanzania General Elections* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), 385; Millar to State Department, 12 October 1965, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 59, Subject Numeric Files 1964-66, Box 2690, POL 14.

¹⁰³ Head of the Office for Studies and Intelligence, Moroni, to Head of the Section for Studies and Intelligence, Department for Overseas Territories and Departments, Paris, 14 November 1971, AN, 19940163/36.

¹⁰⁴ I am grateful to Abdallah Miraj and Mohamed Said for clarifying this detail for me.

¹⁰⁵ Kamwaga, 'Ali Mwinyi Tambwe ni nani hasa?'

7.0 Conclusion

The itineraries of TANU's Bombay delegates reveal an alternative history of Tanganyikan decolonisation beyond a simplistic story of nationalist triumph. For sure, both Mhando and Tambwe were committed anticolonialists and strong advocates of TANU's struggle for independence on their travels. But they combined their official duties with the pursuit of personal projects, which ranged from attempts to set-up rival pan-African organisations to building transoceanic connections among the Muslim *umma*. Later, both men projected their political and social capital in different directions: in Mhando's case, towards the Eastern Bloc; in Tambwe's into the cascading causes of African nationalism in the Indian Ocean.

In doing so, Mhando and Tambwe utilised new sources of political support to construct their own transactional networks of patronage, as the geographies of Tanganyika's decolonisation extended beyond the East Africa region. Their itineraries demonstrate that by the mid-1950s, a higher education at Makerere was perceived to be increasingly inadequate and surpassed by new opportunities in Egypt, South Asia, and Eastern Europe. Anticolonial entrepreneurs like Mhando and Tambwe grasped how by securing scholarships they could not just further the nationalist cause, but also cement their own political power. The purpose here is not to induct such individuals into a Tanzanian pantheon of anticolonial heroes. Rather, it is to offer a more open-

ended and globally connected history of decolonisation and elite formation, which takes TANU as a multifaceted and fractious movement rather than an irresistible monolithic force.